
Explaining the BRICS Summit Solid, Strengthening Success¹

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Abstract

The BRICS have emerged as a solid, increasingly comprehensive, cooperative success, both alone and within the G20, on behalf of all emerging countries, as demonstrated by its summit performance since its start on the margins of the G8's Hokkaido Summit in 2008 through to its gathering at the G20's Brisbane Summit in 2014. This success is due primarily to the failure of the other international institutions from the 1944–45 and 1975 generations to give the leading emerging powers an equal, effective place and thus to solve the new, compounding global financial crisis and other challenges arising since 2008. The BRICS is a plurilateral summit institution growing in its level, membership, agenda and interaction intensity, with its summit performance rising substantially across an increasing array of major dimensions of global summit governance. This performance has been driven somewhat by the global financial, economic and food shocks since 2008, but primarily by the failure of the multilateral organizations from the 1940s, the G8-plus process from 2003 to 2009 and the first two G20 summits to give the big emerging powers the equal role, rights, responsibilities and effective influence warranted by their rising relative capability and international openness and needed to solve the new challenges of an intensely interconnected world. It was also due to the increasing institutionalization of the BRICS as a constricted, compact club, where rational incentives to cooperate slowly started to breed personal bonds that enhanced cooperation among the participants themselves.

Keywords: BRICS summit, global financial crisis, G8, G20

Introduction

Significance

Among the world's many plurilateral summit institutions (PSIs) with global relevance and reach, the BRICS grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa stands out in several ways. It arose as a summit on the sidelines of the Group of Eight (G8) summit in 2008, just before the arrival of the first Group of 20 (G20) summit, in which all the BRICS members had an equal place. It was initiated by Russia, which soon hosted the first separate BRICS summit at Yekaterinburg on 16 June 2009, and which had been an established member of the G8 since 1998. The BRICS combined territorially large, centrally located powers from major continents: Russia from Europe, East Asia and Central Asia; China from East Asia; India from South Asia; Brazil from South America; and, upon its admission in 2011, South Africa from Africa. At its outset, the BRICS contained a small set of largely post-colonial countries of a distinctive kind — the economically, demographically and geographically

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big emerging countries that were growing very fast and rapidly approaching or already in the major power tier. It had a quite comprehensive agenda, unlike the G20 initially focused on finance and economics, and unlike the G8 apparently focused after 2009 on development and security. Its broad agenda highlighted the questions of whether and why the BRICS would provide better global governance than the G8 and G20 and whether it would do so in cooperation or competition with these other global PSIs.

The Debate

Answers to these questions are the subject of an ongoing debate among several competing schools of thought about how and why the BRICS summit arose and performed.

The first school sees a failed BRICS of little relevance to its members or those beyond. Adherents point to its lack of big achievements on central, pressing issues such as reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and its long struggle to produce only a modestly resourced BRICS development bank by 2014. As causes they point to the lack of common characteristics and interests among its members, notably the differences between democratic India, Brazil and South Africa and the less democratic members, the territorial disputes and military tension between China and India, and the admission of a much smaller South Africa with a power-boosting focus on its neighbouring African region rather than the globe as a whole [O'Neill, 2012].

The second school sees the BRICS experiencing a boom-to-bust decline [Niu Haibin, 2015]. This school emerged in 2013 when the economic growth of China and India began to slow and that of Russia, Brazil and South Africa started suddenly to drop severely. A variant sees the BRICS as merely one of many new groups of emerging powers arising in the same period, with others having more promise due to their more reliable rising power and democratic political systems [Keukeleire and Hooijmaaijers, 2014].

The third school sees a “facade of unity” as the BRICS summit struggles to agree on a reformed international financial order, due to its members’ domestic economic and political challenges and the close ties of some to a much more powerful United States [Jones, 2014, p. 80]. Members’ difficulties in meeting the demands of their middle-income transition mean that the future power of the BRICS is by no means assured. Others highlight its members’ economic disparities, with China so much more powerful than the rest, their different domestic political systems, and rivalries between China and India [Acharya, 2014, pp. 65–65].

The fourth school sees the BRICS as a short-term, single-issue, successful response to the financial crisis that created it [Petropoulos, 2013]. It argues that the BRICS summit arose due to the imbalance in the international economic system exposed by the financial crisis of 2008. The economic size of BRICS members allowed the group to participate successfully in discussions about solutions to the crisis. This showed that their collaboration could improve their global standing. This leverage focused the BRICS agenda, especially at the early summits, on reforming the existing international financial institutions (IFIs) to enhance the influence of emerging economies.

The fifth school sees the BRICS becoming increasingly influential but still far from being a unified geopolitical bloc or alliance [Kulik, 2014]. Its leaders created a currency reserve pool in 2013, were the G20’s most active members, and were reshaping global order with increasing influence and impact due to their rising relative capabilities. Yet after five summits they “still have a long way to go before they can manage to find the common ground necessary to act as a unified geopolitical alliance” [Li, 2014, p. 14]. Similarly, Steen Fryba Christensen and Raúl Bernal-Meza [2014, p. 44], employing concepts developed by Antonio Gramsci and Robert Cox, conclude that “it is difficult to

conceive of the BRICS as a counter-hegemonic ‘alliance’ to the extent that the interests and the differences between its members do not permit one to consider it a force that could generate systemic changes.” A variant of this school sees “interdependent hegemony,” asserting that “the rise of the BRICS has indeed, to a large extent, challenged the many aspects of the existing international order’s *functionality, scope, legitimacy* and *authority* ... However, it has not yet fundamentally changed the *structural power* of the existing international system” [Li and Agustín, 2014, 69].

