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Through the Lenses of Morality and Responsibility: BRICS, Climate Change and Sustainable Development

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to shed a broader light on the social identity of the BRICS group of countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) whose growing economic power is the defining motive of their social construct in international relations. In line with this purpose, the article examines the BRICS nations' positions concerning the moral aspect and the notion of responsibility for the nexus between climate change and sustainable development. This article argues that their statements and discourse on climate change and sustainable development forge the process of constructing a separate group identity for the BRICS partners. The articulation of moral appraisals and the notion of responsibility in the areas of climate change and sustainable development help the BRICS countries build their self-conception and self-categorization corresponding to their identity as emerging powers, so their actions are accomplished accordingly.

Keywords: BRICS, Social Identity, Emerging Powers, Common Future, South-South Solidarity

Ahlak ve Sorumluluk Bakışıyla: BRICS, İklim Değişikliği ve Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma

Özet

Bu makale, uluslararası ilişkilerdeki sosyal yapıların belirlenmesini sağlayan artan ekonomik güçleri olan BRICS ülke grubunun (Brezilya, Rusya, Hindistan, Çin ve Güney Afrika) sosyal kimliğine dair kapsamlı bir açıklama sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda makale, ahlaki açı ve sorumluluk kavramı bağlamında iklim değişikliği ile sürdürülebilir kalkınma arasındaki ilişkiyi BRICS ülkelerinin görüşlerini incelemektedir. Makale, iklim değişikliği ve sürdürülebilir kalkınma konusundaki açıklamalarının ve söylemlerinin BRICS ortakları için ayrı bir kimlik oluşturma sürecini pekiştirdiğini savunmaktadır. İklim değişikliği ve sürdürülebilir kalkınma alanlarında ahlaki değerlendirmelerin ve sorumluluk kavramının ifade edilmesi, BRICS ülkelerinin kendilerini algılama ve kendilerini sınıflandırma biçimlerini yükselen güçler statüsüne karşılık gelecek şekilde inşa etmesine yardımcı olmakta ve eylemleri ise buna uygun olarak sonuçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: BRICS, Sosyal Kimlik, Yükselen Güçler, Ortak Gelecek, Güney-Güney Dayanışması

Introduction

The acronym BRICS stands for five emerging powers, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. After its formal inception in 2009 in the form of BRIC, the four nations' annual leaders' summits, ministerial meetings, and joint statements initiated the institutionalization of the grouping. The platform took its current design following the addition of South Africa in 2010. Since their success in promoting their economic development has been the bedrock of preserving and maintaining their newly won status, the issues of climate change and sustainable development are relevant to their international image. As a sense of responsibility is closely related to the growing power of the actors on the international stage,¹ the expanding heterogeneity of the developing world differentiates the perceptions of responsibilities for and moral appraisals of how to respond to the prospects of climate change and sustainable development.

Discourse plays a central role in empowering ideas to shape identities and in giving meaning to social and physical phenomena. Defining identity as relational, discourse provides an analytical tool for understanding the relational construction of identity.² Social contexts and group membership are determinative functions when an actor frames its attitudes and actions toward any issue. Accordingly, an actor's perception of the Self in relation to the groups with which it is associated shapes social identity. Also, self-categorization relies on the comparison revealing the differences between the perception of self and other relevant out-group members in terms of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.³ So, identity is a reflection of a process building on the conceptualizations of the Self and in-group/out-group differentiations.⁴

This article, therefore, intends to address the questions of in what context the BRICS countries frame climate change and sustainable development, how the moral aspect toward and the sense of responsibility for the climate change—sustainable development nexus inspire the BRICS group, and whether this process forges a social identity for the five members. Having been undergirded by the Constructivist point of view, the article argues that the discourse on climate change and sustainable development allows the BRICS members to present a particular self-conception and self-categorization. Within this framework, the discursive position grounded in moral underpinnings and the notion of responsibility outlines the BRICS' commitment to fight against climate change and promote sustainable development. Hence, the self-conception and self-categorization of the BRICS countries contribute to the construction of a distinct social entity at the international level taking shape in line with the group identity as emerging powers, and the BRICS group produces practical outcomes accordingly.

* I thank the Editorial Board of *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, the anonymous referees, and Dr. Özgür Tüfekçi for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.

1 Amrita Narlikar, "Is India a Responsible Great Power?", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No 9, 2011, pp. 1607-1621.

2 Donald A. Sylvan and Amanda K. Metskas, "Trade-Offs in Measuring Identities: A Comparison of Five Approaches", Rawi Abdelal et al. (eds.), *Measuring Identity: A Guide for Social Scientists*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 72-112; Lene Hansen, "Discourse Analysis, Identity, and Foreign Policy", Lene Hansen (ed.), *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, London, Routledge, 2006, pp. 15-32.

3 Kelly S. Fielding and Matthew J. Hornsey, "A Social Identity Analysis of Climate Change and Environmental Attitudes and Behaviors: Insights and Opportunities", *Frontiers in Psychology*, No 7, 2016, p. 121.

4 Rawi Abdelal et al., "Identity as a Variable", Rawi Abdelal et al. (eds.), *Measuring Identity: A Guide for Social Scientists*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 17-33.

