



BRICS in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Shaping Global Environmental Governance in the 21st Century

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Abstract

In the 21st century, changes are taking place rapidly in global politics and environmental governance, with artificial intelligence and emerging powers playing a significant role. BRICS, which includes countries like Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, aims to bring together these developing countries to become the voice of emerging new economies and end the unipolarity of the world. This group has worked to strengthen Western dominance in the world and made the world's power multipolar. Through this research paper, we will explore how Artificial Intelligence is impacting environmental policies, climate change and global governance resources in BRICS member countries. This chapter helps illustrate how BRICS is not only strengthening the voice of the Global South and emerging economies on the international stage, but it is also playing and contributing an important role in issues like sustainable development and climate governance.

Index term - BRICS, artificial intelligence, environment, governance, cooperation.

Introduction

Global governance refers to the institutions, rules, and processes through which international problems are resolved. These include the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and other international organizations. In the 20th century, these international organizations were under the influence of Western countries, but in the 21st century, there is a change in their dominance. Power is no longer in the hands of just one country, but power has now become multipolar. These changes are especially visible in the 21st century due to artificial intelligence and the emerging economy countries.

The international world order consists of a complex set of rules, procedures, and institutions for solving problems, with no central world government. This international world order relied on institutions such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the IMF. But now, due to institutions like BRICS, the international world order has got new options.

Global governance developed in the 20th century primarily under the influence of Western countries. Which were controlled through institutions like the UN and Britain Woodson. These institutions shaped economic, security, and trade rules. But in the 21st century, there was a demand for reforms in global governance through emerging powers, an example of which can be taken from organizations like BRICS, it demanded reforms for developing countries. Due to which countries with emerging economies can emerge in a multipolar world order. Create a New Development Bank for alternative institutions in BRICS and demand reforms in the UNSC.

Artificial Intelligence has played a significant role in transforming global governance, including the AI Act, the NIST Framework, and the UNESCO Ethics Recommendation. The BRICS summit in 2025 was based on AI-Governance, in which they made a declaration which emphasized on risk management and inclusive nation. India has adopted new IT governance guidelines in 2026.

The BRICS group represents the Indian economy, which is rapidly gaining influence in global politics and economy. This group not only promotes economic cooperation but also encourages a multipolar world order. Bhagwati (1993) views the global system as becoming more multi-layered and complex, involving both regional and multilateral cooperation.

Through this study we will try to understand the relationship between AI and BRICS in the context of environmental governance. While it is playing a revolutionary role in climate monitoring, resource management and policy making, it also carries with it high energy use and environmental challenges.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to understand the relationship between AI and BRICS, particularly in the context of environmental governance. Today, AI plays a vital role in climate monitoring, resource management, and policy-making, but it also carries with it energy consumption and environmental challenges.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to analyze the role of BRICS in shaping global environmental governance in the age of Artificial Intelligence. The research is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data, including artificial intelligence declaration(2025),etc, while secondary data is collected from academic journals, research articles, etc. A comparative case study approach and thematic analysis method is used to identify and examine key themes such as AI governance, environmental sustainability, climate policy, and key insights. The study compares different perspectives to understand how artificial intelligence is influencing governance structures and environmental decision-making. The scope of the research is limited to available literature and does not involve empirical methods such as surveys or interviews. Therefore, the findings are based on existing knowledge and interpretations, which may be subject to limitations in data availability and rapidly evolving developments in AI and global governance.

BRICS in Global Governance

BRICS—comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, with recent expansions including Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and Indonesia—has emerged as a pivotal force in global governance, particularly within institutions like the United Nations (UN). Formed in 2009, the group now represents over 45% of the world's population and about 35% of global GDP, amplifying the voices of the Global South. It advocates for greater equity in global decision-making, challenging the veto power of the UN Security Council's P5 (permanent members: US, UK, France, Russia, China) and pushing for reforms such as expanded permanent seats for developing nations like India and Brazil. The BRICS countries argue that the post-World War II global order, dominated by Western institutions like the IMF, World Bank, and UN, perpetuates an unbalanced power structure favoring the Global North. In response, BRICS promotes a multipolar world order, emphasizing balanced power distribution through initiatives like the New Development Bank (NDB), which funds infrastructure in member states without the conditionalities often imposed by Western lenders. This vision gained traction at recent summits, such as the 2024 Kazan Summit, where leaders reiterated calls for UNSC reform and de-dollarization to reduce economic dependencies. In the age of artificial intelligence (AI), BRICS' role becomes even more critical. As member states like China (a leader in AI patents) and India (with its booming tech sector) develop national policies on technological advancement, data governance, and digital sovereignty, the group fosters collaboration via platforms like the BRICS AI Working Group. For instance, discussions at the 2023 Johannesburg Summit addressed AI ethics, algorithmic bias, and equitable access to AI tools, countering Western dominance in standards-setting bodies like the OECD or EU's AI Act. This shift is reshaping global governance, birthing new power structures such as BRICS-led digital infrastructure projects (e.g., undersea cables and data centers) that challenge US-centric tech hegemony and promote "digital multipolarity."

