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## Expanding South-South Cooperation in Climate and Energy Security in the Post-Paris Era: Opportunities for India as a BRICS Member

### Introduction

The emergence of BRICS, a multilateral organisation whose abbreviation stems from its member countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – in climate governance after the Paris Agreement of 2015 is significantly important for reshaping climate policies through its commitment to cooperate with the GS nations. Established in 2009 as a forum to strengthen South-South cooperation, the BRICS offers an alternative to the GN-dominated institutions like the European Union (EU), despite its diverse membership facing significant political and economic challenges to national interests to achieve “consensus on substantive matters”. As one of the world’s largest economic groupings in global climate governance, the BRICS’ stand on achieving targets in the post-PA era would determine the future trajectory of the GS (with growing energy needs, failure to meet which has caused global energy insecurity) focused on its sufferings due to the disproportionate impacts of the industrial policies of the Global North (GN). In an era of rising climate challenges and dynamic geopolitics, the role of the GS in global climate security and disaster management has become crucial. Following this,

the BRICS reiterates the GN's obligations in emission reduction and climate finance. The expansion of BRICS to include other strategic GS nations like: Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, UAE, Indonesia, and South Africa (resulting in BRICS+) bear a significant influence on equitable climate governance epitomised by the organisation's continued stewardship in achieving the PA targets because it promotes consensus-building on climate security issues like: green finance, renewable energy (RE) and carbon markets. As the world faces climate and energy security challenges, BRICS+, as a newly-created potential GS organisation, possesses immense potential in global climate governance since it accounts "for over 40 percent of the world's population and a substantial share of its forest area"<sup>1</sup>. India, as a GS climate leader, has successfully integrated its socio-economic development with its environmental goals by aligning poverty alleviation and energy security with its RE projects that ensure justice and inclusivity in climate security. Future studies must aim to understand the impact of such group relationships on renewable energy, net-zero goals, resource distribution, and policy decisions.

## Research Methodology

The article uses the BRICS as a case study framework to understand the paradigm shift from the GN to the GS while conducting an in-depth empirical analysis of climate and energy security discourses and international agreements, amongst which India's role, as an emerging GS leader, focuses on sustainable energy independence that works multilaterally to work on climate security concerns. This article draws data from three primary databases: the Observer Research Foundation, the Official Website of the BRICS, and the Official Website of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, with a geographical focus on analysing the BRICS and India's climate-energy discourses, with a particular emphasis on the Global South. Using search terms like "BRICS climate and energy security", "BRICS and Paris Agreement", "Global South net-zero goals" and "India's climate diplomacy", results for all English-language international news, journal articles, review papers and research reports between 2020 and 2025 were considered. As the research question primarily focuses on the security aspects of climate energy and energy in the GS from the BRICS' point of view, the search was restricted to the BRICS' strategies of combating security challenges in the GS, especially after the PA.

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<sup>1</sup> O.C. Kurian, D. Sarkar, S. Suri (2025). *The Role of BRICS Leadership in Forging Climate and Health Strategies for a One-Health World*. "Issue Brief", 772, p. 3.

## Relationship between Climate & Energy Security: Implications for the GS

The relationship between climate change, emissions, energy and security is a complex one in contemporary geopolitics that needs careful analysis since “energy security debates largely overlook climate concerns”<sup>2</sup>, especially in the GS, where energy security discourses and policies prioritise industrial development over sustainable development, which “contribute directly to climate insecurity”<sup>3</sup>. Thus, failure to comply with clean energy development, in the course of meeting the ever-rising energy needs through coal and petroleum-based fuels, becomes potentially harmful because of energy’s inherent links with climate security. As a result, the BRICS’ holistic approach to balance climate and energy security prioritises an emphasis on achieving net-zero<sup>4</sup> through RE manufacturing and supply, not only for its members but also for the entire GS community, since both are generally considered to be “institutionally separated”<sup>5</sup> but are integral to the global environmental security. Such a narrative serves as the starting point for reconsidering the tripartite relationship between energy, climate, and security. Although both energy and climate security are international issues, they are not entrenched in mainstream security discourses, which often leads to neglecting human welfare and ecology. It is for this reason that BRICS emphasises energy and climate security in the GS through a cooperative rather than competitive approach, a way not previously discussed. Any measure to tackle climate change challenges requires the notion of energy to be viewed by the GS nations as a security issue, focusing on sustainability as the central tenet of global discourse. This article argues for fundamentally rethinking the notion of “security away from traditional, state-centric threat/defence terms, which cannot provide security once the referent object is no longer the state” since this approach avoids identifying enemies and other involved actors in terms of “securitising moves and in the security provisions”<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> J. Nyman (2018). *Rethinking energy, climate and security: a critical analysis of energy security in the US*. “Journal of International Relations and Development”, 21, pp. 118–145. <https://doi.org/10.1057/jird.2015.26>.

