

Nigeria's Partnership with the BRICS

Leveraging Opportunities and Mitigating the Risks



Policy Recommendations

- 1 Nigeria must develop a grand strategy that specifies its strategic interests in the BRICS.
- 2 Nigeria must Protect her diplomatic and trade relations with the West
- 3 Nigeria must manage its partnership with BRICS in a bid to mitigate the spread of misinformation in the Sahel by Russia.
- 4 Nigeria should use its partnership with the BRICS as a negotiating power to mount pressure on the West to reform multilateral institutions.
- 5 There is a need for Nigeria to mobilise members of the BRICS to support its initiatives across Africa, particularly as it concerns the fight against terrorism and insurgency in the Sahel.

Introduction

In January 2025, Nigeria accepted the invitation to [join BRICS](#) as a partner country. The term BRIC was first used by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill, who used it to refer to the informal intergovernmental bloc made up of Brazil, Russia, India and China, which emerged in 2009 following the first official [BRIC summit hosted by Russia in 2009](#). South Africa joined the bloc in 2011 to create the BRICS. With the admission of new members in 2024, the bloc has further expanded into what some analysts refer to as [BRICS Plus](#). The overarching objective of the bloc is to counteract the global economic and political dominance of the G7 bloc as well as the Bretton Woods Institutions. In the past few years, the bloc has expanded in terms of its economic strength and its membership size. The share of the world Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the four founding members of the bloc (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) has grown from about [8 per cent](#) in 2000 to [24 per cent](#) in 2023. The bloc has expanded its membership through the strategy of inviting more countries to join as partner countries. In 2024, the bloc formally [welcomed into its fold five new members - Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates \(UAE\)](#). The October 2024 BRICS Plus Summit held in the Russian city of Kazan witnessed the participation of [thirty-two countries](#), including 24 heads of state and government. Around 30 other countries expressed interest in partnering with BRICS. Together, the growing economic strength and expansion in the size of its membership signal the growing potential of BRICS to exercise global economic and political influence, as well as its growing capacity to challenge the global hegemony of the developed

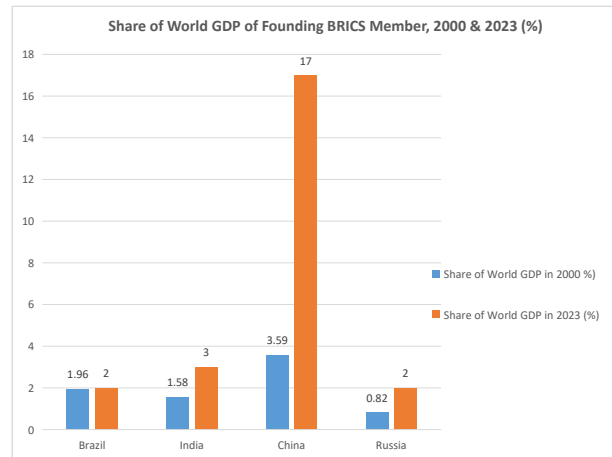
Western countries. In January 2025, [Brazil took over the rotating presidency of the BRICS](#) with an agenda to deepen global South cooperation. This has further implications for the global hegemony of the West.

Nigeria's partnership with the BRICS is significant in many ways. First, it comes at a time when the bloc's global influence is increasing due to growth in its economic strength and membership expansion. Secondly, it comes at a time when Nigeria requires support to bolster its domestic economy and waning regional influence in Africa. Thirdly, there is growing polarisation of the world with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and support for military regimes in African countries where the influence of the G7 is waning following the expulsion of France by its former colonies. Finally, if implemented, the current economic policy of Trump's administration in the United States, especially the planned increase in taxation against some G7 member states, will further polarise Western hegemony and strengthen BRICS Plus. This edition of Nextier SPD Weekly assesses how Nigeria can leverage opportunities presented by partnering with BRICS while mitigating the associated risks.

Opportunities for Nigeria in the BRICS Plus

The expansion of membership of the BRICS beyond the initial five countries has given rise to the term BRICS Plus as a new metaphor used to refer to the bloc in its expanded form. The growing economic strength of BRICS is evidenced by the growth in the share of world GDP of the four founding members, which grew from about 8 per cent in 2000 to 24 per cent in 2023 (see fig. 1). In fact, when measured by [purchasing power parity](#), the share of global GDP of five original BRICS countries has increased from a little over 21 per cent to about 35 per cent since 2000, while that of the G7 countries has declined from 43 per cent to 30 per cent.

