

## African Union and BRICS: Mutual Interests and Shared Values<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*Since 2024, two new African states, Ethiopia and Egypt, have become full BRICS members, marking the advent of a new phase in the evolution of the association's African dimension. The expansion of the African continent within the club demonstrates BRICS' dedication to the South-South dialogue and the growing importance of Africa and also reflects broader shifts in the global power dynamics.*

*However, it also underscores a transition towards a polycentric world order in which the African continent is assuming an autonomous role in global affairs. At the same time, there is a disproportionate representation of the continent in BRICS, as none of the states of Western and Central Africa has so far been a full member of the association.*

*This article examines the process of transformation of the BRICS African track, from its initial BRICS Plus and BRICS Outreach formats to the partial representation of the continent at the sub-regional level by the recently-appointed permanent and partner members of the association. It has been suggested, however, that the informalized nature of the association, which has long been attractive due to the special dialogue format of the BRICS, will not be able to meet the growing demand for the inclusion of new actors. The more states that join the grouping, the greater the procedural and organizational clutter that awaits it. The African continent is home to 54 UN member states, the accession of each of which is unthinkable.*

*The latest wave of expansion in 2025 with the introduction of a new category of "partner country", despite the inclusion of Nigeria and Uganda, still does not make Africa equally represented in BRICS. In this regard, it remains relevant to study the prospects for the development of the African vector of BRICS and the search for new non-state formats of cooperation. The article discusses the problem of the continent's further integration into BRICS, in particular the extent to which potential expansion could challenge the established dialogical format and lack of institutional overload that have been responsible for BRICS' success. The authors analyse the prospect of inviting the African Union (AU) as a continent-wide representative to address the above issue. Based on the analysis of the key documents of the AU and BRICS, the authors examine the proximity of the two organisations both politically and ideologically (compliance with the so-called "spirit of BRICS") and practically (coincidence of agendas and projects). The paper*

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*analyses the internal architecture of the AU and the BRICS to identify possible obstacles and difficulties on the way to the integration of the two organisations.*

**Keywords:** African Union, BRICS, polycentricity, Agenda 2063, pan-africanism, SDG, Africa

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## **Introduction**

Over the past several years, BRICS has undergone a profound and rapid transformation. Having completed two successful waves of expansion – in 2011 and 2024 – and reached a new level of integration, what was once a “club of emerging economies” has evolved into a large-format forum representing the interests of the Global Majority [Panova, 2024]. Its traditional focus on inclusive development and consensus-based decision-making immediately positioned BRICS as an alternative to Western-centric organizations, while subsequent enlargements strengthened its claim to serve as a new center of global governance.

A key, if not defining, feature of BRICS lies in the fact that it extends beyond interstate dialogue, engaging think tanks, academia, and civil society in shaping its agenda [Muratshina, 2019; Kirton, Larionova, 2022]. Its flexible, informal format and its shared values – commitment to a just, multipolar order and a counter-hegemonic global agenda – have underpinned both its appeal and success [Bordachev, Suslov, 2024].

The enlargement of BRICS has coincided with a growing crisis of global governance institutions. One of the defining characteristics of the transition to polycentricity is depolarization – the rejection of “poles” that divide the world into a single hegemonic power or two competing blocs. Polarized configurations require comparable capabilities, rivalry or competition [Batalov, 2012]. In contrast, depolarization reflects states’ refusal to participate in bloc confrontation, opting instead for the creation of multiple centers of power. The renewed bipolarity sought by the “collective West,” led by the United States, is not appealing to the Global South – nor to BRICS, which rejects bloc politics altogether. The African continent, which has traditionally maintained a non-aligned stance since the establishment of the Organization of African Unity, emphasizes its independence and refuses to play the “great-power game.”

The association’s inclusive development agenda, comprehensive focus on security and growth, and consensus-based model of decision-making fully correspond to Africa’s interests, while the continent’s demand for participation in multilateral organizations continues to grow. Africa is no longer merely an object but a subject of international relations, and its agency will undoubtedly increase [Abramova, 2018]. In 2024, the African Union (AU) was invited to join the G20, and discussions intensified regarding the potential inclusion of African states as permanent members of the UN Security Council. The 2024 expansion of BRICS brought in two major regional powers – Egypt and Ethiopia – each wielding sub-regional influence and, to some extent, representing broader African interests. During Russia’s BRICS chairship in 2024, the new “partner country” category was formally introduced. Three additional African states (Uganda, Algeria, and Nigeria) were invited to participate, and all except Algeria have already agreed to join.