The sixth school sees the BRICS as Russia’s counter-hegemonic coalition, created as an assertive, long-term, finance-focused group that is crystallizing as an influential community [Roberts, 2009; Fituni, 2014, pp. 98–107]. Its cohesion and influence are based on its members’ status as regional superpowers and economic growth engines and their consensus on common principles for world order. This school argues that the BRICS was led by a Russia that sought to counter unipolarity in an international system directed by the United States. Russia thus turned the BRICS from an investment strategy and concept about economic cooperation invented by Jim O’Neill in 2001 into a political alliance to change the international balance {O’Neill, 2001 #485@@hidden}. When the economic crisis exposed the United States as vulnerable, Russia seized the opportunity to highlight the failures of the U.S.-led international economic system. Russia called for emerging economies to become equals in decision making. By 2008, it had obtained a favourable international position, as it had integrated itself into the international economic system on its own terms. Russia thus reacted to the western sanctions imposed on it due to the Crimea crisis in 2014 by trying to use its connections with China and India to boost trade and foreign investment [Zhong, 2014]. As members of the G20, the BRICS countries also bonded to counter host Australia’s suggestion that Russia might be suspended from the governing troika preparing the Brisbane Summit in November 2014 [Jones, 2014, p. 83].

The seventh school sees the BRICS as a broader developing country coalition seeking to shift the balance of global political influence from the West toward the developing world as a whole [Nikonov, 2014]. It was an expression of the unified political will of several countries to establish a new international institutional balance to correspond to the emerging geopolitical one. As the existing institutional balance was undemocratic and unipolar and failed to offer opportunities for all parties, the BRICS helped developing countries to claim their place. It thus challenged not only the G7/8 but also western dominance as a whole.

The eighth school sees the BRICS as a stand-alone success, due to its own institutional skill [Cooper, 2014; Cooper and Thakur, 2014]. Andrew F. Cooper and Asif Farooq [2013, p. 428] argue that “BRICS members have been successful in amplifying converging interests while avoiding friction from disagreement by downplaying issues on which there is geopolitical divergence and policy competition” and relying on institutional flexibility from a loose, informal style. A variant sees particular BRICS success in the global South, led by its New Development Bank, based on its members’ financial, technical and foreign reserve capabilities [Modi, 2014, pp. 86–87].

The ninth school sees the BRICS as a successful competitor to the G8 and G20. It produced agreements important to its members and the world and succeeded on issues where other international institutions had failed. This school highlights the expansion of the BRICS to embrace South Africa as a member in 2011, the involvement of many African leaders at the Durban Summit in 2013, and the creation of the New Development Bank at the Fortaleza Summit in 2014. As causes, it identifies the members’ growing power, similarity and like-mindedness as big, emerging, largely post-colonial powers and the failure of the established G7 powers and the international institutions they control to accommodate this power and distinctive common interests in a sufficiently fast and full way.

The tenth school sees the BRICS as a successful cooperator with the G20 and the G8 [Kirton, 2013d; Luckhurst, 2013]. It points to the many priority subjects, principles and actions that the BRICS and all G20 members agree on and the tendency of the BRICS to voice its distinctive dissent in reasonable, restrained, diplomatic terms. It notes the BRICS summit's regular expression of support for the G20. As causes, it identifies the seriousness of the global problems that all three global PSIs address, their shared agenda, the continuing need of the BRICS for G7 countries' capabilities and cooperation, the membership of all BRICS members in the G20, and the unique position of Russia — the BRICS founder — as a member of the BRICS, G20 and, until its suspension in 2014, the G8. A variant of this school sees BRICS members diverging on many G20 issues but uniting to secure its agreements on IFI reform and shifting the G20's focus to development issues [Stuenkel, 2012].

Puzzles

All these schools acknowledge the growing international economic and political power and role of the BRICS members, their desire for an enhanced place in global governance and their leadership in regional institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Dialogue Forum. Yet none fully explains why BRICS summitry arose before G20 summitry did and then became institutionalized as a standalone summit in 2009, after the G20 one had become an ongoing PSI in which all BRICS members and other key emerging countries had an equal place. None offers a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of the BRICS summit performance, across all of the major dimensions of global governance that such PSIs have, nor does so according to an analytical framework that allows for systematic assessment and results that can be directly compared to those of the similar PSIs of the G8 and G20. Almost none offer explanations based on a well-specified, internally consistent, causal model that is grounded in the major international relations theories of realism, liberal institutionalism and constructivism and that directly connects its causes to the hypothesized and observed effects. Such systematic scholarship is necessary to accurately describe how well the BRICS summits performed and compactly explain why it did so. This article undertakes these tasks of systematic, theory-grounded, model-based description and explanation. It does so using a method of input-output matching, reinforced by a brief process tracing of the critical case of most recent BRICS summit at Fortaleza in 2014.

Thesis

This analysis shows that the BRICS summit became a solid, increasingly comprehensive, cooperative success, both alone and within the G20, on behalf of all emerging countries. This was due primarily to the failure of the international institutions from the 1940s and 1975 to give the leading emerging powers an equal role in solving the compounding global financial, food and other challenges and crises erupting since 2008. As the BRICS grew institutionally in its level, membership, agenda, interaction intensity and depth, its summit performance rose to a substantial level across most dimensions of global governance. This rise was driven somewhat by the shocks of the global financial, food and economic crises of 2008–13, but above all by the failure of the multilateral organizations from the 1940s, the expanding G8 from 1975 and the first two G20 summits to give the big emerging powers the equal role, rights, responsibilities and influence that their rising relative capability and increasing international openness warranted and that were needed to solve the new challenges of an intensely interconnected world. It was also due to the increasing institutionalization of the BRICS as a constricted, compact club, where rational incentives to cooperate slowly bred personal bonds among the participants themselves.