Between 2001 and 2021, annual [Foreign Direct Investment \(FDI\) inflows](#) to the bloc more than quadrupled and contributed significantly to gross fixed capital formation. Through the New Development Bank (NDB) established in 2014 to lend money to boost infrastructure, by the end of 2022, the bloc had [provided about \\$32bn](#) to emerging nations for infrastructural projects. With the admission of Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE into the bloc, the share of the world GDP of the ten BRICS countries (BRICS Plus) put together is estimated to be more than a [quarter of the global economy](#). The BRICS Plus will also account for about [44 per cent](#) of the world's crude oil production and [42 per cent](#) of the world's



Sources: O'Neill, J. (2001). [Building Better Global Economic BRICs](#). Global Economics Paper No: 66 & Ferragamo, M. (2024). [What is the BRICS group, and why is it expanding?](#) Council on Foreign Relations.

population. The growing economic strength of BRICS is an opportunity for Nigeria to leverage its partnership with the bloc to grow Nigeria's economy through access to markets of member states, FDI inflows from the bloc and funding for the much-needed infrastructural development in Nigeria.

Politically, the BRICS Plus provides a formidable platform for members to mount pressure on multilateral institutions to grant greater voice and representations to countries of the global South. Thus, by partnering with the BRICS, Nigeria can use the bloc as a platform to deepen its quest for expansion of the United Nations Security Council to provide a permanent seat for Africa to be occupied by Nigeria. Besides, the BRICS platform provides an opportunity for Nigeria to negotiate and attract support for its fight against insurgency and terrorism in the Sahel region. Already, countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE are playing mediation roles in Africa, with [Saudi Arabia leading ongoing peace talks for Sudan's civil war](#). Nigeria's partnership with the BRICS can strengthen the peace process in Sudan and other troubled African countries.

What risks must Nigeria mitigate in its partnership with the BRICS Plus?

ping mechanisms communities affected by Nigeria's participation in the BRICS as a partner country presents certain risks for Nigeria. Nigeria risks undermining the cordial relations existing between her and the West if its participation in the BRICS is not strategically managed. Some members of the BRICS Plus, particularly Iran and Russia, are longtime adversaries of the West. More recently, Russia has attracted [condemnation and sanctions](#) from the West over its invasion of Ukraine. Therefore, Nigeria must be careful not to demonstrate overt and unalloyed alignment to the anti-West stands of

some BRICS Plus members who support Russia's invasion of Ukraine because doing so may affect Nigeria's diplomatic relations with the West.

Russia is accused of contributing to instability in the Sahel through its Wagner Group. Through the Wagner Group, [Russia provides support](#) for military regimes in countries like Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, all of whom have severed diplomatic ties with France. Some [prominent members of the BRICS Plus](#), including Russia, Iran, and UAE, have been accused of contributing to the escalation of the ongoing civil war in Sudan [by shipping arms to rebel groups in Sudan](#). By joining the BRICS as a partner country, there is the risk that as Nigeria's ties with Russia deepens, Nigeria may fail to condemn the infamous activities of Russia and its Wagner Group in the Sahel if she prioritises the pecuniary interests and gains of the nation from the BRICS. If this happens, it will undermine the efforts of regional bodies, including ECOWAS, to pressure the military regimes in Africa to return their countries to democracy. Already, there are allegations of [silence by South Africa](#) over the infamous activities of the Wagner Group in Africa. It is not clear if this alleged silence is linked to South Africa's membership of BRICS. Again, as Russia continues to assert itself in [the Sahel through various strategies](#), including the spread of [disinformation through its Wagner Group](#), Nigeria's participation in the BRICS may be a subtle strategy by Russia to increase its foothold and pursue its national interest in the Sahel. In this regard, Nigeria risks becoming a battleground for the spread of Russia's disinformation and counter narratives by the West if Nigeria does not manage its partnership with the BRICS strategically.

On the economic angle, Russia's Wagner group has been accused of [exploiting mineral resources in parts of Africa](#) like the Central African Republic, Mali and Sudan. These resources are allegedly used by Russia to fund its war in Ukraine. If this is true, then Nigeria's poorly governed mineral resources, like gold already illicitly mined by armed groups in parts of the North West, are at risk of being exploited by Russian mercenaries if Nigeria's relations with Russia under the BRICS are not properly managed. Despite these risks, Nigeria stands to gain more if she strategically participates in the expanded BRICS.

