
BRICS NEW DELHI DECLARATION AND THE SHIFT TOWARDS MULTIPOLAR GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

BRICS New Delhi Declaration 2026: In the context of international institutions, the need for increased representation of the developing countries. This paper asks the question if these commitments can make a difference in the decision-making, specifically within the United Nations Security Council and the International Monetary Fund, in terms of demands for a multipolar world. It contrasts the declaration's proposals with the institutional rules and amendment procedures and required approvals, in a doctrinal and analytical manner. The analysis concludes that the declaration does not in itself redistribute legal authority, but offers a basis for cooperation. Implementation will be based on specific proposals, agreement beyond BRICS, and reconciling different national interests. It also identifies a higher influence of the big developing economies compared to a wider participation of smaller developing economies. Global justice calls for institutional reform which must be done both with an eye to legal feasibility and with an eye to representative fairness. The paper suggests more specific proposals for reform, safeguarding the influence of poorer members, wider consultation and openness over progress. It argues that the impact of the declaration's on inclusive governance is contingent upon its promises leading to forms of institutional participation that go beyond the most powerful states.

Keywords: BRICS; New Delhi Declaration; multipolarity; global justice; reform of the Security Council and IMF governance.

1. Introduction

In a globalizing world, decisions on peace, financial stability and development have impact on countries outside of the national borders. International institutions offer a mechanism to deal with these common concerns, but also pose questions of law and justice. Who are the players in the process of international rule making? Who or what interests are addressed? When it comes to decision making that impacts them, can countries with fewer resources really have a meaningful impact? Representation is a crucial aspect in understanding the fairness of global governance as well as these questions.

International institutions share power, in varying legal structures. The Charter of the UN establishes the sovereign equality of the members of the United Nations and gives special powers to the permanent members of the Security Council in decision making. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) uses a system of 'voting power' which includes basic votes and votes based on quotas. Thus, membership does not automatically give equal opportunity to participate in making institutional decisions. These arrangements are open to critique of existing legal frameworks and their ability to accommodate calls for fairer involvement.

This examination can be conducted based on the BRICS New Delhi Declaration 2026. It advocates for more representation of the developing countries in the Security Council and international financial governance reforms. The issues of Security Council reform are covered in paragraph 13, while financial institutions, such as IMF quota and voting shares, are addressed in paragraphs 17–18. These commitments link with demands for a multipolar world with proposals to redistribute influence in existing institutions.

Multipolarity and fair representation are two different things, however. A distribution of power among several influential states or groups of states is known as multipolarity. Recurring issues around fair representation include the opportunities available to the countries that are less economically and politically powerful. Increasing the strength of the big emerging economies can shift the international balance of power but not always lead to greater representation of smaller developing countries. Reform should then be judged from the point of view of global justice in terms of whose voice is amplified, and whether there is any real opportunity for less powerful states to voice their opinions.

This central research problem is the disconnect between political will to reform and the law

that is necessary to implement the reform. This paper discusses the viability of the New Delhi Declaration for more representation of the developing world in the Security Council and IMF. It takes into account legal and institutional challenges to these proposals and steps that might contribute to overcoming them. The two institutions offer different environments for exploring the functional distribution of authority and the possibilities for change in terms of legal rules.

With the declaration being adopted recently, it remains to be seen how it will impact the long term. It can, however, be evaluated based on its commitments vis-à-vis institutional procedures, required approvals and the interests of the participating states. The key question is whether BRICS can be useful in turning the calls for multipolarity into 'legally achievable' changes in international decision-making. By examining these changes in terms of representation and participation, the discussion will also take into account whether reform will promote the overall goal of greater global justice as well as the role of the major emerging powers.

2. Research Approach and Existing Scholarship

The study adopts a doctrinal and analytical approach to explore the dynamics between the reform pledges of the New Delhi Declaration and the rules on decision-making in the international context. The main legal instruments are the declaration, the IMF Articles of Agreement and the United Nations Charter, which it refers to, and the precedent BRICS commitments. It is important to understand cooperation, institutional power and representation in the context of academic scholarship. It analyses the specificity of the proposed reforms, and the procedures that need to be put in place to implement them and the impact of these on developing countries. There are two key measures of fairness: representation and meaningful participation.

