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The Economic Development Potential of BRICS+ and the New Development Bank: A Comparative Analysis with the World Bank and the IMF

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Abstract. This article provides a comparative analysis of the roles played by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with the current and potential role that the BRICS+ alliance through its New Development Bank (NDB) in both financing and developing policy recommendations aimed at economic development among member countries. The World Bank and IMF have traditionally been the main institutions influencing global economic policies. However, the emergence of BRICS+ as a significant player in the global economy has added a new dimension to this landscape. While the Bretton Woods institutions promoted and often imposed neoliberal policies on countries recipients of financing, the NDB places its focus on strengthening their economic sovereignty. Using quantitative and qualitative methods, the article examines the approaches, methodologies, and implications of these institutions in providing financing and advice to countries seeking to strengthen their economic sovereignty. Drawing on a wide range of academic literature, official documents, and case studies, this article highlights the various strategies employed by these institutions and assesses their effectiveness in supporting countries in implementing sovereign economic policies. Based on this, the article provides recommendations for the wider and more comprehensive approach of the BRICS+ and its NDB in order to improve its effectiveness to help its member countries in meeting the challenges of the multipolar world that is shaping up.
Keywords: World Bank, IMF, BRICS+, NDB, economic sovereignty, recommendations, comparative analysis

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Introduction

The question of economic sovereignty has long been central to states seeking to maintain control over their policy choices and development trajectories. Within this framework, international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have historically exerted considerable influence by offering financial assistance and policy guidance to member states [1]. However, the rise of alternative alliances such as BRICS+ has begun to challenge the dominance of Western-oriented institutions, introducing new dynamics into the architecture of global economic governance.

Critics contend that the World Bank and IMF often prioritize projects that disproportionately benefit wealthier nations and multinational corporations, thereby undermining economic sovereignty, environmental sustainability, and domestic industrial development in the Global South [2]. The IMF's structural adjustment programs (SAPs) of the 1980s, in particular, have been widely criticized for deepening poverty and inequality by enforcing austerity measures without establishing the foundations for long-term, inclusive growth [3].

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In contrast to the World Bank and IMF — both of which remain heavily influenced by Western powers — BRICS+ promotes multipolarity and respect for national sovereignty in international affairs [4]. One of its central functions is to provide member states with a platform for coordinating economic policies and sharing development strategies. Unlike the prescriptive, conditionality-driven approach of the Bretton Woods institutions, BRICS+ emphasizes mutual cooperation, solidarity, and recognition of diverse development paths [5] (Table 1).

Table 1. **Comparative Framework: Bretton Woods Institutions vs. BRICS+**

Dimension	World Bank / IMF	BRICS+
Foundational Context	Established in 1944 at Bretton Woods to stabilize the post-war global economy and promote reconstruction and development	Emerged in the 2000s as a coalition of emerging economies seeking to reform global governance and reduce Western dominance
Governance Structure	Voting power weighted by financial contributions, giving the U.S. and European states disproportionate influence	Decisions based on consensus among members, reflecting principles of multipolarity and sovereign equality
Policy Approach	Conditional lending tied to structural adjustment programs (SAPs), emphasizing liberalization, privatization, and fiscal austerity	Emphasizes policy space, mutual cooperation, and respect for diverse development models without prescriptive conditionality
Development Philosophy	Prioritizes integration into global markets, often criticized for privileging foreign investors and multinational corporations	Advocates South–South cooperation, infrastructure investment, and industrial development tailored to national priorities
Impact on Sovereignty	Frequently accused of undermining economic sovereignty by imposing uniform policy prescriptions	Positions itself as a defender of sovereignty, offering alternatives to Western-led financial governance
Key Instruments	Loans, grants, technical assistance, and policy surveillance (IMF Article IV consultations)	New Development Bank (NDB), Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), and policy coordination platforms

Source: compiled by Goran Sumkoski, Roman V. Manshin.

The debate over economic sovereignty has been a recurring theme in international political economy, particularly in relation to the influence of the Bretton Woods institutions. Scholars such trace the origins of the World Bank and the IMF to the post-war settlement, emphasizing their role in stabilizing the global economy and promoting reconstruction [6]. Yet, many researchers argue, the governance structures of these institutions — dominated by Western powers — have often constrained the policy autonomy of developing countries [7; 8].

A central point of contention has been the conditionality attached to IMF and World Bank lending. Some researchers demonstrate how structural adjustment programs (SAPs) systematically reduced policy space in the Global South, prioritizing fiscal austerity, liberalization, and privatization [9]. These measures, while intended to restore macroeconomic stability, frequently exacerbated poverty and inequality, critique of globalization as a process that undermines nations' development priorities [2].

In response to these dynamics, scholars have highlighted the emergence of BRICS+ as a counterweight to Western-dominated financial governance. O. Stuenkel situates BRICS within a broader "post-Western" order, in which emerging powers seek to reshape global institutions [10]. C. Roberts et al. underscores the group's emphasis on multipolarity and sovereign equality, contrasting it with the hierarchical decision-making of the IMF and World Bank [11]. Similarly, G.T. Chin [5] and P. Bond [3] note that the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) represent concrete institutional innovations designed to expand financial autonomy and development options for member states. Hence, this literature suggests a clear divergence in development philosophy: while the Bretton Woods institutions have historically promoted market-oriented neoliberal reforms under Western leadership, BRICS+ advances a model rooted in South–South cooperation, policy flexibility, and respect for diverse development trajectories. This contrast not only reflects competing visions of global economic governance but also raises fundamental questions about the future of sovereignty in an increasingly multipolar world.

