BRICS
INDIA 2026
BUILDING FOR RESILIENCE, INNOVATION, COOPERATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

THE INDIA MOMENT : BRICS 2026 PLAYBOOK

ABOUT GLOBAL EYE

Over 95% of Indian think tanks operate as not-for-profit foundations, largely dependent on government funding or philanthropic grants. This overreliance has constrained commercialization and, in turn, stifled innovation within the policy ecosystem - despite the rapid rise of policy enthusiasts seeking meaningful engagement. Global Eye Intelligence stands apart as a young, bootstrapped Indian startup committed to building a National Security Knowledge Economy.

In the fast-evolving landscape of international relations and security, we have positioned ourselves as a pivotal force, delivering cutting-edge geopolitical intelligence and strategic insights. Agile, independent, and forward-looking, Global Eye is redefining how geopolitical challenges are understood and addressed.

GLOBAL EYE VISION

We envision a Modern Indian State by 2047—a vision once dreamt by Sardar Patel—where innovation, security, and knowledge converge to shape a resilient and future-ready nation. As Chanakya wisely noted, the strength of a nation flows through its treasury. With India entering an era of unprecedented demographic advantage, it is imperative that we incentivize and empower our youth to innovate within the policy ecosystem, ensuring that India's intellectual capital becomes its greatest strategic asset.

We aspire to emerge as the world's leading intelligence hub, delivering unmatched geopolitical insights and strategic solutions that enable nations, organizations, and individuals to navigate the complexities of an interconnected world. By fostering peace, strengthening security, and advancing sustainable development, we aim to redefine how knowledge serves as the cornerstone of power in the 21st century.

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BRICS 2026

BRICS+ ENERGY & CLIMATE SECURITY

TURNING THE 2025–2030 ROADMAP INTO ACTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Energy and Climate Security are central to economic stability, strategic autonomy, and national resilience. For BRICS+ countries, these challenges are intensified due to various geopolitical turmoils in the global energy markets, climate-related risks, and growing dependency on limited supply chains for critical minerals and clean energy technologies.

The BRICS+ Energy Cooperation Roadmap 2025–2030 is a shared understanding that fragmented national responses are inadequate to tackle deep structural risks formed by the geopolitical frameworks of rich nations.

This report assesses how the Roadmap can be operationalised under India's upcoming BRICS+ presidency, with a focus on four priority areas - (i) critical minerals cooperation, (ii) climate and water-risk coordination, (iii) green energy initiatives, and (iv) climate-resilient infrastructure financing through the New Development Bank.

The analysis finds that while BRICS+ faces institutional, political, and capacity constraints, practical and cooperative diplomacy is a realistic way forward. Initiatives aligned with domestic priorities can deliver tangible outcomes. Such an approach can strengthen collective energy and climate security while positioning BRICS+ as a credible and solution-oriented Global South voice in global energy and climate governance.

BACKGROUND

In the current global context, energy and climate security have become inseparable. Climate change is directly affecting energy systems because of extreme weather conditions, floods, droughts, and water stress, while energy transition is reshaping the global supply value chains and geopolitical dependencies every day.

Global assessments show that demand for key clean-energy minerals could increase several-fold by 2030, while existing supply chains remain highly concentrated in the hands of rich nations and expose BRICS+ to geopolitical and market risks. At the same time, many BRICS+ countries are mineral and resource abundant but remain dependent on external processing, financing, and extraction technology.

The BRICS+ Energy Cooperation Roadmap 2025-2030 builds on earlier ministerial commitments and aims towards a collective attempt to address these challenges through cooperation and not competition. It focuses on energy transition pathways suited to national circumstances, resilient infrastructure, climate financing, technology cooperation, and sustainable development.

India's 2026 BRICS+ Presidency provides an opportunity to take a step forward and focus on substantial outcomes that reflect BRICS+ priorities, especially on energy transition pathways, climate-adaptation, and climate finance.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

A series of key developments has pushed energy and climate security as a crucial need on the BRICS+ agenda. The disruption of the global supply chain has exposed vulnerabilities in accessing critical minerals like lithium, cobalt, nickel, copper, and rare-earth minerals.

Despite widespread availability across the Global South, China continues to dominate the extraction and refining stages of these crucial minerals, creating strategic dependencies that are beyond simple resource ownership. Current global events highlight that supply chain disruptions are not due to geological scarcity but to the lack of extraction technology and export concentration.

Secondly, climate-related risks are no longer “future scenarios”; they are present realities. Climate impact assessments show that rising temperatures, extreme rainfall, and water stress are already affecting energy infrastructures and agricultural productivity in several BRICS++ economies.

The issue of water scarcity has emerged as a critical energy security issue affecting hydropower generation, thermal power cooling, and industrial output.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Thirdly, the global energy transition is showing uneven growth. While renewable energy deployment is growing rapidly, developing countries face the persistent bottlenecks of economic feasibility, grid integration, and accessibility of extraction and deployment technology.

Global energy outlooks highlight a widening gap between the investment required for low-carbon and resilient infrastructure and economic feasibility in developing countries, despite rising global investment.

Formally, BRICS+ has expanded in membership and ambition, with the New Development Bank gradually increasing its focus on sustainable infrastructure. And the global climate negotiations remain fragmented on the issues of climate finance, adaptation, and market-based mechanisms.

Against this backdrop, the BRICS+ Energy Cooperation Roadmap 2025-2030 rises as a hope to anchor cooperation in areas where collective action of nations can deliver tangible and sustainable outcomes.

ACTORS / PLAYERS

The primary stakeholders that are shaping BRICS+ energy and climate security are national governments, mainly ministries responsible for energy, environment, mining, finance, and water resources. Their domestic policy priorities, political circumstances, and constraints will eventually determine the scope and pace of cooperation within BRICS+.

The other key stakeholders are multilateral institutions, mainly the New Development Bank. The NDB's investment portfolio shows growing emphasis on sustainability, climate alignment, and concentration in transport, energy, and urban infrastructure, whilst avoiding high-risk and/or politically sensitive energy assets. This type of funding pattern shapes the kind of cooperation that is attainable and economically feasible for developing nations.

State-owned enterprises and private sector actors in energy, mining, and renewable energy deployment are also key players crucial for critical mineral extraction, processing, and power generation. Research institutions, think tanks, and track II platforms contribute through data-sharing, framing evidence-based policies, and trust-building.

A few external factors, including global commodity markets, the existing climate governance regime, and international standards for responsible sourcing of critical minerals, form a broader environment within which BRICS+ cooperation operates.

ACTORS / PLAYERS

From an analytical viewpoint, the BRICS+ Energy Cooperation Roadmap 2025-2030 is politically and theoretically significant but uneven in operational terms. Its strength lies in recognising the national diversity of all the BRICS+ members (core and expanded) and avoiding rigid commitments that could create a hurdle in cooperation.

On critical minerals, the Roadmap correctly identifies cooperation as a strategic priority but does not properly address the scale of the challenge. BRICS+ countries hold approximately 72% of critical minerals reserves, but the supply chain remains fragmented, and the processing capacity is unevenly distributed. The international framework responsible for mineral sourcing is expanding, but the implementation capacity remains inconsistent across BRICS+ economies.

Climate and water risks add to these vulnerabilities. Up to 50% of existing energy infrastructure in climate-vulnerable regions is exposed to high or very high climate risk. In several BRICS+ countries, water stress is already reducing hydropower output during dry years and increasing cooling costs for thermal power plants and data centres, directly linking climate adaptation to energy security. Climate and water risk coordination offers a comparatively low-cost but high-impact opportunity for cooperation within BRICS+.

Green energy initiatives like interoperable carbon markets and petroleum transition models face greater political and technical hurdles in terms of institutional capacity and trust. Shared risk assessments, data exchange, and early warning mechanisms aligned closely with domestic priorities can avoid stalemates in burden-sharing debates.

Lastly, financing constraints remain a major limitation as the cost of capital in developing countries is 2-3x higher than in advanced economies. The New Development Bank has increased its climate-aligned portfolio, but it remains modest when compared to the multi-hundred-billion-dollar annual investment needs of the BRICS+ economies.

SCENARIO MATRIX

Best-Case Scenario : India's presidency will push BRICS+ to operationalise elements of the roadmap through focused initiatives. Initiatives like establishing a BRICS+ Critical Minerals Working Group, a joint climate and water-risk assessments, and creating a pipeline of NDB-financed climate-resilient infrastructure projects.

Most-Likely Scenario : Progress will be selective and gradual. Cooperation advances in areas of data sharing, climate risk assessment, and financing, while sensitive areas like carbon markets and petroleum transition move slowly. However, the core of BRICS+ will be limited by institutional capacity

Worst-Case Scenario : The Roadmap is limited to a declaratory document, weakening BRICS+ credibility and continued dependency on external markets and governance framework. Also, a more politicised cooperation with lower institutional cooperation among the BRICS+ nations could happen.

IMPLICATIONS

Short-term implications can be predicted through various national-level reports published by BRICS+ economies separately. These reports predict an effective implementation of the Roadmap leading to improved supply chain resilience, better disaster preparedness, and mobilising finance for climate-resilient infrastructure. Recent climate-related disasters have shown what environmental stress can do to global supply chains, underlying the urgency of coordinated action.

In the long term, sustained cooperation would strengthen BRICS+' collective bargaining power in the global energy and climate governance framework. BRICS+ could shape norms that help the developing countries better and have an honest say in how international and transnational institutions translate power into action. However, in the case of failure of the roadmap could risk the dependency on foreign markets and undermine long-term energy and climate security.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

The global energy and climate framework is likely to remain fragmented but contested among nations under the name of "strategic autonomy of essential resources." In this environment, BRICS+' value lies in shaping complementary pathways that reflect Global South priorities and becoming the first economic forum that also highlights the harsh realities of energy and climate security if not governed properly.

Hence, the future outlook is anchored in finance, risk management, data sharing, technological collaboration, and issue-based cooperation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority 1- 2026 Deliverables

- **Establish a BRCS Working Group on Critical Minerals - mapping supply chains, coordinating exploration data, and identifying non Western financing and processing partnerships.**
- **Create a BRICS+ Climate Risk Coordination Mechanism - data-sharing of climate-risk metrics and scenario assumptions across BRICS+ economies.**
- **BRICS+ Data-Sharing Commitment Framework - focused on energy systems and mineral resources by leveraging comparative advantages of each BRICS+ member.**
- **Re-launch the BRICS+ Energy Research Cooperation Platform - Formulate clear thematic pillars: energy transition modelling, grid resilience, and emerging clean technologies.**
- **Announce a USD 10 Billion NDB Climate-Resilience Infrastructure Pipeline - Backed by preliminary project list and sectoral allocation.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority 2- 2027 Pilot Initiatives

- **Conduct Joint Climate and Water-Risk Assessments - Pilot in 2-3 high risk regions across BRICS+ using shared methodologies and interoperable datasets.**
- **Launch Sector-Specific Cooperation Pilots - Focus on renewable energy integration, bioenergy and sustainable fuels, hydrogen value chains, transport and mobility transitions, and power system resilience.**
- **Initiate Skill-Building and R&D Exchange Programs - Targeted fellowships and joint research calls linked directly to the Energy Cooperation Roadmap priorities.**

Priority 3- 2028-2030 Scale-Up

- **Mainstream Climate and Water-Risk Metrics within NDB Project Appraisal - to make resilience a financial condition, allow grants in case of water- related disasters.**
- **Expand NDB Climate Pipeline into a Rolling Investment Facility - to include private co-financing mechanisms and sectoral cooperation.**
- **Institutionalise Cross-Cutting Cooperation - among R&D, skill building, innovation, and technology cooperation**
- **Review of the Energy Cooperation Roadmap - to ensure that the roadmap remains adaptive to technological and geopolitical shifts for future.**

CONCLUSION

The BRICS+ Energy Cooperation Roadmap 2025-2030 provides a timely yet flexible framework for addressing energy and climate security challenges. While constraints related to capacity, trust, and finance remain, India's presidency offers an opportunity to move from intent to implementation.

Through targeted cooperation, financing, and coordinated diplomacy, BRICS+ can strengthen collective resilience and contribute constructively to global energy and climate governance in an increasingly uncertain world.

In doing so, the Roadmap can help advance the three core pillars of energy security for BRICS+ countries, affordability, accessibility, and availability of resources, while aligning energy transition objectives with developmental priorities.

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BRICS 2026

THE HUMAN-CENTRIC RESET

HOW INDIA'S 2026 PRESIDENCY LINKS DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE WITH INCLUSIVE GLOBAL SOUTH COOPERATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

India has signalled that its 2026 BRICS presidency will be more than a routine rotational exercise. Framed around the theme "Building Resilience and Innovation for Cooperation and Sustainability", New Delhi intends to recast BRICS as a platform that is visibly people-centric, development-oriented, and digitally enabled.

At the heart of this approach lies India's effort to export a governance philosophy that blends humanity-first diplomacy with Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)—including Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker, and allied platforms—as scalable tools for inclusion, service delivery, and state capacity-building across the Global South.

The report follows the development of BRICS into a wider BRICS+ format, analyses how India has been strategic in its utilisation of digital and people-to-people tools, and provides possible scenarios on how BRICS can be reconstituted to have a new form by 2026 and beyond. It also evaluates strategic consequences to member states, Global South partners, and multilateral institutions in an order that is increasingly multipolar.

BACKGROUND

BRICS originally was an informal alliance of big emerging markets and wanted to have a greater say in the world economic system led by the West. Over time, it has become a more explicitly political and geoeconomic platform, one that challenges the legitimacy, representativeness, and effectiveness of current world governance institutions.

The BRICS became substantially more weighty in aggregate economic and demographic terms due to the expansion waves of 2023-24, yet they enhanced internal variety. The polarities in the political system, pattern of development, philosophies of regulation, and geopolitical orientations have intensified the dispute of governance, setting the agenda and unity.

As the case of India in its 2023 G20 presidency suggests, a precedent was exposed. From exaggerating the Voice of the Global South, driving inclusive growth discourses, and reinventing DPI as a low-cost growth promoter, New Delhi showed the power of norm-setting coupled with actual provision. It seems that the BRICS 2026 presidency is destined to put in place this template, but this time around for a more heterogeneous and politically complex grouping.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

At the 2025 BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced India's intention to give a "new form" to BRICS during its 2026 presidency. The proposed redefinition, "Building Resilience and Innovation for Cooperation and Sustainability", explicitly embeds people-centric development and social resilience into the bloc's identity.

Recent BRICS declarations (2024–25) reflect this shift, explicitly emphasising:

- People-to-people interactions are a basis of understanding each other, social growth, and sustained cohesion.
- Digital public infrastructure, cybersecurity, and interoperable digital economies are important facilitators of inclusive growth and SDG acceleration.
- The growing presence of digital platforms and digital payments in the economic profiles of member states is an indicator of convergence between the development policy and the digital transformation.
- Combining these trends, it can be suggested that there has been an effort to take BRICS out of declaratory politics and into more visible outcomes for the citizens.

ACTORS

India : Being an agenda-setter in 2026, India is projecting itself as a supporter of humanity-first diplomacy and development cooperation by DPI. It will struggle to strike the right balance between openness and interoperability with valid interests in the field of data protection, cyber resilience, and digital sovereignty – not only within the country, but also with partners.

Other BRICS Members (New Entrants)

The members of BRICS introduce fiercely conflicting digital governance models. Some stress robust state control and localisation of data, and others embrace open ecosystems and market-based innovation. These variations introduce complementarities and friction, especially in the process of developing common standards or interoperable systems.

The importance of WANA on the BRICS 2026 Agenda of India : The vision of BRICS presented by India, based on people and DPI, coincides with WANA priorities especially well:

Energy-Digital Nexus

- **The members of WANA BRICS are mostly involved in the export of energy and need to diversify their economies.**
- **Infrastructure: Digital infrastructure offers a platform to expand the non-oil sector (fintech, e-governance, logistics technology)**

- Enhance subsidy target, migrant services, and public delivery.
- Build post-hydrocarbon state capacity without replicating Western welfare-state models
- India's DPI experience, especially in targeted transfers, payments, and digital identity, is highly relevant to these transitions.

