

## South Africa's BRICS Membership as Leverage in Its Relationship with the West

Научный руководитель – Скальная Юлия Андреевна

*Арбузова Ольга Андреевна*

*Студент (бакалавр)*

Московский государственный университет имени М.В.Ломоносова, Факультет глобальных процессов, Образовательная программа «Глобальная энергетика и международный бизнес», Москва, Россия

*E-mail: vozubra43@gmail.com*

In today's modern political and economic realities intergovernmental associations and alliances are gaining more and more strength. Among those BRICS occupies a special place. Currently, it consists of 11 countries, and the number of applications for membership shows no tendency to decreasing. But if we go back to its origins, the first expansion of the BRICS took place in 2011, and it was associated with the entry of South Africa, which was especially remarkable and to some extent even surprising because, in terms of population, territory, the level of economic development and the GDP indices, South Africa was significantly inferior to the 4 founding countries. In fact, it still remains the member with the weakest development dynamics in the union. However, the value of South Africa lies elsewhere.

With its entry, BRICS has become much more representative and has begun to claim the position of the most authoritative association of non-Western developing countries, and, in addition to that, it has assumed a large-scale mission to unite the Global North and the Global South. South Africa has also gained numerous advantages from entering the BRICS, as this African country planned to achieve a number of goals at various levels: from solving internal problems of poverty, inequality, and unemployment to raising its profile in the international arena. After all, South Africa became the first country representing the entire African continent, and after the elimination of apartheid, its foreign policy generally proclaimed the maintenance of peacemaking, often acting as a mediator in various world conflicts.

Whithin that framework, South Africa's position in BRICS is also rather unusual but increasingly significant because the state is located at the crossroads of conflicting interests of the Western camp – which, in my study, I will summarize under the G20, – and the BRICS camp, thus, becoming a leverage between them. Undoubtedly, South Africa depends on both: the European Union is a key source of direct investment and technology, the largest regional bloc, while BRICS has become the main political vector, and the New BRICS Development Bank is becoming an alternative to the IMF and the World Bank, providing loans without harsh conditions.

As part of my research, I would like to consider how South Africa's place and role in BRICS has changed over the past few years, what the development trend of this country represents and assess the prospects for further cooperation between South Africa and the West. Accordingly, the research will be based on the data provided by the authoritative articles published in the mid-2010s by the scholars of the Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University of Russia A. Salitsky [2], V. Shagalov [3], and the Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences O. Kulkova [1], V. Shubin and proceed with the most actual data to-date. Such research is most definitely in demand as the increasing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East are deepening the boundaries between territories and states that are already fragmented (the North no less than the South) and are raising more questions about the future. One of those questioning is whether the leverage will outweigh BRICS, or the G7 will continue to dictate its rules to South Africa and Africa as a whole.

### Источники и литература

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