<sup>3</sup> J. Nyman (2018). *Rethinking energy... Op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> Net-zero refers to total absence of GHG emissions from the atmosphere which were previously caused due to human activities. The CoP-26 advocated for the adoption of ambitious net-zero goals through cutting down on fossil fuels and transitioning to renewables that reduced climate and energy security challenges. Thus, net-zero goals have a direct relationship with climate and energy security.

<sup>5</sup> J. Nyman (2018). *Rethinking energy... Op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> M. J. Trombetta (2008). *Environmental security and climate change: Analysing the Discourse*. “Cambridge Review of International Affairs”, 21(4), pp. 585–602. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557570802452920>.

Through its analysis, the article aims to present a comprehensive South-South strategic roadmap for the BRICS nations that offers clear evidence of India as one of the biggest greenhouse gas (GHG) emitters and how it can utilise the platform as a political coalition of the GS nations and uphold a stable partnership in climate governance towards a sustainable future.

## BRICS' Journey in Climate & Energy Security Regime

The GS has been historically vulnerable to the GN's GHG emissions since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the late-nineteenth century. In 1992, the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) reported that the GS had become subject to environmental colonialism<sup>7</sup> by the GN. The gradually increasing role of the BRICS in 2010 was marked by limited interactions among its members, who formally engaged in climate change debates in 2009 and 2010. During this time, there was a significant number of debates between the GN and GS wherein the former was willing to cooperate in global climate security only if the latter was "willing to compromise and assume obligations through substantial emission reductions"<sup>8</sup>, while the issue of financial assistance and technical support remained unresolved, which pressurised EPs like India and China with increasing energy demands<sup>9</sup>. However, it was only after the birth of the PA in CoP-21 in 2015 that the BRICS was able to strengthen its cooperative efforts towards achieving energy and climate security in the GS.

<sup>7</sup> The climate change challenges have shown their ugliest forms in the GS while industries and companies in the GN have contributed to 92% of the global GHG emissions which is described as "climate colonialism" or "environmental colonialism". Climate colonialism or environmental colonialism, in the most precise sense, refers to the exploitation of the GS' natural resources causing environmental havoc in the GS while "exporting" its climate mitigation solutions abroad to earn profits which poses a finance pressure on the GS economies. Thus, the GS is reduced to poverty in two ways: destruction of property by climate - induced disasters and the financial burden due to transition to the GN-exported expensive RE solutions which creates a sharp divide between the GN and the GS: the haves and the have-nots by destabilising climate and energy security in the GS; A. Agarwal, S. Narain (1991). *Global Warming in an Unequal World: A Case of Environmental Colonialism*. Centre for Science and Environment. New Delhi, pp. 81-91.

<sup>8</sup> S. Bailer, F. Weiler (2015). *A Political Economy of Positions in Climate Change Negotiations: Economic, Structural, Domestic, and Strategic Explanations*. "Review of International Organizations", 10(1), pp. 43-66. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-014-9198-0>.

<sup>9</sup> Q. Shen, X. Zou (2024). *Evolution of Cooperation among BRICS Countries in Global Climate Governance: From UNFCCC to the Paris Agreement*. "Vestnik MGIMO-Universiteta", 17(1), pp. 65-85. <https://doi.org/10.24833/2071-8160-2024-1-94-65-85>.

The PA serves as a guide for nations to reduce GHG emissions, aiming for a rise in global temperature of not more than 1.5°C, which signatory nations are meeting through the use of non-fossil fuels in the form of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). This makes the PA a landmark instrument to achieve climate and energy security. Its ‘bottom-to-top reduction’ mechanism was followed by all, and the BRICS countries submitted their updated NDCs at the successive Conference of the Parties (CoPs) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Therefore, the Common But Differentiated Responsibilities<sup>10</sup> (CBDR) principle of the PA directs the GN accountable to finance towards an environmentally-sustainable GS after the damages it has caused<sup>11</sup>, which can enable both blocs towards greater climate and energy security; to be achieved by the transfer of adequate climate finance. Consequently, climate finance has continued to be a field of South-South cooperation within the BRICS framework. To sum up, the BRICS, on behalf of the GS nations, is capable of leading its own climate action plans based on mobilising climate finance and attracting the GN parties towards investments in RE solutions like manufacturing solar energy panels, windmills, and electric vehicles.