The Growth of the BRICS as an International Institution

The BRICs was created conceptually as a class of countries in 2001 by Jim O’Neill of Goldman Sachs [O’Neill, 2001]. Yet its origins go back to the early 1990s in Russia, in the form of a “strategic triangle” of the RIC of Russia, India and China [Fituni, 2014, pp. 98–100; Senokosov, 2012]. It was later fostered by the formation of the SCO led by Russia and China. The BRICS itself first emerged at the ministerial level, as a gathering of the foreign ministers of Brazil, Russia, India and China on the margins of the opening of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2006 [Roberts, 2009; Luckhurst, 2013]. The first meeting of the BRIC leaders took place on the margins of the G8 and Major Economies Meeting on Energy Security and Climate Change (MEM) in Toyako-Hokkaido on 9 July 2008 [Hansen and Sergunin, 2015]. They agreed to hold a “proper” free-standing meeting the following year.

That stand-alone summit took place at Yekaterinburg on 16 June 2009, after the first two, highly successful G20 summits had been held in November 2008 and April 2009 [Kirton, 2013a]. BRICS leaders continued to hold their annual stand-alone summits each spring (see Appendix A). By 2011 they had added a second one each autumn on the margins of the G20 summit. At the second stand-alone summit, South Africa was admitted as a member. It attended the third summit in Sanya for the first time as such and hosted the fifth summit in Durban in 2013.

The BRICS summit quickly acquired a broad and dense array of ministerial and official-level bodies (see Appendix A). Stand-alone ministers’ meetings started for foreign affairs in 2006; finance in 2008; agriculture, trade and health in 2010; education and science, technology and innovation in 2013; and environment in 2015. The peace and security club thus quickly became an economic and social development one.

Dimensions of BRICS Performance

BRICS summit performance generally rose slowly and steadily over its first six summits to reach a solid level. This progress is seen in a systematic assessment of the evidence according to the six dimensions of global governance by which such summits are assessed, as outlined and justified in the model of systemic hub governance developed to account for the performance of the G20 (see Appendix B) [Kirton, 2013a].

Domestic Political Management

On the first performance dimension, domestic political management, the BRICS stand-alone summits had a perfect attendance record. The leaders always deemed it important to attend. The same was true for the BRICS summits held on the margins of the G20 and G8. This record was maintained by the decision at the Toronto G20 summit in 2010 not to hold a BRICS meeting because President Lula of Brazil did not attend the twin G20 one. The principle of fully inclusive equality was thus affirmed.

At their stand-alone summits, the BRIC leaders issued an increasing number of compliments to individual members in the summit’s communiqué. Such compliments, 43 in total, were issued at every summit, starting with two in Yekaterinburg in 2009, rising to a peak of 11 at Sanya in 2011 and 10 at Fortaleza in 2014.

The BRICS also featured in the subsequent national policy addresses of its members. In China, in the report to the 18th Party Congress in the autumn of 2013, when Xi Jinping became the new president,

the foreign policy section referred to only four international institutions: the UN, G20, BRICS and the SCO.

The effect of domestic re-election on BRICS summits is difficult to determine. Most leaders attending the early summits (Russia's Dmitry Medvedev, China's Hu Jintao, India's Manmohan Singh and Brazil's Lula) did not run for re-election. In the case of South Africa's Jacob Zuma, the newest member, there seems to have been a small positive effect.

Deliberation

On the second dimension, deliberation, in its public component measured by the conclusions in the concluding communiqué, performance slowly increased. The first summit produced just under 2,000 words, the second and third between 2,000 and 2,500, the fourth and fifth more than 4,000, with a surge at the sixth to 21,907 words (see Appendix B). It took the G7 summit 13 years to reach a level of over 4,000 words; the BRICS did it by their third summit.

At the first summit in 2009, the leading issue was macroeconomics, occupying 57% of the communiqué, followed by trade and investment at 36%, development at 35%, and the financial crisis at 22%, with considerable overlap (see Appendix C). In 2010 macroeconomics and development again led with more than 41%, IFI reform rose to take the third spot and employment was added. In 2011 macroeconomics and development again led, while food and agriculture at 18% came third and health at 14% fourth, with arms control and proliferation added. In 2012 macroeconomics and development again led. However, in 2013 when South Africa hosted, development soared to a strong first at 60%, and macroeconomics dropped to a distant second at 25%. In 2014 development retained its lead, while IFI reform took second at 19%.

The BRICS summit thus always had development as a priority, and macroeconomics until 2014. Its agenda broadened into the social concerns of food and health. It also expanded into the political-security subjects of non-proliferation with a peak of 9% in 2012 and terrorism with a peak of 9% in 2013.

Direction Setting

On the third dimension, the principled and normative direction setting emphasized by constructivist theory, performance has been strong, above all in emphasizing the BRICS institution's foundational distinctive mission. At the very start of their first joint statement in 2009, the BRIC leaders defined the mission of their new group as discussing "the current situation in global economy and other pressing issues of global development, and also prospects for further strengthening collaboration within the BRIC." In the first numbered paragraph they declared: "We stress the central role played by the G20 Summits in dealing with the financial crisis." The statement ended by defining the BRIC's purpose as "serving common interests of emerging market economies and developing countries, but also to building a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity."

What rendered this foundational mission distinct from those of other international institutions was "strengthening collaboration within the BRIC," supporting the G20 summit in the face of financial crisis and, less clearly, supporting the common interests of emerging countries in their economic development.

Decision Making

On the fourth dimension, decision making through producing commitments with precision, obligation and future orientation, as highlighted by the legalization variant of liberal-institutionalist theory, performance rose [Abbott, Keohane, Moravcsik et al., 2000]. The BRICS summit started with only 15 commitments in 2009, quickly spiked to 45 in 2010 and remained at about that level through to 2013. It took the G7 summit six years to reach a similar level. In 2014 the BRICS soared to produce 92 commitments.

