

The Latent Maritime Potential of BRICS+: A Time for Realignment

Francois Vreÿ¹

Security Institute for Governance and Leadership in Africa, Stellenbosch University

This article is based on research related to the NIHSS-funded project, ‘Seeing the Sea: Promoting BRICS cooperation for development and security in Africa’

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v47i1.6179>

Abstract

BRICS+² comprises Brazil, China, India, Russia, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Ethiopia and Egypt. This grouping encompasses vast land and maritime areas rich in human and natural capital across Eurasia, East and South Asia, the Persian Gulf, Africa and the East coast of South America. Despite their geographical dispersion, BRICS+ members are interconnected by maritime routes traversing the South Atlantic, Indo-Pacific, Red Sea, the Southern Ocean and Mediterranean Sea. The link between maritime trade and the global economy, coupled with BRICS+’s declared focus on cooperation, development and trade, underscores the significance of also researching their maritime agendas. However, BRICS+ as a maritime entity remains underexplored, presenting a paradox of a proclaimed economic, trade and development agenda without attending to ocean agendas, maritime economics and maritime security settings. This gap was highlighted during the 2018 BRICS meeting in South Africa, but has since been largely overlooked. This disconnect presents a research opportunity to explore the maritime dimension, potential opportunities and future pathways for BRICS+, either as a block or dispersed maritime player.

Keywords: BRICS+; maritime trade; sea routes; maritime security

1. Introduction

By 2024, all members (bar Ethiopia) of the BRICS+ grouping are littoral states, reside in the Global South grouping of countries, house national maritime interests and have access to the oceans. BRICS+ national maritime interests are vested in their maritime zones, with the oceans linking BRICS+ members along the oft-noted “road that goes everywhere”. Unfortunately, an official or even emergent maritime interests debate within BRICS (and now BRICS+) remains absent except for the explicit reference made to it in the 2018 Johannesburg Declaration:

We recognise the vast potential in cooperation and collaboration in advancing the Oceans Economy amongst BRICS+ countries, which encompasses multiple sectors, including the strategic areas of maritime transport, shipbuilding, offshore oil and exploration, aquaculture, port development, research and technology, conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, marine and coastal tourism, financial and insurance services, as well as coastal industrial zone development. (BRICS 2018)

Other than the Johannesburg Declaration, one must scour available documentation to piece together anecdotal indicators and views on, or references to, maritime themes and related matters (Mudemeli 2023). The 2018 declaration coincides with a second matter that increasingly characterises BRICS declarations—that of a growing security focus (see Bratersky and Kutryrev 2019). As for the latter, the 2024 BRICS+ Summit in Russia was probably the first that explicitly includes security in the summit theme: Strengthening multilateralism for just global development and security (President of Russia 2024).

Overall, the BRICS+ grouping aspires to address common threats collectively. However, cooperation on international security issues remains low-key, mostly declaratory during annual meetings and not overtly embedded in a collective programme. The BRICS+ security concerns dovetail with sectors that make up non-traditional security threats and vulnerabilities, but the declaratory focus remains on cooperative economic relations, international trade and financial matters.

¹ Emeritus Professor, Stellenbosch University and Research Coordinator, Security Institute for Governance and Leadership in Africa (SIGLA).

² In this chapter, BRIC refers to Brazil, Russia, India, China, and BRICS refers to Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa. BRICS+ refers to Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and then the new members Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, with Saudi Arabia (membership pending) and the United Arab Emirates that joined in 2024. Argentina declined the invitation to join, but Indonesia joined in 2025.



The majority of BRICS+ members are coastal states in their respective regions. Their littoral locations offer opportunities to ensure unhindered conduct of, or denial of, maritime trade and use of the oceans as a rising development frontier. In contrast, their potential maritime trade and industry domains together with their security ambitions remain opaque in the broadening security schema of BRICS+ (Panova 2015), amidst a general leaning that marginalises a maritime agenda.

The following discussion aims to underline the importance of maritime economics and security within BRICS+. Given that official BRICS+ statements, literature and programmes on maritime matters are vague, the discussion attempts to infer maritime relevance from BRICS+ statements, geography, the small cluster of literature on BRICS+ maritime aspects and some naval matters. The narrative that follows proceeds along four avenues. First, identifying BRICS+ motivations and stances on its agenda that include references to status improvement, revisionism and soft power. The second section turns to BRICS+ as a maritime entity inclusive of a maritime agenda, alternative outlooks on BRICS+ as a dispersed or block player, and the liberal agenda on maritime governance. Section three argues the case for a blue BRICS+ pointing to opportunities and constraints before concluding.

2. Exploring the BRICS+ Agenda: From Status Improvement and Revisionism to Common Interests

The use of theory helps to explain elements of why countries joined BRICS+. A common stance on peaceful coexistence in its different formats supported by early BRICS members (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) goes some way in this regard, and ties into the declaratory statements from current BRICS+ fora themes. A more nuanced outlook sprouts from status theory underpinned by policy ambitions for self-esteem, reputation, honour, dignity, fame and sympathy within BRICS+, but also in the world order in general (see, for example, Haans and Thomas 2023). According to Konyshov and Sergunin (2022) status-seeking states turn to mobility strategies to compete with a dominant group through a competition strategy or attempt to achieve ascendance in a different politico-economic domain through a creativity strategy or some combination thereof (TASS News Agency 2024). The latter mobility strategies are difficult to generalise, however, in the section on national agendas (discussed later), some indicators of national pursuits through BRICS membership are outlined. One should also take note of revisionism and power transition theories that are more systemic in kind. However, each BRICS+ member ultimately has its reasons that may or may not align with the agendas of other members, or future members.

As a common pursuit, BRICS+ countries strive to cement or improve their status in the international system while pursuing their national agendas along a pathway that confers most benefit. The interplay between the block and national ambitions becomes visible in the themes of the annual heads of state meetings over the past 16 years, as addressed later. Individually, the annual themes tend to be overly broad to capture the gist of inclusive ambitions and cooperation that BRICS members attempt to master, tie together and benefit from.

BRICS+ aims, objectives, and visions mostly stem from assessments on statements of the pre-2024 BRICS grouping that will likely guide BRICS+ and its growing membership for the immediate future (TASS News Agency 2024). From these statements and declarations, one can infer at least four aspects holding maritime relevance (discussed below), albeit so that no explicit nexus is visible:

The first aspect is that of multipolarity: A drive towards a larger multipolar nature of international relations with the potential of new alliances within the Global South. The BRICS+ alliance, within the context of more partner countries in future, is a harbinger of stronger voices from the South to shape global governance in a way that better suits southern needs and thereby reform the international politico-economic system (Garcia Herrero, 2024: 7-8). With three members in BRICS+ (South Africa, Egypt and Ethiopia, with Nigeria a partner in waiting), Africa is well represented to add its voice and inject African agency. Inherently BRICS+ agendas also account for the maritime dimension on matters such as alliances, cooperation and more consensual voices and pact-building, as well as influence. Within the BRICS+ grouping and its latent members awaiting membership, pathways for different regions from the Global South to influence future ocean debates are opening up. They can shape ongoing deliberations on ocean matters and shift maritime security regimes towards more cooperation to better serve their interests, lower undue competition and build consensus on ocean agendas.

