

Brics as a Dynamic and in Process Phenomenon of Global Planning: An Analysis Based on the 2009-2020 Annual Summit Declarations



*Brics como Fenómeno Dinámico y en Proceso de la
Coyuntura Global: un análisis basado en las Declaraciones
anuales de la Cumbre 2009-2020*

*Brics como Fenômeno Dinâmico e Processual da
Conjuntura Global: uma análise baseada nas Declarações
das Cúpulas anuais de 2009-2020*

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DOI: 10.5752/P.2317-773X.2022v10.n1.p117

Recebido em: 17 de março de 2021
Aprovado em: 14 de fevereiro de 2022

ABSTRACT

Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa are very heterogeneous countries and the BRICS is a very original arrangement. This paper asserts that the BRICS is a dynamic and in process phenomenon: dynamic because it is developed according to the member's perceptions about world scenario, without establishing limitations on strategies and initiatives of each member country; in process because it is developed through specific processes, in which members do not point any destination or institutionalization to be achieved. At the annual summit meetings held regularly since 2009, the BRICS issues a Declaration. The most prominent topics on the international framework are punctuated and criticized, with generic proposals to handle or to solve them. The declarations do not show any progressive stages on approaching these topics, neither consolidation of commitments among the members on them. Such documents represent the main primary source for the characterization of the group and its behavior. The innovation of this paper is to deepen the use of primary sources to move forward in the effort for the BRICS conceptualization and to analyze its performance throughout the years. The documentary analysis of Summit Declarations is developed by using two text analysis software packages, AntConc and VOSviewer.

Key Words: BRICS Countries; BRICS Summit Declarations; Governance Instruments; Documentary Sources; Documentary Analysis.

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RESUMEN

Brasil, Rusia, India, China y Sudáfrica son países muy heterogéneos y los BRICS son un arreglo muy original. Este trabajo afirma que el BRICS es un fenómeno dinámico y en proceso: dinámico porque se desarrolla de acuerdo a las percepciones de los miembros sobre el escenario mundial, sin establecer limitaciones en las estrategias e iniciativas de cada país miembro; en proceso porque se desarrolla a través de procesos específicos, en los que los miembros no señalan ningún destino o institucionalización a alcanzar. En las cumbres anuales que se celebran periódicamente desde 2009, los BRICS emiten una Declaración. Se puntúan y critican los temas más destacados del marco internacional, con propuestas genéricas para manejarlos y resolverlos. Las declaraciones no muestran etapas progresivas en el abordaje de estos temas, ni consolidación de compromisos entre los miembros sobre ellos. Dichos documentos representan la principal fuente primaria para la caracterización del grupo y su comportamiento. La innovación de este trabajo es profundizar en el uso de fuentes primarias para avanzar en el esfuerzo de conceptualización de los BRICS y analizar su desempeño a lo largo de los años. El análisis documental de las Declaraciones de Cumbres se desarrolla utilizando los softwares de análisis de texto, AntConc y VOSviewer.

Palabras clave: BRICS; Declaraciones de la Cumbre BRICS; Instrumentos de Gobernanza; Fuentes Documentales; Análisis documental.

RESUMO

Brasil, Rússia, Índia, China e África do Sul são países muito heterogêneos e o BRICS é um arranjo muito original. Este artigo afirma que o BRICS é um fenômeno dinâmico e processual: dinâmico porque se desenvolve de acordo com as percepções dos membros sobre o cenário mundial, sem estabelecer limitações nas estratégias e iniciativas de cada país membro; processual porque se desenvolve por meio de processos específicos, nos quais os membros não apontam qualquer destino ou institucionalização a ser alcançada. Nas cúpulas anuais realizadas regularmente desde 2009, o BRICS emite uma declaração. Os tópicos de maior destaque da conjuntura internacional são pontuados e criticados, com propostas genéricas para tratá-los ou resolvê-los. As declarações não mostram etapas progressivas na abordagem desses temas, nem consolidação de compromissos entre os membros sobre eles. Tais documentos representam a principal fonte primária para a caracterização do grupo e seu comportamento. A inovação deste artigo é aprofundar o uso de fontes primárias para avançar no esforço de conceituação do BRICS e analisar seu desempenho ao longo dos anos. A análise documental das Declarações de Cúpulas é desenvolvida usando dois softwares de análise de texto, AntConc e VOSviewer.

Palavras-chave: BRICS; Declarações de Cúpula do BRICS; Instrumentos de Governança; Fontes Documentais; Análise Documental.

Introduction

Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa are very heterogeneous countries, and the BRICS is a very original arrangement. Conceptualizing the BRICS is a challenge that justifies the term “phenomenon” used in the title. This paper asserts that the BRICS is a dynamic and in process phenomenon: dynamic because it is developed according to the member’s perceptions about world scenario, without establishing limitations on strategies and initiatives of each member country; in process

because it is developed through specific processes, in which members do not point any destination or institutionalization to be achieved.

The five countries use the group to enlarge the international order, occupying vacant spaces in the governance structures, but do not put such initiatives as embryos nor initial steps for a new international order. The BRICS do not seek to put itself as an alternative to the current order. As the major powers do not meet the demands for governance bodies reforms and democratization, the BRICS has decided to play its own role in these processes. In doing so, they created a new space to stress their common claims, year by year, and to present opinions and critics about relevant issues in each one.

The G-7's difficulty in containing the 2008 crisis gradually opened to the G-20 an opportunity to create its own international economic agenda. In this context, the five countries articulated themselves with the main claim to reform multilateral organisms, with emphasis on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), indicating a process of modernization and not replacement of the system by the G-20. However, in 2020 demands for multilateralism reform and global governance were summarized in the acknowledge "international cooperation in the interest of both nations and peoples through reinvigorated and reformed multilateral system, including the UN, the WTO, the WHO, the IMF and other international organizations". (BRICS, 2020, 6).

At the annual summit meetings held regularly since 2009, the BRICS issues a Declaration on the international order. The most prominent topics on the international framework are punctuated and criticized, with generic proposals to handle or to solve them. The declarations do not show any progressive stages on approaching these topics, neither consolidation of commitments among the members on them.

Such documents represent the main primary source for the characterization of the group and its behavior since it was created. They express the consensus and the composition of interests among the members at each moment, avoiding themes that may cause discomfort and emphasizing the ones that do not bring any limiting aspects to the individual action by each one of them. The Declarations has been the main intervention instrument of the BRICS in the world scenario in these twelve years.

The innovation of this paper is to deepen the use of primary sources to move forward in the effort for the BRICS conceptualization and to analyze its performance throughout the years. The article allows moving forward in this effort by adopting a methodological procedure to treat systematically the BRICS main primary source, the Annual Declarations, since its first Summit. Joints Communiques issued in parallel with the Summits were not considered in the analysis because they presented little detailed ideas from the discussions and because of the risk of duplicating the content of the Summit Declarations.

The documentary analysis of Summit Declarations is developed by using two text analysis software packages, AntConc and VOSviewer. Two goals are pursued: (i) exploring the content of the documents based on the collected and organized data with the aid of the software; and (ii)

identifying how themes are treated and the Brics' behavior in these first 12 annual Summits Declarations.

The combined use of the two software packages has an innovative character in International Relations and more specifically in understanding the BRICS. The counting by AntConc shows the frequency with which words appear or stop appearing along the Summits, which allows a quantitative approach to the BRICS emphases each year. The network-formatted figures generated by VOSviewer organize the relationships between words and how they change each year, providing the basis for qualitative analysis of the documents, and allows verifying the dynamics and the in process character of the evolution of the BRICS.

After this short introduction, the second section discusses the BRICS nature and demonstrates the innovative character here proposed; the third section presents the methodological tools adopted; the fourth shows the analysis of each Declaration and of the twelve Declarations altogether; and the fifth brings the general analysis of the period and some conclusions.

The innovative and peculiar nature of the BRICS.....

The difficulty in defining the BRICS reflects the absence of plans or even indications on organizational structures development. Considering existing typologies, the BRICS does not fit within the categories of group, block, alliance, or international institution, regime, or organization. (CARVALHO et al, 2015).

The BRICS as a dynamic and in progress instrument of the international positioning of its members implies the perception that none of the five countries takes it as the main stage of debates or dialogues. They have articulated themselves in different ways. Brazil since 2018 has adopted a foreign policy of approaching the USA and keeping distance from China. In 2020, China along with the ASEAN countries, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand, signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). India withdrew from the RCEP negotiations in 2019, Russia works together with China at Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), South Africa adopted a coordinated strategy in the formation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

However, the BRICS has shown great resilience. The original format has been able to resist even in face of complex challenges, such as moments of great tension between China and India, as well as the anti-China aggressiveness of Bolsonaro's Government in Brazil. This resilience has not given rise to paralysis or dynamism loss. In 2014, the group created the New Development Bank (NDB) and established the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), in addition to several working groups.

These initiatives did not change the mentioned characteristics, dynamic and in process. The working groups focus on strategic themes - health, education, trade, energy - as well as the meeting of Think Thanks that reinforce members' ties, support their discussions in the Summits and the approval of cooperation plans such as the BRICS Partnership on New Industrial Revolution (PartNIR) established in 2018. In the case of

NDB and CRA, a structure of competences and responsibilities was formally instituted through agreements signed in 2014.

These two institutions are cooperation instruments that do not limit each country's performance in other financial organizations, neither do they contest the existing international financial order.

The NDB is always presented as one more financial instrument for the five countries, with no preferential treatment or privileges, but oriented only by the members themselves. The CRA intend to offer a kind of insurance in case of exchange distresses, allowing access for money from the members' reserves.

Muhr treats the BRICS as a group trying to build itself as a relevant actor in the International System based on rhetoric and that achieves materiality in the establishment of a bank and a fund. (MUHR, 2016). Ban and Blyth (2013, p. 242) argue that the group served as "one of the few beacons of the global economy" during the 2008 crisis and reinforced, in its own way and without consensus on the *modus operandi*, the role of the State in development. Kornegay (2013) defines the BRICS as a coalition of developing countries with a view to strengthening their influence in different international forums, with the potential to balance the aspirations of these countries in other initiatives.

