

Brics As a Geopolitical Security Instrument: Analyzing Russia's Motives in Engaging Africa

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Abstract.

This study analyzes the role of BRICS as a geopolitical security instrument within Russia's broader strategy to expand its influence across Africa amid the ongoing structural transformation of the international order toward multipolarity. Originally established as an economic cooperation forum among developing nations, BRICS has since evolved into a political and strategic platform that functions as an alternative to Western-dominated global institutions. This transformation has become increasingly pronounced in the context of escalating geopolitical tensions between Russia and Western states, particularly in the aftermath of the Ukraine conflict. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, this study conducts content analysis of policy documents, official statements by Russian officials, international media reports, and communiqués from BRICS summits and the Russia–Africa Summits of 2019 and 2023. The analytical framework draws on the theories of strategic depth and multipolar institutionalism to examine how Russia leverages non-Western multilateral platforms to build cross-regional strategic depth. The findings reveal that Russia has systematically utilized BRICS as an alternative diplomatic channel to consolidate military cooperation, advance energy investment expansion, and construct anti-hegemonic narratives rooted in South–South solidarity across Africa. Through BRICS, Russia positions itself as a strategic partner that upholds the principles of equality, sovereignty, and non-intervention which stands in deliberate contrast to the hierarchical patterns characteristic of Africa–West relations. This article contributes to the international relations literature by broadening the understanding of the role of multipolar institutions in the security strategies of non-Western states, and by demonstrating how BRICS functions as a geopolitical instrument that reconfigures global power dynamics and South–South relations within the context of an emerging multipolar world order.

Keywords: Africa; BRICS; Geopolitics; Strategic Security; Multipolarity and Russia.

I. INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War didn't automatically give rise to a fully unipolar world. On the contrary, the international order has exhibited signs of a gradual shift toward a more diverse configuration of power, commonly referred to as multipolarity. This shift is marked by the weakening grip of Western-dominated global institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, alongside the growing influence of developing nations in shaping the world's political and economic agenda (Acharya A. , 2014) (Stuenkel, 2016). It is within this landscape that BRICS, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, has emerged as one of the most visible manifestations of the Global South's efforts to construct a more inclusive and equitable international order. Since its inception, BRICS was conceived as an economic cooperation forum centered on development, trade, and the reform of global economic governance (Lukin, 2018). Over time, however, the grouping underwent a notable transformation, evolving from a purely economic platform into a political and strategic forum with increasingly significant geopolitical implications. This process was further reinforced by the accession of Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates to BRICS in 2024, consolidating the bloc as a collective cross-regional force in both economic and political terms. For Russia, BRICS represents far more than a vehicle for economic cooperation.

Following the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the escalating Russia-Ukraine conflict since 2022, Moscow faced a mounting wave of international sanctions and considerable diplomatic isolation (Lukin, 2018). It was within this constrained environment that Russia actively strengthened its ties with non-Western states as part of a broader global counter-balancing strategy. Evidence of this includes the growth in trade

volumes between Russia and non-Western partners following 2022, as well as the increasing number of states that abstained from or voted against UN resolutions related to Ukraine, both serving as indicators of expanding non-Western support for Moscow's position. BRICS thus became one of Russia's principal instruments for sustaining its international legitimacy while extending its influence beyond the Western orbit. Africa occupies a distinctive place in Russia's contemporary geopolitical strategy. The continent offers a combination that is difficult to overlook, namely abundant natural resources, rapidly expanding markets, and substantial political support in international forums, particularly the United Nations General Assembly.

In recent years, Russia has steadily intensified its presence across Africa, spanning arms sales and military training, energy and mining investments, and engagement in regional security matters (**Korybko, 2020**). The Russia-Africa Summits held in 2019 and 2023 stand as concrete reflections of this deepening relationship. The first Russia-Africa Summit, convened in Sochi in October 2019, produced a joint declaration that established the strategic framework for Russia-Africa relations in the twenty-first century, marking the initial institutionalization of this partnership (Russian Federation, 2019). Dalam In this context, BRICS serves as a critical channel of diplomatic legitimacy for Russia. Through the BRICS platform, Russia has cultivated an image as a partner committed to the principles of equality, sovereignty, and non-intervention, an approach that stands in deliberate contrast to the hierarchical and conditionality-laden patterns historically associated with Western engagement in Africa (Acharya A. , 2014). The anti-hegemonic narratives and South-South solidarity embedded within the BRICS framework have provided Russia with the discursive capital to position itself as a power that understands Africa's historical burdens and supports the continent's pursuit of political and economic autonomy. Theoretically, these dynamics can be examined through two principal conceptual frameworks, namely strategic depth and multipolar institutionalism. The concept of strategic depth underscores the importance of expanding geopolitical access and cross-regional networks as a means of enhancing a state's resilience and strategic autonomy (**Davutoğlu, 2001**).

