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 belirleyici 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 bağa ilişkin BRICS ülkelerinin görüşlerini incelemektedir. Makale, iklim değişikliği ve sürdürülebilir kalkınma konusundaki açıklamaların ve söylemlerin 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 olmaktadır 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.

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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. Additionally, the works exploring the BRICS countries’ engagement in sustainable development initiatives point out their capacities in supporting international efforts. 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 profiles and their positions in the climate negotiations. Some developments such as India’s interference in weakening the language of the final text of the twenty-sixth Conference of Parties (COP) or the course of Brazil under President Bolsonaro (2019-ongoing) caused suspicions of diversifications surfacing among the BRICS states. 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". 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".

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. 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. 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. 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.

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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.\(^\text{16}\) 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”.\(^\text{17}\) 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”.\(^\text{18}\) The BRICS countries affirmed this intergenerational vision by seeing sustainable development efforts as key elements for future growth and a “responsibility to […] future generations”.\(^\text{19}\) 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.\(^\text{20}\) 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”.\(^\text{21}\) 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.\(^\text{22}\) 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.\(^\text{23}\)

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

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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 intragenerational 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

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”. 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.

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”. The BRICS leaders also acknowledged the role of sustainable growth and green practices in dealing with climate change issues, and expressed their commitment to “new models and approaches towards more equitable development and inclusive global growth”. 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. 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.”

34 “Fourth BRICS Summit: Delhi Declaration”.
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. Correspondingly, President Bolsonaro reaffirmed that environmental preservation produces local and global benefits whilst pursuing economic innovations. 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.

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”. The BRICS partnership stressed its commitment “to lead by example in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. At this juncture, the five members of the BRICS platform proposed a new institution differing from the Western models in its basic functions. 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”. The underlying ideational incentive of this initiative is closely related to the notion of responsibility to ensure intra-generational solidarity.


41 “Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries’ Leaders”.


43 “Fourth BRICS Summit: Delhi Declaration”.

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. In this context, both Prime Minister Modi and President Ramaphosa highlighted the capability of the NDB to bridge the global infrastructure gap. Also, a Russian official comment considered the NDB as an institution modernizing global governance architecture and financing renewable energy projects.

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.” 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. 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.

48 “Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries’ Leaders”.
Table 1. The BRICS Countries’ 2020 Targets Under the Copenhagen Accord

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2020 Targets</th>
<th>Emissions Reduction Performances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Reducing its projected emissions incl. LULUCF (Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry) by between 36.1% and 38.9% in 2020.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Limiting emissions by 15–25% below 1990 levels.</td>
<td>Decreased GHG emissions by 36.69% in 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Reducing the emissions intensity of its GDP by 20-25% by 2020 in comparison to the 2005 level.</td>
<td>Reduced GHG emissions per GDP from 2.375 CO2e/ $ million GDP in 2005 to 1.172 CO2e/ $ million GDP in 2019.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Decreasing carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP by 40-45% by 2020 compared to the 2005 level.</td>
<td>Decreased 3.034 kiloton CO2e/ $ million GDP to 844 kiloton CO2e/ $ million GDP from 2005 to 2019.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Reducing emissions growth trajectory below BAU (Business-as-usual) by 34% in 2020.</td>
<td>Limited total GHG emission by 550 MtCO2e (Million tons of CO2 equivalent), which stays in the range of the target of 414-599 MtCO2e.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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. 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 Agreement 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

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

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Country} & \textbf{INDCs} & \textbf{Updated NDCs} \\
\hline
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 MtCO2-e & Limit annual GHG emissions between 350-420 MtCO2-e \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{The BRICS Countries’ 2030 Targets Under the Paris Agreement\textsuperscript{56}}
\end{table}

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”.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{59}


\textsuperscript{55} A country’s INDCs turn into NDCs when it formally joins the Paris Agreement.


\textsuperscript{57} “Fourth BRICS Summit: Delhi Declaration”.

\textsuperscript{58} “8th BRICS Summit: Goa Declaration”.

In addition, the BRICS platform utilizes the motto of ‘LNOB’ in its calls for closing the gap in development financing. 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. 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. 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. 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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intergenerational</th>
<th>Morally Framed Discourse</th>
<th>Practices Reflecting the Sense of Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common Future</td>
<td>Emissions Reduction Commitments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave No One Behind</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Efforts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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,

BRICS, Climate Change and Sustainable Development

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 Mielniczuk.

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. Moreover, while the article restates the portrayal of the grouping as the voice

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, 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, 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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