Being a financial architect and a financial payer

- The exposure to sanctions (Iran) and the economies (Egypt) that are heavy in remittances and global financial centres (UAE, Saudi Arabia) meet on one point:
- cutting down friction and reliance on cross-border payments.
- Local currency settlement experiments, BRICS digital payment sandboxes, and interoperable payment rails are all very appealing to WANA, which makes the region an excellent place to test BRICS financial innovation.

People-to-People Mobility

- WANA accommodates tens of millions of migrants from the Global South, especially South Asian and African migrants. The so-called people-centric diplomacy in BRICS is all about skills recognition, digital identity portability, and social security coordination that can directly enhance the daily life of this region.

- This adds a human security dimension to what is often treated purely as energy or geopolitics.

Global South Partners and Multilateral Institutions

Numerous nations across the continents of Africa, Latin America, and Asia are progressively viewing BRICS as a provider of not only development finance but also digital infrastructure and governance models. On the other hand, the UN and G20 have taken DPI and digital compacts as transversal priorities, which is creating a scenario of overlap and competition among the platforms.

ASSESSMENT

- India's BRICS 2026 strategy reflects the consolidation of a distinct foreign policy toolkit built around three reinforcing levers.
- Narrative power, framing cooperation around humanity-first values and Global South solidarity.
- Exportable digital solutions — positioning DPI as a global public good rather than a proprietary technology stack.
- Middle powers are building a coalition with each other through flexible associations instead of inflexible blocs.
- This would bring India nearer to being a rule-shaper and not a rule-taker in international discourses on digital governance. Its advantage is that it is tangible: DPI brings practical gains, such as payments, identity, and access to services, which makes diplomacy something quantifiable on the citizen level.
- The weaknesses are also very evident. Capacity divergences among the BRICS members, cyber and data security risks and geopolitical cleavages (sanctions and conflict spillover) may divide digital structures or reduce the speed of agreement on shared standards.

SCENARIO MATRIX

Best Case

BRICS 2026 provides a consistent, people-centric digital collaboration roadmap, backed by pilot projects in digital payments, identity and service provision among willing members.
Potential: BRICS will become a valid centre of diverse digital growth and standardisation.

WANA BRICS members become anchor markets for BRICS digital payments, migrant services, and DPI pilots, lending credibility and scale to India's 2026 agenda.

Risk: Competing blocs respond with parallel standards, fragmenting global digital governance.

Most Likely

Incremental progress dominates. Declarations are followed by working groups, testbeds, and training programmes, but implementation remains uneven.
Selective adoption—payments, fintech, and digital identity cooperation progress, while deeper data governance remains fragmented.

Opportunity: BRICS forms soft infrastructure (norms, networks, trust), which can be extended in the future.

Risk: There is a gap between verbal and nonverbal communication, and this is what creates the scepticism of the BRICS' transformative power.

Worst Case

Geopolitical divisions, sanctions, stresses or internal differences paralyse the agenda, leaving BRICS+ too large and too disorganised.

The cooperation is constrained by regional conflicts, intensification of sanctions, or polarisation of geopolitics, which push WANA BRICS states into bilateral instead of bloc-based digital conditions.

Opportunity: Smaller coalitions within BRICS advance niche digital and people-centric projects.

Risk: Loss of normative credibility as a development-centric coalition.

IMPLICATIONS

Tactical (2026–2030) : WANA states are likely to emerge as early adopters of BRICS digital finance pilots and interoperability experiments.

India's technical missions and DPI capacity-building could find faster uptake in WANA than in some other BRICS regions due to strong state capacity and investment capital (especially in the Gulf).

Strategic (Longer Term) : A digitally enabled BRICS presence in WANA could gradually reshape:

- Global energy pricing conversations
- Alternative development finance narratives
- Digital standards across Afro-Eurasian trade corridors

This would position BRICS not only as a Global South platform, but as a connector between Asia, Africa, and Europe—with WANA as its geopolitical hinge.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For India

- Target 2-3 flagship, deliverable initiatives (e.g., a BRICS DPI Fellowship, Digital Payments Sandbox or People-to-People Mobility Fund).
- Make cooperation institutional by establishing a BRICS Centre of Excellence on DPI, which will be co-hosted by another member to strengthen shared ownership.
- India should use WANA BRICS members as a pilot for its people-centred and digital agenda. Collaborate with one of the Gulf countries (UAE or Saudi Arabia) and one non-Gulf partner (Egypt or Iran) to implement practical programmes in digital payments, remittances, and migrant services, where the positive effect on the population is readily apparent.

Current DPI Cooperation in WANA

- Any proposal to have the BRICS Centre of Excellence on Digital Public Infrastructure co-hosted with a WANA member, with the kind of leverage of capital, connectivity and scale, signals collective ownership and the positioning of BRICS as indeed an Afro-Eurasian space.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make domestic digital and social programmes co-branded with BRICS initiatives to generate political buy-in and co-branding visibility.
- Agree on non-dividing interoperable standards through the BRICS forums without further splitting the state.

For Global South Partners

- Participate actively in DPI pilots, which are based on local legal, technical and societal environments.
- Partnership Multiply between BRICS, G7, and multilateral institutions in order not to rely on one digital architecture.
- In the case of Multilateral Institutions and Think Tanks
- Systematically compare emerging DPI models to identify best practices and regulatory gaps.
- Establish joint research and foresight platforms to monitor social impacts, inclusion outcomes, and resilience.

CONCLUSION

India's BRICS 2026 presidency has the potential to transform a largely state-centric forum into a more citizen-visible coalition, where diplomacy is measured not only in communiqués but in lived outcomes. If even a subset of proposed digital and people-to-people initiatives reaches scale, BRICS could emerge as a laboratory for inclusive digital multipolarity—and India as one of its most constructive architects.

In the longer arc, the normalisation of DPI as a global public good—already visible in G20 and UN processes—may become one of BRICS' most enduring contributions. Should that trajectory hold, India's early-mover advantage could translate into sustained convening power and technical influence well beyond 2026.

WANA countries also add to BRICS, making it more of an Afro-Eurasian strategy rather than an emerging-market alliance. For the 2026 presidency in India, WANA is no side-show – it is a multiplier. Should India be capable of linking people-focused diplomacy and digital public infrastructure with the energy, financial and mobility realities of WANA and BRICS, it may become a cross-regional system shaper and not a loose geopolitical tag. In that result, WANA will not only be a component of BRICS but also its core in its future applicability.

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THE TRILATERAL ADVANTAGE

INDIA'S BHARAT AFRICA SETU & THE UAE'S STRATEGIC ROLE IN THE BRICS 2026 AGENDA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

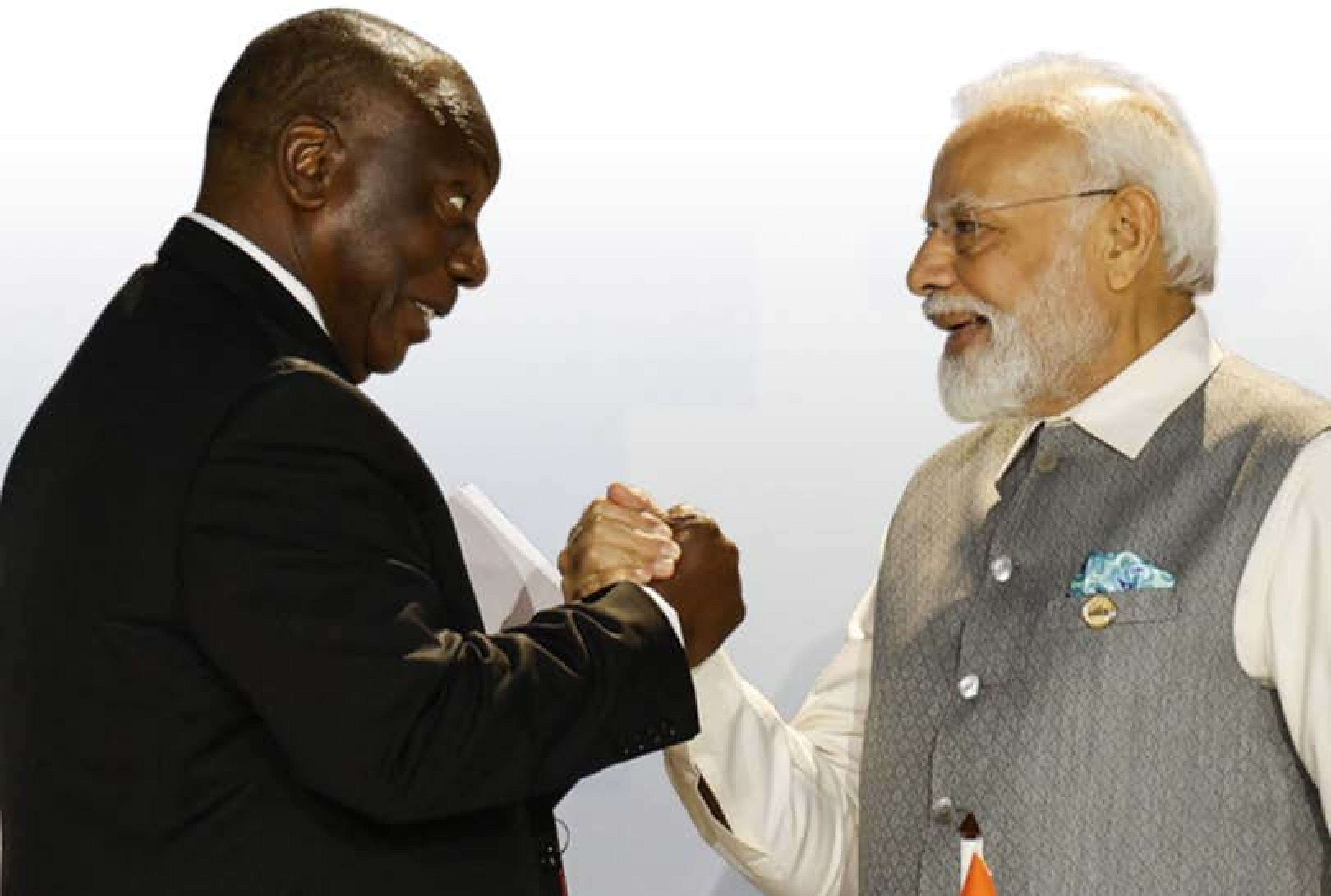
India is set to host the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi after officially assuming the presidency on January 1, 2026. During its presidency, India intends to redefine BRICS with a renewed focus on "Building Resilience and Innovation for Cooperation and Sustainability." The country has prioritized a humanity-first approach, aiming to strengthen bilateral relationships and enhance international cooperation to tackle shared challenges, such as AI governance.

"South-South cooperation" refers to the collaborative efforts among developing countries in the Global South, aimed at rebalancing global economic structures. This is achieved through increased trade, investment, technology exchange, and the development of partnerships. The Global South is a key strategic pillar of the BRICS agenda for 2026.

The UAE's membership in BRICS demonstrates its commitment to a multi-aligned foreign policy and its desire to strengthen ties with emerging economies. The UAE is actively exploring opportunities for trade, investment, infrastructure development, strategic connectivity, and climate cooperation within the BRICS framework.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bharat Africa Setu is closely aligned with the BRICS 2026 agenda, which aims to promote South-South cooperation, enhance trade connectivity, and integrate the Global South. This initiative strengthens trade links between India, Africa, and the United Arab Emirates, positioning itself as a connectivity hub for the Global South. Bharat Africa Setu serves as an operational enabler, emphasizing the goals of BRICS 2026 in areas such as connectivity, development finance, digital trade, and cooperation focused on Africa.



BACKGROUND

- BRICS is traditionally centered around three main pillars: politics and security; economy and finance; and people-to-people (P2P) interactions, which involve civil society. Representing about 45% of the global population, BRICS accounts for 35% of the world's total economic output (GDP), establishing itself as a significant force on the global stage.

- SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION has emerged as a defining theme in the era of multipolarity. The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) defines it as "a common endeavor of peoples and countries of the South, born out of shared experiences and sympathies, based on common objectives and solidarity, and guided, among other principles, by respect for national sovereignty and ownership, free from any conditionalities." This cooperation began as a united voice against colonialism, imperialism, and oppression and has evolved into a major platform for Global South countries to exchange technology, resources, and best practices, thereby assisting each other in socio-economic development and growth.

BACKGROUND

- BRICS has emerged as the largest platform for enhancing horizontal cooperation by challenging the inequities created by North-led initiatives, particularly in commercial and financial sectors. The group has established its own financial institutions and currency swap arrangements, such as the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingency Reserve Arrangement (CRA), primarily to reduce reliance on Western-led international financial institutions (IFIs).

- The 16th BRICS Summit was a landmark event in the evolution of the grouping. The theme, "Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security," marked the first summit with the expanded membership, featuring Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates as full members following their accession at the 15th summit.

- In April 2025, DP World of the UAE and the Indian Government announced the launch of the 'Bharat Africa Setu,' a transformative trade initiative designed to double India-Africa trade and strengthen cooperation between the two regions. The Bharat Africa Setu is a strategic trade ecosystem involving India, Africa, and the UAE, aimed at boosting South-South cooperation and supporting BRICS' objectives for reformed global governance and increased intra-bloc trade.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- Under India's BRICS presidency in 2026, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is playing a strategic role in promoting South-South cooperation, particularly through initiatives like the Bharat Africa Setu. This platform also offers an opportunity to announce and institutionalise the IAU trilateral cooperation.

- DP World, a logistics company based in the UAE, launched the Bharat Africa Setu to provide Indian businesses with access to robust warehousing, trade finance, and distribution networks. This initiative aims to connect India to Africa by enhancing sea and air connectivity among ports, economic zones, and logistics parks, enabling Indian exporters to reach 53 African countries.

- The initiative seeks to create a comprehensive commerce ecosystem by integrating value-added services with efficient physical infrastructure. It allows Indian manufacturers to showcase new product concepts, access trade support services easily, reduce cash flow constraints, and navigate regulatory processes, licensing requirements, and government approvals more effectively.

- The logistics footprint across Africa includes 10 ports and terminals, 3 economic zones, and 203 warehouses that cover over 1.5 million square meters. It also provides extensive expertise in freight operations, logistics management, and market access capabilities.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- The launch of Bharat Africa Setu coincides with the start of construction on Bharat Mart, a 2.7 million-square-foot B2B and B2C marketplace in Dubai. Designed to enhance trade between India and global markets, Bharat Mart will serve as a one-stop export platform for Indian exporters. Phase one, comprising 1.3 million square feet, is scheduled to open by the end of 2026 in the Jebel Ali Free Zone (Jafza). This phase will feature 1,500 showrooms and over 700,000 square feet allocated for warehousing, light industrial units, office space, and meeting facilities, including dedicated areas for women-led businesses from India.

- By integrating these services, DP World offers Indian businesses smart and resilient supply chain solutions, helping to insulate trade from global disruptions and enabling them to thrive in the African market.

- The establishment of the IAU trilateral framework is shifting cooperation toward an innovation-led development model. The focus of this trilateral cooperation should be on strengthening economic collaboration through entrepreneurship and fostering an innovation ecosystem. This involves building partnerships among businesses, startups, entrepreneurs, researchers, and academics.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- The pillars of IAU trilateral cooperation include Industrial and Technological Cooperation, Investment and Financing Collaboration, and Research, Vocational, and Academic Partnerships.

- Additionally, the IAU benefits from its geographical proximity; the Indian Ocean serves as a natural connector among the three regions, making both physical and digital connectivity feasible and cost-effective.

