



Evolution of the BRICS Platform of Shared Values

Oleg Barabanov

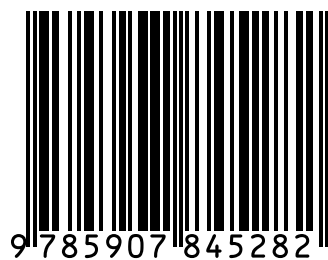
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PRINCIPLES OF BRICS PARTNERSHIP

List of values:

1 graduality	6 solidarity	11 mutually beneficial cooperation	16 recognition of Nelson Mandela's values, principles and dedication to the service of humanity
2 proactivity	7 mutual assistance	12 equality	17 sovereignty
3 pragmatism	8 mutual understanding	13 resolute rejection of attempts to misrepresent the results of World War II	18 peace
4 openness	9 trust	14 mutual respect	19 rule of law
5 transparency	10 inclusiveness	15 democracy	20 respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
			21 consensus

✓ yes

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
2009 Russia. To promote cooperation among our countries in:	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																
2010 Brazil. To promote cooperation among our countries in:	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																
2011 China. To advance cooperation, reflecting the principles of:	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓														
2012 India. To take our cooperation forward on the basis of:				✓		✓		✓	✓												
2013 South Africa. Our discussions reflected our growing:						✓															
2014 Brazil. To deepen our partnership with a renewed vision, based on:				✓						✓	✓										
2015 Russia. To further enhance our strategic partnership on the basis of principles of:				✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓								
2016 India. To further strengthen our strategic partnership in the spirit of:				✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓								
2017 China. Our cooperation has fostered the BRICS spirit featuring:				✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓							
2018 South Africa. Our commitment to principles of:										✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓					
2019 Brazil. Our fundamental commitment to the principle of:												✓		✓				✓			
2020 Russia. Our commitment to the principles of:										✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
2021 India. Our shared values:															✓			✓	✓	✓	
2022 China. The BRICS spirit featuring:				✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓							✓
2023 South Africa. The BRICS spirit of:				✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓						✓
2024 Russia. The BRICS spirit of:				✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓						✓

SHARED GOALS OF BRICS

List of values:

1	harmony	6	cooperation	11	democracy	16	strengthening and reforming the multilateral system
2	peace	7	stability	12	inclusiveness	17	upholding international law
3	prosperity	8	responding to emerging challenges	13	representation	18	sustainable development
4	security	9	sustainable development (in English the same as #18 but literal translation from Russian – sustainable growth)	14	greater participation of developing countries in international decision-making	19	inclusive growth
5	development	10	eradication of poverty, inequality and unemployment	15	strengthening multilateralism		

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19			
✓	✓	✓																		2009	Russia. Cooperation of BRIC countries is conducive to building:
✓	✓	✓																		2010	Brazil. Cooperation of BRIC countries is conducive to building:
	✓		✓	✓	✓															2011	China. Overarching objective and strong shared desire for:
	✓		✓	✓																2012	India. BRICS is a platform for cooperation for the promotion of:
	✓			✓	✓	✓														2013	South Africa. Our shared goal to contribute positively to:
	✓		✓	✓	✓															2014	Brazil. BRICS have been guided by the overarching objectives of:
	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓											2015	Russia. To step up coordinated efforts in:
	✓	✓		✓						✓										2016	India. To advance our common goals of:
	✓		✓	✓	✓															2017	China. The overarching objective and our desire for:
✓	✓	✓		✓																2018	South Africa. Cooperation toward the attainment of:
	✓	✓				✓														2019	Brazil. Shared goal of building:
										✓	✓	✓	✓							2020	Russia. To work towards reforming international governance:
																				2021	India. There was no list of shared goals, it was partially merged with shared values
																				2022	China. There was no list of shared goals
														✓	✓	✓				2023	South Africa. Nothing in declaration; but in Guiding Principles for BRICS membership expansion there was: the BRICS vision of:
	✓										✓						✓	✓		2024	Russia. Enhancing our strategic partnership through the promotion of:

✓ yes

THE DESCRIPTION OF ZONES OF CONFLICTS AND EMERGENCIES IN A SPECIFIC PARAGRAPH IN BRICS DECLARATIONS

1 Haiti	6 Iran	11 DR Congo	16 Iraq	21 diplomatic crisis between Gulf countries
2 Japan	7 Afghanistan	12 Guinea-Bissau	17 Ukraine	22 DPRK
3 Libya	8 Horn of Africa	13 Madagascar	18 Somalia	23 Sudan
4 Palestine	9 Mali	14 Western Africa	19 Burundi	24 Lebanon
5 Syria	10 CAR	15 South Sudan	20 Yemen	25 Nagorno-Karabakh
				26 Niger
				27 Western Sahara
				28 Mozambique

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
2009 Russia																													
2010 Brazil	✓																												
2011 China		✓	✓																										
2012 India				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																					
2013 South Africa				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓																		
2014 Brazil				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓												
2015 Russia			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									
2016 India	✓			✓	✓		✓																						
2017 China				✓	✓	✓	✓									✓				✓	✓	✓							
2018 South Africa				✓	✓	✓	✓													✓	✓	✓							
2019 Brazil			✓	✓	✓		✓													✓	✓	✓	✓						
2020 Russia			✓	✓	✓		✓				✓					✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
2021 India						✓	✓																						
2022 China						✓	✓										✓					✓							
2023 South Africa	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓											✓			✓			✓			✓	✓		
2024 Russia	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓						✓	✓			✓			✓	✓					✓

VISION OF FUTURE AND BRICS TASKS

The ideas of the BRICS vision of the future and its objectives were separately emphasised only in some declarations. Much more often, they were included in the description of shared goals

List of values:

1	peace	6	active growth	11	sustainable development
2	harmony	7	inclusiveness	12	mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries
3	cooperation	8	protection	13	security
4	scientific development	9	preservation	14	mutual trust
5	economic and social progress	10	equality	15	fairer international order

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
✓	✓	✓	✓												2011 China. The 21st century should be marked by:
✓			✓	✓											2012 India. We envision a future marked by:
					✓	✓	✓	✓							2014 Brazil No.1. The need for humankind to achieve:
✓				✓		✓			✓	✓	✓				2014 Brazil No.2 Our commitment to a major contribution to:
✓				✓						✓			✓		2014 Brazil No.3. Strengthen dialogue among BRICS and South American countries for the promotion of:
		✓							✓		✓		✓		2015 Russia. Establishment of sustainable peace based on:
✓					✓					✓				✓	2018 South Africa. To enhance our strategic partnership through the promotion of:

✓ yes

Executive Summary

During its years of existence, the BRICS Group has become an important international association of leading Global non-Western and Southern countries. Its appeal for many developing nations is reflected in their desire to join. Importantly, these countries perceive BRICS as a symbolic alternative to the current West-oriented world order, although BRICS always emphasises that its activities are not directed against third countries. Nevertheless, as an independent centre of power and attraction in the non-Western world, BRICS focuses on evolving a value platform of its own.

This value component is reflected in the declarations of BRICS summits. A semantic analysis of these texts allows for the identification of the main principles that BRICS follows in organising its work, as well as the Group's general goals based on these principles. This distinction sets BRICS declarations apart from G20 declarations, which lack a common value platform shared by both Western and non-Western countries.

For a considerable time, BRICS value priorities were formulated dialectically and evolved from summit to summit. Despite their similarities, there was no unified or semantically stable set of BRICS values in the initial period. This can be explained by the fact that each presiding country emphasised its own priorities. Moreover, as Vladimir Putin often notes, each country has its own values rooted in its cultural and historical traditions. For this reason, the existence of one-size-fits-all common values (including those suitable for the non-Western world) is not necessary, although it is possible. BRICS is a space where national values are aligned, and therefore its value priorities represent an amalgam of sorts, which, as is only natural, can be modified depending on which country is the current chair in office.

Value formulations in declarations adopted by BRICS summits became increasingly consolidated during the period of Russian Chairship in 2015, when the relationship between the BRICS countries was defined for the first time as a strategic partnership.

The Chinese Chairship in 2017 further solidified the value priorities, coining the term “the BRICS spirit.” This term reappeared during the next Chinese Chairship in 2022 and has persisted into subsequent years.

The expansion of BRICS membership contributed to perpetuating the semantic formulations of value priorities. The South African summit in 2023 approved a distinct document, Guiding Principles for BRICS Membership Expansion, which recorded this development.

The developments in 2022–2024 made it possible to establish a semantically stable understanding of the BRICS spirit, defined by the following values: mutual respect,

mutual understanding, sovereign equality, solidarity, openness, inclusiveness, consensus, and also strengthening collaboration, and democracy. These principles continue to crystallise semantically in relation to the general goals of BRICS. In 2023–2024, these included: strengthening peace, establishing a more inclusive and fair international order, reforming the multilateral system, upholding the rule of international law in its interconnectedness, and promoting sustainable development and inclusive growth.

BRICS declarations differ in their semantic tone due to varying priorities and intentions among the presiding countries. The most critical references to the advanced Western countries are found in a separate statement on food security adopted during the Russian Chairship in 2009, as well as in the general declarations approved during South Africa's Chairship in 2013, Russia's in 2015, India's in 2021, and Russia's in 2024. A set of documents adopted during the Brazilian Chairship in 2014 is characterised by a comprehensive reflection of independent alternative models of BRICS development.

The report analyses the results of BRICS members' voting on anti-Russian and anti-Iranian resolutions at the UN General Assembly. These results should not be interpreted in absolute terms; however, they are moves of considerable symbolic importance, indicative of internal consolidation and solidarity within BRICS.

China holds a position closest to Russia's in the first five BRICS countries; India and South Africa remain neutral, while Brazil is more distant. Among the new members, Iran and Ethiopia align more closely with Russia's position, whereas Egypt, the UAE, and the recent invitee, Saudi Arabia, are more distant. According to the list of possible BRICS partner countries published after the 2024 Russian summit, Belarus shares an identical position with Russia, while Cuba takes a similar stance. Algeria, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Vietnam, Uganda and Uzbekistan are more neutral. Indonesia, which transitioned from partner status to full membership in 2025, along with Malaysia, Nigeria, and Thailand, is also quite distant. Turkey opposes Russia, as evidenced by its voting at the UN General Assembly.

The level of open solidarity with Iran at the UN General Assembly is higher than that for Russia. Among the first five BRICS countries, Russia and China consistently show solidarity with Iran, while India almost always does, and South Africa fairly often. Brazil maintains a neutral stance. None of the first five BRICS members votes for anti-Iranian resolutions, unlike their votes on anti-Russian ones. Among the new members, Egypt holds a position quite close to that of Iran, while Ethiopia is neutral. The UAE and the newly invited Saudi Arabia, which had previously opposed Iran, have remained neutral in recent years. Indonesia has consistently supported Iran during the recent years. Among potential partner countries, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Vietnam and Uzbekistan have always supported Iran in recent years, while Algeria has almost always done so. Kazakhstan adopts a more neutral stance, while Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey and Uganda are entirely neutral. None of the potential partner countries voted for anti-Iranian resolutions in the past three years.

The Initial BRIC/BRICS Summits, 2008–2013

The groundwork for BRICS cooperation traces back to 2005, when a tripartite summit of the RIC grouping (Russia, India, China) was held. This was followed in 2006 by a ministerial meeting in the quadripartite BRIC format with Brazil's inclusion. Thus, the term "BRIC" – coined in 2001 by Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs as a geoeconomic configuration – became a tangible entity. Notably, nuances persist regarding the bloc's founding date. Vladimir Putin, in his addresses at BRICS summits, has repeatedly emphasised that BRICS originated in 2005 with the tripartite meeting convened at his initiative. Conversely, during its 2017 Chairship, China signalled that the group's timeline should commence from 2006, following the first BRIC ministers' meeting. Under this logic, China declared 2017 the start of "BRICS' second golden decade." Other member states have not formally articulated positions on this matter.

The first informal gathering of BRIC leaders – Dmitry Medvedev, Hu Jintao, Manmohan Singh, and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva – occurred in July 2008 on the sidelines of the G8 summit in Japan. No joint declaration was issued during this meeting; however, a concise press release summarised its outcomes, highlighting quantitative metrics that underscored BRIC's growing contribution to the global economy¹.

BRIC 2009 (Russia)

The first full-format BRIC summit with a joint declaration took place a year later, in June 2009, in Yekaterinburg, Russia². Fundamentally, the 2009 BRIC summit declaration was not, in our view, revolutionary or disruptive to the existing global order. However, it placed clear emphasis on safeguarding and advancing the interests of developing countries (the term "Global South" had not yet been introduced in the declaration). This was articulated through the formulation of the following principles and

¹ BRIC Leaders Meet. Toyako, Hokkaido, Japan // BRICS Information Centre. 9.07.2008. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/080709-leaders.html>.

² Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries' Leaders. Yekaterinburg, Russia // BRICS Information Centre. 16.06.2009. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/090616-leaders.html>.

objectives: **1)** increasing assistance from developed countries (the term “the West” had not been used in the declaration either) and providing liquid financial resources to developing nations; **2)** debt relief for developing countries; **3)** facilitating global market access; **4)** technology transfer; **5)** common but differentiated responsibility between developed and developing nations to combine measures to protect the climate with steps to fulfil our socio-economic development tasks; **6)** greater voice and representation within the IMF. Semantically, these objectives were framed in neutral, non-critical terms, resembling delicate appeals to developed nations rather than confrontational demands.