In 2009, the leading subject was energy with five commitments, well ahead of the ten others with only one each (see Appendix D). In 2010, energy again came first with 11 commitments, followed by development with seven. In 2011, climate change came first with six commitments, followed by macroeconomics and trade with five each. In 2012 trade with nine commitments led by far. In 2013 development led with 13, followed by peace and security with eight. In 2014 decision making broadened even more, as commitments came in turn on international cooperation with 24, macroeconomics with 10 and socioeconomics, crime and corruption, and regional security with nine each. The BRICS was increasingly becoming a full-strength decisional forum, much like the G7/8 had long been. This increasingly comprehensive decisional performance is seen in the addition of the first commitments on financial regulation, macroeconomics, trade, climate change and energy in 2010, and on food and agriculture, health, human rights, accountability, terrorism, regional security and institutionalization in 2011. It is further seen in its surge in peace and security commitments in 2014.

Its 264 cumulative commitments were led by international cooperation with 33 and development with 27. This shows the BRICS is an outward looking, cooperative, development-devoted group.

Delivery

On the fifth dimension of delivery, defined as the compliance of its members with its priority commitments in the year following the annual summit, performance is best assessed by an application of the methodology developed for, applied to, and used to assess the G8, G20 and UN summits [Kirton, Kulik, Bracht et al., 2014; Kirton, Kulik and Bracht, 2014; Drezner, 2014, p. 142; Kirton, in press-b]. This method requires extensive, systematic research on the actual behaviour of BRICS members in implementing their priority summit commitments and doing so in a way caused by and consistent with the summit commitments their leaders made. The research based on this methodology has produced the best data base currently available about the compliance performance of the G8, G20 and BRICS summits.

This research shows that BRICS compliance performance has always been in the positive range and usually substantial, with a rising trend (see Appendix E). Compliance with the one assessed commitment from 2009 was +1.00 (100%), and with the three from 2010 +0.27 (63.5%). Compliance with the seven assessed priority commitments from 2011 was +0.54 or 77%, and with the five commitments assessed from 2012 at +0.28 or 64%. For the five assessed commitments from 2013, compliance rose back to +0.48 or 74%. This compliance performance is similar to the G8's first 37-year average of +0.40 or 70%.

Development of Global Governance

On the sixth dimension, the institutionalized development of global governance, performance has been strong. References to institutions inside the BRICS started with two in 2009 but spiked to 32 in 2012 and 26 in 2013 (see Appendix B). There was a similar rise in references to outside institutions,

with a spike from 13 in 2009 to 34 in 2010 (see Appendix F). There was always more attention to outside than to inside institutions, although the gap narrowed over the years. In keeping with its distinctive mission, the BRICS launched its New Development Bank in 2014, just as the G20 had created the Financial Stability Board in 2009 to meet its distinctive mission of promoting financial stability.

The Cadence of BRICS Performance

Taken together, the BRICS summit performance over its first six years suggests a four-stage progression. The first stage of getting started saw a small success, with accomplishments primarily in the public deliberative domain. The second stage, in 2010 and 2011, saw a substantial increase in almost all dimensions, especially in decision making in 2010 and delivery in 2011. The third stage, in 2012 and 2013, saw a further rise to a substantial level, above all in public deliberation. The fourth stage, at the start of its second hosting cycle in Fortaleza in 2014 saw a spike in deliberation, decision making and the development of global governance inside the BRICS, led by the birth of the New Development Bank.

On a comparative basis, this performance fits well with that of the G7 after its first six summits from 1975 to 1980. However, in comparison with the first six G20 summits, the BRICS lags, save only for the leaders' attendance, where the smaller BRIC had a perfect score [Kirton, in press-a].

Causes of BRICS Performance

The concert equality model of G8 governance and the systemic hub model of G20 governance can explain this particular pattern of BRICS performance rather well, but with the second cause of multilateral organizational failure now replacing the first cause of shock-activated vulnerability as the most salient one in the case of the BRICS [Kirton, 2013d].

Shock-Activated Vulnerability

The first cause is shock-activated vulnerability, notably in finance, food and foreign military interventions. The global financial crisis, emerging in the United States, United Kingdom and Europe in 2007, was a key cause of the first BRIC stand-alone summit at Yekaterinburg in June 2009 and, to a lesser extent, its first sideline summit in the summer of 2008. By 2009 all BRICS members were severely affected by the crisis, which erupted when U.S. investment bank Lehman Brothers collapsed on 15 September 2008 and spread globally and deepened swiftly during the following months. The diminishing strength of the crisis after 2009 coincided with the reduced attention given by the BRIC countries to the financial crisis, and the increasing intensity of their summitry and performance focused on other subjects. The second shock salient to the creation of the BRICS was the food crisis of 2008. Its impact is seen in the release at the first BRIC summit of a separate leaders' statement on food security. However, although most BRIC members were food importers, the impact was limited within their countries, if not on the poorer developing ones beyond. The declining severity of the global food crisis was, however, accompanied by rising attention given to food security in 2011, for this was a chronic condition for the poor.

The third shock came from foreign military interventions led by G8 powers, above all in Libya in 2011. They inspired the BRICS to express opposition to the Libyan intervention in 2011 and more generally to express its devotion to the principle of non-interference, even if these military interventions were not mounted directly against BRICS members or their close allies abroad.

Multilateral Organizational Failure

The second cause, multilateral organizational failure, is more salient. The failure of the UNSC to prevent the expansion of the military intervention launched by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Libya, the failure of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reform its voice, vote and governance in full on time, and the failure of the World Bank were direct causes of BRICS actions, with the World Bank failure generating the creation of the New Development Bank in 2014. The World Trade Organization's failure to complete its badly overdue Doha Development Agenda also fuelled BRICS performance on trade.

In similar fashion, the G8 failed at its 2008 summit in Hokkaido and 2009 summit in L'Aquila to give BRIC members a fully equal permanent place. They were again only invited guests at some sessions and at L'Aquila their status was newly diluted by the 40 leaders who attended on the last day. BRICS performance surged at Fortaleza in July 2014, the first BRICS summit held after Russia had been suspended from the G8 summits held earlier that year.