Materials and Methods

The quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this research, with triangulating the results. The data was obtained directly from the sources of the World Bank, IMF, NDB, BRICS+, AIIB, as well from the authors that have researched these institutions. Historical approach was also employed in order to compare the approach, policy, volume of financing over the period when all these banks worked in parallel, which is between 2015 and 2024.

A comparative analysis of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and BRICS+ highlights several fundamental differences in their approaches to global economic governance. The World Bank and IMF have historically advanced a relatively uniform set of neoliberal policy prescriptions, emphasizing fiscal austerity, liberalization, and privatization as conditions for financial support [6]. In contrast, BRICS+ promotes a more flexible and inclusive framework that acknowledges the diversity of member states' development priorities and seeks to reinforce economic sovereignty [1].

Institutions created under the BRICS+ umbrella, such as the New Development Bank (NDB), provide alternative sources of financing that reduce reliance on Western-dominated international financial institutions (IFIs) and enhance member countries' autonomy in decision-making [12]. Moreover, BRICS+ underscores the importance of South–South cooperation and the democratization of global economic governance, positioning itself as a counterweight to the concentration of power within the Bretton Woods system. By challenging the dominance of Western powers in global financial institutions, BRICS+ aspires to foster a more equitable and inclusive international economic order [3]. Nevertheless, scholars note that the BRICS+ alliance faces significant challenges, including diverging national interests among its members, institutional limitations, and the broader pressures of geopolitical competition with entrenched neoliberal systems and their institutions [13].

Policy Conditionalities, Financing Mechanisms, Governance Structures

The World Bank and the IMF have historically advanced a relatively uniform set of neoliberal policy prescriptions, emphasizing fiscal austerity, trade liberalization, and privatization as conditions for financial support. These conditionalities, particularly during the era of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in the 1980s and 1990s, significantly constrained the policy autonomy of borrowing states, often undermining domestic industrial strategies and social welfare systems. Critics argue that such measures prioritized macroeconomic stability and integration into global markets at the expense of poverty reduction and long-term development [14]. By contrast, BRICS+ promotes a more flexible and inclusive orientation. Rather than imposing prescriptive conditionalities, BRICS+ emphasizes policy space, mutual respect, and recognition of diverse development trajectories. This approach reflects a broader commitment to multipolarity and the defense of national sovereignty in global economic governance.

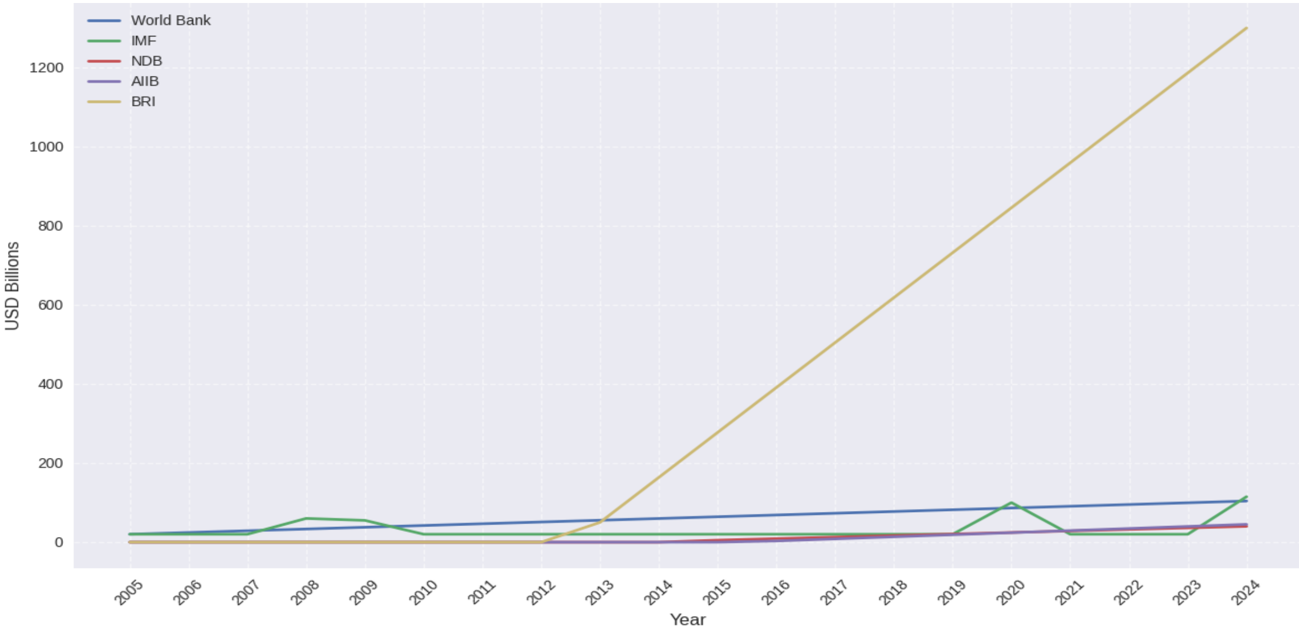
The financing strategies of the Bretton Woods institutions and BRICS+ also diverge significantly. The World Bank provides loans and grants for development projects, while the IMF offers balance-of-payments support, both typically tied to policy reforms [5]. These mechanisms, while extensive, have been criticized for reinforcing dependency on Western-dominated financial systems. In contrast, BRICS+ has established alternative instruments such as the NDB and the CRA. The NDB focuses on infrastructure and sustainable development financing, while the CRA provides liquidity support to member states facing short-term balance-of-payments pressures. These mechanisms are designed to reduce reliance on Western-led IFIs and to enhance the financial autonomy of member countries [12].