In the Joint Statement of 2009, the BRICS advocated for a consensus-based dialogue on dealing with climate change and socio-economic development<sup>12</sup>, rather than bending to the GN’s unilateral pressures, which reflects the creation of the GS’s collective social identity through the BRICS framework by not acceding to the GN’s demands and perspectives, after which the adoption of the NDC principle of PA became a historical landmark in the global climate governance framework. Except for Brazil, the major sources of GHG emissions of all other BRICS nations are coal-based fuels and petroleum, which are accountable for their “high carbon intensity in economic

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<sup>10</sup> The principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR), enshrined in the PA, speaks of collective action towards climate change with a special focus on the GN nations, due to them being historical GHG emitters with “superior economic and technological capacity” that prevent the GS from developing industries in its nations due to an increase in overall GHG levels and global temperature. Therefore, it is the GN’s responsibility to ensure climate justice by financing the GS’ climate actions, RE projects and provide technological know-how which would bring the global climate and energy regime to an equilibrium.

<sup>11</sup> I. Mustafa, F. Barcellos (2025). *BRICS proposes new climate geopolitics focused on financing and social justice*. BRICS Brasil 2025; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Social Communication Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil. <https://brics.br/en/news/brics-proposes-new-climate-geopolitics-focused-on-financing-and-social-justice> [accessed: 12.05.2025].

<sup>12</sup> *BRICS Joint Statement, 2009* (2009). BRICS Information Centre. University of Toronto. <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/090616-leaders.html> [accessed: 12.05.2025].

developments”<sup>13</sup>. The BRICS summit of 2024 appreciated the commendable efforts of the GS countries like Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), on their transition to sustainable development through environmental protection and RE for combating climate change in global cooperation, which is the need of the hour. Having their policies aligned with international frameworks like the PA that demonstrate their leadership roles in climate action, both countries have set an example by contributing to their own sustainability goals, with Egypt’s growing RE production units in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region<sup>14</sup> and the UAE significantly progressing solar energy investments towards fulfilling long-term national commitments in carbon footprint reduction. Therefore, it is expected that with their recent membership in the BRICS, the two countries will offer significant opportunities to BRICS members in terms of RE investment, poverty elimination, strong supply chains, and resilient infrastructure for the GS to achieve net-zero.

The climate security narrative of the BRICS towards emissions reduction was conceived not in accordance with strict compliance to the CBDR (as proposed by the GN) but through voluntary pledges, greater inclusiveness, cooperation and coordination in its “Common Future of the Planet” concept for ensuring climate and energy security in the GS<sup>15</sup>. This approach was important because, over the last decades, the GS has been facing climate and energy security challenges “in terms of environmental deterioration arising from the unsustainable and inequitable consumption of resources” that resulted in the adoption of the Leave-No-One-Behind (LNOB)<sup>16</sup> motto (as proposed by the United Nations originally) by the BRICS environment ministers in their second meeting in 2016. The LNOB’s adoption proved advantageous for the GS, as it articulated the GS’s needs to attain climate security after being in a disadvantaged situation due to the unfair exploitation of natural resources by the GN. It also reshaped the climate and energy security

<sup>13</sup> A. Mukhia, S. Qi, X. Zou (2024). *Climate Governance Pathway for BRICS in the Post-Paris Era*. “Global Journal of Emerging Market Economies”, 16(3), pp. 321–339. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09749101241244456>.

<sup>14</sup> W. Aly (2024). *BRICS hails Egypt, UAE for climate change efforts*. Egypt Today. <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/135604/BRICS-hails-Egypt-UAE-for-climate-change-efforts> [accessed: 12.05.2025].

<sup>15</sup> *2nd BRIC Summit of Heads of State and Government: Joint Statement* (2010). BRICS Information Centre. University of Toronto. <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/100415-leaders.html> [accessed: 12.05.2025].

<sup>16</sup> The LNOB advocates the role of every single party in tackling climate security challenges and no one shall be left alone in struggling to achieve climate-resilient development. It highlights global security and prosperity through “a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalisation” that reflects inclusive sustainable development through mitigation of common challenges like rising GHG emissions, energy requirements and sea levels.



discourses through the BRICS' collective identity as a large grouping of GS nations that are also Emerging Powers (EPs)<sup>17</sup>, so that "no one is left behind and those furthest behind are helped first"<sup>18</sup>.

## The South-South Cooperation Framework in Post-Paris Global Climate Security Regime

The South-South cooperation framework across the domains of climate action offers a holistic methodological approach to understand global strategies for the BRICS+ nations to tackle climate change, pollution, and acknowledge the interconnectedness of climate challenges in the GS. Such a multidisciplinary framework is capable of bringing the GS nations together through the BRICS+ towards legislating on mitigatory measures like emission reduction and RE promotion. The BRICS' South-South cooperation is necessary because the GS possesses an immense quantity/quality of natural resources, which facilitate innovations in nature-based solutions towards its energy security. This puts BRICS "in a good position to lead a fair ecological transition that strengthens a more cooperative and less unequal multipolar world"<sup>19</sup> when combating climate security challenges through collective efforts in its journey to sustainable economies.