In contrast to the main declaration of the first BRIC summit, the BRIC’s Joint Statement on Global Food Security³ adopted a more radical and explicitly critical tone towards developed countries. It directly stated that attempts to attribute rising food prices to increased consumption in developing nations “obscure the true causes” of price growth. Among these causes, it highlighted restricted market access and trade-distorting subsidies in developed countries. The BRICS nations declared that “radical reductions of multibillion-dollar subsidies in the agricultural sector, which prevent developing countries from increasing their agricultural production,” should be a key objective for the WTO’s Doha Round negotiations. The statement stressed that “intellectual property rights in the agricultural domain should strike a balance between the common good of humankind and incentives to innovation.” This marked an open reference to “open patents,” a theme that would later resurface during the COVID-19 pandemic. Semantically, this BRIC statement carried a markedly different tone – a firm demand rather than a diplomatic appeal – compared to the main declaration. This creates the impression that the drafts of these two documents were prepared by different groups, potentially from different countries.

Regarding value postulates, the 2009 summit declaration positioned them in the penultimate paragraph. The principles of cooperation among BRIC countries were defined as follows: “We have agreed upon steps to promote dialogue and cooperation among our countries in an incremental, proactive, pragmatic, open and transparent way.” The bloc’s objectives were articulated as: “The dialogue and cooperation of the BRIC countries is conducive not only to serving the common interests of emerging market economies and developing countries, but also to building a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity.”

³ BRIC’s Joint Statement on Global Food Security. Yekaterinburg // BRICS Information Centre. 16.06.2009. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/090616-food-security.html>.

It is worth noting that by the time of the Yekaterinburg BRIC summit, the first two G20 summits had already taken place: in November 2008 in the United States⁴ and in April 2009 in the United Kingdom⁵. The G20, which previously existed in a ministerial format, ascended to the leaders' level in response to the 2008–2009 global financial crisis. For the first time, leaders of major Global South states gained a collective platform for dialogue with their Western counterparts.

A comparative examination of declarations of these two nascent structures reveals the following. The G20 declarations were almost entirely focused on the crisis and measures for its remediation. Characterised by exhaustive detail, they incorporated concrete action plans and statements addressing specific dimensions. This stands in contrast to the relatively concise BRIC 2009 declaration, comprising just 16 paragraphs, which maintained a generalised scope. Notably, the BRIC declaration's opening paragraph explicitly acknowledged the “central role” of G20 summits in crisis mitigation.

Equally telling is the semantic disposition of early G20 declarations, which adopted a conspicuously optimistic register. Recurring phrases included, among others: “we are determined to enhance our cooperation and work together to restore global growth;” “we have taken strong and significant actions to stimulate our economies;” “we agreed that a broader policy response is needed;” “as immediate steps we will continue our vigorous efforts to stabilise the financial system;” and “we have pledged to do whatever is necessary to restore confidence, growth and jobs.”

The initial G20 declarations did not shy away from scrutinising the origins of the crisis. However, the emphasis within these documents is quite telling. The entirety of the blame was attributed to market participants: “During a period of strong global growth and prolonged stability, market participants sought higher yields without an adequate appreciation of the risks.” The role of states in fostering the crisis received only oblique acknowledgment: “Policy-makers, regulators and supervisors, in some developed countries, did not adequately appreciate and address the risks

⁴ Declaration of the Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy. Washington DC // G20 Information Centre. 15.11.2008. URL: <https://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2008/2008declaration1115.html>.

⁵ Global Plan for Recovery and Reform. Statement Issued by the G20 Leaders. London // G20 Information Centre. 2.04.2009. URL: <https://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2009/2009communique0402.html>.

building up in financial markets.” Unsurprisingly, the identity of these “some developed countries” remained unspecified, with questions of their accountability entirely absent from the discourse.

In the context of navigating the global economic crisis, the proposed strategy was fundamentally straightforward, centring on two principal tenets: a commitment to free market principles and reliance on the IMF. The overarching conclusion, abstract yet exhortative, was captured in statements such as “but more needs to be done” and “a global crisis requires a global solution.”

It is relevant to note that certain paragraphs of those G20 declarations, in our view, remain pertinent today. For instance: “Our central banks have also taken exceptional action. Interest rates have been cut aggressively in most countries, and our central banks have pledged to maintain expansionary policies for as long as needed;” and “we will refrain from competitive devaluation of our currencies.”

A number of points within these G20 declarations acknowledged the detrimental impact of the crisis on developing nations. Nevertheless, within the framework of the aforementioned strategies, the primary advice for these nations was to seek assistance from the IMF. Furthermore, there was an emphasis on strengthening the IMF’s role as an advisor to countries on macroeconomic policy.

Notably, albeit briefly and with a medium-term perspective, four of the six theses from the Yekaterinburg Declaration of BRIC were reflected in these two G20 declarations: increased representation in the IMF, enhanced development aid, debt relief, and a differentiated approach to climate change. Indirectly, through the advocacy of combating protectionism, the notion of improving developing countries’ access to global markets also received some consideration. The issue of technology transfer, however, remained unaddressed, as it was not a focal point of the G20’s anti-crisis summits. Thus, if one examines solely the final 2009 BRIC declaration in its entirety, it must be acknowledged that it bore little difference from the G20 texts. However, the previously mentioned BRIC statement on food security was markedly different – both in its direct allegations against Western countries regarding WTO-inconsistent agricultural subsidies and in the solutions it proposed. These were the semantic outcomes of the first comprehensive BRIC summit.

BRIC 2010 (Brazil)

The second summit took place in April 2010 in Brazil⁶. The tone of the joint post-summit statement was also extremely delicate. To a certain degree, it appears to be even more benign and non-contentious than the first declaration and especially the 2009 statement on food security. A typical example of the style of this text can be found in the following wording regarding relations between the West and the non-West: “Emerging market economies and developing countries have the potential to play an even larger and more active role as engines of economic growth and prosperity, while at the same time committing to working together with other countries towards reducing imbalances in global economic development and fostering social inclusion.”

Of the six principles on the support of developing countries recorded during the previous summit, only three were explicitly retained in the 2010 statement: representation in the IMF, differentiated responsibility for climate issues, and reinforcing aid. Debt relief, access for developing countries to global markets, and technology transfer to them, proposed as goals of BRIC a year earlier, were not clearly reflected in this summit’s declaration. Moreover, the calls to end agricultural subsidies in developed countries and to open patents in the agricultural industry, included in the earlier text on food security, were not developed further.

This departure from the principles of previous declarations marked the beginning of a tendency that would manifest itself further in BRICS final documents. It is logical to presume that the chairing country prepares the first draft of a declaration, accentuating the aspects particularly important to it. It goes without saying that the other countries will make certain amendments to the document but the original semantic subtext of the declaration will remain, making it significantly different from the declarations released a year earlier and a year later. The result is a five-year cycle in BRICS’s emphasis on specific meanings and values as each new chairing country sets its own priorities. Only five years later can we see the return to the initial variant, which is then reiterated. The lack of a shared secretariat and insufficient attention to compliance with the earlier

⁶ Совместное заявление глав государств и правительств стран – участниц Второго саммита БРИК (Бразилия, Россия, Индия, Китай) // Президент России. 15.04.2010. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/524>; 2nd BRIC Summit of Heads of State and Government: Joint Statement. Brasilia // BRICS Information Centre. 15.04.2010. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/100415-leaders.html>.

adopted principles – at least at the early stages – have played a role in this trend. Interesting findings can emerge not only comparing the BRICS declarations from different years but also from analysing the declarations adopted during the chairship of the same country. This provides a clearer understanding of the evolution and dynamics of its priorities. We will return to this discussion later.

During Brazil’s Chairship in 2010, a new topic was included in the declaration that had not been addressed the previous year and which remains the focus of President Lula da Silva’s value-based policy and egalitarian socioeconomic strategy: the fight against poverty, social exclusion and inequality. This topic received a dedicated section in the declaration. However, once again, the section was worded in the most delicate manner, with no references to the food security demands from the previous year.

Noteworthy new priorities included the first mention by BRICS of the role of national currencies in trade among the BRICS countries. The finance ministries and central banks of these countries were asked “to look into regional monetary arrangements, including local currency trade settlement arrangements between our countries.” Interestingly, the Russian text of the declaration uses the words “to examine the issue” whereas the English text uses the more neutral “to look into.” We will return to the semantic differences between the Russian and English texts of the declarations later.

Despite the differences between Brazil’s BRIC declaration and the Russian declaration, three sections of the 2009 document became semantically consistent to a certain extent, featuring the same wording as the previous year. **First**, there was a paragraph on the commitment to a “multipolar, equitable and democratic world order” based on six principles: 1) international law; 2) equality; 3) mutual respect; 4) cooperation; 5) coordinated action; and 6) collective decision-making of all states. **Second**, it contained a paragraph on “a comprehensive reform” of the UN with a passage stating that “we understand and support the aspirations of India and Brazil to play a greater role in the UN.” **Third**, the principles and goals of cooperation, along with BRIC’s mission in global politics, were outlined. This section is almost identical to the text of Russia’s declaration from the previous year, except that it was moved from the end of the declaration closer to the beginning.

BRICS 2011 (China)

The third BRICS summit took place in April 2011 in China⁷. South Africa had just joined the group, and its president Jacob Zuma attended the summit. Brazil was represented by the new president, Dilma Rousseff, instead of Lula da Silva. An agreement on BRICS inter-bank cooperation was signed at the summit. At the same time, there was a tangible shift in the semantic tone of the final declaration, from highlighting the specific features of developing countries (and lobbying their interests) to emphasising stronger cooperation between the BRICS countries within the group. In this regard, they adopted a special action plan, supported existing sector-based initiatives in certain areas of the economy and social development and approved new ones. The discussion also focused on the need to strengthen coordination among the BRICS countries on international issues of common interest. Therefore, the 2011 Chinese summit can be called a summit of internal consolidation for BRICS.

The 2011 declaration introduced a new dimension: social protection. The context suggests that it did not refer to the developing world as a whole, but to the cooperation of the five countries within the BRICS: “We underscore our firm commitment to strengthen dialogue and cooperation in the fields of social protection, decent work, gender equality, youth, and public health, including the fight against HIV/AIDS”. In the context of the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident that occurred shortly before the summit, it is important to note that the subject of nuclear energy surfaced in the declaration, reaffirming that “nuclear energy will continue to be an important element in the future energy mix of BRICS countries.”

With regard to the specific interests of the entire developing world, the declaration once again highlighted differentiated climate responsibilities, increased assistance from developed countries, and the need for reform of the IMF (although the phrasing was much softer than the year before, with the clause about the IMF and the World Bank needing to address their legitimacy deficits actually removed from this edition). The call for the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger was included, albeit with less elaboration than the previous year, just stated in the context of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The subject of national currencies was omitted from the declaration altogether, replaced by a much more evasive and general phrase about “a broad-based international reserve currency system.” The mention of national currencies did not reappear in the BRICS declarations for a long time after that, nor did a few other subjects addressed earlier

⁷ Декларация, принятая по итогам саммита БРИКС (г.Санья, о.Хайнань, Китай, 14 апреля 2011 года) // Президент России. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/907>; Sanya Declaration. Sanya, Hainan, China // BRICS Information Centre. 14.04.2011. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/110414-leaders.html>.

such as debt relief, market access, technology transfer, open patents, the end of agricultural subsidies in developed countries. Separately, the declaration stated support for the development of infrastructure in Africa and its industrialisation (apparently to mark South Africa's accession to the group), but only within a broader framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), not BRICS itself. The subject of excessive volatility in commodity prices, particularly those for food and energy, was also new. In fact, the declaration clearly indicated that Brazilian President Lula's robust egalitarian approach, which had undoubtedly influenced the 2010 phrasing, had now been replaced by a more cautious attitude, with noncommittal phrases typical of the Chinese leadership under Hu Jintao.

As for semantically stable phrases, the clause on the world order, which had been repeated almost word for word in the two previous declarations, was gone, replaced by "we share the principle that the use of force should be avoided. We maintain that the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of each nation should be respected." The paragraphs on combating terrorism and the WTO retained a certain continuity from the previous texts. However, an important clarification was added to the paragraph on reforming the UN, in addition to exactly the same phrase as before – that BRICS was in favour of not just reforming the UN, but of the need for a comprehensive reform of the UN, "including its Security Council." This wording remained unchanged in all subsequent declarations.

The signatories re-emphasised the role of the G20 as the premier forum for international economic cooperation, explicitly stating that BRICS was submitting its initiatives and proposals for the upcoming G20 summit. Therefore, on the whole, semantically, the 2011 BRICS declaration conveyed the idea that the group largely viewed itself as a mechanism for preliminary coordination of the five countries' approaches before the G20. However, any initiatives to promote international issues – those beyond the framework of the five countries' cooperation within BRICS – as an independent entity were clearly relegated to the back burner.

The 2011 Chinese summit further crystallised some of the wordings in the context of creating the BRICS value platform. The two previous declarations included the phrase on cooperation between the BRIC countries being conducive not only to serving the common interests of developing countries, but also to building a harmonious world in general, repeated almost verbatim. In 2011, a new clause on the BRICS group's place in the world was included in the preamble. The Russian translation posted on the Kremlin's website, is as follows: "The vision of a common goal and a strong shared desire for peace, security, development and cooperation have brought together the BRICS countries <...> BRICS aims

at making a significant contribution to the development of humanity and establishing a more equitable and fairer world.” At the same time, the English-language text reads: “*It is the overarching objective and strong shared desire for peace, security, development and cooperation that brought together BRICS countries... BRICS aims at contributing significantly to the development of humanity and establishing a more equitable and fair world.*” It should be noted that there are subtle semantic discrepancies between the Russian and English texts of the declaration. “The vision of a common goal” in the Russian translation was “*the overarching objective*” in the original English version, which is not quite the same. Two years later, the English texts of BRICS documents featured another term, “*shared goal*,” while the Russian phrase, “common goal,” remained unchanged. This suggests that analysing the Russian texts in isolation can be semantically confusing. Next, the declaration defines the value principles of cooperation between the BRICS countries, with more semantic differences found between the English and Russian texts. In English, the declaration says they will continue “*to advance cooperation in a gradual and pragmatic manner, reflecting the principles of openness, solidarity and mutual assistance.*” The Russian translation mentions “further gradual advancement of cooperation on the basis of a pragmatic approach, reflecting the principles of openness, solidarity and mutual assistance.” In the Russian text, the word “*gradual*” got separated from the epithet “*pragmatic.*”

However, all things considered, the value priorities of BRICS were for the first time united in a separate paragraph and symbolically placed at the beginning of the declaration, and the 2011 Chinese summit deserves full credit for this.