Governance arrangements further illustrate the institutional divide. The World Bank and IMF operate under a weighted voting system, where influence is determined by financial contributions. This structure grants disproportionate power to the United States and European states, limiting the voice of developing countries. By contrast, BRICS+ institutions emphasize consensus-based decision-making and sovereign equality among members. This governance model reflects the bloc's broader political commitment to democratizing global economic governance and challenging the concentration of authority within the Bretton Woods system [13].

Despite its ambitions, BRICS+ faces significant challenges in consolidating its role as an alternative to Western-led IFIs. Scholars highlight diverging national interests among BRICS+ members, and operating within a global system still dominated by neoliberal norms and entrenched financial institutions, which complicate collective action and policy coordination [13].

Comparison of Volume of Financing

A comparative assessment of the World Bank Group, the IMF, the BRICS NDB, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) illustrates the shifting landscape of global development finance. While these institutions differ in mandates, governance, and financing models, they also differ in the amounts of finance provided, which shape their contributions to global economic development. For the World Bank Group, commitments in FY2023 reached $104 billion, a record high driven by climate finance and post-pandemic recovery lending. Disbursements were approximately $70 billion [15]. IMF's total outstanding credit as of mid-2024 stood at around $115 billion, with major programs in Argentina, Pakistan, and several African states. Lending spiked during the COVID-19 crisis and remains elevated due to debt distress in low-income countries [16]. By 2024, the NDB had approved $40 billion in loans, with cumulative disbursements still lagging (around $15 billion). Expansion to new members (e.g., Bangladesh, UAE, Egypt) has broadened its portfolio [17]. By 2024, the AIIB had approved over $45 billion in financing across more than 220 projects, with a growing emphasis on renewable energy and connectivity [6]. Cumulative BRI investments since 2013 are estimated at $1.3 trillion by 2024, though estimates vary depending on methodology and inclusion of private-sector projects [18] (Figure). These trends highlight the diversification of global development finance, with BRICS+ and Chinese-led institutions offering alternatives to the traditional dominance of the Bretton Woods system.



Annual Commitments — Disbursements, 2015—2024

Sourse: created by Goran Sumkoski, Roman V. Manshin based on data from the World Bank Group, International Monetary Fund, New Development Bank, and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Results and Discussion

Potential Role of BRICS and National Development Bank

BRICS and its associated institutions like the NDB have great potential for historic significance, but for this to happen quickly, many strategic and operational objectives must be achieved. Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (plus other countries that may join the collaboration) in developing recommendations for countries aimed at increasing economic sovereignty could be significant, and in several ways this could be accomplished.

The progressive weakening of state capacities under neoliberal globalization — often resulting in governments acting primarily as facilitators of transnational corporate interests — constitutes a major challenge to contemporary governance. This process has been widely criticized for eroding the autonomy of nation-states and subordinating public policy to the imperatives of global capital [18]. Overcoming this condition requires a deliberate effort to restore state sovereignty through the development of a coherent national ideology, long-term strategies, and comprehensive development plans. Equally important is the strengthening of state capacity to ensure the political, economic, and social development of its people [19].

In the context of a multipolar world order, grounded in the principles of realism in international relations theory, there is no necessity for a prescriptive, universal ideology imposed from outside. Instead, operational decisions at the level of the nation-state should derive from the sovereign will of the people, enabling societies to manage their affairs in accordance with their own preferences, values, and historical trajectories [20]. This perspective aligns with critiques of neoliberal globalization that emphasize the importance of endogenous development models and the rejection of one-size-fits-all prescriptions [21].

The doctrine of the sovereign state thus becomes indispensable in the face of neoliberal de-statization, which has systematically disempowered governments and constrained their ability to formulate and implement sovereign strategies and visions. As Goran Sumkoski's research [20] demonstrates, neoliberal regulatory models often weaken institutional capacity and undermine the social foundations of governance, thereby limiting the ability of states to pursue independent development paths [22]. In this regard, the role of BRICS+ and its institutional mechanisms, particularly the New Development Bank (NDB), is of paramount importance. These platforms provide alternative sources of financing and policy space, enabling states to resist externally imposed conditionalities and to reassert their sovereignty in global economic governance.