BRICS Cooperation

Internal cooperation among the BRICS countries can be seen in many areas, such as economic, political, and technical cooperation. This cooperation establishes them as a strong group on the global stage.

Regarding environmental issues, BRICS countries have actively participated in international agreements such as the Paris Agreement. These countries recognize climate change as a serious global challenge and are committed to promoting sustainable development.

Additionally, economic and political collaboration among BRICS countries is also important. For example, institutions like the New Development Bank (NDB) provide financial assistance to developing countries, promoting sustainable projects.

In the context of AI, BRICS countries are collaborating on technology sharing, innovation, and the development of digital infrastructure. While there are some challenges, such as political differences and resource inequalities, the group is playing an important role in global governance.

On environmental issues, BRICS nations have been proactive participants in global pacts, most notably the 2015 Paris Agreement. Representing major emitters—China (30% of global CO₂), India (7%), and Russia (5%)—they view climate change as an existential threat disproportionately burdening the Global South. At COP29 in 2024, BRICS leaders pushed for "common but differentiated responsibilities," securing commitments from developed nations for \$100 billion annually in climate finance. Domestically, initiatives like China's afforestation drives (planting 100 billion trees by 2030), India's International Solar Alliance (co-founded with

France but BRICS-led), and Brazil's Amazon Fund underscore their dedication to sustainable development. The BRICS Environment Ministers' meetings, held annually since 2015, coordinate policies on biodiversity, ocean conservation, and green tech transfer, exemplifying how internal alignment translates to global leadership..

Economic and political collaboration remains a cornerstone, exemplified by the New Development Bank (NDB), established in 2014 as a Shanghai-headquartered alternative to the World Bank and IMF. With \$100 billion in capital, the NDB has approved over \$30 billion in loans by 2025 for sustainable infrastructure, such as South Africa's renewable energy grids and Ethiopia's rail networks, often bypassing Western conditionalities like governance reforms. Politically, the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), a \$100 billion liquidity pool, shields members from currency crises, as utilized by Russia amid 2022 sanctions. These mechanisms promote South-South cooperation, with 2024 expansions allowing non-BRICS developing nations to join NDB projects, extending influence to Africa and Latin America.

In the AI era, BRICS collaboration focuses on technology sharing, innovation, and digital infrastructure. The 2023 Johannesburg Summit launched the BRICS AI Partnership, facilitating joint R&D in areas like machine learning for agriculture (India-China models) and cybersecurity (Russia-Brazil protocols). China shares Huawei's 5G tech with India and South Africa, while initiatives like the BRICS Cable Forum aim to build independent undersea data cables, reducing reliance on US-controlled routes. This counters Big Tech dominance, promoting "digital sovereignty" through shared standards on data localization and ethical AI. Yet, challenges persist: political divergences (e.g., India-China border tensions), resource asymmetries (China's tech lead vs. others' lags), and differing ideologies (Russia's authoritarianism vs. Brazil's democracy) hinder cohesion. Economic inequalities—China's GDP dwarfs others—fuel perceptions of dominance. Despite these, BRICS' institutional momentum, evidenced by the 2024 Kazan Summit's AI and green tech declarations, underscores its pivotal role in reshaping global governance toward multipolarity.

BRICS has increasingly positioned itself as a key norm-shaper in global environmental governance, using artificial intelligence (AI) as both a tool and a policy domain. The group's dual focus on digital transformation and climate action reflects a broader strategy to move from being a "protest coalition" of the Global South to a rule-making actor in the AI-driven era. This case highlights how BRICS is linking AI governance with environmental sustainability, especially through joint platforms, national-level AI-environment projects, and coordinated declarations at the BRICS level.

BRICS and AI-linked environmental policy BRICS countries are among the world's largest emitters and most vulnerable to climate change, yet they are also leading adopters of AI. In 2025, BRICS leaders issued a "Global Governance of Artificial Intelligence" statement that explicitly framed environmental sustainability as a prerequisite for AI development. The statement calls for AI applications that mitigate emissions, enhance climate-adaptation planning, and support sustainable resource management, while also requiring that AI systems themselves minimize greenhouse-gas emissions, energy use, and electronic waste. This positions BRICS as a bloc that links AI ethics with climate responsibility, challenging purely commercial or security-driven AI agendas common in Western-led frameworks.