Formici explores the BRICS as an emerging legal network, based on soft-law undertakings and sharing of legal practices. Her analysis pinpoints areas for cooperation, as well as gaps and vulnerabilities due to weak positions and poor implementation. This emphasises a critical difference between a common statement and arrangements that can implement it. This view, when applied to the New Delhi Declaration, is a focus on the possibility of collective commitments for subsequent institutional action.

Petrone asks if BRICS can make a positive contribution to Security Council reform. He highlights the need for a shared vision and how the various interests of the members make

things challenging. His work implies that there can be an agreement on the need for reform without an agreement about the design of the reform. A bid for more representation for the developing countries might leave unanswered questions of permanent membership, regional representation and voting rights. This can be a starting point to discuss the extent and the boundaries of the declaration language agreed for.

Stuenkel looks at the development of development banks in parallel with the international already existing institutions. His analysis is showing how emerging powers may be able to increase their institutional choices and remain within the current order. This helps to differentiate between two methods of change: reform from within existing institutions and complementary set-up outside existing institutions. The point is especially salient in the context of considering cooperation through the New Development Bank in isolation from the changes to the voting power and quota of the IMF.

These studies, combined, make it clear that BRICS' reform efforts need to be viewed not only in the light of the various differences that exist between the members, but also their institutional facilities. They come before the 2026 declaration and cannot make an assessment of the commitments of the declaration. Based on their arguments, this research compares the proposals in the declaration with the legal avenues for reform of the Security Council and IMF. It's a specific contribution: Can legal feasibility be paired with representative fairness: can it expand meaningful participation or will it mainly enhance the power of the major emerging powers? This way, it is the distribution and use of institutional power which are at the heart of the analysis of justice in a globalizing world.

3. The New Delhi Declaration: Purpose and Legal Significance

Main Priorities of the Declaration

The BRICS New Delhi Declaration links up demands for a more representative international order to BRICS cooperation in security, finance and development. Other areas of its agenda are peaceful cooperation, counter-terrorism, health, agriculture and innovation. In this agenda the reform of the Security Council and international financial institutions are especially pertinent to the link between law and global justice.

The declaration calls for more representation for developing countries in the Security Council

and IMF quotas and governance. It also inculcates Chinese and Russian support for greater participation of India and Brazil in the United Nations, including the Security Council. But this language shouldn't be seen as a promise of permanent membership or specific veto power.

The jobs are in addition to earlier announcements by the BRICS. The declaration refers back to some of the prior statements on Security Council reform and reiterates the Rio de Janeiro vision on IMF reform. This is why its significance hinges to an extent on whether it helps in bringing forward proposals, which BRICS members have already endorsed.

Multipolarity and Representation of the Global South

Multipolar governance is the sharing of influence at the international level among a number of centres. BRICS portrays co-operation between emerging and developing economies as a way to boost their involvement in global issues. But simply a greater number of influential states does not make international institutions fairer.

There are varying resources, interests and negotiating capacities in the Global South. Enhancing the influence of the big economies could not be equitable for smaller economies. This focus of the declaration on representation and protection of the quota shares of the poorest members of the IMF in developing countries is thus important in any discussion of the commitment to inclusion.

The aspirations of India provide an example of this relationship of national influence and broader reform. While the greater Indian representation will bring in more representation, it should be juxtaposed with the interests of other underrepresented countries in the realm of global justice. The question that matters is whether proposed changes expand or primarily redistribute power among the powerful States.

Political Commitments and Legal Obligations

Title alone cannot be used as a guide to the legal effect of an international document. The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties acknowledges that the designation of an agreement does not determine whether or not it is a treaty. What its terms and its intended legal effect are must be examined.

A word of caution: the reform commitments listed here are more political initiatives than

provisions that directly alter the rules of the game of institutions. They are in favor of additional cooperation and negotiation, but are not a mechanism that would assign seats or voting power in the Security Council or the IMF. The reaffirmation of the existing international obligations also does not make it the source of the obligations.