Economic diversification is a second aspect. The five countries called upon in 2024 to join BRICS add economic weight to the BRICS+ group. While China is already the second largest global economy, the BRICS+ membership brings its own economic clout—even if more regional in kind. Saudi Arabia as a latent member and the UAE, for instance, are key players in the global oil market, while Egypt and Iran dominate strategic geopolitical maritime locations, and Ethiopia is one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa (Panchia 2024). The post-2023 grouping harbours 50 per cent of global crude oil production and controls maritime straits and continental economic hubs as depicted by China, Brazil, India and South Africa. Collective economic gravitas, important geopolitical locations, key players in the oil market, and housing future labour and consumer markets call for secure maritime connectivity as maritime trade remains the bedrock of the global economy. This view, however, stands in the shadow of the low-keyed BRICS+ concern with maritime cooperation and trade, ocean debates and the requisite maritime security governance to collectively use the oceans under safe and secure conditions (Schoeman 2023).

The third aspect concerns population factors: BRICS+ members are home to a major portion of the world's population, which can lead to a larger market for trade and investment within the BRICS framework. 45 per cent of the global population reside in BRICS+ and live on or close to the coast, making them both users and beneficiaries of what oceans offer (Cosby and Lebakula 2024). This land-sea connection offers a logical rationale for BRICS+ to link their agendas on cooperation, development and prosperity with ocean agendas on economics, the environment, justice and security to benefit the large, but marginalised communities from the Global South.

Strategic influence is the final aspect: The addition of each post-2023 member has brought more regional influence to BRICS+. For example, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have substantial sway in the Middle East, Egypt controls the Suez Canal, a critical maritime chokepoint, and Ethiopia serves as the diplomatic hub for Africa via the African Union, and houses approximately 97 diplomatic missions. Iran and Saudi Arabia are two dominant Middle Eastern political players, dominating the Strait of Hormuz that controls global oil flows from the Persian Gulf. Unfortunately, Iran is also a major destabiliser in the Middle East. The Iranians are associated with shipping disruptions in the Arabian Sea/Gulf of Oman, and through its Houthi proxy, attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and NW Indian Ocean since December 2023 (Alasar 2024). South Africa is seen as a regional power and gateway to Africa, and holds direct influence over the Cape Sea Route as an alternative flow resource when the Red Sea/Suez Canal is blocked. South Africa is also the member state physically connecting BRICS+ via sea routes through the South Atlantic to Brazil in South America and in future, to Cuba, Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea.

3. BRICS+ as a Maritime Entity

3.1. *Mapping a maritime agenda: Maritime features, imperatives and alternative outlooks*

As coastal states, BRICS+ members are not only dependent on the surrounding seas that carry the bulk of world trade, the oceans also serve as the common physical and virtual connection for member states. Unfortunately, little maritime work takes place under the BRICS+ banner. This is despite De Vivero and Mateos (2010) delimiting the potential of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) grouping's maritime profile when South Africa joined. Although each BRICS+ member has its own national maritime security interests, the litmus test is to integrate or at least align these interests with a common BRICS+ maritime agenda. On 21 October 2024, in a rare reference to maritime interests, Russia's president, Vladimir Putin stressed the importance of transport connectivity for BRICS+ and Russian progress on sea routes, maritime safety and connecting Russian ports with the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean (The Diplomatic Society 2024). Serving common interests through collaboration offers practical building blocks for entering a maritime agenda while narrow or vital national interests typically slow such progress. It is, however, over-ambitious to expect that all maritime interests of member states can be easily collated under one maritime umbrella and programmes for execution, yet largely ignoring their extensive maritime interests remains a serious void, as depicted in the sea access outline below (World by Map, n.d.)

Table 1: Coastal features of BRICS+ countries³

Member State	Coastal Length	Bi- or Multi Coastal	Oceans Connections
Brazil	7 491 km	N	Southern Atlantic
China	14 500 km	N	Western Pacific
India	7 000 km	Bi	Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal
Iran	2 440 km	Multi	Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Caspian Sea
Russia	37 653 km	Multi	Baltic, Pacific, Black Sea, Caspian Sea
Saudi Arabia*	3 000 km	Bi	Arabian Sea and Red Sea
South Africa	2 798 km	Multi	Indian and Atlantic Oceans, Southern Ocean
United Arab Emirates	1 318 km	N	Persian Gulf
Egypt	2 900 km	Bi	Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea

*Not yet a member

³ Thirteen states became partners at the 2024 BRICS Summit in Kazan Russia: The Littoral Countries in the partner grouping are Cuba (Caribbean Sea), Indonesia (Indian Ocean), Malaysia (Indian Ocean), Nigeria (Gulf of Guinea, Atlantic Ocean), Thailand (Indo-Pacific), Turkey (Mediterranean and Black Seas) and Vietnam (Pacific Ocean).

As a potential politico-economic bloc, BRICS+ harbours the maritime clout to use in constructive or disruptive ways. The constructive outlook relates to how BRICS+ countries employ their access to and use of the oceans' living and non-living resources, as well as its utility as a connectivity medium, and how they embrace multilateralism and cooperation for economic, trade and development purposes. This is also about how constructively or competitively BRICS+ as a block eventually participates in the global agenda on setting rules and norms to extend good governance over the world's oceans and play along in the fields of the blue economy, blue justice, ocean health and maritime security, as argued by Bueger and Mallin (2023). In essence, the question is whether BRICS+ will become a global maritime security provider within the liberal model of security governance based on cooperation and international norms.

The 2018 Johannesburg Declaration (BRICS 2018) advocates on an array of maritime matters to be further developed. However, the sectors listed depend upon cooperation and good order at sea: **maritime transport**; shipbuilding; **offshore oil and exploration**; **aquaculture**; port development; research and technology; **conservation and sustainable use of marine resources**; **marine and coastal tourism**; **financial and insurance services** as well as **coastal industrial zone development**. Unfortunately, the explicit 2018 call for maritime cooperation received little traction, with the Johannesburg II Declaration of 2023 (BRICS 2023) making no further reference to ocean matters.

One set of explanations for this neglected maritime agenda comes from the Ocean Regions Programme at the University of Pretoria (see Schoeman 2023). BRICS+ is too loosely organised, harbouring a broad agenda formulated around matters strongly directed by the annual hosting country. Secondly, not all activities, agendas and collaborations take place under the BRICS+ banner or are explicitly sanctioned as a BRICS+ initiative. Maritime-wise, common interests and security concerns are stated, however, institutionalised cooperation as a BRICS+ pursuit remains absent. As a result, maritime collaboration and agenda setting remain latent. The views from the Oceans Regions Programme largely conform to those raised by Zhihua (2019) on cooperation, governance and the economic sector. As for the institutional profile, both publications note the absence of, and thus the need for, institutionalising maritime cooperation. In not attending to maritime matters, there is a subsequent lack of institutionalisation and so little evidence of a shift from the declaratory to the institutional imperative. Programmes for execution/implementation are therefore largely absent.

