

The Evolution of the Agenda in BRICS Declarations. Leadership in Global Sustainable Development 2009-2024

Academic supervisor – Прохорова Дарья Александровна

Журавлева С.А.¹, Маркова П.В.²

1 - Lomonosov Moscow State University, Университетская гимназия (школа-интернат), Moscow, Россия, *E-mail: wvshiison@gmail.com*; 2 - Lomonosov Moscow State University, Университетская гимназия (школа-интернат), Moscow, Россия, *E-mail: markovapolina2021@mail.ru*

Annotation

The objectives of this report are to trace the historical evolution of BRICS summit declarations from 2009 to the present, identifying key stages in their development from an initial focus on financial coordination to the articulation of an alternative model of global governance and to identify the main trends reflected in these documents, including the shift from reactive criticism of existing institutions to proactive institution-building (exemplified by the New Development Bank, the BRICS Grain Exchange, and the Space Council), the expansion of the agenda to encompass security, technology, and civilizational dialogue, and the growing emphasis on the principles of sovereignty, multipolarity, and the representation of the Global South. To achieve this, the analysis apply Actor-Network Theory (ANT), developed by Bruno Latour and colleagues, as an analytical framework: treating declarations as active actors (actants) that participate in assembling and stabilizing the BRICS network by connecting people, institutions, technologies, and texts, thereby shaping the very reality they describe. The overarching aim is to demonstrate that the declarations are a dynamic force in BRICS' transformation into a key actor shaping a polycentric world order.

Introduction

The history of BRICS begins in an economic research paper. In 2001, economist Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs coined the term "BRIC" to describe the four major emerging economies - Brazil, Russia, India, and China - which he predicted would increasingly dominate global growth.

The original 2001 paper was followed up by a more comprehensive and influential global economics paper by Goldman Sachs titled "Dreaming with BRICs: The Path to 2050" published in October 2003.

This 2003 report shifted the conversation to a concrete forecast. It projected that over the next 50 years, the BRIC economies could become a major force in the world economy.

Transformation of the agenda in BRICS declarations

The evolution of the BRICS summits from 2009 to 2024 reflects the group's steady transformation from an informal economic dialogue into a comprehensive geopolitical alliance. During the foundational period between 2009 and 2012, the summits held in Yekaterinburg, Brasilia, Sanya, and New Delhi were primarily shaped by the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis. The core objective during these years was the reform of the international financial architecture, with member states calling for a more multipolar world order and a greater voting share for emerging economies within the IMF and the World Bank.

1. The meetings in Durban, Fortaleza, and Ufa marked a turning point where BRICS moved to the implementation of practical financial tools. This era saw the landmark creation of the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, which provided the bloc with its own financial safety nets independent of Western-led institutions and established a formal strategy for economic partnership.

From 2016 to 2019, the thematic focus shifted toward innovation and the digital economy. The summits in Goa, Xiamen, Johannesburg, and Brasilia centered on the challenges and opportunities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, cybersecurity, and science-driven growth. It was also during this time that the "BRICS Plus" concept was introduced in Xiamen, signaling the group's intent to lead a much broader coalition of developing nations and expand its influence.

The period between 2020 and 2022 was defined by crisis management and sustainability as the world grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to global travel restrictions, the summits in St.-Petersburg, New Delhi, and Beijing were held virtually and focused heavily on biological security, vaccine cooperation, and the creation of resilient supply chains. The discussions also integrated a stronger emphasis on "green" economic recovery and the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The most recent stage, spanning 2023 and 2024, is characterized by historic expansion and a push for financial sovereignty. The Johannesburg summit in 2023 was a geopolitical milestone that resulted in the invitation of several new member states, nearly doubling the size of the bloc. Most recently, the Kazan summit in 2024 focused on the seamless integration of these new members and the development of independent cross-border payment systems, such as the BRICS Bridge, to facilitate trade outside the dollar-dominated financial system.

Actor-Network Theory as a tool to analyze the agenda

Considering the BRICS declarations through the prism of Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory, it can be noted that in response to each of the events in the period under study, 2009-2024, which are a kind of actors, due to the fact that they significantly changed the direction of the general agenda, declarations followed, that is, the response actants that determined the further direction of development and sought to influence the changes in the current situation in various areas of public life. For instance, the consequence of the 2008 crisis was the adoption of the Yekaterinburg Declaration in 2009, the purpose of which was to try to return the economy to its former state. Further, in the period from 2013 to 2015, tools were created to strengthen the financial system, which marked the beginning of the formation of a novel institution - a new development bank. The next period (2016-2019) is characterized by the emergence of the fourth industrial revolution, due to which the BRICS agenda gained the advantage of the scientific and information direction, and the association was replenished with a number of new members. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the main aspects of the declaration in St.-Petersburg, New Delhi, and Beijing were devoted to overcoming the virus, as well as strengthening biological safety. The most recent summits in Johannesburg and Kazan considered general issues of geopolitics and the subsequent extension of the BRICS association.

Conclusion

In accordance with Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, the BRICS declarations play a significant role in the process of laying a rut for the further development of the association. The main directions of the agenda meet the requirements of the time, which emphasizes the importance of the documents adopted at the summits as actants within the framework of the theory.