The studies analyzing the BRICS grouping with respect to climate change mainly focus on the importance of their contributions to actions over global climate change, and the potential role of the BRICS partnership in international climate negotiations.⁵ Additionally, the works exploring the BRICS countries' engagement in sustainable development initiatives point out their capacities in supporting international efforts.⁶ Still, these works limit their analysis by concentrating on material indicators such as these five countries' share of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in order to analyze their role in climate change, and their rapid economic performances to assess their effectiveness in enhancing sustainable development. To the best of my knowledge, no published work has yet drawn up an analytical perspective delving into the moral aspect of and the perception of responsibility for climate change and sustainable development in respect of uncovering the BRICS countries' social identity, whilst revisiting their practices in the areas of climate change mitigation and sustainable development. Thus, the article contributes to the previous literature by presenting the first attempt to discuss the BRICS grouping within this scope.

Also, skeptical views emphasize the disparities between the BRICS states concerning their emissions profiles⁷ and their positions in the climate negotiations⁸. Some developments such as India's interference in weakening the language of the final text of the twenty-sixth Conference of Parties (COP)⁹ or the course of Brazil under President Bolsonaro (2019-ongoing) caused suspicions of divergences surfacing among the BRICS states.¹⁰ While India did not eschew cooperating in Glasgow, Environment Minister Yadav (2021-ongoing) admitted the importance of the BRICS group for India and the platform's "very significant role in addressing [...] climate change".¹¹ Additionally, President Bolsonaro re-explored the value of the BRICS states in the post-Trump period and underlined the need for "further strengthening of the BRICS strategic partnership".¹²

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- 5 Elena Gladun and Dewan Ahsan, "BRICS Countries' Political and Legal Participation in the Global Climate Change Agenda", *BRICS Law Journal*, Vol. 3, No 3, 2016, pp. 8-42; Christian Downie and Marc Williams, "After the Paris Agreement: What Role for the BRICS in Global Climate Governance?", *Global Policy*, Vol. 9, No 3, 2018, pp. 398-407; Marco António Baptista Martins, "The BRICS Commitment on Climate Change: Process Towards an Effective Approach in the Path of Sustainable Development", Tiago Sequeira and Liliana Reis (eds.), *Climate Change and Global Development*, Springer, Cham, 2019, pp. 175-187.
 - 6 Elisabetta Basile and Claudio Cecchi, "Will the BRICS Succeed in Leading the Way to Sustainable Development?", *Rivista Di Studi Politici Internazionali*, Vol. 85, No 2, 2018, pp. 223-234; Sergey Bobylev and Leonid Grigoryev, "In Search of the Contours of the Post-COVID Sustainable Development Goals: The Case of BRICS", *BRICS Journal of Economics*, Vol. 1, No 2, 2020, pp. 4-24.
 - 7 Deborah Davenport, "BRICs in the Global Climate Regime: Rapidly Industrializing Countries and International Climate Negotiations", Ian Bailey and Hugh Compston (eds.), *Feeling the Heat*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 38-56.
 - 8 Axel Michaelowa and Katharina Michaelowa, "BRICS in the International Climate Negotiations", Soo Yeon Kim (ed.), *The Political Economy of the BRICS Countries: Volume 2: BRICS and the Global Economy*, World Scientific, 2020, pp. 289-305.
 - 9 Joanna Depledge et al., "Glass Half Full or Glass Half Empty?: The 2021 Glasgow Climate Conference", *Climate Policy*, Vol. 22, No 2, 2022, pp. 147-157.
 - 10 Alexander Zhebit, "The BRICS: Wither Brazil?", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 43, No 6, 2019, pp. 571-584. For an analysis of the effect of Jair Bolsonaro on Brazilian politics, see: Esra Akgemci, "Authoritarian Populism as a Response to Crisis: The Case of Brazil", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 19, No 74, 2022, pp. 1-15.
 - 11 Bhupender Yadav, "BRICS Environment Ministers Adopt the New Delhi Statement on Environment", 27 August 2021, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1749687> (Accessed 25 May 2022).
 - 12 "Joint Statement by President of the Federative Republic of Brazil Jair Bolsonaro and President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 16 February 2022, <https://www.gov.br/mre/en/contact-us/press-area/press-releases/joint-statement-by-president-of-the-federative-republic-of-brazil-jair-bolsonaro-and-president-of-the-russian-federation-vladimir-putin> (Accessed 25 May 2022).

It is of importance to note that this article does not argue about whether the BRICS grouping is an alliance in international politics or a block in international climate negotiations. Furthermore, it is not the only organization whose members possess dissimilarities. Nevertheless, dialogue among the BRICS states continues, and this enables its members to form a non-Western identity and develop a shared understanding of how to address global challenges, such as climate change and sustainable development.

Furthermore, the literature lacks studies that trace the concepts of morality and responsibility regarding climate change and sustainable development in the realms of discourse and practice.¹³ Acknowledging this gap, the article adopts an interpretive discourse analysis which allows it to uncover structures and patterns across texts, and to reveal the connection between words and identity.¹⁴ By assembling textual materials, the article draws an integrated frame for the BRICS states' discursive and ideational position. Accordingly, the article collected the declarations of the BRICS platform, high-ranking state representatives' speeches—delivered at UN events, the BRICS summits, the BRICS ministerial meetings, and other multilateral forums—, and official texts. While the annual summit declarations particularly illustrate the BRICS' discursive stance, orientation, and coordination toward major international issues, high-ranking representatives' speeches and texts are the articulations of each country's position, and display a glimpse of their coherence in formulating and advancing the shared discursive framework.