ACTORS

1. Government of India : India plays a crucial role in enhancing South-South Cooperation through initiatives like the Bharat Africa Setu and the institutionalisation of the IAU Trilateral. The Bharat Africa Setu aims to expand trade connectivity, support micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and start-ups, and deepen economic engagement with Africa. The IAU Trilateral will leverage platforms such as GIFT City, UPI/RuPay, and innovation ecosystems to promote inclusive growth and development-led cooperation.

2. United Arab Emirates (UAE) : The UAE acts as a strategic facilitator and connector within BRICS by linking Asia, Africa, and the Middle East through its advanced logistics, financial, and infrastructure capabilities. Its membership in BRICS enables a multi-aligned foreign policy and a commitment to strengthening ties with emerging economies.

3. DP World : DP World is a key operational player in the Bharat Africa Setu initiative. It facilitates trade through its ports, terminals, economic zones, warehouses, and digital logistics solutions. Beyond infrastructure, DP World also contributes to trade finance facilitation, market access, regulatory support, and supply-chain resilience, making it essential for the expansion of India-Africa trade, thanks to its extensive logistics footprint across Africa and global supply-chain expertise.

ACTORS

4. African Partner Countries : African nations are core stakeholders and beneficiaries of both the Bharat Africa Setu and the proposed IAU trilateral. Their participation fosters industrial development, job creation, technology transfer, and market integration. African governments, port authorities, trade agencies, and local enterprises play critical roles in ensuring last-mile connectivity, regulatory alignment, and the localization of value chains across various sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, energy, and services.

5. BRICS Institutions

The New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) provide the financial and institutional backbone for South-South cooperation. They support infrastructure financing, SME development, and sustainable projects aligned with the Bharat Africa Setu and broader Global South priorities under India's BRICS presidency.

6. Academic and Research Institutions

Universities, vocational institutes, and research centers in India, Africa, and the UAE contribute to skills development, innovation, and long-term capacity building. Their involvement supports workforce readiness, applied research, and people-to-people engagement, reinforcing the soft power dimension of South-South cooperation.

ASSESSMENT

BRICS is transitioning from discussion to action, as demonstrated by the Bharat Africa Setu initiative. This initiative focuses on enhancing South-South Cooperation through improved trade, logistics, digital payments, and connectivity between India, Africa, and the UAE. It promotes practical economic cooperation that benefits the Global South.

The Bharat Africa Setu initiative helps countries in the Global South reduce their over-dependence on traditional trade routes and financial systems from the Global North by creating new trade corridors and payment options. As a result, BRICS members gain more choices and greater economic stability while remaining engaged in the global economy.

This initiative is crucial for the long-term strengthening of BRICS. As the organization expands, it may become more challenging to engage all members; however, Bharat Africa Setu provides a shared economic goal for them. India, the UAE, and African countries contribute based on their strengths: India serves as a manufacturing and technology hub, the UAE acts as a logistics and finance center, and African nations are viewed as growing markets and production partners. This collaboration makes BRICS more effective and balanced.

ASSESSMENT

From the perspective of South-South Cooperation, the Bharat Africa Setu initiative represents a modern approach that supports businesses, small enterprises, start-ups, skill development, and innovation. By fostering these aspects, it helps create jobs, develop local industries, and encourage long-term growth in developing countries.

Overall, Bharat Africa Setu champions an active BRICS. If this model is supported by BRICS institutions, it could serve as a template for future cooperation across the Global South.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Government of India

India should formally position the Bharat Africa Setu within the BRICS cooperation framework. Additionally, it should promote the IAU trilateral as a long-term economic partnership that enhances South-South cooperation and serves as a gateway to African nations.

2) United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The UAE should continue to act as a connector between India and Africa through the Bharat Africa Setu. It should also encourage Emirati financial institutions and sovereign funds to support joint India-Africa projects. Furthermore, the UAE can help align private sector initiatives with BRICS development goals and promote Dubai as a neutral trade and innovation hub for the Global South.

3) BRICS Institutions

The New Development Bank (NDB) and Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) should prioritise financing projects linked to Bharat Africa Setu and establish dedicated funding windows for India-Africa-UAE cooperation to strengthen project implementation. BRICS institutions should also support the integration of payment systems and provide risk-mitigation tools to encourage private sector participation.

CONCLUSION

BRICS has evolved from merely discussing global challenges into a practical platform focused on solutions that promote trade, job creation, and economic growth. The Bharat Africa Setu initiative represents a positive shift in how BRICS approaches cooperation among developing countries. This initiative leverages India's production strength, the UAE's logistics and financial expertise, and Africa's expanding market to create a balanced and mutually beneficial partnership.

Furthermore, it enhances South-South Cooperation and reduces dependence on the Global North, while still maintaining openness and connectivity to the global economy. The initiative also supports small businesses, startups, innovation, and skills development, which are essential for long-term and inclusive growth.

As India prepares to lead BRICS in 2026, this model could serve as a foundation for future cooperation within the bloc if it is supported by BRICS institutions and member countries. In doing so, it reinforces BRICS's role as a strong platform for cooperation, resilience, and shared prosperity across the Global South.

SUPPORTING

INDIA'S BRICS 2026

PRESIDENCY

JOIN TRACK II

BRICS 2026

THE AI GOVERNANCE PLAYBOOK

THE BRICS ALGORITHM FOR DEVELOPMENT-CENTRIC AI GOVERNANCE ORDER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As artificial intelligence (AI) reshapes global power, economic competitiveness, and governance norms, BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and newly inducted members, faces a pivotal moment. By 2026, AI will function not merely as a technological tool but as a determinant of sovereignty, development trajectories, and geopolitical influence. This report examines how BRICS is positioning itself to shape AI governance and technology standards amid growing fragmentation between Western-led regulatory frameworks and state- or development-centric models.

The analysis traces the evolution of AI governance within BRICS, assesses key developments, stakeholders, and scenarios for cooperation or divergence, and evaluates the tactical and strategic implications for global governance and emerging technology ecosystems. It concludes with targeted recommendations and an optimistic assessment of BRICS potential role as a bridge between innovation, inclusivity, and Global South priorities. Notably, BRICS AI governance declaration reflects a coordinated Global South position that diverges in emphasis from Western and Freedom Online Coalition (FOC) approaches.

BACKGROUND

BRICS, originally established as an economic coalition to amplify the voice of emerging economies, has progressively expanded its agenda to include digital governance, technology cooperation, and artificial intelligence. The rapid acceleration of AI capabilities since the early 2020s, particularly in generative models, automation, and data-driven governance has elevated AI from a sectoral concern to a strategic issue linked to sovereignty, development, and global influence.

Global AI governance has largely been shaped by Western-led initiatives such as the EU AI Act and G7 processes, which emphasize risk mitigation, ethics, and private-sector innovation. However, many BRICS countries argue that these frameworks insufficiently reflect the developmental priorities, institutional capacities, and socio-economic realities of the Global South. Concerns around regulatory asymmetry, data dependency, and technological exclusion have intensified.

Against this backdrop, BRICS has increasingly framed AI governance through the lenses of developmental sovereignty, digital inclusion, and multilateral reform. By 2025–26, AI governance emerged as a core BRICS priority, not only to strengthen domestic capabilities but also to influence global norm-setting in ways that accommodate diverse development pathways and reduce structural inequalities in the global digital order.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

BRICS intensified focus on AI governance has been triggered by three converging developments. First, the rapid expansion of generative AI exposed deep asymmetries in access to compute infrastructure, data resources, and foundational models. Second, growing export controls, technology sanctions, and supply-chain restrictions reinforced concerns around technological dependence and strategic vulnerability, particularly for China and Russia. Third, the acceleration of Western-led AI governance initiatives such as the EU AI Act and G7 Hiroshima AI Process, raised apprehensions about regulatory exclusion and norm-setting without adequate Global South representation.

In response, BRICS elevated AI governance across ministerial, technical, and summit-level discussions. The 2025 Rio BRICS Summit marked a turning point, explicitly framing AI as a tool for inclusive development, social welfare, and economic transformation, while advocating a UN-centered multilateral approach to global AI governance. Leaders emphasized sovereignty, interoperability, and equitable access rather than uniform regulation.

Institutionally, BRICS established a dedicated AI Research Group, advanced dialogue on aligning national AI strategies, and explored cooperation on digital public infrastructure, skills development, and open-source innovation. While no unified regulatory framework has emerged, these developments signal a shift from exploratory dialogue toward structured coordination grounded in development-centric governance principles.

ACTORS

The primary actors include BRICS national governments, which set policy direction and negotiate multilateral positions. Ministries of technology, commerce, defense, and external affairs play critical roles in aligning AI strategy with national interests.

- National AI research groups and study committees such as the recently announced BRICS AI research group are emerging as technical bodies to observe and analyze AI development and innovation across member states.
- State-owned and private technology firms are key stakeholders, particularly in China and India, where AI innovation ecosystems are expanding rapidly. These firms influence standards, talent flows, and infrastructure investment.
- Academic institutions and research labs provide technical expertise and legitimacy to policy discussions, while multilateral bodies such as the New Development Bank (NDB) and BRICS Business Council act as facilitators for funding and private-sector engagement.

Externally, Western governments, multinational technology companies, and global standard-setting organizations (ISO, ITU, OECD) remain influential, even if indirectly, by shaping the broader regulatory environment within which BRICS must operate. Additionally, global civil society and digital rights organizations, which are prominent in declarations such as the FOC but less central in BRICS governance, continue to advocate for multistakeholder participation and human-rights-aligned AI policies, highlighting a tension in governance approaches._

ASSESSMENT

BRICS approach to AI governance reflects a balance between ambition and constraint. Its ambition lies in challenging Western-centric AI norms by advancing development-oriented, state-capacity-driven governance models. Constraints emerge from internal diversity, as political systems, economic structures, and strategic priorities vary significantly across members.

China's advanced AI capabilities contrast with other members' continued dependence on imported hardware, cloud infrastructure, and foundational models, limiting the scope for deep collective action. Geopolitical frictions and differing relationships with Western economies further constrain integration.

Comparative analysis of BRICS and FOC declarations highlights a normative divide in global AI governance: BRICS emphasizes digital sovereignty and state-led frameworks, while FOC prioritizes civil society participation and rights-based approaches.

Despite these differences, full convergence is not required for influence. Even limited coordination on principles, interoperability, and capacity-building can meaningfully diversify global AI governance and reduce normative concentration.

SCENARIO MATRIX

- Best Case Scenario : BRICS successfully establishes a flexible AI governance framework focused on shared principles rather than rigid regulation. Members collaborate on open-source models, shared compute infrastructure, and talent development. This framework gains recognition among Global South countries, positioning BRICS as a norm entrepreneur and balancing Western influence in global AI governance.

- Most Likely Scenario : Incremental progress continues, with cooperation limited to specific areas such as digital public infrastructure, skills development, and research exchange. National approaches align on broad principles, even if no binding standards emerge. BRICS provides a platform for shared positions in global forums but stops short of a unified legal framework.

- Worst Case Scenario : Geopolitical tensions, sanctions, and internal divergences derail cooperation. AI governance becomes fragmented along national lines, and BRICS fails to present a coherent alternative to Western frameworks. Members remain technology consumers rather than shapers of global norms.

IMPLICATIONS

- Tactical Implications: In the short term, BRICS coordination could lower barriers to AI adoption in developing economies by promoting affordable models, shared datasets, and localized applications. The emerging BRICS AI research group could become a key platform for cross-national monitoring and innovation exchange.

- Strategic Implications: Over the long term, a BRICS-led AI governance approach could accelerate the multipolarization of technology governance. It may reduce dependence on Western platforms, influence global standards, and redefine how AI ethics and risk are framed, shifting from individual-centric to development-centric paradigms.

However, divergence with frameworks that prioritize multistakeholderism and civil-society involvement may create friction in broader international negotiations over AI norms.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

- Looking ahead to 2026 and beyond, BRICS is likely to remain a significant, though not dominant, force in AI governance. Its strength will lie in coalition-building with other emerging economies rather than direct competition with advanced AI powers. As AI becomes embedded in governance, healthcare, finance, and defense, the demand for inclusive and adaptable regulatory models will grow creating space for BRICS-led initiatives.

- The success of this effort will depend on sustained political commitment, investment in shared infrastructure, and the ability to translate high-level declarations into operational mechanisms. The presence of national AI study groups and emerging research networks suggests a maturing institutional base for long-term cooperation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **For BRICS Governments: BRICS can institutionalize the existing BRICS AI Research Group as a permanent coordination platform, comparable to the OECD AI Policy Observatory, to align principles and facilitate the exchange of best practices. Collective advancement of UN-anchored AI governance through UNESCO and ITU reflects commitments articulated at the 2025 Rio Summit. AI governance can be embedded within national development and industrial strategies, drawing on India's Digital Public Infrastructure, China's pilot-based AI regulatory approach, and Brazil's public-sector AI initiatives.**

- **For Industry: Technology firms can engage with governments through AI regulatory sandboxes focused on public-interest applications in healthcare, agriculture, and education, building on existing practices in India, Brazil, and China. Investment in open-source and multilingual AI models—as demonstrated by India's Bhashini initiative and China's open-source large language model programs—offers a pathway to reducing reliance on proprietary Western systems.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **For Multilateral Institutions: The New Development Bank represents a key vehicle for financing AI-ready digital infrastructure, skills development, and public-sector AI deployment, extending its current portfolio in digital connectivity and smart infrastructure. BRICS-led platforms can also facilitate AI capacity-building across the Global South, drawing on cooperative knowledge-sharing models such as the Digital Public Goods Alliance.**

- **For Academia and Civil Society: Academic institutions and civil society organizations play a role in advancing evidence-based AI governance through the development of inclusion metrics linked to employment outcomes, service delivery, and inequality reduction. This approach aligns with UNDP frameworks on AI and human development and BRICS labor minister deliberations on workforce transitions and reskilling in the context of automation.**

CONCLUSION

AI governance represents both a challenge and an opportunity for BRICS. While internal diversity and external pressures limit the scope of deep integration, the grouping is uniquely positioned to inject balance, inclusivity, and development-centric thinking into global AI debates. By 2026, BRICS may not define the rules alone—but it can ensure that the future of AI governance is not written by a few, for a few. With the establishment of collaborative mechanisms like an AI research group and growing convergence on shared principles, BRICS can help shape an AI-driven future that is more equitable, multipolar, and ultimately optimistic.

SUPPORTING

INDIA'S BRICS 2026

PRESIDENCY

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BRICS 2026

THE NEW GEOMETRY OF POWER

BRICS+ & THE QUIET REORDERING OF GLOBAL POWER, FINANCE, & STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The global distribution of power has undergone significant change following the strategic expansion of BRICS+ throughout 2024 and 2025. This marks a fundamental reconfiguration of the global order, as the bloc has evolved from an economic grouping into a structured geopolitical entity representing the global majority.

By integrating Southeast Asia's anchor Indonesia, West Asia's energy pillars - the UAE and Iran and African regional powers Egypt and Ethiopia, BRICS+ now accounts for approximately 37% of global GDP, oversees about 44% of global crude oil production, and represents over 45% of the world's population. This shift has disrupted traditional power patterns, creating a multicentric system in which the Global South possesses the institutional capacity to challenge Western-led financial and trade norms.

As India assumes the presidency in 2026, with an agenda centered on Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation, and Sustainability, the bloc is expected to lean toward a "humanity-first" approach, aiming to leverage Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). While internal rivalries persist, the expansion represents a quiet but consequential restructuring—one that institutionalizes strategic autonomy through local currency trade and parallel development financing.

BACKGROUND

The transformation from BRICS to BRICS+ is not merely a numerical expansion; it reflects a long-term structural shift in global power distribution.

Despite contributing more than half of global economic growth, Global South countries have remained underrepresented in global decision-making. The establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) in 2014 provided an institutional alternative to existing financial structures.

Since the 2023 Johannesburg Declaration, the bloc has advanced multiple reforms. The 2024 Kazan Summit and the 2025 Rio de Janeiro Summit formalized a tiered membership structure, admitting new full members alongside a Partner Country framework.