The authors identify as one of the central challenges of future BRICS development the limited possibility of indefinitely expanding full membership. It is crucial to preserve the group’s flexible, non-institutionalized character in order to maintain its unique dialogue-driven “flexible geometry” [Bordachev, Suslov, 2024]. Yet the greater the number of members, the heavier the procedural and bureaucratic load. The continent comprises 54 states, and Central Africa still lacks representation within BRICS. Following the 2024 enlargement, two additional sub-regions – North Africa (Egypt) and East Africa (Ethiopia) – were incorporated. Despite the introduction of the “partner country” format and the invitation extended to three more African states, continent’s

representation remains uneven. Consequently, it is particularly important to explore the potential for structural transformation within BRICS through the development of its African dimension.

The article addresses an issue that has received limited attention in scholarly discourse: the intersection of *interest-based* and *value-based agendas* in the BRICS and AU frameworks. Methodologically, the study relies on qualitative analysis to identify key overlaps in the agendas of the two organizations (summarized in *Table 1*). The comparison of their “thematic portfolios” reveals alignment across several core areas. The authors conclude that BRICS states could develop new forms of cooperation with the AU, including joint infrastructure projects, interoperability of payment systems and development banks, as well as engagement with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Beyond practical cooperation, both institutions articulate value-driven agendas. Although the AU aspires to act as the unified voice of Africa, scholarly literature underscores its fragile political agency, a factor that must be considered when designing BRICS-AU cooperation strategies.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In this article, the authors examine the potential for cooperation between BRICS and the AU through the lens of *the agent-structure approach* [Wendt, 1987; Wight, 2006], derived from the social sciences and particularly from the work of Anthony Giddens [Giddens, 1979]. The theory explores the interrelation between society (structure) and individual actors (agents), emphasizing the agents’ capacity to introduce change within the structure. Consequently, both the social system and the individuals that constitute it continuously shape one another.

From this theoretical perspective, the BRICS group can be seen as a structure that encompasses Africa’s leading regional figures, who act as agents of change within both the BRICS group and the AU. These states can transmit the values of both organizations internally, within their respective subregions, and externally, beyond the continent.

The case of South Africa is particularly noteworthy, as it vividly illustrates the potential role of an agent of change within the BRICS structure. Having experienced prolonged isolation during the apartheid era, the country succeeded in integrating into an international institutional framework, contributing not only its own national interests but also advancing a broader pan-African agenda. Within the agent-structure theoretical framework, the activities of such agents of change may be analyzed through their policy agendas – that is, the narratives and values articulated in the declarations adopted at the conclusion of a country’s BRICS chairmanship [Zelenova et al., 2024].

When addressing the question of the AU’s identity and comparing its underlying values with those of BRICS, the authors adopt a constructivist paradigm, in which issues of identity occupy a central analytical position. This theoretical approach, in turn, appears particularly useful for understanding the plural and evolving identities that characterize both BRICS and the AU.

### **African Agenda within BRICS**

Since joining the BRICS group in 2011, South Africa has consistently incorporated Pan-African interests into its activities, amplifying Africa’s voice on the global stage and strengthening South-South cooperation. One key mechanism that has facilitated this dialogue is the BRICS Outreach, through which neighbouring non-BRICS states are invited to participate in summits. This initiative was launched at the 2013 Durban Summit, which had the theme of “*BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration and Industrialization*”, and was a milestone event for the continent.

For the first time, the South African government invited the AU Chairperson (the leader of Rwanda at the time) and the Chairperson of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (the leader of Senegal) to attend the BRICS summit [Shubin, 2015]. This established a precedent for regular dialogue between BRICS and AU representatives. Furthermore, through South Africa’s initiative, the Outreach format expanded to include regional economic communities

(RECs) across Africa. In 2013, for the first time, their leaders, including those from Gabon, Uganda, Ethiopia, Togo, Zambia, Namibia, and Angola, were invited to participate in the Durban Summit [Shubin, 2015]. During South Africa's first BRICS presidency, the BRICS Business Council was also established to promote and strengthen economic, trade, and investment ties among the business communities of member states.