For Russia, Africa functions as a space of strategic depth, offering opportunities to diversify economic, political, and security relationships in the face of sustained Western pressure. Multipolar institutionalism, on the other hand, explains how major non-Western states construct and utilize alternative institutions to challenge the prevailing international order and redistribute global power on a more equitable basis (Acharya A. , 2014). Although the scholarly literature on BRICS continues to expand, most existing studies remain concentrated on its economic and institutional dimensions, while the security and geopolitical aspects have received comparatively limited attention. More specifically, research that directly connects the role of BRICS to Russia's security strategy in Africa remains notably scarce. This article seeks to address that gap by posing the following central research question, how and why does Russia employ BRICS as an instrument for consolidating its influence in Africa within the framework of geopolitical security? By treating BRICS as a strategic instrument, this article argues that the grouping can no longer be understood solely as an economic alliance, but rather as an integral component of Russia's grand strategy in shaping a multipolar world order. This approach is intended to enrich academic debate on the role of Global South institutions, the dynamics of non-Western power, and the transformation of international security architecture in the twenty-first century.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since its emergence in the early 2000s, BRICS has attracted considerable scholarly attention in the field of international relations, particularly with respect to shifts in the global economic structure and the rise of developing nations. Early studies generally conceptualized BRICS as a macroeconomic coordination forum aimed at strengthening intra-BRICS trade and advancing the reform of global economic governance, which was widely perceived as disproportionately oriented toward Western interests (O'Neill, 2001) (Stuenkel, 2015). From this perspective, BRICS was understood as a collective response by emerging powers to deeply entrenched structural inequalities within the international system. Over time, however, the literature gradually shifted its focus from the economic dimension to the political and geopolitical domains. Several studies have argued that BRICS is not merely a loose economic coalition, but also a political platform enabling its members to align positions on global issues such as UN reform, multilateralism, and

opposition to unilateral intervention (Lukin, 2018) (Yin, 2018). The establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) further reinforced the view that BRICS was constructing a tangible alternative institutional infrastructure. Nevertheless, much of the existing literature continues to characterize BRICS as a considerably heterogeneous collective actor, one whose member states do not always share convergent national interests. The divergent strategic orientations of China, Russia, India, and other member states have frequently been invoked to question the cohesiveness of BRICS as a geopolitical alliance (Pant, 2013). Consequently, the security and geopolitical dimensions of BRICS have often been treated as peripheral concerns within the mainstream literature.

Russia, BRICS, and the Strategy of Balancing against the West

In studies of Russian foreign policy, BRICS is frequently understood as part of Moscow's broader effort to challenge Western hegemony and promote a more pluralistic world order. Lukin (2018) argues that Russia views BRICS as a key instrument for building a world in which power is no longer monopolized by the United States and its allies (Tsygankov, 2019). Within this framework, BRICS is positioned as a tool of soft balancing, not to confront the West militarily, but to reduce Russia's dependence on Western-controlled institutions and norms. Tsygankov (2019) further contends that Russian foreign policy is fundamentally rooted in a desire to be treated as an equal great power, and that BRICS provides an arena in which such recognition can be collectively constructed without requiring Western validation. The soft balancing dimension warrants closer examination. T. V. Paul (2018) defines soft balancing as the use of non-military instruments, including diplomatic agreements, institutional coalitions, and economic policies, to constrain the capabilities and influence of dominant powers (Paul, 2018). In the Russian context, BRICS functions as a soft balancing instrument that allows Moscow to mitigate the isolating effects of Western sanctions. By presenting itself as a legitimate leader among Global South states, Russia asserts its continued relevance on the international stage without direct military confrontation with the Western alliance. This logic reflects what Lo (2015) describes as "assertive realism" in Russian foreign policy, a posture that is neither passive nor reckless, but one that systematically exploits available institutional openings to preserve Russia's geopolitical weight (Lo, 2015).

Since the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the deepening of the Russia-Ukraine conflict from 2022 onward, the strategic significance of BRICS for Russia has undergone a marked escalation (Sakwa, 2020). Trenin (2014) observes that Western economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation compelled Moscow to seriously diversify its partnership networks, accelerating its pivot toward the East and the Global South. Under these circumstances, BRICS ceased to be a merely convenient forum and became an urgent strategic necessity. Through BRICS, Russia is able to sustain access to alternative international financial systems, diplomatic networks insulated from Western pressure, and a legitimacy narrative continuously cultivated before developing nations. Beyond its functional utility, BRICS also performs an ideological role that cannot be overlooked within Russia's balancing strategy. Prashad (2012) demonstrates that the discourse of the Global South carries a profound historical charge, rooted in the rejection of international hierarchies inherited from colonialism. Russia's commitment to multipolarity is not confined to informal rhetoric; it has been formally codified at the highest level of state policy. The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, signed by President Putin on 31 March 2023, explicitly designates Africa as a priority region and identifies BRICS as one of the primary instruments for constructing a just multipolar world order (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2023). The document further articulates the objective of eliminating the vestiges of United States dominance in world affairs, a formulation that reinforces Russia's soft balancing strategy through non-Western institutions.