As the bloc prepares for India's 2026 presidency, the focus is shifting from rapid expansion to consolidating the partner country model and strengthening the NDB as a financing institution independent of Western conditionalities.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- Indonesia has joined as a full member, significantly enhancing the bloc's influence over critical Indo-Pacific trade routes.

- A two-tier Partner Country Model has been formalized, enabling countries such as Vietnam, Nigeria, and Malaysia to participate in high-level coordination.

- BRICS Cross-Border Payment Initiative—designed to reduce reliance on dollar-based networks—has received formal endorsement.

- The integration of Iran and the UAE has given BRICS+ leverage over roughly 40% of global oil production, enabling a growing share of energy trade to settle in local currencies.

- Under the theme "Strengthening Global South Cooperation for More Inclusive and Sustainable Growth", Brazil's presidency prioritized AI governance and climate finance.

- India officially assumed the chair on January 1, 2026, adopting the vision of "Humanity First" and rebranding the bloc's priorities as R.I.C.S.—Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation, Sustainability.

ACTORS

India: Leading the 2026 presidency and assuming a central role in the Global South, while sustaining multi-alignment and a humanity-first approach.

China: The institutional leader of the South, functioning as the primary financier and key advocate of rapid expansion.

Russia: A sovereign security pivot breaking diplomatic isolation and spearheading BRICS Pay and cross-border payment systems.

UAE & Iran: The bloc's "Energy Core," offering substantial commodity leverage and stabilizing energy markets.

Indonesia: The newest Indo-Pacific anchor, providing maritime connectivity and leadership within ASEAN.

ASSESSMENT

Power dynamics are steadily shifting from a traditional Western-centric order toward a more distributed Global South-led structure. At its core, the alliance is bound by a shared commitment to sovereign equality and reforms in global governance—addressing long-standing institutional disparities within platforms such as the IMF and the World Bank.

China provides the economic engine and seeks to institutionalize "revisionist structures", attempting to reshape the global system to reflect emerging power realities. Russia anchors the bloc's security dimension and champions a sanction-resistant financial system. New energy heavyweights such as the UAE and Iran give the group control over 44% of global crude production—reshaping global energy geopolitics. Meanwhile, Indonesia, Egypt, and Ethiopia extend the bloc's reach into the Indo-Pacific and the Suez–Red Sea maritime corridor.

The stability of this coalition depends on its two-tier structure—balancing full members with partner countries. Partner nations benefit from preferential NDB financing and access to BRICS Pay, creating a gradual, structured membership pathway that aligns new entrants with the bloc's core interests. These alternatives provide credible exit routes from Western financial dominance, enabling countries to pursue national priorities without fear of external economic pressure.

ASSESSMENT

Within this complex architecture, India emerges as a crucial balancing force. By maintaining deep ties with the West while leading BRICS in 2026, India prevents the bloc from becoming overtly anti-Western or China-centric. Its R.I.C.S. agenda prioritizes a humanity-first model, positioning Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) as a global public good—bridging technological and financial inclusion. India's leadership helps ensure BRICS+ remains a pragmatic development platform rather than an ideological coalition.

SCENARIO MATRIX

Best Case Scenario : India successfully institutionalizes the R.I.C.S. agenda. Digital Public Infrastructure and blockchain-based payment systems achieve widespread adoption among core and partner countries. The Global South attains genuine financial sovereignty. BRICS+ becomes a stable, non-Western alternative where trade settles in local currencies, reducing dependence on the U.S. dollar without triggering global instability.

Most Likely Scenario : The NDB and local currency trade expand steadily. However, border disputes and regional tensions prevent unified political alignment. BRICS+ emerges as an efficient trade hub but fails to develop a single political voice. Members gain economic benefits while retaining divergent security partnerships.

Worst Case Scenario : Internal rivalries and unclear membership criteria generate policy inconsistency. Concerns over domestic currency stability undermine adoption of CrossPay, the decentralized digital payments platform under development. BRICS+ retains demographic and energy strength but lacks the structural coherence to challenge the dollar or set global standards, enabling Western institutions to regain influence.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Autonomy : By 2026, the NDB aims for 30% of its financing to be in local currencies—reducing member exposure to Western interest rates, sanctions, and the “weaponization” of the U.S. dollar. The NDB emphasizes project viability without the conditionalities typical of Western lenders.

Cooperation : India seeks to drive political, economic, and humanity-first cooperation. A key implication is accelerated institutional reform in the NDB and a stronger collective stance on counter-terrorism—moving BRICS+ toward a more coordinated security posture.

Sustainability : The 2026 agenda prioritizes climate financing through the NDB that does not impede industrial growth. The bloc aims to build a green energy corridor led by the Global South.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Under India's 2026 presidency, Digital Public Infrastructure—the system behind UPI—is expected to serve as a blueprint for other member states. This aligns with the innovation pillar of R.I.C.S., emphasizing scalable, low-cost technology and local currency ecosystems for the Global South.

Partner countries such as Vietnam, Nigeria, and Thailand will function as integral components of the bloc, allowing BRICS+ to project influence across all major emerging markets while maintaining a coherent core.

Given its growing dominance in fossil fuels and hydrocarbons, BRICS+ is also expected to lead in renewable energy, enabling Global South economies to pursue green industrialization without replicating carbon-heavy Western models.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Use the BRICS platform pragmatically for infrastructure development and technology transfer, while avoiding entanglement in major-power military rivalries.
- Strengthen the NDB and expand its local-lending capacity to create a robust alternative to the IMF.
- Establish clear, formal pathways for partner countries to ensure long-term stability.
- Leverage continued BRICS+ expansion as a catalyst for democratizing global governance—building a multi-tiered structure that reflects 21st-century demographic and economic realities.

CONCLUSION

The expansion of BRICS+ reflects a world in purposeful transition. Its two-tier architecture—integrating ten core members and thirteen partner countries—creates a unique blend of strategic alignment and broad-based market access, offering a counterweight to traditional power concentrations.

Despite internal diversity, the shift represents a long-overdue democratization of global governance. By amplifying the voice of the global majority, the bloc aims not to destabilize the system but to balance it. As India leads the 2026 agenda, the pathway toward a more inclusive, resilient, and equitable global order becomes clearer—one where progress is measured not by the dominance of a few, but by the shared prosperity of many.

SUPPORTING

INDIA'S BRICS 2026

PRESIDENCY

JOIN TRACK II

BRICS 2026

HYDROGEN HORIZONS & SOLAR SOVEREIGNTY

NORTH AFRICA'S ROAD TO BRICS 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

West Africa occupies a strategically important position in the Global South's energy transition, combining significant renewable energy potential with persistent energy access deficits. As BRICS countries expand their role in sustainable infrastructure and green finance, the region presents a credible opportunity for targeted cooperation that aligns development needs with climate and energy security objectives. Despite ongoing fiscal, regulatory, and political challenges in parts of the sub-region, a capability-based approach highlights scope for scalable renewable deployment through concessional finance and risk-mitigation mechanisms. For India and other BRICS partners, engagement in West Africa's green energy transition offers a practical pathway to advance South–South cooperation while supporting long-term energy resilience and inclusive growth.

BACKGROUND

West Africa continues to face a structural energy deficit despite possessing substantial renewable energy potential. The region's electricity generation capacity remains limited relative to population growth and economic needs, with per capita electricity consumption among the lowest globally. Energy access remains uneven, particularly in rural areas, where electrification rates are significantly below urban averages. Fossil fuels, especially oil and gas, continue to dominate the regional energy mix, contributing to price volatility, import dependence, and climate vulnerability.

At the same time, West Africa is endowed with a diverse range of renewable resources. Solar irradiation levels across the Sahel and coastal states are among the highest globally. Wind potential is notable in coastal and island states, while hydropower and biomass offer supplementary options in specific ecological zones. Recognising this potential, ECOWAS adopted regional frameworks such as the ECOWAS Renewable Energy Policy (EREP) and the ECOWAS Energy Efficiency Policy, aiming to increase renewable energy penetration and achieve universal energy access by 2030. However, progress has been constrained by financing gaps, regulatory fragmentation, and limited domestic manufacturing capacity.

BACKGROUND

Against this backdrop, BRICS countries have emerged as increasingly relevant external partners in the global energy transition, particularly for developing regions. Over the past decade, BRICS members, especially China, India, and Brazil, have made significant investments in renewable energy deployment, manufacturing, and policy innovation. BRICS countries now account for a substantial share of global renewable energy capacity additions, with strong comparative advantages in solar manufacturing, bioenergy, and project execution.

The establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) has further enhanced BRICS' role in green finance, with a stated mandate to support sustainable infrastructure and renewable energy projects in emerging economies. For West Africa, BRICS engagement represents a potential alternative and complement to traditional Western development finance, offering South–South cooperation grounded in developmental priorities rather than purely commercial returns. India's leadership in solar energy, particularly through initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance, positions it as a key bridge between BRICS energy capabilities and West Africa's development needs.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- Policy consolidation within West Africa has continued, albeit unevenly. Multiple West African states have updated national renewable energy strategies, introduced feed-in tariffs or auction mechanisms, and expanded rural electrification programmes through off-grid solar and mini-grid models. The West African Power Pool (WAPP) has also advanced cross-border transmission planning to facilitate regional power trade, an essential enabler for scaling renewable energy generation.

- Renewable energy investment patterns in the Global South have shifted, with growing emphasis on South–South financing mechanisms. BRICS countries have increased domestic renewable capacity at scale, benefiting from declining technology costs and accumulated technical expertise. China has consolidated its position as a leading manufacturer of solar and wind equipment. At the same time, India has rapidly expanded its solar capacity and developed knowledge in utility-scale projects, auctions, and concessional financing models. Brazil's bioenergy sector continues to demonstrate the viability of renewable energy aligned with industrial and agricultural development.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- BRICS institutions have gradually expanded their green finance portfolios. The New Development Bank has prioritised renewable energy, grid modernisation, and sustainable infrastructure in its lending framework, signalling a strategic shift toward climate-aligned development finance. While West Africa has not yet been a primary recipient of large-scale NDB financing, the institutional architecture and policy orientation now exist to support such engagement.

- The approach to the 2026 BRICS Summit in India has created a strategic opportunity to formalise BRICS-Africa cooperation in the energy domain. Energy security, sustainability, and development-oriented investment have emerged as recurring themes in recent BRICS declarations. For India, hosting the 2026 summit presents an opportunity to translate these commitments into concrete initiatives, particularly by aligning BRICS green finance capabilities with West Africa's renewable energy needs and regional integration efforts. Together, these developments indicate a convergence between West Africa's energy transition imperatives and BRICS' growing role as a provider of green finance, technology, and development cooperation.

ACTORS

Primary stakeholders :

ECOWAS/ECREEE and WAPP (regional policy & integration); national governments and rural electrification agencies (policy, permits); BRICS governments (finance & technology suppliers - India emphasised here); the NDB and national development banks (finance instruments); private sector IPPs and developers (solar, wind, batteries); local communities and CSOs (consent, employment); and multilaterals/donors for co-financing and risk mitigation.

ASSESSMENT

- Opportunities. West Africa's resource abundance and falling technology costs make large-scale renewables and decentralised solutions economically attractive. BRICS offers three strategic advantages: (i) finance (NDB + sovereign lines), (ii) manufacturing and supply chains (China/India solar value chains), and (iii) technical know-how (bioenergy, grid planning, project execution). These can reduce project costs and speed deployment.

- Constraints. Key risks include weak regulatory frameworks, limited bankable pipelines, affordability issues for low-income consumers, and political instability in some states. Regional policy fragmentation and the limited scale of NDBs in relation to needs necessitate blended finance and robust safeguards.

- Net assessment: a BRICS-led, India-anchored approach is feasible and high-impact if (a) it prioritises bankable pilots and local content, (b) uses concessional/blended instruments to avoid debt stress, and (c) strengthens ECOWAS coordination to regionalise benefits.

SCENARIO MATRIX

Scenario	Description
Best Case	BRICS countries establish a regional forum for sustainable green energy development in West Africa. BRICS will fund research and Development to expand the energy projects. BRICS will collaborate with ECOWAS to develop a comprehensive energy plan at the grassroots level.
Most- Likely	BRICS announces a Green Fund and pilots, but disbursement is gradual; some projects reach financial close with mixed local content. Impact is positive but incremental; private finance remains cautious..
Worst Case	Announcements at the Summit are high on rhetoric but lack timely financing, resulting in minimal implementation. Country capacity and political risk hinder projects, and private investors remain wary.

IMPLICATIONS

Tactically, an India-led package accelerates project pipelines and demonstrates South–South financing alternatives. Strategically, it can reposition BRICS as a provider of development finance that prioritises climate and industrialisation simultaneously, if structured to build local assembly/manufacturing, not only hardware export. Poorly structured finance risks worsening debt or environmental/social harms; safeguards and transparency are therefore strategic imperatives.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Between 2026 and 2030, a targeted BRICS intervention could catalyse 1–3 GW of additional renewable capacity across pilot countries and scale PAYG (pay-as-you-go) mini-grids to reach millions off-grid, provided blended finance and technical assistance are delivered. In the longer term, successful pilots could underpin regional value chains (such as panel assembly and battery servicing) and support industrialisation. ECOWAS policy harmonisation and WAPP integration will remain essential enablers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For India (summit host & lead):

- Propose at BRICS 2026 creation of a BRICS-West Africa Green Facility hosted at the NDB with a concessional tranche (seeded by India + other BRICS members) and a local-currency risk window to reduce FX exposure for West African borrowers.
- Offer targeted Lines of Credit (LoCs) to West African states tied to local content and skills transfer (solar module assembly, O&M training). Leverage Indian firms for supply-chain partnerships.

For BRICS / NDB:

- Prioritise blended finance for three summit pilots (utility solar, manufacturing hub; aggregated mini-grids, coastal green hydrogen feasibility and demo) and provide partial risk guarantees to attract private capital.

For ECOWAS & national governments:

- 4Streamline permitting, adopt transparent procurement standards and ring-fence social/community benefit clauses; harmonise interconnection rules via WAPP to allow cross-border power trade.

For private sector & investors:

- Accept lower initial returns in exchange for predictable offtake/guarantees and commit to technology transfer and local supply-chain development.

For donors & multilaterals:

- 6Co-finance grants for feasibility, technical assistance and community safeguards; provide catalytic grant funding to de-risk first movers and support gender-inclusive access programs.

CONCLUSION

West Africa has the natural resources and growing private-sector models required for a credible green transition; what it lacks is scaled, patient finance and industrial partnerships that generate local value and jobs. BRICS, led by India's convening capacity and implementation experience, can close this gap with a pragmatic, pilot-centred approach anchored at the NDB and tied to ECOWAS integration. If the BRICS 2026 summit in India endorses a focused facility, along with at least three replicable pilot projects, the summit will move beyond rhetoric to deliver tangible green power, jobs, and climate outcomes for West Africa. That practical South–South cooperation would be a durable and politically powerful success, precisely the kind of deliverable the 2026 Summit should aim to leave behind.

SUPPORTING

INDIA'S BRICS 2026

PRESIDENCY

JOIN TRACK II

BRICS 2026

SOLAR SAHEL TO COASTAL GRIDS

WEST AFRICA'S GREEN INVESTMENT CORRIDOR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyses how North African countries can contribute meaningfully to the BRICS agenda in 2026 through energy and green transition pathways. It focuses on three interlinked dimensions: large-scale renewable energy deployment, the emergence of green hydrogen hubs in Morocco and Egypt, and the continued role of natural gas and transitional fuels from Algeria and Libya.

As BRICS evolves from a primarily political grouping into an increasingly economic and development-oriented platform, energy security and transition have become central pillars of cooperation. North Africa, located at the crossroads of Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, offers a unique combination of renewable potential, export-ready infrastructure, and hydrocarbon reserves. These assets allow the region to support both short-term energy stability and long-term decarbonisation objectives.