Cooper and Farooq (2015) and Stuenkel (2014, 2015) analyze the BRICS as a club. Cooper and Farooq (2015, p. 07) assert that the informal club culture allows the accommodation of possible existing differences and tensions and the cooperation "to work without any pressure of rigid institutional hurdles such as organizational problems, deadlines, influence from fragmented bureaucratic interest groups and turf fighting as witnessed within formal institutions". Despite the regular summit meeting and a set of "stable constitutive, regulatory and procedural norms", the maintenance of the informal club model ensures self-selective exclusivity: the restriction to a small number of members allows the operationalization of joint actions in common themes and interests, facilitates coordination and cooperation and reinforces the status of each one of the members, both domestically and internationally to create "an image of a new and loose form of multilateralism". (COOPER; FAROOQ, 2015, p. 07, 10). The NDB, as a formal institution and the result of this informal club culture, suggests "the political resilience of the BRICS as an informal club". (COOPER; FAROOQ, 2015, p. 05).

The exclusive club dynamics initially allowed the BRICS to reinforce their performance as emerging powers, especially in the G-20. (STUENKEL, 2014). However, without a common and clear agenda, the club format has helped to balance skills and dissonant interests among members. The annual summits and declarations take place without constraints and binding decisions and allowing members to gain international prominence. (STUENKEL, 2015).

The international status is attributed in view of self-selective exclusivity, making participation restricted to members both in defining the agenda and in the exclusive goods achieved reinforce the image of emerging powers and leaders of South-South cooperation. The greater flexibility to themes of common interest and the abandonment of those of grea-

ter tension indicates a loose alliance that uses informality to achieve cooperation without constraints beyond these. A smaller number of members reduces the costs associated with accessing information and negotiating procedures by facilitating the identification of mutually common or divergent interests and the distribution of benefits. (COOPER; FAROOQ, 2015).

However, Cooper and Farooq (2015, p.03) argue that the conflicting and diverging interests and aspirations of the BRICS generate a trust deficit challenging “any cooperation and coordination that could be sustained in the long term”. The characterization of the BRICS as a club helps, according to the authors, to understand the resilience and maintenance of the group and the format of multilateralism creates “an image of a new and loose form of multilateralism”. (COOPER; FAROOQ, 2015, p.10). However, it is a multilateralism that, contrary to the Ruggie’s (1992) assertion, does not generalize modes of conduct, since there are no institutionalized rules and the constraints, when they exist, tend to be accommodated or avoided at the Summits and do not appear in the Declarations.

Cooper’s and Farooq’s (2015) proposal to understand the BRICS from the perspective of informal clubs is quite illuminating though insufficient. The reason is that it exposes a dynamic that reinforces the attributes of gaining international status added to the BRICS. However, it does not clearly demonstrate the motives for resilience and how long this dynamic of peculiar formality – or lack of it – will be perpetuated based on this gain of international status with NDB’s full activity.

This formality appears in the regularity of the Summits, in the initiatives for the creation and development of working groups and the NDB and CRA, as well as proposals to attract other partners. From 2013 to 2018 neighboring countries were invited to the country that hosted the annual Summit. In 2017, the possibility of joining new members was signaled the BRICS Plus proposal. 2019 and 2020 had no participation from other countries.

The NDB, in turn, announced the process of admitting new members at Moscow Summit in 2020. It is a formal extension of the BRICS but by itself does not guarantee the resilience of the group. This occurs, in addition to the NDB, by the signaling of new members’ adherence indicating the reinforcement of each BRICS country status in its region and the BRICS as a relevant actor in the International System. The working groups have been meeting since the interval between the first two Summits, between 2009 and 2010, and as of 2011, action plans are established with a schedule of joint activities between these groups and national authorities. This set of elements shows the complexity and capillarity of the group’s action, making the characterization of an informal club based on a specific type of multilateralism insufficient. Too much attention to form, as Cooper and Farooq do, may overlook important elements of the content being treated. (COOPER; FAROOQ, 2015). Analysis of the Summit Declarations indicates it.

These elements suggest the adequacy of the “dynamic and in process” qualifiers for the BRICS. Absent of formal character, after all, it does not have constitutive treaties and agreements. The BRICS bases its articulation through the Summits and has in the Declarations resulting from

them its main instrument of action. The analysis of these Declarations indicates in process advances, as there are no intentions as to some form of institutionalization, and dynamic while reflecting the members' perception of the moment and does not prevent other strategies and initiatives. It is true that the NDB was formed based on constitutive and signed agreements between members. It has international legal personality. But as Cooper and Farroq warn, it is the result of this articulation, an institutional extension "in many ways at odds with the informal club culture of the BRICS" that they defend, and which are intended to be improved in this research. (COOPER; FAROOQ, 2015, p.10).

..... Methodological tools for quantitative and qualitative analysis of texts

This paper employs documentary analysis research since it offers "the search for information in documents that had no scientific treatment", an appropriate form for a study that seeks originality, since it allows the researcher to avert or to contest any influence from previous readings. (OLIVEIRA, 2007, p.69). For Laver, Benoit and Garry (2013, p. 311), "an alternative way to locate the policy positions of political actors is to analyze the texts they generate [...] they can be analyzed, reanalyzed, and reanalyzed again without becoming jaded or uncooperative".

The analysis of the Summit Declarations uses two free software, AntConc (ANTHONY, 2018) and VOSviewer (ECK, 2018). Both allow: (i) textual data compilation by listing words according to the frequency they appear; (ii) contextualization of words and expressions through associations among them.

The two software were used in text analysis and bibliometric studies involving textual data produced by real speakers, such as speeches, debates, and interviews transcriptions, named corpus. (IBPAD, 2018). Its employment in the Social Sciences has increased due to the possibility of systematizing large volumes of data and texts, to go beyond treatment exclusively by qualitative methods. Organizing these data in quantitative way, using the software's resources, can improve qualitative analysis reach, allowing more robust results achievement.

AntConc has been used in studies on authority statements, official documents and transcriptions of preliminary debates (MARAKHOVSKAIIA; PARTINGTON, 2019; GARCIA, 2018; YEON, 2017, DUPUIITS, 2015), as well as the treatment they receive on the media (YA; YUE; JIE, 2019; ZHANG; WU, 2019). VOSviewer has been applied in bibliometric network construction (BAHOO; ALON; PALTRINIERI, 2020; GEHE; HU; HOU, 2018) and in its analysis (SHAHRIAR, 2019).

AntConc generates frames with the frequency of words in the text. VOSviewer, using bibliometric analysis and a specific algorithm, generates graphic representations, in a network format, associating words identified as relevant, being defined a minimum frequency of three times in the text, and exposing the relationships among them, called strength link. For Soares (et al, 2016, p. 175), bibliometric analysis "is a method of quantitative analysis for scientific research. The data elaborated through bibliometric studies measure the contribution of scientific knowledge de-

rived from publications in certain areas.” According to Ness Jan van Eck (2018, p. 03), “although VOSviewer is primarily intended for the analysis of bibliometric networks, it can in fact be used to create, visualize and explore maps based on any type of network data”.

The use of the two software as methodological tools results from the complementarity of the generated results. The quantitative survey on the frequency of words in documents carried out by AntConc is complemented and contrasted by the association of words in VOSviewer graphic illustrations. The joint use of each software allows greater interpretative reach of the results.

The ranking of words demonstrates their use in the course of the text, especially if verified in relation to the context in which they were used – by clipping the text or through the context of the time. Nevertheless, the appearance of a word in the ranking and its permanence or absence throughout the summits are relevant to indicate the kind of context created, reinforced or even forgotten in the conduct of the negotiations, a reflection of the dynamism of contemporary international relations.

The graphic representation shows these words arranged and connected in different ways, with greater or lesser prominence, highlighted by colors suggesting clusters by proximity, and related by coupling links. The layout illustrates in which environment the word or group of words is inserted in a document, using colors indicating clusters by proximity and association. Colors delimit contexts, indicate their relative position within the document, and reinforce the coupling links.

The highlighting or not of words derives from the relationship between frequency, context and relative position in the formation of the association force. The complexity of the figures reflects the density of the discussions and allows interpretations about the research subject, based on the criteria and assumptions exposed below.

Table 1 Analyzed BRICS Annual Declarations, 2009-2020

| Year | Date | Country | City | Final document | Action Plan | Paragraphs | Total words | Different words | Total words (without stopwords) | Different words (without stopwords) |
|------|---------|--------------|---------------|--|-------------|------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 2009 | 16 Jun | Russia | Yekaterinburg | BRIC Leaders Joint Statement | No | 16 | 956 | 397 | 555 | 349 |
| 2010 | 10 Apr | Brazil | Brasília | BRIC Grouping, II Heads of State/ Government Summit | No | 33 | 2387 | 777 | 1384 | 710 |
| 2011 | 14 Apr | China | Sanya | Sanya Statement | Yes | 32 | 2221 | 690 | 1310 | 635 |
| 2012 | 29 Mar | India | New Delhi | New Delhi Statement | Yes | 50 | 4111 | 1125 | 2384 | 1045 |
| 2013 | 27 Mar | South Africa | Durban | Thekwini Statement | Yes | 47 | 4047 | 1052 | 2343 | 981 |
| 2014 | 15 Jul | Brazil | Fortaleza | Fortaleza Statement | Yes | 72 | 8015 | 1622 | 4662 | 1540 |
| 2015 | 09 Jul | Russia | Ufa | Ufa Statement | No | 77 | 11953 | 2017 | 6921 | 1934 |
| 2016 | 16 Oct | India | Goa | Goa Statement | Yes | 110 | 7289 | 1553 | 4374 | 1553 |
| 2017 | 04 Sept | China | Xiamen | Xiamen Statement | Yes | 71 | 7373 | 1491 | 4504 | 1421 |
| 2018 | 26 Jul | South Africa | Johannesburgh | Johannesburgh Statement | Yes | 102 | 7042 | 1470 | 4193 | 1399 |
| 2019 | 14 Nov | Brazil | Brasília | Brasília Statement | Yes | 73 | 6277 | 1357 | 3689 | 1291 |
| 2020 | 17 Nov | Russia | Moscow | Moscow Statement | Yes | 97 | 8821 | 1707 | 5200 | 1624 |
| | | | | <i>All the documents</i> | | | <i>70492</i> | <i>4195</i> | <i>41519</i> | <i>4089</i> |

Own elaborated.

A stopword list establishes a statistical filter to reduce the “noise” or “pollution” of results with terms that add little to documentary analysis. According to Chartier and Meunier (2011, p. 19), “the statistical meaning of a word can be based on its amount of information” which is defined by its representativeness and by discrimination in a text (or corpus). They

may be infrequent (i.e. idiosyncratic terms, that is, specific to the speech) or highly frequent (e.g. articles, prepositions, pronouns) and that do not contribute to the analysis of the meanings of the speech. An additional generic list of words³ the authors identified as irrelevant or devoid of impact for the intended analysis was used, such names of countries excessively repeated. (CHARTIER; MEUNIER, 2011; DENNY; SPIRLING, 2018). Table 1 presents the quantitative indicators of the analyzed statements.