Russia has strategically positioned itself within this discourse. Although Russia is not historically part of the colonized world, Moscow employs the BRICS platform to align itself with the reformist aspirations of the Global South and to sustain the narrative that the West is the source of structural injustice in the international order. This approach endows BRICS with a dimension that extends well beyond policy coordination, transforming it into a space of discursive construction in which Russia continually affirms its identity as a partner that stands on the side of the marginalized. This collective positioning has been formally documented since the Brasilia Declaration of 2019, which reaffirmed BRICS's commitment to

multilateralism, rejection of unilateralism, and support for the reform of global governance (BRICS, 2019). Notwithstanding these developments, the existing literature exhibits a recurring limitation. Studies on Russia within BRICS tend to concentrate on the Russia-China relationship or on the economic dimensions of intra-member relations (Valockova B. , 2020). while the broader regional dimension, particularly Russia's engagement with Africa through BRICS mechanisms, remains inadequately examined in a systematic manner. Alden dan Vassiliev (2022) underscore that Russia-Africa relations have undergone a significant reorientation since 2014; however, the role of BRICS as a catalyst and legitimator of this reorientation has not received proportional attention in the literature (Alden & Vassiliev, 2022). It is precisely this gap that serves as the point of departure for the present article, which seeks to examine specifically how BRICS functions as a bridge between Russia's global balancing strategy and its increasingly intensive engagement with Africa.

Africa in Russian Foreign Policy: Between Security, Economics, and Global Legitimacy

Studies on Russia's engagement with Africa demonstrate that the continent has assumed an increasingly important role in Russia's global strategy, particularly since the mid-2010s. A range of scholarly works documents that Russia has strengthened its presence through arms sales, military cooperation, private security contracts, and investments in the energy and mining sectors (Wezeman, 2019). This approach is almost invariably accompanied by an anti-colonial narrative and an emphasis on the principle of non-intervention, serving as a means by which Russia distinguishes itself from Western powers. Several scholars have also highlighted the strategic value of African political support for Russia, particularly within multilateral forums such as the United Nations General Assembly. The votes of African states have frequently proven decisive in international resolutions concerning Ukraine, sanctions, and other global security matters (Sakwa, 2020). Africa, therefore, is not merely an economic or security target for Russia; it constitutes a valuable source of international political legitimacy.

While this body of literature provides a rich account of the forms and motives of Russian engagement in Africa, most studies remain bilateral or sectoral in orientation. Russia-Africa relations are typically analyzed in isolation from broader institutional frameworks such as BRICS. As a result, the role of BRICS as a bridge between Russia's Africa strategy and its broader geopolitical agenda has yet to be comprehensively analyzed. This reorientation began to take institutional form with the first Russia-Africa Summit in Sochi in 2019, at which both parties formally agreed upon a cooperation framework encompassing the political, security, and economic dimensions of their relationship (Russian Federation, 2019). The transformation of BRICS from an economic forum to a geopolitical platform reached its clearest expression at the 2023 Summit, whose official theme, "BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism," constituted an explicit statement of Africa's centrality to the BRICS agenda (BRICS, 2023).

Theoretical Framework: Strategic Depth and Multipolar Institutionalism

To bridge the gaps identified above, this study draws on two primary theoretical frameworks, namely strategic depth and multipolar institutionalism. The concept of strategic depth, as developed by **Davutoğlu (2001)** emphasizes the importance of geographic space and cross-regional relationships as sources of a state's strategic power. Within this framework, the expansion of influence into other regions is not merely a policy option but a structural necessity for enhancing resilience and strategic flexibility. In the Russian context, Africa can be understood as a space of strategic depth that enables the diversification of international relationships amid sustained Western pressure. Access to African resources, ports, markets, and political support broadens Russia's room for maneuver within the international system. Multipolar institutionalism, for its part, explains how non-Western states create and leverage alternative institutions to challenge Western dominance without withdrawing from the existing international system. From this perspective, BRICS functions as a multipolar institution that provides legitimacy, coordination, and symbolic capital for states seeking to reconfigure the global distribution of power (Acharya A. , 2014).