By examining background drivers, recent developments, stakeholder dynamics, and future scenarios, this report demonstrates that North Africa's energy profile aligns closely with BRICS priorities such as South–South cooperation, diversified supply chains, and alternative development finance. Readers who engage with the full report will gain insight into how North Africa can function as a strategic energy partner for BRICS by 2026, the risks involved, and the policy choices required to convert potential into durable outcomes.

BACKGROUND

North Africa's contemporary energy transition is shaped by a convergence of structural pressures and strategic opportunity. Historically, most countries in the region relied heavily on imported fuels or hydrocarbon exports, exposing them to global price volatility and geopolitical disruptions. Rising domestic demand, population growth, and fiscal pressures further underscored the need for diversified and resilient energy systems.Over the past decade, renewable energy emerged as a strategic response. Governments across the region recognised that abundant solar irradiation and wind corridors could be leveraged not only to meet domestic electricity demand but also to reposition North Africa within global energy markets. This shift coincided with declining renewable technology costs and growing international climate commitments.

The post-2020 period marked a further inflection point. Global interest in hydrogen as a decarbonisation vector accelerated, particularly for hard-to-abate sectors such as fertilisers, steel, and shipping. North African states, especially Morocco and Egypt, identified green hydrogen as a means to move up the energy value chain rather than remain commodity exporters.Simultaneously, the BRICS grouping expanded its agenda to include development finance, infrastructure, and sustainable growth.Institutions such as the New Development Bank prioritised renewable energy and climate-resilient infrastructure, creating institutional pathways for engagement. North Africa's energy transition thus unfolded in parallel with BRICS' search for diversified, non-Western economic partnerships.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- The principal trigger for North Africa's elevated relevance to BRICS energy discussions has been the formalisation of national renewable and hydrogen strategies between 2022 and 2025. Governments moved from aspirational targets to regulatory frameworks that clarified land access, power sourcing, and export logistics for large projects.

- Morocco approved several large green hydrogen and green ammonia projects involving international consortia, signalling readiness for industrial-scale deployment. These projects integrate solar and wind generation with electrolysis and downstream processing, largely oriented toward export markets. Egypt, leveraging its industrial base and control of the Suez transit corridor, launched hydrogen zones linked to ports and industrial clusters.

- Parallel developments occurred in transitional fuels. Algeria reinforced its position as a stable gas supplier amid global energy disruptions, while Libya's hydrocarbon potential regained attention despite ongoing political uncertainty. Both countries underscored the continuing relevance of gas in maintaining energy security during the transition period.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- On the multilateral front, BRICS discussions increasingly referenced energy diversification and green finance. The NDB expanded its renewable portfolio and explored opportunities beyond core members, opening space for structured engagement with North African projects. By the time of writing, North Africa's energy transition is no longer speculative; it is entering an implementation phase with direct relevance for BRICS planning toward 2026.

ACTORS

- North African Governments

States remain the primary drivers of energy policy, setting national targets, approving projects, and negotiating with investors. Political commitment at the executive level has been decisive in accelerating renewable and hydrogen initiatives.

- Energy Agencies and Regulators

Specialised agencies and regulators oversee project design, grid integration, and compliance. Their technical capacity and regulatory predictability underpin investor confidence.

- Private Sector and International Consortia

Energy companies, infrastructure developers, and technology providers supply capital, expertise, and market access. Their participation determines project scale and timelines.

- BRICS Governments

BRICS member states are potential investors, technology suppliers, and long-term offtakers. Their policy priorities shape demand for green fuels and transitional energy supplies.

- New Development Bank and Other DFIs

The NDB and allied development finance institutions influence outcomes through financing structures, risk mitigation, and sustainability standards.

- Local Communities and Workforce

Social acceptance, employment creation, and skills development are critical to maintaining political and economic sustainability of large projects.

ASSESSMENT

- From an analytical standpoint, North Africa offers BRICS a rare combination of immediacy and transformation in energy cooperation. Renewable energy and green hydrogen align with long-term decarbonisation goals, while gas supplies ensure continuity and stability. This duality is particularly valuable for BRICS economies that must balance climate commitments with development imperatives.

- Morocco and Egypt demonstrate institutional readiness and strategic clarity, positioning themselves as early movers in green hydrogen. Their proximity to major shipping routes and industrial markets enhances export feasibility. Algeria's gas infrastructure provides reliability at a time when energy security remains a priority for many BRICS members.

- However, risks persist. Financing gaps, water constraints for hydrogen production, and political instability—particularly in Libya—could slow progress. Moreover, competition from other hydrogen-producing regions may compress margins. Despite these challenges, North Africa's energy trajectory is credible and strategically aligned with BRICS interests, provided partnerships move beyond memoranda toward binding commitments.

SCENARIO MATRIX

Scenario	Description
Best Case	North African renewable and hydrogen projects secure long-term offtake agreements with BRICS industrial buyers. The NDB and partner DFIs provide blended finance, enabling timely implementation. By 2026, North Africa emerges as a visible supplier of green fuels and a stabilising gas partner within BRICS energy networks.
Most- Likely	Selective projects progress, particularly in Morocco and Egypt, while others face delays. Gas continues to play a significant transitional role. Engagement with BRICS deepens gradually but remains uneven across countries.
Worst Case	Financing constraints, regulatory delays, and political instability stall projects. Green hydrogen remains largely aspirational by 2026, and BRICS energy cooperation with North Africa is limited to hydrocarbons.

IMPLICATIONS

In the short term, North Africa enhances BRICS' energy diversification options. Renewable and gas partnerships reduce exposure to single-region supply risks and provide immediate investment opportunities.

Strategically, sustained engagement would integrate North Africa into BRICS-led energy and infrastructure corridors. This strengthens South–South cooperation, reduces dependence on traditional energy suppliers, and positions BRICS as a proactive actor in the global energy transition.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Looking ahead to 2026, North Africa is likely to consolidate its role as a hybrid energy region. Renewable capacity will continue expanding, at least some green hydrogen projects will approach commercial operation, and gas will remain a stabilising factor.

For BRICS, the region represents a pragmatic partner that bridges current energy needs and future climate objectives. Progress will depend on financing discipline, political stability, and sustained policy alignment. The trajectory suggests gradual but meaningful integration rather than rapid transformation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- North Africa is well positioned to support the BRICS 2026 agenda through a balanced energy transition model that combines renewable energy expansion, emerging green hydrogen capacity, and the continued use of transitional fuels. Countries such as Morocco and Egypt have moved beyond policy intent to project-level implementation in solar, wind, and green hydrogen, leveraging strong institutional frameworks and export-oriented infrastructure. At the same time, Algeria and Libya retain strategic importance as gas suppliers, offering energy stability during the transition phase. Together, these elements align with BRICS priorities of energy security, industrial decarbonisation, and diversified supply chains.

- For BRICS, deeper engagement with North Africa offers both immediate and long-term advantages. Green hydrogen and ammonia from Morocco and Egypt can support decarbonisation of fertilisers, steel, and shipping, while gas from Algeria provides a pragmatic bridge fuel. North Africa's geographic position further strengthens South–South connectivity, linking African production with Asian and Atlantic markets. The New Development Bank can play a catalytic role by providing blended finance, risk mitigation, and infrastructure support, ensuring that projects move from announcement to execution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Looking ahead, sustained collaboration will be critical. Binding offtake agreements, coordinated financing, and technology partnerships can anchor North Africa within BRICS' energy architecture beyond 2026. With disciplined policy alignment and structured cooperation, North Africa can emerge as a durable, low-risk energy partner that advances both development and climate objectives for the BRICS bloc.

CONCLUSION

North Africa's energy and green transition trajectory offers BRICS a strategic opportunity rather than a dependency. By combining renewable energy, emerging green hydrogen capacity, and transitional gas supplies, the region can support both immediate energy security and long-term decarbonisation. If partnerships are structured with realism and mutual benefit, North Africa can become a durable contributor to BRICS' energy architecture by 2026. The outlook is cautiously optimistic, grounded in tangible assets, institutional progress, and shared strategic interests.

SUPPORTING

INDIA'S BRICS 2026

PRESIDENCY

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BRICS 2026

THE RISE OF A GLOBAL SOUTH CLIMATE VANGUARD

INTEGRATING SUSTAINABILITY, GREEN FINANCE, & RESILIENT GROWTH IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyses the emerging trends in sustainability and climate issues within the context of the BRICS, with a particular emphasis on the objectives of BRICS 2025, in light of their relevance for setting agendas in BRICS 2026. Not only is this a climate-related issue, sustainable development is becoming a rapidly converging issue with economic, energy, and strategic trends, but BRICS, which encompasses almost half of the world's population and a major share of emissions, resource utilisation, and biodiversity, plays a critical role in determining an alternative world order for sustainability with a focus on the Global South.

The BRICS countries play a crucial role in the international governance of climate change and its impacts on the sustainability of economic growth. These countries are trying to reconcile the need to implement various global initiatives, national policies, and measures related to climate change with the need to achieve economic growth and energy security. There is a need to balance the international initiatives on the one hand, and the need to achieve economic growth, maintain economic and energy security on the other.

The report will provide an in-depth understanding of the role of BRICS in becoming a unified climate action bloc by ensuring that development ensures climate change leadership through Global South Equity for Global Climate Change.

BACKGROUND

The BRICS countries, which comprise Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, were formed as an economic bloc that sought to change the financial governance to correct the existing differences created by a predominantly Western-centric ideology in existing institutional bodies. Since its formal establishment in 2009, the BRICS states have been guided by a needs-driven vision based on sovereignty, non-interference, and differentiated responsibilities. Historically, environmental sustainability has been a matter of lesser concern in comparison to economic growth, financing for development, industrialisation, and geopolitics.

Environmental concerns became a part of the BRICS dialogue mostly with a developmental perspective, dealing with the eradication of poverty, access to energy, building infrastructure, and industrialisation. Unlike the OECD's climate initiatives, BRICS nations have refused to set binding targets for cutting emissions. They relied on responsibility in relation to past emissions, disparities in emissions, and climate commitments consistent with fairness and equality for developing nations.

However, over the past ten years, these climate change risks have increasingly forced BRICS countries to include environmental sustainability as a key consideration among their strategic agendas. By the first twenty years of the twenty-first century, climate change was inexorably linked to economic, strategic, and development agendas.

BACKGROUND

At the same time, dissatisfaction with current global climate funds and conditionality-based global systems led by Western countries has led BRICS countries to explore more self-reliant solutions. Creating a New Development Bank (NDB) is perhaps one of the first attempts to systematically fund development infrastructure, renewable energy, and climate change resilient development on Global South terms.

By 2025, sustainability within the BRICS has shifted from being a marginal issue to becoming an instrument of strategic significance that is being increasingly used for the purposes of articulating normative leadership with an aim of ensuring alternative climate governance that tries to merge developmental needs and obligations with the advent of global climate change responsibilities.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

BRICS 2025 represents a shift from solidarity to action-based climate change policy. This shift is necessitated by the insufficiency of existing international climate financing and governance frameworks to address the needs of the Global South in the face of climate-induced economic shocks and global fragmentation. This has pushed BRICS to adopt a more active engagement stance on climate change.

In light of these trends and concerns, the BRICS 2025 Agenda placed special emphasis on integrating climate action with development and economic resilience and supporting an agenda of development-first sustainability. Deepening cooperation on climate finance, green economy, and industry transformation, and transition to sustainable infrastructure.

Enhancing the New Development Bank as a key instrument of green finance, investment in renewable energy, and climate-resilient infrastructure were critical elements. Expanded NDB mandates enhanced cooperation on carbon markets and knowledge-sharing for adaptation technologies, indicating growing ambitions.

The BRICS 2025 Outlook further emphasised South-South technology transfer on issues such as renewable energy systems, green hydrogen, battery storage, climate-resilient agriculture, and sustainable urbanisation.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Climate collaboration is increasingly integrated with energy security concerns, and this is especially evident with respect to geopolitical shocks to supply chains and imbalances in development on critical minerals and clean energy.

Moreover, the debates on the possible BRICS Expansion featuring the admission of Global South countries solidified the position of the environment and sustainability as a political agenda that can encompass a multiplicity of models in a unique development-climate vision. Taken together, all these elements paved the way for the BRICS of the future in 2026.

ACTORS

The BRICS climate framework has several stakeholders, including governments, institutions, and non-governmental stakeholders.

- The core stakeholders in the BRICS climate framework are the BRICS national governments. These governments face challenges in their developmental needs, energy security, and employment, in addition to fulfilling their commitments to climate change. The BRICS approach to sustainability, known as development first, may vary among its member states.

- China stands out in the group of member states in terms of its leadership in the production of renewable energy technologies, clean energy value chains, and green industry.

- India's positioning is as a key proponent of climate justice, a fair transition, and a call for differentiated responsibilities for developing economies.

- Brazil exerts its ecological influence through its role as a custodian of important biodiversity, especially the Amazon rainforest, while South Africa's key positioning area lies in adaptive measures, climate finance, and a just energy transition.

- Though less outspoken on mitigation, Russia's role lies in energy politics, technological sophistication, and strategic resource management.

ACTORS

The New Development Bank represents the key financial agency for ensuring climate cooperation within the BRICS nations by investing in green infrastructure and climate-resilient development. On the national level, ministries of environment, sector ministries of energy and industry, and economic planning organisations have assumed major roles for turning overall commitments into specific policies that do not hinder economic development.

Apart from state actors, corporate actors, including state-owned companies and new green tech companies, are major implementers of renewable energy projects, sustainable infrastructure, and industrial decarbonization. Civil society actors offer support through policy inputs, data production, sustainability indices, or climate justice campaigns, although the level of leverage varies from one BRICS country to another because of different political settings. New members, along with strategic partners, broaden the climate presence of the BRICS group in global geopolitics, embedding sustainability in the developmental paradigm despite different models.

Individually, these actors make up a complex and dynamic governance, which will ultimately determine the strength, coherence, and authenticity of the BRICS response to the issue of climate change, and the extent to which the bloc is able to take action on the issue.

ASSESSMENT

From an analytical perspective, it can be said that the policy response of BRICS toward climate change represents a skillful act of balance. Its main positive aspect can be determined as its ability to consider development and environmental sustainability as viewed from a positive perspective and not as limitations or constraints in any way.

Such a consideration takes into account the concerns and demands of the Global South, which are many times ignored by approaches led from developed continents and based on strict measures of emission reduction and conditionality as conceived in developed models of climate change.

This integration is evident in the common stances on climate finance reform, green industrialization, South-South technology transfer, and resisting climate ex post conditions. The common interests enhance the bargaining power of BRICS in multilateral climate change negotiations.

Additionally, BRICS supports climate change solutions that are attractive to developing countries. This includes climate change solutions in the areas of affordable renewable energy, adaptation financing, as well as climate change-related technologies.

Nonetheless, certain internal imbalances limit cohesion and implementation efforts. The technological leadership of China in renewable energy production and green value chains leads to structural imbalances, while Russia's reliance on petroleum makes certain restraints on climate actions inevitable. Regional disparities in institutional capacity, political will, and economic structures among members add to the difficulties of coordination efforts.

Institutionally, the SDN continues as the main agent in the actualisation of the political consensus action. However, the lack of enforcement powers or collective monitoring systems in the BRICS framework ensures differentiated outcomes in the different member-states. The environment ministries or the energy sector regulators, and the planning commissions in the countries influence differentiated outcomes. In the private sector, influence is on the indirect outcomes; the institutions and societal groups have an indirect influence. The UN Framework on Climate Change continues to involve the same processes in parallel.

Ultimately, the success of climate efforts within BRICS will depend on whether summit-level consensus can be built into institutional cohesion, financial commitment, and tangible outcomes. "BRICS 2025" shows a continually enhanced sense of strategic intent and narrative vision, but whether this will be built into a lasting sense of climate leadership will be determined by their capacity to cope with different levels of internal asymmetry before "BRICS 2026".