3. Available on <http://www.ranks.nl/resources/stopwords.html>.

For the execution of the research and the organization of the data, six parameters (Table 2) and nine presumptions (presented below) were established, based on the software use tutorials, to be used jointly in the analysis. Parameters are variables that assume analytical value for the search. Presumptions are previous guidelines that aid the interpretation of the results. The combined use of the two instruments is suitable for an analytical model that merges quantitative and qualitative methods in the document handling.

The six parameters and the presumptions of the proposed model allow establishing documentary analyses based on the results generated by AntConc and VOSviewer and require evaluation by the researcher.

Table 2 Analysis Parameter

| Analysis parameter | Definition |
|--------------------|--|
| Frequency | number of times a given term appears |
| Environment | scenario derived from a discourse identified from one or more terms selected throughout the texts. |
| Clusters | recurring and commonly connected terms throughout documents that may have discursive power or not |
| Coupling link | those establishing a direct relationship among groups established by frequency/recurrence and proximity |
| Relative position | indicates the arrangement of word and term groups in the textual organization, resulting from the context in which the terms were processed |
| Strength link | relationship among different terms found throughout the text, resulting from a ratio between frequency, proximity and environment. Its graphical representation, in network format, highlights the relative position between recurring word groups that are connected by coupling links |

Own elaborated.

The model adopted here pays special attention to the criteria “frequency” and “strength link”. The “clusters” criterion indicates the occurrence of common terms used in the same context or throughout the text. Linkage is independent from clusters and indicates how textual constructions and ideas are associated by dialogues with each other. In order to identify how strong these associations are in the cluster formation, the “strength link” criterion is established. The “frequency” criterion relates: the absolute number of repetitions of the same term alone, as a semantic instrument.

The frequency the terms appear throughout the documents can be taken as the first element to aid the researcher in the documental analysis of the object – BRICS. In the construction of the analysis, it was noticed that the frequency of terms did not necessarily indicate key words in the document, nor in the evolutionary history of BRICS, especially when confronted with the strength link figure derived from both the individual and collective analyses of the summits. The terms found in the frequency and ranking lists generated by AntConc are not necessarily seen in the figures that indicate association generated by VOSviewer.

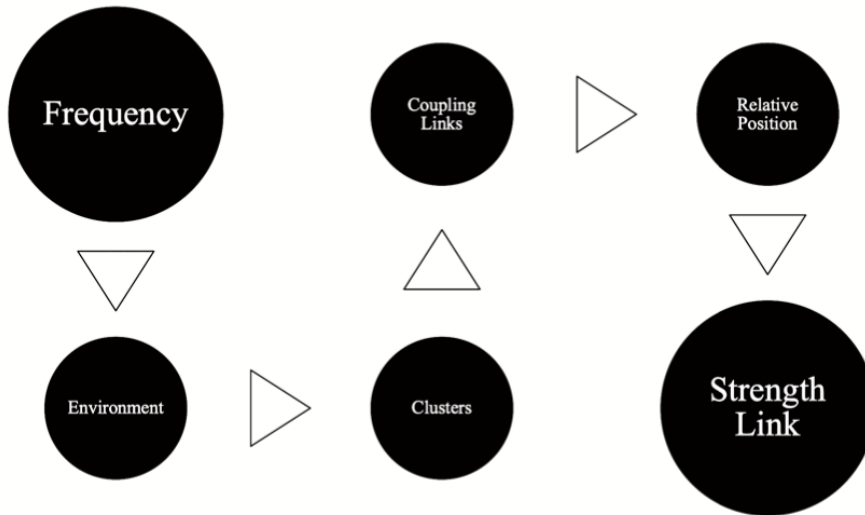
The presumptions are listed and commented below.

- 1 – In the process of interpreting the texts of the documents, even with the aid of stopword list, certain terms such as articles, prepositions, pronouns are part of the common vocabulary or vices of the language and not denoting anything relevant to the analysis.
- 2 – The context and proximity with which words appear in the text may indicate a direct relationship between the attributes and perceptions that members have of different variables in International System – due to the international conjuncture of a certain moment and the current political ideas.
- 3 – The proximity of some terms varies according to the contexts in which they are observed. This stems from the flexibilization of the themes and subjects approached, either by changes in perception of the international context, or by the direct influence of decision-making groups who act more assertively throughout the negotiations.
- 4 – The coupling links are considered as important elements in the analysis, mainly because they allow interaction between groups of seemingly different words. However, this connection may, in some cases, be too fragile and built based on a software systematization without sufficient solidity and not noticeable to the researcher's careful eye during the qualitative evaluation of the documents.
- 5 – The linking terms and the relative position of clusters are fundamental to understand how the different terms and subjects are treated throughout the text and show how, even semantically distant, the groups dialogue with each other either by the actors' perception, or by the way they are treated, referring to previously discussed subjects.
- 6 – The relative position of clusters is a fundamental and enlightening element both in situations in which few themes are addressed, and when diffusion by different themes is present. In situations in which extremes are present – scarcity or excess of themes – it is, at times, difficult to identify the impact of the relative position, but with greater care, it is noticed that the correlation of groups becomes clearer, or sometimes confused, when observed as a group based on the strength link figures.
- 7 – The figures of strength links are enlightening as they can trace clear pictures of the discussed groups and topics. This affirmation is relevant when certain Summits are observed where, despite the numerous discussions and themes, it was possible to build graphically ordered figures. In summits in which there was an excessive number of topics treated devoid of focus, confusing and somehow unclear figures are observed, though still keeping their explanatory power– in these cases, there is a loss of focus and/or relevance of many topics.
- 8 – The linking figures contrast the information brought by the frequency and ranking indexes. This reinforces the idea that,

throughout the process of generating such figures, and based on the analysis of groups of information, the terms that appear the most do not always reflect the themes of greater importance in the discussions.

- 9 – The analysis model proposed handle the dynamic character of BRICS in the International System and it is summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Indicative chain of dynamism



Own elaborated.

Analysis of the annual Summit Statements

For each Statement, the section presents and analyzes a word frequency frame, generated by AntConc, and a figure with the term strength link, generated by VOSviewer. The criteria and assumptions for the analysis are in previous section.

To reinforce the analysis, selected excerpts from the Statements and comments on the context of the moment are also presented.

The Statement texts are in BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020). .

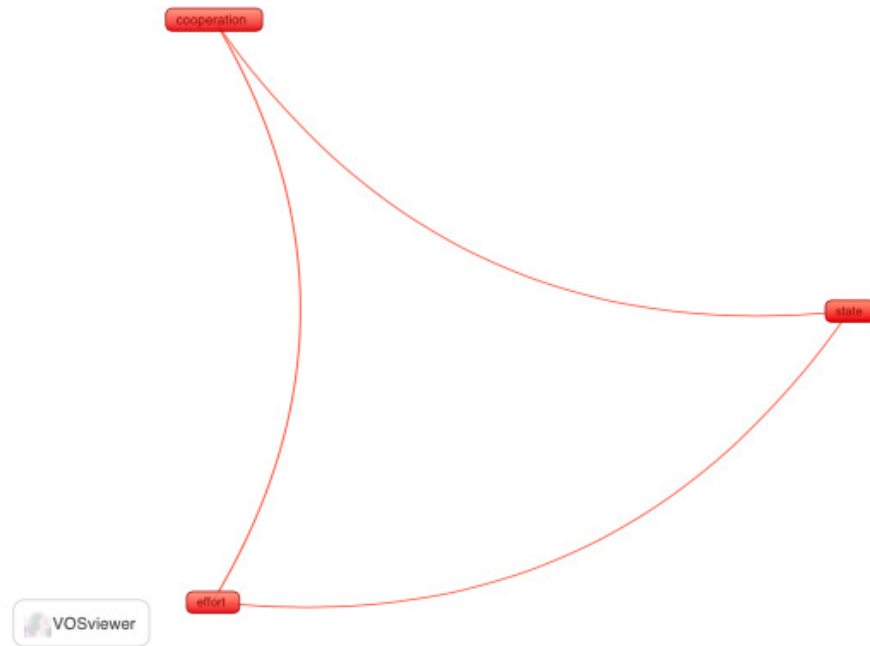
Yekaterinburg - June 2009

The first BRICS Summit took place amid the unfolding of the serious financial crisis triggered in September 2008. “Financial”, “economic” and “crises” are in the most cited words (Table 3). “Development” indicates the BRICS’s self-announced mission: “promoting dialogue and cooperation among our countries in a growing, proactive, pragmatic, open and transparent way” and stimulating the “construction of a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity.”

“Cooperation”, fourth word in Table 3, is one of the coupling links in Figure 2, alongside “efforts” and “states”. The relative position suggests discussions around them with low strength link. Given the incipience of

the grouping, this may reflect BRICS's self-designation efforts in the face of the crisis, in addition to criticism of multilateral governance institutions. The G-20 was recalled as an important forum in which BRIC had gained relevance.

Figure 2 Strength link at 2009 BRIC Summit



Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

Table 3 Ranking and frequency of words at the 2009 - 2012 BRIC Summit

| Rank | 2009 | | 2010 | | 2011 | | 2012 | |
|------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
| | Frequency | Words | Frequency | Words | Frequency | Words | Frequency | Words |
| 1 | 18 | international | 24 | countries | 28 | cooperation | 43 | development |
| 2 | 10 | countries | 23 | international | 28 | international | 33 | global |
| 3 | 10 | development | 19 | cooperation | 26 | development | 25 | brics |
| 4 | 8 | cooperation | 17 | world | 21 | brics | 24 | countries |
| 5 | 7 | energy | 16 | development | 19 | support | 24 | international |
| 6 | 7 | financial | 15 | economic | 16 | africa | 19 | cooperation |
| 7 | 6 | economic | 13 | energy | 16 | countries | 17 | africa |
| 8 | 5 | among | 12 | bric | 14 | brazil | 17 | support |
| 9 | 5 | efforts | 10 | developing | 14 | world | 17 | will |
| 10 | 5 | global | 10 | financial | 13 | china | 16 | energy |
| 11 | 5 | support | 10 | global | 13 | economic | 16 | sustainable |
| 12 | 5 | world | 10 | need | 13 | south | 15 | developing |
| 13 | 4 | also | 9 | brazil | 12 | global | 15 | economic |
| 14 | 4 | based | 9 | support | 12 | india | 15 | world |
| 15 | 4 | bric | 9 | will | 11 | russia | 14 | growth |
| 16 | 4 | crisis | 8 | g | 10 | financial | 12 | financial |
| 17 | 4 | dialogue | 8 | importance | 10 | growth | 12 | including |
| 18 | 4 | multilateral | 8 | trade | 10 | meeting | 12 | trade |
| 19 | 4 | role | 7 | efforts | 10 | will | 11 | community |
| 20 | 4 | states | 7 | first | 9 | security | 11 | conference |

Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

Brasília – April 2010

The theme “Global Governance and Common Vision” directed deeper and diverse debates, including the defense of “a multipolar, equitable and democratic order based on international law, equality, mutual respect, cooperation, coordinated action and decision-making of all States.” The statement is twice as large and twice the number of discussed points compared to 2009.