Beyond these two frameworks, the dynamics of Russia's strategy in Africa can also be examined through the lens of niche positioning in international politics. This concept explains how states facing capacity constraints or structural pressures selectively concentrate their engagement in particular sectors and

spaces to maximize their influence (Cooper, 1997). Rather than adopting a hegemonic strategy that seeks comprehensive dominance across multiple sectors, states with limited resources tend to focus their involvement on high-leverage strategic issues. In the post-2022 context, Russia's Africa strategy reflects precisely this pattern, prioritizing military cooperation, security partnerships, and political support as strategic niches that enable the expansion of influence without requiring hegemonic economic capacity. Niche positioning thus complements the frameworks of strategic depth and multipolar institutionalism by explaining how Russia operationalizes its geopolitical ambitions in a selective and asymmetric manner within an emerging multipolar world order.

Research Gap

Consistent with the literature reviewed above, four significant conceptual and empirical gaps can be identified, each of which provides the justificatory basis for the present article. The first gap concerns the security dimension of BRICS, which remains marginalized within the mainstream literature. Studies on BRICS have been largely dominated by economic and institutional perspectives. Pioneering works such as O'Neill (2001), which first introduced the BRIC acronym, indirectly established a dominant framework that positioned BRICS primarily as an economic growth phenomenon. This tendency has persisted across numerous subsequent studies that examine BRICS in the context of global financial governance reform and institutional development, including the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) (Stuenkel O., 2016). Although some scholars have begun to shift attention toward the political dimension, including BRICS's collective positions on UN reform and opposition to unilateral intervention (Lukin A., 2018) (Yin R., 2018), the security and geopolitical dimensions of BRICS remain comparatively underexplored. Papa (2015) raises the potential of BRICS as an emerging security community, yet his analysis is more exploratory than analytically rigorous. Pant (2013) similarly acknowledges the heterogeneity of member states' strategic interests, though this argument has more often been used to question the relevance of BRICS as a security actor rather than to investigate how specific members actively exploit the BRICS platform to advance their national security interests.

There thus exists a clear analytical gap concerning how BRICS member states, and Russia in particular, instrumentalize BRICS as a tool of geopolitical security (Acharya A., 2014). The second gap pertains to the tendency of studies on Russia within BRICS to remain confined to two dominant foci, namely the collective internal dynamics of BRICS, with particular emphasis on the Russia-China relationship, and the broader narrative of Russian foreign policy centered on confrontation with the West in the Eurasian theater (Tsygankov A., 2019) (Lo B., 2015). Valockova (2020) notes that the existing literature has documented Russia's strategy beyond Eurasia, including its engagement with Africa, but that almost all such studies analyze this policy in isolation from institutional mechanisms such as BRICS. The role of BRICS as an enabler and legitimator of Russia's expansion into regions such as Africa constitutes an important dimension that has yet to receive systematic scholarly attention. Studies that specifically examine how Russia employs BRICS as a strategic bridge toward regions outside Eurasia, Africa in particular, remain scarce, with most existing work treating BRICS as institutional background rather than as a primary analytical variable (Paul, 2018) (Prashad, 2012). This condition produces a significant blind spot in efforts to understand the logic of Russia's grand strategy in a holistic and comprehensive manner. The third gap lies within the literature on Russia's engagement with Africa, which, despite having expanded considerably in recent years, remains predominantly bilateral and sectoral in orientation.

Wezeman (2019) provides a comprehensive documentation of Russian arms flows to Sub-Saharan Africa, while **Korybko (2020)** analyzes Russia's Africa strategy within a broader geopolitical context. Alden dan Vassiliev (2022) highlight a significant reorientation in Russia-Africa relations since 2014, characterized by a shift from Soviet-era legacy ties toward a more pragmatic and interest-driven partnership. Nevertheless, virtually all of these studies analyze Russia-Africa relations on a sector-by-sector basis, whether in the military, energy, or UN General Assembly diplomacy domains, without integrating them into a broader institutional framework (Alden & Vassiliev, 2022). The role of BRICS as a legitimation channel, a platform for narrative construction, and a diplomatic infrastructure within the Russia-Africa relationship has almost never been explicitly or systematically examined in the existing literature. Stuenkel (2016) does

acknowledge the potential of BRICS as an alternative global order but does not specifically investigate its role as a catalyst or legitimator of Russia's regional strategy in Africa. The fourth gap is theoretical in nature. To the best of the authors' knowledge, no existing study has explicitly integrated the framework of strategic depth (**Davutoğlu, 2001**) with that of multipolar institutionalism to analyze Russia's strategy through BRICS in Africa. These two frameworks have typically been applied in isolation from one another.