Artificial intelligence governance

Niazi (2023) has defined artificial intelligence governance as a framework which has involvement of multiple actors and promotes cross-border partnerships, which can lead to ethical artificial intelligence development. Artificial intelligence governance is getting a focal role as many countries and organizations have developed artificial intelligence governance framework for their region or country. Ligot (2024) has mention about various actors that have play role in artificial intelligence harnessing and in its regulations, first are technical experts create an AI system and they are responsible for the ethical development of artificial intelligence, second, people use artificial intelligence by giving AI productive input for different purpose like seek knowledge, innovation, etc, third Niazi (2023) mention that the policy maker should combine artificial intelligence with the business system and should give preference to human centric approach, fourth that trainers or educators in society educate and development of AI talents in society and also educate people about use AI in responsible and ethical way (Ligot, 2024). There are various challenges in artificial intelligence governance, like Artificial intelligence acting as a "black box," which means it is difficult to interpret its outcome, bias development of artificial intelligence, data privacy, etc.

BRICS Artificial intelligence governance

Artificial intelligence development and governance is becoming the need for today's society. Various countries across the globe have started to give artificial intelligence importance in the field of governance. BRICS "The global governance of Artificial Intelligence." BRICS is currently a very important organization in international relations, as many dominant countries in the field of economy, territory, etc are part of it, including China's GDP, which ranks second in the world, India, which ranks fifth, etc. BRICS countries are located on different continents, and they have a great influence on their region. This creates an importance of collective and governance frameworks, which can lead to systematic artificial intelligence development in these countries in that region. The development of artificial intelligence ultimately depends on the government of a state and the ideology of artificial intelligence. For example, Zhou (2023) mentions that China at the starting period of its technological development was highly influencing China's research and development and there was very little focus on the research and development at that time. The political or bureaucratic system ultimately influences the artificial development in a country; the political system can make both

laws to constrain and develop artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence has been evolving and gaining importance in the development policy of a country. Artificial intelligence is included in countries' primary sectors like health care, education, etc. Aguzarova et al. (2026) mention that in Russia, there are Marusya and Alisa, etc, voice assistants that are contemporarily popular among students in Russia. Many international organisations have already released their Artificial Intelligence governance framework, including the United Nations, which released its AI governance framework in 2024, in which they mention various topics like data privacy, development of artificial intelligence should be for collective welfare, etc (United Nations, 2024).

Sharma and Sharma (2025) has analyzed the AI strategy and development framework of all the BRICS. Brazil released its artificial intelligence strategy in 2018, and knowledge advancement, strengthening competitiveness, etc is promoted by its AI strategy. Ministério do Ciência, Tecnologia, Inovações e Comunicações (2018, as cited in Sharma & Sharma, 2025) mentions that the strategy also gave importance to expenditure in research and development, promotion of ethical concepts in artificial intelligence development. Sharma and Sharma (2025), in the Russian national AI development strategy, which was released in 2017, planned by 2030 to make Russia a global leader. China's new generation artificial intelligence development plan was released by the government in 2017. Its target is to make artificial Intelligence the most influential field by 2030. South Africa revealed its draft of the National Artificial Intelligence strategy, giving foremost importance to ethics in artificial intelligence governance (Sharma and Sharma, 2025). India came up with a national strategy for AI in 2018, it promotes unbiased growth and growth from public issues in society. Egypt released its national AI strategy in 2019, it includes artificial intelligence in various sectors like health care, transportation, etc. Iran released its AI strategy in 2017, and in 2017 United Arab Emirates (Sharma and Sharma, 2025). Ethiopia released its national artificial intelligence policy in 2024. According to the analysis of Sharma and Sharma (2025) AI strategy of BRICS countries Russia and China as both are communist political ideology country and have gave importance to government lead AI innovation, but in China's AI development both public and private sector has led development under government surveillance on the other hand in Russia there is a weak private sector innovation in artificial intelligence sectors and most of AI development is under dominance of state apparatus. South Africa gave importance to ethics in artificial intelligence governance, Ethiopia government gave importance to the topic like infrastructure, codification, and skill development (Sharma and Sharma, 2025). All countries of the BRICS have given importance to innovation, economic benefits, ethics, increasing expenditure on the research and development sector, etc in artificial intelligence in their governance strategy (Sharma and Sharma, 2025).