By that time, the work of the Group of Twenty had also changed. The anti-crisis format of its first summits had become a thing of the past, starting with the summit in Canada in June 2010⁸. The G20 began promoting itself as “the premier forum for our international economic cooperation.” Since 2011, G20 summits have been held once a year instead of twice, as had been the case previously. The subject of developing countries began to occupy a noticeably smaller place in the Group’s declarations. This was especially evident at the Canadian summit in 2010, where almost all the clauses of the declaration were homogeneously global, like for example, the clause on combatting poverty. The specifics of the developing world were reflected only in two paragraphs of that declaration: one on the reform of the IMF quotas, which had already been carried out before the Canadian meeting, and another on assistance to the poorest countries as part of the Millennium Development Goals. The same can be said about the

⁸ The G20 Toronto Summit Declaration. Toronto // G20 Information Centre. 27.06.2010. URL: <https://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2010/to-communicue.html>.

G20 summit in South Korea in November 2010⁹. That declaration relegated most issues of assistance to the poorest countries to UN formats. The G20 summit in France¹⁰ in November 2011 focused exclusively on the financial crisis in Greece and the Eurozone. The developing world agenda was all but omitted, except for the usual general statements. These general phrases acknowledged “mitigating excessive food and agricultural commodity price volatility” as an “important endeavour” – a subject obviously included on the G20 agenda by the BRICS members following their previous summit. The declaration also mentioned social protection, another issue on the Chinese BRICS summit agenda. Strengthening IMF supervision of the macroeconomic policies of states was recognised as a key mechanism for crisis prevention.

The French summit of the G20 is also interesting because it included an informal meeting of BRICS leaders on its sidelines, allowing them to compare notes and coordinate their respective stances before the summit.

BRICS 2012 (India)

The 4th BRICS summit was held in March 2012 in India.¹¹ The participants signed the General Agreement on Granting Loans in National Currencies and launched the establishment of the New Development Bank of the BRICS states. The finance ministers were instructed to examine the relevant practical issues.

The core values were set out in several clauses at the beginning of the declaration. Some of them were semantically related to the clause on BRICS’ place in the world formulated at the previous summit but were rephrased. Overall, these principles were as follows:

- partnership for common development;
- cooperation on the basis of openness, solidarity, mutual understanding and trust (the first two principles were set out at the summit in China the year before; in 2012, they were complemented with trust and mutual understanding, while mutual assistance and “gradual, pragmatic approach” were discarded);

⁹ The G20 Seoul Summit Leaders’ Declaration. Seoul // G20 Information Centre. 12.11.2010. URL: <https://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2010/g20seoul.html>.

¹⁰ Cannes Summit Final Declaration – Building Our Common Future: Renewed Collective Action for the Benefit of All. Draft of November 4. Cannes // G20 Information Centre. 3.11.2011. URL: <https://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2011/2011-cannes-declaration-111104-en.html>.

¹¹ Fourth BRICS Summit: Delhi Declaration. New Delhi // BRICS Information Centre. 29.03.2012. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/120329-delhi-declaration.html>.

- BRICS is platform for dialogue and cooperation for the promotion of peace, security and development in a multipolar, interdependent and increasingly complex, globalising world;
- the transcontinental dimension of our interaction adds to its value and significance;
- we envision a future marked by global peace, economic and social progress and enlightened scientific progress.

It is noteworthy that the term “global governance” in detail was for the first time included in the declaration of the BRICS summit in India. It was first used in BRIC documents two years before that in Brazil, but only as part of a subtitle (“Common vision and global governance”).

The meaning of the term “global governance”, which had only been used in futures studies about an ideal world order, was changed from a vision of the future to a description of the existing mechanisms of global regulation. To be fair, the term “global governance” was used in the documents of the G20 summit held in France six months before the BRICS summit. In other words, BRICS followed in the wake of the G20 when it comes to adjusting old terms to new realities. In the BRICS Delhi Declaration, the effectiveness of global governance institutions was linked to the strengthened representation of emerging and developing countries in the institutions of global governance. On the one hand, the former BRICS premise on strengthening representation at the IMF was expanded to include all global institutions. On the other hand, since the summit was held in India, this could be interpreted as a hint at the long pending reform of the UN Security Council expressed in a newly-minted term. However, as in the previous year, the clause in the BRICS Delhi Declaration on the reform of the UN reiterated the commitment to reforming the UN Security Council as well.

Since the summit was held during the financial crisis in Greece and the Eurozone, the BRICS declaration logically compared stable growth in the developing countries to the crisis in the advanced states. It pointed out that the build-up of sovereign debt in advanced countries was creating an uncertain environment for global growth. The BRICS countries stated that it is critical for advanced economies to adopt responsible macroeconomic and financial policies. Apart from being aesthetically pleasing, this approach included a vital conceptual principle, which held that it was not the South but the West that was the source of global economic problems.

BRICS had not made such statements before, not even at the height of the global financial crisis in 2009.

The BRICS Delhi Declaration for the first time included long and detailed statements on conflict situations in the Middle East, Syria, Iran and Afghanistan. This was an element of formalising the BRICS' foreign policy stance not only for a harmonious future world but also with regard to existing conflicts. The statement on Syria made in the declaration is noteworthy: "We express our deep concern at the current situation in Syria and call for an immediate end to all violence and violations of human rights in that country. Global interests would be best served by dealing with the crisis through peaceful means that encourage broad national dialogues... We encourage the Syrian government and all sections of Syrian society to demonstrate the political will to initiate such a process." As you can see, it is not an expression of one-sided support for the Syrian government.

It was stated that the elimination of poverty and hunger problems in developing countries depended on accelerated growth and sustainable development. The advanced countries were not criticised for that situation. The creation of new jobs was expected to help resolve these problems. In other words, BRICS followed in the wake of previous solutions proposed by the G20, which formulated the goal of enhancing employment on a global scale. References to the derivatives market for commodities in that connection repeated the relevant G20 statements.

As for climate change, BRICS again used the premise of the diversification of responsibility, which means that advanced countries were expected to increase their financial and technical assistance. In that context, BRICS documents for the first time used the term "green economy," which echoed the new term, "green growth," used by the G20 in November 2011, six months before the BRICS summit. Moreover, it was mentioned for the first time in the G8 declaration¹² in May 2011. This is an indicative example of the way the new agenda was handed down from the G7/G8 to the G20 and ultimately to BRICS.

In accordance with the BRICS declaration, green economy should be interpreted within the broader framework of sustainable development and the eradication of poverty: "We resist the introduction of trade and investment barriers in any form on the grounds of developing the green

¹² Deauville G8 Declaration: Renewed Commitment for Freedom and Democracy // G7 Information Centre. 27.05.2011. URL: <https://www.g7.utoronto.ca/summit/2011deauville/2011-declaration-en.html>.

economy.” Support for growth in Africa was no longer to be provided exclusively through the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), as it had been a year before, but “including within the framework of NEPAD.”

As for energy, BRICS texts have been complemented with a new phrase: “Energy based on fossil fuels will continue to dominate the energy mix for the foreseeable future.” Before that, the group had only called for diversifying energy resources (this phrase can still be found in its documents). As in the previous year, the declaration mentioned safe nuclear energy, but with more emphasis on “strict observance of relevant safety standards and requirements.” It also for the first time stressed the IAEA’s essential role in the joint efforts towards enhancing nuclear safety standards. The declaration stated that “most BRICS countries” faced similar challenges in the sphere of access to health services, health technologies and medicines. It proposed addressing them within the framework of cooperation between the relevant sectors of the BRICS countries. The bulk of the declaration and the action plan were devoted to cooperation between the five countries.

As a result, the 2012 Delhi Declaration was larger (50 clauses) than the two previous ones (32–33 clauses). It reworded the group’s value priorities formulated the year before and criticised Western countries’ financial policies as a source of global problems. Otherwise, the declaration closely followed the G20 themes formulated six months earlier, both in substance and as regards the terms. On the other hand, the declaration offered the first BRICS analysis of several conflicts.

The G20 summit¹³ held in Mexico in June 2012 was the first summit hosted by a Global South country, even though it was not part of the BRICS group. Like the year before, the BRICS leaders held an informal meeting on the sidelines of the event to compare their positions.¹⁴ However, even though the G20 summit was hosted by a developing country, its declaration did not differ much from its previous documents. It focused on the challenges facing the Eurozone and the IMF’s capitalisation. One of the new elements was “the need to enhance the participation of

¹³ Итоговая декларация лидеров «Группы двадцати» // Президент России. 19.07.2012. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/1245>; G20 Leaders Declaration. Los Cabos, Mexico // G20 Information Centre. 19.07.2012. URL: <https://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2012/2012-0619-loscabos.html>.

¹⁴ Media Note on the Informal Meeting of BRICS Leaders Ahead of G20 Summit in Los Cabos. Los Cabos // BRICS Information Centre. 18.07.2012. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/120618-loscabos-note.html>. Such meetings of BRICS leaders on the sidelines of G20 events subsequently became regular.

developing countries in global value chains.” However, the G20 leaders agreed to refer the issue to the WTO, UNCTAD and the OECD, calling on them to do everything in their power to achieve the desired result. They also called for “accelerated progress in ending the mechanistic reliance on credit ratings.” There is a semantic difference between “as soon as possible” in the Russian text and “*accelerated progress*” in the English variant.

As for “green growth,” the Mexico declaration repeated the formula of the previous BRICS summit, which said that green growth should not be used to introduce protectionist measures. Overall, like the earlier G20 documents, the Mexico declaration was globally homogeneous and did not make a breakthrough towards strengthening the voice of developing countries.

BRICS 2013 (South Africa)

The next BRICS summit was held in South Africa in 2013.¹⁵ It was the first summit where Vladimir Putin represented Russia and the new Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, spoke on behalf of the People’s Republic of China. The delegates reviewed preparations for the establishment of the New Development Bank and signed an agreement on co-financing green economy projects. However, since the summit was held in South Africa, it focused on cooperation between BRICS countries and African states.

It should be noted that prior to this summit, the G8 was the only informal international association that addressed support for African countries. Starting in 2000, African leaders were regularly invited to attend G8 events. South Africa was invited 12 times between 2000 and 2012, Algeria and Nigeria 11 times each, Senegal nine times, Ethiopia six times, Egypt five times and Ghana four times. The G8 adopted special declarations, assistance programmes and action plans for Africa. They were advocated especially actively during the presidencies of France and Japan. The G20, which included only one African country, South Africa, did not pay special attention to the continent. BRICS only added African issues to its declarations after South Africa joined the group. But initially such efforts were mostly limited to appeals to other structures such as NEPAD to increase assistance.

¹⁵ BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration and Industrialisation. eThekweni Declaration. Durban, South Africa // BRICS Information Centre. 27.03.2013. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/130327-statement.html>.

For this reason, BRICS acted for the first time as Africa's new collective partner at the 2013 summit in South Africa. It was also the first time that invitations were sent to the leaders of several non-member countries: Egypt, Guinea, Chad, Senegal, Angola, Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, the Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Uganda, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia and Algeria. BRICS launched a new practice of inviting the leaders of non-member countries to its summit meetings, a practice that the G8 and, to a lesser degree, the G20 had long been following. The practical result was the BRICS agreement to co-finance infrastructure projects in Africa.

As for value priorities, the South African declaration for the first time articulated BRICS' shared goal: "to contribute positively to global peace, stability, development and cooperation", including through "commitment to the promotion of international law, multilateralism and the central role of the UN." It stated that the role of BRICS in the world was based on "an inclusive approach of shared solidarity and cooperation towards all nations and peoples." As you can see, these formulas differed slightly from the earlier descriptions of the inclusive BRICS platform adopted at the summits in China and India. The most likely reason for this has been mentioned above: there was no tradition for each new chairship to coordinate the themes of their declarations with those adopted earlier.

The South African summit for the first time proclaimed BRICS as an alternative development model: "We are committed to exploring new models and approaches towards more equitable development and inclusive global growth by emphasising complementarities and building on our respective economic strengths." This issue had never been raised before, with summit participants only adopting relatively modest appeals to the West to respect the interests of developing countries. But at the summit in South Africa, BRICS put forth its own, non-Western alternative, even if only at the level of a declaration. This decision was probably influenced by the African context of the summit.

That South African declaration included a relatively comprehensive vision and priorities for the developing world. It can be described as the first BRICS declaration that was not influenced by the G20 and even G8 agendas and formulas. It was also much less "globally homogeneous." The BRICS wanted the non-member African countries attending its summit to view it as an independent force (including in terms of finance and resources), which is why clauses on alternative strategies and development models were added to the declaration, alongside practical decisions to co-finance African projects. This shift in discourse is an undeniable achievement of South Africa's Chairship in 2013.

The G20 summit held in St Petersburg in September 2013¹⁶ was the first summit hosted by a BRICS country. The main priorities of Russia's G20 Presidency were defined as follows: 1) to increase financing for investment; 2) to ensure public debt sustainability; and 3) to stimulate job creation around the world.