Strategic depth has more commonly been applied to non-hegemonic states facing geopolitical pressures from multiple directions simultaneously, while multipolar institutionalism has more generally been used to analyze BRICS or Global South institutions as collective actors. Their integration offers considerably richer analytical potential. Strategic depth assists in explaining the geographic and geopolitical motivations underlying Russia's expansion into Africa, while multipolar institutionalism elucidates the institutional mechanisms through which that expansion is legitimately operationalized. Without this integration, analysis of Russia's Africa strategy through BRICS will remain partial and ill-equipped to capture the complexity of interactions across the national, regional, and global dimensions (Stuenkel, 2016) (Paul, 2018). The present article seeks to address all four gaps in an integrated manner. By analyzing how Russia employs BRICS as an instrument of geopolitical security in extending its influence across Africa, this study moves beyond the economic-institutional frameworks that have long dominated BRICS scholarship (Stuenkel, 2016) (O'Neill, 2001). Furthermore, by integrating the frameworks of strategic depth and multipolar institutionalism, this article advances a new analytical perspective capable of explaining the relationship between state strategy, institutional mechanisms, and regional geopolitical dynamics within the context of an international order in transition toward multipolarity (**Acharya, 2014; Davutoğlu, 2001**).

III. METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of developing an in-depth understanding of how and why Russia utilizes BRICS as an instrument of geopolitical security in extending its strategic influence across Africa. The qualitative approach was selected because the study focuses on the analysis of meaning, narratives, and foreign policy strategies that cannot be adequately explained through quantitative measurement alone (Creswell, 2014). Accordingly, the study emphasizes the interpretation of texts, discourses, and diplomatic practices that shape Russian behavior within the BRICS framework.

Research Design

The study is designed as a qualitative inquiry based on content analysis. Content analysis is employed to identify the dominant patterns, themes, and narratives within official documents and textual sources relevant to Russian foreign policy, BRICS, and Russia-Africa relations. This method enables the researchers to trace how concepts such as multipolarity, anti-hegemony, South-South solidarity, and strategic security are consistently constructed and deployed within Russia's official discourse (Krippendorff, 2018). The approach is also well suited to the research objectives, which extend beyond the mere description of phenomena to encompass an explanation of the motives and strategic rationality underlying state behavior within a complex global geopolitical context.

Data Sources and Collection Techniques

Research data were collected through documentary study of both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources comprise official Russian policy documents, public speeches and statements by senior Russian officials including the President and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as official documents from BRICS summits and the Russia-Africa Summits of 2019 and 2023. These documents were selected on the grounds that they represent the official positions of the state and reflect Russia's political communication strategy at the international level. The selection of primary documents was governed by three explicitly defined criteria. First, documents must have been issued by an official state actor, specifically the Government of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, or the BRICS multilateral platform, and thus can be considered to represent authoritative policy positions. Second, documents must have been published within the period 2019 to 2023, consistent with the temporal scope established for this study. Third, documents must explicitly address Africa, Russia-Africa cooperation, or the narratives of multipolarity and Global South solidarity that constitute the core of the analysis.

On the basis of these three criteria, six primary documents were selected: (1) the Declaration of the First Russia-Africa Summit, Sochi, 2019 (Russian Federation, 2019); (2) the Declaration of the Second Russia-Africa Summit, Saint Petersburg, 2023 (Russian Federation, 2023a); (3) the BRICS Brasilia Declaration, 2019 (BRICS, 2019); (4) the BRICS Johannesburg II Declaration, 2023 (BRICS, 2023); (5) the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, 2023 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2023); and (6) the speech by President Putin at the International Parliamentary Conference Russia-Africa in a Multipolar World, March 2023 (Putin, 2023). Secondary sources include international media reports, research institution publications, and academic literature addressing BRICS, Russian foreign policy, and African geopolitics. Secondary sources serve to provide analytical context, data triangulation, and to strengthen the validity of interpretations drawn from the primary sources (Bowen, 2009). The selection of the 2019 to 2023 timeframe reflects the judgment that this period captures the intensification of Russia-Africa relations and the growing significance of BRICS within Russia's global strategy, particularly in the aftermath of the escalating Russia-Ukraine conflict and the mounting pressure exerted by Western states on Moscow.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis proceeded through several stages. In the first stage, the researchers conducted open coding to identify initial themes emerging from the documents and texts under analysis, including security, multipolarity, anti-hegemony, sovereignty, and Global South cooperation. In the second stage, these themes were organized through thematic coding to construct more structured analytical categories directly relevant to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The subsequent stage involved data interpretation by connecting empirical findings to the theoretical frameworks of strategic depth and multipolar institutionalism. Through this approach, the study not only describes what Russia does, but also explains how these actions reflect a systematic effort to build cross-regional strategic depth and to leverage multipolar institutions as a means of counterbalancing Western dominance.