Predominant, Equalizing Capabilities

The third cause, the predominant, equalizing capabilities of BRICS members, also mattered. Since its 2009 start, the BRIC increased its global predominance to approach a majority in global gross domestic product in purchasing power parity, growth rates and population [Kirton, 2013d, a]. However, the combined soft power of the BRICS members remained modest compared to that of the G7 and the other G20 members (see Appendix G).

Moreover, its internal equality and equalization were low. China's economy was larger than the other four members combined and its growth rate far exceeded that of the other, slowing members in 2013 and 2014. The addition of South Africa as a member in 2011 reduced the equality and equalization of the group. One result of China's much superior relative capability was its 2014 success in securing the site of the New Development Bank.

Common Characteristics and Principles

The fourth cause, common characteristics and principles has some weight. Most BRICS members are big, rapidly emerging economies, with a global foreign policy and relevance. Most had direct experience as colonies under European imperialism. Yet there is a large divide between the democratic members of India, Brazil and South Africa, institutionalized in their IBSA Dialogue Forum since 2013, and Russia and China. China and India had a territorial dispute, just as Russia and Japan did within the G8 club.

Domestic Political Cohesion

The fifth cause, domestic political cohesion, is high, and thus helps account for the BRICS increasing and solid success. Each BRICS leader in the first six years was in firm control of his or her domestic legislature, judiciary and central bank and was relatively popular among the domestic public. Continuity was considerable, as India's Manmohan Singh attended all six summits while each other original member sent two leaders to the summit. The cumulating continuity helps account for the BRICS performance rise, if not the singular spike in performance in 2014.

Constricted Participation in a Club at the Hub

The sixth cause, constricted participation in the club also had a strong effect. With only one member added in its first six years to make it a five-member group, the BRICS was a highly compact club. Meeting twice a year since 2011, it acquired the interaction intensity needed to become an interpersonal club. All members also belonged to the G20, while Russia connected the BRICS to the G8 until 2014, India and South Africa to the Commonwealth, Russia and China to the SCO, and Russia, China and India to the Asia-Europe Meeting.

Critical Case: 2014 Fortaleza

The sixth BRICS summit, held in Fortaleza on 15 July 2014, showed that the BRICS was becoming a more comprehensive, cooperative success on behalf of all emerging and others countries, by acting as an internally equal and even interpersonal club.

In the lead-up to the summit, some of Brazil's partners felt that the preparatory process was disorganized. The Brazilian presidency was preoccupied with hosting the World Cup, which resulted in a delay in the summit from the normal spring-time scheduling to mid July. Brazil was also preoccupied with its forthcoming elections in October and with the one big make-or-break BRICS summit agenda item — the long discussed and negotiated development bank. This issue was rendered more complex and competitive when South Africa decided to seek the site of the bank, even though it did not expect to win. China's strong desire to host the bank in Shanghai and its campaign to secure supporters for its bid led China to readily accept several of the proposals of its partners that it had previously refused. Russia's international isolation due to its invasion and annexation of the Crimean region of Ukraine made it similarly accommodating, in an effort to boost its geopolitical support from its BRICS colleagues. Brazil's desire to host a successful summit in the lead-up to President Dilma Rousseff's re-election campaign and to secure an agreement on the bank as the defining achievement of her summit led Brazil to accept large passages of text proposed by its partners for the communiqué, which appeared unaltered in final declaration. These dynamics of equal initiative and easy agreement were most evident in the success of several issue-specific initiatives from South Africa, the least powerful country in the group.

The New Development Bank

The defining achievement of Fortaleza was the long awaited birth of the New Development Bank. It took much time to debate the details, especially regarding the physical home, the first president, the board of directors, and the quota contributions and voting shares. At one moment at the summit it looked like there would be no consensus. But in the end, the leaders themselves realized that if they did not agree, they would lose a historic opportunity and might not have another chance. They produced a result that satisfied them all.

The decision to call the new institution the "New Development Bank" was a compromise rather than a signal of any particular approach or significance about the word "new." Other names were suggested, including the "BRICS Development Bank" and the "Infrastructure Bank."

The bank was, in fact, new in several ways. One was the equal sharing of the capital contributions among the five countries, as distinct from the World Bank with its different quota shares and proportional voting rights, with the largest share for the United States. This arrangement required much negotiation, as China had wanted to contribute more than the other members. However, the majority's insistence on equality won.

The new BRICS bank was intended to complement the old World Bank and Asian Development Bank rather than substitute for them. The new bank would fill the gaps that the old ones could not cover. This was in the interest of developing countries, such as Indonesia, which had complained about the detailed, intrusive conditionality of the IMF and World Bank, especially in the Asian financial crisis of 1997. The new bank would do things the other banks and IMF were not able or willing to.

The New Development Bank was initially devoted mainly to traditional infrastructure, such as roads and connectivity. However, senior Chinese officials foresaw its projects expanding from hard infrastructure to social development over time. The first task, however, was to develop a strategy about the role of the BRICS in the world, and what it and only it could collectively do.

UNSC Permanent Membership

A second issue showing the BRICS's advance as an equalizing, interpersonal club was reform of the permanent membership of the UNSC. This was a difficult issue arousing a defensive positionalist dynamic from the existing Permanent Five (P5) members of the UNSC, which saw expansion as a dilution of their status, rights and control. It was one of the many major differences among the BRICS countries.

For each summit, the leaders' personal representatives spend much time drafting the section on this issue of the declaration. India, Brazil and South Africa push hard to have their claims for enhanced membership recognized. In the past, China and Russia, both members of the P5, always refused. At Fortaleza, however, the BRICS members finally put their differences aside and acknowledged the IBSA claim. Thus the declaration read: "China and Russia reiterate the importance they attach to Brazil. India and South Africa's status and role in international affairs and support their aspiration to play a greater role in the UN." At the previous two summits, the IBSA members had unsuccessfully pressed for such language, in a stronger form. This time a gentler version of the IBSA initiative got in.

Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Another achievement was the commitment on sexual and reproductive rights. The declaration read: "We confirm our strong commitment to address social issues in general and in particular gender inequality, women's rights and issues facing young people and we reaffirm our determination to ensure sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for all." The passage on sexual and reproductive rights was drafted by South Africa and appeared verbatim from its drafted text. South Africa had made such a proposal for the two previous summits at Durban and Delhi but had been refused, despite its status as Durban host. This was due to Russia's resistance to anything that might be seen as legitimizing the status and claims of its gay community. Even though this Russian antipathy was particularly prominent in the spring of 2014, the passage sailed swiftly through at Fortaleza.

Social Security and Education

Further such achievements arose on social security and education. The first, in the Fortaleza Action Plan, authorized a "Meeting of Ministers or Senior Officials responsible for social security, on the margins of a multilateral meeting." This South African initiative and success flowed from the passage on population led by South Africa at the Sanya Summit. Another South African success at Fortaleza was the paragraph that linked education explicitly to the Millennium Development Goals and post-2015 sustainable development goals.

Conclusion

Thus as the BRICS institutional system grew, its summit performance rose to a substantial level, across all six dimensions of performance and across a broadening agenda extending into the political-security sphere. This progression was due primarily not to initial and continuing financial shocks but to the failure of the multilateral organizations from the 1940s to give the big emerging powers the greater role, rights and responsibilities warranted by their rising relative capability. It was also due to the intensifying institutionalization of the BRICS as a constricted, compact club, where rational incentives to cooperate started to breed personal bonds that enhanced cooperation among the participants themselves.

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Appendix A: BRICS Meetings

A-1: Annual Summits (2009–2014)

1	16 June 2009	Yekaterinburg, Russia
2	16 April 2010	Brasilia, Brazil
3	14 April 2011	Sanya, China
4	29 March 2012	New Delhi, India
5	25–26 March 2013	Durban, South Africa
6	15–16 July 2014	Fortaleza, Brazil

A-2: Ad Hoc Summits (2008–2014)

1	9 July 2008	Hokkaido, Japan (at the G8 plus)
2	3 November 2011	Cannes, France (at the G20)
3	18 June 2012	Los Cabos (at the G20)
4	5 September 2013	St. Petersburg, Russia (at the G20)
5	15 November 2014	Brisbane, Australia (at the G20)

A-3: Foreign Ministers (2006-2014)

1	21 September 2006	New York, United States	United Nations General Assembly
2	24 September 2007	New York, United States	United Nations General Assembly
3	16 May 2008	Yekaterinburg, Russia	
4	26 September 2008	New York, United States	United Nations General Assembly
5	16 May 2009	Yekaterinburg, Russia	
6	24 September 2009	New York, United States	United Nations General Assembly
7	21 September 2010	New York, United States	United Nations General Assembly
8	23 September 2011	New York, United States	United Nations General Assembly
9	24 September 2011	Moscow, Russia	
10	26 September 2012	New York, United States	United Nations General Assembly
11	26 September 2013	New York, United States	United Nations General Assembly

12	24 March 2014	The Hague, Netherlands	Nuclear Security Summit, G7 meeting
13	25 September 2014	New York, United States	United Nations General Assembly

A-4: Finance Ministers (2008–2015)

1	7 November 2008	São Paulo, Brazil	G20
2	13 March 2009	Horsham, United Kingdom	G20
3	4 September 2009	London, United Kingdom	G20
4	22 September 2011	Washington DC, United States	International Monetary Fund/World Bank meetings
5	11 October 2012	Tokyo, Japan	
6	25 February 2012	Mexico City, Mexico	
7	11 October 2013	Washington DC, United States	International Monetary Fund/World Bank meetings
8	11 April 2014	Washington DC, United States	International Monetary Fund/World Bank meetings
9	15 July 2014	Fortaleza, Brazil	
10	9 September 2014	Cairns, Australia	G20
11	16 April 2015	Washington DC, United States	International Monetary Fund/World Bank meetings

A-5: Agriculture and Agrarian Development Ministers (2010–2015)

1	26 March 2010	Moscow, Russia
2	29 October – 1 November 2011	Chengdu, China
3	29 October 2013	Pretoria, South Africa
4	15 March 2015	Brasilia, Brazil

A-6: Trade and Economy Ministers (2010–2014)

1	April 2010	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
2	13 Apr 2011	Sanya, China
3	14 December 2011	Geneva, Switzerland
4	28 March 2012	New Delhi, India

5	19 April 2012	Puerto Vallarta, Mexico
6	26 March 2013	Durban, South Africa
7	14 July 2014	Fortaleza, Brazil

A-7: Health Ministers (2010–2014)

1	May 2010	Geneva, Switzerland	
2	11 July 2011	Beijing, China	
3	September 2011	New York, United States	United Nations High Level Meeting on Non-communicable Diseases
4	22 May 2012	Geneva, Switzerland	World Health Assembly
5	10–11 January 2013	New Delhi, India	
6	20 May 2013	Geneva, Switzerland	World Health Assembly
7	7 November 2013	Cape Town, South Africa	
8	20 May 2014	Geneva, Switzerland	
9	5 December 2014	Brasilia, Brazil	

A-8: Science, Technology and Innovation Ministers (2013–2015)

1	10 February 2013	Cape Town, South Africa
2	17–18 March 2015	Brasilia, Brazil

A-9: Education Ministers (2013–2015)

1	Nov 2013	Paris, France
2	2 March 2015	Brasilia, Brazil

A-10: Environment Ministers (2015)

1	22 April 2015	Moscow, Russia
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Appendix B: BRICS Performance

Summit	Domestic Political Management		Deliberation		Decision Making	Delivery		Development of Global Governance	
	Attendance	Compliments	# words	# documents		Compliance	# commitments assessed	Internal	External
2009 Yekaterinburg	100%	2	1,844	2	15	+1.00	1	2	13
2010 Brasilia	100%	8	2,436	1	45	+0.27	3	16	34
2011 Sanya	100%	11	2,253	1	38	+0.54	7	12	28
2012 Delhi	100%	7	4,415	2	32	+0.28	5	32	43
2013 Durban	100%	5	4,789	2	43	+0.48	5	26	51
2014 Fortaleza	100%	10	21,907	3	92	N/A	N/A	58	253
Total	100%	43	37,644	11	265	N/A	21	146	422
Average	100%	7.17	6,274	1.8	44	+0.41	4.2	24	70

Notes: Only documents issued at a stand-alone summit in the leaders' name are included.