It is unclear, however, that such commitments can affect legal developments. They set common positions, facilitate negotiations and serve as a measure to judge whether the subsequent actions of members are in line with their priorities. The extent to which these are able to be implemented in practice will be more dependent on more specific proposals and approvals within each institution.

The declaration thus serves as a springboard to seek reform. How its promises are translated into lawful institutional changes and for whose benefit those changes are beneficial determines whether it will help create a more just international order.

4. Reforming the UN Security Council

Developing Countries and Unequal Representation

The Security Council has the main responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Its decisions have the potential to impact countries that are not even members, so representation is significant to the legitimization of its authority. There are 5 permanent members and 10 elected members of the Council as provided for in Article 23 of the UN Charter. Elected members serve two-year terms; permanent members do not have to be elected and have special voting privileges.

No permanent seats in Africa, Latin America. India and Brazil also want to strengthen their institutional role. The elected membership provides countries from these regions with opportunities to participate, but not with the continuity and voting rights that come with permanent membership. The worry is a lack of balance in the deliberations of an organization that has global ramifications.

From the standpoint of global justice, reform entails something more than the recognition of the economic or political significance of specific states. It involves thinking about the role that countries impacted by security decisions can play in the decision-making process. But simply adding permanent members to the chamber wouldn't be a panacea to this issue. Expansion

risked to expand privileged positions without more consultation and accountability resulting in little influence for smaller states.

BRICS' Position on Security Council Reform

The New Delhi Declaration advocates for a holistic reform of the Security Council and more representation for developing countries. It acknowledges the dreams of Africa, Asia and Latin America and the backing by China and Russia for India and Brazil's role to be bigger in the United Nations, including its Security Council. The commitments offer a common starting point for additional negotiations but leave many details unresolved.

A viable proposal should include the number of extra seats, who is in, who isn't, how they are selected, and who has a vote. The support for increased representation does not necessarily imply consensus about these issues. Specifically, there should be no reading into this support for India and Brazil playing a larger role as an express acceptance of permanent seats with veto powers.

The African location depicts the significance of these details. The common African position is for at least two permanent seats to be introduced with the same privileges as those of current permanent members, notably the veto (while it still exists), and five non-permanent seats. The negotiations should therefore be meaningful and take into account various regional demands instead of assuming that all the developing countries are pushing for a single model.

Legal Requirements and Political Barriers

The membership of the Council needs to be changed through amendment to the UN Charter. There are two stages: a two-thirds majority in the General Assembly, and a two-thirds majority by the constitutions of the UN members. The permanent members of the Security Council are the five countries that must be included in the ratification. A General Assembly vote of approval for reform is therefore not enough.

This presents a great deal of tension. Shifting power from institutions requires permission of the permanent institutions. The requirement serves to guarantee the stability of the Charter framework, but also allows an existing permanent member to block an amendment from coming into effect by not ratifying it. Compliance with these legal requirements is necessary, and can be supported by the BRICS agreement.

However, amendment can be made. In 1965 changes took effect that increased the Council to 15 members. This shows a legal way to expand, but that's not the reform that took away vetoes or provided new seats. Its precedent sets legal precedent and not a guarantee about the present proposals.

The veto must be handled with care, too. There are no circumstances under which an abstention grants a negative vote a blocking power, as is the case with a negative vote of a permanent member under Art.27. Permanent membership and the veto arrangements are thus two different decisions, which are linked. Any reform plan that is credible must not only establish who would be involved, but also how the reformed Council would make decisions. This would enable the general commitments in the declaration to be tested against actual law changes.

5. Reforming Global Financial Governance

IMF Quotas, Voting Power and Representation

International monetary cooperation and financial stability are two of the important functions of the IMF. Its governance is important as it could impact on public spending, employment and development decisions on financial assistance and economic adjustment. Thus, participation in the fair means not only sharing of voting power, but also the conditions for the countries to affect policies that impact on their citizens.