The BRICS AI governance declaration was released during the 17th BRICS summit under Brazilian presidency. It mentions that a unified global attempt is needed for the development of artificial intelligence. It gave importance to collaborative diplomacy. BRICS (2025) mentions that the inclusive governance system gave importance to close cooperation with the private sector, with international organizations, technological and intellectual communities, and other decision influencers in the development of artificial intelligence. Emphasis on the inclusive artificial intelligence governance policy in which they gave importance to the legal framework, right to privacy, intellectual property right and national security. They mention the right to get benefits for the development of artificial intelligence (BRICS, 2025). BRICS (2025) promotes an inclusive "collaborative approach" and removes constraints in artificial intelligence development and supply chain. For equal and sustainable development, BRICS (2025) emphasizes that artificial intelligence should be available for all people in society, the AI-led development and benefit should be under sustainable development goals, it should enhance productivity or process efficiency, understanding of artificial intelligence should their for the developer that build it and make a strong "intellectual autonomy", etc., are the features that are promoted by the BRICS AI governance declaration (BRICS, 2025).

Environmental governance

Looking at the role of BRICS in environmental governance, this topic emerges as extremely important as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India China and South Africa) appears to be participating fully. These countries are rapidly emerging in the global economy and at the same time, whether it is population, development or other conditions, their impact on the environment is very visible in every aspect. Together, these countries contribute a significant portion of global carbon emissions, further exacerbating the problem of climate change. due to which representing over 41% of the world's population and abundant natural resources This group wields growing influence in addressing challenges like environmental sustainability and human rights (Diah Ayu Rahmawati, Haryono, woro utari, yoga Adi prayogi, Sinariyanda K, 2024)

But still climate change is emerging as a major challenge for the BRICS countries due to which greenhouse gas is continuously increasing due to population growth, urbanization and industrialization. All the BRICS countries suffer from severe and vital environmental issues and conclude that there is no strong relation between the environmental problems and the economic growth of a country. (Doaa Mohamed Salman Abdou, Nadeen Sherif El Adawy 2018) On the one hand, facing competition, these countries are rapidly moving towards artificial intelligence, technological innovation and on the other hand, climate change and limited resources are emerging as a challenge. China is the world's largest carbon emitter due to its coal-based industries, while India's emissions are rising rapidly due to growing energy demand. Deforestation of the Amazon rainforest in Brazil is a major contributor to global climate change.

Case Studies Environment Perspective

Examples from each country are important to understand the environmental problems of BRICS countries. Air pollution and water scarcity are serious problems in India, especially in urban areas. Industrial pollution and carbon emissions are high in China. However, it is also a leader in renewable energy. Deforestation of the Amazon rainforest in Brazil is a major environmental problem with global implications. In Russia, oil spills and the melting Arctic region are major concerns, while in South Africa, pollution due to mining activities and dependence on coal are major concerns.

China's situation is also complex. On the one hand, China is the world's largest carbon emitter, while on the other hand, it is a leader in renewable energy investment. According to the International Energy Agency, China produces the most solar and wind energy in the world (IEA, 2023). However, air and water pollution due to industrial activities remains a serious problem. China has set a goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2060 and is using AI-based monitoring systems for pollution control. Nevertheless, its rapidly growing economy continues to exert environmental pressure (Stern, 2021).

In the case of Brazil, deforestation of the Amazon rainforest is a global concern. According to a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization, deforestation has serious impacts on the global carbon balance (FAO, 2020). The Amazon rainforest is called the "lungs of the Earth," but it is being rapidly degraded due to agricultural expansion, illegal logging, and mining activities. The Brazilian government has implemented several policies for forest conservation, but their effective implementation faces political and administrative obstacles (Nepstad et al., 2014).

Russia's environmental challenges are primarily related to its energy sector and Arctic region. Russia's economy is dependent on oil and gas exports, which increases environmental risks. Melting ice in the Arctic region is exacerbating the effects of climate change. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Arctic region is warming twice as fast as the global average (IPCC, 2021). Russia has adopted some environmental policies, but their impact remains limited due to economic interests.

Environmental problems in South Africa are primarily linked to coal-based energy and mining activities. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, South Africa is one of the highest carbon emitters in Africa (UNEP, 2022). Excessive use of coal increases air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. To address this problem, the government is working towards a "Just Energy Transition," which aims to transition to renewable energy while maintaining social and economic balance (Baker et al., 2020).