Analytical Framework

The analytical framework of this study integrates two primary theoretical perspectives. First, the theory of strategic depth is employed to analyze Africa as a geopolitical space that functions to extend Russia's strategic reach across the security, economic, and diplomatic dimensions. Second, multipolar institutionalism is used to understand the role of BRICS as an alternative institution that provides legitimacy, coordination, and symbolic capital for non-Western states seeking to challenge the existing global structure (Acharya A. , 2014). The integration of both frameworks enables a more comprehensive analysis of the relationship between state strategy and international institutions within the context of a shifting world order.

Validity and Limitations

To strengthen the validity of the study, the researchers applied source triangulation, comparing data drawn from official documents, international media, and academic literature. In addition, the use of well-established theoretical frameworks assists in reducing interpretive bias and reinforcing the consistency of the analysis. The study is nonetheless subject to certain limitations. Its focus on documentary sources and official state discourse risks overlooking informal dynamics or the perspectives of local actors within Africa. Furthermore, the study does not aim to measure the quantitative impact of Russian policy, but rather to illuminate the strategic logic that underlies it. Future research may therefore complement these findings through empirical approaches or field-based inquiry.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the principal findings of the study and subjects them to analytical discussion by connecting the empirical evidence to the theoretical frameworks of strategic depth and multipolar institutionalism. The findings demonstrate that BRICS functions as a significant geopolitical instrument within Russia's strategy to extend its influence across Africa, particularly in the context of escalating Western pressure and the ongoing transformation of the global order toward multipolarity.

BRICS as an Instrument of Legitimacy in Russia's Global Strategy

The findings indicate that Russia has consistently employed BRICS as a platform for international legitimacy in the face of diplomatic isolation and economic pressure imposed by Western states. Across a range of official speeches and joint BRICS declarations, Russia has emphasized the importance of multilateralism, sovereign equality, and the rejection of unilateralism, a set of narratives that stand in direct opposition to Western foreign policy approaches in the aftermath of the Ukraine conflict. In this context, BRICS functions not merely as an economic coordination forum but also as a symbolic space through which Russia sustains its image as a legitimate and relevant global actor. This legitimacy is of considerable importance to Russia, given that Western economic sanctions and diplomatic restrictions seek to isolate Moscow from the international system.

Through BRICS, Russia is able to demonstrate that it has not been marginalized globally but continues to maintain meaningful partnerships with major states of the Global South. This is consistent with the soft balancing argument, whereby states employ international institutions and coalitions to reduce the dominance of major powers without resorting to direct confrontation (Stuenkel O. , 2015). In the African context, the legitimacy derived through BRICS reinforces Russia's standing as a politically accepted partner. African states that are members of or interact with BRICS tend to perceive Russia as part of a legitimate non-Western coalition rather than as a unilateral actor operating outside international norms. BRICS thus provides a normative framework that facilitates the expansion of Russian influence across the continent.

Africa as a Space of Strategic Depth in Russian Foreign Policy

The findings further indicate that Africa occupies a central position within Russia's strategic depth strategy. Within this framework, Africa is not regarded as a peripheral region but as a geopolitical space that extends Russia's strategic reach beyond the Eurasian theater. The most compelling empirical evidence derives from international arms transfer data. According to the SIPRI Fact Sheet 2024, Russia was the largest arms supplier to Africa during the period 2019 to 2023, accounting for approximately 24 percent of total major arms imports to the continent and surpassing the United States (16 percent), China (13 percent), and France (10 percent) (Wezeman, 2019). These figures reflect the depth of Russia's military engagement, which extends well beyond mere commercial transactions. Furthermore, Russia has concluded military cooperation agreements with more than 40 African states, a fact confirmed directly by President Putin at the Russia-Africa Summit in Saint Petersburg in 2023 and independently verified by the European Parliament Research Service (2024). These agreements encompass a broad range of engagements, including military personnel training, the supply of weapons systems, counterterrorism support, and access to ports and air bases. Arms sales and security contracts not only generate economic returns but also create long-term technological and operational dependencies that consolidate Russia's position as an indispensable security partner (Valockova B. , 2020).

Beyond the military dimension, Russia has also concluded nuclear cooperation agreements with 20 African states, including plans to construct nuclear power plants in Egypt and Nigeria, representing a form of economic strategic depth that deepens long-term structural dependencies (European Parliament Research Service, 2024). From the perspective of strategic depth, this network of cooperative arrangements significantly enhances Russia's strategic flexibility and expands its foreign policy options amid sustained Western isolation pressure (Davutoglu, 2001). The most concrete documentary evidence is found in the Declaration of the Second Russia-Africa Summit of 2023, in which the parties formally committed to enhancing equal and mutually beneficial cooperation as a contribution to the establishment of a more just multipolar world order, while also confirming the cancellation of African debt totaling 23 billion USD (Russian Federation, 2023a). This strategic dimension was articulated directly by President Putin at the International Parliamentary Conference on Russia-Africa in a Multipolar World in March 2023. Putin cited major Rosatom projects in Egypt, investments by Rosneft and Lukoil across Africa, and the cancellation of African debt as concrete evidence of Russia's commitment, characterizing these not as rhetorical promises but as expressions of "genuine strategic cooperation" (Putin, 2023).