Domestic Political Management refers to participation by BRICS leaders. Compliments are references to members in summit documents.

Deliberation refers to the documents issued in the leaders' name at the summit.

Decision Making refers to number of commitments as identified by the BRICS Research Group.

Delivery scores are measured on a scale from -1 (no compliance) to +1 (full compliance, or fulfilment of goal set out in commitment). Figures are cumulative scores based on compliance reports.

Development of Global Governance: internal refers to the number of references to BRICS institutions in summit documents; external is references to institutions outside the G20.

Appendix C: BRICS Conclusions

Issue Area	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Financial crisis	21.5%	18.1%	14.4%	12.2%	9.3%	9.1%
Reform of international financial institutions	12.9%	21.1%	7.9%	12.5%	8.3%	18.7%
Exchange rates	7.2%	5.9%	4.4%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Macroeconomics	56.8%	43.2%	40.5%	39.2%	25.0%	13.9%
Employment	0	6.4%	1.2%	7.3%	9.0%	4.3%
Trade and investment	35.7%	6.8%	11.5%	25.5%	19.2%	11.7%
Development	35.2%	40.8%	40.2%	36.4%	60.1%	30.9%
Health	6.8%	7.3%	14.4%	16.3%	15.4%	6.6%
Food and agriculture	6.8%	8.9%	17.7%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Crime and corruption	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	2.7%	4.0%
Terrorism	5.6%	5.1%	4.6%	6.4%	9.2%	5.4%
Non-proliferation (arms control)	0	0	8.8%	8.9%	2.6%	3.0%

Note: N/A = not available.

Appendix D: BRICS Commitments by Issue Area, 2009–2014

Issue Area	Total	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total	265	15	45	38	32	43	92
Financial regulations	4		2	2			
Reform of international financial institutions	11	1	4	1	2	2	1
Macroeconomics	22		4	5	1	2	10
Socioeconomic	17	1	1	4	2		9
Development	27	1	7	1	3	13	2
Trade	25		4	5	9	3	4
Labour and employment	1						1
Global Transnational Issues							
Energy	19	5	11	1	2		
Climate change	12		2	6	3		1
Environment	3						3
Food and agriculture	6			1	1		4
Health	2			1	1		
International cooperation	33					9	24
Information and communication technologies	5	1		2			2
Education	7		3				4
Natural disaster	4	1	2	1			
Human rights	7			1		1	5
Political Security Issues							
Good governance	4	1	1	1		1	
Accountability	2			1		1	
Crime and corruption	11				1	1	9
Non-proliferation	3					1	2
Terrorism	5			1	1	1	2

Regional security	10			1			9
Political issues	4	1			3		
Peace and security	10	1			1	8	
General							
Support for G20	4	1	1	1	1		
United nations	6	1	3	1	1		
Institutionalization	1			1			

Caroline Bracht, Olga Milkina, October 21, 2014

Appendix E: BRICS Compliance, 2009–2013

Table E-1: Compliance by Summit (N=21)

Commitment	Issue Area	Text	Average	Brazil	Russia	India	China	South Africa
2009 Yekaterinburg, Russia (N=1)								
2009-	food security	"The BRIC countries support the adoption of a wide range of mid- to long-term measures in order to provide for a solution to the issue of food security."	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	
2009 Summit Average			+1.00	+1.00	+1.00	+1.00	+1.00	
2010 Brasilia, Brazil (N=3)								
2010-15	Development	We reiterate the importance of the UN Millennium Declaration and the need to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We underscore the importance of preventing a potential setback to the efforts of poor countries aimed at achieving MDGs due to the effects of the economic and financial crisis. We should also make sustained efforts to achieve the MDGs by 2015, including through technical co-operation and financial support to poor countries in implementation of development policies and social protection for their populations.	+1.00	+1	+1	+1	+1	
2010-19	Trade	"We commit ourselves and urge all states to resist all forms of trade protectionism."	-1.00	-1	-1	-1	-1	
2010-29	Energy	"We will aim to diversify our energy mix by increasing, where appropriate, the contribution of renewable energy sources"	+0.80	+1	0	+1	+1	
2010 Summit Average			+0.27	+0.33	0	+0.33	+0.33	

Commitment	Issue Area	Text	Average	Brazil	Russia	India	China	South Africa
2011 Sanya, China (N=7)								
2011-04	Regional security	"We wish to continue our co-operation in the UN Security Council on Libya"	+0.40	0	+1	-1	+1	+1
2011-13	Reform of international financial institutions	Recognizing that the international financial crisis has exposed the inadequacies and deficiencies of the existing international monetary and financial system, we support the reform and improvement of the international monetary system, with a broad-based international reserve currency system providing stability and certainty.	+0.20	0	0	+1	+1	-1
2011-14	Finance	We support the international community in strengthening cooperation to ensure stability and strong development of physical market by reducing distortion and further regulate financial market.	+0.40	+1	0	+1	0	0
2011-17	Climate change	We support the Cancun Agreements	+0.80	+1	+1	+1	0	+1
2011-27	Health	[We underscore our firm commitment to strengthen] dialogue and cooperation in the field of] public health, including the fight against HIV.	+1.00	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1
2011-28	Development	We support infrastructure development in Africa and its industrialization within framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).	+0.60	+1	0	+1	+1	0
2011-30	Trade	[We have agreed to continue further expanding and deepening] trade [cooperation among our countries].	+0.40	0	0	+1	+1	0
2011 Summit Average			+0.54	+0.58	+0.43	+0.71	+0.71	+0.29