SCENARIO MATRIX

Best Case Scenario:

The best possible scenario with BRICS 2026 will establish a coordinated and integrated climate narrative with access to strong financial resources in the form of the New Development Bank. This will include the establishment of shared technology and innovation portals, as well as collective stances during international climate talks. This will minimize reliance on climate funds that are controlled by the West and ensure that BRICS becomes a major leader and even a force that shapes climate governance vis-à-vis the Global South.

The Most Likely Scenario:

The likely course will see incremental progress. Climate governance will be reinforced mainly through project-based approaches rather than joint commitments to achieve certain objectives, with gradual progress in green financial flows and cooperation in renewables, adaptation technology, and sustainable infrastructure. Even while progress is made in cooperating on climate finance and technology, the BRICS group will be dedicated to reducing emissions, timeframes, and enforcement mechanisms. The course will help achieve progress, but may impede the transforming power of the group at the global level.

Worst-Case Scenario:

In the less desirable situation, there may be an increase in geopolitical tensions, economic slowdowns, or competition within and between the BRICS countries, which will adversely affect climate cooperation. The differentiated opinions within the BRICS countries may hamper the bloc's consensus in implementing policies, which can slow down its progress and efforts. In such circumstances, the credibility of BRICS under climate change will continue to decline, and its strategic and shaping role in alternative climate change regimes will be limited, making it dependent on the Western-centric structures.

Implications-

Increased climate cooperation within BRICS would be expected to advance green financing instruments and better finance mechanisms, especially through BRICS-aligned institutions. Further diplomatic coordination at global forums in support of climate agendas would enhance the bloc's capacity for agenda-setting and negotiating leverage. This also allows BRICS to increase the policy experimentation in renewable energy deployment, climate-resilient infrastructure, and adaptation technologies that could accelerate the pace of implementation across member states. These measures have the potential to accelerate the pace of renewable energy uptake, enhance climate resilience, and decrease the vulnerability of member states to economic and supply-chain shocks

SCENARIO MATRIX

Sustained and efficacious BRICS climate cooperation at the strategic level could position the bloc as a trendsetter within global climate governance in the long term. Through the advancement of development-centric sustainability frameworks, BRICS would undermine the Western monopoly on climate finance instruments, sustainability standards, and governance norms, thereby reinforcing the rise of a multipolar environmental governance architecture. The implication would not only be to expand policy space for the developing economy but also reshape the distribution of influence in global climate institutions.

Yet the strategic payoff depends on efficient implementation. Failure to translate coordination into measurable outcomes would reinforce perceptions of BRICS as an inefficient bloc, that is, unable to turn collective potential into sustained and transformative climate leadership.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Going forward, environmental sustainability at BRICS 2026 will be a central pillar of cooperation. With increasing climate risks, climate action at the interface of trade policy, digitization, and industrial strategy, supply-chain resilience will make sustainability integral to the bloc's economic and geopolitical agenda. The credibility of BRICS climate leadership will depend on converting consensus into measurable outcome-driven implementation.

The increased exposure to climate-induced disruptions-from extreme weather events to food and energy insecurity-figures to reinforce BRICS incentives for deeper coordination, especially in the areas of adaptation finance, disaster risk reduction, resilient infrastructure, and secure supply chains.

BRICS 2026 also provides a strategic chance to turn this into a model of sustainability through long-term financing mechanisms, common reporting, and in coordination with climate diplomacy. Growing membership increases the bloc's potential to define global climate norms and governance structures. Their potential will thus be realised by maintaining internal cohesion and such diversification of national pathways in the shared development-climate framework. A lack of it will disrupt sustainability ambitions and undermine the BRICS role in global environmental governance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- BRICS countries should set up a permanent mechanism to ensure continued coordination beyond each year's summit, thus preventing climate change policies' fragmentation. National climate policy's harmonization within the BRICS frameworks, while taking into account different development realities, is central for coordinated efforts. The BRICS countries' stance on climate change negotiations should be formulated and should be centered around issues like equity, climate finance, and the transfer of climate-friendly technology to developing countries.

- The NDB must also vastly enhance its provision for concessional finance regarding adaptation, resilience, and climate risk-mitigation initiatives. The development of BRICS-specific green taxonomies and enhanced impact measurement would also be helpful. This would provide more clarity and would also enable sustainability projects on the global level for the BRICS countries.

- The state-owned enterprises and green tech companies should be encouraged through certainty of policy, finance instruments, and risk-sharing facilities. Public-private partnerships could act as a catalyst in developing infrastructure, and BRICS could further enhance its technology through greater collaboration

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **New and potential members should harmonize their national climate policies within the frameworks of the BRICS nations to leverage maximum joint influence. Early induction into the sustainability efforts of the BRICS would strengthen the cohesion of the global institutions and increase the voice of the Global South in climate decision-making.**

CONCLUSION

BRICS has reached a point where a policy change will be more probable. Despite continuous political and structural challenges, BRICS 2025 is ambition-oriented, linking sustainability more with economic growth rather than opposing them.While this approach may seem exclusive, it also holds immense promise for equitable cooperation.

Environmental sustainability is emerging as a compelling strategic imperative and a major opportunity for the BRICS Summit 2026. With its development orientation, better institutionalization, and fast-growing international influence, BRICS has the potential to assume leadership on the climate issue that is representative of Global South conditions.If supported by political will and good implementation, BRICS could provide a lead for shaping an inclusive and equitable global climate regime.

SUPPORTING

INDIA'S BRICS 2026

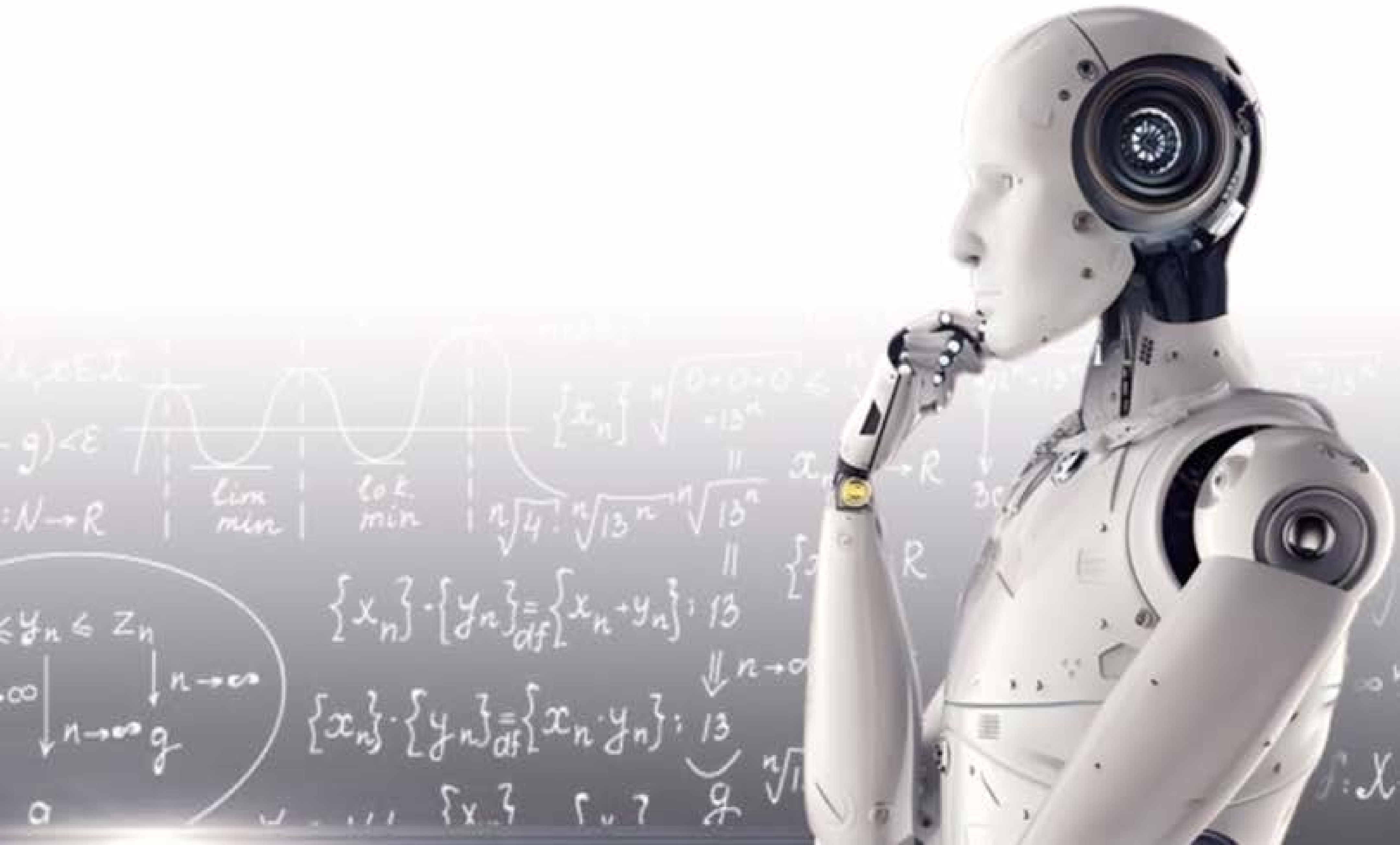
PRESIDENCY

JOIN TRACK II

BRICS 2026

THE DIGITAL SPINE OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

BRICS+ INNOVATION CORRIDORS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BRICS+ Innovation Corridors are structured cross-border networks that integrate infrastructure, digital systems, innovation ecosystems, and enterprise networks across BRICS+ countries. Unlike traditional trade corridors that focus on movement, innovation corridors aim to facilitate the flow of technology, data, talent, capital, and scalable solutions with Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital public infrastructure (DPI) as core enablers.

BRICS+ economies together account for over 40% of the global population, nearly 37% of global GDP (PPP), and more than 45% of global manufacturing output. Yet, intra-BRICS trade remains under 20% of total trade for most members, and cross-border innovation collaboration remains shallow. This gap reflects structural fragmentation between innovation generation, financing, and market access.

This report argues that innovation corridors can bridge these gaps by linking startups and MSME clusters and aligning development finance with technology deployment. India's BRICS+ Presidency provides a narrow but critical window to pilot, institutionalise, and operationalise this approach.

BACKGROUND

Within recent expansion, BRICS+ includes economies at very different stages of development but with shared constraints such as productivity gaps, uneven technology diffusion, and dependence on external innovation ecosystems.

Across BRICS+ economies, MSMEs account for over 90% of enterprises and 40-60% of employment, yet have disproportionate output and exports. At the same time, startups across India, China, Brazil, and South Africa have grown rapidly, but over 70% remain in the early stage and fail to scale beyond pilot deployments, particularly in enterprise-facing sectors.

Traditional corridors (railways, ports, and highways) have improved connectivity but fall short in systematically improving enterprise capability or technology absorption. Innovation corridors expand the corridor concept to include digital infrastructure, standards, finance, and institutional coordination, aligning with India's DPI experience and BRICS' stated focus on inclusive and sustainable growth.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Several developments have made the innovation corridors feasible and urgent for BRICS+. Firstly, institutional mechanisms already exist. BRICS operates working groups on science, technology, innovation, MSMEs, startups, and the digital economy. The BRICS Action Plan for Innovation and the SME Working Group Action Plan recognise the need for technology diffusion and enterprise upgrading, but implementation remains weak.

Secondly, digital infrastructure investment has increased rapidly. BRICS+ countries collectively invest over USD 1 trillion annually in infrastructure, with a growing share allocated to broadband, cloud computing, data centres, smart logistics, and digital payments. India's DPI platforms process over 10 billion digital transactions per month, demonstrating the scale possible when digital systems are interoperable and public.

Third, development finance capacity has expanded but remains underutilised for innovation. The New Development Bank's portfolio crossed USD 35 billion, yet less than a quarter of this directly targets enterprise-linked digital or innovation infrastructure. Financing remains asset-heavy rather than productivity-linked.

Finally, India's BRICS+ Presidency aims to explicitly prioritize innovation, resilience, and digital public goods. This provides political will to move from consensus-building to pilot execution.

ACTORS

Governments are the major players that help shape corridor viability through policies on data, standards, procurement, and mobility. Ministries of IT, industry, MSMEs, commerce, and finance play central roles, while sub-national governments anchor clusters.

BRICS mechanisms provide coordination but lack delivery authority. Their effectiveness depends on alignment with national programmes and financing institutions. Development finance institutions, especially the New Development Bank and national development banks, determine scale. Without risk-sharing instruments, private capital remains limited.

Enterprises include startups (technology suppliers), MSMEs (adopters), and large firms that anchor supply chains. Their participation determines real outcomes. Innovation intermediaries (incubators, research centres, digital platforms, and procurement agencies) convert policy intent into adoption.

ASSESSMENT

The primary value of BRICS+ Innovation Corridors lies in reducing transaction costs across three dimensions:

- (i) technology adoption,
- (ii) scale, and
- (iii) cross-border expansion.

Technology adoption gaps-

- Surveys across BRICS economies show that fewer than 30% of MSMEs use advanced digital tools, and less than 15% deploy AI-enabled systems, despite availability.
- Corridors that combine technology, finance, and compliance support can accelerate their progress by leveraging NDB-backed financing.

Startup scaling failures-

- Startups receive capital but lack buyers; MSMEs need solutions but lack risk-bearing capacity.
- Innovation corridors can create structured demand through cluster-based deployment and public procurement.

Cross-border scale constrained-

- Differences in standards, payments, and logistics add 15–25% to transaction costs for SMEs operating across borders.
- Corridor-based harmonisation can sharply reduce these frictions.

SCENARIO MATRIX

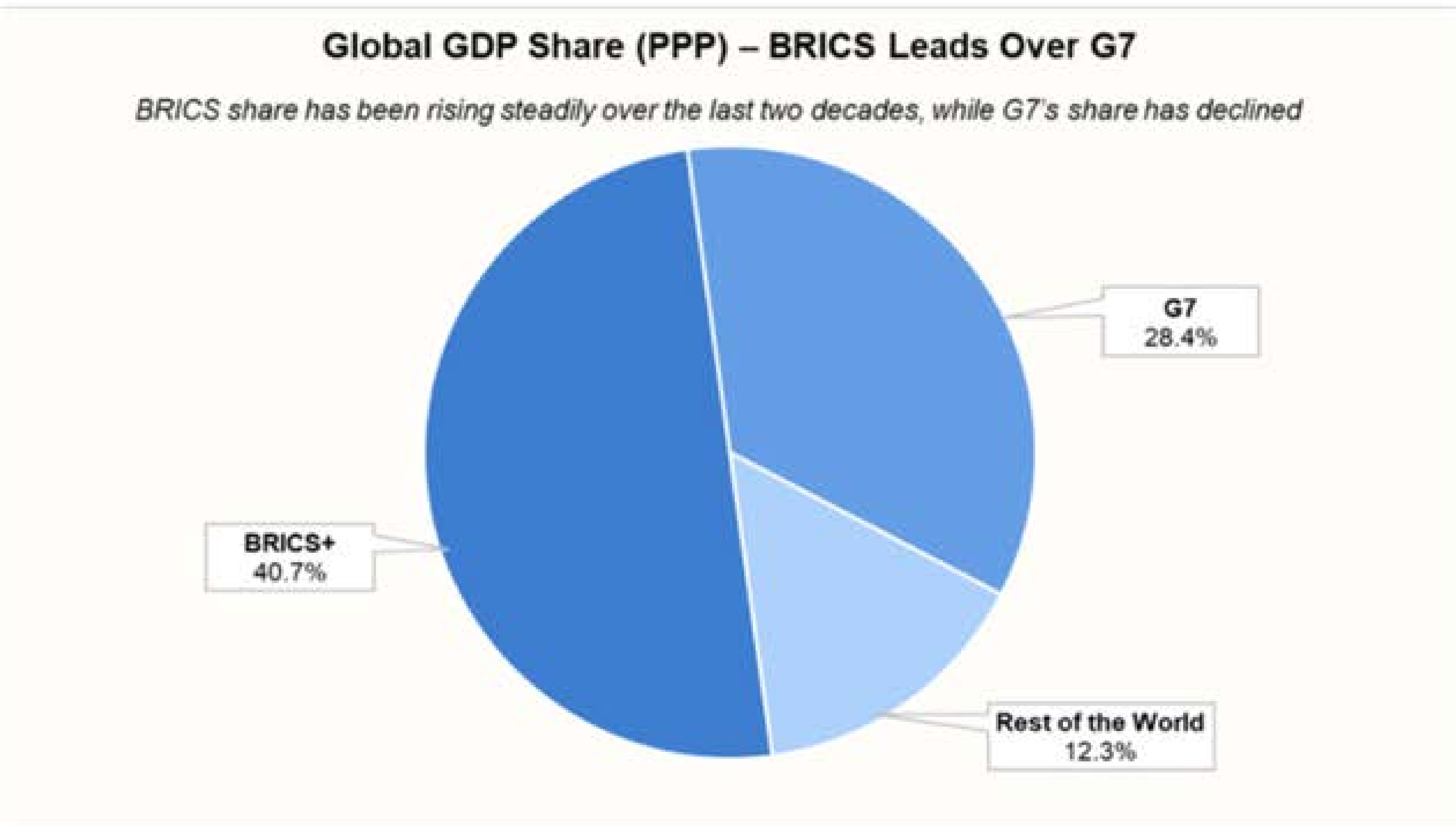
Scenario	Description
Best Case	• India's Presidency pilots 5–6 sector-specific innovation corridors, each linking startups, MSME clusters, financing instruments, and procurement pathways. • At least USD 2–3 billion in blended finance is aligned. • AI adoption rates among participating MSMEs rise by 20–30%, and startups achieve cross-border scale.
Most- Likely	• The most likely scenario could be improved coordination, expansion of digital platforms, and the success of selective pilots succeeding. • Financing alignment remains limited, along with incremental gains .
Worst Case	• The corridors remain conceptual and financing stays limited to capital loans. • Enterprise outcomes remain unchanged.