The declaration also included a commitment to replenish the African Development Fund, to assist developing countries in building capacity in the area of tax administration, to reduce the average cost of transferring remittances to developing countries, to develop plans on skills for employment in low-income countries, as well as to address food security and hunger reduction, with a focus on the poorest countries. Based on these commitments and seeking to strengthen the effect of the G20's actions in developing countries, the member countries adopted a St Petersburg development strategy. The semantic nuance here is that it is referred to as "strategy" in Russian and a much softer "outlook" in English (*St Petersburg Development Outlook*). One decision that related to the subjects addressed by BRICS was the establishment of the G20 Dialogue Platform on Inclusive Green Investments for sustainable development and poverty eradication.

BRICS in 2014–2021

BRICS 2014 (Brazil)

The subsequent BRICS summit took place in July 2014 in Brazil¹⁷, marking the onset of a new stage for the group. This transition was driven both by the commencement of a fresh five-year cycle in BRICS operations, with countries embarking on their second presidencies, and by the geopolitical upheavals of 2014. These changes catalysed the politicisation of G20 meetings, notably evident at the November 2014 G20 summit in Australia. Russia's participation in the G8 was suspended,

¹⁶ Санкт-Петербургская декларация лидеров «Группы двадцати». // Президент России. 2013. URL: <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d48a73994e28b71688.pdf>; G20 Leaders' Declaration. St Petersburg // G20 Information Centre. 6.09.2013. URL: <https://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2013/2013-0906-declaration.html>.

¹⁷ Форталезская декларация (принята по итогам шестого саммита БРИКС). Г.Форталеза, Бразилия // Президент России. 15.07.2014. URL: <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d4f1dd6741763252a8.pdf>; The 6th BRICS Summit: Fortaleza Declaration. Fortaleza, Brazil // BRICS Information Centre. 15.07.2014. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/140715-leaders.html>.

the planned June 2014 G8 summit in Sochi was cancelled, and the group was transformed into the G7.

These developments influenced Russia's strategic pivot towards BRICS. In a pre-summit interview, Vladimir Putin asserted that "it is time to raise the BRICS' role to a new level and to make our association an unalienable part of the global management system." He emphasised that BRICS must "persistently counteract individual states' attempts to impose on the international community the policy of displacing unwanted regimes and promoting unilateral solutions to crisis situations."¹⁸

The Brazilian summit saw India represented for the first time by its newly elected Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. Additionally, a joint meeting was held between BRICS leaders and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), extending the tradition of regional outreach initiated the previous year in South Africa. Pre-summit media reports also speculated about Argentina's potential accession to BRICS, allegedly supported by Brazil, India, and South Africa. However, no final decision emerged. Vladimir Putin clarified in his interview that "the expansion of BRICS is not being considered in practice at the moment."¹⁹

A landmark outcome of the summit was the signing of the final Agreement on the New Development Bank²⁰ and the Treaty for the Establishment of a BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement²¹. These accords provided the first legal and regulatory foundations for the group's autonomous financial and economic initiatives.

New axiological wording emerged: the English version of the Brazilian summit's declaration replaced the term "shared goal" with "overarching objectives" – a phrasing previously introduced in the Chinese declaration – while the Russian text retained the translation as "общие цели" [common goals]. Of the four *goals/objectives* outlined the prior year, three remained unchanged: peace, development and cooperation. The fourth, stability, was replaced with security – a shift some interpret as a

¹⁸ Интервью российскому информационному агентству ИТАР-ТАСС // Президент России. 15.07.2014. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46218>.

¹⁹ Интервью латиноамериканскому агентству «Пренса Латина» и российскому агентству ИТАР-ТАСС // Президент России. 11.07.2014. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46190>.

²⁰ Agreement on the New Development Bank. Fortaleza, Brazil // BRICS Information Centre. 15.07.2014. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/140715-bank.html>.

²¹ Treaty for the Establishment of a BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement. Fortaleza, Brazil // BRICS Information Centre. 15.07.2014. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/140715-treaty.html>.

response to 2014's geopolitical turbulence. The declaration reiterated its "commitment to international law and multilateralism with the UN at its centre and foundation," almost mirroring the previous year's wording.

The principles of partnership among BRICS nations were articulated, revealing notable differences between the English and Russian versions. The English text reads: "*we pledge to deepen our partnership with a renewed vision, based on openness, inclusiveness and mutually beneficial cooperation.*" In contrast, the Russian version reads: "we pledge to deepen our partnership based on openness, inclusiveness, mutual cooperation, and with a new vision of prospects". In the English text, "*a renewed vision*" is positioned as the foundation of the partnership, marking the conclusion of the previous five-year cycle of presidencies and the onset of a new one. This vision defines the three principles of partnership: openness, inclusiveness and cooperation. However, in the Russian text, "a new vision of prospects" is treated as a fourth principle, on par with the other three, losing its contextual emphasis tied to the start of a new five-year cycle. A year earlier, there were no formal principles of BRICS cooperation, only a statement on growing solidarity; these principles emerged in the Chinese and Indian declarations of 2011 and 2012. As noted earlier, the lists of principles at that time differed, with only openness being retained in the new principles.

As at the previous Brazilian summit, attention was devoted to poverty and hunger eradication. An agreement was reached to exchange information regarding strategies for ensuring access to food for the most vulnerable population groups. While this decision appears modest and unambitious, it reflects an approach gaining increasing traction in BRICS activities: the exchange of best practices among the five nations. This approach is expected to develop further. Concerning the fight against extreme poverty, BRICS endorsed the relevant efforts of the World Bank but noted that they would only be effective if the Bank is able "to effectively move towards more democratic governance structures."

Overall, the 2014 Brazilian declaration was the most extensive to date, comprising 72 points. A significant portion of these focused on sectoral cooperation among the five BRICS nations. New tasks emerged here: the question of a foreign policy planning dialogue to be explored, alongside the mutual recognition of higher education qualifications. It is worth noting that the latter topic did not see practical development thereafter. The foreign policy planning dialogue, however, can be seen as a subtle nod to the geopolitical events of 2014. Ukraine was directly

addressed in one point of the declaration: “We express our deep concern with the situation in Ukraine. We call for a comprehensive dialogue, the de-escalation of the conflict and restraint from all the actors involved, with a view to finding a peaceful political solution, in full compliance with the UN Charter and universally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms.” The declaration did not explicitly address the issue of Crimea. However, it included statements such as: “we condemn unilateral military interventions and economic sanctions in violation of international law and universally recognised norms of international relations;” and “no State should strengthen its security at the expense of the security of others.” The theme of supporting the territorial integrity of all states, which had previously appeared in the BRICS declaration at the Chinese summit, was also absent this time.

BRICS 2015 (Russia)

In 2015, Russia again hosted the BRICS summit, this time in Ufa,²² where the group’s leaders also met with the leaders of the SCO and EAEU member states and partner countries. The summit participants adopted the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership and a declaration, which included a clause on combating the Ebola virus disease in Africa. That issue had earlier been discussed at the G20 summit in Australia in 2014. The statement on Ukraine said that “there is no military solution to the conflict and that the only way to reconciliation is through inclusive political dialogue.” The participants expressed support for Russia’s diplomatic efforts to settle the conflict in Syria (the summit was held before Russian troops were sent to the Middle East) and for the territorial integrity of Syria, Iraq, Mali and Libya. The declaration also mentioned territorial integrity in general. A statement on BRICS’ advocacy of the priority of international law, sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, which also mentioned territorial integrity, was placed for some reason in the middle of a large section on information and communication technologies (ICTs). It read as follows: “We are concerned with the potential misuse of ICTs for purposes, which threaten international peace and security. We emphasise the central

²² VII Саммит БРИКС Уфимская декларация (Уфа, Российская Федерация) // Президент России. 9.07.2015. URL: <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/YukPLgicg4mqAQly7JRB1HgePZrMP2w5.pdf>; VII BRICS Summit: 2015 Ufa Declaration. Ufa, Russia //BRICS Information Centre. 9.07.2015. URL: http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/150709-ufa-declaration_en.html.

importance of the principles of international law enshrined in the UN Charter, particularly the political independence, territorial integrity and sovereign equality of states, non-interference in internal affairs of other states and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.” After that, the document returned to the issue of ICTs.

The focus regarding ICTs was on inequality: “We recognise that states are not at the same level of development and capacity with regard to ICTs. We commit ourselves to focus on expanding universal access to all forms of digital communication.” Statements on the debts of developing countries expressed criticism of the advanced states: “Debt restructurings have often been too slow and too late, thus failing to reestablish debt sustainability and market access in a durable way.” The participants also expressed “deep disappointment” with the prolonged failure by the United States to ratify the IMF 2010 reform package coordinated by the G20, which “continues to undermine the credibility, legitimacy and effectiveness of the IMF.” They pledged to continue working to bring greater attention to the issues on the G20 agenda that are prioritised by developing countries and emerging markets. It was probably the first critical statement towards the G20 since the establishment of BRICS. The declaration also expressed concern over potential spillover effects from “the unconventional monetary policies of the advanced economies.” For the first time in several years, the declaration mentioned “the potential for expanding the use of the group countries’ national currencies in transactions between the BRICS countries.”

The 2015 declaration was the first one to mention international migration in the context of the migration crisis in the EU. During the year of Russian Chairship, BRICS held the first meeting of the heads of national migration agencies. The declaration expressed regret for the large-scale loss of lives of migrants in the Mediterranean, and called for providing the necessary assistance to these migrants and addressing the root causes of the growing unregulated migration.

Another issue that was addressed for the first time was human rights and their direct connection to state sovereignty. It was pointed out that “cooperation of sovereign states is the cornerstone of international activities to protect human rights,” and that the BRICS countries would work to bolster non-politicised human rights dialogue.” As for international relations in general, the declaration emphasised the need to discard

resorting to “double standards” and to avoid placing the interests of some countries above others.

Overall, the 2015 BRICS declaration is much more critical of the advanced countries (which were not yet described as “the West”) than the 2009 document, which was adopted in Russia as well. One of the reasons for this was the geopolitical shifts of 2014. Unlike earlier declarations, the clauses of the 2015 document begin with the phrases such as “we insist,” “we condemn,” “we assert,” “we stress,” and the like. It even included the first elements of diplomatic trolling, which were gradually replacing substantive diplomacy and determining the media backdrop of Russia-West relations. As a result, the 2015 Russian declaration was one of the most critical towards the “advanced economies” adopted by BRICS previously.

Relations between BRICS countries in the sphere of values were for the first time described as a “strategic partnership.” The 2009 declaration mentioned “dialogue and cooperation” between the BRIC countries; the document adopted in Brazil in 2010 repeated that phrase, complementing it with “cooperation and coordination.” During the summit in China in 2011, the attending countries added the word “partnership.” which was also used in the Indian declaration in 2012, in South Africa in 2013, and in Brazil in 2014. This is evidence of a fundamental change in assessing BRICS activities, both substantively and in a symbolic semantic sense.

The Ufa Declaration reaffirmed the principles of strategic partnership within BRICS and complemented them with openness, solidarity, equality and mutual understanding, inclusiveness and mutually beneficial cooperation. Only “openness” can be found in all the earlier declarations; “inclusiveness and mutually beneficial cooperation” were added in Brazil in 2014, “solidarity” appeared in the Chinese and Indian declarations (2011–2012), and “mutual understanding” in the Indian document. “Equality” was mentioned for the first time, whereas “mutual assistance” and “trust,” present in earlier documents, have disappeared.

Putting things in perspective, it should be noted that the G20 declarations did not contain any sections on values, they did not attempt to define the principles of cooperation between the group’s countries, and they never described it as a “strategic partnership.” Differences between Western and non-Western countries made the use of such formulas impossible.*

Before Russia's membership was suspended, the declarations of the G7/G8 group mentioned values from time to time but not constantly. For example, during the first summit of the G6 (before Canada joined the group) held in France in 1975, they were defined as "our shared beliefs of an open, democratic society, dedicated to individual liberty and social advancement." They were not mentioned in 1976-1979, but reappeared in 1980 in the group's special statement on the deployment of Soviet troops in Afghanistan, which noted that all countries obeyed the rule of law, respected national independence, and kept world peace. The common values and beliefs disappeared again in 1981-1982 and reappeared in 1983, when President Ronald Reagan, who hosted the summit, said: "Our nations are united in their dedication to democracy, individual freedom, creativity, moral purpose, human dignity and personal and cultural development." In 1984, when UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher hosted the summit for the first time, they adopted not only a general declaration but also a special 'Declaration on Democratic Values,' which spoke in detail about the rule of law, the system of democracy, and freedoms. When the G7 met in Germany in 1985, they again adopted a general declaration plus a declaration on the 40th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, where their values were more aptly presented in a classical triad: "We share a commitment to freedom, democratic principles and human rights." In 1986, silence returned.

With the advent of Gorbachev's era, the G7 issued several statements on East-West relations, which emphasised these values. In 1987 and 1989, it was the same triad of freedom, democracy and human rights. In 1988, it was complemented with a "desire of all men to live in peace under the rule of law." The general declaration adopted in 1990 expressed joy at the spread of democracy in Eastern Europe: "We welcome unreservedly the spread of multiparty democracy, the practice of free elections, the freedom of expression and assembly, the increased respect for human rights, the rule of law, and the increasing recognition of the principles of the open and competitive economy." In 1991, when Mikhail Gorbachev was invited for the first time to a G7 meeting, they praised the "common values of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and sound economic management."

In 1992, when an end was put to the East-West conflict, they stated: "Rarely have conditions been so favourable for shaping a permanent peace, guaranteeing respect for human rights, carrying through the principles of democracy, ensuring free markets, overcoming poverty and safeguarding the environment." The special political declaration adopted in 1993 mentioned the classic triad of values plus the rule of law. No new elements were added in 1994-1995, but the separate political declaration adopted in 1996 mentioned "basic requirements of respect for human rights, establishment of democratic institutions and individual citizen's security."