The 2023 Heads of State summit (BRICS, 2023) theme allows for cooperation that strongly relates to ocean agendas. Sustainable development, biodiversity (BRICS, 2023) conservation and sustainable use, climate change, climate action in developing countries, disaster risk reduction and resilient communities have a parallel maritime footprint. While the 2023 Johannesburg Summit Declaration (BRICS 2023) emphasises institutional development in order to strengthen the BRICS+ partnership, it is too brief and non-committal to give further content to ideas of BRICS+ maritime cooperation and partnership building. Furthermore, turning to the ocean agendas noted earlier and framed by Bueger and Mallin (2023), the topics noted in the 2023 Heads of State themes, for example, intersect with the paradigms and debates in Bueger and Mallin's framework (2023). However, a BRICS+ interface remains absent.

Assembling all BRICS+ members under a common overarching maritime agenda is ambitious, and one must presently infer shared objectives rather than argue substance. One connection relates to naval matters. Although BRICS+ member countries hold naval exercises, these do not have a declared BRICS+ nexus. At times, naval chiefs use the BRICS banner (Martin 2024b), as found in statements of naval vessels from South Africa destined to visit Egypt (cancelled), Russia (cancelled), and Brazil in 2024. A fully-fledged BRICS+ naval exercise (even unofficial) is yet to materialise, while military cooperation is officially denied by the Russians, who hosted the 2024 Heads of State summit (TASS News Agency, 2024). While China, Russia and South Africa cooperate on naval matters (Ex Mosi 2023), Iran, China and Russia exercise together (Ex Maritime Security Belt 2024), as do China and Russia, in conducting joint exercises (Ex Joint Sea 2022). India, Brazil and South Africa hold separate exercises (Ex Ibsamar), however, with India absent from any Russia-China-Iran naval activities.

Two Iranian naval vessels arrived in South Africa on 4 April 2023 (Jordan 2023), with a Chinese satellite tracking vessel following in their wake (Bloomberg, 2023). South African naval observers attended the 2024 naval exercise 'Maritime Security Belt' in the Gulf of Oman between China, Russia and Iran (defenceWeb, 2024). In a parallel development, Ex Ibsamar VIII (India, Brazil, South Africa) took place in October 2024 (Wingrin 2024). The common denominator is the implicit BRICS+ connection, with 2024 showing a visible BRICS+ profile in South Africa's naval diplomatic activities and more explicit references to the BRICS+ nexus in statements and speeches about these activities. Naval exercises are, unfortunately, too often perceived as institutionalised cooperation, but inferring a BRICS+ connection is not possible. This leaves the impression that maritime cooperation remains mute despite the clear growth of naval cooperation, since this does not occur under an official BRICS+ label.

3.2. *Alternative outlooks: Regional globalism, integration and the liberal approach towards maritime governance*

Viewing BRICS+ as a revisionist or reformist, blocks employing soft power to promote their change agenda holds relevance. A pragmatic interpretation of soft power that includes coercion, or an entity promoting global regionalism given the geographic spread of member states, can be considered (Konyshyev and Sergunin 2022). In a sense, reformist and soft power within a regional globalism house partially explains how the BRICS+ grouping of states can set up and execute a common agenda and account for their geographic distribution. Simultaneously, the 21st century's more cooperative international setting is fading with growing competition complicating the BRICS+ agenda setting, their objectives and programmes. It is against this backdrop that preferences for coercive rather than cooperative maritime actions enter into the frame.

War spilling into the Black Sea with naval attacks (Russia attacking Ukraine) is an apex disrupter. Closely following are power competition and naval suasion in the South and East China Sea (China vs the rest), and armed attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, with Iran supporting the Houthis. Interfering with subsea infrastructure in the Baltic (Russia vs Europe) and assaults on shipping in the Arabian Sea (Iran), also lean towards undue coercion. The latter resonates with naval responses from India to interdict a new piracy wave while also issuing a warning to Iran to refrain from further interference with shipping, all of which involves BRICS+ members.

While it is easy to list indicators of more competition, BRICS+ agendas that are on alternative pathways to offset Western dominance and the liberal approach to maritime governance and deal with security, hold mutual interests. Institutionalised international norms, multilateral global governance and the focus on human security sectors that call for the mitigation of illegal actions are thus, according to Perez (2022), areas of common concern. For BRICS+, the choice remains that of using the oceans as deemed fit and necessary (nationalistic or under an aggressive and competitive BRICS+ consensus), or becoming a cooperative authority to co-establish shared rules for responsible international ocean use.

The liberal approach to maritime governance argues for accepting rules to regulate the use of common spaces such as the ocean, and to reduce risks to healthy and productive oceans. Consensus on common rules and a corresponding governance regime reinforced with ethical criteria are catalysts for cooperation as well as understanding the maritime landscape as inter-spatial, transnational and inter-jurisdictional, calling for coexistence, cooperation and institutionalisation (Perez, 2022). Whether playing in the global league or using the liberal approach to direct a BRICS+ maritime agenda to forge a Southern block of responsible maritime actors and so influence the global consensus, the goal must be safer, more secure, productive and sustainable oceans. Institutionalisation and declared common interests within BRICS+ do, however, remain very low-key, if not absent, and leave maritime matters institutionally and geographically scattered.

During the lead-up to the 2010 BRIC, De Vivero and Mateos (2010) stressed the need for institutionalisation as the way for maritime cooperation, and raised the issue of whether BRIC will remain in the old competitive/national security paradigm or shift to the new cooperative and inclusive club for using the oceans. The latter attends to energy security, technology and ocean leadership, rather than national interests, competition and coercion. Furthermore, the resolutions and agreements, such as the 2023 United Nations (UN) agreement on protecting the oceans' biodiversity (signed only by Brazil and China in BRICS+) (United Nations [UN] 2023a), aimed at promoting sustainable ocean spaces, are notable as they cover common ocean spaces where jurisdiction and domain awareness are often weak (UN 2023b). Although not yet fully ratified, the 2023 UN agreement holds much potential as an entry point for BRICS+ to join an international league as a block player, thereby helping map maritime governance in support of safe and secure oceans, and establish itself as an influential and leading maritime security provider from the Global South.

In pursuit of safe and secure oceans and global connectivity, subsea cable infrastructure rapidly moved up the maritime security agenda. However, within BRICS+, only China, South Africa, India, United Arab Emirates and Egypt are members of the International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC). Important players like Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia (pending) and Ethiopia remain absent. In contrast, the majority of BRICS+ members signed the SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea) Convention (1974) and Protocols (with the exception of Saudi Arabia / South Africa) on the safety of life at sea, and the IMO (International Maritime Organisation) Convention (1948) to regulate shipping. With regard to Search and Rescue (S&R), Egypt is not a signatory to the S&R Convention of 1979. Regarding the SUA (Suppression of Unlawful Acts) Convention of 1988, all the BRICS+ member countries are signatories, as depicted on the IMO ratification page. By 15 April 2024, BRICS+ countries will have signed the majority of the 58 IMO conventions, protocols and agreements listed for better safety, security and use of the oceans (International Maritime Organisation 2015). BRICS+ is thus not only enmeshed in the international conventions on maritime safety and security premised on the fraternal cooperation of signatories, but also as individual members with the latent potential to influence important decisions should a BRICS+ agenda take shape.