All these case studies demonstrate that environmental issues in BRICS countries are multifaceted and complex. While policy development is essential, effective implementation and monitoring are even more crucial. Furthermore, international cooperation, technological innovation, and a commitment to sustainable development will enable these countries to address future environmental challenges.

High-Density Insight Section

In the 21st century, global environmental governance has become increasingly complex, multifaceted, and technologically advanced, with artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging groups like BRICS playing a crucial role. AI has made the collection, analysis, and forecasting of environmental data faster, more accurate, and comprehensive, leading to more scientific and effective policymaking in areas such as climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, and natural resource management. For example, India and China are using satellite imagery, machine learning, and big data to monitor air quality, water resources, and agricultural patterns, while Brazil is using AI-based systems to track Amazon deforestation. In this context, BRICS countries promote "South-South Cooperation" and provide technical and financial assistance to developing countries, thereby shifting the global balance of power and challenging traditional Western dominance. According to Vogler (2016), current environmental governance has become "multipolar," where power is not limited to developed countries, but emerging economies are also playing a decisive role. However, with the increasing use of AI, problems such as "digital inequality" and "climate inequality" are also emerging, as developed countries have access to more advanced technology, resources, and data, allowing these influences to remain greater in policymaking (Zuboff, 2019).

Furthermore, according to Amartya Sen's (1999) capability approach, technological development will only be considered meaningful if it promotes equal opportunity, social justice, and inclusiveness; otherwise, it could deepen inequalities. The role of global institutions such as the UNFCCC remains important, but these institutions often fail to function effectively due to political differences, slow decision-making, and conflicts of interest between developed and developing countries. BRICS emerges as an alternative platform where more flexible and pragmatic cooperation is possible. Nevertheless, internal challenges exist within BRICS, such as the divergent national interests of member countries, economic disparities, and geopolitical tensions, which limit its collective efforts. Thus, High-Density Insight shows that AI and BRICS together are making global environmental governance more data-driven, multipolar, and technologically enabled, but also pose challenges such as ethical questions, institutional limitations, and inequality. Ensuring effective and equitable environmental governance in the future will require that AI be used in an inclusive, transparent, and equity-based approach, so that all countries, especially developing nations, can benefit equitably and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (IPCC, 2021).

The increasing use of AI has also brought about several new challenges, notably "digital inequality" and "climate inequality." Developed countries have greater access to advanced AI technology, data, and resources, while developing countries still lag behind in these areas, which could further exacerbate global inequality (Zuboff, 2019). In this context, Amartya Sen's "capability approach" suggests that technological development will be considered effective and equitable only if it provides equal opportunities to all and promotes social justice (Sen, 1999).

Additionally, global institutions such as the UNFCCC remain central forums for environmental governance, but their functioning is often slow and politically constrained. Conflicting interests between developed and developing countries hamper decision-making. BRICS, meanwhile, emerges as an alternative platform where more flexible and pragmatic cooperation is possible. However, even within BRICS, problems such as economic inequality among member countries, conflicting national interests, and geopolitical tensions remain, limiting their collective efforts.

Ultimately, High-Density Insight makes it clear that AI and BRICS together are making global environmental governance more data-driven, technologically enabled, and multipolar. However, this also raises ethical questions, inequalities, and institutional limitations that need to be addressed through balanced and inclusive policymaking. In the future, if AI is used in accordance with the principles of transparency, equity, and cooperation, it can significantly contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Conclusion

BRICS countries are among the leading organizations in world affairs. This paper analyzed the BRICS on their cooperation, artificial intelligence development, and environmental factors. BRICS countries have been evolving and growing in different sectors, such as trade, innovation, etc. In many parameters it has made a focal role in promoting its approach of de-dollarization. This paper analysis revealed that the BRICS organisation countries have different political systems and ideologies, and are cooperating in world affairs, like China and India's cooperation in different sectors like trade, innovation, etc. Even though these countries have different perspectives, they have all agreed on cooperation, including Artificial Intelligence, the environment, etc. But it is also mentioned that there is a gap between framework formulation and its implementation, as in research that in the Sustainable Development Goal, BRICS countries agreed on it, but countries like China, which is one of the largest countries for carbon emission, still gave importance to it, the BRICS principle, and talks about making China carbon emission free by 2060. This shows that there is an influence of the BRICS policy on its countries for implementing the BRICS frameworks. Artificial intelligence is gaining importance in the world. BRICS also released its BRICS AI Governance Declaration (2025), which gave principles in artificial intelligence, like innovation, giving importance to private industries, etc. This paper also analyzed the insights for BRICS countries. There is a challenge of ethics, increasing inequality in BRICS countries, etc that need to be solved.

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