The first G8 summit attended by Russia was held in 1997. Its declaration stated that "sustainable development includes strengthening democracy and human rights." However, these values were not mentioned in 1998 and were included in 1999 in the context of the information revolution: "The information revolution and greater exposure to each other's cultures and values have strengthened the democratic impulse and the fight for human rights and fundamental freedoms while spurring creativity and innovation." There was silence for a decade between 2000 and 2010. The general declaration adopted at the summit in France in 2011 was titled "Renewed commitment to freedom and democracy" and declared "profound commitment to the values of freedom and democracy, and their universality." No values were mentioned in 2012, and the 2013 declaration did not speak about the classical triad of values but about commitment to "open economies, open societies and open governments."

It was only when Russia was ousted from the group that the G7 revitalised the classical definitions of liberal values, highlighting the importance of the group's values: "This Group came together because of shared beliefs and shared responsibilities. We are profoundly committed to the values of freedom and democracy, and their universality." This phrase was subsequently repeated at nearly all G7 meetings as a set semantic phrase.

The statements on the BRICS' values set out in the 2015 Russian declaration include requisites for the establishment of sustainable peace such as 1) mutual trust, 2) mutual benefit, 3) equity and 4) cooperation. It also reflected on the idea of historical memory in connection with the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, stating the following: "We express our commitment to resolutely reject the continued attempts to misrepresent the results of World War II."

You will not find the phrase "shared objectives" in the Russian declaration, but it relates to a descriptive phrase on the agreement to "step up coordinated efforts in responding to emerging challenges, ensuring peace and security, promoting development in a sustainable way, addressing poverty eradication, inequality and unemployment." This list differs significantly from the previous and subsequent declarations. Only "peace and security" were among the group's shared objectives, while addressing poverty eradication and unemployment and responding to emerging challenges were usually mentioned as concrete goals set out in the relevant sections rather than in the value-based preamble. Moreover, the Russian and English versions of the declaration were not aligned semantically or substantially. The English version mentioned "*sustainable development*" while the Russian text spoke about "*sustainable growth*," which are regarded as two different things in modern socioeconomic theory.

After the BRICS meeting in Ufa, a G20 summit was held in Turkey in November 2015. Economically, Turkey is not a Western country, but the declaration adopted there was worded in an exceptionally globalistic and homogeneous spirit, disregarding the requirements of the developing world. After this, there was a chronological gap because the BRICS summit was postponed until the autumn of 2016, while the next G20 summit convened in China in September 2016.²³ It was the second time that a BRICS country hosted it. The priorities of the Chinese G20 Presidency included invigorating the global economy, boosting the growth of the global and national economies, and responding to the challenges of the new industrial revolution. Not much was said in the declaration about the specific features of the developing countries, but it again mentioned assistance to their industrialisation, in particular in Africa, the IMF quotas, strengthening the developing countries' tax systems, ensuring their access to energy resources, and maximising the growth potential of developing and low-income countries. The advanced countries were not criticised.

²³ G20 Leaders' Communiqué: Hangzhou Summit. Hangzhou // G20 Information Centre. 5.09.2016. URL: <https://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2016/160905-communication.html>.

BRICS 2016 (India)

Soon after, in October 2016, the next BRICS summit was held in India²⁴. It continued the tradition of BRICS meetings with the leaders of the countries from the region hosting the summit. This time, meetings were held with members of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). The summit was preceded by the first-ever BRICS sports event, the BRICS U-17 Football Cup for juniors under 17. Each of the five countries sent a team to the competition, which was won by Brazil (the country was represented at the October summit by the new president, Michel Temer). This marked the launch of the BRICS Sports Games. The BRICS Customs Cooperation Committee was established and an initiative was put forward to create a BRICS credit rating agency.

At the summit, the countries adopted the first declaration that raised the issue of compliance – control over the implementation of previously made decisions. This was an area in which BRICS had been lagging behind both the G7 and the G20. The Sherpas were instructed to ensure the advancement of this process.

In light of the Paris Climate Agreement being enacted, the declaration reflected a call for developed countries to fulfil their commitments to provide financial and technological assistance to developing countries on the climate agenda. The parties also supported a wider use of natural gas as a clean fuel in accordance with the Paris Agreement. It was noted that nuclear energy would play a significant role “for some of the BRICS countries” in meeting their Paris Agreement commitments. The New Development Bank issued the first set of green bonds in RMB.

The declaration noted that states should participate in international internet governance on an equal footing and that the digital and technological divide between developed and developing countries should be bridged. On the issue of taxes and offshore jurisdictions, the signatories affirmed that “profit should be taxed in the jurisdiction where the economic activity is performed and the value is created.” The document touched upon some traditional aspects such as IMF reform and debt relief for developing countries. Since the Millennium Development Goals had been replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals by that time, the declaration included a call for developed countries to increase assistance with respect to the SDGs.

²⁴ Декларация Гоа // Президент России. 16.10.2016. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/5139>; 8th BRICS Summit: Goa Declaration. Goa, India // BRICS Information Centre. 16.10.2016. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/161016-go.html>.

Interestingly, the 2016 BRICS declaration did not reflect any reaction to the previous G20 summit agenda, which had often been the case in the past. Furthermore, even though the G20 summit had taken place just a month before the BRICS meeting, chaired by a BRICS country, China, the discussion at the Indian BRICS summit did not focus on any priorities of the Chinese G20 agenda, except for a general recognition of the country's successful presidency. It is clear that these issues may have been discussed by the BRICS leaders at their informal meeting before the G20 summit in China; however, the glaring difference between the two summits' agendas might suggest a lack of coordination between them. Therefore, BRICS made no cumulative contribution to the Chinese G20 agenda, with the exception of the usual informal meeting shortly before the G20 meeting. Perhaps the jealously competitive relationship between China and India in regard to "their" summits played a role in this.

In foreign affairs, BRICS called upon all parties involved "to work for a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the conflict" in Syria, repeating a phrase from earlier BRICS declarations. The deployment of the Russian military contingent to Syria, which took place between the BRICS summits, was not reflected in the declaration. Ukraine was not mentioned at all, although other global conflicts were discussed in detail. For the third time in a row, the BRICS declaration included the clause condemning military interventions and unilateral economic sanctions. The following principles to guide dispute resolution, as well as international affairs in a broader sense, were formulated: 1) good-faith, 2) sovereign equality of States, 3) non-intervention in the internal affairs of States, and 4) cooperation. The commitment to resolutely reject the continued attempts to misrepresent the results of World War II, as stated in the previous year's Russian declaration, was reiterated. The Indian declaration also retained the phrase about commitment "to a more just, democratic, and multi-polar international order based on the central role of the United Nations, and respect for international law," which was found in varying terminology in the texts from previous summits. The principles and norms of international law were to be observed "in their inter-relation and integrity."

As far as the value postulates are concerned, the document again mentioned common goals, something that was not directly referenced in the previous Russian declaration. This time, the English text used the adjective "*common*" instead of "*shared*," which had been their previous choice. The Russian translation used the same Russian word for "*common*" in both cases. "Our common goals" were "peace, development, democracy

and prosperity.” Peace, development and prosperity had been included in previous lists of BRICS goals, but this was the first declaration in which democracy was added, and this deserves special attention. The clause about the strategic partnership between the BRICS countries and its six underlying principles from last year’s Russian declaration was included in the current Indian declaration unchanged.

BRICS 2017 (China)

The subsequent BRICS summit convened in September 2017 in China²⁵, featuring an outreach session with leaders from other nations under the Emerging Markets and Developing Countries Dialogue (EMDCD) format. This marked the first occasion such a meeting was arranged, with invitations extended not only to countries from the host’s region but also to representatives from nearly all subregions of the developing world, including Egypt, Tajikistan, Mexico, Guinea, and Thailand. Within this format, the term “BRICS Plus” was introduced for the first time. Furthermore, during the summit year, a public-private dialogue Women and the Economy was launched. However, this theme had already featured in the agendas of both the G7 (as a “*gender-responsive economy*”) and the G20 (as “*women’s empowerment*”) prior to the BRICS summit in China. Thus, in this instance, BRICS also aligned itself with these priorities.

Internet governance was once more included in the declaration: “We believe that all states should participate on an equal footing in the evolution and functioning of the Internet and its governance. The structures that manage and regulate the critical Internet resources need to be made more representative and inclusive.” For the third consecutive year, a phrase concerning “the principles of international law enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, particularly state sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity and sovereign equality of states, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” was incorporated into sections on ICT without any apparent direct connection to their thematic focus. Human rights were linked to the right to development. Regarding counter-terrorism, international cooperation was emphasised to be conducted in adherence to the principles of “sovereign equality of states and non-interference in their internal affairs.”

²⁵ Сямэньская декларация руководителей стран БРИКС. Сямэнь, Китай // Президент России. 4.09.2017. URL: <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/0auA2fXB3aZfGjy7ZHtubAhlydQv9AL5.doc>; BRICS Leaders Xiamen Declaration. Xiamen, China // BRICS Information Centre. 4.09.2017. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/170904-xiamen.html>.

In relation to the international situation, the declaration stated, “We strongly deplore the nuclear test conducted by the DPRK.” On Syria, the formulations largely echoed those of the previous year. Ukraine, as in the prior year, was not mentioned. In addition to the existing sectoral foreign policy formats within BRICS, the declaration noted Brazil’s proposal to establish a BRICS Intelligence Forum, although no such meeting was listed among the BRICS events held that year or the next. Regarding the G20, the declaration highlighted the need to enhance coordination among BRICS countries “with an aim to make the G20 process and outcomes reflect the interests and priorities of EMDEs.” In addition, “concern over the challenges faced by the African continent in achieving independent and sustainable development” was expressed.

On energy, the summit reiterated its position, as in previous years, to “work together to promote the most effective use of fossil fuels and wider use of gas, hydro and nuclear power, which will contribute to the transformation toward a low emissions economy, better energy access, and sustainable development.” Developed countries were once again urged to increase their financial contributions to climate initiatives. However, this time, the issue of debt relief for developing nations was not raised. Instead, the topic of national currencies was revisited, with references to an interbank local currency credit line, the idea of creating a BRICS Local Currency Bond Fund, local currency settlement, and local currency direct investment, “where appropriate.”

A significant conceptual shift in the formulation of BRICS’ value platform occurred at the 2017 summit in China. For the first time, the term “BRICS spirit” was introduced, articulated as follows: “Our cooperation since 2006 has fostered the BRICS spirit featuring mutual respect and understanding, equality, solidarity, openness, inclusiveness and mutually beneficial cooperation, which is our valuable asset and an inexhaustible source of strength for BRICS cooperation.” Notably, the BRICS spirit was grounded in the six principles previously defined during 2015–2016 as the foundation of the BRICS strategic partnership, with the addition of mutual respect. Although the term “strategic partnership” remained in the Chinese declaration, the principles themselves were relocated to define the BRICS spirit. BRICS’ common goals, previously articulated in declarations from 2013, 2014, and 2016, were now framed in the English text as “*the overarching objective and our desire*.” The Russian translation rendered this as overarching objectives and shared aspiration, a more precise rendition compared to earlier translations of “the overarching objective” as a shared goal. The Chinese declaration encompassed objectives such as peace, security, development, and cooperation – a list echoing Brazil’s

2014 declaration but differing significantly from India's 2016 text, which included democracy and prosperity (now absent). Additionally, a phrase from Russia's 2015 declaration regarding the "impermissibility of revising the outcomes of World War II," retained during India's 2016 Chairship, was omitted. The summit under China's Chairship concluded with the commitment "to usher in the second golden decade of BRICS cooperation and solidarity."

In general, the 2017 Chinese declaration, akin to its 2011 predecessor, focussed predominantly on internal cooperation among the five BRICS nations. It is unsurprising that it highlighted "the important progress in BRICS institutional development" as a key outcome. The document maintained a calm and neutral semantic tone, despite being the first BRICS summit under Donald Trump's administration – a period marked by intensified US trade pressure on China. Apart from generic references to WTO principles consistent with previous wordings, this pressure and responses thereto were not addressed in the declaration. China also became the first BRICS country to assume the group's chairship immediately following its presidency of the G20. However, the theme of last year's Chinese Presidency in the G20, which was ambitious both in its scope and the number of documents adopted related to growth, the new industrial revolution, and other matters, was not reflected in that BRICS declaration. In other words, there was a lack of continuity in the agenda.

BRICS 2018 (South Africa)

The next BRICS summit was held in South Africa in July 2018²⁶. The host country was represented by the new President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa. A BRICS Outreach Dialogue meeting took place between BRICS and the leaders of eighteen African countries, representatives of the countries presiding in the G20, the Caribbean Community and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. According to media reports, the participants discussed the possible BRICS expansion, but no decision was made. Vladimir Putin said at a news conference that there were no plans to increase the number of BRICS members at that time²⁷.

²⁶ Йоханнесбургская декларация Десятого саммита БРИКС // Президент России. 26.07.2018. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/5323>; BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution. 10th BRICS Summit Johannesburg Declaration. Johannesburg, South Africa // BRICS Information Centre. 26.07.2018. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/180726-johannesburg.html>.

²⁷ News conference following BRICS summit. President of Russia. 27.07.2018. URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58119>.