The coercive modes cited earlier refer to using access to strategic ocean landscapes in order to coerce potential opponents. Some examples are ignoring international regimes that regulate shipping transit through maritime chokepoints controlled by BRICS+ countries such as Egypt and Iran, as well as the Southern Cape Route around South Africa, while Russia and China control much of the emerging northern route between the Arctic ice cap and Russia. This could well lead to the militarisation of ocean territories as seen in the North-Western Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf (Bueger and Stockbruegger, 2022). A recent case in point is the rapidly escalating Houthi armed attacks on commercial shipping in the Southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden off Yemen that resumed in March 2025. The declared aim is to coerce state actors and even commercial entities, such as civilian shipping lines, to change their behaviour towards the Israel-Gaza conflict. Iran does not stand neutral in the ongoing Houthi attacks, given its long-standing support to its Houthi proxy in Yemen. Iran also actively interferes with commercial vessels passing through the Strait of Hormuz in response to what it deems to be interference and threats to Iranian interests. India, in turn, deploys its navy into the Arabian Sea to counter interference, albeit against criminal elements, but also likely in a suasion mode of naval diplomacy directed at Iran.

The Houthi attacks exemplify threats from armed non-state groups to international shipping, challenging a BRICS+ interest in freedom of navigation and the need for collective security provision against a common threat (Wintour 2024). A further example is the Chinese and Indian naval posturing in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean to support their respective interests (Khan 2022). Characteristically, China and India view one another with suspicion given their competing stances on the Indian Ocean/Indo-Pacific, and in light of China's ambitions to run their Maritime Silk Road through the Indian Ocean to Africa without competitors interrupting this strategy (Raja Mohan 2022). Neither of these examples demonstrates any official BRICS+ stance on mitigating threats against their common interests in the respective ocean theatres, but instead both function as detractors from expectations of constructive BRICS+ maritime cooperation to promote maritime security.

3.3. *Outlining overlapping BRICS+ agendas*

The World Economic Forum (WEF) distinguishes between a collective BRICS+ agenda and the individual agendas of BRICS+ members that (also) suit their national agendas. Although BRICS+ membership brings to the fore national agendas, common stances and coherent agendas remain ambitious, difficult and troublesome (Pillai and Savio 2024). From a theoretical approach, BRICS+ members have their reasons why their BRICS+ membership is important, but security interests are more difficult and are often last to be subjected to collaborative arrangements (Saran 2017).

Merging or reconciling BRICS+ common and national agendas remains complex, but needs some resolution. How BRICS+ proceeds as a collective entity remains unclear, however, Shapenko *et al.* (2014) suggest four progressive scenarios towards greater integration of their interests and resultant policies and programmes:

- A loosely organised entity: A club of emerging nations discussing global agendas dominated by other actors.
- More cooperation: Forge alliances to influence global agendas by expanding membership and building a political alliance.
- More integration: Fostering integration towards a Union by increasing economic growth and trade, integration and moving towards an economic union.
- More globalist beyond BRICS+: Pursuing economic, political and cultural integration to help address global problems faced by all.

The above scenarios outline alternatives that could become more formalised and politicised in response to developments that accommodate or constrain BRICS+ ambitions. From a dispersed club to an integrated entity, each pathway harbours ways to align national agendas with BRICS+ ambitions. BRICS countries must, however, also rise to modern challenges to remain in step with a changing environment. The idea of a multiplex world offers more room for actor blocks from the Global South seeking more manoeuvring space, acceptance, influence and tolerance for alternative ideas—room not so readily available to older institutions of a similar kind, as argued by Acharya (2017). With BRICS+ professing to be an economic organisation focused on cooperation and development, instruments to align their economic activities and answers to domestic difficulties of members must be part of the agenda to move BRICS+ forward (Shapenko *et al.* 2014). In practice, this approach must also be taken up and executed in the underplayed maritime agenda called for in South Africa in 2018.

4. The Case for a Blue BRICS+

The oceans physically connect BRICS+ member countries and their economies. Simultaneously, significant trade differences characterise BRICS+ countries, but intra-group trade make up a good percentage of goods traded vs international turnover that exceeds the global average (United Nations, 2023:6). South Africa, Ethiopia and Egypt show strong trade profiles with India and China, and much of this is maritime-based. Increasing their international footprint or operationalising their reasons for joining BRICS+ must harness the country's maritime profile, assets and advantages. The latter rests upon collaboration on local and international initiatives that mitigate competitive and destructive ocean-grabbing behaviour. Lowering risks of overexploitation, inequitable distribution of access and failed or wrong adaptation to changing ocean conditions speaks to more sustainable ocean futures. This serves as a viable vision for how states, civil society, local communities, markets, industry and their collective influence on and implementation of rules mediate interaction with the oceans (Haas *et al.* 2022).

Returning to the liberal outlook, security underpinnings that pave the way for optimal ocean use rest upon responsible use and cooperation, not militarising conflicts and competition. Avoiding the latter requires diplomacy and regulation through international institutions and consensus building on norms (Perez 2022). Whether solely between BRICS+ members or through a wider network, frameworks for cooperation are on offer. The latter opportunities, amongst others, now include consensus building on The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) stipulations as well as more recent programmes. As for the latter, some opportunities arise from UN Resolution 76/296 Our ocean, our future, our responsibility (2022), UN Resolution 72/249 on the responsible use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, as well as cooperation with the ICPC on the protection of subsea infrastructure as a common critical connectivity and communication infrastructure setting.⁴

Despite the continuation of contestations about boundaries, rites of passage, use of resources and territorial claims, the norm proposed is consensus, collective action, and cooperation to serve interests and mitigate common threats. This norm setting permits sustainable ocean use, security of trade and coastal states themselves (Perez 2022). Pursuing the liberal approach, cooperative global maritime security governance becomes more important for actors to collaborate and ensure order at sea by promoting confidence and trust. Pathways for this are embedded in lowering sovereignty claims by balancing the rights argument with that of responsibility, making security referents more inclusive, setting up more amicable interaction contexts by lessening competition and revisionism, and formulating norms and rules collectively to be less intrusive and threatening to national sovereignty. These pointers help to regulate conflict through the UNCLOS dispute settlement mechanism, such as the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (Sperling 2022). In addition, promoting the aforementioned matters within BRICS+ can help situate BRICS+ as an influential, albeit dispersed, security provider for maritime security and the use of the oceans.