In the BRICS High-Level Meeting on Climate Change of 2022, a joint statement was issued<sup>20</sup> that asserted the alliance's remarkable progress in decarbonisation strategies towards emission reduction, like Electric Vehicle (EV) promotion, RE infrastructure development like solar and hydropower

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<sup>17</sup> As opposed to the GN's leadership in the global regime for climate change, many large and fast – growing economies have profoundly reshaped the world order after the end of the Cold War in 1991. Such economies are known as Emerging Powers (EPs) which are continuously competing to balance their position in the West-dominated international system. Major Emerging Powers, like Brazil, Russia, India and China, have transformed the global economic and geopolitical dynamics and are utilising climate change challenges as opportunities to "exert leadership" and "reconsider the established policy trajectories" by forging GS consensus on clean energy.

<sup>18</sup> *XII BRICS Summit Moscow Declaration* (2020). BRICS Information Centre. University of Toronto. <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/201117-moscow-declaration.html> [accessed 12.05.2025].

<sup>19</sup> M. Souto (2025). *Ministers approve BRICS Environment declaration*. BRICS Brasil 2025; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Social Communication Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil. <https://brics.br/en/news/ministers-approve-brics-environment-declaration> [accessed: 12.05.2025].

<sup>20</sup> *Explainer: BRICS' role in global fight against climate change*. (2024). CGTN. <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2024-10-21/Explainer-BRICS-role-in-global-fight-against-climate-change-1xRnLoLJOQo/p.html> [accessed: 12.05.2025].

grids and turbines, rainwater harvesting, green coal manufacture and electric transportation through bilateral and multilateral agreements. Consequently, in its Kazan Summit in 2024, the BRICS adopted the Kazan Declaration 'Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security' for consensus-based decision-making on the GN's CBDR towards the L&D fund for the GS, to link the GS' climate change and RE ambitions with human security which reflect the achievement of the GS' net-zero goals as a potential area of South-South cooperation within the BRICS framework.

The Kazan Declaration was a changemaker in the global climate treaty-making regime since it laid stress on the continued role of the Group-of-Twenty (G-20)<sup>21</sup> as a vital player of South-South cooperation framework based on consensus with pragmatic outcomes and as the "premier global forum for multilateral economic and financial cooperation"<sup>22</sup> which bridges the GN-GS divide "on an equal and mutually beneficial footing"<sup>23</sup> through dialogue for seeking global solutions on climate change and RE. In this regard, it highlighted the successes of the G-20 Summit of 2024 towards fulfilling the agenda's priorities on climate change and GHG emission reduction strategies under the Brazilian presidency and vowed to adhere to the G-20's commitments towards attaining inclusiveness in "amplifying" the voice of the GS<sup>24</sup>. By appreciating India's G-20 presidency in 2023 for including the African Union as a valuable GS member in the G-20, the Declaration reaffirmed the BRICS' continued support and cooperation on climate change mitigation measures such as GHG emission reduction through carbon sinks and the need for climate finance towards transfer of technology like remote sensing satellite applications and capacity-building, as was to be agreed upon in the G-20 presidencies by India, Brazil and South Africa from 2023 to 2025. Furthermore, it was reiterated that the CoP-29 held in November 2024 in Azerbaijan would strongly deliberate upon climate finance to the GS

<sup>21</sup> Consisting "for over 80 percent of the global economy", the Group-of-Twenty (G-20) is a multilateral organisation based on the principle of social inclusion where both the GN and GS nations meet in annual summits to discuss on global issues like climate change, RE, global economy, trade and health. The G-20 has been addressing climate and energy security challenges through the PA that aims to achieve a maximum of 1.5°C rise in global temperature through sustainable energy transition.

<sup>22</sup> *Kazan Declaration: 'Strengthening Multilateralism For Just Global Development And Security'* (2024). Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. [https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/38450/Kazan\\_Declaration\\_\\_Strengthening\\_Multilateralism\\_For\\_Just\\_Global\\_Development%E2%80%A6](https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/38450/Kazan_Declaration__Strengthening_Multilateralism_For_Just_Global_Development%E2%80%A6) [accessed: 12.05.2025].

<sup>23</sup> *Kazan Declaration....* (2024). *Op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> *BRICS nation expect strong outcomes on climate finance for developing countries* (2024). Economic Times. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/brics-nation-expect-strong-outcomes-on-climate-finance-for-developing-countries/articleshow/114515669.cms?from=mdr> [accessed: 12.05.2025].