The summit focused on the Fourth Industrial Revolution, a subject that had been a highlight of China's G20 Presidency two years earlier. The BRICS Partnership on the New Industrial Revolution (PartNIR) and a related advisory group were established. The leaders welcomed the proposal to establish a BRICS vaccine research and development centre. For the first time, blockchain technology was mentioned in the context of the digital economy advancement. The participants "noted with satisfaction" the progress achieved on establishing the BRICS Local Currency Bond Fund, and were looking forward to starting its operation. They also expressed concern over the impasse reached in appointing new members to the WTO Appellate Body. The declaration addressed the advancement of the Oceans Economy and the conservation of marine resources. In fact, this issue had been discussed at the G7 summit six weeks earlier, which can be seen as parallelism or propagation of the agenda. There was no longer any mention of gas and nuclear energy, the declaration referred solely to renewable energy sources and an energy efficient lifestyle. The part about the importance of the norms and principles of international law, in particular territorial integrity of states, which had been included in the clause on the use of ICT for three years in a row, was removed from there; instead, support for these principles was moved to the preamble, which made much more sense. The relevant paragraph included no mention of territorial integrity, but called for "promoting democracy in international relations." Again, no reference was made to Ukraine.

Just as during the first South African Chairship in 2013, the African context of the Johannesburg summit again prompted considerable emphasis on the continent's affairs. The parties to the 2018 declaration called for addressing the infrastructure financing deficit in Africa, emphasised the need for Africa's industrialisation and the need to strengthen the voice and representation of African countries in the IMF. They supported efforts to strengthen the African Peace and Security Architecture and commended the African Union's commitment to the "Silencing of the Guns by 2020" initiative. They also noted "the long overdue outstanding task of ensuring the adequate representation of African States in the UN, especially in peace and security matters." However, compared with the previous South African declaration, this one maintained a calmer and less critical tone.

The value section changed significantly from the previous years. The reference to the BRICS spirit, introduced a year ago under the Chinese Chairship, was gone. The term common goals was also missing. Instead of the BRICS spirit and goals, this declaration merely stated a commitment to a few principles, of which it mentioned five: 1) mutual respect, 2) sovereign

equality, 3) democracy, 4) inclusiveness, and 5) strengthened collaboration. Four of the above principles were features of the previous year's BRICS spirit: mutual respect, equality (with the added epithet "sovereign"), inclusiveness and cooperation. However, the last term was replaced with "collaboration" in the English version. The Russian translation used the same Russian word for cooperation in both cases, probably to avoid the negative connotation of the cognate term "collaborationism" in Russian. The fifth principle was democracy, which had not been mentioned at all a year ago, while in 2016, in India, it was included in the list of common goals, not among the principles of strategic partnership (which later evolved into the BRICS spirit). The remaining features of the 2017 BRICS spirit – openness, solidarity and mutual understanding – were gone.

As for the common goals, they were replaced with a descriptive phrase in the English version of the declaration: "*We express satisfaction regarding the achievements of BRICS over the last ten years as a strong demonstration of BRICS cooperation toward the attainment of peace, harmony and shared development and prosperity.*" However, the Russian translation published on the Kremlin's website again used the term "goal," which was not present in the English version. "*Cooperation toward the attainment*" was translated as "*the goal of cooperation is.*"

More significant changes occurred in the South African declaration's clause on the BRICS Strategic Partnership, altering its substantial rather than just semantic overtones. The concept of strategic partnership was no longer linked to BRICS value principles, as it had been previously, but rather to a more practical agenda focused on the promotion of: 1) peace, 2) a fairer international order, 3) sustainable development and 4) inclusive growth. To honour the centenary of the birth of Nelson Mandela, the signatories recognised "his values, principles and dedication to the service of humanity."

At the end of 2018, Argentina hosted the G20 summit, which was marked by sharp controversy between developed and developing countries over trade, migration, and other issues. This led the media to speculate about the possibility of the parties failing to agree on a final declaration for the first time. The communique was eventually adopted, but, according to Vladimir Putin, it was of a more general nature with some "rounded edges".²⁸ Curiously, in addition to the traditional BRICS leaders' meeting on the sidelines, the Argentine G20 summit also featured a

²⁸ Answers to media questions. President of Russia. 1.12.2018. URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59290>.

trilateral meeting in the Russia-China-India format, initiated by Russia to strengthen coordination.²⁹ Leaders' statements at this meeting, especially those of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on WTO and trade issues, were more acute than at BRICS previous meetings. A similar trilateral meeting, also in addition to the general BRICS meeting, was held on the sidelines of the next G20 summit in Japan in June 2019.

BRICS 2019 (Brazil)

The next BRICS summit was held in Brazil in November 2019.³⁰ The host country was represented by newly elected president Jair Bolsonaro. No outreach format was used this time. Since the new Brazilian leadership adhered to values that were starkly different from those promoted by Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, the 2019 declaration differed significantly in its semantic tone from previous Brazilian declarations of 2010 and 2014. It was devoted almost entirely to sectoral aspects of internal cooperation between the five countries and foreign policy. It did not focus as much on the developing world's agenda, and even when it did, it was a rehash of the previous year's language. Overall, more paragraphs in the declaration than usual were copied from the previous year's text. Notable points include the recurring phrase about continuing to pursue the efficient use of fossil fuels, which was omitted a year earlier. The WTO reform was mentioned as well. There was a noticeable semantic difference between the Russian text of the declaration and its English version. The English version read, "*We recognise the importance of necessary WTO reform.*" The Russian text of the declaration said, "We recognise the importance of the long overdue WTO reform." Replacing the modifier "necessary" with the much stronger "long overdue" made this paragraph of the declaration in the Russian text significantly more critical than in the English text. This is arguably one of the starkest semantic differences between these two language versions compared to those discussed above. It has been suggested that a culture of consensus needs to be restored in the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The Skripal case context may have led to this language being used this time. A year earlier, even though the Skripal incident occurred before the 2018 BRICS summit, the OPCW was not mentioned in the declaration at all. Also new was the phrase "We also underline the imperative that international organisations be fully driven by Member States and promote the interests of all."

²⁹ Russia-India-China meeting. President of Russia. 1.12.2018. URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59278>.

³⁰ Декларация Бразилиа по итогам XI саммита государств – участников БРИКС // Президент России. 14.11.2019. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/5458>; Brasília Declaration. Brasília, Brazil // BRICS Information Centre. . 14.11.2019. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/191114-brasilgia.html>.

Regarding the values preamble, the term “strategic partnership” as a description of relations between the BRICS countries was removed for the first time since 2015. There was no mention of the BRICS spirit either. Similar to the previous year, the main value statement is expressed in the form of a “fundamental commitment to principles.” There are three principles: sovereignty, mutual respect and equality. Mutual respect and equality were carried over from last year. The modifier “sovereign,” which was added to the definition of equality a year ago, has become a separate principle. Democracy, inclusiveness and collaboration, which were there last year, have disappeared from the text.

In addition to the three principles, the shared goal was reiterated, labelled as “building a peaceful, stable and prosperous world.” The three components of this goal – peace, stability and prosperity – have already been found in different combinations in previous lists of BRICS shared goals and aspirations in 2013, 2014, and 2016-2018. The value preamble concluded with the following statement, “These concepts, values and objectives provide a solid foundation and clear guidance for our mutually beneficial and pragmatic cooperation.” Thus, for the first time, the term “values” appeared in BRICS declarations in relation to the current agenda. A year ago, it was mentioned only in the context of historical memory and in relation to Nelson Mandela’s values; before that, the term “values” was nonexistent, and principles, goals or spirit were mentioned instead.

BRICS 2020 (Russia)

Then came the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020, Russia chaired BRICS. The initial plans were to hold the summit in Chelyabinsk³¹, but in 2019 Vladimir Putin told his BRICS colleagues that the summit would be held in St Petersburg.³² The pandemic changed these plans, and the summit was first postponed from its original date in July³³, and eventually held online in November 2020.³⁴ The summit participants adopted the new Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership until 2025 (the first such strategy

³¹ Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 15.03.2018 г. № 110 // Президент России. 15.03.2018. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/42887>.

³² BRICS leaders’ meeting. President of Russia. 14.11.2019. URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62045>.

³³ Decision taken to postpone BRICS and SCO summits. President of Russia. 27.05.2020. URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/63415>.

³⁴ Московская Декларация Саммита БРИКС // Президент России. 17.11.2020. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/5581>; Moscow Declaration. Moscow, Russia // BRICS Information Centre. 17.11.2020. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/201117-moscow-declaration.html>.

was also adopted under Russia's Chairship in 2015), as well as the BRICS Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The declaration noted that BRICS decided to establish the BRICS Vaccine R&D Centre in 2018. However, the centre did not become operational within two years, and the declaration called for ensuring the beginning of its work. During the summit, Narendra Modi said that India and South Africa proposed easing intellectual property restrictions regarding coronavirus diagnosis and treatment.³⁵ The topic of open patents, which had been raised in the early phases of BRICS but then disappeared, resurfaced. It was now proposed to return to this issue as part of global discussions about coronavirus-related open patents. However, the fact that the BRICS summit declaration did not include open patents, and patents were discussed only during verbal exchanges, is significant. To put it in this perspective, at the G20 summit, which was also held online under the Presidency of Saudi Arabia³⁶ shortly after the BRICS summit, the topic of open patents, albeit in the form of a suggestion, was included in the declaration: "We fully support the voluntary licensing of intellectual property."

The developed countries were called upon to increase financial aid to the developing world as part of the Paris Climate Agreement. In the context of the pandemic, the transfer of technology to developing countries was mentioned, along with providing them with greater access to development resources. "Sustainable and efficient use of all energy sources" was highlighted. "We note the progress achieved in establishing a BRICS Local Currency Bond Fund and look forward to its operation." A BRICS Payments Task Force on the national payments systems' cooperation was created as well. A decision was made on the gradual and balanced expansion of NDB membership in order to involve non-BRICS members in its work.

With regard to the WTO reform, the difference in the terms used in the Russian text and the English text is once again quite noticeable. The English text used "*necessary*," whereas the Russian text used "*long overdue*." International efforts to defer the debts of the poorest countries were welcomed. With regard to Nagorno-Karabakh, a ceasefire agreement was welcomed, and further political and diplomatic efforts were supported "to create the necessary conditions for a lasting and comprehensive peace in the region." Overall, the message on conflict zones was as follows,

³⁵ BRICS Summit. President of Russia. 17.11.2020. URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64430>.

³⁶ Leaders' Declaration. Riyadh Summit // G20 Information Centre. 22.11.2020. URL: <https://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2020/2020-g20-leaders-declaration-1121.html>.

“We concur that all conflicts should be resolved by peaceful means and diplomatic engagement through political dialogue and negotiations in line with international law, particularly the UN Charter.” The need to restore the spirit of consensus in the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons was reiterated. Regret was expressed with regard to disruptions of strategic stability mechanisms and arms control regimes. Regarding the UN Security Council reform, in addition to the traditional expression of support, the following was stated, “We commit to instill new life into discussions on reform of the UN Security Council.”

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, “the importance of preservation and the inadmissibility of desecration or destruction of monuments erected in remembrance of all those who fought against fascism” was emphasised. “We further urge for a resolute stand against the rehabilitation of Nazi ideology, racism, xenophobia, colonialism and the distortion of history.”

The values preamble used the phrase “commitment to principles” again. These principles included “our commitment to multilateralism and the principles of mutual respect, sovereign equality, democracy, inclusiveness, and strengthened collaboration.” Mutual respect and equality were retained from the previous year, and the modifier “sovereign” was added to the principle of equality again, as seen in South Africa two years earlier. The separate principle of sovereignty, which appeared a year earlier in Brazil, was omitted. The remaining principles were not present in Brazil, but all of them were included two years earlier in South Africa, with the “commitment to multilateralism” at the forefront. Notably, the principle of democracy reappeared in the Russian declaration.

Regarding BRICS shared goals, similar to the previous Russian declaration of 2015, this term was not included, but the goals were mentioned descriptively, “We will continue working towards strengthening and reforming international governance so that it is more inclusive, representative, democratic with meaningful and greater participation of developing countries in international decision-making.” Among the goals thus identified, inclusiveness and democracy have been there before, but representation and participation of developing countries in decision-making were cited earlier among specific tasks rather than goals, and were described in separate paragraphs later in the text of the declaration rather than in the values preamble. Such language to focus on such goals that usually were not present both before and after is reminiscent of the previous Russian declaration of 2015. The term BRICS “strategic partnership,” which was absent in the previous year’s Brazilian declaration reappeared in this year’s text.

In terms of tone, the Russian 2020 declaration was less critical and confrontational towards developed countries than the previous Russian declaration of 2015. Although substantive criticism was abundant here as well, the language, in our opinion, has become noticeably more neutral. In comparison with the “average” BRICS declaration, and unlike the 2015 text, this declaration did not stand out semantically.

BRICS 2021 (India)

The next BRICS summit was held in September 2021,³⁷ also via videoconference. It was chaired by India.

Let us take a look at its subjects. The statement on climate change read as follows: “We recognise that the peaking of Greenhouse Gas Emissions will take longer for developing countries, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty.” The parties acknowledged the Indian proposal, to be further discussed by ministries, of a BRICS Platform on Digital Public Goods. That subject was subsequently transformed into an initiative on digital public infrastructure and became a priority of India’s G20 Presidency in 2023. The 2021 summit participants reaffirmed the importance of technology sharing and assistance for poor countries, and discussed the WTO reform. They expressed “deep disappointment” with the IMF reform. The *COVID-19* pandemic led to the appearance of a new subject, the reform of the World Health Organisation. “We also expect the international community to reform and strengthen the policy responses of WHO to fight the *COVID-19* pandemic and other current and future health challenges.” The declaration included a statement on open patents (patentleft) and discussions on the *COVID-19* vaccine Intellectual Property Rights waiver at the WTO.

During India’s BRICS Chairship, the group’s countries adopted a Joint Statement on Strengthening and Reforming the Multilateral System, which focused on representation and inclusiveness. They pointed out that “the continued relevance of the UN system and its associated architecture would be determined by its ability to adapt to contemporary realities and respond to the evolving and interconnected challenges of our time.” It was the most critical statement regarding the UN system ever made by BRICS.