BRICS and the Construction of Anti-Hegemonic Narratives

One of the principal findings of this study concerns the central role of anti-hegemonic narratives within Russia's strategy through BRICS. Analysis of official speeches and policy documents demonstrates that Russia consistently employs language emphasizing the injustice of a Western-dominated international system and the necessity of constructing a more equitable and inclusive global order. This narrative finds strong resonance across Africa, given the continent's historical experience with colonialism and structural dependency. BRICS serves as the primary vehicle for the dissemination of this narrative. Through joint declarations and multilateral forums, Russia reinforces the message that BRICS represents the interests of the Global South and challenges the dominance of Western-led institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. In this context, the anti-hegemonic narrative functions not merely as rhetoric but as a strategic instrument for building political solidarity and international legitimacy (Stuenkel O. , 2016).

This finding supports the argument of multipolar institutionalism, which holds that alternative institutions play a significant role in reconfiguring the global distribution of power. As a multipolar institution, BRICS enables Russia to articulate its interests collectively, thereby reducing the risk of isolation and enhancing its bargaining position within the international system (Acharya A. , 2014). The Johannesburg II Declaration of 2023 consistently employs the language of sovereign equality, inclusivity, and Global South solidarity (BRICS, 2023). The document further affirms support for African Union membership in the G20 and calls for the reform of Bretton Woods institutions, both of which reflect the anti-hegemonic narratives examined in this study. The anti-hegemonic narrative disseminated through BRICS is not merely a communication tactic but constitutes a component of a structured state strategy. Russia's Foreign Policy Concept of 2023 explicitly employs anti-neocolonialist language and identifies the Global South as a legitimate strategic partner in the construction of a new international order (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2023). This confirms that the narratives projected through the BRICS platform originate from the highest level of Russian state policy.

BRICS as an Alternative Diplomatic Channel in Russia-Africa Relations

The findings indicate that BRICS functions as an alternative diplomatic channel connecting Russia's global strategy to its bilateral relationships across Africa. The Russia-Africa Summits and BRICS meetings frequently complement one another, generating synergies between multilateral and bilateral diplomacy. Through BRICS, Russia can extend its diplomatic reach without relying on Western institutions or conventional multilateral mechanisms. This approach enables Russia to offer a model of cooperation emphasizing equality and non-intervention, which stands in contrast to the Western approach frequently associated with political and economic conditionality. African states, in this context, gain greater room for maneuver in diversifying their international partnerships. For Russia, this consolidates its position as a strategic partner perceived as flexible and responsive to local needs. These findings suggest that BRICS functions not merely as a discussion forum but as a diplomatic infrastructure that facilitates the expansion of Russian influence across Africa. In this sense, BRICS operates as a force multiplier in Russian foreign policy.

Security and Global Geopolitical Implications

From a global security perspective, the findings of this study suggest that Russia's use of BRICS carries broader implications for the architecture of international security. By consolidating its partnerships in Africa through BRICS, Russia contributes to the diversification of security sources and reduces Western dominance in conflict management and regional stability. At the same time, this dynamic generates new challenges. Russia's presence in Africa through military and security cooperation has the potential to intensify geopolitical competition with other actors, including China and Western states. Notwithstanding this, the study suggests that Russia tends to employ BRICS as a means of avoiding direct confrontation, consistently foregrounding multilateralism and Global South solidarity as its legitimating framework.

Theoretical Discussion: Integrating Strategic Depth and Multipolar Institutionalism

The integration of strategic depth and multipolar institutionalism yields a more comprehensive understanding of Russia's strategy through BRICS. Africa, as a space of strategic depth, provides the resources, political support, and strategic flexibility that are essential to Russia's geopolitical calculations.

BRICS, as a multipolar institution, simultaneously furnishes the legitimacy and coordination required to articulate these interests on a collective basis. The findings of this study demonstrate that Russia's strategy cannot be understood by treating its regional and institutional policies as separate phenomena. On the contrary, the two are deeply interconnected within a broader effort to shape a multipolar world order more conducive to non-Western states. BRICS thus functions as a bridge between Russia's national strategy and the dynamics of global geopolitics.