countries and serve as a mechanism “for delivering on the current and future nationally determined actions and ambitions in mitigation, adaptation and loss & damage” when the Declaration applauded the CoP-22 of Egypt that established the Loss-and-Damage Fund (L&D)<sup>25</sup> which was operationalised at the CoP-24 of the UAE which aimed at bridging the North-South divide. The birth of the Contact Group on Climate Change and Sustainable Development by the BRICS Environment Ministers and the Framework on Climate Change and Sustainable Development<sup>26</sup> at the High-Level Dialogue on Climate Change in Russia in 2024 reflects the Kazan Declaration’s aims for a united GS through multilateralism through joint efforts on areas of mutual interest like global warming, climate change, RE and sustainable development to bridge the North-South divide to prevent a fragmented geopolitical order. Following the Kazan Declaration, the BRICS Working Group reiterated the need for “adequate climate finance” by the GN needed for the GS’s transition to a low-carbon economy, as directed by the PA<sup>27</sup>. Of late, the BRICS nations have also been playing an instrumental role in bridging the pre-existing deep North-South divide by acting as “bridge-builders”<sup>28</sup> after GN countries like the United States have formally withdrawn from the collective global efforts/financing GS projects to promote their domestic interests. Likewise, in April 2025, the BRICS environment ministers reiterated the need for “environmental multilateralism” through “balanced and inclusive global governance” towards protecting the environment through global and regional approaches that exclusively stressed the role of the GS<sup>29</sup>. It reflects the BRICS’ continuous adherence to the PA, which positions it as a GS-led multilateral organisation challenging the GN hegemony in global RE transition.

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<sup>25</sup> In the CoP-27 (Egypt), an agreement was reached by the UN members towards creation of a fund, the Loss-and-Damage Fund (the L&D fund, commonly known as climate finance), for assisting the GS nations in their recovery from climate-induced disasters. The term “Loss and damage” is used to describe the adversities like deteriorating ecosystems, loss of human lives, property and crops caused by environmental calamities, the brunt of which is borne by the GS nations. Therefore, as historical emitters of GHGs, the responsibility of directing the L&D fund to the GS lies with the GN countries (as the earliest nations to be industrialised), whose coordination is to be governed by the World Bank. It enables bridging the sharp North-South divide in terms of climate and energy security challenges by allowing financial opportunities for the GS’ inclusive socio-economic development.

<sup>26</sup> *Kazan Declaration...* (2024). *Op. cit.*

<sup>27</sup> M. Souto (2025). *Ministers approve BRICS...* *Op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> V. Furness (2025). *BRICS’ climate leadership aims hang on healing deep divides*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/brics-climate-leadership-aims-hang-healing-deep-divides-2025-03-10/> [accessed: 12.05.2025].

<sup>29</sup> M. Souto (2025). *Ministers approve BRICS...* *Op. cit.*

## Viewing through the Indian Lenses: Bridging the North-South Divide

The BRICS' cooperative efforts towards achieving climate and energy security are marked by its gradually-increasing GS membership that led to the creation of BRICS+, while thirty countries expressed their interests and ten officially filed their appeals to join the alliance<sup>30</sup>. Additionally, the expansion of BRICS membership from five to eleven countries, aimed at strengthening climate and energy security, underscores the organisation's growing leadership in global climate governance. Achieving climate and energy security through multilateralism has become the collective identity of the BRICS because its members, who are EPs of the GS, have encouraged the other GS countries to respond to the climate challenges through sustainable socio-economic development measures, which serve as their collective interest. This is directly linked to the GN-GS debates on the CBDR principle, which emphasises the GN's primary responsibility of scaling down GHG emissions and assisting the GS's sustainable socio-economic development financially and technologically. Thus, the BRICS' stand on climate and energy security has earned it the reputation of being "responsible stakeholders from the GS", with Russia positioning itself "as a constructive partner" in the post-Cold War era. This is when India emerged as a GS leader "between the proponents from both hemispheres"<sup>31</sup>.

India's well-planned climate and energy diplomacy is capable of responding to the GS's vulnerabilities with the GN's technological support and financial backing on multilateral platforms, such as the BRICS, as it helps the nation cooperate on a global scale by adhering to the CBDR principle, which later developed into the L&D fund. It is also a good balancer in terms of maintaining equilibrium between international climate negotiations and national development goals. Therefore, with its commitments adhering to achieve net-zero, India's leadership position as a key player in climate negotiations is demonstrated by its openness to collaborate on GN parties like the United States and multilateral organisations like the EU on the L&D fund, green technologies, climate-resilient infrastructure and the establishment of a global carbon market that enables other GS countries to trade carbon credit to raise funds for climate and energy security projects<sup>32</sup>. It sustains

<sup>30</sup> *Explainer: BRICS' role in global...* (2024). *Op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> J. Kahn (2009). *India cleans up its act: Manmohan Singh's new stand on Copenhagen is just part of a plan to reposition India as a global power*. Newsweek International. <https://www.newsweek.com/manmohan-singhs-new-strategy-india-76871> [accessed: 12.05.2025].

<sup>32</sup> K.C. Ratha, A. Barik (2025). *India's Climate Diplomacy: A Review (2014-2024)*. "Issue Brief", 787. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/india-s-climate-diplomacy-a-review-2014-2024> [accessed: 12.05.2025].

bly bridges the North-South divide by ensuring that the GS does not lag in its climate goals due to L&D funding and technology transfer from the GN.