This analysis covers the period from the initiation of the BRICS group onwards. This timeframe corresponds to the process in which the BRICS formed a grouping for those states whose voices were becoming important in global climate discourse and whose efforts were critical in promoting the global sustainable development agenda. The analysis starts by examining materials from the BRICS platform to explore the discursive elements and then delves into speeches and texts to build an integrated frame. Relying on this investigation, the article employs self-conception and self-categorization as its analytical tools in explaining the BRICS identity, as a separate social entity, in connection with morality and responsibility. Whilst merging this analytical framework with its methodological approach, the article contributes to the literature by bridging discourse and practice as it focuses on the BRICS nations' efforts at mitigation, their investments in renewables, and the New Development Bank (NDB).

The Moral Dimension of the BRICS' Stance on Achieving Sustainable Development

The identities of actors help to explain their actions in remaining in solidarity with others, which may not produce an optimal profit for them.¹⁵ For this reason, approaches built on actors' morally framed identity conceptions and self-categorizations have more explanatory power than the consequentialist accounting for their behaviors and choices, because morality redresses any cognitive dissonance

13 Cristina Besio and Andrea Pronzini, "Morality, Ethics, and Values Outside and Inside Organizations: An Example of the Discourse on Climate Change", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 119, No 3, 2013, pp. 287-300. For a discussion of discourse and practice in the realm of climate change and security, see: Başar Baysal and Uluç Karakaş, "Climate Change and Security: Different Perceptions, Different Approaches", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 14, No 54, 2017, pp. 21-44.

14 Loizos Heracleous, "Interpretive Approaches to Organizational Discourse", *Discourse, Interpretation, Organisation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 28-54; Charlotte Epstein, "Who Speaks? Discourse, the Subject and the Study of Identity in International Politics," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 17, No 2, 2011, p. 341.

15 Kathryn Hochstetler and Manjana Milkoreit, "Responsibilities in Transition: Emerging Powers in the Climate Change Negotiations", *Global Governance*, Vol. 21, 2015, pp. 205-226.

between actors' decisions and their normative positions. Moreover, the moral aspects of actors' motivations can suppress and regulate selfishly calculated actor behaviors that would challenge the maintenance of the global public good.¹⁶ Providing the basis for the contemporary understanding of sustainability, the Brundtland Report, entitled "Our Common Future", defines sustainable development as "meet[ing] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [...]" and an assurance that those poor get their fair share of the resources required to sustain that growth.¹⁷ The current moral conceptualization is inherited from this definition, since it has introduced intergenerational and intra-generational ideas to the language of sustainability.

In its earliest days, the BRICS grouping considered hunger and poverty eradication, which are the components of sustainable development goals, as "moral, social, political and economic imperative[s] of humankind".¹⁸ The BRICS countries affirmed this intergenerational vision by seeing sustainable development efforts as key elements for future growth and a "responsibility to [...] future generations".¹⁹ The statements delivered by the BRICS leaders confirm this intergenerational vision of sustainable development. The label 'Common Future' represents this perspective, since it refers to an understanding of and expounding upon the morally defined relationship between economic activities and future well-being. Brazil's President Temer (2016-2018) reinvigorated the discourse of the 'Common Future' and recommended integrating this perspective, in order to achieve socially balanced and environmentally friendly economic growth.²⁰ Also, South Africa's Environmental Affairs Minister Molewa (2014-2018) considered the actions for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a "historic mission for future generations".²¹ China's Foreign Minister Wang (2013-ongoing) underlined the role of the SDGs in building a greener and more balanced global development with a shared future.²² India's Prime Minister Modi (2014-ongoing) also expressed the opinion that creating a safe environment for the coming generations depends on protecting the climate and environment in a sustainable manner.²³

These official statements indicate that the leading figures from the BRICS countries agree on the idea that ensuring the sustainability of the planet in the face of undisciplined economic activities is

16 Heinz Welsch, "How Climate-Friendly Behavior Relates to Moral Identity and Identity-Protective Cognition: Evidence from the European Social Surveys", *Ecological Economics*, Vol. 185, 2021, pp. 1-11.

17 Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 8.

18 "3rd BRICS Summit: Sanya Declaration", *BRICS Information Centre*, 14 April 2011, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/110414-leaders.html> (Accessed 28 September 2021).

19 "Fourth BRICS Summit: Delhi Declaration", *BRICS Information Centre*, 29 March 2012, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/120329-delhi-declaration.html> (Accessed 28 September 2021).

20 Michel Temer, "Speech by President Michel Temer on the Occasion of the 71st Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations", 20 September 2016, <https://www.gov.br/mre/en/content-centers/speeches-articles-and-interviews/president-of-the-federative-republic-of-brazil/speeches/speech-by-president-michel-temer-on-the-occasion-of-the-71st-session-of-the-general-assembly-of-the-united-nations-new-york-september-20-2016> (Accessed 28 September 2021).

21 Edna Molewa, "Statement by Minister B Molewa at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2017", 17 July 2017, https://www.dffe.gov.za/speech/molewa_sustainabledevelopment_2017forum (Accessed 26 May 2022).

22 Yi Wang, "Building Consensus and Synergy For a Bright Future of Global Development", 26 September 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/202109/t20210926_9580295.html (Accessed 24 May 2022).

23 Narendra Modi, "PM's Speech on the World Environment Day", 05 June 2021, https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pms-speech-on-the-world-environment-day/ (Accessed 24 May 2022).

an intergenerational moral appraisal, since humankind shares the same future. Counting on the social dimensions of economic activities, this discursive position reveals the self-conception of the grouping. In support of the article's argument, the BRICS nations represent a group of states recognizing the moral dimension of sustainable development, in emphasizing that its implementation is critical to secure the future of the planet and conserve it for future generations.