“Development”, “economic”, “financial”, “efforts” appear in Table 3 and are absent in Figure 3, possibly for the reasons indicated in presumption 8 (section 2). “Coordination”, although present in the preamble and in the course of discussions, does not appear in Table 3 or Figure 3.

The variety of themes compared to the 2009 Summit suggests: (i) effort to participate in more diverse debates - economy, finance, development; (ii) different action fronts for consolidation of the BRICS; (iii) expansion of themes, without solid and joint actions; (iv) attention to world transformations and the conjuncture of the time. The dynamism appears in the incorporation of environments such as “terrorism” and “agriculture”, positioned at extremes, but united by the coupling link “protocol”. The term indicates effort for the construction of arrangements and rules, as in the also debated Kyoto Protocol.

Figure 3 Strength link at 2010 BRIC Summit

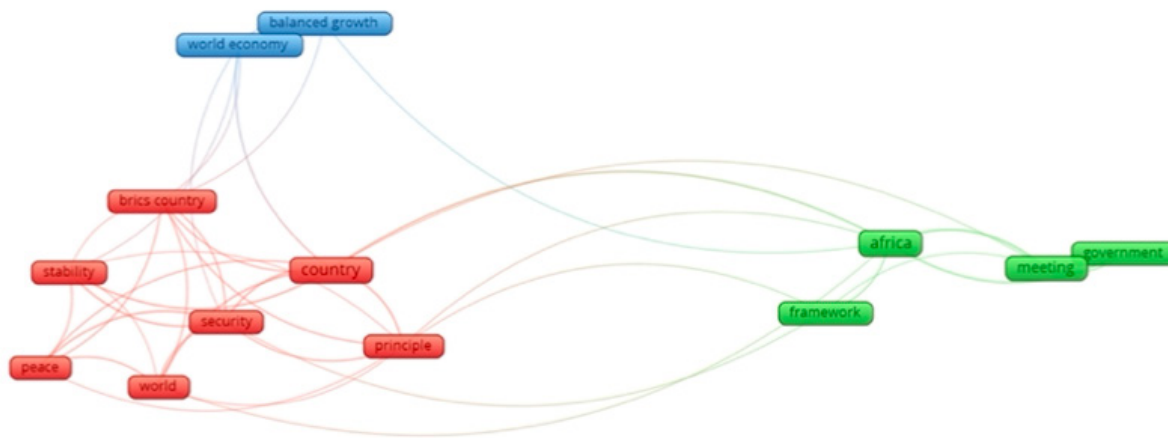


Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

Sanya – April 2011

The greater complexity of the 2011 Summit discussions appears in the clearest definition of three clusters in Figure 4, populated by greater numbers of terms.

Figure 4 Strength link at 2011 BRIC Summit



Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

Under the theme “Broad Vision, Shared Prosperity”, and after South Africa’s entry, the Summit discussed the “strengthening of cooperation in BRICS” and “coordination in international and regional issues of common interest”. BRICS was placed as an “important platform for dialogue and cooperation [...] and with no confrontational element”, open both to the participation of other countries and international and regional organizations.

In Figure 4, “brics country”, “stability”, “principle” form a cluster (red) by proximity and link to “meeting”, “framework” and “africa” (green). “Security”, which appears both in Figure 4 and in Table 3, permeated many discussed agendas: (i) economic and financial system; (ii) terrorism containment; (iii) fluctuations in commodity prices; (iv) use of nuclear energy.

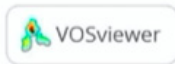
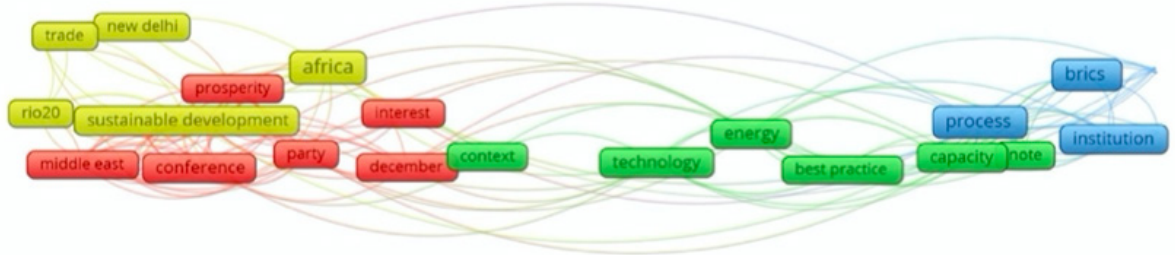
New Delhi – March 2012

The increasing density of discussions is reflected in Table 3, in which “development” and “developing” appear 58 times. The discussions highlighted the recovery of the 2008 crisis, environmental sustainability (Rio +20), global trade and WTO multilateralism. Clusters are more complex, defined more consistently, and closer to each other (Figure 5).

Under the theme “BRICS Partnership for Stability, Security and Prosperity”, the Statement warned about liquidity expansion policies in developed countries, generating volatility in emerging economies’ markets. In addition to the reform of the IMF and the WB, the idea of the BRICS Development Bank was born, highlighting synergies and complementarities. Meetings of the BRICS Business Forum and Financial Forum

took place, and the proposed common stock exchange came up, maintained until 2018. Cooperation among BRICS on sustainability, trade, energy, and their structure advanced - Figure 5.

Figure 5 Strength link at 2012 BRIC Summit



Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

Table 4 Ranking and frequency of words at the 2013 - 2016 BRIC Summit

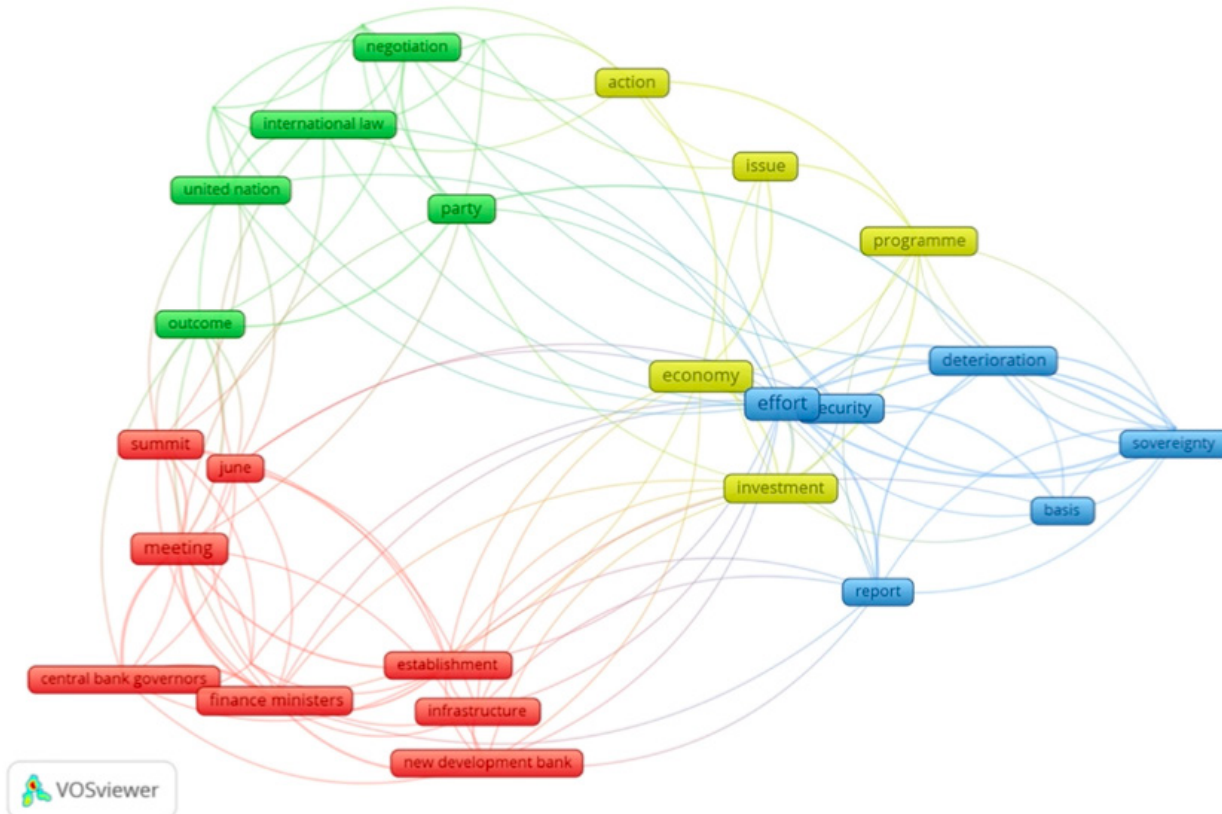
| Rank | 2013 | | 2014 | | 2015 | | 2016 | |
|------|-----------|----------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|----------------|
| | Frequency | Words | Frequency | Words | Frequency | Words | Frequency | Words |
| 1 | 59 | development | 72 | development | 119 | brics | 109 | brics |
| 2 | 31 | international | 66 | brics | 114 | international | 56 | cooperation |
| 3 | 24 | brics | 57 | cooperation | 103 | cooperation | 56 | development |
| 4 | 23 | countries | 53 | international | 100 | countries | 54 | international |
| 5 | 22 | africa | 46 | un | 95 | development | 51 | countries |
| 6 | 21 | support | 36 | sustainable | 52 | efforts | 48 | welcome |
| 7 | 20 | global | 34 | economic | 47 | un | 41 | including |
| 8 | 19 | cooperation | 32 | support | 44 | security | 36 | sustainable |
| 9 | 19 | un | 29 | will | 42 | welcome | 32 | economic |
| 10 | 15 | infrastructure | 28 | welcome | 42 | well | 31 | security |
| 11 | 15 | peace | 27 | security | 41 | economic | 30 | global |
| 12 | 15 | sustainable | 24 | global | 39 | will | 29 | importance |
| 13 | 14 | security | 24 | peace | 38 | support | 27 | note |
| 14 | 13 | developing | 23 | call | 36 | including | 27 | support |
| 15 | 13 | growth | 22 | efforts | 34 | global | 24 | terrorism |
| 16 | 13 | new | 21 | also | 31 | states | 23 | un |
| 17 | 12 | towards | 20 | countries | 30 | sustainable | 22 | growth |
| 18 | 12 | will | 20 | importance | 28 | national | 22 | regard |
| 19 | 11 | african | 20 | world | 27 | call | 21 | implementation |
| 20 | 11 | bank | 19 | financial | 26 | importance | 20 | agenda |

Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

Durban – March 2013

The theme in this Summit was “BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration and Industrialization”, emphasizing investments, infrastructure, security and international law areas, axes observed in Figure 6.