BRICS and BRICS+ annual meetings saw several themes emerging over the past 12 years since South Africa joined. Inherently, partnerships, inclusiveness, collective action, cooperation and solidarity/mutuality characterise the annual themes. The themes in Table 2 connect in the sense that cooperation, not competition, anchors every annual agenda. While security only features twice in the themes since 2011, and again in 2024 in the Russian-led summit, declaratory ambitions for cooperation, prosperity, solidarity and development ultimately rest upon a secure, stable and predictable politico-security landscape to minimise risk and uncertainty. This declaratory set of annual aspirations must be extended to maritime matters as well to augment the spirit of solidarity underpinned by shared cooperation, mutuality and partnerships.

Table 2: BRICS+ themes for annual Heads of States meetings

Year	Theme
2011	Broad Vision, Shared Prosperity
2012	BRICS+ Partnership for Global Stability, Security and Prosperity
2013	BRICS+ and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration and Industrialisation
2014	Inclusive Growth: Sustainable Solutions
2015	BRICS+ Partnership – a Powerful Factor of Global Development
2016	Building Responsive, Inclusive and Collective Solutions

⁴ The International Cable Protection Committee's 'Member List' of April 2024, for example, reflects neither Saudi Arabia as a member in waiting, nor Brazil, Russia, and Iran as members of the ICPC.

Year	Theme
2017	BRICS: Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future
2018	BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution
2019	BRICS: Economic Growth for an Innovative Future
2020	Global Stability, Shared Security and Innovative Growth
2021	BRICS @ 15: Intra-BRICS+ Cooperation for Continuity, Consolidation and Consensus
2022	Strengthen BRICS Solidarity and Cooperation, Respond to New Features and Challenges in International Situation
2023	BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Multilateralism
2024	Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security

Building on the broad and declaratory wording and concepts of the annual heads of states' meetings, national expressions and agendas of BRICS+ members serve as possible building blocks for a blue BRICS architecture. This is premised on the presence of maritime programmes and strategies already declared and, in some cases, further developed by the nine member states of the BRICS+ grouping.

China is the leading country that explicitly prioritised the oceans for its economic progress. One indicator is the series of five-year plans with the *13th Five-year plan* (2016-2020) premised upon maritime-based economic development (Martinson 2016). In addition, debates on the Maritime Silk Road are better known for its landing points across the Indo-Pacific and in Africa, more particularly. Russia also underlines the comprehensive management of the oceans with its *Marine Board* to manage and integrate maritime affairs (Bo 2020). South Africa launched 'Operation Phakisa' in 2014 to harness South Africa's ocean economy with the idea of boosting development, supporting the National Development Plan and increasing job creation (Findlay 2018). India plans for a Maritime India and houses the *Maritime Agenda 2010-2020*, with maritime connectivity being a major focus to leverage ocean wealth (Rao 2019). In turn, Brazil pursues *The Blue Amazon Paradigm* directed at ocean and river spaces and their preservation and sustainable use (Barros-Platau and Barros 2022). All five of these earlier BRICS+ members thus hold developmental ambitions with maritime underpinnings irrespective of how successfully these programmes are executed and yield deliverables to optimise their use of the oceans.

Regarding the post-2023, they also have ocean programmes. Egypt is formulating its *National Strategy for the Blue Economy* with the National Blue Economy Research and Innovation Centre seemingly the lead agency offering a roadmap under the auspices of the Ministry of the Environment (Egypt Business Directory 2024). Iran declared a maritime development strategy to develop its coast and expand economic ties with neighbours, however, little information on progress is forthcoming (Rubin 2024). The UAE launched its *Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy 2023* to position its blue economy as a pillar for growing its GDP and protecting the marine environment (Gulf News Report 2022). Saudi Arabia's *Vision 2030* targets the blue economy inclusive of harnessing the potential of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf (World Economic Forum 2024). Although not a littoral country, Ethiopia houses maritime ambitions towards the blue economy, logistics and resources through the *Ethiopian Maritime Authority*. National ambition is also visible in Ethiopia's attempts to lease territory around Berbera, a port of Somaliland, and so gain a sea outlet and become a maritime player in a strategic maritime chokepoint (Santos 2023). These strategies and programmes suggest BRICS+ member states are expressing their maritime interests through strategies and programmes but have not yet been taken up in a common BRICS+ declaration or block stance on maritime matters.

4.1. *A maritime BRICS+: Opportunities and constraints*

The persistent emphasis on collaboration expressed in almost every BRICS+ annual theme also ties into the practices of maritime cooperation. In contrast, as Zhihua (2019) points out, policy preferences of member states play a mediating role, but not always in an energetic manner, and this slows the move to multilateral action. Fortunately, the national maritime programmes of BRICS+ members offer attractive national clusters of interests premised upon the use of the oceans and in effect, echo the constituent elements of the 2018 Johannesburg Declaration as the primary call for BRICS+ to pursue maritime cooperation.

Zhongxiu and Qingxin (2020) briefly referred to BRICS investment cooperation to advance the ocean economy. The authors used the 2018 Johannesburg Declaration to demarcate designated maritime sectors and to promote the idea of 'new sector investments' to bring member states into step with the maritime economic agenda. Although BRICS+ does not reflect geographic proximity, but globally dispersed regions, the theory of Global Regionalism informed by principles of functionality, networks, identity, multi-actorness and multifactor spans becomes relevant (Konyshv and Segunin 2022:110). Dispersed regionalism theory offers ideas for more dispersed agenda

setting and its pursuit as opposed to a BRICS+ common maritime block strategy. In addition, Bo (2020) outlines important domains where maritime powers ought to place their efforts. Although Bo (2020) wrote with China in mind, BRICS+ also enters the equation. Within the expanded BRICS+, this is an imperative given potential membership proliferation, their diversity in terms of geographic setting, economic development, maritime standing and dealing with the wider ocean agendas demanding maritime security, in addition to the updated paradigms expressed by Bueger and Malin (2023):

- The blue economy: Expanding economic growth and marine resources within a sustainable development paradigm.
- Ocean health: Ecological consequences of human interactions and to protect and restore aquatic life and marine environments.
- Blue justice: Equitability and fair distribution of maritime risks, revenues, access and control.

Management expertise regarding the use of the oceans is crucial. In addition, the pursuit of a maritime economic agenda turns the attention to BRICS+ as a rising player that must remain in step with current maritime paradigms. These paradigms refer to maritime security, maritime economy, the environment and matters of blue justice with a focus on governance, multilateral action, cooperation and institutionalisation (Zhihua 2019). In doing so, national leaders and decision-makers must compete and cooperate to serve national and common BRICS+ interests with the following some suggested competitive and cooperative roles outlined below.

For BRICS+ member countries, a functional governance structure or high-level oversight body at the national level to align policies and strategies must be considered. Governance and oversight promote consolidation of existing maritime departments to limit over-bureaucratisation and improve efficiency. This consolidation or optimal alignment of maritime partners implies better national adherence of individual states as national maritime architectures tend to vary significantly, and thus, the suggestion to be positioned and aligned in order to support a future BRICS+ maritime agenda. Science and technology are, for example, driving forces, and their maritime relevance or iterations are critically important and thus, a common field of note. Both require investments, competitive industries and world-class maritime equipment for the marine industry.