The prospects for intra-generational prosperity are broadly appearing on the BRICS platform. The BRICS group disclosed its aspiration to contribute to the development of emerging markets and developing countries (EMDCs) through enhancing “the voice and representation of BRICS countries and EMDCs”, and recognized the role of sustainable development in creating shared prosperity.²⁴ In this respect, the BRICS states announced their commitment to strengthening and supporting South-South cooperation.²⁵ Furthermore, the BRICS Environment Ministers revived the motto of ‘Leave No One Behind (LNOB)’ in emphasizing the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on the poor, and the need for “transformative leadership” in promoting morally incentivized intra-generational solidarity.²⁶

This understanding was articulated by the state leaders from the BRICS countries as well. For instance, Jiechi Yang – China's former State Councilor (2013-2018) and Foreign Minister (2007-2013) – stressed the great potential of the BRICS cooperation in promoting dialogue with other emerging and developing countries, and deepening South-South cooperation while enhancing global development.²⁷ Equally, South Africa's President Ramaphosa (2018-ongoing) indicated vulnerable strata of societies should also not be left behind in the pursuit of creating a climate-resilient future and low-carbon economy,²⁸ and marked the BRICS countries' potential to achieve “a world of better health, better opportunity and shared prosperity for all”.²⁹ Likewise, Russia's President Putin (2012-ongoing) and Foreign Minister Lavrov (2004-ongoing) articulated that the BRICS states could act with one voice in responding to global challenges such as poverty and imbalances among nations.³⁰

These pieces of evidence show that their discursive aspirations to be the voice of the Global South and disadvantaged people and to lead the South-South dialogue differentiate the BRICS nations from the rest of the developing world; so this process boosts the idea of intra-generational solidarity

24 “BRICS Leaders Xiamen Declaration”, *BRICS Information Centre*, 4 September 2017, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/170904-xiamen.html> (Accessed 27 May 2022).

25 “VII BRICS Summit: Ufa Declaration”, *BRICS Information Centre*, 9 July 2015, http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration_en.pdf (Accessed 27 May 2022).

26 “Goa Statement on Environment: Second Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers”, *BRICS Information Centre*, 16 September 2016, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/160916-environment.html> (Accessed 28 September 2021).

27 Jiechi Yang, “Remarks by H.E. Yang Jiechi State Councilor of the People's Republic of China at the Opening Ceremony of 2017 First BRICS Sherpa Meeting”, 23 February 2017, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/201702/t20170224_678602.html (Accessed 25 May 2022).

28 Cyril Ramaphosa, “Remarks by President Cyril Ramaphosa at the Virtual Leaders' Summit on Climate”, 22 April 2022, <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/remarks-president-cyril-ramaphosa-virtual-leaders%27-summit-climate> (Accessed 24 May 2022).

29 Cyril Ramaphosa, “Statement by His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa during the Opening Session of the 13th BRICS Summit”, 09 September 2021, <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/statement-his-excellency-president-cyril-ramaphosa-during-opening-session-13th-brics-summit> (Accessed 24 May 2022).

30 Vladimir Putin, “Meeting of BRICS Leaders with Delegation Heads from Invited States”, 5 September 2017, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55532> (Accessed 28 September 2021); Sergey Lavrov, “Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's Opening Remarks at a Stand-alone Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs/International Relations”, 01 June 2021, https://mid.ru/en/press_service/minister_speeches/1423685/ (Accessed 24 May 2022).

and frames the BRICS' social identity. In line with the argument of this article, this self-categorization cements the identity of the emerging powers as the BRICS embraces a morally supported stand for responding to the environmental challenges faced by developing states.

In essence, the discourse of a 'Common Future' and the motto of 'LNOB' enable the BRICS to articulate their views regarding sustainable development and developing countries. These discursive elements help the BRICS group to draw a self-conception and self-categorization through acknowledging the moral appraisals of the intergenerational vision and intra-generational solidarity. These ideas raised by the discourse serve to formulate their group identity as emerging powers.

The Sense of Responsibility within the BRICS Club for the Climate Change—Sustainable Development Nexus

Although the idea of designing an environment-friendly economy is not a brand-new recommendation, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and blindness to climate-related environmental degradation over the years have promoted the notion of sustainable development in searching for a solution "to keep the global economy growing without causing irrevocable environmental damage".³¹ As opposed to unsustainable development models, the necessity to progress toward more sustainable development pathways was comprehended by emerging powers as enabling improvements in the quality of life and offering the chance to exploit the natural resources in the long term.³²

Accordingly, the concept of sustainable development first appeared in 2009 on the BRICS agenda "as a major vector in the change of paradigm of economic development".³³ The BRICS leaders also acknowledged the role of sustainable growth and green practices in dealing with climate change issues,³⁴ and expressed their commitment to "new models and approaches towards more equitable development and inclusive global growth".³⁵ The statements of high-ranking officials confirm these positions. For instance, Russia's President Medvedev (2008-2012) regarded the efforts to accomplish comprehensive improvements in sustainable development and climate-friendly technologies as a means of promoting mutual benefits, whilst dealing with the impact of the GFC.³⁶ In this context, Prime Minister Modi underscored the BRICS' capacity "to give concrete meaning to the concept of sustainable and balanced development, and produce innovative models of development".³⁷ For Brazil's

31 Jeongwon Park, "The Evolution of Green Growth Policy: An Unwelcome Intrusion on Global Environmental Governance?", *Journal of East Asian Economic Integration*, Vol. 17, No 2, 2013, pp. 212-213.