The quota is a member's financial contribution and affects its access to the IMF's resources. Voting power is a combination of quota-based voting and basic voting in which all votes are equal. This is a system of recognising monetary contributions and ensuring at least a basic level of equality. But the bigger the quota, the more influence will countries have in decision-making in institutions.

There is a crucial difference between the two of increasing quotas and redistributing quota shares. A 50 per cent increase was approved by the Sixteenth General Review, with the increase being pro-rated among members. This sort of increase enhances the financial resources of the IMF without altering members' relative quota shares. Therefore, there is no direct relationship between the size of the financial contribution and the relative voice. To consider representative reform, one must not only consider the increase in resources, but also the distribution of influence.

BRICS' Proposals and Barriers to Reform

The New Delhi Declaration backs the robust IMF and wants governance arrangements that are more reflective of the role of the developing economies in the world economy. It requires a realignment of quotas, and protection of the interests of the poorest members' quotas. This raises the issue of justice: How is it possible to look at the increasing role of a country like India as an economic power without harming a smaller developing nation?

The legal path will vary with the proposed change. Article III of the IMF Articles of Agreement require the support of 85 per cent of the overall voting power for the changes in quotas. The amount of the quota of a member may not be modified without his/her consent and upon the required payment. This means that to reform, it will take more than just the BRICs members agreeing.

If the Articles themselves are to be modified, there is a different process for that. Amendments are approved in general accordance with Article XXVIII and are subject to the approval of the Board of Governors and acceptance by three-fifths of all members representing 85 per cent of all members' total voting power. Some of the safeguarding provisions need to be accepted by all the members. Thus, quota adjustment and amendment of the governing treaty should not be confused with each other.

These thresholds will provide countries with considerable voting power an influence over reform. The ensuing challenge is similar to the Security Council issue: shifting the authority distribution requires some buy-in from the people who are benefiting from what is. BRICS therefore need to create a momentum building outside of its members and come up with proposals that balance economic clout with protection for the less influential countries.

The New Development Bank and Local-Currency Cooperation

BRICS also aims to achieve financial cooperation, through the New Development Bank, which funds infrastructure and sustainable development. It is not involved in monetary and financial-stability functions of the IMF. Extra development financing could increase countries' choices, but would not alter their voting rights at the IMF.

Other institutions will also have to be examined. Voting power under the Bank's founding agreement is based on the subscribed shares, and provides for a minimum combined voting

share of the founders. Its creation does not take away doubts about the concentration of power, therefore. Fairness is measured by the way that the lender and the governance body are doing things.

In a similar vein, the declaration's backing for exploring local-currency settlements is related to how trade and investment payments are made. It is not to be mistaken for an existing common currency of the BRICS, or just a rebalancing of the powers in the IMF. The practical arrangements need to take into consideration payment compatibility, currency availability and financial risks. These programs can be adjuncts to institutional reform and their effectiveness should be evaluated separately. A wider range of financing and payment options is desirable, and representation needs to be meaningful, which means that those "rules" need to be considered.

6. Critical Analysis: Can BRICS Deliver More Inclusive Governance

The Gap Between Commitments and Implementation

As the Security Council and IMF discussions demonstrate, a shared issue with the support for fairer representation is that it does not define how authority is to be redistributed. The declaration gives a general direction, and the legal measures outlined above need concrete proposals and further consensus. It is therefore important to analyse its contribution in relation with the linkages between its commitments and the institutional change required to meet them.

There are also different standards of improvement for the two institutions. In the Security Council, progress would take the form of reaching agreement on membership categories and voting and an amendment proposal that could get the required ratifications. In the IMF, it would be a decision that would balance the relative influence and safeguard the vulnerable members. A greater amount of financial resources does not, by itself, prove better representation, unless there is a change in the percentage allotment of the quota.

This separation makes it possible to keep the political and institutional reform separate. While repetitive declarations can be useful to keep negotiations going, mere repetition is not the basis of implementation. A more solid foundation for assessment would link each commitment to a suggested legislative change, a body that must consider the change and the approvals that have yet to be completed, etc. It would make it easier to assess the practical contribution of the

declaration if it were to take such an approach.