Furthermore, the expansion and control of maritime spaces and then using these spaces in an optimal fashion is controversial and holds much competitive potential (Bo, 2020). In practice, this expansionist trend for more ocean access requires that jurisdictional seas be delimited and disputes be settled peacefully. According to Bo (2020), the development of and active participation in the regulated use of the high seas, as well as cooperation with actors to access and govern distant maritime spaces as prescribed by UNCLOS and mutual agreements, is a further, albeit difficult, future scenario. Notwithstanding the difficulties, BRICS+ must be part of the debate if it wants to promote its interests or that of member states.

Turning the attention more fully to a BRICS+ maritime agenda, Zhihua (2019) identified ways to take the then BRICS maritime economic debate from political statements to policy and institutional programmes. Zhihua (2019) avers that as a growing politico-economic block, BRICS members must grow their role and influence in maritime security governance rule-making and become a leading voice for the Global South through maritime economic cooperation. BRICS also serves as a mobilising entity to bring other countries from the South into the maritime governance debate with three major Southern powers (China, India, Russia) alongside members from South America, Africa and the Middle East (since 2024) in the lead (Zhihua 2019). In pursuit of maritime economic cooperation, several priorities are put forward and read together with arguments from Bo (2020). The following are possible trajectories.

BRICS+ countries must use their existing national programmes to promote the maritime agenda. Economic pathways only make sense if they are in step with maritime security initiatives such as disaster risk management, environmental security programmes, those offering physical security against threats to shipping, and programmes that foster responsible behaviour in harvesting and extracting living and non-living marine resources. Extending blue justice based on fairness and equitability is a further imperative given the perceived and de facto lack thereof experienced in the Global South.

Collectively, the above offers a normative environment for progressing with maritime industry aspects, such as maritime infrastructure, transforming maritime industries and developing modern maritime service industries (Zhihua 2019). The opportunities are reinforced by the BRICS+ partnership to build consensus based upon existing platforms housed within the BRICS+ cluster of states and their geopolitical and geoeconomic clout. In practice, Track 1, 2 and 3 diplomacies are engine rooms for progress. Tracks 2 and 3 help to operationalise what Track 1 government-to-government diplomacy has set out in, for example, the 2023 Johannesburg Declaration (Muresan 2023). Given the official activities for BRICS+ 2024 in Kazan, Russia, the extensive array of fora, conferences and meetings are impressive and possibly plug-in entities, but unfortunately still include only one oceans-related stream dedicated to polar research cooperation driven by Russia (Roscongress, 2024). One caveat here is that the latter stream expressed the desire for joint research in ocean sciences that seems to reach

more widely than polar research while Putin noted inclusion of the Persian Gulf, Red Sea and Caspian Seas in his official statement at the BRICS Business Forum in 2023 (. (Sputnik Africa, 2024; The International Affairs, 2023).

Zhihua (2019) also notes obstacles that offset the optimism of turning to the latent potential of the ocean's economy. First, BRICS+ countries do not make up the rules for global maritime governance and must cooperate within BRICS+ to forge a more benign global maritime governance regime (Zhihua, 2019). Second, maritime economic cooperation must be institutionalised and supported as economics and security houses a remarkably close interdependence. BRICS+ members are, thus, in the position to add BRICS-agency to information, investment, resource allocation, dispute management and business opportunities. Third, BRICS+ must consider adding value to global maritime governance and its regulatory frameworks that remain the setting for international rules that BRICS+ must heed as well. This underlines the imperative for BRICS+ as a block or as countries to be a player in setting up the rules.

The block approach must also be considered given possible new applications with the following littoral states requesting BRICS affiliations: Algeria (Strait of Gibraltar), Bangladesh (Indian Ocean), Cuba (Caribbean), Ecuador (Pacific), Indonesia (Malacca Strait), Nicaragua (Caribbean/Pacific), Nigeria (Gulf of Guinea), Pakistan, (Arabian Sea), Senegal (Atlantic Ocean/Gulf of Guinea), Sri Lanka (Indian Ocean), Sudan (Red Sea), Thailand (Indo-Pacific), Türkiye (Bosporus, Mediterranean and Black Sea), Uruguay (Southern Atlantic) and Venezuela (Southern Atlantic) (Devonshire-Ellis and Bonesh 2023). Continued membership growth increases influence as a block or a dispersed entity pursuing a common BRICS+ maritime agenda.

If BRICS+ aspires to become a block player operating as a dispersed global maritime security provider, maritime security cannot be left aside. Turning to maritime security, BRICS+ countries and the ambition of leveraging the blue economy to propel BRICS+ countries into an upward developmental trajectory, must contend with traditional and non-traditional maritime security threats. Their amicable mitigation remains key to ensuring the security platform upon which productive global maritime economic cooperation within BRICS+ will flourish (Zhihua 2019).

5. Conclusion

BRICS+ includes a dispersed grouping of strategically located coastal states on different continents located astride or adjacent to important maritime trade routes. The BRICS+ members rally around a declared agenda of trade, development and cooperation to build an alternative politico-economic block of emerging countries in the international system. In its pursuit, they vie for national and global power, influence and an adjustment of the rules that govern the system to be more beneficial to their interests. In all these politico-economic and diplomatic manoeuvres, the maritime agenda remains neglected except for annual naval exercises amongst BRICS+ members, but not under a BRICS+ label.

Pre-2024, BRICS members at their 2018 Heads of State meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, undertook to leverage maritime economics. The Johannesburg Declaration (BRICS 2018) mapped out areas to further develop and build upon to make greater use of the maritime economic potential on offer to help BRICS lift their economic growth curves. Unfortunately, the 2018 declaration found no further expression in the work of BRICS working committees responsible for shifting the annual declaratory commitments from political statements to policy objectives to BRICS+ programmes. Inherently, BRICS+ thus remains a powerful player with latent, but unused maritime influence at the diplomatic, economic and security levels.

Although literature and institutional work on harnessing the maritime influence of BRICS+ remain limited, the potential lingers. With common ambitions of influencing global governance, rulemaking and institutional changes for a more just international setting, a BRICS+ maritime agenda cannot be left off the change agenda. Some pathways to bring its underlying maritime leverage to fruition are the following. First, the chosen concepts that populate the themes of annual Heads of State meetings have maritime relevance in terms of geography, ambitions and outcomes. Second, the oft-declared BRICS+ economic, trade and development goals co-depend on a global maritime system embedded in a safe, sustainable and secure operating environment. Third, the determination to adjust the rules-based international system within which BRICS+ must function includes a maritime domain where BRICS+ can help to adjust the regulatory environment in its favour, or towards more fairness. Fourth, any drive to elevate the maritime focus in BRICS requires institution building to direct and execute selected programmes, and is therefore dependent on what model BRICS+ aspires to follow:

- A loosely organised entity: As a club of emerging nations discussing global agendas dominated by other actors, maritime agendas must be included.
- More cooperation: Allying to influence global agendas by expanding membership and building a political alliance. In this case,

the ocean's agenda must be a focus, and as a political alliance, their focus must include participation in agenda setting that accounts for the ever-expanding maritime security agenda.

- More integration: Fostering integration towards a Union by increasing economic growth and trade, integration and moving towards an economic union. An integration pathway calls for a maritime agenda. The essence here is that a BRICS+ economic union shall be maritime-dependent given the maritime core of the global economy and that all BRICS+ member states (except Ethiopia) are coastal countries.
- More globalist beyond BRICS+: Pursuing economic, political and cultural integration to help address global problems faced by all. In this case, BRICS+ must participate within the liberal cooperative maritime security paradigm as a block or regionally dispersed body that promotes progress towards a global consensus on the responsible use of the oceans.

Imagining a blue BRICS+ ultimately raises the question of how BRICS+ can integrate the ocean's agenda into its pursuits, given that the maritime domain, its security and product delivery are premised upon BRICS+' regional and international hierarchies of cooperation. Politically and declaratory-wise, the scene is set. It is now incumbent upon the fora of BRICS+ as collective engine rooms to shift the annual political declarations of intent to strategy and programmes and so institutionalise ways to promote a maritime BRICS+ agenda.

References

- Acharya, A. 2017. "After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of a Multiplex World Order", *Ethics and International Affairs* Vol 31, No 3, pp 277-278.
- Alasar, F.A. 2024. From Yemen to Palestine: The strategic depth of the Houthis-Iranian Alliance. Middle East Institute. 16 February 2024. From Yemen to Palestine: The strategic depth of the Houthis-Iranian alliance | Middle East Institute (mei.edu) 18 March.
- Barros-Plataiu, A.F. and Barros, J.G.C. 2022. "Brazil's Strategic Diplomacy for Maritime Security and Safety", *Contemporary Politics* Vol 28, No 1, pp 38-54.
- Bloomberg. 2023, 6 April. *Chinese Spy Ship Docks at Durban Harbour*. Available at: <https://mybroadband.co.za/news/security/486831-chinese-spy-ship-docks-at-durban-harbour.html> Accessed March 24, 2025.
- Bo, H. 2020. *Chinese Maritime Power in the 21st Century. Strategy, Planning, Policy, and Predictions*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Bratersky, M. and Kutryev, G. 2019. "BRICS and the Evolving Russia-India-China Security Agenda", *Strategic Analysis* Vol 43, No 6, pp 597-619.
- BRICS. 2018. *BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution*, 10th BRICS Summit Johannesburg Declaration, Johannesburg, South Africa, July 25-27.
- BRICS. 2023. *BRICS and Africa: Partnership for mutually accelerated growth, sustainable development and inclusive multilateralism*. XV BRICS Summit Johannesburg Declaration, Sandton, 23 August.
- Roscongress, BRICS Summit, October 2024 Available at: <https://roscongress.org/events/sammit-briks/about/> Accessed 8 June 2025.
- Bueger, C. and Mallin, F. 2023. "Blue Paradigms: Understanding the Intellectual Revolution in Global Ocean Politics", *International Affairs* Vol 99, No 4, pp 1719-1739.
- Bueger, C. and Stockbruegger, J. 2022. "Maritime Security and the Western Indian Ocean's Militarisation Dilemma", *African Security Review* Vol 31, No 2, pp 195-210.
- Cosby, A. and V. Lebakula. 2024, 12 December. *15% of Global Population Lives Within a Few Miles of a Coast – and the Number is Growing Rapidly*. The Conversation. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/15-of-global-population-lives-within-a-few-miles-of-a-coast-and-the-number-is-growing-rapidly-240672> Accessed 19 January 2025.
- De Vivero, J.L.S. and Mateos, J.C.R. 2010. "Ocean Governance in a Competitive World. The BRIC Countries as Emerging Maritime Powers—Building New Geopolitical Scenarios", *Marine Policy* Vol 34, No 5, pp 967-978.
- United Nations, 2023. "BRICS Investment Report". United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.
- Egypt Business Directory. 2024, 23 February. *Ten Things You Need to Know About Egypt's Blue Economy Roadmap*. Available at: <https://www.egypt-business.com/news/details/2408-10-things-you-need-to-know-about-egypts-blue-economy-roadmap/> Accessed 22 March 2024.

- Findlay, K. 2018. "Operation Phakisa and Unlocking South Africa's Ocean Economy", *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* Vol 14, No 2, pp 248-254.
- García Herrero, A. 2024. "Potential Geoeconomic and Geopolitical Consequences of an Expanded BRICS", *EconPol Forum* Vol 25, No 1, pp 5-9.
- Gulf News Report. 2022, 29 March. *WGS 2022: Umm Al Quwain Launches Blue Economy Strategy*. Available at: <https://gulfnews.com/business/wgs-2022-umm-al-quwain-launches-blue-economy-strategy-1.86820370> Accessed 22 March 2024.
- Haas, B., Mackay, M. C. Navaglio, Fullbrook, L., Murunga, M., Sbrocchi, C. 2022. "The Future of Ocean Governance", *Fish Biology and Fisheries*, Vol 32, pp 254-255. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11160-020-09631-x>. Accessed 25 March 2025.
- Haans, J. and Thomas, C.J. 2023. "Status competition: the BRICS' Quest for influence in global governance." *China Report* Vol 59, No. 4, pp 388-401.
- International Maritime Organisation. 2015. *Ratifications by State as at 28 April 2015*. Available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/Pages/StatusOfConventions.aspx> Accessed 18 April 2024.
- .LaGrone, S. 2023, 6 April. "Iranian Navy Surface Action Group Docked in South Africa, Satellite Photos Reveal", USNI. Available at <https://news.usni.org/2023/04/06/iranian-navy-surface-action-group-docked-in-south-africa-satellite-photos-reveal> Accessed on 4 June 2025.
- Khan, M.Z. 2022. "Strategic Posturing of China in IOR", *Policy Perspectives* Vol 19, pp 13-33.
- Konyshv, V. and Sergunin, A. 2022. "Theoretical Perspectives on BRICS: What Kind of an International Institution is it?" In *Turning Points of World Transformation: New Trends, Challenges and Actors*; pp 101-115. Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.
- Martin, G. 2023, 4 August. SA Navy Chief Visits Russia, Promotes BRICS Alliance. DefenceWeb. Available at <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/sa-navy-chief-visits-russia-promotes-brics-alliance/> Accessed on 3 April 2024.
- DefenceWeb. 2024a, 15 March. *Iran, Russia and China Hold Naval Exercises with SA as Observer*. DefenceWeb. Available: <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/sea/sea-sea/iran-russia-and-china-hold-naval-exercise-with-sa-as-observer/> Accessed 24 March 2025.
- Martin, G. 2024b, 1 March. SA Navy Will Hit the High Seas This Year with Ship Visits to Russia and Cuba. DefenceWeb. Available at: <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/sea/sea-sea/sa-navy-sending-sas-amatola-to-russia-and-sas-drakensberg-to-cuba-as-it-strengthens-international-naval-relations/> Accessed April 3, 2024.
- Martinson, R.D. 2016. "The 13th Five-Year Plan: A New Chapter in China's Maritime Transformation." *China Brief*, Vol 16, No 1.
- Mudemeli, U. 2023. *BRICS in the Maritime Domain. Scoping Review of Relevant Documentation*. Oceans Regions Programme, June. Available at: <https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/915/brics-in-the-maritime-domain.zp265955.pdf> Accessed 27 March 2024.
- Muresan, A. 2023, 14 March. *BRICS XV: Expectations for South Africa's 2023 Chair*. Policy Insights. Johannesburg: SAIIA.
- Panchia, Y. 2024, 2 January. *New Members, Old Powers: BRICS' New Year Expansion as 10-Country Bloc*. ForbesAfrica. Available at: <https://www.forbesafrica.com/current-affairs/2024/01/02/new-members-old-powers-brics-new-year-expansion-as-10-country-bloc/> Accessed 11 April 2024.
- Panova, V. 2015. "The BRICS Security Agenda and Prospects for the BRICS Ufa Summit", *International Organisations Research Journal* Vol 10, No 2, pp 119-139.
- Perez, R. 2022. "The Liberal Approach to Maritime Security", In R. Bosilca, S. Ferreira and B. Ryan (eds.). *Routledge Handbook on Maritime Security*, pp 62-72. Oxon: Routledge.
- Pillai, K. and Savio, N.T. 2024, 10 April. *The Latest BRICS Expansion (But Probably Not the Last)*. BRICS Information Portal. Available at: <https://infobrics.org/post/40926> Accessed March 24, 2025.
- President of Russia. 2024, 21 October. *On October 22-24, the President will take part in the BRICS Summit in Kazan*. Available: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/75359> Accessed 24 March 2025.
- Raja Mohan, C. 2022, 4 January. *China's Two-Ocean Strategy Puts India in a Pincer*. Foreign Policy. Available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/04/india-china-ocean-geopolitics-sri-lanka-maldives-comoros/> Accessed April 11, 2024.
- Rao, P.V. 2019. "'Development through Connectivity': India's Maritime Narrative", *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* Vol 15, No 3, pp 245-264.