1. Profound ideological changes in relation to the sovereign — the people of the nation-state — require changes in the incentive structure between economic, political and social factors laid down in fundamental acts such as constitutions.
2. Sovereign science, research and education, including economic science, must be reconsidered in accordance with the doctrine of the sovereign state and implemented both within the country and within the international academic network of sovereign states.
3. The adopted sovereign ideology and local scientific knowledge must be transformed into a national vision and strategy for sovereign economic development, supported by political and administrative structures and the people.
4. Achieving the vision and strategy of a sovereign state will require institutional changes and human resource development in public administration, political structures, and education.
5. The implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the economic model for sovereign states should provide support to economic actors from individual entrepreneurs to large corporations, including access to financing and innovation development.

Based on this vision and strategy, as well as practical operational areas of intervention, BRICS+ and the New Development Bank can help in the diagnosis, analysis and implementation of the structural elements of the nation's sovereign development while implementing the sovereign economic doctrine in the following areas:

- Institutions, management and administration of economic development.
- Implementation and construction of a fair economic system — participants and implementation of the strategy in action.
- Investments — public, private, policy and generation — public and private.
- Sectoral economic policy — targeted support for the unique advantages of the sector.
- Restructuring/Optimization of public and private companies — Business process reengineering.
- International economic cooperation.

- Sovereign financial flows for development.
- Infrastructure development — transport, energy, communications.
- Development of skills, know-how and knowledge — Human development.
- Increasing production and service potential, technologies, innovations.
- Development of micro, small and medium businesses.
- Local economic development.
- Natural and mineral resources.
- Trade, export promotion, marketing and branding of the national economy.
- Regulation and deregulation for economic development.
- Digitalization, e-governance, blockchain, artificial intelligence.
- Effective public administration.

Accordingly, BRICS+ and the New Development Bank can address the institutional vacuum left by decades of neoliberal policy-driven de-statization, supporting member states in rebuilding the institutional foundations of economic sovereignty. They will help formulate their own sovereign economic doctrine and provide the practical skills, knowledge, platforms, levers, and tools for its implementation. This will create the conditions for thriving economic development in the interests of all citizens of the nation-state and ensure a fair economy for all.

The Global Role of BRICS+ in Advancing Economic Sovereignty

The BRICS+ grouping — comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and potentially other states seeking to align with its agenda — has emerged as a significant actor in global economic governance. Its role in developing recommendations for countries aimed at enhancing economic sovereignty is multifaceted, reflecting both practical initiatives and normative commitments to multipolarity and inclusivity in international relations.

One of the most immediate contributions of BRICS+ lies in the exchange of experience and knowledge transfer. Member states have pursued diverse paths to strengthen their economic sovereignty, ranging from China's state-led industrial policy to Brazil's emphasis on agricultural innovation and India's digital economy initiatives. By sharing best practices in economic governance, investment policy, and industrial development, BRICS+ can provide a repository of alternative models to the neoliberal prescriptions historically promoted by Western-led institutions [16]. This exchange is not merely technical but also ideological, as it reinforces the legitimacy of development strategies tailored to national contexts rather than externally imposed conditionalities.

BRICS+ also has the potential to institutionalize joint research projects and analytical reports that identify effective strategies for enhancing sovereignty. Collaborative think tanks, academic networks, and policy forums can generate comparative analyses of fiscal policy, industrial upgrading, and financial regulation. Such initiatives could culminate in operational plans that provide actionable guidance for states seeking to reduce dependency on external actors. By pooling intellectual resources, BRICS+ can counterbalance the epistemic dominance of Western institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, which often frame global economic debates through a neoliberal lens.

A further dimension of BRICS+ influence lies in the formation of common positions on key issues in international trade, finance, and regulation. By coordinating their stances in multilateral forums such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) or the G20, BRICS+ countries can amplify their collective bargaining power. This unity enables them to challenge asymmetries in global economic governance, particularly those that privilege advanced economies. Common positions on issues such as financial regulation, debt restructuring, and digital trade could provide developing countries with a stronger platform to assert their interests and safeguard sovereignty [17].

Beyond discourse, BRICS+ has demonstrated a capacity to create joint institutions that provide tangible support for economic sovereignty. The establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) exemplify this institutional innovation. These mechanisms offer financing alternatives that reduce reliance on the IMF and World Bank, thereby mitigating the policy conditionalities often attached to Western-led lending. Looking forward, BRICS+ could expand these initiatives by creating sector-specific funds (e. g., for green energy or digital infrastructure) and industrial support mechanisms that directly bolster domestic capacities in member and partner states.

Finally, BRICS+ plays a crucial role in diplomatic engagement and the shaping of international economic norms. By acting collectively in global forums, BRICS+ countries can exert influence over the evolution of standards in areas such as sustainable finance, digital governance, and climate-related investment. This diplomatic presence not only strengthens the voice of emerging economies but also contributes to the democratization of global governance, challenging the concentration of power in Western capitals. In this sense, BRICS+ is not merely a financial or economic bloc but also a normative coalition advocating for sovereignty, multipolarity, and inclusivity in the global order [6; 9].