IMPLICATIONS

Tactical Implications will be faster technology adoption, reduced startup mortality, fewer "early stage exits", and lower transaction costs for cross-border operations.

Strategic Implications are deeper. BRICS+ Innovation corridors can reduce dependence on external technology ecosystems, strengthen South-South trade, and improve resilience against supply-chain shocks. Success reinforces leadership in digital governance and innovation diplomacy across BRICS+ economies.

Failure to act risks increased productivity gaps within the BRICS+, reduced collective competitiveness, and cracks in the strategic autonomy of critical corridors and AI infrastructure.



FUTURE OUTLOOK

Over the next decade, innovation corridors could evolve into hybrid networks combining physical connectivity, digital platforms, finance, and enterprise ecosystems. AI, digital public infrastructure, clean energy, and logistics will define corridor relevance as time progresses.

India is uniquely positioned to act as a system integrator, leveraging DPI, startup depth, and policy credibility. Early pilot projects will determine whether corridors become institutionalised or fade away.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Governments

- Define corridors operationally- Each corridor should specify sectors, clusters, technologies, financing instruments, and timelines.
- Pilot before scaling- Launch limited pilots (1-2 years) tied to measurable outcomes such as productivity gains, cost reduction, or export readiness.
- Harmonise digital layers- Align standards on data sharing, digital payments, and e-procurement to reduce cross-border friction.
- Enable mobility- Create fast-track visas for researchers, founders, and technical staff linked to corridor projects.

For Development Finance Institutions

- Create corridor-linked financing windows with guarantees, blended finance, and milestone-based disbursement.
- Shift metrics from asset creation to productivity and adoption outcomes.
- Crowd in private capital through first-loss mechanisms and co-investment structures.

For Enterprises and Startups

- Form a cross-border consortium instead of isolated expansions.
- Focus on deployment-ready solutions, not pilots without demand signals.
- Leverage procurement platforms as first-scale markets.

CONCLUSION

BRICS+ Innovation Corridors offer a credible pathway to move BRICS cooperation from intent to impact. The economic scale exists, and the institutional architecture and technology are in place, especially around AI and digital infrastructure.

India's BRICS+ Presidency provides a rare combination of political will and implementation opportunity. If corridors are designed with discipline and executed through pilot projects, they can transform BRICS from a coordination forum into a delivery platform for inclusive and innovation-led growth.

SUPPORTING

INDIA'S BRICS 2026

PRESIDENCY

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BRICS 2026

THE SCALE GAP SOLUTION

BUILDING THE BRICS+ STARTUP & MSME INNOVATION ENGINE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across BRICS+ economies, startups and MSMEs play different but complementary roles in economic growth. MSMEs account for over 90% of enterprises and contribute 40-60% of employment. Startups and MSMEs have different positions within BRICS+ economies but face a common structural problem- innovation does not consistently translate into productivity, scale, or sustained market participation. MSMEs struggle to absorb new technologies and comply with evolving standards, and Startups struggle to secure finance and stable demand beyond the early stages. These gaps continue to exist because enterprise capability, access to finance, and market connectivity are handled in isolation.

This report proposes the establishment of the BRICS+ Startup and MSME Innovation Platform that is anchored in three interdependent pillars- Capability, Capital, and Connectivity. Capability is the ability of enterprises to absorb innovation through skills, technology adoption, and compliance readiness. Capital refers to the access to patient, risk-aligned finance that supports both innovation deployment and scaling. Connectivity focuses on enabling enterprises to access markets, supply chains, procurement systems, and cross- border opportunities within BRICS+.

This report further outlines how the BRICS+ Startup and MSME Innovation Platform can operationalise these priorities through targeted pilot projects, structured market access during India's BRICS+ Presidency.

BACKGROUND

Across BRICS+ economies, MSMEs play a critical role in employment generation, local production, and domestic value chains, yet their contribution remains relatively low. National enterprise assessments continue to identify low technology adoption, skills gap, high compliance costs, and limited access to formal markets and finance as major constraints.

At the same time, startups across BRICS+ economies increasingly develop enterprise- facing solutions but fail to scale them beyond pilot stages. In India, for example, while the startup ecosystem has risen, they remain at an early stage and struggle to integrate into MSME supply chains or a large market base.

The common structural issue is fragmentation of (i) policy responsibility and ministries, (ii) programmes and instruments, (iii) risk assessment, and (iv) market pathways. Capability building programmes, financing instruments, and market access mechanisms operate separately. These create a major gap in the pathway from innovation to productivity and scale. India's experience in integrating digital infrastructure, MSME formalisation, and market access reforms provides a practical basis for addressing these challenges at the BRICS+ level.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Three developments that push the Startup and MSME Innovation Platform to the BRICS+ agenda. Firstly, the institutional groundwork already exists. BRICS+ has adopted the MSME cooperation framework and advanced work under the Partnership on the New Industrial Revolution (PartNIR).

BRICS+ backs startups and MSMEs through a Startup Knowledge Hub that shares policies, programs, and ecosystem data, and connects founders, investors, and incubators across member countries. It has created an MSME Working Group and 2025–2030 Action Plan, plus a proposed MSME Forum to coordinate support, finance, and digital platforms. India's Presidency offers an opportunity to shift this work from dialogue to implementation.

Secondly, development finance capacity has already expanded. The New Development Bank's active portfolio exceeded USD 35 billion by 2024-end, with approximately 40% aligned with climate and sustainable development projects. But MSME innovation adoption and startup scaling remain weakly integrated into this system.

Thirdly, BRICS+ expansion has widened the operational base-

- Egypt- manufacturing clusters and regional trade connectivity
- Ethiopia- a large early-stage enterprise aligned with infrastructure-led growth
- South Africa- mineral and manufacturing-linked MSMEs with export competitiveness.

ACTORS

- Governments- MSME, industry, commerce, startup, digital economy, and finance ministries
- India-led Platforms- Startup India, MSME Ministry programmes, digital public infrastructure
- BRICS+ Mechanisms- PartNIR, BRICS+ MSME Forum (proposed)
- Development Finance Institutions- NDB, national development banks, SIDBI-type institutions
- Enterprises- MSMEs (adopters), startups (solution providers)
- Market Enablers- Procurement agencies, export promotion councils

ASSESSMENT

The central weakness across BRICS+ enterprise ecosystems is fragmentation. Capability-building initiatives focus on skills and compliance, but can rarely access finance.

Financing instruments assess risk without accounting for productivity gains from innovation. Market access systems assume firms are already compliant, financed, and scalable. As a result :

- MSMEs receive training without capital.
- Startups receive capital without buyers.
- Procurement systems lack ready suppliers.

A BRICS+ Startup & MSME Innovation Platform can add value by acting as a coordination layer, aligning existing national and multilateral instruments around shared priorities. Its credibility will depend on agenda specific scope of action, early finance alignment, and measurable delivery.

SCENARIO MATRIX

Scenario	Description
Best Case	India's Presidency is that the Innovation Platform pilots 5-6 sector-specific programmes linking startups to MSME clusters across BRICS+.
Most- Likely	The platform improves coordination and institutional learning with a gradual integration of finance and market access.
Worst Case	The BRICS+ Startup and MSME Innovation Platform remain declaratory, with limited engagement and no financing integration.

IMPLICATIONS

In the short term, this platform could create a quicker process for MSME adoption of digital innovations, improve startup survival beyond pilot stages, and lower transaction costs for innovation-led finance.

In the long term, this platform could help create a higher productivity matrix for both MSMEs and Startups, stronger scaling pathways, and deeper intra- BRICS+ enterprise integration. However, failure to act risks widening productivity gaps and weakening domestic enterprise competitiveness.

Institutionally, the platform can also improve policy feedback loops by data-sharing on adoption outcomes across BRICS+ economies. This would allow governments and development banks to refine enterprise-support instruments based on evidence rather than programme design alone, improving accountability and reducing duplication across national MSME and startup initiatives.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Enterprise competitiveness will increasingly depend on the ability to adopt innovation, access finance, and reach markets. India's Presidency will provide a window to demonstrate how coordinated action can strengthen enterprise resilience across BRICS+ economies. Successful and collaborative pilot projects can shape long-term BRICS+ cooperation on enterprise development.

Beyond India's Presidency, the platform's relevance will depend on continuity, financing integration, and ownership by multiple BRICS+ members. Embedding the platform within existing BRICS mechanisms and aligning it with development finance priorities can help ensure durability. Over time, this could enable BRICS+ to emerge as a credible coordination space for enterprise upgrading amid global economic fragmentation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Expanding Connectivity** : Use public procurement platforms as first-scale mechanisms, drawing on India's experience. We can also enable cross-border pilot corridors within BRICS+ markets. We can work towards mutual recognition of standards to ease MSME cross-border operations. We can also develop a BRICS+ digital platform for MSMEs, as proposed under the BRICS+ MSME Forum.

- **UAE & Saudi Arabia role** : Position industrial zones and logistics hubs as regional scale-up platforms, where BRICS+ startups that have proven MSME adoption can access larger contracts, financing, and regional markets.

- **Egypt manufacturing corridor** : Pilot cross-border MSME manufacturing linkages using Egyptian industrial zones as production hubs for BRICS+ markets, supported by harmonised standards and logistics facilitation.

- **Indonesia–ASEAN bridge** : Use Indonesia's digital platforms to connect BRICS+ MSMEs into Southeast Asian markets, pairing digital access with targeted export-compliance support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Strengthening Capability :** To pilot cluster-based deployment programmes linking startups to MSME clusters across BRICS+ and integrate skills, standards compliance, and digital adoption into single deployment packages. We can establish technology absorption and digitalisation centres in industrial clusters and measure outcomes through productivity gains, cost reduction, and compliance readiness.

- **India as pilot :** Deploy logistics, inventory, and compliance startups directly inside textile and auto-component MSME clusters (e.g., Tiruppur, Pune) through time-bound pilots where adoption costs are partially underwritten by public programmes. Productivity and compliance improvements become the success metric, not the number of startups supported.

- **China replication :** Use industrial parks and manufacturing clusters to integrate process-automation and quality-control startups into SME supplier networks linked to large anchor firms, with local governments coordinating adoption rather than funding innovation schemes.

- **Brazil application :** Embed agritech and traceability startups within agribusiness MSMEs supported by development-bank-linked technical assistance, focusing on yield improvement and export compliance rather than experimentation.

CONCLUSION

Under India's BRICS+ Presidency, the Startup and MSME Innovation Platform can transform BRICS+ cooperation from intent to implementation. By strengthening capability, aligning appropriate capital, and expanding connectivity, the BRICS+ Startup and MSME Innovation Platform can close the gaps that prevent innovation from translating into productivity and scale. India's Presidency can help in doing so by providing a platform for diplomatic coordination to deliver resilient, inclusion-focused growth across BRICS+ economies.

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INDIA'S BRICS 2026

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INDIA'S BRICS 2026 MOMENT

MULTI-ALIGNMENT, INSTITUTIONAL REFORM, & THE POLITICS OF GLOBAL REPRESENTATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report discusses how BRICS 2026 is shaping contemporary geopolitics and outlines India's strategic approach to balancing its relations between the West and the expanding Global South. As BRICS evolves from an economic coalition into an increasingly assertive geopolitical platform, India faces a complex environment shaped by great-power rivalry, economic interdependence, and competing visions of world order. This report outlines the evolution of BRICS, key developments leading up to 2026, and analyses the principal actors involved, and assesses the motivations and strategic calculations pursued by India. The report further identifies possible geopolitical scenarios and their tactical and strategic implications and concludes with some recommendations for stakeholders. The report highlights India's emerging role as a bridge-builder in an increasingly multipolar world.

BACKGROUND

BRICS originally included Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa and was a response to the long-standing asymmetries in global governance structures dominated by Western institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. It emerged to amplify the voices of the emerging economies, seek greater representation in global decision-making, and offer alternative pathways for development finance and economic cooperation across the Global South. Through the years, BRICS has evolved from a loose economic platform toward a wider strategic forum that fosters South–South cooperation, multilateral financial innovation through mechanisms such as the New Development Bank, and coordinated diplomatic positions on reforming global governance frameworks.

The geopolitical context in which BRICS operated dramatically altered in the aftermath of the Russia–Ukraine conflict, increasing tensions between the United States and China, realignments in global supply chains, and rising protests from many countries of the South against financial dependence on the West's currency systems and sanctions regimes. It was against this backdrop that the expansion of BRICS between 2024 and 2025, a process that saw the accession of major economies from the Middle East and Africa, marked a structural transition from being an economic bloc to a coalition with genuine geopolitical heft. For India, this transformation presented a double-edged sword, as it seeks to deepen its strategic partnerships with the United States and Europe while strengthening its leadership within the Global South.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- **BRICS 2026 has been marked by several defining developments: an expansion of membership that has extended the block's economic and demographic footprint, entrenching its position in energy, trade, and infrastructure, while introducing a more diversified set of political interests and strategic priorities into its fold. debates on the diversification of global financial systems and the search for alternatives to dollar-dominated trade settlements have risen within the grouping. The pace of developing such payment mechanisms remains debated, with some members urging faster movement. India has been careful and pragmatic in its support for financial resilience and diversification without succumbing to economic posturing that explicitly confronts Western systems.**

- **Other crucial developments have included the contrast between China's efforts to use BRICS as a platform for counterbalancing Western influence with India's preference for projecting BRICS as a development-oriented, multipolar, and non-ideological arrangement. At the same time, India has considerably deepened its partnerships with the West on technology collaborations, defence cooperation, supply-chain initiatives, and strategic dialogues such as the QUAD, while maintaining its engagement with forums representing the Global South. A renewed articulation of interests by developing nations on issues such as climate finance, energy transitions, digital connectivity, and fairer trade norms has further entrenched BRICS as a critical site for negotiation and leaership, with India increasingly being positioned as a consensus-builder.**

ACTORS

- BRICS 2026 is driven by a mixed set of actors whose motivations and capabilities vary significantly.
- India aims to preserve strategic autonomy while reinforcing its leadership in the Global South and maintaining strong technological, economic, and security alliances with the West.
- China has recently expressed ambitions to extend geopolitical influence through the platform, utilising BRICS to bolster its institutional position in global governance. Under increasing sanctions and diplomatic isolation from the West, Russia sees BRICS as a crucial strategic and economic lifeline.
- Brazil and South Africa have continued appealing for inclusiveness, development cooperation, and reform of the multilateral systems against ideological confrontation.
- New BRICS members from the Middle East and Africa pursue energy security, investment channels, and financial sovereignty through their membership within the grouping.
- The United States and the European Union look on at BRICS with cautious regard to subtle engagement, conscious of both its potential to reshape global order and the balancing role of India.
- Beyond the bloc itself, several Global South states that are not BRICS members view it as an aspirational diplomatic platform, symbolic of their quest for greater agency in world politics.