The PA has shaped the BRICS' ideas and policies on climate and energy security, which is reflected in India's claims of the organisation's importance in playing a "very significant role in addressing [...] climate change"<sup>33</sup>. While being vocal in shaping global energy and climate discourses, India's announcement of its *Panchamrit* goals<sup>34</sup> (synonymous to its NDCs) in November 2021 at the CoP-26 and subsequently endorsing the New Delhi Climate Agenda during its G-20 Presidency in 2023 (which focus on finding global solutions in a multilateral approach) serve as an inspiration for the GS nations in mobilising climate finance for sustainable development and transitioning to a low-carbon economy, in accordance with the PA provisions within the BRICS framework. However, what is worth noting is India's renewed and evolving attention towards bridging the North-South divide through cooperation in areas such as low-carbon infrastructure, green technologies, and digital solutions, which are inclusive in nature. Such initiatives position India as an emerging leader of the GS by balancing not only its own sustainable development goals but also the GS's green transition to achieve climate and energy security.

In a bid to promote solar energy and strengthen its supply chains by reducing GHG emissions through dependence on coal-based fuels, India's initiation of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) presents an example of a GS climate leader which is sincerely devoted to improve energy and climate security in the GS (with most of them lying in the tropical regions) where sunlight is abundant and mobilising the GN's financial resources is the need of the hour. Thus, its co-partnership with France, since 2015, in leading the ISA encourages strategic RE partnerships among the EU, Latin America, Africa, and Asia to jointly tackle climate and energy security challenges. Also, it has developed a wide network of strategic partnerships with the GS groups within the BRICS, like the African Union (with South Africa being a BRICS member), in technological leadership, training facilities and poverty

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<sup>33</sup> BRICS environment ministers adopt the New Delhi Statement on environment (2021). Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRI=1749687> [accessed: 12.05.2025].

<sup>34</sup> At the 26<sup>th</sup> CoP in Glasgow in 2021, Prime Minister Modi present the five-nectar plan (*Panchamrit*) for India's transition to achieve climate and energy security which has five aims:

- Achieving 500 gigawatts of RE by 2030;
- Fulfilling 50% of its energy requirements by 2030;
- Reducing 1 billion tons of GHG emissions by 2030;
- Reducing carbon intensity below 45% by 2030;
- Achieving a net-zero emission target by 2070.

alleviation through job creation in RE manufacturing and supply units, which reflects its multifaceted approaches to achieving net-zero goals that extend beyond traditional frameworks like the United Nations.

Similarly, the formation of the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA) during India's presidency of the G-20 in 2023 is another example that demonstrates North-South cooperation towards a sustainable energy transition. Initiated by India and comprising Brazil, along with South Africa (also a BRICS member), the GBA has included GN nations like the United States and Italy to provide capacity-building opportunities and technological support. While the GBA strives to secure energy supply chains to improve climate and energy security through the use of biofuels, it also provides opportunities for the GS to enhance its energy security and boost employment opportunities, aligning with India's efforts to strengthen its leadership in the biofuels sector. Its expansion to include global organisations like the World Bank, the International Energy Agency, and the World Economic Forum reflects the possibilities for global funding opportunities that highlight "recognition of biofuels as a critical alternative energy source",<sup>35</sup> which solidifies India's strategic position as a key player in the global biofuel sector, benefiting the GS. For example, ethanol-blended petroleum (up to 20% by 2025) is expected to reduce Indian oil imports by 63 million tonnes annually, costing \$ 5.4 billion, which presents an example for the GS to reduce GHG emissions and import costs that contribute to strengthening climate and energy security. Therefore, the ISA, in conjunction with the GBA, positions India not only as a GS climate and RE leader but also as an enthusiastic BRICS member which strives for the collective efforts towards achieving net-zero goals and poverty eradication by each nation to ensure collective security.

Despite the alliance facing challenges because of structural differences in the constituent states' energy, pollution mitigation and economic development policies, the role of India as an emerging GS power has become more significant since 2024 with the inclusion of five new members, making it BRICS+ which shows how climate challenges supersede its political interests and ideological differences, before which climate governance was often considered as "low politics" when speaking of national security and human rights issues as "high politics"<sup>36</sup>. During CoP-27, India, as a GS nation, expressed regret and concern over the GN's failure to meet the goal of mobilising 100 billion dollars per year

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<sup>35</sup> Manini (2024). *Towards leadership on sustainable fuels: The Global Biofuels Alliance and India*. Observer Research Foundation (ORF). <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/towards-leadership-on-sustainable-fuels-the-global-biofuels-alliance-and-india> [accessed: 12.05.2025].

<sup>36</sup> A. Mukhia, et al. (2024). *Climate Governance Pathway... Op. cit.*

by 2020 as the L&D Fund<sup>37</sup> and reiterated that such negotiations on financial mobilisation should be based on the principles of equity and CBDR. Therefore, through its collaborative efforts in the ISA, GBA and its G-20 presidency in 2023, positive outcomes on cooperation between the GN and the GS, in terms of L&D and technological support, were achieved, wherein decisions on such cooperation were put forward before the UNFCCC through joint statements in ministerial meetings<sup>38</sup>. As a result, the GN was able to fulfil its promise of 100 billion dollars by 2022<sup>39</sup>. Thus, India, as a BRICS member, plays the role of a “strategic balancer”<sup>40</sup> in a multipolar world order by strengthening South-South cooperation and bridging the North-South divide while maintaining its strategic autonomy to advance the interests of the GS nations through development-focused diplomacy and multilateral engagement on critical issues such as climate change, climate finance and energy security. It is for this reason that, as an “aspirational rather than practical” organisation, scholars like Brutsch and Papa (2013)<sup>41</sup> consider the BRICS as “somewhere between”<sup>42</sup> the GN and GS, which implies a bridge between the two towards common goals of achieving climate and energy security through sustainable means.

India can use the BRICS as a platform to address “unfair climate practices”<sup>43</sup> such as the EU’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanisms (CBAM), which, unilaterally and unfairly, burden the GS by shifting on it “the responsibility of decarbonising heavy industrial sectors”<sup>44</sup> which impede the

<sup>37</sup> *Developed countries fulfilled \$100 bn climate finance promise in 2022: OECD* (2024). Business Standard. [https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/developed-countries-fulfilled-100-bn-climate-finance-promise-in-2022-oecd-124052901826\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/developed-countries-fulfilled-100-bn-climate-finance-promise-in-2022-oecd-124052901826_1.html) [accessed: 12.05.2025].

<sup>38</sup> N. Siddiqui, R. Ranjan (n.d.). *Reflecting on COP 27 & the Loss and Damage Fund through the Indian lens*. The Global Network for Human Rights and the Environment. <https://gnhre.org/?p=16693> [accessed: 12.05.2025].

<sup>39</sup> *Developed countries fulfilled...* (2024). *Op. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> D. Maiorano, K. Kaur (2024). *India’s Role in the BRICS: Navigating the Balance in a Changing World*. Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore. <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/papers/indias-role-in-the-brics-navigating-the-balance-in-a-changing-world/> [accessed: 12.05.2025].

<sup>41</sup> C. Brutsch, M. Papa (2013). *Deconstructing the BRICS: Bargaining Coalition, Imagined Community, or Geopolitical Fad?* “The Chinese Journal of International Politics”, 6(3), pp. 299–327. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pot009>.

<sup>42</sup> M. Papa, N.W. Gleason (2012). *Major emerging powers in sustainable development diplomacy: Assessing their leadership potential*. “Global Environmental Change”, 22(4), pp. 915–924. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2012.06.003>.

<sup>43</sup> D. Maiorano, K. Kaur (2024). *India’s Role in the BRICS...* *Op. cit.*

<sup>44</sup> N. Banerji (2024). *EU’s carbon border tax mechanism unfair to developing countries: CSE*. Down to Earth. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/climate-change/eus-carbon-border-tax-mechanism-unfair-to-developing-countries-cse> [accessed: 12.05.2025].

latter's socio-economic development. With RE technologies being expensive, it becomes a financial burden for the GS to transition to clean economies within a short period, while the GN neither undergoes emissions reduction nor mobilises the necessary financial or technical support. Therefore, the CBAM is a clear violation of the PA's CBDR principle, to which India has responded by planning to openly communicate with the EU authorities on Indian exports<sup>45</sup> and develop a carbon pricing and taxation model by collecting taxes on high-carbon exports<sup>46</sup>, which would balance the CBAM taxation model by incentivising Indian businesses to transition to low-emission manufacturing strategies. Therefore, while India strives to achieve energy security, its participation in the BRICS reflects a balance of power while maintaining its strategic autonomy, strengthening its stand on climate governance mechanism for the GS and balancing its power relationships with the GN by encouraging the GS parties like the African Union for a North-South strategic cooperation through incorporation in multilateral institutions like the G-20 in 2024<sup>47</sup> that demonstrates its leadership role as an EP between the GS vis-à-vis the BRICS and the GN. Its constructive approach to institutional reforms towards global climate governance, such as the addition of the African Union (comprising resource-rich African nations) to the G-20 and the BRICS development to BRICS+, encourages greater cooperation and consensus-building among more GS parties by making the BRICS framework more inclusive and equitable.

## Conclusion

Owing to their common climate and energy security challenges characterised by growing GHG emissions, the BRICS countries have entered into different multilateral alliances in climate negotiations by upholding the principles of CBDR in a post-Paris era. It advocates for the GN's continuous compliance with the PA provisions, such as regulating L&D to the GS for being "historical emitters". From a geopolitical perspective, as EPs, the BRICS nations have had to break from their traditional grouping to establish a new GS mechanism. Throughout its journey, it has focused on drawing the GN's attention to their unfulfilled promises and reminded them that it is the GN that is responsible for the GS's climate change-induced disasters and their associated financial

<sup>45</sup> *India weighs local tax options to avoid EU carbon levy* - Minister (2023). Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-weighs-local-tax-options-avoid-eu-carbon-levy-minister-2023-11-02/> [accessed: 12.05.2025].

<sup>46</sup> *India weighs local tax...* (2023). *Op. cit.*

<sup>47</sup> K. Bhattacharjee (2023). *G-20 | African Union becomes permanent member*. The Hindu. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/g-20-african-union-becomes-permanent-member-under-indias-presidency/article67287988.ece> [accessed: 12.05.2025].



burden during the transition to low-carbon economies. Therefore, despite pre-existing ideological disparities between the GS and the BRICS grouping, the EPs continue to collaborate to bridge the sharp North-South divide, in which India has pioneered making the GN an ally rather than a competitor in the GS's journey to net-zero.

India's role is multifaceted: it not only strives to achieve energy and climate security through equity and cooperation, but also seeks to eliminate poverty through job creation that generates income opportunities for the vulnerable population of the GS, presenting its *Panchamrit* goals as an example. It also ensures the efficient utilisation of the GS's resources like solar energy and cheap labour to maximise the economic and environmental benefits worldwide that firmly reinstate its leadership role in the global energy transition<sup>48</sup>. Furthermore, India's strategies of adding GS parties like the AU within climate-oriented multilateral organisations like the G-20, the ISA and the GBA reflect its potential to strengthen South-South cooperation by bringing many BRICS countries on board and facilitating the establishment of a stable GS regime in global climate and energy security. Thus, although the L&D contributes to being a debatable<sup>49</sup> issue within the broader context of a North-South divide, India, as an emerging BRICS nation, has proved to be a valuable ally for other non-BRICS GS nations by facilitating discussions to overcome differences amongst each other and negotiating towards sustainable development<sup>50</sup>. Therefore, this paper has an analysis of opportunities for India as a BRICS member that have facilitated its proactive involvement in multilateral climate and RE forums to inspire the GS.

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## Abstract

This article analyses India’s dual role as a BRICS member and a Global South (GS) country in climate security concerns after the Paris Agreement (PA) and its opportunities while taking into account its challenges. In addition, the in-depth case study of India, as one of the biggest emitters and achievers of the Paris goals, offers valuable insights into its emergence as a BRICS climate leader which inspires and encourages to scale up South-South cooperation to achieve climate and energy security

collectively, providing stakeholders and policymakers with greater clarity to work on pragmatic and locally adaptable solutions to tackle climate challenges. Using critical content analysis, the paper employs South-South cooperation as a framework to address the question: *What are the opportunities for India, as a GS country and a BRICS member, to enhance South-South cooperation on global climate and energy security in the post-Paris era?*

Rozszerzanie współpracy Południe-Południe  
w zakresie bezpieczeństwa klimatycznego i energetycznego  
w erze po szczycie paryskim: możliwości dla Indii  
jako członka BRICS

Abstrakt

W artykule analizowana została podwójna rola Indii jako członka BRICS i kraju Globalnego Południa (GS) w kwestiach bezpieczeństwa klimatycznego po Porozumieniu Paryskim (PA). Wskazano na możliwości i wyzwania dla tego państwa. Dogłębne studium przypadku Indii jako jednego z największych emitentów i realizatorów celów paryskich oferuje cenne spostrzeżenia na temat tego państwa jako lidera klimatycznego BRICS, który inspiruje i zachęca do zwiększania współpracy Południe-Południe w celu wspólnego osiągnięcia bezpieczeństwa klimatycznego i energetycznego, zapewniając interesariuszom i decydom większą jasność w budowaniu pragmatycznych i lokalnie adaptowalnych rozwiązań, by stawić czoła wyzwaniom klimatycznym. Korzystając z krytycznej analizy treści, artykuł wykorzystuje współpracę Południe-Południe jako ramy do odpowiedzi na pytanie: *Jakie są możliwości dla Indii, jako kraju GS i członka BRICS, w celu wzmocnienia współpracy Południe-Południe w zakresie globalnego bezpieczeństwa klimatycznego i energetycznego w erze po porozumieniu paryskim?*

**Keywords:** climate change, energy, Paris Agreement, security, South-South

**Słowa kluczowe:** zmiana klimatu, energia, porozumienie paryskie, bezpieczeństwo

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