32 Isabel Maria Bodas Freitas et al., "The Kyoto Mechanisms and the Diffusion of Renewable Energy Technologies in the BRICS", *Energy Policy*, Vol. 42, 2012, pp. 118-28; Lorenzo Fioramonti, "On the BRICS of Collapse: Why Emerging Economies Need a Different Development Model", *Center for the Study of Governance Innovation*, University of Pretoria, South Africa, 2014, <https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/Legacy/sitefiles/file/46/1322/brics.pdf> (Accessed 07 February 2022).

33 "Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries' Leaders", *BRICS Information Centre*, 16 June 2009, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/090616-leaders.html> (Accessed 28 September 2021).

34 "Fourth BRICS Summit: Delhi Declaration".

35 "BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration and Industrialisation: Thekwini Declaration", *BRICS Information Centre*, 27 March 2013, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/130327-statement.html> (Accessed 28 September 2021).

36 Dmitry Medvedev, "Dmitry Medvedev's Article, BRIC Countries: Common Goals — Common Actions has been Published", 13 April 2010, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/7443> (Accessed 25 June 2022).

37 Narendra Modi, "Statement by Prime Minister at the Plenary Session of BRICS Leaders", 14 April 2011, <https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/332/Statement+by+Prime+Minister+at+the+plenary+session+of+BRICS+Leaders>

President Rousseff (2011-2016), it was also urgent to embrace a new paradigm that must focus on remodeling the economic structures in compliance with the sustainable development agenda.³⁸ Correspondingly, President Bolsonaro reaffirmed that environmental preservation produces local and global benefits whilst pursuing economic innovations.³⁹ Similarly, Minister Wang noted that “the old way of ‘pollution first, treatment afterwards’” needed to be replaced by a contemporary approach embracing economic growth, environmental protection, clean energy, and social issues for the common good of the international community and next generations.⁴⁰

As it takes place on the BRICS agenda, the discourse of the ‘Common Future’, blended in with an intergenerational vision, encourages the sense of responsibility for promoting the sustainable development paradigm and for fighting climate change. The argument drawn from Constructivism puts forward that the self-conception of the BRICS group forges a group identity, which is represented under the label of ‘emerging powers’. In this regard, the BRICS introduces itself as consisting of a group of states which recognizes the adverse impacts of the old-fashioned environmentally insensitive path to industrialization, and thus aims at designing ideal practices with a sense of responsibility.

In addition to the sense of responsibility generated as a response to environmentally hazardous practices, the BRICS felt responsible for the developing nations, since they had reached the status of emerging powers who can utilize their capabilities and political activism to support the developing world. Therefore, the platform enabled its members to present themselves as “conducive [...] to serving common interests of emerging market economies and developing countries”.⁴¹ The BRICS partnership stressed its commitment “to lead by example in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.⁴² At this juncture, the five members of the BRICS platform proposed a new institution differing from the Western models in its basic functions.⁴³ So, the BRICS club addressed the problem of “financing constraints” in developing states, and they created the NDB “with the purpose of mobilizing resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging and developing economies”.⁴⁴ The underlying ideational incentive of this initiative is closely related to the notion of responsibility to ensure intra-generational solidarity.

(Accessed 25 June 2021).

- 38 Dilma Rousseff, “Speech by President Dilma Rousseff on the Occasion of the Opening of the General Debate of the 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly”, 17 August 2014, <https://www.gov.br/mre/en/content-centers/speeches-articles-and-interviews/president-of-the-federative-republic-of-brazil/speeches/statement-by-h-e-dilma-rousseff-president-of-the-federative-republic-of-brazil-at-the-opening-of-the-general-debate-of-the-67th-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly> (Accessed 24 May 2022).
- 39 Jair Bolsonaro, “Remarks by the President of the Republic at the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity”, 01 October 2020, <https://www.gov.br/mre/en/content-centers/speeches-articles-and-interviews/president-of-the-federative-republic-of-brazil/speeches/palavras-do-senhor-presidente-da-republica-na-cupula-da-biodiversidade-da-organizacao-das-nacoes-unidas-brasilia-30-de-setembro-de-2021> (Accessed 24 May 2022).
- 40 Yi Wang, “Sustainable Development—The Road to Achieve Chinese Dream and Human Progress”, 26 September 2013, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/2461_663310/t1081238.shtml (Accessed 26 May 2022).
- 41 “Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries’ Leaders”.
- 42 “8th BRICS Summit: Goa Declaration”, *BRICS Information Centre*, 16 October 2016, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/161016-go.html> (Accessed 28 September 2021).
- 43 “Fourth BRICS Summit: Delhi Declaration”.
- 44 “The 6th BRICS Summit: Fortaleza Declaration”, *BRICS Information Centre*, 15 July 2014, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/140715-leaders.html> (Accessed 28 September 2021).

Recognizing the BRICS' potential for ensuring green transformation, China's President Xi (2013-ongoing) urged on the partnerships with the Global South to promote sustainable global development.⁴⁵ In this context, both Prime Minister Modi and President Ramaphosa highlighted the capability of the NDB to bridge the global infrastructure gap.⁴⁶ Also, a Russian official comment considered the NDB as an institution modernizing global governance architecture and financing renewable energy projects.⁴⁷

In brief, these pieces of evidence support this article's argument, by showing that the discourse of a 'Common Future' and an intergenerational vision contribute to the self-conception of the BRICS, as it constructs a group identity that displays their readiness to take responsibility for dealing with climate change through the necessary instruments. Moreover, the motto of 'LNOB' and the idea of intra-generational solidarity paved the way for a social context where the BRICS falls into the category between developing and developed countries. This self-categorization enables the BRICS, as emerging powers, to merge their insightful understanding of the developing world's needs with a sense of responsibility for mobilizing their capabilities to provide assistance to the developing states.