Shared Demands and Different National Interests

BRICS members can agree that international institutions need to be reformed, but have divergent perspectives on the power distribution. This difficulty can be seen in the Security Council. While China and Russia are already permanent members, India and Brazil are pushing for a greater role. The points at which they begin, even when they are articulating the general language of greater representation, are different, then.

In order to maintain an atmosphere of cooperation, members may agree on broad wording rather than on every issue that is in contention. But this diplomatic advantage turns into a liability during implementation when decisions have to be made. The support for a bigger role doesn't solve issues regarding permanent seats and veto rights or regional selection. The difficulty is in getting from "the general idea" to a stance that members are willing to accept and back via the proper legal channels.

The issue of financial reform is a similar one. A formula that weights by economic size can work in favour of large emerging economies and not help the smaller developing economies. The need for an economic transition should thus be kept in mind in parallel with the pledge to safeguard the poorer members. This involves negotiations not just within BRICS, but also with the other institutional members. Otherwise, an "ordinary appeal to fairness" can mask disagreement as to what fairness demands.

Greater Influence for BRICS or Wider Benefits for Developing Countries

The main question around justice is whether reform is increasing the number of people involved, or simply shifting who is making privileged decisions. If BRICS members are given influence, institutions will be more representative of major economic and political powers. It does not automatically, however, provide more opportunities to smaller states in decision making.

Representation must thus be judged more than just in numbers and votes. Some of these are consultation with countries involved, the opportunity to raise issues, information and accountability for decisions. For instance, the addition of more permanent seats would strengthen the presence of the regions, at least for many states, which would be dependent on

the willingness of the new seats to consult them. There is no guarantee that regional representation and regional accountability go hand in hand.

India's aspirations fit in this broader context. This greater Indian presence would increase the number of actors in institutions that have power, and its impact on global justice would also hinge on the arrangements it would support for other nations. It should be done on the same basis with all the BRICS members. The declaration provides a foundation for reform; however, its promise of inclusive governance can only be believed if the changes being proposed explain how the states that are less represented will be able to gain meaningful influence. Multipolarity must, therefore, be considered as an opportunity for better governance—the success of which is conditional on institutional design and action thereafter.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The New Delhi Declaration can contribute to the more representative global governance by providing the common basis for negotiation. But its pledges don't in themselves shift institutional power. The analysis demonstrates that meaningful reform is conditional on specific proposals, a consensus outside of BRICS and respect for the processes in each of the institutions. It may therefore be best viewed as a facilitator of a legal and political change process, the result of which is still to be determined.

BRICS should translate its general commitments into institution-specific proposals. These should explain to the Security Council who will be members, how representation and voting will be handled in the regions. If members are not in agreement, the differences would give a better ground for negotiation than the repeated affirmations of general principles. Proposals should also include a description of how further representation would enhance consultation with countries which are not represented by the Council.

Proposals should differentiate from the IMF's perspective an increase in financial resources from a change in relative voting power. Any intended quota corrections should spell out their expected impact on emerging economies and on poorer members. This would enable fairness claims to be considered in the light of the distribution of influence. Development financing, in particular local-currency financing, should be assessed separately as a means of cooperation, but not as a replacement of changes in the governance of the IMF.

A public review of progress between summits would also be beneficial for implementation. A review of this nature would be able to pinpoint outstanding legal actions, consensus proposals, and points of contention. It is recommended that consultation with smaller developing countries be undertaken to ensure that the reform agenda of BRICS reflects interests beyond the ones of its strongest ones. These measures would not eliminate the need for formal approvals, but could help increase transparency and the quality of the negotiations.

The declaration provides a potential pathway to more inclusive decision making processes and not evidence that a more equitable order has come about. The main obstacles are legal and political – requiring approval processes, existing privileges and varying national interests. Success should be defined from the law and justice in a globalising world perspective as meaningful opportunities to participate and influence decision making. Greater influence by the BRICS would help with that only if it comes in the form of institutional arrangements that would extend those opportunities more widely.

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