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Emerging Trade Relations Among BRICS Nations

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Abstract

This study article presents a thorough analysis of the evolving trade relationships among BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—over the period from 1992 to 2023. Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research methods, the study explores the diverse factors driving economic cooperation among these emerging economies. Secondary information derived from scholarly sources, government reports, and industry publications form the basis for examining trade dynamics. The findings show substantial growth in trade volumes, led predominantly by China, with India also showing significant expansion. Although Brazil, Russia, and South Africa display variable trade patterns, their overall trade volumes have risen throughout the time spent studying. The investigation also discovered that the majority of the BRICS nations had a negative trade balance during the study period. Notably, the increasing share of intra-BRICS trade from 2004 to 2023 illustrates a concerted effort to strengthen economic cooperation and reduce reliance on traditional Western markets. The research highlights the different economic scales and development paths within the BRICS group, with China playing a key role in global trade. The paper also addresses challenges such as trade imbalances, effects on local industries, and environmental issues. Finally, it provides practical ideas for policymakers to leverage international trade benefits while ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic development.

Keywords: BRICS, Emerging, Economic Trade, Developing Nations

Introduction

The concept of grouping the world's greatest emerging countries under the acronym BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) originated with James O'Neill, a renowned worldwide economic research analyst from the top US investment firm Goldman Sachs. Suggested by the English term "brick," O'Neill created the abbreviation BRIC (Building Better Global Economic BRICs) in an article he authored in 2001 (Kolesnichenko, Rozanov, & Debin, 2013). According to the logic of the acronym, Kazakhstan, a country with enormous development potential, may have joined the BRICs "to complete the picture." First, though, the alliance gained a transcontinental aspect when the Republic of South Africa became a member (Kolesnichenko, Rozanov, & Debin, 2013).

As attention focuses on wars in Eastern Europe and the Middle East and mounting tensions between the world's great powers, a structural shift in the global order has been quietly underway. Large developing nations are exerting greater influence in world economic affairs and are beginning to build alternatives to Western-led institutions. At this movement's core is a formal intergovernmental grouping known as the BRICS plus. The grouping includes five longstanding members—Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa—as well as five that joined in January 2024 or have been invited: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Together, these ten nations account for around 40 percent of both crude oil production and exports. They also account for one-quarter of global GDP, two-fifths of global trade in goods, and nearly half of the world's population. Adding another dozen nations that have applied for membership, including dynamic emerging markets such as Thailand, Vietnam, and Bangladesh, would raise the group's share to one-third of global GDP (Azevedo, et al., 2024).

Trade in goods among BRICS economies has considerably outpaced trade between the BRICS and G7 nations, leading to greater intra-BRICS trade intensity. Decades of rapid growth have also given many of these economies far more weight in the global economy, both as producers and consumers. Because many of these nations are engaged with both advanced economies and China, which is perceived as an economic and trade superpower, they can create another coalition less dependent on the West (Azevedo, et al., 2024).

Trade has been a major driver of the economic development of BRICS plus. The share of global trade in goods transacted among the group's current members more than doubled, to 40 percent, from 2002 through 2022. This tendency becomes more evident when looking at the increasing dependence of specific BRICS plus economies on trade with fellow BRICS plus members. China's growing role as a supplier of industrial and consumer goods, in addition an importer of commodities, has been a key force for integration (Azevedo, et al., 2024).

The Table 1 provides a comprehensive snapshot of the economic and demographic statistics for the BRICS countries in 2023. China leads the group with the highest GDP at approximately $17.79 trillion, significantly surpassing the other members. India follows with a GDP of about $3.55 trillion, while Brazil and Russia have similar GDPs of around $2.17 trillion and $2.02 trillion, respectively. South Africa's GDP is the smallest at $377.78 billion. The gross domestic product per capita, Russia tops the list at $13,817, followed by China at $12,614, Brazil at $10,044, South Africa at $6,253, and India at $2,485. The population figures show India as the most populous with approximately 1.43 billion individuals, marginally more than China's 1.41 billion. Brazil and Russia have populations of 216 million and 144 million, respectively, while South Africa has the smallest population at 60 million. In terms of trade, China is the dominant exporter and importer with exports worth $3.51 trillion and imports worth $3.13 trillion. India has substantial export and import activities as well, with figures of $777.14 billion and $850.64 billion, respectively. Russia's exports and imports are valued at $466.60 billion and $378.93 billion, respectively, while Brazil's exports are at $393.66 billion, closely followed by its imports at $342.21 billion. South Africa, while the smallest economy, has exports and imports worth $124.76 billion and $123.53 billion, respectively.

Analysing the data, it is evident that China is the economic powerhouse of the BRICS, with the highest GDP and trade volumes, driven by its large population and strong manufacturing sector. India's large population contributes to its growing economic and trade figures, however its GDP per capita remains the lowest among the BRICS. Russia and Brazil have similar economic sizes but differ in their GDP per capita and trade balances, reflecting their unique economic structures. South Africa, while smaller in economic terms, maintains a balanced trade profile, highlighting its strategic economic position in the African continent.

Table 1: Total GDP, Per Capita, Population, Export and Import, of BRICS Countries (2023)

Total GDP, GDP Per Capita, Export, Import, and Population of BRICS Countries (2023)					
Countries	GDP	GDP Per Capita	Population	Export	Import
Brazil	2,173,665,655,937	10,044	216,422,446	393,656,923,983	342,214,686,307
Russia	2,021,421,476,035	13,817	143,826,130	466,604,779,915	378,926,011,233
India	3,549,918,918,778	2,485	1,428,627,663	777,135,587,444	850,641,682,920
China	17,794,781,986,105	12,614	1,410,710,000	3,513,236,885,529	3,127,201,616,052
South Africa	377,781,600,986	6,253	60,414,495	124,755,265,329	123,532,082,833

Source: World Development Indicator

As the world witnesses the ascent of BRICS nations as major economic players, understanding the intricacies of their trade relations becomes imperative for policymakers, economists, and global stakeholders. The study's purpose is to present a thorough examination of the emerging trade relations among BRICS nations, shed light on the various elements that influence their economic collaborations and recommend practical implications for the future world economy.

