

Chapter 16

Digital Diplomacy Among BRICS Countries

Badar Alam Iqbal

Aligarh Muslim University, India

Mohd Nayyer Rahman

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6512-0028>

Aligarh Muslim University, India

ABSTRACT

The post Covid19 world has witnessed a great deal of progress and development in digital environments, while at the same time an increase in digital threats and sanctions (Mazumdar, 2024). BRICS has emerged a cooperative and collaborative multilateral group of developing countries attempting to reform the international economic and geo-political environment (Iqbal & Rahman, 2023). BRICS has, through various summits and collaborative efforts, extensively propounded the application of digital space to push for digital diplomacy. Post Covid19 and amid Russia-Ukraine conflict, the digital diplomacy is a new initiative for soft power. The present chapter is an attempt to understand the digital diplomacy initiatives of the BRICS countries and how it is shaping cooperation and collaboration among developing countries. A review of the existing literature suggests that much work has focused on digital diplomacy for soft power in the developed countries. However, there is no specific study focusing on BRICS countries, particularly representing developing countries.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The conglomeration of BRICS stands for cooperation among Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The extant literature on BRICS demonstrated its increasing relevance in the geo-politics, although not limited to (Rahman, 2016; Rahman *et al.*, 2022; Iqbal & Rahman, 2016; Iqbal, *et al.*, 2023). BRICS member countries, individually, has implemented customised policies and programs to harness digital technology for socioeconomic development. The digital diplomacy through the socioeconomic development is their way of entering the digital space. (Andrade & Goncalo, 2021). This has resulted in the emergence of BRICS as potential agents of reforming the global digital landscape. Efforts, that are visible in policies, have been made by BRICS to advance digital transformation in areas such as education, telecommunications, healthcare, communications, to name a few. According to Andrade and Goncalo (2021), in order to curtail the negative social impact of digital disruption, BRICS has made a collective effort to upgrade the skills of their people by focusing on better internet penetration. Although the BRICS nations have a common objective of digital improvement, they have encountered unique problems and barriers in their efforts to achieve innovation and technical growth. For instance, Russia has encountered the task of establishing a more reliable and efficient policy structure to bolster its innovation environment (Klochikhin, 2012). The growing significance of the digital economy, platforms, and technology has opened the way for the emergence of digital diplomacy. Digital diplomacy refers to the utilization of information and communication technologies for diplomatic purposes, capturing the originality of this approach. In this chapter we argue that digital diplomacy for developing countries is the set of policies arising out of cooperation aimed at enhancing technology to compete with the developed countries. BRICS, being the frontrunner of the developing countries competing with the developed countries, through its cooperation in the field of technology, digital economy, *et cetera*, enhances the digital diplomacy.

However, the BRICS countries have acknowledged the significance of working together and collaborating in the digital field to influence the geopolitical situation (Oveshnikova *et al.*, 2018). The BRICS nations are positioned to have a significant impact on the future of digital growth as the global digital economy progresses. They will utilize their combined strengths and handle their individual obstacles to shape this future (Chakraborty, 2018). The digital economy, characterized by extensive utilization of information technology, has become pervasive across several domains of social and economic existence in numerous countries, including the BRICS nations (Lazanyuk & Revinova, 2019). The BRICS countries have also examined the possibilities of emerging technologies, such as blockchain and cryptocurrency, to facilitate digital transformation. These technologies have the capacity to strengthen

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