Figure 6 Strength link at 2013 BRIC Summit



Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

Figure 6 indicates a clearer definition of theme axes, relative position and coupling links. “Effort”, in the blue cluster, referring to security, performs the coupling link function when connecting “investment”, “establishment” and “international law”, in their respective clusters.

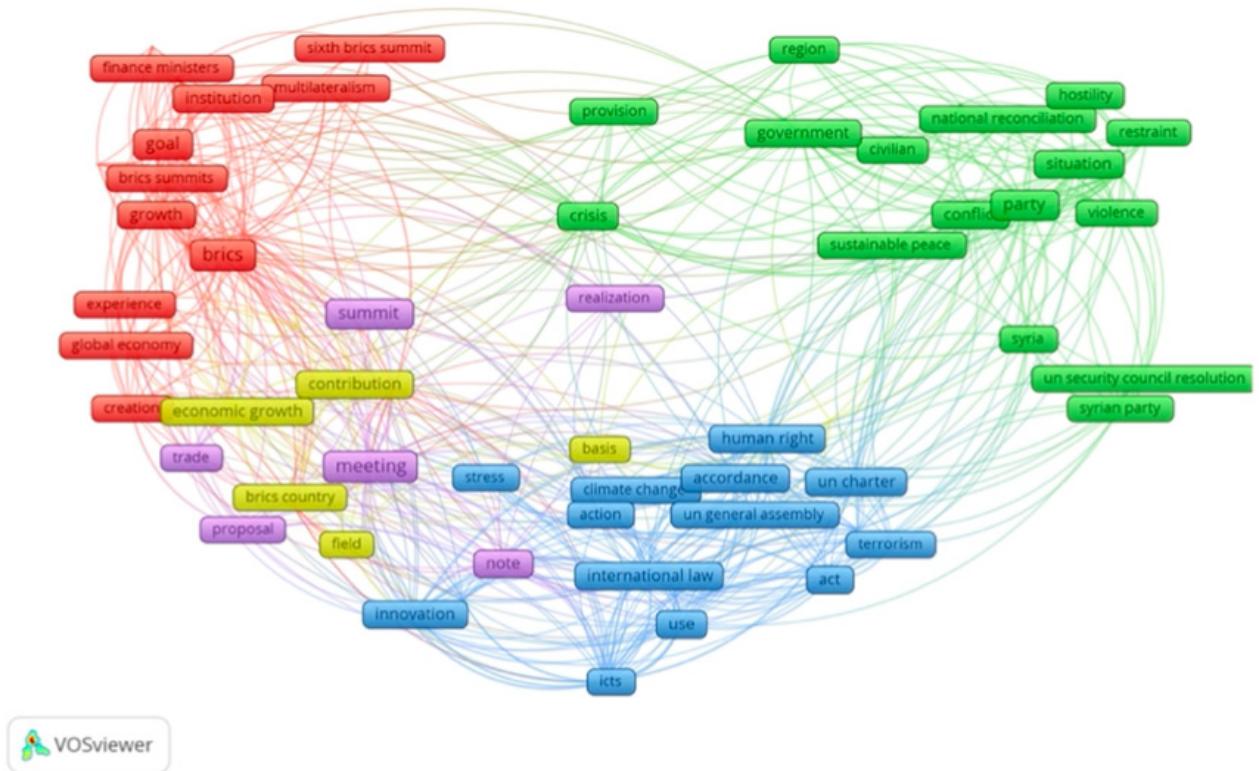
Fortaleza – July 2014

With the theme “Inclusive Growth: Sustainable Solutions”, the second cycle of BRICS summits began, after each country having hosted the event once. BRICS expanded intra-group cooperation, with emphasis on the creation of the NDB and the CRA.

“Development”, “cooperation”, “economic” and “financial” highlight these aspects in Table 4. In Figure 7, three well-defined and complex clusters indicate proximity and interrelationship among BRICS economy, structure, and internal articulation, positioned in relation to other major topics such as security and international environment.

The environmental theme had lost strength while other themes ascended – the blue cluster in Figure 7 illustrates this. The concern about global stability in the attributes of security and peace are associated with the conflicts at the time (green cluster), highlighting the role of the BRICS in the stability and maintenance of peace. “BRICS” in the red cluster serves as a coupling link with other clusters reinforced by the density of the graphic connection lines shown in the figure.

Figure 7 Strength link at 2014 BRIC Summit



Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

Ufa – July 2015

A significant change in the most frequent terms was the rise of “cooperation” and the retreat of “development”. The new initiatives - NDB and CRA - would expand intragroup cooperation efforts - the theme was “BRICS Partnership - A Thriving Factor for Global Development”.

Figure 8 Strength link at 2015 BRIC Summit



Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

The main discussions on development, established in the first cycle, were atomized. In Figure 8, it is difficult to identify any criteria from Table 2 in view of the number of associated terms. The discussions were dense yet presenting unclear foci.

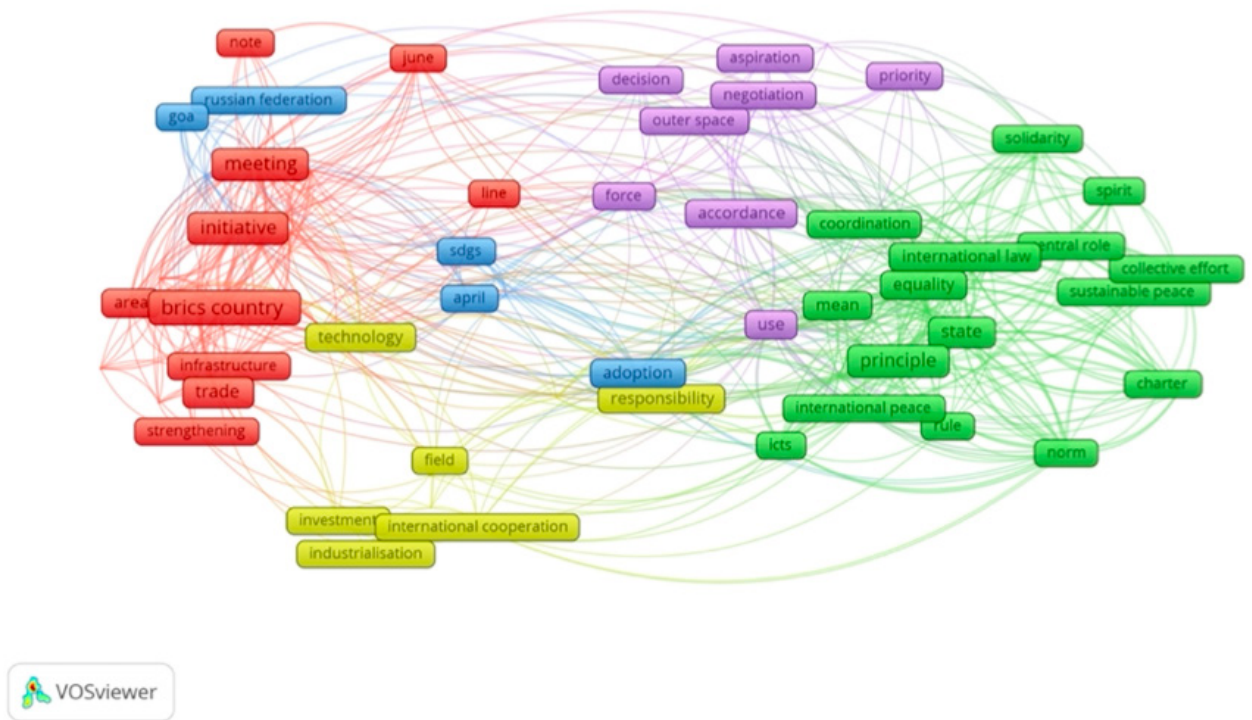
The arrangement of theme groups in Figure 8 indicates little strength link, due to the absence of coupling links and relative position not clearly defined between the matters. Even so, the figure throughout the discussions, though graphically disorderly, suggests great enthusiasm for the agreements settled in 2014.

Goa – October 2016

With the theme “Building Responsive, Inclusive and Collective Solutions” the 2016 Summit was the most extensive to date. The Statement seems confusing yet generating a graphically organized figure with high explanatory power (Figure 9). The document randomly deals with several themes: multilateralism, the role of the UN, WTO, G-20 and IMF, Agenda 2030, initiatives for sustainable development, coordinated actions and cooperation for economic recovery. The beginning of the NDB operation is highlighted. Table 4 illustrates this variety of agendas.

In Figure 9, the association between themes is dense. Five clusters are highlighted. “Coordination” appears in one of them, pointing to international efforts to ensure peace and sustainability. Decision structures (in lilac) connect to other clusters through “accordance” as a coupling link. The others complete the figure under a strong discourse of BRICS initiatives for investment in technology, trade, and infrastructure. Regardless, the focus on development cooperation was maintained.