Need of the Study

Given the pivotal role BRICS nations play in the global economy, understanding their emerging trade relations is crucial. BRICS nations represent diverse economies with substantial economic growth, significant market potential, and influential political power. Understanding the trade dynamics within this group is crucial for comprehending the shifting patterns of global trade and economic cooperation. This study is essential to identify the opportunities and challenges faced by these nations in fostering trade relations, which can inform policymakers, economists, and businesses about strategic trade partnerships. Additionally, it provides insights into how these developing markets can use their collective strength to enhance their global trade presence, thus contributing to the broader discourse on international economic development and cooperation.

Literature Review

There are numerous studies analysis the trade relation between the BRICS countries. However, (Jain, 2023) investigates the effect of trade connections on the expansion of the budget of developing countries, with a particular focus on rising economies such as Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. It dives into theoretical frameworks such as dependency, modernization, classical, and neoclassical trade models, and examines how the rapid growth of these economies may affect both developed and rising economies. As stated by the report, policies that promote trade transparency and diversification are critical to boosting economic growth, with China already serving as a growth engine through rapid expansion and export market facilitation. While India and Brazil have similar potential, South Africa's position is undetermined, signifying a revolutionary shift in the global economic landscape as a result of developing nations' rapid growth.

(Bhattacharya & Sharad Nath, 2016) examines the link among export and import of products and services and economic evolution per capita in the BRICS nations using a variety of econometric approaches such as panel unit root, panel cointegration, Granger causality tests, FMOLS, and DOLS. The data show a cointegrated relationship between the variables, implying a long-term relationship. Importantly, the study shows that, eventually, both export and import of goods and services Granger generate a rise in per capita economic growth. Moreover, there is evidence of reciprocal causal relationship between export of products and services and economic development in the brief run. The learning recommends that the linked nature of rising GDP and trade supports the BRICS nations' export-oriented strategies.

(O'Neill, 2001) assesses the state of the global economy as of year-end, focusing on the dynamic between the G7 and major emerging market economies, particularly the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, and China). The study's forecasts for 2001 and 2002 indicate a more positive outlook for the BRICs compared to the G7, with projections suggesting these emerging economies will outpace the G7 in terms of growth. The paper explores different scenarios for the next decade, considering nominal GDP assumptions and exchange-rate conversion methods. Regardless of the scenario, the relative weight of the BRICs is expected to increase significantly, led by China, influencing the global economic landscape. The paper also suggests potential reforms in European economic governance, anticipating the need for adjustments in representation both within the Eurozone and globally, with the inclusion of key BRIC nations in international economic coordination efforts.

(AFONSO, 2001) examines the impact of commercial and technological aspects of international commerce on the physical accumulation and quality of productive factors from Adam Smith to the present. The study stresses the historical evolution of economic thought, noting that throughout the 'classic period,' economic growth and international trade were considered as inseparable branches, with a prevalent conviction in the favourable influence of international trade on economic expansion. However, during the 'neoclassical period,' these theories grew autonomous, resulting in the neglect of international trade's role within the framework of economic growth until the 1960s. The paper emphasizes the recent reintegration of both theories, particularly with the inclusion of endogenous growth models. This integration, made possible by improved modelling frameworks and recent advances in international trade theory, adds to a better understanding of the complicated link that exists between economic growth and international commerce.

(Sharma , Shahbaz , Kautish , & Vinh Vo, 2021) explores the complex relationship that exists between the need for renewable energy, export dynamics, and the BRICS countries' rapid industrial expansion between 1990 and

2018. The research looks at export diversification, extensive and intensive export margins, and the effects of overall, horizontal, and vertical export growth on the demand for renewable energy. Considerations are made for controlled variables including capital formation, income inequality, and technological innovation. Elasticity coefficients show that the adoption of greener energy solutions is positively influenced by elements such as capitalization, conventional exports, export diversification, and technical breakthrough. However, in contrast, the demand for renewable energy is negatively impacted by new product exports and wealth disparity. The study emphasizes the need of sophisticated, renewable energy-based production processes and equitable income distribution in promoting cleaner behaviours at the industrial and home levels. It presents a comprehensive policy framework to integrate economic and environmental goals and encourage positive contributions from a wide range of stakeholders.

(Chen , Xie , Shahbaz , Song , & Wu, 2021) investigates the competitiveness and trade complementarities of BRICS nations in fossil energy trade, employing the logarithmic average division index (LMDI) method to link shown the complementary nature of trade and comparative advantage indices. The findings reveal an annual decline in China's competitiveness in coal trade, contrasting with Russia's increasing competitiveness. collaboration in the trading of crude oil has expanded steadily amongst China and Russia, although India and Russia exhibit high complementarity with unstable drivers, and Russia consistently demonstrates exceptional and consistent supply capacity for natural gas within the BRICS countries.

(Amaechi, 2020) discusses BRICS, a substantial coalition of major emerging economies, with an emphasis on its goals of forging both short-term political and long-term economic alliances within a global system. The paper explores the contrasts and similarities within the BRICS bloc, investigating their methods for international power projection and assessing their overall relevance to the worldwide political economy through the analysis of secondary data sources. The BRICS have emerged as a crucial participant in ensuring a peaceful, prosperous, and multipolar world, and this article seeks to provide light on the dynamics and ramifications of this influential alliance.

(DE CASTRO, 2013) looks at the changing trade dynamics of the BRICS economies, specifically how export landscape is changing away from the Triad (the United States, the European Union, and Japan) and toward emerging markets. Despite maintaining ties with the Triad, BRICS trade engagement has broadened, with an emphasis on regional trade within BRICS and interactions with the Triad. The study identifies significant changes in product groups, with an intensity on increased exports to markets outside the Triad, for example China and India. The assessment investigates factors such as revealed comparative advantage, export trade introversion, complementarity, and trade barriers, revealing significant trade divergences for specific product groups, particularly mineral fuels, oils, and distillation products from Brazil and South Africa to China and India.

(Farooq, Abdul Rehman Shah, & Ullah, 2023) explores the upshot of exports on BRICS countries' economic growth since 1990 to 2017, applying panel data analysis. The outcomes designate a long-term association between variables such oil rents, exports, population growth, government consumption, food production, inflation, trade, trade openness, gross capital formation, foreign investment, and debt services using a variety of economic indicators. The study highlights the positive association between export earnings and economic growth in the countries investigated, emphasizing that countries with restricted natural resources may experience obstacles in economic growth due to reduced exports and earnings.

(Deepak, 2008) discovers the economic implications of China, India, Brazil, and South Africa's rise, assessing their potential impact on both industrialized and developing countries through channels like international trade, investment, finance, and migration, with a focus on whether these nations could become the new engines of universal economic growth, noticing that China already supports growth elsewhere, while India and Brazil have similar potential, and the transformative effects of their rapid growth are reshaping the world's economic power balance.

(Gil da SILVA, 2020) describes the BRICS group, which was founded around a decade ago to include industrialized countries. The term BRICS was coined in 2001 by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neal to symbolize Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. BRICS leaders envisage the group as a transformation agent and argue for it to be a voice for developing countries. The BRICS nations, which now represent approximately one-fifth of the global economy, want to express their influence on the world stage and play a key role in influencing global economic trends.

(Singh K. , 2016) examines the evolution and significance of the BRICS group, originally comprising Brazil, Russia, India, and China, later expanded to include South Africa (BRICS). It highlights their substantial impact on the worldwide economy, with projections representing a third of the global economy and nearly half of global GDP growth by 2020. The study delves into the changing dynamics of BRICS's foreign trade, emphasizing China's dominant role in intra-BRICS trade, and suggests that enhanced cooperation within the bloc can leverage their comparative advantages for mutual benefit.

(Singh & Dube, 2014) scrutinizes the progress of the BRIC acronym, highlighting its origin in a Goldman Sachs paper and subsequent predictions of the collective significance of Brazil, Russia, India, and China in the global economy. While recent trends support these predictions, the paper acknowledges challenges within the BRICS group, such as low rankings in global reports, inadequate infrastructure, and internal differences. It emphasizes the potential for the BRICS countries to form a powerful bloc but underscores the need for addressing internal issues, fostering cooperation, and implementing strategic measures for sustained success.

(Wilson & Purushothaman, 2003) outlines projections for the BRICS economies (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) over the next 50 years, suggesting they could surpass the G6 in US dollar terms, with substantial growth driven by higher real growth and currency appreciation. The projections, contingent on supportive policies and institutions, anticipate a significant shift in global economic dynamics, impacting investment portfolios, capital flows, commodity demand, and market opportunities, emphasizing the strategic importance of being involved in emerging markets for global companies.

Methodology

This study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques to analysis the emerging trade ties between the BRICS economies from 1992 to 2023. The research focused on a sample of five developing nations: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. Secondary data was utilized, sourced from various data repositories, including academic articles, government reports, and industry publications. The comprehensive analysis of these diverse data sources provided a robust foundation for analysing emerging trade relations among BRICS nations. By integrating both methodological approaches, the study offers a nuanced perspective that captures both statistical trends and contextual insights, contributing to the broader discourse on global economic development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

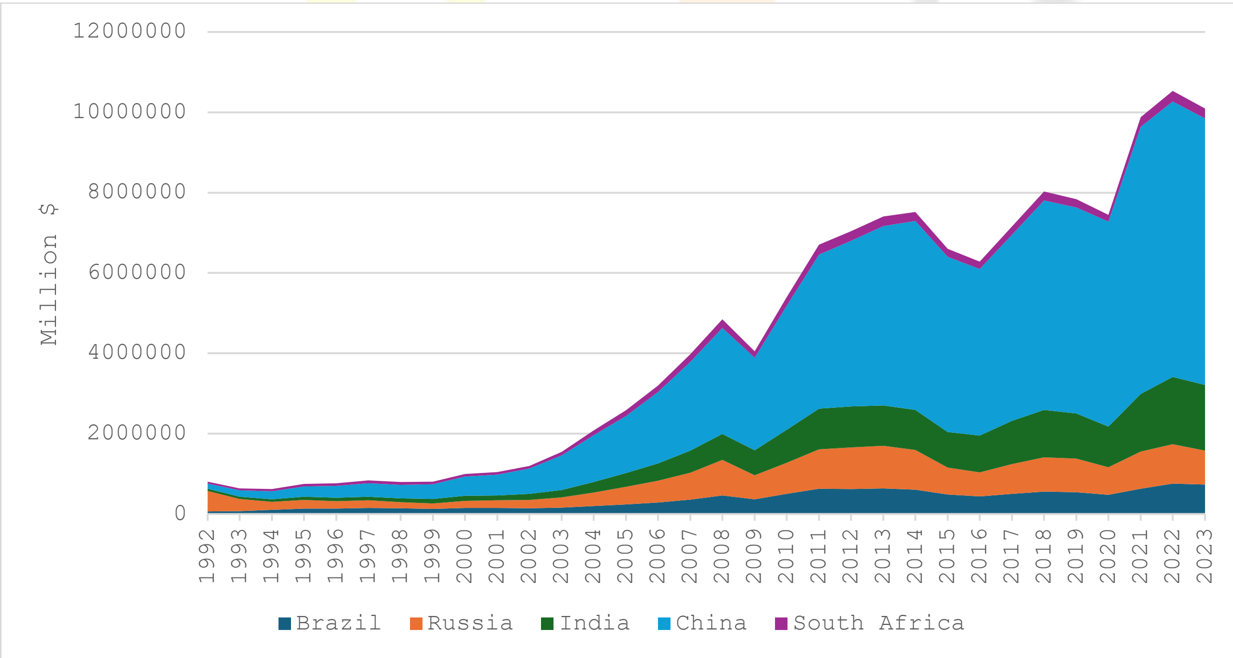
Data Analysis

Total Trade (Import & Export) of BRICS Countries (1992-2023)

The Figure 1 depicts the total trade (imports and exports) of the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) from 1992 to 2023. Each country's trade volume is represented in different colours, allowing us to analyse their individual trade growth and contributions to the total BRICS trade. China, represented in purple, dominates the chart with the largest trade volumes among the BRICS nations. From 1992, China's trade growth is exponential, reflecting its rapid industrialization and integration into the global economy. The trade volume continues to soar, with notable peaks around 2008 and a brief dip during the global financial crisis. Post-crisis, China's trade volume surged again, reaching its highest points in 2021-2022 before a slight decline in 2023. India's trade volume, illustrated in green, shows a consistent upward trend from 1992 onwards. India's trade began to rise significantly in the early 2000s, mirroring global economic trends and its own economic liberalization. There are minor fluctuations, but overall, the trajectory remains upward. India's trade volume increased substantially after 2010, reaching new heights by 2023, highlighting its growing importance in global trade. Brazil's trade volume, represented in blue, shows a steady increase over the years. From 1992 to the early 2000s, Brazil's trade grew gradually. However, there is a noticeable uptick starting around 2003, continuing to rise with some fluctuations until 2023. The global financial crisis around 2008-2009 caused a slight dip, but Brazil's trade resumed growth afterward, peaking around 2021. The fluctuations suggest Brazil's trade is somewhat sensitive to global economic conditions. Russia's trade, shown in red, also exhibits growth from 1992 to 2023. The growth pattern is similar to Brazil's, with a gradual increase until the early 2000s, followed by a more rapid rise. Russia experienced a significant dip during the 2008-2009 financial crisis, but trade levels recovered and grew steadily until around 2013. Post-2013, Russia's trade growth plateaued, indicating potential geopolitical or economic factors affecting its trade volume. South Africa's trade, shown in turquoise, is the smallest among the BRICS countries but shows steady growth. From 1992, there is a gradual increase with a noticeable rise starting in the early 2000s. The 2008-2009 financial crisis impacts South Africa similarly to the other BRICS nations, but trade levels recover and continue to grow. The growth is more modest compared to the other countries, indicating South Africa's relatively smaller but stable role in BRICS trade.

Comparing all five BRICS countries, China clearly stands out with the largest trade volume, significantly surpassing the others. India's trade volume is the second-largest, showing strong growth, particularly in the last decade. Brazil and Russia have similar growth patterns, with noticeable increases post-2000 but more fluctuations. South Africa, while growing steadily, has the smallest trade volume. The overall trend for BRICS countries shows increasing trade volumes, with China being the major driver of growth, reflecting its pivotal role in global trade dynamics. This comparison highlights the diverse economic scales and growth trajectories amid the BRICS alliance.

Figure 1: Total Trade of BRICS Countries (1992-2023)



Source: World Development Indicators

Trade Balance of BRICS Countries (1992-2023)

The Figure 2 depicts the trade balance of the BRICS nations from 1992 to 2023. Brazil's trade balance exhibited significant fluctuations. In the early 1990s, Brazil enjoyed a positive trade balance, peaking at $8,150 million in 1992. However, starting from 1995, the country faced persistent trade deficits, reaching a low of -$23,042 million in 1997. This negative trend continued through the early 2000s, with minor positive balances such as $4,297 million in 2002 and $30,323 million in 2005. The period from 2009 to 2015 saw Brazil experiencing large deficits again, peaking at -$65,368 million in 2014. A positive shift occurred post-2015, with Brazil closing 2023 with a substantial trade surplus of $51,442 million, indicating a significant improvement in trade performance. Russia consistently maintained a positive trade balance from 1992 to 2023, reflecting its strong export capabilities, particularly in energy and raw materials. Starting at $64,753 million in 1992, Russia's trade surplus experienced fluctuations, but remained robust throughout the period. Notable peaks include $153,407 million in 2008 and $289,887 million in 2022, highlighting Russia's export strength. Despite some declines in the trade balance, such as during the global financial crisis in 2008, Russia's trade balance stayed positive, closing at $87,679 million in 2023, albeit lower than its previous peaks but still demonstrating a strong export-driven economy. India's trade balance from 1992 to 2023 was consistently negative, reflecting its heavy dependence on imports. Starting with a deficit of -$2,154 million in 1992, India’s trade deficit worsened over the years, reaching significant lows like -$119,283 million in 2011 and -$122,906 million in 2012. Despite some improvements in recent years, such as a lesser deficit of -$10,516 million in 2020, India still faced substantial deficits. By 2023, India recorded a trade deficit of -$73,506 million, indicating a persistent imbalance between imports and exports. China's trade balance showed a dramatic increase, becoming a global export powerhouse from 1992 to 2023. Starting with a modest surplus of $4,998 million in 1992, China's trade surplus grew significantly, reaching $460,829 million in 2021. This growth reflects China's export-oriented economic strategy and integration into global supply chains. Despite some fluctuations, for instance, the decline in 2018 with $91,487 million, China maintained high surpluses, closing at $386,035 million in 2023. This consistent surplus underscores China's pivotal role in global trade. South Africa's trade balance exhibited mixed results from 1992 to 2023. The country experienced alternating periods of surplus and deficit, starting with a positive balance of $5,274 million in 1992. It faced deficits in the mid-2000s, such as -$4,776 million in 2006, but also recorded surpluses in recent years, peaking at $25,787 million in 2021. South Africa ended 2023 with a modest surplus of $1,223 million, reflecting a relatively balanced trade situation overall, though with significant fluctuations throughout the years

When comparing the BRICS nations, clear differences emerge in their trade balance trends. China and Russia consistently maintained high trade surpluses, driven by strong export sectors, particularly in manufacturing for China and energy for Russia. Brazil, while fluctuating, showed recent improvement with a strong surplus in 2023. In contrast, India faced consistent trade deficits due to its high import dependence despite economic growth. South Africa's trade balance was more variable, with periods of both surplus and deficit but has shown positive trends recently. Overall, the BRICS nations exhibit diverse trade patterns influenced by their unique economic structures and global roles, involving China and Russia standing out for their export dominance.

Figure 2: Trade Balance of BRICS Countries (1992-2023)

Trade Balance of BRICS (1992-2023)					
Years	**Brazil**	**Russia**	**India**	**China**	**South Africa**
1992	8150	64753	-2154	4998	5274
1993	5183	33548	47	-11792	6080
1994	1846	18028	-988	7357	3046
1995	-14823	13429	-4250	11958	1026
1996	-18498	16544	-4554	17550	2204
1997	-23042	8920	-5148	42823	1723
1998	-20535	18073	-7005	43837	1534
1999	-11108	33396	-8770	30641	3455
2000	-14837	52012	-4246	28786	3927
2001	-12280	38865	-4255	28086	4797
2002	4297	37241	-5046	37383	4385

2003	12399	48938	-4233	35821	4151
2004	22845	72423	-12662	51174	-329
2005	30323	104616	-22898	124627	-659
2006	29983	125994	-29981	208919	-4776
2007	19039	112060	-49726	308036	-4021
2008	-3215	153407	-62025	348833	-4632
2009	-6722	90979	-73426	220130	1246
2010	-22994	123146	-74621	222401	4845
2011	-20128	165215	-119283	180895	3482
2012	-33507	147144	-122906	231864	-5666
2013	-56912	123874	-55375	234872	-8485
2014	-65368	132221	-60894	221550	-5712
2015	-20784	109725	-48310	358836	-4505
2016	7177	66276	-40526	255484	1459
2017	14820	83515	-83759	215697	4365
2018	7549	165826	-101666	91487	2061
2019	-12072	129322	-73070	132788	1971
2020	8931	75810	-10516	355147	14776
2021	9398	172283	-83134	460829	25787
2022	8695	289887	-119529	577847	8171
2023	51442	87679	-73506	386035	1223

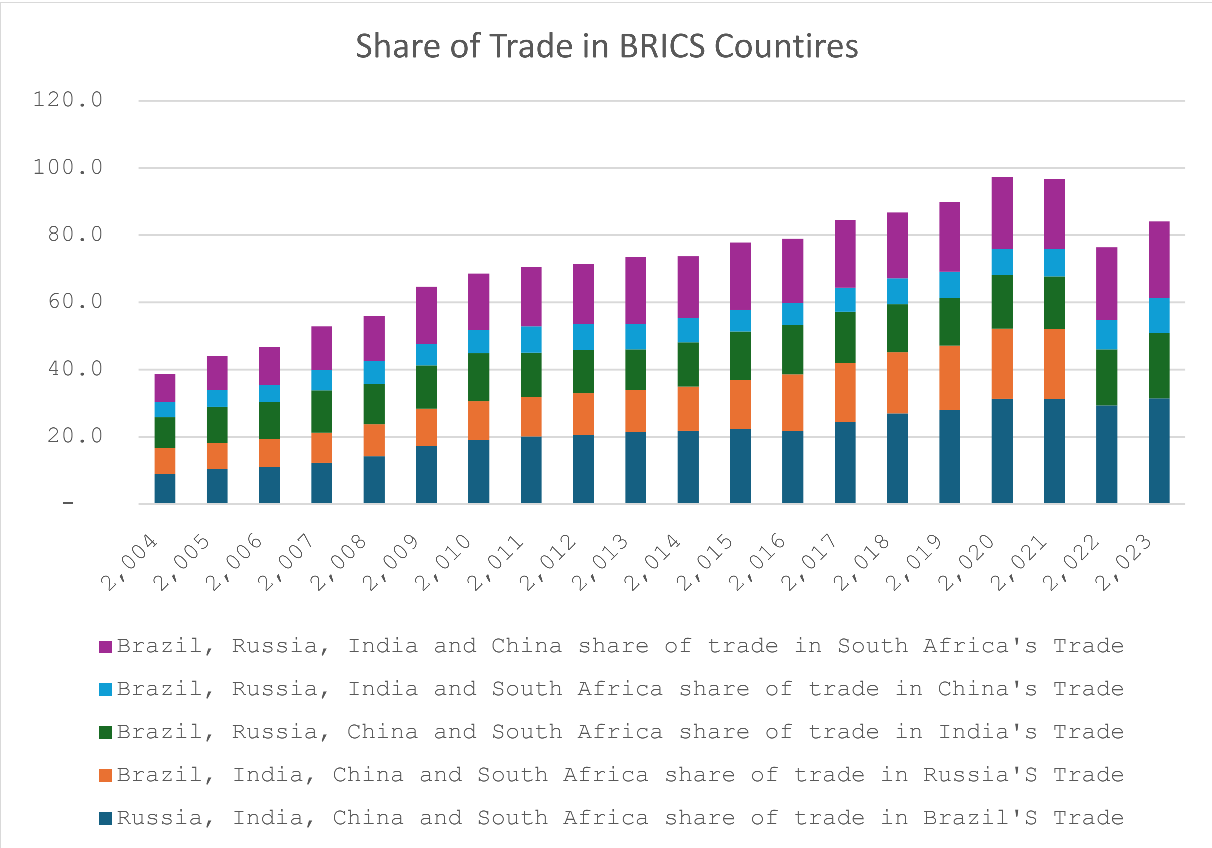
Source: World Development Indicators

Trade Among BRICS Countries

The Figure 3 depicts the share of trade between BRICS nations from 2004 to 2023. Brazil's trade with Russia, India, China, and South Africa has grown remarkably from 2004 to 2023. Starting at 9.0% in 2004, Brazil's trade share with these BRICS nations almost doubled by 2010, reaching 19.0%, and continued to rise, peaking at 31.5% in 2023. This steady increase reflects Brazil's deliberate efforts to deepen economic ties within the BRICS framework, aiming to diversify its trade partnerships and reduce reliance on traditional Western markets. Russia's trade share with Brazil, India, China, and South Africa also exhibited significant growth from 2004 until 2021. Beginning at 7.73% in 2004, Russia's intra-BRICS trade rose to 20.81% by 2021. This substantial growth highlights Russia's strategic shift towards BRICS, especially after 2014 when geopolitical tensions with Western countries intensified, prompting Russia to seek stronger economic connections inside the BRICS bloc. The marked rise in trade share indicates Russia's realignment towards these emerging markets to enhance its economic resilience. India's trade with Brazil, Russia, China, and South Africa has shown fluctuations but generally maintained an upward trajectory from 2004 to 2023. In 2004, India's trade share with these countries was 9.08%, rising steadily to 14.22% by 2010. Despite some dips, the share increased again, reaching 19.52% in 2023. This growth demonstrates India's ongoing efforts to bolster economic cooperation within BRICS, leveraging these partnerships to enhance trade and drive economic development. The rising trade share underscores India's strategy to balance its global trade portfolio by strengthening ties with BRICS nations. China's trade share with Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa has demonstrated steady development from 2004 to 2023. Starting at 4.60% in 2004, this share increased steadily to 10.31% by 2023. This growth reflects China's strategy of deepening economic ties amid the BRICS framework, emphasizing the mutual benefits and interdependencies among BRICS countries. China's significant economic influence within the group and its commitment to fostering closer ties with BRICS partners align with its broader global trade strategy. South Africa's trade with Brazil, Russia, India, and China's growth has accelerated from 2004 to 2023. The trade share started at 8.29% in 2004 and rose consistently to 22.81% by 2023. This notable rise, especially after South Africa joined BRICS officially in 2010, highlights the country's deepening economic integration within the bloc. The increasing trade share underscores South Africa's strategy to strengthen trade relations with other BRICS nations, boosting its economic evolution and stability.

Analysing the trade shares of all five BRICS nations from 2004 to 2023 reveals a clear trend of increasing intra-BRICS trade. Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa have all significantly increased their trade shares with one another, reflecting a concerted effort to strengthen economic ties within the group. This trend underscores the strategic importance of BRICS as a platform for economic cooperation and diversification away from traditional Western markets. The data highlights the mutual benefits of these trade relationships, with each country leveraging the BRICS framework to enhance its economic resilience and growth prospects. Overall, the increasing trade shares signify the victory of BRICS in fostering closer economic coalition among its constituent states.

Figure 3 Share of Trade in BRICS Countries (2004 -2023)



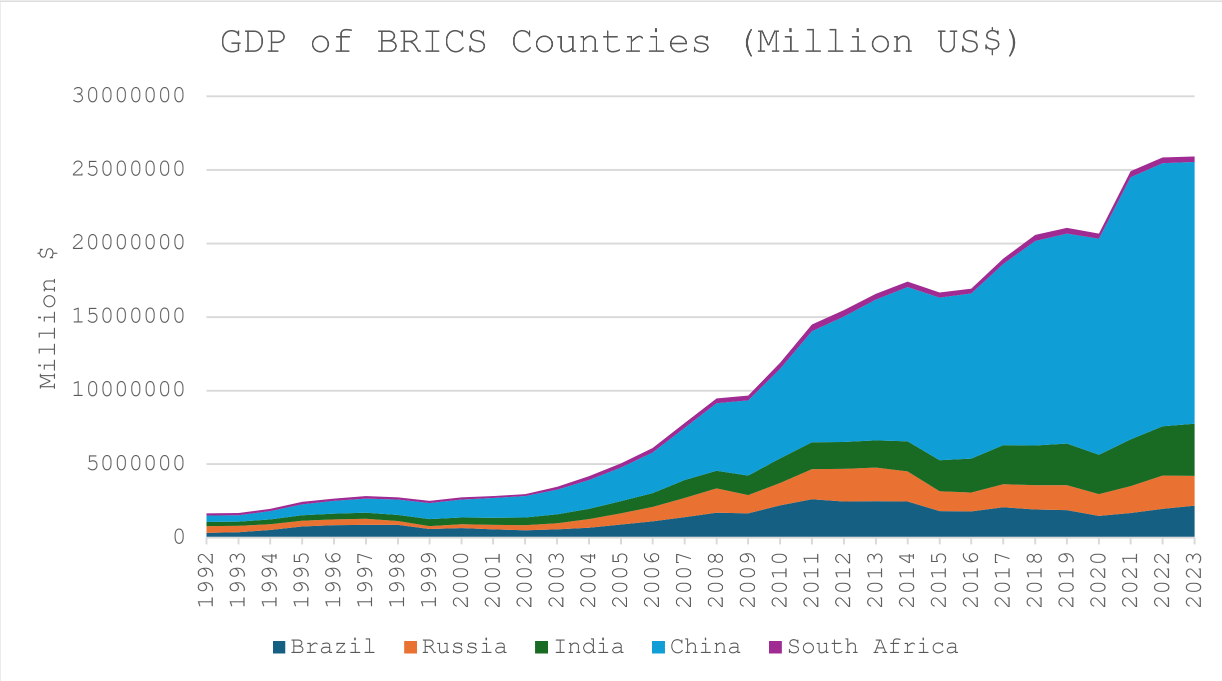
Source: TRADE MAP

GDP of BRICS Countries (1992-2023)

The figure 4 provides the GDP trends for each BRICS country from 1992 to 2023. The purple area for China dominates the chart, reflecting its exponential GDP growth. Starting from similar levels as other BRICS countries in 1992, China's rapid economic expansion is evident, driven by manufacturing, exports, and significant foreign investment. This expansion has made China into an economic powerhouse and a key player in global trade. Represented by the green area, India's GDP shows consistent development over time. This steady rise highlights India's egress as a significant global economy, driven by IT services, manufacturing, and a large domestic market. Unlike other BRICS nations, India has avoided major downturns, indicating robust economic policies and growth potential. The blue area representing Brazil's GDP shows a steady increase from 1992 until around 2014, where it peaks. This period reflects Brazil's economic growth driven by commodities and industrial expansion. However, post-2014, there are fluctuations indicating economic challenges, possibly due to political instability and global market changes. The red area for Russia's GDP indicates significant volatility. After an initial decline post-1992, likely owing to the transition from the Soviet Union, here is a sharp increase around 1999. This growth continues with fluctuations until peaking around 2013, followed by declines and recoveries, reflecting the impact of global oil prices and sanctions. The yellow area at the top represents South Africa's GDP, showing smaller but positive growth compared to its peers. Despite being the smallest economy among BRICS, South Africa has maintained steady growth, driven by mining, manufacturing, and services sectors. However, it faces challenges such as political instability and economic inequality.

Comparing all five BRICS countries reveals diverse economic trajectories. China's remarkable growth stands out, transforming it into an economic giant. India shows steady and consistent growth, while Brazil and Russia have experienced more volatility. South Africa, though smaller, has maintained positive growth. These differences reflect each nation's unique political-economic contexts and policies.

Figure 4 GDP of BRICS Countries (1992-2023)



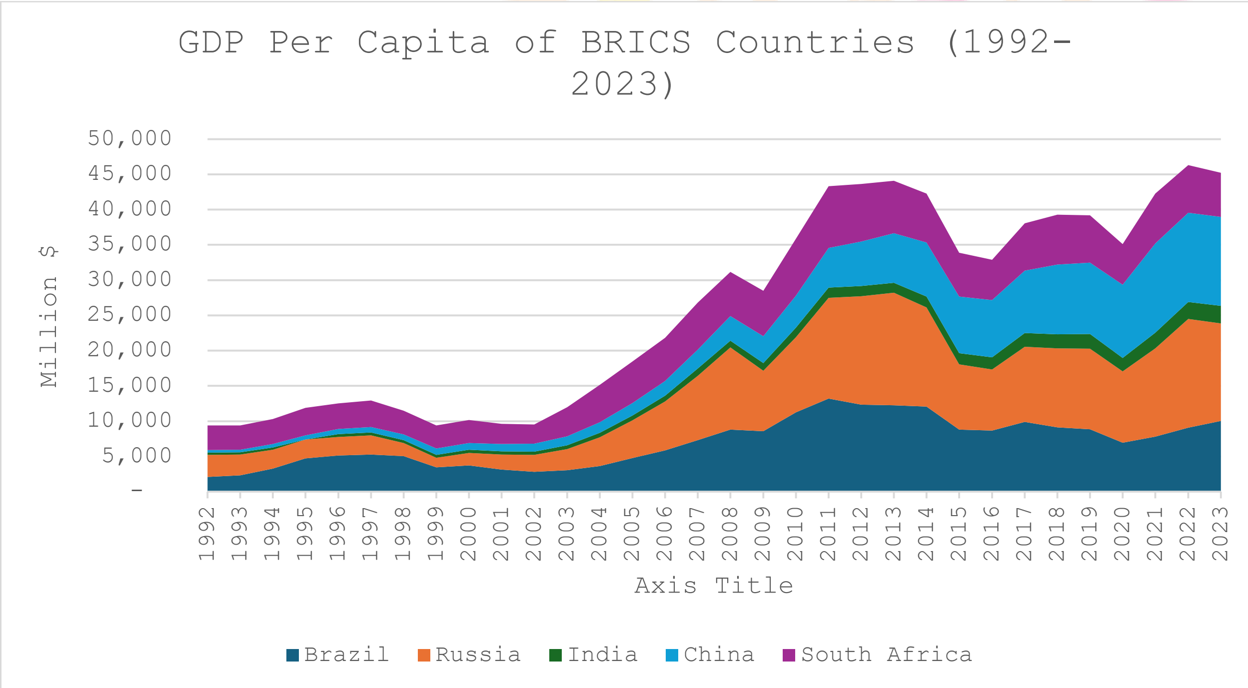
Source: World Development Indicators

GDP Per Capita of BRICS Countries (1992-2023)