The New Development Bank's (NDB) role in developing recommendations for countries focused on enhancing economic sovereignty is significant and relevant in the context of today's global economy. Technical advice, hard and soft infrastructure, and financing play a critical role in the NDB's efforts to support member countries in strengthening their economic sovereignty [22; 23]. The NDB's contribution can be summarized in the following areas:

Financing: The NDB's financing model is central to its role in enhancing economic sovereignty. Unlike the IMF and World Bank, which often attach policy conditionalities to their loans, the NDB emphasizes project-based lending aligned with national priorities. This approach allows member states to pursue development strategies without external interference in domestic policy choices [24; 25]. Furthermore, NDB financing promotes economic sovereignty by reducing dependence on traditional sources of financing and facilitating the diversification of financing options for member countries. The NDB provides member countries with financing for infrastructure and sustainable development projects through a variety of financial instruments, including loans, equity investments, and guarantees. For example, the NDB has financed renewable energy projects in India, water sanitation in South Africa, and transport infrastructure in Brazil. These projects not only address pressing development needs but also diversify funding sources, reducing reliance on Western-dominated institutions [24].

The NDB's role extends beyond financing. It represents a symbolic and practical shift in global governance toward multipolarity. While the AIIB dominates in hard infrastructure and the World Bank/IMF in policy frameworks, the NDB's comparative advantage lies in soft infrastructure and sovereignty-supporting mechanisms. Technical advice, soft infrastructure and financing are integral components of the NDB's efforts to support member countries in strengthening their economic sovereignty, ultimately contributing to their economic independence and resilience. The decisive battle for economic sovereignty may well be fought in this domain [10; 26; 27].

Competition in the hard infrastructure sector continues, and the AIIB has surpassed the World Bank in terms of financing infrastructure projects around the world, such as roads, ports, railways, etc. Hard infrastructure — roads, ports, railways, and energy systems — remains a cornerstone of development finance and a critical determinant of economic sovereignty. Historically dominated by the World Bank, the sector has undergone a profound transformation in the past decade with the rise of multipolar financing institutions such as the AIIB, the NDB, and BRI. The AIIB and BRI have become leading financiers of roads, ports, railways, and power systems across Asia and parts of Africa and the Middle East. These actors have increasingly surpassed or complemented the World Bank in terms of financing volumes, particularly in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East [28]. The NDB complements this portfolio with sustainability-focused, member-priority projects. While aggregate World Bank commitments remain large, in several sub-regions and project classes, multipolar financing now exceeds World Bank-led volumes.

Since its establishment in 2016, the AIIB has rapidly scaled up to become a leading financier of transport, energy, and connectivity projects. By 2024, its cumulative approvals exceeded USD45 billion, with a strong emphasis on Asia but growing global reach. China's Belt and Road Initiative has become the single largest source of infrastructure financing globally, with cumulative investments surpassing USD1.3 trillion by 2024, spanning 87 countries [28]. The NDB complements these efforts by financing sustainability-focused, member-priority projects. Its portfolio includes renewable energy in China, water management in South Africa, and the Mumbai Metro Line in India. Despite maintaining large aggregate commitments (USD 104 billion in FY2023), the World Bank's share of global infrastructure financing has declined relative to multipolar institutions [29] (Table 2). While the AIIB has surpassed the World Bank in terms of infrastructure financing volume [11], the NDB's comparative advantage lies in regional projects that directly enhance sovereignty by reducing infrastructure gaps.

Table 2. **Annual Hard Infrastructure Approvals, USD billion, 2015—2024**

Year	AIIB	NDB	World Bank, hard infra subset	BRI, investment + construction
2015	1.5	1.0	18.0	90.0
2016	3.0	1.8	19.0	95.0
2017	4.2	2.5	20.0	100.0
2018	5.0	3.1	22.0	110.0
2019	6.5	3.8	23.0	115.0
2020	7.2	4.0	24.0	105.0
2021	8.0	4.5	25.0	110.0

Year	AIIB	NDB	World Bank, hard infra subset	BRI, investment + construction
2022	9.0	5.2	26.0	115.0
2023	10.5	6.0	27.0	118.0
2024	12.0	6.8	27.5	121.7

Source: compiled by Goran Sumkoski, Roman V. Manshin.

BRI dwarfs all other institutions in scale, though its financing is bilateral and less transparent. AIIB has surpassed the World Bank in annual infrastructure approvals in Asia and is expanding globally while total multipolar financing (AIIB + NDB + BRI) now exceeds World Bank-led volumes in most regions. The rise of multipolar hard infrastructure financing has three key implications:

- Diversification of Sources: Borrowers now have multiple options beyond the World Bank, reducing dependency and increasing bargaining power;
- Sovereignty and Policy Space: NDB and AIIB financing is less conditional, allowing states to pursue development strategies aligned with national priorities;
- Shift to Soft Infrastructure: While multipolar actors dominate hard infrastructure, the World Bank and IMF retain influence in soft infrastructure (policy advice, governance, standards). The decisive contest for sovereignty lies in this domain.

Where the NDB can play its most important role is in creating "soft" infrastructure, where the World Bank / IMF enjoys the greatest monopoly that it has built in the last 75 years, and where the decisive battle for the economic sovereignty of nation states is taking place. The World Bank exploits the importance of "soft" infrastructure — including institutions, regulations, rules, policies, and human capital — to maintain its dominance and exploitation. To achieve this goal, it provides global financial infrastructure, payment systems, and rating agencies, dominates currency and commodity exchanges, and creates global and national regulatory frameworks through technical assistance, capacity building, and policy advice to compel member countries to maintain their institutional structures, governance structures, and regulatory environments in line with the demands of the global neoliberal order. BRICS+ and the NDB should also go beyond grants, loans, and technical assistance, which provide advisory services, training programs, knowledge exchange, institution building, and advice on the development and implementation of sovereign economic policies. This means addressing the entire institutional, legal, financial, trade, political, educational, and other "soft" infrastructure, which is truly one of the greatest weapons of the current neoliberal system.

Soft Infrastructure Platforms:
While hard infrastructure — roads, ports, railways, and energy systems — has long been the visible face of development finance, the decisive contest for economic sovereignty increasingly lies in the domain of soft infrastructure. This encompasses the institutional, legal, financial, trade, political, and educational frameworks that underpin national development strategies. For the past 75 years, the World Bank and the IMF have maintained a near-monopoly in this sphere, embedding neoliberal norms through technical assistance, policy advice, and conditional lending [7; 26].

The World Bank and the IMF have leveraged their monopoly in soft infrastructure to maintain global influence. Their interventions include:

- Policy advice and conditionality: Structural adjustment programs and governance reforms tied to loans [9].
- Global financial infrastructure: Oversight of payment systems, credit rating frameworks, and regulatory standards [7].
- Knowledge production: Flagship reports (e.g., World Development Report, Global Financial Stability Report) that shape global policy discourse.
- Capacity building: Training programs for government officials, often embedding neoliberal economic principles [26].

Through these mechanisms, the Bretton Woods institutions have entrenched a neoliberal order that constrains sovereign policy space.

The New Development Bank (NDB) and the broader BRICS+ framework have the potential to challenge this dominance by creating alternative platforms for financial sovereignty, policy development, and knowledge exchange. Unlike hard infrastructure, where financing volumes can be measured in billions of dollars, soft infrastructure is about sovereign governing, institutional design, and knowledge production [22; 30]. The development and implementation of these soft infrastructure platforms by the New Development Bank can help strengthen the economic sovereignty of member countries, promote their economic development and strengthen their position in the global economy. The creation of an alternative to the SWIFT international financial messaging system will ensure secure, efficient, and transparent financial transactions between NDB member countries and their trading partners. The creation of mechanisms for exchanging national currencies between NDB member countries will reduce dependence on the U.S. dollar and other reserve currencies. The development of such platforms will help NDB member countries formulate and implement industry policy development strategies across various economic sectors. This should involve creation of centers of expertise, analysis, and research that will provide scientific support, analytical data, and professional expertise on economic development and management, developing digital infrastructure and connectivity platforms, access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and programs to promote entrepreneurship, innovation, and job creation in member countries. To this end, the NDB has a unique opportunity to develop the following soft infrastructure, which it can make available to all states around the world:

- Financial Sovereignty Mechanisms: Developing alternatives to SWIFT and promoting local currency financing to reduce dependence on the U.S. dollar.
- Currency Exchange Platforms: Establishing fair systems for exchanging national currencies among BRICS+ members.
- Policy Platforms: Supporting industrial policy, sectoral strategies, and sovereign economic planning.
- Research & Expertise Centers: Creating BRICS-focused think tanks and knowledge hubs to provide analytical support and policy advice.
- Digital Infrastructure: Expanding ICT access, promoting digital inclusion, and fostering innovation ecosystems.
- SME Support: Establishing entrepreneurship centers to provide training, mentoring, and access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises.

These initiatives directly challenge the policy monopoly of the IMF and World Bank, which have historically shaped development strategies through conditionality [30] (Table 3).

Table 3. **Strategic Implications of Soft Infrastructure Financing**

Strategic Area	World Bank / IMF	NDB Potential Contribution
Global financial architecture	Dollar dominance, SWIFT reliance	Local currency settlement, alternative messaging systems
Policy frameworks	Neoliberal conditionality	Sovereignty-based industrial policy
Institutional design	Governance reforms aligned with Western models	Member-driven institutional innovation
Knowledge ecosystems	Global reports shaping discourse	BRICS-focused expertise centers
SME & innovation	Limited	Entrepreneurship hubs, job creation programs

Source: compiled by Goran Sumkoski, Roman V. Manshin.

While the World Bank and IMF dominate policy advice and knowledge production, the NDB and BRICS+ are emerging challengers, particularly in financial sovereignty and digital platforms. The "decisive battle" for sovereignty lies in expanding these alternative soft infrastructure platforms, where the NDB can reduce the structural dependence of member states on Bretton Woods institutions.

The scope and focus of World Bank technical assistance (TA) encompasses providing advice across a wide range of sectors, including infrastructure development, education, health, agriculture, and governance, as well as policy advice, capacity building, knowledge sharing, and institutional strengthening. On the other hand, NDB technical assistance is currently primarily focused on infrastructure development projects. This is also reflected in the assistance delivery mechanisms, where the World Bank provides technical assistance through various channels, including project-based assistance, policy dialogue, advisory services, training programs, and knowledge-sharing platforms, and often integrates technical assistance into project financing and lending operations. Meanwhile, the NDB provides technical assistance only through project-specific support and advisory services within the same projects.

Technical assistance has long been a central instrument of international financial institutions (IFIs) in shaping development trajectories. The World Bank has historically provided TA across a wide range of sectors — including infrastructure, education, health, agriculture, and governance — integrating it into lending operations and policy dialogue [31]. By contrast, the New Development Bank (NDB), as a relatively new institution, has concentrated its TA primarily on infrastructure development projects, reflecting its narrower mandate and member-driven priorities. This divergence reflects broader institutional philosophies: the World Bank's emphasis on comprehensive development frameworks and policy conditionality versus the NDB's focus on sovereignty-respecting, project-specific support.

The World Bank provides TA across multiple sectors, including macroeconomic policy, governance, social development, and institutional strengthening. Its TA is often embedded in structural reforms and policy-based lending. NDB focuses on infrastructure-related TA, such as diagnostics, project design, and implementation support. Its TA is narrower in scope but aligned with the principle of respecting national development strategies.

In terms of TA delivery mechanisms, the World Bank uses diverse channels — policy dialogue, advisory services, training programs, and knowledge-sharing platforms. It frequently integrates TA into lending operations, thereby linking financial flows with policy advice [31]. The NDB provides TA primarily through project-specific support, advisory services, and technical consultations embedded within infrastructure projects. Unlike the World Bank, it does not yet operate large-scale standalone TA programs [1] (Table 4).

Table 4. **Comparative Scope and Delivery of Technical Assistance**

Dimension	World Bank	NDB
Sectoral scope	Broad: infrastructure, education, health, agriculture, governance	Narrow: infrastructure-focused
Policy advice	Extensive, often tied to lending conditionality	Limited, project-specific
Capacity building	Training, institutional strengthening, governance reforms	Training linked to infrastructure projects
Knowledge platforms	World Development Reports, global databases, policy forums	Emerging centers of expertise, BRICS-focused
Integration with finance	Strongly integrated into loans and grants	Embedded in project financing only

Source: compiled by Goran Sumkoski, Roman V. Manshin.

The emerging areas of NDB's TA should evolve to meet the expectations of current and potential member states. Its activities can be grouped into four broad areas:
1. Diagnostics: Assessing infrastructure gaps, financial risks, and sustainability challenges.
2. Recommendations: Providing policy and project-level guidance aligned with national strategies.
3. Transfer of Best Practices: Facilitating South–South knowledge exchange on infrastructure governance and financing.
4. Training and Knowledge Platforms: Offering online courses, webinars, and seminars for government officials, entrepreneurs, and SMEs.

The NDB's technical consultations and expertise to member countries can help them formulate sound economic policies, formulate effective development strategies, and implement sustainable projects. These platforms can facilitate the exchange of experience, knowledge transfer, and consultation on best practices in various sectors, as well as support for the development of national strategies. Knowledge and training platforms can offer online courses, webinars, seminars, and other educational resources for entrepreneurs, government officials, and public figures. The creation of centers of expertise and analysis that will develop strategies and offer recommendations to support decision-making at the government and business levels facilitates the development of international cooperation between member countries and other countries.

Strategic implications are that the World Bank's TA has historically shaped global development discourse, embedding neoliberal policy frameworks into borrowing countries [27;30]. The NDB's TA, while narrower, represents an alternative model that emphasizes sovereignty, demand-driven support, and South–South cooperation. The decisive challenge for the NDB lies in expanding its TA beyond infrastructure to soft infrastructure domains — such as financial systems, digital platforms, and industrial policy — where the World Bank and IMF still dominate. If successful, the NDB could redefine the balance of influence in global knowledge production and policy advice.

Expectations of BRICS and its international geopolitical and ideological platforms and institutions as NDB, and more importantly, their potential to promote the economic development of nation states, for better or worse, are shaped by the 75-year history of the Bretton Woods institutions and their legacy. This legacy is that the Bretton Woods institutions don't help countries develop, but rather impoverish them further, favoring multinational corporations over host economies, and to achieve this, corrupting host governments, exploiting and damaging them with their financing conditions, colonial behavior toward voting rights, and destroying all but the most valuable currencies, expecting that a basket of five global currencies, through which the entire world is forced to support Western economies, will continue to exploit the world for the benefit of a few.

Thus, nation-states have come to expect similar types, styles, levels, and diversity of services from any new institution or set of institutions seeking to replace or replicate the role of the outgoing Bretton Woods institutions. This creates several layers of challenges for BRICS+ and its institutions, such as the NDB, in terms of its mission, sustainability, predictability, reliability, both in strategic coherence, more institutional linkages, platforms, and instruments, and in parallel, the levels and scale of its operations.

The expectations placed on BRICS+ institutions in helping provide hard and soft infrastructure, and the very important role of technical assistance, training and education, are double-edged. On the one hand, they must replicate the scale and diversity of services offered by the Bretton Woods institutions to be credible alternatives. On the other hand, they must avoid reproducing the exploitative practices that discredited those institutions. This requires building institutional coherence and scaling up operations and expanding soft infrastructure platforms (financial systems, digital inclusion, SME support). If successful, BRICS+ and the NDB could redefine global development finance by combining the breadth of Bretton Woods services with a multipolar, sovereignty-based ethos.

The global neoliberal order has systematically weakened the role of states by transferring mandates and powers to international or quasi-national bodies, thereby eroding the sovereignty of nation-states [18; 27]. This process of de-statization has not only diminished the capacity of states to exercise independent policy-making but has also entrenched a governance model in which transnational corporations and global financial institutions dominate decision-making [6]. The ongoing decline of neoliberal ideology has created a vacuum — not only in competing ideologies but also in the skills, strategies, and institutional frameworks necessary for implementing a sovereign economic doctrine [22]. This vacuum presents both a challenge and an opportunity. For nation-states, it underscores the urgent need to reclaim policy space and rebuild institutional capacity. For BRICS+ and the New Development Bank (NDB), it highlights the organizational and strategic hurdles they must overcome to provide credible alternatives to the Bretton Woods institutions and to assist other states in doing the same [8; 32]. Despite their potential, BRICS+ and the NDB face several structural and organizational disadvantages that limit their effectiveness:

1. Weak ties between members: Divergent geopolitical interests and economic models among BRICS+ members hinder deeper integration.

2. Poorly developed organizational structure: Compared to the World Bank and IMF, the NDB's institutional framework remains relatively underdeveloped, limiting its global reach.
3. Underfunding: The NDB's capital base is modest relative to the scale of global infrastructure and development needs, constraining its ability to rival established institutions.
4. Insufficient development of soft infrastructure platforms: While the NDB has made progress in hard infrastructure, its role in financial systems, digital platforms, and policy frameworks remains limited.
5. Poorly developed spectrum of technical assistance: Unlike the World Bank, which integrates technical assistance into lending, the NDB's advisory services are still project-specific and narrow in scope.
6. Need to scale up globally: The NDB must expand beyond BRICS members to achieve systemic influence, yet this requires stronger governance and credibility.
7. Weak implementation mechanisms: Limited institutional capacity and coordination challenges reduce the effectiveness of NDB initiatives.

Despite attempts to destroy nation-states and limit their capabilities and powers, they remain the only level at which nations can exercise accountable governance, self-organization, and self-management. In this context, nation-states can legitimately build their own economic prosperity and way of life. A new sovereign economic doctrine must be built and promoted by BRICS+ and NDB, based on the doctrine of a sovereign nation state, establishing a common framework for sovereign nation states to find their own paths of political, social, and economic development in a multipolar world based on realism in the theory and practice of international relations [22]. The role of BRICS+ and the NDB is to develop their potential for facilitating this agenda.

Conclusion

The roles of the World Bank, IMF, BRICS+ and the NDB in promoting economic development reflect contrasting approaches to global economic governance. While the World Bank and IMF have historically promoted neoliberal policies that prioritize market-oriented reforms, BRICS+ and the NDB offer a focus on strengthening economic sovereignty and provide an alternative vision based on solidarity, mutual cooperation, and respect for national sovereignty. The analysis shows the waning impact of the Bretton Woods institutions in comparison with the rising BRICS+ and NDB impact that is compounded by organizations such as the AIIB and other bilateral financing platforms such as BRI. The article proposes recommendations for the NDB expanded its role in financing and especially in the area of soft infrastructure and technical advice provision. The article also highlights the structural barriers that the NDB is facing in this pursuit. Current historical circumstances and geopolitical changes present a unique opportunity for BRICS+ and the NDB to play a crucial role through their financing of hard and soft infrastructure, and technical assistance to become an essential part of this process.

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Экономический потенциал стран БРИКС+ и Нового банка развития: сравнительный анализ со Всемирным банком и МВФ

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Аннотация. Представлен сравнительный анализ роли Всемирного банка, Международного валютного фонда (МВФ) с текущей и потенциальной ролью альянса БРИКС+ через его Новый банк развития (НБР) как в финансировании, так и в разработке рекомендаций по вопросам политики, направленных на экономическое развитие стран-членов. Всемирный банк и МВФ традиционно являются основными институтами, влияющими на глобальную экономическую политику, однако появление БРИКС+ в качестве значимого игрока в мировой экономике добавило новое измерение к этому ландшафту. В то время как Бреттон-Вудские институты продвигали и часто навязывали неолиберальную политику странам – получателям финансирования, НБР уделяет особое внимание укреплению их экономического суверенитета. При помощи количественных и качественных методов рассматриваются подходы, методологии и роль этих институтов в предоставлении финансирования и консультаций странам, стремящимся к укреплению своего экономического суверенитета. Опираясь на широкий спектр научной литературы, официальных документов и тематических исследований, анализируются различные стратегии, применяемые этими институтами, оценивается их эффективность в поддержке стран в реализации суверенной экономической политики. На основании этого даются рекомендации по более широкому и всеобъемлющему подходу БРИКС+ и Нового банка развития в целях повышения его эффективности для оказания помощи странам-членам в решении задач формирующегося многополярного мира.

Ключевые слова. Всемирный банк, МВФ, БРИКС+, Новый банк развития, экономический суверенитет, рекомендации, сравнительный анализ

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