Statements on the international situation reaffirmed “the sole authority of the UN Security Council” and emphasised “the imperative of

³⁷ Нью-Делийская декларация XIII саммита БРИКС // Президент России. URL: <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/2A21IKLvIURJe6q3h06f0uHodoe3EtoO.doc>; XIII BRICS Summit: New Delhi Declaration // BRICS Information Centre. 9.09.2021. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/210909-New-Delhi-Declaration.html>.

refraining from any coercive measures not based on international law, in particular the UN Charter.” The parties reaffirmed the importance of reviving the spirit of consensus at the OPCW. For the first time in years, the declaration did not include a separate clause on Syria. It also mentioned the principle of territorial integrity of all states for the first time in three years.

The previously used term “*commitment to principles*” was replaced with “*our shared values*.” It was the first time that the term “values” was used to describe the imperatives shared by the BRICS countries. As we noted above, it was earlier used only in the context of commemorating Nelson Mandela at the South African summit in 2018 and as a synonym for “principles” and “concepts” in Brazil in 2019.

In 2021, the shared BRICS values included peace, the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and democracy for all. There was also the term “strategic partnership.” For the first time in many years, the declaration did not include a list of shared BRICS goals, either in a direct or a descriptive form. However, the list of shared values included some of the goals that were present in previous declarations, in particular, peace. As for democracy, it migrated between goals and principles in earlier declarations. The new elements in 2021 were the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Overall, the Indian 2021 declaration, although mostly worded neutrally, was one of the strongest regarding BRICS’ disappointment with the global governance system, protests against it and calls for its reform.

BRICS Countries’ Voting at the UN General Assembly in 2014-2021

Apart from adopting declarations, it is also important to check practical symbolic steps of BRICS countries. Voting at the UN General Assembly is among the most indicative, even if not the most important, elements of internal political consolidation in any international institution. As a result of the geopolitical shifts of 2014, anti-Russia resolutions were regularly adopted at the UNGA. Of course, the results of such voting should be regarded as relative because there is not always a direct connection between voting of a state at a UN body and its real willingness to cooperate with Russia. There are many different factors involved.

Nevertheless, a consistent approach to voting at international platforms reflects a degree of internal consolidation in an institution. The case in point is NATO and the EU, whose member states usually vote unanimously at the UNGA (at least before Trump's second term). So, it is worth looking at how BRICS countries voted.³⁸

The following resolutions were adopted at the UNGA before February 24, 2022:

- Resolution 68/262 of March 27, 2014: Territorial integrity of Ukraine;
- Resolutions on human rights in Crimea: 71/205 of December 19, 2016; 72/190 of December 19, 2017; 73/263 of December 22, 2018; 74/168 of December 18, 2019; 75/192 of December 16, 2020; and 76/179 of December 16, 2021;
- Resolutions on the militarisation of Crimea: 73/194 of December 17, 2018; 74/17 of December 9, 2019; 75/29 of December 7, 2020; and 76/70 of December 9, 2021. The BRICS countries voted as follows:

	68/262	71/205	72/190	73/194	73/263	74/17
Brazil	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained
India	abstained	against	against	abstained	against	abstained
China	abstained	against	against	abstained	against	against
Russia	against	against	against	against	against	against
South Africa	abstained	against	against	abstained	against	abstained

³⁸ Zero (0) means that the given state abstained or not voted all the time.

	74/168	75/29	75/192	76/70	76/179	Total
Brazil	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	0
India	against	abstained	against	abstained	against	against: 6
China	against	against	against	against	against	against: 9
Russia	against	against	against	against	against	against: 11
South Africa	abstained	abstained	abstained	not voted	abstained	against: 3

Other anti-Russia resolutions adopted at the UNGA back then concerned chemical weapons. The UN General Assembly adopts resolutions on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention almost every year. In the 2010s, these resolutions mostly focused on Syria. The alleged poisoning of the Skripals in 2018 was reflected in these resolutions in a veiled manner, without any reference to Russia. The document only mentioned the use of chemical weapons in the territory of Great Britain. Russia invariably voted against these resolutions, while other BRICS countries voted in various ways. It was only after the poisoning of Alexei Navalny³⁹ that UNGA Resolutions 75/55 of December 7, 2020, and 76/29 of December 6, 2021, mentioned Russia and condemned it “in the strongest possible terms,” and not even in the preamble but in the main body of the text.

	75/55	76/29	Total
Brazil	in favour	in favour	in favour: 2
India	in favour	in favour	in favour: 2
China	against	against	against: 2
Russia	against	against	against: 2
South Africa	in favour	in favour	in favour: 2

³⁹ On the Rosfinmonitoring list of organisations and individuals involved in extremist or terrorist activities

The results of those votes can be summed up as follows. Before the incident with Alexei Navalny,⁴⁰ BRICS countries never voted in favour of anti-Russia resolutions, but neither did they unanimously vote against.

Eleven resolutions on Crimea were adopted in 2014-2021. Russia voted against all of them. China's stance was closest to Russian: it voted against nine of the 11 resolutions, and abstained twice: on the first 2014 resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and on the first resolution on the militarisation of Crimea, which was adopted in 2018 after a naval incident in the Kerch Strait. India voted against six of the 11 resolutions, and abstained on the first 2014 resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine and on the four 2018-2021 resolutions on the militarisation of Crimea. India voted against all six resolutions on human rights in Crimea, which the UNGA had adopted almost every year since 2016, after the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People⁴¹ was banned in Russia. South Africa voted against three times, while Brazil always abstained. It should be noted that none of the BRICS countries, apart from Russia, voted against the first 2014 resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. They preferred to abstain.

After the alleged poisoning of Alexei Navalny⁴² in 2020, the larger part of BRICS countries (Brazil, India and South Africa) stopped abstaining and started voting in favour of these resolutions. Of course, Russia was only one of many items in their text that is regarded by UN standards as a long one. These BRICS countries probably wanted to indicate their support for the global struggle against chemical weapons more than their solidarity with Russia, but there could also be other substantive reasons.

BRICS in Today's World

There was a radical change in the global geopolitical environment in 2022 when Russia's special military operation upended the balance of power among states and made it more polarised. In this context, politics came to dominate the G20 agenda, especially in 2022, which inevitably affected the way it held its meetings, and the resulting declarations.

⁴⁰ On the Rosfinmonitoring list of organisations and individuals involved in extremist or terrorist activities

⁴¹ Declared an extremist organisation in Russia and prohibited in 2016

⁴² On the Rosfinmonitoring list of organisations and individuals involved in extremist or terrorist activities

BRICS 2022 (China)

China hosted the BRICS summit in June 2022 as part of its Chairship. It took place via a videoconference.⁴³ There was also a BRICS+ event, which brought together heads of 13 countries from across the world.

This was in fact the first time a BRICS declaration mentioned the expansion process by instructing BRICS Sherpas to clarify the guiding principles, standards, criteria and procedures for this expansion on the basis of consensus. There was also an effort to move into practical implementation a theme regarding Remote Sensing Satellites by devising procedures for exchanging data on this topic. BRICS countries also spoke out against green trade barriers by stressing that measures to tackle climate change must not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination. The declaration did not address the topic of settlements in national currencies directly, only welcoming the BRICS Payments Task Force cooperation on the payments track among central banks. As for sanctions, the declaration adhered to earlier wording to reaffirm that the UN Security Council had sole authority for imposing them. The declaration went on to mention the statement by the five nuclear states. Adopted in January 2022, it affirmed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

This is the way the declaration addressed the Ukraine issue: “We have discussed the situation in Ukraine and recall our national positions as expressed at the appropriate forums, namely the UNSC and UNGA. We support talks between Russia and Ukraine. We have also discussed our concerns over the humanitarian situation in and around Ukraine and expressed our support for the efforts of the UN Secretary-General, UN agencies and ICRC to provide humanitarian assistance in accordance with the basic principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality established in UN General Assembly resolution 46/182.” The declaration also expressed a commitment to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states and supported all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of crises.

On the G20, the declaration stated that it had to remain intact. Now the declaration did not contain the point of condemning unilateral sanctions, in contrast to the declarations of the previous years. Food

⁴³ XIV BRICS Summit Beijing Declaration // BRICS Information Centre. 23.06.2022. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/220623-declaration.html>.

security in the context of the Ukrainian conflict was also omitted, even though the declaration did contain some earlier wordings on BRICS countries producing one third of the world's food and welcoming the Strategy on Food Security Cooperation of the BRICS Countries.

Setting the tone in terms of the declaration's values, the preamble referred to upholding the BRICS spirit, just as during China's 2017 Chairship. It must be noted that no other country mentioned this term in their declarations in between the two Chinese Chairships. In 2022, China described this BRICS spirit as characterised by mutual respect and understanding, equality, solidarity, openness, inclusiveness, and consensus. Six out of these seven elements were already mentioned in the previous Chinese declaration. Consensus was mentioned for the first time, replacing mutually beneficial cooperation. The notion of a strategic partnership was present in the declaration. In addition, just like India's declaration in 2021, the Chinese declaration did not list the BRICS shared goals.

BRICS 2023 (South Africa)

The next BRICS summit took place in South Africa in August 2023.⁴⁴ Just as before, it was followed by a BRICS+/Outreach event which was attended by several dozens of heads of state from Africa and across the world. The South African summit's key decision involved expanding BRICS by inviting six countries to join the group: Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

This was also the first time a BRICS declaration referred to the "countries of the global South" in addition to relying on "developing countries" as a conventional term. In terms of energy, the document echoed the 2020 Russian declaration by emphasising the efficient use of all energy sources. Furthermore, the phrasing on the green trade barriers resurfaced, while instructing the finance ministers and central bank governors to consider the issue of local currencies and payment instruments.

⁴⁴ XV BRICS Summit Johannesburg II Declaration. BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism. Sandton, Gauteng, South Africa // BRICS Information Centre. 23.08.2023. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/230823-declaration.html>.

Here is what the declaration said regarding Ukraine: “We recall our national positions concerning the conflict in and around Ukraine, as expressed at the appropriate forums, including the UNSC and UNGA. We note with appreciation the relevant proposals for mediation and good offices aimed at the peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy, including the African Leaders Peace Mission and the proposed path for peace.” The declaration also contained a phrase expressing concern “about the use of unilateral coercive measures, which are incompatible with the principles of the Charter of the UN and produce negative effects, notably in the developing world.” The way it was drafted can lead to wide ranging interpretations, which could include both ordinary protectionist measures in international trade, as well as sanctions akin to those imposed on Russia. The declaration did not mention the sanctions explicitly. However, the South African summit did produce a separate document. Titled Guiding Principles of BRICS Membership Expansion, it contained a provision stating that countries aspiring to join the BRICS group should not impose non-United Nations Security Council authorised sanctions on existing BRICS countries.

Regarding food security, the wording did not change compared to the preceding declaration. The document also reaffirmed the need to fully respect international humanitarian law in conflict situations.

The BRICS spirit resurfaced once again in the values preamble of the South African declaration, making the South African Chairship the first to use this term apart from China. The declaration defined the BRICS spirit as resting upon mutual respect and understanding, sovereign equality, solidarity, democracy, openness, inclusiveness, strengthened collaboration and consensus. Therefore, all seven elements from China’s 2022 wording remained intact, with the only addition of the word “sovereign” to the equality principle, and also adding democracy and strengthened collaboration. Also adopted at the South African summit,⁴⁵ the document titled ‘BRICS Membership Expansion: Guiding Principles, Standards, Criteria and Procedures’ differed from the declaration in the way it defined the BRICS spirit by replicating the exact Chinese wording.

⁴⁵ BRICS Membership Expansion: Guiding Principles, Standards, Criteria and Procedures // BRICS Information Centre. 23.08.2023. URL: <http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/230823-membership-expansion.html>.

The declaration did mention a strategic partnership without listing the group's goals. However, the Guiding Principles referred to the BRICS vision of strengthening multilateralism, strengthening and reforming the multilateral system and upholding international law. It must be noted that preceding declarations never referred to the BRICS vision or goals in this manner.

BRICS 2024 (Russia)

The next BRICS summit was held in Kazan, Russian Federation, in October 2024,⁴⁶ the first meeting after the group's expansion. Of the six countries invited a year ago, Argentina, led by new President Javier Milei, refused to join BRICS, while Saudi Arabia took a wait-and-see stance and participated only in the outreach format. The leaders of the other four countries – Egypt, Iran, the UAE and Ethiopia – attended the summit.

The participating countries decided to develop the modalities for a new BRICS partner country category. The Russian Foreign Ministry's report of December 27, 2024, stated⁴⁷ that on January 1, 2025, nine countries would join BRICS as partner states: Belarus, Bolivia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Thailand, Uganda and Uzbekistan. But immediately after the summit unofficial sources mentioned the list of 13 probable candidates to BRICS partners (including also Algeria, Nigeria, Turkey and Vietnam).⁴⁸ In January 2025, Brazil as the new Chair announced that Indonesia would not be a partner but a full member of BRICS. Also, Brazil confirmed that Nigeria had accepted the invitation to become a BRICS partner. This makes BRICS a ten-member group (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, the UAE, Iran, Ethiopia, Egypt and Indonesia) with nine partner countries today.

The discussion at the summit continued to focus on the possibility of using national currencies and payment systems. The Russian declaration featured several new dimensions, of which the following deserve a mention.

⁴⁶ XVI Саммит БРИКС. Казанская декларация. Укрепление многосторонности для справедливого глобального развития и безопасности. Казань, Российская Федерация // Президент России. 23.10.2024. URL: <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/MUCfWDg0QRs3xfMUiCAmF3LEh02OL3Hk.pdf>; XVI BRICS Summit. Kazan Declaration. Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security. Kazan, Russian Federation // President of Russia. 23.10.2024. URL: <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/en/RosOySv-LzGaJtmx2wYFv0lN4NSPZploG.pdf>.