The figure 5 provides the GDP per person information for the BRICS countries from 1992 to 2023, reflecting economic growth and fluctuations over the years. Each country's economic trajectory offers insights into its progress and economic resilience. China's GDP per capita showcases its remarkable economic transformation. Starting at $366 in 1992, China's GDP per capita increased exponentially, reflecting its rapid industrialization and economic reforms. By 2007, it reached $2,694 and continued to climb, hitting $7,020 in 2013 and $10,409 in 2020. Despite minor fluctuations, China maintained strong progress, with GDP per capita peaking at $12,663 in 2022 before a slight dip to $12,614 in 2023. This growth underscores China's role as a major global economic powerhouse. India's GDP per capita has demonstrated a steady upward trend from a low base. Starting at $318 in 1992, India's growth has been consistent, reflecting its economic liberalization and reforms. By 2007, GDP per capita crossed the $1,000 mark and continued to rise, reaching $1,351 in 2010 and $1,958 in 2017. The growth trajectory continued with minor fluctuations, reaching $2,485 in 2023. India's sustained growth highlights its expanding economy and increasing importance in the universal economic landscape. Russia's GDP per person journey is marked by dramatic changes, especially in the 1990s. Starting at $3,099 in 1992, Russia faced economic turmoil post-Soviet Union, dropping to $1,331 in 1999. The 2000s brought substantial growth, with GDP per capita increment to $11,635 by 2008. The global financial crisis caused a dip to $8,563 in 2009, but Russia bounced back, peaking at $15,941 in 2013. Political and economic challenges saw fluctuations in the following years, with GDP per capita reaching $15,445 in 2022 before slightly declining to $13,817 in 2023. Brazil's GDP per capita illustrates important fluctuations over the years. Starting at $2,105 in 1992, Brazil experienced steady growth in the 1990s, peaking at $5,240 in 1997. However, the late 1990s and early 2000s saw declines, with a notable drop to $3,456 in 1999. The period from 2003 onwards shows a strong recovery and continuous growth, reaching a high of $13,201 in 2011. The subsequent years were marked by economic challenges, resulting in a decline to $8,783 in 2015. Despite some recovery late in the decade of 2010, Brazil's GDP per capita stood at $10,044 in 2023, reflecting ongoing economic volatility. South Africa's GDP per person shows a more stable but modest growth compared to its BRICS counterparts. Starting at $3,519 in 1992, South Africa's GDP per capita experienced steady evolution during the 1990s, reaching $3,904 in 1995. The growth continued into the 2000s, peaking at $8,737 in 2011. However, economic challenges in the subsequent years led to fluctuations, with GDP per capita decrease to $5,753 in 2020. A recovery was seen in 2021, but by 2023, GDP per capita stood at $6,253, indicating ongoing economic challenges.

Comparing the GDP per capita trends of the BRICS countries reveals distinct economic trajectories. China leads with the greatest important growth, reflecting its rapid industrialization and global economic integration. India, starting from a low base, shows consistent growth, highlighting its expanding economy. Russia experienced dramatic fluctuations due to political and economic upheavals but showed strong recovery in the 2000s. Brazil's growth was marked by significant volatility, reflecting economic and political instability. South Africa's growth, while stable, was the most modest, indicating persistent economic challenges. Overall, China and India demonstrate robust growth, while Russia, Brazil, and South Africa exhibit more pronounced economic fluctuations.

Figure 5 GDP Per Capita of BRICS Countries (1992-2023).



Source: World Development Indicators

Conclusion

Global commerce has been a driving force behind the economic growth and development of India, China, Brazil, Russia, and South Africa. These countries have undergone significant increases in export volumes and earnings, which have propelled their economic progress. The expansion of international trade has opened new marketplaces for their commodity and services, fostering economic diversification and growth. However, this global coalition comes with its individual set of challenges, including trade imbalances, impacts on domestic industries, and environmental concerns. This study found substantial growth in trade volumes, led predominantly by China, with India also showing significant expansion. Although Brazil, Russia, and South Africa display variable trade patterns, their overall trade volumes have risen during the study period. The increasing share of intra-BRICS trade from 2004 to 2023 illustrates a concerted effort to strengthen economic cooperation and reduce reliance on traditional Western markets. The study also found that most of the BRICS nations had a negative trade balance during the study period. The research highlights the different economic scales and development paths within the BRICS group, with China playing a key role in global trade. The paper also addresses challenges such as trade imbalances, effects on local industries, and environmental issues. The study recommends that policymakers in these countries navigate these complexities carefully, balancing the benefits of global trade with the need for sustainable and inclusive economic development. While the positive impact of international trade varies across these nations, those that have effectively promoted employment, attracted foreign investment, and diversified their exports have seen significant gains. Nonetheless, addressing issues such as trade imbalances, protectionist tendencies, and economic inequality remains crucial for maximizing the benefits of global trade and ensuring long-term economic stability.

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