During its second term as chair, South Africa hosted a dialogue forum with African leaders on the topic of "*Unlocking Africa's Potential: BRICS-Africa Cooperation on Infrastructure*," which resulted in the Multilateral Agreement on Co-Financing Infrastructure in Africa between BRICS export-import and development banks [Larionova, 2015].

Subsequently, Pretoria continued to expand the African agenda within BRICS, emphasizing the AU as a key regional organization ensuring continental stability. During its third chairship, the Johannesburg Declaration formally proposed to enhance Africa's trade integration through the AfCFTA [Second Johannesburg Declaration, 2023]. South Africa views it not only as a trade mechanism but also as an instrument for strengthening food security across the continent [Second Johannesburg Declaration, 2023].

The African track of BRICS has also developed through the New Development Bank (NDB). It was no coincidence that in 2018, the first regional NDB office for Africa was opened in Johannesburg [NDB, 2017]. As of 2024, South Africa has received substantial NDB funding for fourteen large-scale infrastructure projects in the fields of water supply, transport, energy, renewable resources, and social infrastructure [All Projects, South Africa, 2025].

South African scholars have actively discussed the search for new practical formats of integration between BRICS and Africa [April et al., 2023]. They note that achieving economic sovereignty requires implementing major infrastructure projects across the continent, with the NDB playing a crucial role. Among BRICS members, China remains the most active and influential investor in Africa [Deitch, 2019]; however, as the NDB currently lends only to member countries – of which only two African states (Egypt and South Africa) are members – expanding cooperation with African development banks is a priority for non-member African states [Khambule, 2023].

An analysis of the agendas of the three BRICS declarations adopted under South Africa's chairmanship highlights a wide range of issues directly relevant to Africa. In addition to the economy, these three declarations also devote considerable attention to humanitarian issues related to human capital development. At the same time, the topics of the continent's development take on a socially oriented character, which brings them closer to the vision proposed by the AU in its policy document Agenda 2063: "The Africa We Want to See." If we consider South Africa's activities in BRICS within the proposed theoretical framework, it is noticeable that the country, acting as an agent within the structure of the association, has gradually been able to shift the agenda towards the "africanization" of the problem area.

### **Alignment of the African Union Agenda with the "BRICS Spirit"**

The AU is one of the continent's longest-standing intergovernmental organizations, with its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity, being established in 1963. For an extended period, Africa was regarded as an object of international relations [Abramova, 2018]. However, over the course of its 60-year existence, the AU has successfully transformed this perception, positioning the continent as a fully-fledged subject engaged in the processes of global governance. While the continent's states have encountered difficulties in attaining subjectivity at the national level, the AU has developed a unified Pan-African agenda, which has enabled countries to speak with one voice in international institutions, albeit with varying degrees of success [Brosig, Lecki, 2022; Ravenhill, 2016]. Although, it's important to note that the unity of this front isn't always successful. One can recall the example of Libya, when the conflict resolution process was decided not by African forces, but by NATO's military intervention, which marginalized the AU roadmap [Murithi, 2012; Linnéa, 2016].

In order to qualify as a candidate for BRICS expansion, a country must demonstrate alignment with the values and principles espoused by the association. These include “the spirit of solidarity, equality, mutual respect and understanding, openness, inclusiveness, mutually beneficial cooperation and consensus” [BRICS, 2023]. Despite the vague nature of the wording, the public has already formed a distinct image of the “BRICS spirit,” and not all countries in the world fit this description. In considering the potential for the AU to become a member of the group, it is important to examine the consistency of their positions, particularly the alignment between the Pan-African agenda and the “BRICS spirit.”

The ideas of Pan-Africanism, from the 19th century to the present day, are reflected in the activities of the AU. The Constitutive Act of the Union notes that the establishment of the organization is “inspired by the noble ideals that guided the founding fathers of our continental organization and many generations of Pan-Africanists in their determination to promote unity, solidarity, cohesion and cooperation among the peoples of Africa and African States” [Constitutive Act of the African Union, 2000]. Thus, despite the profound differences and complexities in the formation of national identities within postcolonial state borders [Bondarenko, 2022], the Pan-African agenda is already showing its first results in the construction of collective identities. The transnationalization of participation in political and economic processes, which is realized both at subregional levels through the activities of RECs and at the continental level within the AU, leads to the smooth construction of a transnational culture that will unite (but not abolish) the national and ethnic characteristics of African peoples [Bondarenko, 2014].

Collective identity is often constructed through negative differentiation, the opposition between “us” and “them,” where “us” is associated with positive self-identification and “them” with negativity or hostility [Wendt, 1999]. The latter are typically perceived as a political threat or a “cultural challenge” (“the West” versus “the non-West”) [Hurrell, 1995]. For African states, the “other” most frequently corresponds to their former metropolises. Such antagonization fosters solidarity and a sense of belonging to a common whole; however, the elimination or weakening of the “opponent” can also diminish the motivation for unity. Over time, collective identity may evolve as a result of structural transformations [Wendt, 1999]. In the case of the AU, scholars note a gradual reorientation from national to transnational interests [Murithi, 2005]. The ideals of the modern AU, centered on autonomy, solidarity, and equity, correspond closely to the “spirit of BRICS”, which promotes the construction of a more just world order in partnership with leading non-Western powers.

BRICS serves as an alternative, yet it does not actively oppose Western organizations. This is also evident in the nature of the group’s expansion, as many BRICS members maintain close partnerships with Western countries. This nature of cooperation resonates with African elites, who are not inclined to espouse a dualistic approach to foreign policy and are reluctant to engage in a zero-sum game when selecting allies [Maslov, 2023]. Consequently, the BRICS countries, akin to the AU, are endeavoring to establish a “positive identity” founded upon shared values and autonomous growth.

When comparing the two institutions in terms of their value-oriented agendas, one can identify both points of convergence and potential contradictions. On one hand, BRICS asserts itself more explicitly as an alternative to the Western-centric model of global governance, emphasizing civilizational diversity, mutual respect, and the vision of a fair multipolar order. The BRICS project corresponds broadly to Eisenstadt’s concept of multiple modernities, which rejects the notion that modernization must follow the Western trajectory [Eisenstadt, 2000; 2002].

For the AU, the unifying framework is Pan-Africanism, which has evolved through multiple historical stages – from the ideas of Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere to contemporary interpretations [Kassae, Ivkina, 2022]. Its modern expression is encapsulated in the well-known principle “African solutions to African problems”, which has become a cornerstone of African agency. Yet, in practical terms, this principle remains contested. The AU's efforts to autonomously

manage conflicts without external intervention have not always been successful [Denisova, Kostelyanets, 2023]. Its mandate for humanitarian intervention, even when limited, continues to generate debate among scholars and policymakers [Bokeria, 2022].

Defending the continent’s agency remains a key AU objective, yet its full realization is constrained by external funding dependence and insufficient continental integration. Doubts persist as to whether the AU can genuinely represent Pan-African interests in their entirety. Nevertheless, it remains the only international organization in the world with a formal right to intervene in the domestic affairs of its member states in cases of grave circumstances, such as war crimes or genocide [Denisova, Kostelyanets, 2023, p. 455].

### From Ideological Crossovers to Practical Compatibility

BRICS activities are divided into three key areas: political and security (1), economic and financial (2), and humanitarian and cultural cooperation (3). Each of these priorities, in turn, involves addressing narrower specific issues. These are determined by the chairmanship, but the main directions remain unchanged.

The BRICS format implies the participation of countries not only in annual and informal summits. In addition, almost 60 intra-group institutions and mechanisms, business circles, think tanks, trade unions, etc. are open within the framework of the group, and the agenda covers up to 34 spheres [Kirton, Larionova, 2022]. No less diverse structure of the AU allows to establish dialogue in all key areas (see *Table 1*). As a result of the AU’s accession to BRICS, more than 200 annual events covering all of the following spheres and more could be open to member countries.