Figure 9 Strength link at 2016 BRIC Summit



Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

Table 5 Ranking and frequency of words at the 2017 - 2020 BRIC Summit

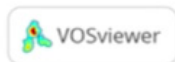
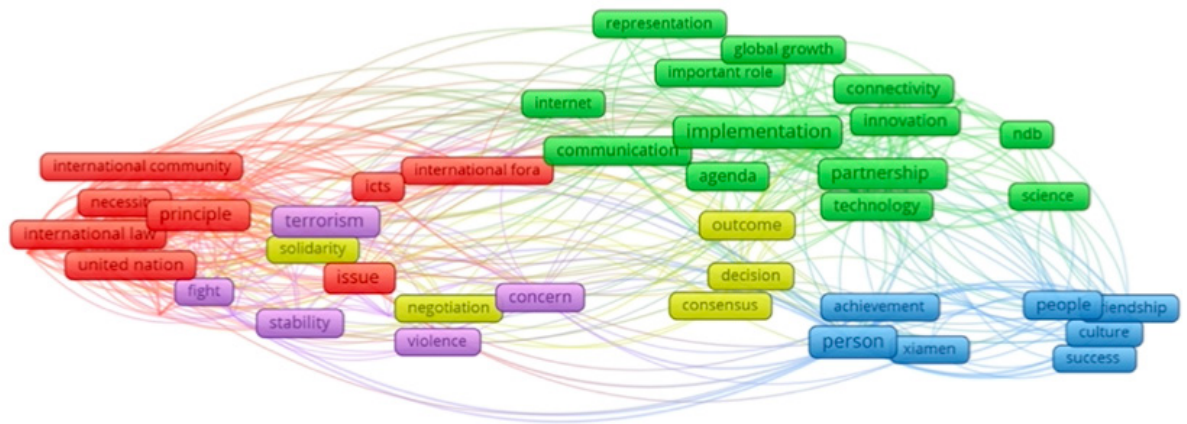
| Rank | 2017 | | 2018 | | 2019 | | 2020 | |
|------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
| | Frequency | Words | Frequency | Words | Frequency | Words | Frequency | Words |
| 1 | 132 | brics | 119 | brics | 98 | brics | 148 | brics |
| 2 | 119 | cooperation | 62 | cooperation | 48 | cooperation | 69 | cooperation |
| 3 | 72 | development | 55 | development | 36 | welcome | 67 | international |
| 4 | 51 | international | 46 | international | 35 | including | 56 | countries |
| 5 | 47 | countries | 36 | security | 34 | countries | 48 | including |
| 6 | 42 | including | 35 | countries | 33 | international | 43 | development |
| 7 | 39 | security | 34 | economic | 27 | importance | 40 | welcome |
| 8 | 33 | economic | 34 | including | 26 | development | 38 | importance |
| 9 | 30 | global | 31 | support | 26 | security | 38 | security |
| 10 | 30 | support | 29 | welcome | 26 | trade | 33 | economic |
| 11 | 30 | will | 28 | importance | 23 | will | 29 | note |
| 12 | 25 | sustainable | 27 | sustainable | 22 | meeting | 28 | support |
| 13 | 24 | nations | 25 | global | 21 | efforts | 27 | efforts |
| 14 | 23 | promote | 25 | reaffirm | 21 | reaffirm | 25 | reaffirm |
| 15 | 23 | united | 24 | peace | 21 | un | 25 | un |
| 16 | 22 | welcome | 23 | un | 19 | economic | 24 | acknowledge |
| 17 | 21 | enhance | 21 | commitment | 18 | also | 24 | global |
| 18 | 20 | agree | 21 | nations | 18 | th | 24 | sustainable |
| 19 | 20 | among | 21 | trade | 17 | among | 23 | covid |
| 20 | 20 | peace | 20 | africa | 17 | sustainable | 23 | nations |

Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

Xiamen – September 2017

“Cooperation”, “development”, “support” and “promotion” (Table 5) indicate the environment of the debates and reinforce the theme, “BRICS: Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future” (...). Figure 10 shows great density. Clusters can be interpreted as follows: the “international community” concerned about “stability” and the risk of “terrorism” (lilac) calls for “consensus” in the “negotiations” (yellow) to ensure “global growth” (green) with respect to culture and peoples (blue).

Figure 10 Strength link at 2017 BRIC Summit



Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

In 2017 there were parallel dealings with other countries who were interested in the dynamics and interaction with BRICS. The term “BRICS Plus” could establish an image of a platform for dialogue with other emerging and developing countries. It may have been a reaction to the emptying of the G-20, a space used as an instrument for articulating countries outside the G-7, and a way to regain the enthusiasm that marked the group until the creation of NDB and CRA.

In the sphere of security, discourses remain focused on conflicts, regional sources of instability and the establishment of strategies for the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by countries (red cluster). On economic issues, the focus was on critical proposals about global financial architecture and the proposition of arrangements among the BRICS (the green cluster, to a large extent). The centrality of these two axes has been present in every meeting.

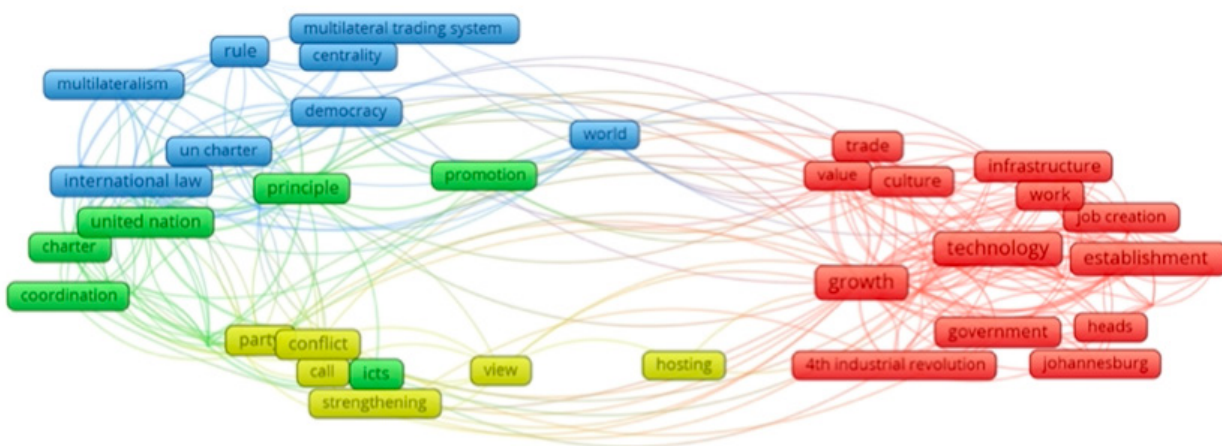
Johannesburg – July 2018

The tenth BRICS Summit celebrated the theme “BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution”. “Cooperation”, “development”, “security” and “Peace” are highlighted words in Table 5.

Figure 11 shows the proximity of terms such as “growth”, “trade”, “infrastructure” and “4th industrial revolution” - red cluster - reflection of that year’s theme. This cluster links to the other three and it is difficult to identify the coupling link due to the connection density illustrated by the graphic linking lines. Perhaps “growth” could function as the coupling

link for “strengthening”, “principle” (green), and “world”, with a primary role in connecting with all clusters in the figure. The BRICS Partnership on New Industrial Revolution (PartNIR) was established in this environment, related to the Summit theme. The progress on “establishing the local currency of the BRICS Bond Fund”, even though without details, is an innovation.

Figure 11 Strength link at 2018 BRIC Summit



Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

Brasília – November 2019

The theme “BRICS: economic growth for an innovative future” highlighted the creation of the BRICS Innovation Network (iBRICS) and formed a cluster (green) in Figure 12. In the summarized Statement, the BRICS emphasized cooperation among them – in one year, more than one hundred meetings in several areas were held.

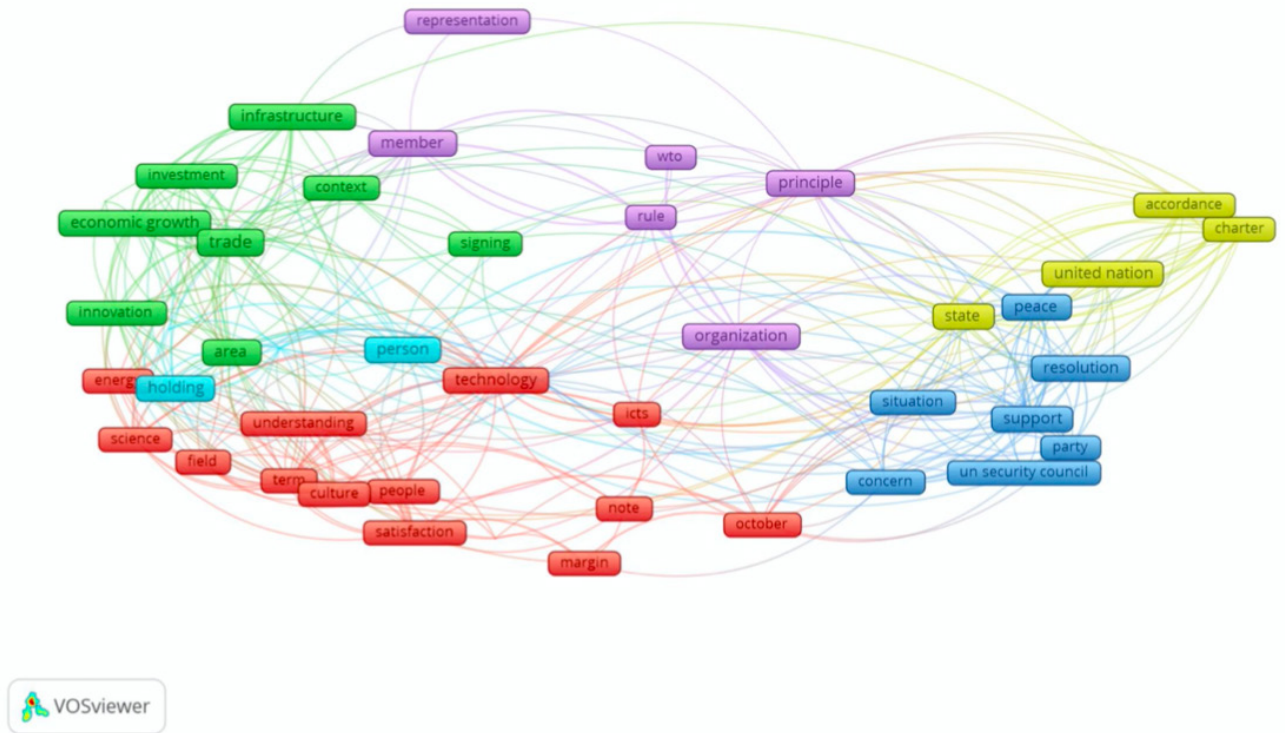
In table 5 “cooperation” appears in second place and in Figure 12 “development”, “security”, “trade”, “sustainable”, are associated with it.