- Rubin, M. 2024, 01 January. *Iran's Supreme Leader Announces Maritime Development Strategy*. American Enterprise Institute. Available at: <https://www.aei.org/articles/irans-supreme-leader-announces-maritime-development-strategy/> Accessed 22 March 2024.
- Santos, P. 2023. *Geopolitical Imperatives of Ethiopia's Quest for Red Sea Access: A Historical and Strategic Analysis*. Ethiopian Institute for Strategic Studies. Available at: <https://www.bing.com/search?q=Ethiopia%27s+maritime+interests+and+authority&q=n&form=QBR&sp=-1&lq=0&sm=u&pq=ethiopia%27s+maritime+interests+and+authority&sc=6-43&sk=&cid=F953822D1AC24F1EA681214A4397DEAA&ghsb=0&ghacc=0&ghpl=> Accessed 10 May 2024.
- Saran, S. 2017, 3 October. *The Next Ten Years of BRICS – Will the Relationship Last?* World Economic Forum. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2017/10/brics-first-next-ten-years/> Accessed March 24, 2025.
- Schoeman, M. 2023. *BRICS Cooperation and Activities in the Maritime Domain*. University of Pretoria: Ocean Regions Programme. Research Brief no. 1. 12 June. Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/ocean-regions-programme/>. Accessed 20 March 2024.
- Shapenko, A., Nureyev, B., Korovkin, V. and Ontoev, D. 2014. "Imagine BRICS: Four Scenarios for the Future", *BRICS Business Magazine* Vol 4, No 8. Available at: <https://www.bricsmagazine.com/en/articles/imagine-brics-four-scenarios-of-the-future#:~:text=The%20BRICS%E2%80%99%20political%20agenda%20has%20become%20a%20mere,years%2C%20the%20BRICS%20economic%20agenda%20has%20changed%20considerably> Accessed 24 March 2025.
- Sputnik Africa., 2024. "Joint Polar Research being discussed at BRICS meeting in Russia's Murmansk", 13 June. Available at <https://en.sputniknews.africa/20240613/joint-oceanic-polar-research-being-discussed-at-brics-meeting-in-russias-murmansk-1067036136.html> Accessed 8 June 2025.
- Sperling, J. 2022. "Global Maritime Security Governance", In R.L. Boşilcă, S. Ferreira, and B.J. Ryan (eds.). *Routledge Handbook of Maritime Security*. Taylor & Francis.
- TASS News Agency. 2024, 21 October. *BRICS Expresses Interests of Global Majority, Says Russian Presidential Aide Ushakov*. Interview: TASS News Agency, March 5, 2024. Available at: <https://brics-russia2024.ru/en/interview/yuriy-ushakov-briks-na-dele-vyrazhaet-interesy-mirovogo-bolsinstva/> Accessed 9 May 9 2024.
- The Diplomatic Society. 2024, 21 October. *Address by President of Russia Vladimir Putin to the Participants of the Plenary Session of BRICS Business Forum*. Available: <https://thediomaticsociety.co.za/4737-address-by-president-of-russia-vladimir-putin-to-the-participants-of-the-plenary-session-of-brics-business-forum> Accessed 23 October 2024.
- The International Affairs. 2023, 8 August. "Vladimir Putin: Video Address to the Participants in the BRICS Business Forum". Available at: <https://en.interaffairs.ru/article/vladimir-putin-video-address-to-the-participants-in-the-brics-business-forum/> Accessed 8 June 2025.
- United Nations. 2023a, 19 June *Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction*. New York. Available at: <https://www.un.org/bbnjagreement/en> Accessed 20 March 2024.
- United Nations. 2023b, 5 March. *UN Delegates Reach Historic Agreement on Protecting Marine Biodiversity in International Waters*. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1134157> Accessed 24 March 2025.
- Wingrin, D. 2024, 9 October. *Naval exercise IBSA VIII commences in South Africa*. DefenceWeb. Available at: <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/naval-exercise-ibsa-viii-commences-in-south-africa/> Accessed 24 March 2025.
- Wintour, P. 2024, 9 March. *Houthi Forces Step Up Red Sea Attacks as US and Denmark Shoot Down Drones*. The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/09/houthi-forces-step-up-red-sea-attacks-as-us-and-denmark-shoot-down-drones> Accessed 15 March 2024.
- World By Map. No Date. *Coastline lengths*. Available at: <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/world/bymap/coastlines/> Accessed 20 March 2024.
- World Economic Forum. 2024, 17 January. *How Saudi Arabia is Unlocking the Power of the Blue Economy*. World Economic Forum Annual Meeting. 17 January. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2024/01/saudi-arabia-unlocking-power-blue-economy/> . Accessed March 22, 2024.
- Zhihua, X. 2019. "BRICS Cooperation on Maritime Economy: Priorities, Challenges, and Path", *China International Studies* Vol 78, pp 145.
- Zhongxiu, Z. and Qingxin, L. 2020. "Promoting BRICS Cooperation for Economic Growth and Development", *Revista Tempo do Mundo* Vol 22, pp 39-58.