Contributions to the Literature

The results and discussion presented in this study make several important contributions to the international relations literature. First, this study broadens the understanding of BRICS by foregrounding its security and geopolitical dimensions, which have received insufficient attention in existing scholarship. Second, it demonstrates how Russia instrumentalizes multipolar institutions as strategic tools within its foreign policy, with reference to Africa. Third, the integration of the strategic depth and multipolar institutionalism frameworks offers a new analytical approach for understanding the relationship between Global South institutions and the security strategies of non-Western states.

V. CONCLUSION

This article has sought to analyze how Russia employs BRICS as an instrument of geopolitical security in extending its strategic influence across Africa amid the ongoing shift of the global order toward multipolarity. Drawing on qualitative analysis of policy documents, official speeches, and the dynamics of Russia-Africa multilateral and bilateral diplomacy, the study demonstrates that BRICS has evolved well beyond its original function as an economic cooperation forum. BRICS now operates as a strategic platform that provides political legitimacy, an alternative diplomatic space, and a means of counterbalancing Western dominance within the international system. The principal findings of this study indicate that Russia systematically employs BRICS to construct strategic depth across Africa. Through military cooperation, energy investment, and the reinforcement of anti-hegemonic narratives and South-South solidarity, Russia extends its geopolitical reach while simultaneously reducing its dependence on Western institutions and markets. Africa, in this context, is understood not merely as an economic or security target but also as a source of political support and international legitimacy for Russia, particularly within global multilateral forums. The study further demonstrates that BRICS functions as an institutional channel through which Russia positions itself as a strategic partner committed to the principles of equality, sovereignty, and non-intervention.

This approach distinguishes Russia in a meaningful way from the hierarchical patterns of engagement frequently associated with Western involvement in Africa. By leveraging BRICS as a multipolar institution, Russia can articulate its geopolitical interests collectively and symbolically, thereby strengthening its bargaining position within a global order undergoing progressive fragmentation. Theoretically, the integration of the strategic depth and multipolar institutionalism frameworks makes an important contribution to understanding the relationship between state strategy and the role of non-Western institutions in international politics. In this regard, the Declaration of the Second Russia-Africa Summit of 2023 further affirms that Russia's commitment to Africa is not a mere diplomatic gesture but a structured agenda encompassing security, energy, and the reform of the global order (Russian Federation, 2023a). This also demonstrates that BRICS and the bilateral Russia-Africa mechanisms operate synergistically as instruments of both strategic depth and multipolar institutionalism. The study ultimately affirms that Russia's geopolitical strategy cannot be understood by treating its national and institutional dimensions as separate phenomena; rather, the two constitute deeply interrelated processes within a broader effort to shape a multipolar world order.

VI. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of this study carry several relevant policy implications for BRICS member states, African nations, and other Global South actors, including Indonesia.

First, with respect to Russia, the study reaffirms the importance of BRICS as a long-term strategic instrument in navigating Western geopolitical pressure. However, to sustain its credibility across Africa, Russia must ensure that the cooperation it offers through BRICS is not exclusively oriented toward its own security and economic interests but also delivers tangible benefits for the development and stability of African states. An imbalance in the implementation of cooperative arrangements risks undermining the South-South solidarity narrative that has constituted the primary source of strength in Russian diplomacy.

Second, for African states, the findings demonstrate that BRICS creates meaningful opportunities to diversify international partnerships and expand diplomatic room for maneuver beyond the Western orbit. At the same time, African states must adopt a strategic and selective approach to engaging with Russia and BRICS to avoid reproducing new forms of dependency. Strengthening domestic institutional capacity and ensuring transparency in cooperative arrangements are essential to guaranteeing that engagement with non-Western actors genuinely serves long-term national interests.

Third, for BRICS as an institution, the findings indicate that the grouping's expanding geopolitical role demands greater consistency between rhetoric and practice. If BRICS is to preserve its legitimacy as a representative of the Global South, its security, development, and global governance reform agendas must be pursued in an inclusive and collective manner, rather than being driven by the interests of any member state.

Fourth, for Global South states outside BRICS, including Indonesia, the findings offer important lessons regarding the dynamics of multipolar institutions. Indonesia, guided by its free and active foreign policy principle, can draw on the BRICS experience as a reference point for navigating relationships with major powers without becoming entangled in global bloc rivalries. This approach is directly relevant to Indonesia's efforts to preserve its strategic autonomy while enhancing its diplomatic role at the global level. Finally, the study opens space for further research into the long-term implications of multipolar institutionalization for global security stability. Future studies could enrich the analysis by incorporating the perspectives of local actors in Africa, adopting a comparative approach that includes other non-Western actors such as China or Turkey, and conducting empirical evaluations of the concrete impact of BRICS engagement on regional security and development.

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