*Table 1.* Intersection of BRICS and African Union Spheres of Activity

	<b>BRICS working spheres</b>	<b>Representation of these spheres within the AU</b>
<b>Policy and security assurance</b>	Counter-terrorism	Agenda 2063, the Dakar Declaration against Terrorism (2001), the Plan of Action to Prevent and Combat Terrorism (2002), African Centre for the Study & Research on Terrorism; the agenda appeared as one of the strategic priorities in the Roadmap for the African Peace and Security Architecture 2016-2020; there is a Special Representative for Counter-Terrorism Cooperation, etc.
	Rule of international law	The African Union Commission on International Law (AUCIL)
	Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation	Pelindaba Treaty (Nuclear Free Zone in Africa, 1996); falls under the mandate of the Peace and Security Department of the AU Commission (Defense and Security Division); featured as one of the strategic priorities in the African Peace and Security Architecture Roadmap 2016-2020
	Countering money laundering and terrorist financing	Agenda 2063; African Development Bank Group Strategy for the Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing in Africa (2007)
	Combating illicit drug trafficking, psychotropic substances and their precursors	Agenda 2063; the AU Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime. Prevention (2019-2023)
<b>Economics and finance</b>	Promoting a just transition to a low-carbon economy	Agenda 2063; African Union Green Recovery Action Plan 2021-2027; one of the objectives of the Department of Infrastructure and Energy of the AU Commission
	Enhancing the role of BRICS states in the international monetary and financial system	Agenda 2063; the African Development Bank Group consists directly of the African Development Bank (ADB), established in 1964, as well as the African Development Fund (1972) and the Nigeria Trust Fund (1976). Among the shareholders are 27 non-African states. The AU also plans to launch the African Central Bank (in Abuja, Nigeria’s capital), the African Investment Bank (in Libya), and the African Monetary Fund (in Yaoundé, Cameroon’s capital). Eight “golden rules” for managing AU finances; sanctions regime for non-payment of contributions, etc.
	Interbank cooperation development	

	Productivity and digitalization growth	Agenda 2063; Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030); Africa Infrastructure Development Program 2040 (includes information and communication technology targets); Information Society Division of the Department of Infrastructure and Energy in charge; Pan African e-Network project; more than 400 technology hubs on the continent
	Agricultural cooperation, ensuring food security	Agenda 2063; Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program 2025; Great Green Wall Project; AU Strategy and Action Plan on Climate Change and Sustainable Development (2022-2032); AU Action Plan on Ecological Restoration 2021-2027; etc.
	Cooperation in the field of transport	Agenda 2063; Africa Infrastructure Development Program; Africa Rail Vision 2040; Brazzaville Declaration and Action Plan for African Railways (2006); Revised African Maritime Transport Charter (2010); High Speed Rail Integration Network Program; Establishment of a Single African Air Transport Market; African Regional Transport Infrastructure Network, etc.
	Control of infectious diseases, eradication of epidemics	Agenda 2063; Africa Health Strategy 2016-2030; Specialized Agency for Medicines (established in 2019, replacing the African Medicines Regulatory Harmonization Program of 2012); Abuja Action Plan to Eliminate HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in Africa by 2030; numerous documents related to COVID-19 and Ebola outbreaks, among others
	Joint actions to prevent and eliminate the consequences of emergencies	Agenda 2063; African Multi-Hazard Early Warning and Early Response System Program (2023); numerous documents on climate change and its impacts, including the Nairobi African Leaders' Declaration on Climate Change and Call for Action (2024)
<b>Humanitarian and cultural spheres</b>	Interparliamentary cooperation	Agenda 2063; Pan-African Parliament (10 standing committees, 235 representatives)
	BRICS Network University, BRICS Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Cooperation Alliance	Agenda 2063; Continental Strategy on Education for Africa 2016-2025; Science and Technology Innovation Strategy for Africa; Pan African University (an academic network of existing African institutions); Pan African Institute of Education for Development (an AU institution studying educational processes on the continent); AU International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa; Nyerere Fellowship and Academic Mobility Programme; Strategy for Harmonization of Higher Education Programmes, among others
	Contacts between representatives of scientific and expert communities, including young scientists	Agenda 2063; Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation in Africa 2024; African Union Network of Scientific Institutions (virtual network); Kwame Nkrumah Science Prize Program; Research Grants Program, etc. Kwame Nkrumah Science Awards Program; Research Grants Program, etc.
	Youth policies	Agenda 2063; African Youth Charter; Youth Decade Plan of Action; Malabo Decision on Youth Empowerment; celebrates African Youth Day (November 1 on the date of adoption of the aforementioned Charter), among others
	Volunteering	AU Youth Volunteer Corps
	Cultural collaborations	Charter for African Cultural Renaissance; AU Plan of Action for the Development of Cultural and Creative Industries in Africa

Source: compiled by the authors.