Commitment	Issue Area	Text	Average	Brazil	Russia	India	China	South Africa
2012 New Delhi, India (N=5)								
2012-3	Reform of international financial institutions	We will work with the international community to ensure that sufficient resources can be mobilized to the IMF in a timely manner as the Fund continues its transition to improve governance and legitimacy.	+0.20	0	0	0	+1	0
2012-9	Trade	Considering UNCTAD to be the focal point in the UN system for the treatment of trade and development issues, we intend to invest in improving its traditional activities of consensus-building, technical cooperation and research on issues of economic development and trade.	0	0	-1	+1	0	0
2012-23	Climate change	We will continue our efforts for the implementation of the Convention [on Biological Diversity] and its Protocols, with special attention to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization, Biodiversity Strategic Plan 2011-2020 and the Resource Mobilization Strategy.	+0.20	0	+1	+1	-1	0

Commitment	Issue Area	Text	Average	Brazil	Russia	India	China	South Africa
2012-25	Development	[We attach the highest importance to economic growth that supports development and stability in Africa, as many of these countries have not yet realised their full economic potential.] We will take our cooperation forward to support their efforts to accelerate the diversification and modernization of their economies. This will be through infrastructure development, knowledge exchange and support for increased access to technology, enhanced capacity building, and investment in human capital, including within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).	+0.40	0	0	0	+1	+1
2012-27	Energy	We will expand sourcing of clean and renewable energy, and use of energy efficient and alternative technologies, to meet the increasing demand of our economies and our people, and respond to climate concerns as well.	+0.60	0	+1	0	+1	+1
2012 Summit Average			+0.28	0	+0.20	+0.40	+0.40	+0.40
2013 Durban, South Africa (N=5)								
2013-9	Development	Within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), we support African countries in their industrialization process through capacity building	+0.60	+1	+1	+1	+1	-1

Commitment	Issue Area	Text	Average	Brazil	Russia	India	China	South Africa
2013-14	Macro	We will explore opportunities for cooperating in the field of SMEs and recognise the need for promoting dialogue among the respective Ministries and Agencies in charge of the theme, particularly with a view to promoting their international exchange and cooperation and fostering innovation, research and development.	+0.20	0	0	+1	+1	-1
2013-21	Trade	We reaffirm our support for an open, transparent and rules-based multilateral trading system	+1.00	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1
2013-31	Crime and corruption	We extend support to the efforts aimed at combating illicit traffic in opiates originating in Afghanistan within the framework of the Paris Pact	+0.20	0	+1	0	+1	-1
2013-36	Terrorism	[We reiterate our strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and stress that there can be no justification, whatsoever, for any acts of terrorism. We believe that the UN has a central role in coordinating international action against terrorism within the framework of the UN Charter and in accordance with principles and norms of international law.] In this context, we support the implementation of the UN General Assembly Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and are determined to strengthen cooperation in countering this global threat.	+0.40	0	+1	+1	0	0
2013 Summit Average			+0.48	+0.40	+0.80	+0.80	+0.80	-0.40
OVERALL AVERAGE			+0.41	+0.46	+0.49	+0.66	+0.65	+0.06

Appendix F: References to Institutions in BRICS Declarations

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of Documents	2	1	1	2	2	3
International Institution*						
G20	3	6	5	5	2	2
United Nations	6	9	10	15	25	44
World Trade Organization	2	2	3	2	5	3
Food and Agriculture Organization	1	0	0	0	0	0
World Grains Forum	1	0	0	0	0	0
International Monetary Fund	0	4	1	8	4	32
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development	0	1	0	0	0	0
International Finance Corporation	0	1	0	0	0	0
Bretton Woods institutions	0	1	0	0	0	0
World Bank	0	3	0	8	0	1
Financial Stability Board	0	1	0	0	0	0
Global Forum	0	1	0	0	0	0
World Expo	0	1	0	0	0	0
Commonwealth	0	1	0	0	0	0
World Student Games	0	1	0	0	0	0
FIFA World Cup	0	1	1	0	0	0
Olympics	0	1	2	0	0	0
African Union	0	0	2	0	6	5
New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development	0	0	1	1	2	0
Universade	0	0	2	0	0	0
Youth Olympics	0	0	1	0	0	0
Arab League	0	0	0	1	0	0
International Atomic Energy Association	0	0	0	2	1	1

International Framework for Sustainable Development	0	0	0	1	0	0
International financial institutions	0	0	0	0	2	1
Multilateral development banks	0	0	0	0	1	0
Regional development banks	0	0	0	0	1	0
International Development Association	0	0	0	0	1	0
Economic Community of West African States	0	0	0	0	1	1
New Development Bank	0	0	0	0	0	161
Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons	0	0	0	0	0	1
G77	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total BRICS Institutions	2	16	12	32	26	58
Total International Institutions	13	34	28	43	51	253

Notes: Listed in order of appearance in cumulative communiqués. The unit of analysis is the sentence.

Appendix G: International Image of BRICS Countries, May 2013

Country	Mainly Positive %	Mainly Negative %	Net (Rank)
Germany (G7)	59	15	+44 (first)
Canada (G7)	55 (second)	13 (first)	+42 (second)
United Kingdom (G7)	55	18	+37 (third)
Japan (G7)	51	27	+24 (seventh)
France (G7)	49	21	+28 (fourth)
European Union	49	21	+28 (fourth)
Brazil (BRICS)	46	21	+25 (sixth)
United States (G7)	45	34	+11 (eighth)
China (BRICS)	42	39	+03
Korea (G20)	36	31	+05
South Africa (BRICS)	35	30	+05
India (BRICS)	34	35	-01
Russia (BRICS)	30	40	-10
G7 Average	51	21	30 (1–6th, eighth)
BRICS Average	37	33	04 (7,9,11–13)

Source: BBC World Survey, May 2013.