EVALUATION

The strategic outlook is essentially Indian, intrinsic to a doctrine of multi-alignment rather than exclusive bloc alignment. While gaining significant economic, technological, and security benefits from partnerships with the Western democracies, India secures diplomatic legitimacy and moral leadership through engagement in BRICS and other Global South forums. The balance so achieved enables the diversification of strategic dependencies, avoidance of overdependence on any single power centre, and maintenance of autonomy in foreign-policy decision-making.

However, India's position in BRICS is not without constraints. Long-standing rivalry and unresolved boundary tensions with China limit mutual trust and complicate intra-bloc coordination. Russia's increasing economic and strategic dependence on China has further shifted the power equation within BRICS, raising concerns over the prospects of single-player dominance. While expanding BRICS strengthened the scale and visibility of BRICS, it has also introduced institutional complexity and rendered consensus-building increasingly challenging. Within these limitations, India derives considerable value from being a credible, responsible, and widely respected actor who can engage constructively with a variety of partners across geopolitical divides. Its strategic value within both the Global South and the Western alliance system reinforces its role as a central balancing force in the evolving international order.

SCENARIO MATRIX

The best-case scenario would be a development-oriented BRICS that attains maturity: pragmatic, concentrating on infrastructure financing, digital innovation, renewable energy transitions, and climate resilience. Divergent national interests would be diffused by inevitable dialogue and consensus, thereby avoiding drifting into ideological confrontation with the West. India itself maintains a vital mediating role, bridging internal differences while deepening parallel partnerships with the United States and Europe. In such an environment, India's diplomatic credibility would widen considerably, strengthening duality in its identity as a stabilising force and a trusted representative of emerging economies.

The most plausible scenario is one where BRICS remains influential but continues to reflect internal fragmentation. The expanded membership boosts its global presence, but persistent political rivalries, above all between India and China, cap the depth of integration. Selective cooperation proceeds in the areas of development finance, trade facilitation, and incremental payment-system diversification, while contentious political and security issues are avoided. India remains actively engaged with BRICS but strikes a careful, calibrated balance that enables it to maintain close ties with Western partners while retaining legitimacy within the Global South. This scenario preserves India's strategic autonomy but requires sustained diplomatic agility and policy discipline.

SCENARIO MATRIX

In the worst-case scenario, BRICS solidifies into a polarised, overtly anti-Western bloc increasingly defined by China's geostrategic precepts and Russia's strategic realignments. The bloc drifts from development cooperation toward ideological posturing and bloc-to-bloc confrontation at the expense of compelling its members to assume adversarial postures in global economic and security debates. India's strategic flexibility is severely compromised as tensions with China escalate and its Western partners grow wary of BRICS' political orientation. Confronting diminished influence within the grouping and heightened diplomatic friction, India might well face a choice between diluting its involvement or risking strategic marginalisation. The result could be to weaken India's balancing capability and damage its larger aspiration of shaping a stable and inclusive multipolar order.

IMPLICATIONS

The evolving dynamics of BRICS carry important tactical and strategic implications for India. In the immediate term, India will be called upon to make significant diplomatic investment to keep issue-based coalitions within the grouping running in order to ensure that its own interests are protected through a process of multilateral restraint that prevents any single member state from seeking unilateral dominance. While economic and energy-related opportunities will grow through intra-BRICS cooperation, their actual realisation will, in turn, depend upon the extent to which India can overcome political complexities and maintain policy coherence. Public diplomacy, consensus-building, and strategic communication across the Global South – essential in strengthening the leadership credentials of India – will form an integral part of this complex exercise.

At the strategic level, India's role as a bridge between the West and the Global South enhances its long-term geopolitical value, entrenching its identity as a responsible stakeholder in a multipolar world. The credibility of this role depends on consistency in India's commitment to strategic autonomy and pragmatic engagement across the diversity of competing power centres. If managed effectively, BRICS could serve as a platform through which India contributes to a more networked, plural, and balanced international order.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

By 2026, BRICS is going to remain a hybrid platform that is neither a tight geopolitical alliance nor just an economic association. The grouping will continue to promote reform of global financial and governance institutions, experimenting with alternative mechanisms of development finance as well as negotiating its internal rivalries, particularly those shaped by China–India dynamics. For India, the outlook remains broadly positive provided it maintains policy independence, enhances domestic economic competitiveness, invests in technological and defence capabilities, and utilises its diplomatic capital in the promotion of dialogue-based cooperation across the Global South. In this emerging era marked by strategic uncertainty and the diffusion of power, those states that can demonstrate flexibility, credibility, and constructive leadership – India is gradually finding a place in this category – are likely to wield a greater say.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this context, the major priority for India is to deepen constructive engagement within BRICS while keeping the grouping development-oriented and inclusive but not confrontational. It requires continued diplomatic balancing, transparent communication with Western partners, and sustained investment in domestic economic and technological strength to convert diplomatic presence into strategic power. Members as a collective under BRICS should focus on institutional consolidation, dispute-management mechanisms, and initiatives that tangibly benefit emerging economies and thereby not project ideological alignment. Meanwhile, the West has much to gain by recognising that India's multi-alignment is not adversarial but stabilising and by strengthening cooperation with India in technology, investment, and global governance reform without putting pressure on it for rigid alignment choices.

CONCLUSION

BRICS 2026 represents a more general restructuring of international relations and the increasing articulation of the Global South in world politics. For India, this is a challenging time that is also full of opportunities, but it is also a moment to think about space for constructive global leadership. While maintaining a balanced, pragmatic, and bridge-building approach between the West and the Global South, India has the potential to help shape a more inclusive and cooperative international order. The road ahead is neither linear nor free from conflict, but prospects can be considered optimistic. India's diplomatic agility, strategic autonomy, and commitment to multipolar engagement position it to emerge as a key architect of the evolving world system.

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BRICS TASKFORCE PRESENTS

JANUARY FOR ENERGY FUTURES

BUILDING THE GREEN SPINE OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

ROUNDTABLE

GREEN INVESTMENT CORRIDORS

DATE : 26TH JANUARY
TIME : 16:00 IST (NEW DELHI)
DURATION : 1:30 HOURS
FORMAT : VIRTUAL
HOSTED BY : BRICS 2026 TASKFORCE
GLOBAL EYE INTELLIGENCE

GREEN INVESTMENT CORRIDORS

AGENDA

Green investment across BRICS+ countries is uneven and scattered. Each country follows different rules, faces different risks, and uses different ways to finance green projects. Although progress has been made, the lack of common standards makes it harder to raise large amounts of long-term funding. Because policies are not aligned, many green projects struggle to grow beyond national borders. Weak coordination also reduces chances for countries to work together, limiting the overall impact of green growth in the region.

This discussion focuses on the idea of a Green Investment Corridor within BRICS+. The goal is to speed up the shift to sustainable growth by improving how countries cooperate on green investments. The session will look at new ways to finance projects, bring rules and regulations closer together, and strengthen governance systems. These steps can help expand sustainable infrastructure, scale clean energy technologies, and support climate-resilient development across member countries.

The Green Investment Corridor is not only about raising money. It is about building long-term cooperation, improving regional integration, and creating a shared vision for a low-carbon future that fits the needs and capacities of BRICS+ countries.

GREEN INVESTMENT CORRIDORS

A Track II dialogue plays a key role here by bringing together experts and stakeholders in an informal and collaborative setting. Such dialogue can help align regulations, build investor confidence, and set up structured systems for steady green investment flows. This can strengthen financial systems that support clean energy, sustainable infrastructure, and climate resilience across the BRICS+ region.

SCOPE OF DISCUSSION

The session will examine how green investments can move across borders and reach projects that support sustainability in different BRICS+ economies. It will cover both traditional financing methods, like debt and equity, and newer tools such as green bonds and blended finance. The importance of clear and predictable regulations will be highlighted, as these reduce uncertainty and attract investors.

The discussion will also look at the support systems behind green investment. This includes the role of development banks, private investors, and public–private partnerships in scaling up projects. Beyond funding, attention will be given to managing risks, improving transparency, and ensuring strong implementation. Together, these elements can help build resilient financial systems that drive clean energy, sustainable infrastructure, and climate-resilient development across the BRICS+ community.

GREEN INVESTMENT CORRIDORS

KEY THEMES

Structuring Green Investment Corridors :

- Identifying priority sectors such as renewable energy, sustainable transport, green manufacturing, and climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Designing corridor-based approaches that link projects, investors, and institutions across borders.
- Creating predictable pipelines of bankable green projects.

Financing Instruments & Risk Mitigation

- Use of blended finance, guarantees, insurance mechanisms, and green bonds.
- Reducing currency, regulatory, and project execution risks.
- Improving project preparation and financial viability.

Role of Development Finance Institutions

- Anchoring large-scale green investments through development banks and public financial institutions.
- Aligning financing tools with long-term sustainability objectives.
- Supporting early-stage, high-impact, and innovative green projects.

GREEN INVESTMENT CORRIDORS

Private Sector & Institutional Investor Engagement

- **Mobilising long-term capital from pension funds, sovereign funds, and institutional investors.**
- **Creating stable policy environments that support long-term investment horizons.**

KEY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **What forms of regulatory coordination across BRICS+ are most critical to building investor confidence, enhancing transparency, and reducing transaction costs in green infrastructure projects?**

- **How can risk-sharing mechanisms be structured to address political, currency, and implementation risks while ensuring the resilience of green investments against climate and market shocks?**

- **What role should joint research, technology transfer, and innovation platforms play in enhancing the effectiveness of Green Investment Corridors across diverse BRICS+ economies?**

RSVP ON :

BRICS2026@GLOBALEYEINTELLIGENCE.ONLINE

ROUNDTABLE

CRITICAL MINERALS

DATE : 26TH JANUARY
TIME : 17:30 IST (NEW DELHI)
DURATION : 1:30 HOURS
FORMAT : VIRTUAL
HOSTED BY : BRICS 2026 TASKFORCE
GLOBAL EYE INTELLIGENCE

CRITICAL MINERALS

AGENDA

Critical minerals are essential for clean energy, modern industries, and long-term technological strength. In BRICS+ countries, progress across the mineral value chain is uneven. Some countries are strong in mining, while others lead in processing or manufacturing. Heavy dependence on a few global suppliers, different regulatory systems, and weak coordination between countries make supply chains fragile and inefficient.

This roundtable focuses on how BRICS+ economies can work together on critical minerals under the BRICS+ Energy Cooperation Roadmap 2025–2030. The aim is to build a clear and coordinated approach covering the full value chain, from exploration and mining to processing, refining, and manufacturing.

SCOPE OF DISCUSSION

The discussion will highlight shared priorities, ways to reduce reliance on external processing centres, and steps to increase value addition within member countries. Strengthening cooperation in these areas can support industrial growth, technology development, and long-term economic resilience across the BRICS+ region.

CRITICAL MINERALS

KEY THEMES

- **Strengthening Supply Security & Diversification : Ensuring stable access to priority critical minerals essential for clean energy technologies, grid infrastructure, battery systems, and advanced manufacturing.**

- **Processing, Refining & Value Addition : Expanding capabilities within BRICS+ countries to move beyond raw extraction toward mid-stream and downstream value creation.**

- **Mapping Value Chains & Identifying Gaps : Coordinated assessments of reserves, production capacities, processing constraints, and technology needs across the mineral ecosystem.**

- **Financing & Bankability : Mobilising blended finance, risk-mitigation tools, and institutional capital to support mineral projects across the value chain.**

- **Institutional Coordination : Building structured cooperation between governments, enterprises, research institutions, and financial bodies to drive scalable outcomes.**

CRITICAL MINERALS

KEY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What should be the mandate, governance structure, and deliverables of the BRICS+ Critical Minerals Working Group?
- Which minerals should be prioritised for coordinated action in the short term, and what criteria should guide prioritisation?
- How can BRICS+ countries collaborate on processing and refining capabilities to reduce reliance on external hubs?
- What forms of pilot projects should be initiated between 2025 and 2030 to demonstrate practical cooperation?
- How can financing frameworks be aligned to support value-added processing, technological upgrading, and sustainable mineral ecosystems?

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POLICY SUBMISSION

BRICS YOUTH POLICY LAB

SUBMIT. GET SELECTED. BE PUBLISHED.
EARN YOUR INVITE TO THE ROUNDTABLE.

YOUTH POLICY LAB

The BRICS Youth Policy Lab is being launched as a platform to empower young thinkers, emerging scholars, and student leaders across the BRICS+ community. Each month, the Lab invites submissions of concise and well-argued policy briefs across a wide range of strategic themes from geopolitics and energy transitions to technology governance, sustainable development, regional cooperation, and economic innovation.

The initiative is designed to identify promising policy talent, showcase cutting-edge ideas, and strengthen youth participation in Track II dialogue. Submissions will be reviewed by the Global Eye Intelligence team, and the top 07 policy briefs will be selected each month for recognition.

Among these, the top 7 authors will have their work published on the Global Eye Intelligence Tank, gaining visibility among senior experts, policymakers, and industry leaders. They will also receive an exclusive invitation to join a closed-door roundtable, where they will have the opportunity to engage directly with leading voices shaping the BRICS+ agenda.

The top 3 contributors will be offered an opportunity to join the Global Eye team as an Intern or Consultant, allowing them to participate and interact with Global Eye's strategic community.

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CALL FOR POLICY BRIEFS

ENERGY RESEARCH COOPERATION PLATFORM

JANUARY 2026

ENERGY RESEARCH COOPERATION PLATFORM

CALL FOR POLICY BRIEFS ON "ENERGY RESEARCH COOPERATION PLATFORM"

The January 2026 cycle of the BRICS Youth Policy Lab invites students, scholars, and early-career researchers to submit policy briefs on the theme "Energy Research Cooperation Platform." This edition focuses on how BRICS+ countries can build a shared ecosystem for collaborative energy research, technology exchange, innovation partnerships, and joint development of clean-energy solutions.

This is an opportunity to contribute original ideas to a rapidly evolving agenda and gain visibility within the Global Eye Intelligence community.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. Word Limit : 1,000 to 1,200 words
2. Format & Structure : Your policy brief must include the following sections:

1. **Title**
2. **Executive Summary (150–200 words)**
3. **Problem Statement**

- Core Analysis (insights, evidence, comparative examples)
- Policy Recommendations (clear, actionable, prioritised)
- Conclusion
- References (if any)

FONT & STYLING REQUIREMENTS

- Font Style: Times New Roman
- Font Size: 12 pt
- Line Spacing: 1.5
- Alignment: Justified
- Margins: 1 inch on all sides
- File Format: PDF only
- File Name: FullName_Briefs_Jan2026.pdf

SUBMISSION PROCESS

All entries must be submitted exclusively through the submission link provided on the Global Eye Intelligence website.

No email submissions will be accepted.

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INDIA 2026
BUILDING FOR RESILIENCE, INNOVATION, COOPERATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

MADE IN BHARAT, FOR THE WORLD