The defense of multilateralism and reform of the UN, WTO and IMF remained on the agenda. The role of organizations as instruments to achieve global objectives had been strengthened in the sustainability agenda – Agenda 2030, COP25, ODA – and international security agenda– OPCW, BTWC. The relevance attributed to the organizations appears in the lilac cluster and in their links to others. “Organization” is a coupling link of the different contexts in the document and its relative position favors such connection. The security agenda close to the UN and the

Security Council, as legitimate maintainers of international peace and security, forms the context illustrated by the blue, yellow and lilac clusters.

Intra-BRICS trade was highlighted by the advances to the BRICS Customs Cooperation Agreement planned for 2022. “Trade” illustrates the ranking of words - table 5 - positioned relatively in the green cluster as a coupling link composing a commercial context next to the cluster of “rules” and “organization” (lilacs) and “technology” and “icts” (red).

Figure 12 Strength link at 2019 BRIC Summit



Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

Regional leaders were absent at the 2019 Summit for the first time since 2011, when the members defended BRICS as a “platform for dialogue and inclusiveness” open to the participation of other states and organizations. In 2017 the term “BRICS Plus” highlighted an image of an international articulation platform sensitive to changes in global ordering.

Despite such absences and the less complex discussions, Figure 12 allows the affirmation that there was no dispersion as in 2015, but a rather slightly less assertive pattern than in 2017 and 2018. This results in a greater care for the conflicting interests of the BRICS that diplomacy cannot overcome, so as an international environment marked by trade disputes intensification (green cluster).

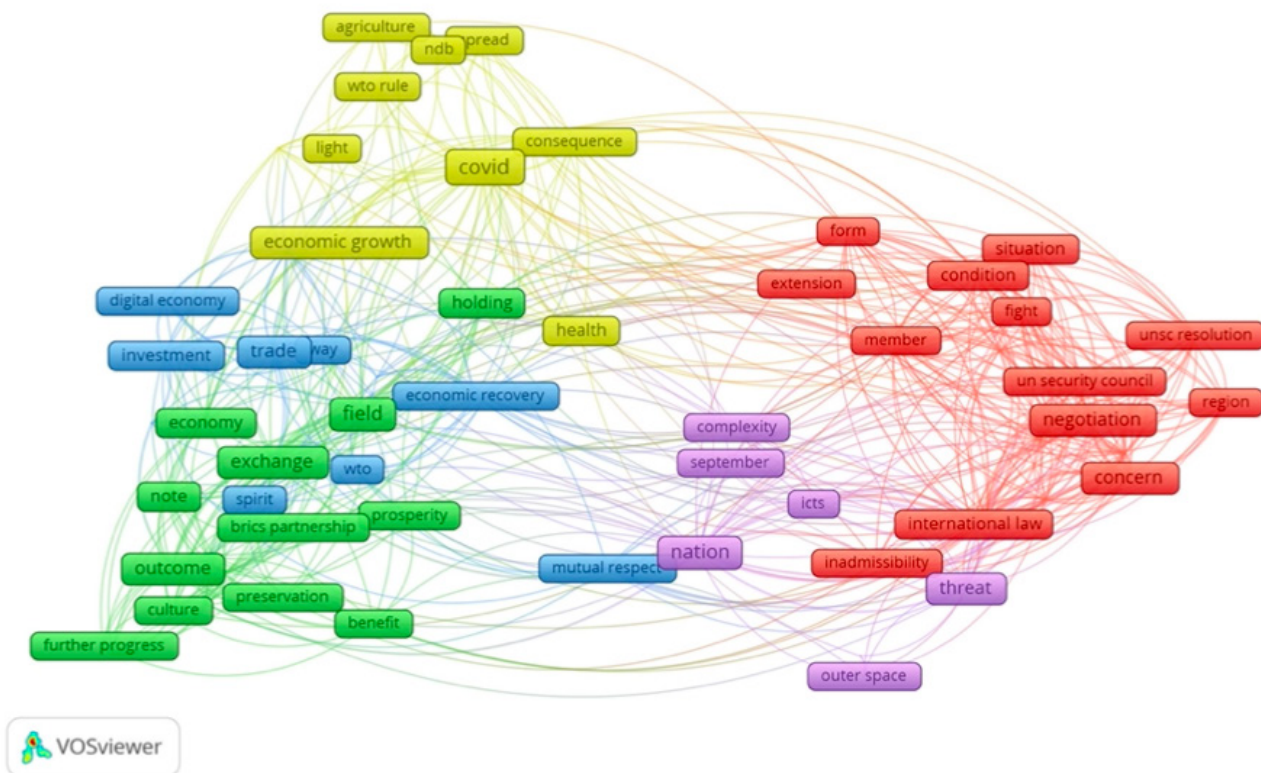
Moscow - November 2020

Under Russian presidency, and remotely for the first time, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 Summit had the theme “BRICS Partnership for Global Stability, Shared Security and Innovative Growth”. Three

strategic pillars - policy and security, economy and finance, culture and people-to-people exchanges – can be identified on the figure 13, respectively in red, blue, and green.

The containment of the COVID-19 pandemic, while environment and cluster can be identified in yellow at figure 13 and in 5 being the 19th most frequent word. In its cluster (yellow), in figure 13, there is concern about the consequences on “health”, “economic growth” and “wto trade”. “COVID” acting as a coupling link with the other clusters: in green, the concern is in the “preservation” of the “brics partnership” for “further progress”. For this, “economic recovery” through “investment” and “trade” with “mutual respect”, in blue, are fundamental to prevent “threat” (in lilac) to “international law” guaranteed by “negotiation” under the auspices of the UN (in red). “UN” appear in table 5 reinforced by “efforts” and “importance”.

Figure 13 Strength link at 2020 BRIC Summit



Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

The “NDB” (yellow) was exalted for its program of emergency loans to its members for actions to combat COVID-19 as well as being recognized as the new president, the Brazilian Marcos Troyjo, and the opening of the new regional office in Moscow. The formal “negotiation” process for the adhesion of new members was initiated, while the CRA had its documents updated while the central banks of the BRICS expanded channels of communication and expertise through BRICS Rapid Information Security Channel (BRISC).

“Cooperation” remains the most frequent term at the Summits – the second most frequent world in table 5. The “digital economy” (blue), “brics partnership” (green) “reaffirm” the plans for advances in the use of technologies for industrial production (PartNIR), on the agenda since the 2018 Summit. Energy, intellectual property, urbanization, food security and health, in general, science and technology, environment, with emphasis on the reaffirmed commitment to the Paris Agreement, were discussed at the Moscow Summit.

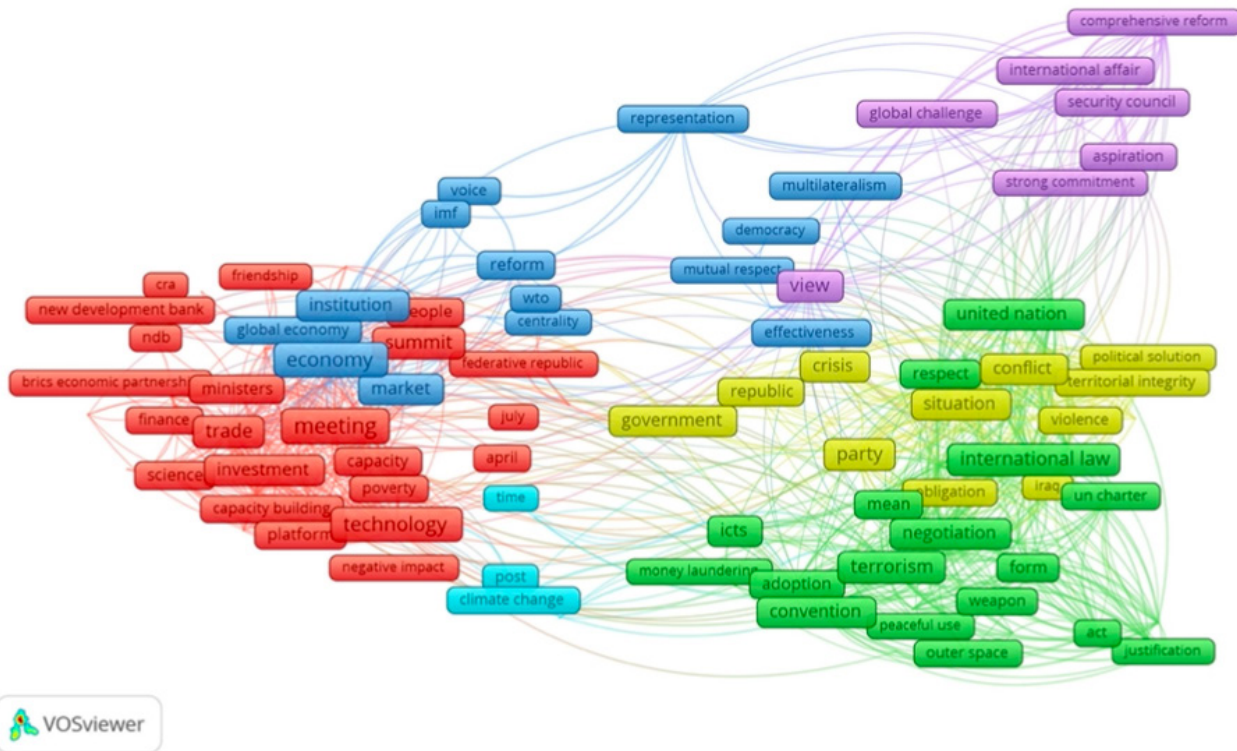
Consolidated analysis of Summit Statements from 2009 to 2020

A collective analysis of the Summit Declarations compiles this information and allows a macro view of BRICS. It is possible to evaluate how the density of the approached subjects and the involvement of the BRICS allowed the emergence and consolidation of an international phenomenon that is difficult to categorize.

The network-shaped map of Figure 14 highlights six clusters, indicative of environments and densely connected by coupling links, in which discussions and relative positions concentrated: BRICS and priority themes (red), critical to the global economy (dark blue), views of international affairs (lilac), security and conflicts (yellow), international rules (green) and climate change (light blue).