Recommendations

1. ***Nigeria to develop a grand strategy for engaging the BRICS:*** Nigeria must develop a grand strategy that specifies its strategic interests in the BRICS. Such a grand strategy will enable Nigeria to leverage its partnership to attract FDIs, negotiate fair trade, obtain concessionary capital for infrastructural development, and transfer technology from BRICS member states like India and China.
2. ***Protect Nigeria's diplomatic and trade relations with the West:*** Nigeria must conduct herself in ways that enable her to build mutually beneficial relationships with BRICS member states without jeopardising her diplomatic relations with the West. Thus, Nigeria must be circumspect when dealing with delicate issues like the war in Ukraine.
3. ***Mitigate the spread of misinformation in the Sahel by Russia:*** Nigeria must manage its partnership with BRICS in ways that ensure Russia does not use Nigeria as a stronghold to continue the spread of misinformation across the Sahel.
4. ***Use BRICS as a pressure group for reform of multilateral institutions:*** Nigeria should use its partnership with the BRICS as a negotiating power to mount pressure on the West to reform multilateral institutions, including the United Nations, to accommodate the interests of African countries. To this end, Nigeria should join the BRICS as a pressure group to pursue a permanent seat for Africa in the UN Security Council.
5. ***Mobilise BRICS to bolster its leadership position in Africa:*** Nigeria can mobilise members of the BRICS to support its initiatives across Africa, particularly as it concerns the fight against terrorism and insurgency in the Sahel. Such support from BRICS member states can enable Nigeria to bolster its leadership in the continent.
6. ***BRICS member states should develop a charter for the bloc:*** Members of the expanded BRICS (BRICS Plus) must ensure that going forward, the bloc puts together a Charter to serve as a framework shaping relations among members and defining the objectives, rights and obligations of member states.

Conclusion

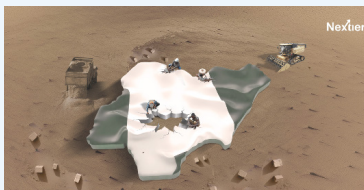
The BRICS has grown in economic strength and membership size, leading to the emergence of an expanded bloc, which analysts now refer to as BRICS Plus. Nigeria's participation in the BRICS presents enormous opportunities and risks for Nigeria. Nigeria should leverage the opportunities presented by the BRICS to enhance her economic development and leadership position in Africa by articulating a formidable grand strategy that will guide her engagement with the BRICS and other economic blocs. It is hoped that Nigeria will gain more if she strategically manages her partnership with the BRICS.

Authors:

Dr Chukwuma Okoli is an Associate Consultant at Nextier and a Lecturer at the Political Science Department at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria.

Dr Ndu Nwokolo is a Managing Partner at Nextier and an Honorary Fellow at the School of Government at the University of Birmingham, UK. He is also a Visiting Research Fellow at the Nathanson Centre on Transnational Human Rights, Crime, and Security at York University Canada.

Nextier Sample Publications



Ruin and Recovery: Nigeria's Infrastructure in Times of Violence

The wheels of Nigeria's infrastructural development are clogged at every turn. Factors such as insufficient budgetary allocations...



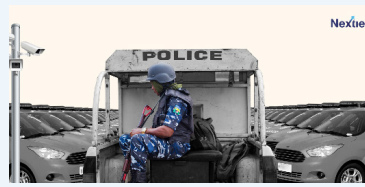
Between Secessionism and Banditry in South East Nigeria

The common form of conflict which the South East region of Nigeria is associated with is secessionist...



Bridging Gaps: Strengthening Governance for Peace in Mano River...

The Mano River region of West Africa, encompassing Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea, has endured...



Police Accountability: Bridging the Gap Between Public Trust and...

Police accountability forms the bedrock of any functional democracy in which law enforcement agencies must work within...



Migration and its Discontents Implications of the Rising Wave...

Anti-immigration policies have been rising across Europe, with many European countries introducing harsh immigration laws. In June...



Government and World Food Programme (WFP) Engagement with Rising Hunger Index in Nigeria

In the next six years, 2030, the world will evaluate the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) made by the UN in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro...