

CHIEF EDITOR'S NOTE

BRICS' Expanding Collaboration and New Fulcrum of Influence

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Today, when various international systems are transforming, the BRICS group, which originally formed as an informal coalition of major emerging economies, has matured into a key institutional platform shaping global governance, economic cooperation, and legal innovation. The expansion of BRICS, with multiple new members joining the association, underscores its growing importance for states seeking an alternative to Western-dominated legal frameworks and Western-driven political institutions.

The growing political clout of BRICS is underpinned by the continued economic dynamism of its members. China and India are now among the largest economies in the world, while Brazil, Russia, and South Africa remain pivotal players in their respective regions and commodity markets. The expansion of BRICS to include additional emerging economies further amplifies its collective weight in global trade, energy, and infrastructure, making the group an increasingly significant agenda-setter in economic and financial governance. This economic centrality translates into legal and institutional influence as well. BRICS countries are major users and sometimes co-authors of global standards in trade, finance, and investment, and their scale enables them to shape the practical implementation of international rules. Moreover, as BRICS deepens, non-members in the Global South increasingly look to the group as a template for alternative development-finance architectures

and regional cooperation schemes, which in turn reinforces the normative authority of BRICS-style legal and regulatory frameworks.

In this context, BRICS is no longer merely a negotiating club for economic instruments or currency swaps; it has become a force for establishing new political and legal mechanisms that increasingly interact with, and sometimes function in parallel to, the Western-centric legal order. The group has moved beyond general declarations of “multipolarity” and “reform of global governance” to the design of specific working mechanisms, including the New Development Bank (NDB), the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), the BRICS Business Council (BBC), the BRICS Think Tanks Council (BTTC), and the BRICS Network University, among others, aiming to facilitate economic, political, and academic cooperation across member nations.

These instruments provide member states and the Global South partners with financing, institutional, and research collaboration alternatives to Western-based finance, arbitration, and research fora, thus reducing dependence on the rules and conditionality of Western legal regimes. At the same time, BRICS countries have increasingly articulated their own conceptions of international law, sovereignty, and diplomacy, which often stand in contrast to certain practices of Western-led interventions and sanctions regimes. This is not a rejection of the UN-based order, but rather an attempt to recalibrate it toward a more balanced distribution of decision-making power and to challenge the informal primacy of Western legal doctrines in domains such as humanitarian law, investment law, diplomatic relations, financial sanctions, and human rights. In this sense, BRICS is becoming a locus where alternative legal narratives are systematically elaborated, tested, and operationalized against the backdrop of the existing Western-centric rule-of-law paradigm.

The enlargement of BRICS has been one of the most visible indicators of its rising global appeal. New members are drawn not only to the economic opportunities of integration into a large consumer and investment bloc but also to the prospect of participating in a more inclusive political and legal conversation. However, this expansion also introduces new legal and institutional challenges.

A larger and more heterogeneous membership implies greater diversity in legal traditions (civil law, common law, mixed systems), regulatory philosophies, and levels of institutional development. As a result, questions of harmonization, balance, mutual recognition, and dispute settlement become central to the functioning of BRICS cooperation, research cooperation included. States must navigate compatibility between national regulatory frameworks and emerging BRICS-level instruments, whether in trade, finance, taxation, or digital governance. The need to build robust legal infrastructure for BRICS and BRICS+, ranging from uniform legal definitions and standards to joint enforcement mechanisms, has elevated law and regulation from a background technical issue to a core political concern within the group.

All this stimulates a new agenda of BRICS legal research. The scholarly and policy-oriented discourse on BRICS legal issues has also evolved significantly over

the past decade. The development of the *BRICS Law Journal* mirrors this trend. Its early research focused on relatively “classic” themes: judiciary, arbitration, human rights, environmental protection, food security, and economic cooperation instruments. These topics remain important, but they are increasingly supplemented—and in some respects overshadowed—by cutting-edge topics linked to digital transformation, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and governance under multipolarity. A striking example is a current issue of the *BRICS Law Journal*, which has analyzed comparative approaches to the political economy of BRICS+ as a global institution, the regulation of artificial intelligence in BRICS states and the European Union, and the development of arbitration as a means of resolving legal conflicts. Other contributions have examined the role of AI and digital tools in law enforcement and criminal justice within BRICS. At the same time, debates on legal values, human rights, and the relationship between technological power and democratic legitimacy have become prominent, signaling a shift from purely functional to more normative and constitutional-style discussions. Parallel to these developments, there is growing attention to legal education and the professional formation of lawyers capable of navigating the hybrid regimes that BRICS and BRICS+ are likely to generate. Legal training, cross-border certification, and shared curricula are becoming important tools for aligning the legal cultures of BRICS members and facilitating the practical application of common standards. In this way, the evolving scholarly agenda of the *BRICS Law Journal* reflects, and in turn reinforces, the transition of the group from an economic club to a qualitatively more integrated legal and institutional power.

In this context, in less than ten years, the *BRICS Law Journal* has emerged as a central platform for the systematic study and development of BRICS-related legal issues. Being the world’s first peer-reviewed academic journal dedicated specifically to the legal aspects of the BRICS association, it provides a forum where leading law researchers from all over the world can engage in comparative analysis, propose legal justifications and instruments, and critically assess the implications of emerging norms. The Journal’s international indexing and open-access model ensure that its contributions reach a broad academic and policy audience, including scholars in the Global North as well as the Global South. The debates, conducted by prominent legal scholars and practitioners, are increasingly likely to inform the design of international treaties, guidelines, and soft-law instruments, as well as national reforms within BRICS member states.

The Journal’s great team of outstanding authors, readers, and editorial members harbors the hope that the evolution of BRICS, its expansion, and the deepening of its legal-academic discourse converge in the *BRICS Law Journal* as a shared space for innovative ideas, expert opinion, and policy-relevant scholarship that will shape the legal and political architecture of the emerging legal order.