Bridging Discourse and Practice: Emissions Reduction and Sustainable Development Efforts of the BRICS States

In the 2009 Joint Statement, the BRIC leaders articulated their readiness to take part in constructive dialogue, "given the need to combine measures to protect the climate with steps to fulfill [their] socio-economic development tasks".⁴⁸ South Africa, prior to its admission, and the BRIC countries as they were at the time, pledged targets to reduce their GHG emissions at COP-15, whereas they had once been exempt from any formal emissions reduction targets. In 2022, the Joint Statement of the BRICS Foreign Ministers also affirmed the BRICS' individual and joint efforts to ensure the implementation of international climate agreements.⁴⁹ This continuing attitude pointed out their ideational orientation toward the category of emerging powers, which offers their willingness and readiness to take mitigation actions as the responsible stakeholders.

45 Jinping Xi, "Keep Abreast of the Trend of the Times to Shape a Bright Future", 22 June 2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202206/t20220622_10708004.html (Accessed 08 August 2022).

46 Narendra Modi, "Media Statement at Informal BRICS Leaders' Meeting on the Margins of the G20 Summit", 30 November 2018, https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/media-statement-at-informal-brics-leaders-meeting-on-the-margins-of-the-g20-summit/?comment=disable (Accessed 24 May 2022); Cyril Ramaphosa, "President Cyril Ramaphosa's Remarks during a Dialogue among BRICS Heads of State and Government and BRICS Business Council and the New Development Bank", 14 November 2019, <https://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/president-cyril-ramaphosa%E2%80%99s-remarks-during-dialogue-among-brics-heads-state-and-government> (Accessed 24 May 2022).

47 "Comment by the Information and Press Department on Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's Participation in the BRICS Foreign Ministers Meeting", *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, 17 June 2017, https://mid.ru/en/press_service/spokesman/comments/1548601/ (Accessed 25 May 2022).

48 "Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries' Leaders".

49 "BRICS Joint Statement on "Strengthen BRICS Solidarity and Cooperation, Respond to New Features and Challenges in International Situation", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, 20 May 2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202205/t20220520_10690224.html (Accessed 27 May 2022).

Table 1. The BRICS Countries' 2020 Targets Under the Copenhagen Accord

Country	2020 Targets ⁵⁰	Emissions Reduction Performances ⁵¹
Brazil	Reducing its projected emissions incl. LULUCF (Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry) by between 36.1% and 38.9% in 2020.	Reduced GHG (Greenhouse Gas) emissions from 2.27 gigatons in 2010 to 1.58 gigatons in 2020 but exceeded 0.35 gigatons to meet the target.
Russia	Limiting emissions by 15–25% below 1990 levels.	Decreased GHG emissions by 36.69% in 2020.
India	Reducing the emissions intensity of its GDP by 20-25% by 2020 in comparison to the 2005 level.	Reduced GHG emissions per GDP from 2.375 CO ₂ e/ \$ million GDP in 2005 to 1.172 CO ₂ e/ \$ million GDP in 2019.
China	Decreasing carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP by 40-45% by 2020 compared to the 2005 level.	Decreased 3.034 kiloton CO ₂ e/ \$ million GDP to 844 kiloton CO ₂ e/ \$ million GDP from 2005 to 2019.
South Africa	Reducing emissions growth trajectory below BAU (Business-as-usual) by 34% in 2020.	Limited total GHG emission by 550 MtCO ₂ e (Million tons of CO ₂ equivalent), which stays in the range of the target of 414-599 MtCO ₂ e.

The mitigation commitments under the Copenhagen Accord are helpful in reviewing to what extent states performed well, because these targets are the legally declared agendas covering the period until 2020. Discourse can facilitate possible paths for taking action. Still, there might be deviations in the practical realm.⁵² As revealed by Table 1, the BRICS endeavored to act responsibly in accordance with their discourse of a 'Common Future' and with their group identity. Despite Brazil's slightly weak performance, the overall performance of the BRICS' climate change mitigation actions corresponds to their voluntary commitments.

When the Kyoto Protocol's second commitment period came to an end, there was an international motivation to regulate emissions reductions after 2020. In line with this purpose, the final draft of the Paris Agreement⁵³ was adopted on 12 December 2015, once China appeared as a constructive stakeholder to build consensus before and during the Paris Conference, and Russia consented to be a responsible player, avoiding any action that would block a potential agreement. The Agreement ended the division between developed and developing states reaching back to Kyoto, as it envisaged the concept of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), which

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

51 "National Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventories and Implied National Mitigation (Nationally Determined Contributions) Targets", *International Monetary Fund*, n.d., <https://climatedata.imf.org/datasets/72e94bc71f4441d29710a9bea4d35f1d/explore> (Accessed 23 May 2022); "Climate Watch Historical GHG Emissions 2022", *Climate Watch, World Resources Institute*, Washington, D.C., n.d., <https://www.climatewatchdata.org/ghg-emissions> (Accessed 22 May 2022).

52 Kevin C. Dunn and Iver B. Neumann, *Undertaking Discourse Analysis for Social Research*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2016, p. 8.