The red cluster synthesizes an environment with relative position within the interesting figure. In it, couple links such as “trade”, “capacity building”, “brics economic partnership”, “new development bank”, with emphasis on “meeting” ensure the strength link of the cluster and acts as a coupling link to other clusters. Very close, the dark blue cluster is the cornerstone element of BRICS: the criticism of international financial governance. “IMF”, “reform”, “economy”, “institution” and “representation” that, as a coupling link, deepens criticism by connecting “comprehensive reform” and “international affair” in the lilac cluster. In the latter, “security council” and “strong commitment” are close and linked, under related environments, to the yellow cluster that gathers concerns about “conflict” and international security. “Crisis” and “territorial integrity” coupling link with “united nations”, “international law” and “negotiation” in a clear demonstration that, despite criticism, BRICS reiterates the United Nations’ prerogative to guarantee international security and peace, in green cluster. Those guaranteed by the “negotiation”, “respect”, “negotiation” of the “international law” in the green cluster and attentive to the themes of the international agenda present in the light blue cluster and discussed by the BRICS: “climate change”.

Figure 14 Strength link at BRICS Summits (2009-2020)



Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

Table 6 reinvigorates the individually compiled dataset at the Summits and contrasts the result of Figure 14.

Figure 14 and Table 6 present a consolidated view of the Summits from the creation of BRICS in 2009 until 2020. In a graphic animation of the annual figures is possible to identify the in process and dynamic movement of the BRICS phenomenon in the period.⁴ As indicated in the assumptions, although the terms found in Table 6 do not necessarily appear in Figure 14, the analysis of frequent terms complements and reinforces the interpretation of the strength link.

4. Graphic animation available in <https://bit.ly/3rGjKL3>

Table 6 Ranking and frequency of words at the BRICS Summit Declarations - 2009 to 2020

| Rank | 2009 -2020 | |
|------|------------|---------------|
| | Frequency | Words |
| 1 | 861 | brics |
| 2 | 607 | cooperation |
| 3 | 573 | development |
| 4 | 542 | international |
| 5 | 440 | countries |
| 6 | 287 | including |
| 7 | 281 | economic |
| 8 | 280 | security |
| 9 | 273 | support |
| 10 | 273 | welcome |
| 11 | 261 | global |
| 12 | 244 | un |
| 13 | 239 | sustainable |
| 14 | 221 | will |
| 15 | 212 | importance |
| 16 | 207 | efforts |
| 17 | 166 | growth |
| 18 | 166 | peace |
| 19 | 166 | reaffirm |
| 20 | 158 | trade |

Own elaborated. Source of data: BRICS INFORMATION CENTRE (2020).

General analysis and conclusions

The contribution of this paper is to analyze the BRICS throughout the Declarations issued at the first 12 Summits, BRICS’s main intervention instrument and main primary source. The results obtained enable us to move forward in the characterization of the BRICS especially by giving great attention to the content as a way of complementing the informal club form: continuous adaptations to changes in the world scenario and in the members’ domestic problems and challenges, its dynamic character; and low formality, what allows advances and setbacks, without organizational goals, its in process character.

The indicative chain of dynamism (figure 1) is efficient in assisting the construction of this analysis, when listed, in a chain mode, the six established criteria. Above all, the two extremes, graphically reproduced on a larger scale in Figure 1, demonstrate the relevance of the criteria “frequency” and “strength link”. Both were found as fundamental result of data modeling by AntConc and VOSviewer software and consolidated based on the evaluation, verification, and interpretation by the authors of the other four criteria.

The scope of the topics treated expanded from 2009 to 2020, but not in a linear way. The Summits took place without indicating any destination or goals for its institutionalization. Advances and setbacks appear in the interpretation of linking figures, which become very complex at

times, indicating density of debates, as in 2014, 2017 and 2020, or very rarefied, as in 2015.

The world scenario influences the discussion agenda, as in 2009, 2010, after financial crisis, and 2020, with COVID-19. Some new terms appeared progressively, such as “Peace”, “UN”, “security”, while others became little expressive in the ranking and frequency tables – “G-20”, “multilateralism”, “IMF” - but not necessarily in the strength link figures. In other words, even if not frequent in discourse, they still concentrate power in the debate environments. The linking figures portray such oscillations regarding the use of terms and the density of discussions.

Except for 2009, 2010 and 2015, all the Summits produced Action Plans, an agenda of commitments for the interval between Summits. In the last few years, Action Plans were no longer created, but the schedule of post-meeting activities was reported at the end of the Summit documents.

While the defense of reforms and greater representativeness in international organizations has been present in all the Summits, there was a wide variety of terms and words along them. It should be highlighted “development, cooperation, economic, security”, recurrent in virtually all the Summits, but not always in the same order of precedence and prominence.

“Development” and “cooperation” guided the debates in BRICS, not always as beacons: they reinforced energy and security agendas as part of concerns about ensuring peace and growth sustainability, justifications for the establishment of BRICS’s own financial instruments. The NDB has been a good instrument for financing projects in the Brics: energy and transport are perhaps the main ones. In 2020, the NDB offered an emergency line of credit for its members to act in containing the global health crisis.

While BRICS was occasionally regarded as an arrangement that would foster the cooperation and coordination of their countries, what remained was solely the concept of cooperation. “Coordination” was hardly used in the first years of grouping formation and was later abandoned. It can be argued that the concept of coordination could suggest the progressive establishment of rules and norms, contrary to the “in process” character suggested here. Until 2014 there is a focus on development of a strong articulation but without a clear format, rules or norms. The promotion of cooperation is highlighted especially in 2017 with the idea of BRICS Plus, which does not advance, and with PartNIR (in 2018) which stimulates industrial growth through trade and investment cooperation with establish a BRICS Partnership on New Industrial Revolution Innovation Center in 2020.

The NDB and CRA were created as cooperation instruments establishing each member’s competences and contributions, though without suggesting coordination of common policies or strategies. Without questioning the IFIs or the Dollar prominence both were presented as initiatives to complement the global financial architecture. Its innovative character lies in the dissatisfaction with the functioning of existing institutions, mitigated by the words “supplementary” and “complementary”. In both cases, the participation of each country does not require changes in their national laws and financial practices, nor are there restrictions on the performance in other international institutions.

The NDB is a formally established organization, with its own regulations and bureaucracies, but not dependent on any BRICS committee. As the CRA too, they depend directly for a group of officials representing the five governments, not the BRICS itself.

The resilience appears in the Summits regularity and the recurrence of topics such as cooperation, security, development. However, none of these elements contradict the in process character, given the absence of formal rules for the BRICS itself or goals to be achieved. The limitation of BRICS positions on issues that may constrain the diplomatic orientations of each member can be exemplified in two points of the 2014 Declaration. Russia had announced the incorporation of Crimea, under protests from Ukraine backed by Western Europe and the US. The Declaration expressed concerns and advocated “a comprehensive dialogue, the de-escalation of the conflict and restraint from all the actors involved” (§44, 2014). The same Declaration met both Brazil and India’s claims for a seat at the United Nations Security Council with generic formulations: “support their aspiration to play a greater role in the UN” however, without advocating expansion of permanent members. (§25, 2014). In both cases, they are protocol statements that do not imply commitments, neither do they place restrictions on each one’s performance.

Adapting discourses to the situations that affected International System was a strategy implicitly and explicitly adopted by the BRICS. In addition to the two aspects mentioned above: (i) conflicts in Africa and the Middle East: discourse for dialogue mediated by international bodies such as the UN; (ii) international governance: defense of adjustments and reforms in financial and political systems, but acting within the systems; (iii) sustainable development as an agenda, especially after the operationalization of the NDB; (iv) the possibility of countries associating with the NDB and CRA, both in the contribution and access to resources; (v) meetings with regional leaders of summit headquarters, except 2019 e 2020, to expand political and economic relationships and opportunities.

The 2017 and 2018 Summits were marked by the vigor and commitment of the involved parties, possibly due to the hosts’ efforts in seeking greater commitment by members. The 2018 Summit marked ten years of annual BRICS meetings and the expansion of the issues dealt with. Despite criticism of a BRICS and G-20 emptying, the Johannesburg Summit Declaration shows that the BRICS remains persistent in the pursue for cooperative actions in the most different fields of international activity in their countries. Examples of that are the debates about the 4th industrial revolution and the announcement of the opening of the NDB headquarters in São Paulo, Brazil. The NDB Eurasian Regional Center in Moscow, Russia, was inaugurated in 2020. And the Brasilia (2019) and Moscow (2020) Summits demonstrated continuity in the BRICS behavior. The 2020’s Summit Declaration reinforce the strength of the group: based on the common interest of countries in meeting in a space of debate, without commitments.

The term “brics” is present in all the Summits Declarations from 2011 on the most frequent words. From 2015 onwards, it becomes the most frequent term in ranking and frequency of words. While the tables

bring together the most cited words in each Summit, the Figures show the forces of association of the words indicating contexts, how they connect and relative positions in the Summits. It establishes the term “brics”, a reflection of the consolidation of the group as a platform for dialogue and “cooperation” among the members. “Efforts” for “growth” “including” “development” “sustainable” and with attention to the “economic”, “security” and “peace” agendas, indicative of the maturing and consolidation of the grouping as a relevant actor, while a vision of themselves, in international relations.

Figure 14 shows the dynamicity of the topics dealt with: initially formed as an instrument for defending a global economic and financial governance reform, BRICS has progressively become a space for debate on themes about the international agenda that are of interest of the member countries. In both dynamics there were advances and setbacks, devoid of manifestations and initiatives of the group restricting each member’s foreign policy.

In 2021, 20 years after the emergence of the acronym, at its 13th Summit the BRICS discussed “Intra-BRICS Cooperation for Continuity, Consolidation and Consensus”, reinforcing members’ interest in it. They established Counter-Terrorism Action Plan, which was a particularly relevant issue for India, given the changes in Afghanistan and welcomed the adhesion of Bangladesh, the UAE and Uruguay to the NDB. The create a disease alert center and vaccine development followed as a proposal since 2018.

The dynamicity and the way issues are treated demonstrate a flexible interaction behavior. It can be presented as a specific multilateralism experiment, lacking in institutional framework and rules, but perceived as advantageous by the members. Even in situations in which some of the five countries had different or opposite positions, the regularity of BRICS activities has been maintained without incidents. The potential gains in domestic and international influence are more difficult to identify. In recent years Brazil and South Africa international influence seems to have weakened, with their alignment to the USA and some moving away from the BRICS partners. The creation and the participation in other initiatives, sometimes arising from the world scenario evolution, such as RCEP, AfCFTA, SCO, demonstrate that there are more room for maneuvering for action by the five countries beyond the BRICS. Therefore, these potential gains could not be seen in the Summit declarations, except for what the Declarations analysis reveals about the relevance the members attribute to the BRICS.

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