⁴⁷ О государствах-партнёрах БРИКС // МИД РФ. 27.12.2024. URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1989548/.

⁴⁸ Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand become partner countries of BRICS // Channel News Asia. 24.10.2024. URL: <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/malaysia-indonesia-vietnam-thailand-brics-asean-global-south-russia-china-4699841>.

The signatories expressed “serious concern over the exponential spread and proliferation of disinformation and fake news, fuelling radicalisation and conflicts.”

The Russian declaration included the following paragraph on Ukraine: “We recall national positions concerning the situation in and around Ukraine as expressed in the appropriate forums, including the UNSC and the UNGA. We emphasise that all states should act consistently with the Purposes and Principles of the UN Charter in their entirety and interrelation. We note with appreciation relevant proposals of mediation and good offices, aimed at a peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy.” The first sentence had been featured in the two previous BRICS declarations adopted after Russia launched the special military operation. The third one generally echoed the previous year’s declaration. The second sentence, however (“all states should act consistently with the Purposes and Principles of the UN Charter in their entirety and interrelation”) was new in a BRICS text. Interestingly, though, it had been previously included in the 2023 G20 India summit declaration⁴⁹ almost verbatim except for the word “interrelation.”

This declaration brought up the sanctions using the previous year’s wording on unilateral coercive measures with significant elaboration, which effectively prevented any ambivalent interpretation. The term “sanctions” was also used. “We reiterate that the unilateral coercive measures, inter-alia in the form of unilateral economic sanctions and secondary sanctions that are contrary to international law, have far-reaching implications for human rights, including the right to development, of the general population of targeted states, disproportionately affecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations. Therefore, we call for their elimination,” the declaration reads.

The subject of illegal unilateral sanctions re-surfaced in relation to Syria. The declaration condemned the Israeli military offensive in the Gaza Strip, “which led to mass killing and injury of civilians, forced displacement and widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure.” The word “genocide” was not used. On Southern Lebanon, it said: “We express alarm over the situation in Southern Lebanon. We condemn the loss of civilian lives and the immense damage to civilian infrastructure resulting from attacks by Israel in residential areas in Lebanon and call for an immediate cessation of military acts.” The parties noted the importance of the annual UNGA resolution on Combating Glorification of Nazism and neo-Nazism, and supported Brazil’s initiative to create a Global Alliance

⁴⁹ G20 New Delhi Leaders’ Declaration. New Delhi, India // G20 Information Centre. 9.09.2023. URL: <https://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2023/230909-declaration.html>.

against Hunger and Poverty, a theme that was a priority of Brazil's parallel G20 Presidency in 2024.

Analysing the values preamble, the term "BRICS spirit" was used for the third consecutive time, suggesting its growing semantic stability. The features of the BRICS spirit highlighted in the Russian declaration replicated the previous year's South African list: mutual respect and understanding, sovereign equality, solidarity, democracy, openness, inclusiveness, collaboration and consensus. In the Russian version, the English term "*collaboration*" was now translated using the Russian equivalent of "interaction" rather than "cooperation," as had been the case previously.

The shared goals were once again explained using a descriptive phrase, as had been the case in previous Russian declarations, stating that the signatories further committed themselves to "enhancing our strategic partnership through the promotion of peace, a more representative, fairer international order, a reinvigorated and reformed multilateral system, sustainable development and inclusive growth."

BRICS Countries' Voting at the UN General Assembly after 2022

Let us examine the voting records of BRICS members at the UN General Assembly. After February 24, 2022, the following anti-Russia resolutions were adopted:

At the 11th UNGA Emergency Special Session:

- ES-11/1 of March 2, 2022: The first post-conflict resolution, describing Russia's actions as "aggression against Ukraine;"
- ES-11/2 of March 24, 2022: Addressed the humanitarian consequences of the conflict;
- ES-11/3 of April 7, 2022: Suspended Russia's membership in the UN Human Rights Council;

	74/168	75/29	75/192	76/70	76/179	Total
Argentina	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	0
Egypt	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	0
Iran	against	against	against	against	against	against: 10
The UAE	abstained	not voted	abstained	abstained	abstained	0
Saudi Arabia	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	against	in favour: 2, against: 1
Ethiopia	abstained	abstained	abstained	against	against	against: 2

Resolutions on chemical weapons in 2020–2021:

	75/55	76/29	Total
Argentina	in favour	in favour	in favour: 2
Egypt	abstained	abstained	0
Iran	against	against	against: 2
The UAE	in favour	in favour	in favour: 2
Saudi Arabia	in favour	in favour	in favour: 2
Ethiopia	in favour	in favour	in favour: 2

There is also a distinction in approaches to be noted here. Iran opposed almost all resolutions, mirroring Russia's stance, while Egypt maintained consistent abstentions. Ethiopia voted against two resolutions on Crimea but supported both chemical weapons resolutions. Argentina and the UAE abstained or did not vote on Crimea resolutions, yet both backed resolutions on chemical weapons. Saudi Arabia supported two Crimea resolutions, opposed one, and endorsed both chemical weapons votes. Overall, until 2022, only one of the invited nations, Saudi Arabia, voted in favour of anti-Russia resolutions regarding Crimea. However, concerning chemical weapons, four of the six countries expressed their support, as did three of the five original BRICS members.

Post-2022 voting outcomes:

	<i>ES-11/1</i>	<i>ES-11/2</i>	<i>ES-11/3</i>	<i>ES-11/4</i>	<i>ES-11/5</i>	<i>ES-11/6</i>
Argentina	in favour	in favour	in favour	in favour	in favour	in favour
Egypt	in favour	in favour	abstained	in favour	abstained	in favour
Iran	abstained	abstained	against	not voted	against	abstained
The UAE	in favour	in favour	abstained	in favour	abstained	in favour
Saudi Arabia	in favour	in favour	abstained	in favour	abstained	in favour
Ethiopia	not voted	abstained	against	abstained	against	abstained

	77/229	78/221	78/316	79/184	ES-11/7	ES-11/8	Total
Argentina	in favour	in favour	in favour	in favour	abstained	abstained	in favour: 10
Egypt	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	in favour	abstained	in favour: 5
Iran	against	against	abstained	against	abstained	abstained	against: 5
The UAE	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	in favour: 4
Saudi Arabia	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	in favour: 4
Ethiopia	against	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	against: 3

In this context, we observe two countries whose positions are more closely aligned with Russia: Iran and Ethiopia. They distinctly stand apart from the other countries, each of which supported some of the resolutions, whereas Argentina endorsed all of them before Trump’s second term in 2025 (under both previous and current presidencies). It must be acknowledged that outside of Western nations, such a complete endorsement from Argentina (10 out of 10 in favour before 2025) is an uncommon occurrence. Consequently, Argentina’s political stance here is entirely contrary to Russia’s. Ultimately, however, Argentina declined to join BRICS. It is also worth noting that after receiving an invitation to BRICS in 2023, none of the other countries voted in favour of anti-Russia resolutions in 2023-24, including Saudi Arabia, which paused its BRICS accession process. However, in 2025, Egypt broke this trend by voting in favour of one such resolution. This marks the first instance among the new BRICS members, invited in 2023, to support an anti-Russia resolution.

	75/191	76/178	77/228	78/220	79/183	Total
Brazil	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	0
India	against	against	against	against	abstained	against : 10
China	against	against	against	against	against	against : 11
Russia	against	against	against	against	against	against : 11
South Africa	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	against: 4
Argentina	in favour	in favour	in favour	in favour	in favour	in favour: 11
Egypt	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	against: 3
Iran	against	against	against	against	against	against: 11
The UAE	in favour	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	in favour: 5
Saudi Arabia	in favour	in favour	not voted	abstained	abstained	in favour: 6
Ethiopia	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	0

It might be expected that the Arab countries of the Gulf would be the foremost supporters of anti-Iran resolutions. But no, here as well Argentina stands out with a 100 percent voting record in favour. In contrast to the anti-Russia resolutions, the original five BRICS countries demonstrate a distinctly stronger solidarity with Iran. Among the majority of countries, there are no abstentions: Russia and China consistently oppose, India almost always opposes, and South Africa repeatedly votes against anti-Iran resolutions. Only Brazil consistently abstained. None of the BRICS five opposed Iran during this period. Setting Argentina aside, since their invitation to join BRICS in 2023, none of the new members have voted in favour of anti-Iran resolutions, including Saudi Arabia.

Finally, let us examine the roster of current and prospective BRICS partners. These encompass countries that have accepted the invitation: Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Indonesia (the latter attained full BRICS membership as of January 1, 2025). Additionally, there are states yet to confirm their participation but that have unofficially reported to have received invitations: Algeria, Vietnam, and Turkey. Let us now consider their voting behaviour.

Resolutions on Russia (2022–2024):

	<i>ES-11/1</i>	<i>ES-11/2</i>	<i>ES-11/3</i>	<i>ES-11/4</i>	<i>ES-11/5</i>	<i>ES-11/6</i>
Algeria	abstained	abstained	against	abstained	abstained	abstained
Belarus	against	against	against	against	against	against
Bolivia	abstained	abstained	against	abstained	abstained	abstained
Vietnam	abstained	abstained	against	abstained	abstained	abstained
Indonesia	in favour	in favour	abstained	in favour	abstained	in favour
Kazakhstan	abstained	abstained	against	abstained	abstained	abstained
Cuba	abstained	abstained	against	abstained	against	abstained
Malaysia	in favour	in favour	abstained	in favour	abstained	in favour
Nigeria	in favour	in favour	abstained	in favour	abstained	in favour
Thailand	in favour	in favour	abstained	abstained	abstained	in favour
Turkey	in favour	in favour	in favour	in favour	in favour	in favour
Uganda	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained
Uzbekistan	not voted	abstained	against	abstained	abstained	abstained

	77/229	78/221	78/316	79/184	ES-11/7	ES-11/8	Total
Algeria	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	against: 1
Belarus	against	against	against	against	against	against	against: 12
Bolivia	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	not voted	not voted	against: 1
Vietnam	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	against: 1
Indonesia	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	in favour	in favour	in favour: 6
Kazakhstan	against	not voted	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	against: 2
Cuba	against	against	against	against	abstained	abstained	against: 6
Malaysia	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	in favour	in favour	in favour: 6
Nigeria	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	in favour	in favour	in favour: 6
Thailand	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	in favour	in favour	in favour: 5
Turkey	in favour	in favour	in favour	in favour	in favour	in favour	in favour: 12
Uganda	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	abstained	0
Uzbekistan	not voted	not voted	abstained	not voted	abstained	abstained	against: 1

Resolutions on Iran (2022–2024):

	77/228	78/220	79/183	Total
Algeria	abstained	against	against	against: 2
Belarus	against	against	against	against: 3
Bolivia	against	against	against	against: 3
Vietnam	against	against	against	against : 3
Indonesia	against	against	against	against : 3
Kazakhstan	against	not voted	not voted	against : 1
Cuba	against	against	against	against : 3
Malaysia	abstained	abstained	abstained	0
Nigeria	abstained	abstained	not voted	0
Thailand	abstained	abstained	abstained	0
Turkey	not voted	not voted	not voted	0
Uganda	abstained	abstained	abstained	0
Uzbekistan	against	against	against	against: 3

Here, we observe a divergence in approaches. Support for Russia is demonstrated by two countries only: Belarus and to some extent Cuba. Following them, there is a group of countries that typically abstain but may occasionally align with Russia – Algeria, Bolivia, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. Uganda consistently abstains. Another group of countries, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, and Thailand, opposed Russia in approximately half of cases. Turkey stands apart, having voted in favour of all anti-Russia resolutions. In 2024, after the invitation to become a BRICS partner, only Turkey voted in favour of such resolutions. But in February 2025 doing so was not only Turkey, but Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Nigeria as well. And if Turkey has not still accepted the status of a BRICS partner, the other 4 countries have done so, and Indonesia was accepted as a full member.

In contrast, the situation regarding Iran reveals a higher level of support. None of the thirteen countries voted in favour of anti-Iran resolutions during the same period from 2022 to 2024. Six countries – Belarus, Bolivia, Vietnam, Cuba, Indonesia, and Uzbekistan – consistently supported Iran. Algeria and Kazakhstan either supported Iran or abstained. Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey, and Uganda consistently abstained or did not vote.

Conclusion

Over the years, BRICS has emerged as a significant international group of leading nations from the Global non-West and South. The appeal of its activities is underscored by the desire of numerous developing states to join the group. BRICS attributes considerable importance to its image as a symbolic alternative, although it consistently emphasises that its activities are not directed against third countries.

However, as an independent centre of power and attraction in the non-Western world, BRICS places great emphasis on formulating its own platform of shared values. This sets BRICS declarations apart from those of the G20, where there is no unified value platform between Western and non-Western nations.

The evolution of the articulation of BRICS value priorities has been dialectical over time, changing from summit to summit. Each chairing country has highlighted its own priorities. Consequently, the BRICS value set is an amalgamation of diverse national values, which may complement each other but need not coincide entirely. This distinguishes BRICS outcome documents from the established list of G7 values, with their classic liberal triad of “freedom – democracy – human rights,” alongside the rule of law and a competitive economy.

Nonetheless, it is clear that during the years 2022 to 2024, there was a notable consolidation of the BRICS value priorities within the semantically established framework of the BRICS spirit. At the core of the BRICS spirit lie the following values: **mutual respect, mutual understanding, sovereign equality, solidarity, openness, inclusiveness, consensus, and also strengthening collaboration, and democracy.**

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