53 See the special issue of *Uluslararası İlişkiler* on Paris Climate Summit and Reflections at <https://www.uidergisi.com.tr/yazilar/paris-climate-summit-and-reflections>.

refers to the efforts of each party to reduce its national emissions.⁵⁴ Table 2 shows the commitments of the BRICS states within the framework of their INDCs and updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)⁵⁵ announcing the post-2020 climate change mitigation actions.

Table 2. The BRICS Countries' 2030 Targets Under the Paris Agreement⁵⁶

Country	INDCs	Updated NDCs
Brazil	Reduce GHG emissions by 43% compared with 2005	Reduce GHG emissions by 50% compared with 2005
Russia	Limit GHG emissions to 70-75% of 1990 emissions	Reduce GHG emissions to 70% of the 1990 level
India	Reduce the emissions intensity of GDP by 33-35%	Reduce the carbon intensity by less than 45%
China	Lower CO2 emissions per unit of GDP by 60% to 65% from the 2005 level	Lower CO2 emissions per unit of GDP by over 65% from the 2005 level
South Africa	Limit annual GHG emissions between 398 and 614 MtCO ₂ -e	Limit annual GHG emissions between 350-420 MtCO ₂ -e

The NDCs are domestic targets to alleviate carbon emissions, and they are instructive to understand actors' willingness to offer their contributions effectively. The BRICS' updated NDCs evince that the overall progress in setting their contributions confirms their responsibility perception in alliance with their discourse of a 'Common Future' and their identity as emerging powers.

Also, the BRICS platform expressed its favor for "[the] preparation and implementation of nationally appropriate mitigation actions".⁵⁷ At this point, the BRICS leaders recognized clean energy technologies as instruments for addressing climate change and promoting sustainable development goals. In the Goa Declaration, the BRICS referred to the role of clean energy in ensuring the collective well-being of the global population and the future of the world.⁵⁸ While examining the practices driven by the discourse of the 'Common Future', the installation of renewable energy is a significant indicator in terms of the climate change—sustainable development nexus, as these actions comply with the expected identity of emerging powers.

From 2009 to 2021, Brazil increased its installed renewable energy capacity by over 88%, equal to 159,942,879 MW. Russia expanded its installed renewable electricity capacity by 17.17% compared to 2009, and its capacity reached 56,216,933 MW in 2021. During the same period, installed renewable electricity capacity in South Africa jumped from 975,034 MW to 10,192,930 MW. Meanwhile, China and India added 397% and 205% to their installed renewable electricity capacity, so their infrastructure reached 1,020,234,183 MW and 147,121,717 MW, respectively.⁵⁹

54 "Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)", *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, n.d., <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs> (Accessed 07 February 2022).

55 A country's INDCs turn into NDCs when it formally joins the Paris Agreement.

56 "All NDCs", *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, n.d., <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NDCStaging/Pages/All.aspx> (Accessed 25 May 2022).

57 "Fourth BRICS Summit: Delhi Declaration".

58 "8th BRICS Summit: Goa Declaration".

59 "Renewable Capacity Statistics 2022", *International Renewable Energy Agency*, Abu Dhabi, n.d., <https://public.tableau.com/views/IRENARETimeSeries/Charts?:embed=y&:showVizHome=no&publish=yes&:toolbar=no> (Accessed 25 May 2022).

In addition, the BRICS platform utilizes the motto of ‘LNOB’ in its calls for closing the gap in development financing.⁶⁰ Therefore, Western-centric Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) lost their traditional roles, since these organizations refrained from infrastructure investment and development assistance and focused on programs targeting institutional reforms in the developing world.⁶¹ Thus, this process assisted the establishment of the NDB, understanding the concerns, wishes, and requirements of the developing economies.

As of August 2022, 45 out of 84 approved NDB projects had financed environment-related initiatives.⁶² Even if the investments carried out within the framework of the NDB have not yet been transferred outside of the BRICS states, the admission of the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Bangladesh, and Egypt as new members of the NDB strengthens its claim to be one of the premier development institutions for EMDCs, by utilizing the Bank’s capabilities and expertise initiated by the BRICS.⁶³ These bonds should enable the BRICS group to expand its sphere of activity in the near future. Moreover, China and Russia became donors of climate finance after they ratified the Paris Agreement. Both countries instituted their own funds together with the United Nations Development Programme and the programme attaches great importance to these initiatives in financing climate actions and SDGs.⁶⁴

The following table merges the discourse and practice of the BRICS regarding the climate change—sustainable development nexus:

Table 3. Morality and Responsibility Perceptions from the BRICS Angle

	Morally Framed Discourse	Practices Reflecting the Sense of Responsibility
Intergenerational	Common Future	Emissions Reduction Commitments Sustainable Development Efforts
Intra-generational	Leave No One Behind	New Development Bank

The table summarizes that the moral aspect in addressing climate change and sustainable development produces the discourse of a ‘Common Future’, relying on the intergenerational vision,

60 “Joint Statement for the Fourth BRICS Ministers of Environment Meeting”, *BRICS Information Centre*, 18 May 2018, <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/180518-environment.html> (Accessed 31 May 2022).

61 Karin Costa Vazquez et al, “Building Infrastructure for 21st Century Sustainable Development: Lessons and Opportunities for the BRICS-Led New Development Bank”, 2017, <http://dspace.jgu.edu.in:8080/jspui/bitstream/10739/1278/1/Building-Infrastructure-21st-Century.pdf> (Accessed 07 February 2022).

62 “List of All Projects”, *New Development Bank*, n.d., <https://www.ndb.int/projects/list-of-all-projects/> (Accessed 08 August 2022).