### **The AU's Accession to BRICS: Problems It Could Solve and Those It Might Create**

At present, the AU remains a structure that is highly dependent on external support. First, the predominant share of its financing comes from Western partners [Sow, 2016; Dersso, 2025]. Second, the AU has recently become a full participant in the G20, which, on the one hand, could subject it to additional political and financial pressure from Western members of that grouping, thereby complicating the deepening of ties with BRICS. On the other hand, broader participation in BRICS, as an association whose influence continues to grow through the inclusion of non-Western actors, could, on the contrary, enhance the AU's international status and strengthen its voice within the G20 framework. An example of this pragmatic stance is Nigeria that does not

perceive participation in the G20 and BRICS as mutually exclusive but rather seeks to diversify its institutional representation in both [Schumacher, 2024].

As for the implications for BRICS itself, the AU's inclusion – whether as a full member or in a partnership format – could help mitigate potential subregional tensions that might arise as the group continues to expand. Such tensions could, for instance, emerge between Ethiopia, which has already obtained full membership, and Eritrea, with which it remains in a state of festering conflict [TASS, 2024; Lyons, 2009; Addis et al., 2020].

The participation of the AU in BRICS could evolve along two possible scenarios, depending on the degree of representation of Africa's major power centers. After the admission of Egypt and Ethiopia, a clear geopolitical imbalance appeared, as Western and Central Africa were not represented. This imbalance was due primarily to the absence of Nigeria, a state capable of exerting significant political and economic influence on its neighbors [Zhambikov, 2023]. If such major actors were not included as full members or partners, the AU's engagement risked becoming limited to an agenda defined by those large states, which may not correspond to the interests of small and medium-sized African countries. Under this scenario, these states could gradually assume satellite positions, adopting one of several strategies: balancing between great powers, seeking patronage and protection from a dominant state, or maintaining a status quo due to the high costs of revision without clear benefits [Kaveshnikov, 2008].

The second scenario envisions all major subregional and continental players *representing themselves independently* within the BRICS framework. In this case, the AU, although not guaranteed, could become a platform within BRICS for articulating the collective interests of small and medium states. Reaching consensus would remain challenging; however, in the absence of dominant actors, the prospects for unity could improve. Under this arrangement, emphasis might shift toward the traditional area of strength for such states: norm-setting and moral leadership in world politics [Egeland, 1985; Ingebritsen, 2002]. With Nigeria's accession to BRICS as a partner state in 2025, the likelihood of realizing this second scenario has increased considerably.

### **Conclusion: Is Cooperation Between the AU and BRICS Possible?**

The AU's fragile political agency and weak economic integration prevent it from serving as a fully consolidated Pan-African voice. However, this does not imply that cooperation between the AU and BRICS should be dismissed. The AU's ambitious plans for establishing a unified continental market and the political aspirations of major African BRICS members to make their continent prosperous, independent, and integrated provide a strong basis for optimistic assessments of the future of BRICS-Africa cooperation. The format of such cooperation, however, remains an issue for near-term consideration.

When viewed through the agent-structure theoretical framework, the AU as a structure will inevitably be transformed by its agents, namely, the most powerful African BRICS members. The Kazan Declaration of 2024 clearly demonstrates that newly admitted African states – Ethiopia and Egypt – have already managed, in a short period of participation, to incorporate their national interests and expand the BRICS agenda [Abramova et al., 2024].

At the practical level, the AU already has extensive experience of engagement with BRICS structures through the BRICS Plus and Outreach formats, having participated in dialogues since 2013. A comparative analysis of the two organizations' agendas reveals a high degree of thematic convergence across their principal domains.

Given the admission of additional African states, it appears logical to intensify cooperation between BRICS and the AU through smaller institutional channels, such as the NDB, the African Development Bank, or the AfCFTA. Considering the sustained efforts of African countries to implement the goals of Agenda 2063 and their ambition to establish a unified trade area, discussions on BRICS-AU integration can be developed along both sectoral (see *Table 1*) and value-based dimensions.

According to the guiding principles of Agenda 2063, the AU aims to build a new architecture of international relations founded on polycentricity and the recognition of African agency – objectives that are closely aligned with the core aims of BRICS. The Union also prioritizes strengthening food, energy, and information security, developing transport corridors, establishing independent joint payment mechanisms, and fostering scientific cooperation through personnel exchanges and technology transfer.

Therefore, the deepening of cooperation between BRICS and the AU should, first and foremost, be initiated by the African BRICS members themselves, with the support of the remaining partners. Second, it should maintain a balance between the value-oriented agenda, which emphasizes multilateralism and civilizational diversity, resonant with Pan-African ideals, and the practical goals of economic development shared by the countries of the Global Majority.

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