63 “NDB Initiates Membership Expansion, Extends Global Outreach”, *New Development Bank*, 2 September 2021, https://www.ndb.int/press_release/ndb-initiates-membership-expansion-extends-global-outreach-development-bank-established-by-brics-welcomes-the-admission-of-uae-uruguay-and-bangladesh-as-new-members/ (Accessed 12 February 2022); “NDB Admits Egypt as New Member”, *New Development Bank*, 29 December 2021, https://www.ndb.int/press_release/ndb-admits-egypt-as-new-member/ (Accessed 12 February 2022).

64 “UNDP Teaming up with China Development Bank to Advance Sustainable Financing for SDGs and Climate Action”, *United Nations Development Programme*, 10 March 2022, <https://www.cn.undp.org/content/china/en/home/presscenter/articles/2022/undp-teaming-up-with-china-development-bank-to-advance-sustainable.html> (Accessed 25 May 2022); “Russia Invests Over \$14 Million in New Projects for Climate Action and SDGs”, *United Nations Development Programme*, 28 December 2021, https://www.undp.org/eurasia/press-releases/russia-invests-over-14-million-new-projects-climate-action-and-sdgs?c_src=CENTRAL&c_src2=GSR (Accessed 25 May 2022).

and the motto of 'LNOB' referring to intra-generational solidarity. The BRICS' practices show the ability to translate the sense of responsibility into action, thereby indicating two aspects of the emerging powers' attempts at maintaining a social identity. Firstly, the BRICS countries drew up a self-conception of being emerging powers that recognizes the necessity to act responsibly for the 'Common Future' and intergenerational vision. Therefore, they exerted themselves to fulfill their climate change mitigation targets and carry out sustainable development practices. Secondly, the motto of 'LNOB' exposed the lack of interest of Western-centric MDBs in providing development financing, so the BRICS group launched the NDB to ensure a level of intra-generational solidarity. This initiative cemented their identity emerging powers by emphasizing their differences from other developing states.

Conclusion

Proceeding from a constructivist standpoint, the article has argued that the discourse built on morality and the notion of responsibility generates a particular self-conception and self-categorization, and thus a separate group identity constructs for the BRICS. The discourse analysis of the texts and speeches has demonstrated that the BRICS, as a group, and the BRICS states, as presented by high-ranking figures, mutually forged an integrated frame developing self-conception and self-categorization. Through the discourse analysis, the article found that morality finds meaning in the discursive positions of the BRICS group and its members, and this feeds the sense of responsibility. The responsibility perception delineates the BRICS agenda and the partner states' practices. Moreover, the analytical framework of the article has highlighted that the BRICS states' self-conception—that recognizes the intergenerational vision and intra-generational solidarity—and their self-categorization—that place them between developed and developing countries—construct their group identity, finding itself under the label of 'emerging powers'. Last, the revealed integrated discursive frame allows us to understand that the 'lead to action' is an extension of being emerging powers. So, this connection has produced the bridge between discourse and practice.

The first research implication of the article is its contribution to the theoretical analysis of emerging powers, by modeling that states reaching the status of emerging powers consider the notions of morality and responsibility in designing their attitudes, beliefs, and actions toward global challenges in the areas of climate change and sustainable development. Second, the article introduces evidence that the nexus between climate change and sustainable development is certainly a relevant topic for investigating the concepts of social identity with respect to the BRICS grouping. Thus, the article has expanded the discussion brought forward by Mielniczuk⁶⁵.

Third, the article provides a broader perspective on the BRICS group identity, by integrating the notions of morality and responsibility as conceptual frameworks and by instrumentalizing the discourses presented in the official texts and speeches. In this regard, the article marks that the BRICS' discursive scheme, rooted in morality and responsibility, reflects their capabilities and readiness, so the BRICS accordingly acts against climate change through mitigating actions, in alliance with sustainable development efforts.⁶⁶ Moreover, while the article restates the portrayal of the grouping as the voice

65 Fabiano Mielniczuk, "BRICS in the Contemporary World: Changing Identities, Converging Interests", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No 6, 2013, pp. 1075-1090.

66 Rafael Leal-Arcas, "The BRICS and Climate Change", *International Affairs Forum*, Vol. 4, No 1, 2013, p. 22-16; Mihaela

of the Global South and the promoter of South-South cooperation,⁶⁷ it reveals that the positioning of the BRICS in relation to the Global South forges their social identity as emerging powers. At this point, the article goes beyond the design features of the NDB,⁶⁸ and it uncovers how the NDB plays a significant part in forming the BRICS as a distinct social entity and performing as an instrument for transferring the shared perspective among the BRICS states on climate change and sustainable development into practice.

Last, the adverse impacts of COVID-19 cannot be ignored as it has revealed the relationship between the environment, human health, and the course of the global economy. Whether or not this pandemic triggers a prompt reform in the characteristics of economic activities or the patterns of the relationship between humankind and nature, the article lays the basis for investigating the actions of the BRICS platform and the NDB in the post-pandemic period within the frameworks of morality and responsibility.

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67 Ramesh Thakur, "How Representative are BRICS?", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No 10, 2014, pp. 1791-1808.

68 Niall Duggan et al., "The Structural Power of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) in Multilateral Development Finance: A Case Study of the New Development Bank", *International Political Science Review*, 2021; Andrew F. Cooper, "The BRICS' New Development Bank: Shifting from Material Leverage to Innovative Capacity", *Global Policy*, Vol. 8, No 3, 2017, pp. 275-284.

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