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The BRICS Power Play: Competing Interests in Global Energy Governance

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African perspectives
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Executive summary

The expanded BRICS bloc (10 members, including Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates) represents the most consequential arena in global climate politics. Collectively, these nations account for over 42% of global greenhouse gas emissions, 50% of the world's population and approximately 43.6% of global oil production. Conventional policy analysis treats BRICS member states as a single coherent actor, when in reality they constitute a contestation of competing interests, timelines and worldviews. Any strategy that flattens this complexity will fail. The central finding of this policy insights is that the energy transition in BRICS is fundamentally a contest of power. Incumbent fossil-industrial interests remain closely intertwined with state-owned enterprises, national oil companies and governments reliant on their revenues. Together, these actors act to slow, dilute or co-opt transition efforts to preserve business as usual. The dominant near-term risk is not outright obstruction but the emergence of a 'grey space' of hybrid compromise, where ambitious climate rhetoric conceals continued fossil expansion and niche innovations are absorbed into centralised systems rather than displacing them.

The BRICS climate arena: Context, actors and fault lines

The BRICS bloc has emerged as a significant force in global climate governance. Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) bring OPEC+ perspectives and hydrocarbon wealth, while Indonesia adds critical mineral resources and acute energy access challenges. Egypt and Ethiopia bring climate vulnerability and adaptation priorities. The bloc accounts for more than half of global solar power capacity.¹ BRICS is characterised by a clash of differing interests, priorities and perspectives. If BRICS member states collectively navigate a just energy transition, the pathway they establish will set a precedent for other emerging economies. If they do not, no amount of ambition elsewhere can compensate.

This policy insights draws on participatory systems mapping, stakeholder interviews and narrative analysis with BRICS member state stakeholders, with a specific focus on China and South Africa. Insights were gained from 40 strategic interviews with senior global BRICS experts and online multi-country Policy Innovation Labs.² The research introduces the BRICS Climate and Energy Compass as an actionable five-axis navigation tool for advancing green industrialisation and renewable energy scaling. It sets out a concrete accountability framework with Regime Flip Metrics for the 2026–2030 period.

1 International Energy Agency, *World Energy Outlook 2023 – Analysis*, Report (IEA, 2023).

2 Johan Schot and W. Edward Steinmueller, "Three Frames for Innovation Policy: R&D, Systems of Innovation and Transformative Change", *Research Policy* 47, no. 9 (November 2018): 1554–1567. Policy Innovation Labs are collaborative, experimental spaces, often embedded within or connected to government, where policymakers, researchers and stakeholders co-design, prototype and test new policy solutions using iterative, evidence-based and human-centred approaches. They aim to address complex problems by moving beyond traditional linear policymaking toward adaptive, systems-oriented innovation.

Three strategic priorities emerge for decision makers: reforming the global and intra-BRICS financial architecture, catalysing investment in hard-to-abate sectors and localising climate finance to strengthen sub-national capacity. These priorities form a tactical roadmap for the next five years.

Actor types, climate posture and key tensions

Rather than profiling 10 individual countries, the research identifies five functional actor groups that collectively define the political terrain which any BRICS-level climate initiative should navigate. Table 1 provides a detailed analysis of the actor type, BRICS member, climate posture and the associated key tensions.

Actor type	Members	Climate posture	Key tension
The structural pivot	China	Aims to achieve net-zero by 2060; the world's largest renewable manufacturer and largest emitter simultaneously. First absolute emissions-cut target announced in September 2025.	Leads clean technology supply chains but continues coal expansion, having approved over 100GW of new coal power in 2022 and 2023. ^a Creates dependency, not just partnership.
The normative entrepreneurs	South Africa, Brazil	<u>Paris Climate Agreement</u> -aligned; pioneer of the <u>JETP model</u> (South Africa); <u>COP30</u> host (Brazil). Both frame climate action in terms of justice and development.	Credibility constrained by domestic fossil fuel dependence. Brazil joined OPEC+ as an observer in 2025; ^b South Africa added 800MW of coal in 2024 despite JETP commitments. ^c
The swing states	India, Indonesia	India aims to achieve net-zero by 2070. Indonesia focuses on growing renewable ambition. Strong voices for development-centred transitions.	The extended net-zero timelines reflect constraint alongside ambition. Indonesia's coal exports ^d send mixed signals.
The incumbent guardians	Russia, Iran, UAE	Formally support the Paris Climate Agreement. Substantively oriented toward maintaining hydrocarbon revenues.	Use BRICS solidarity and sovereignty rhetoric to resist differentiated commitments. The UAE hosted <u>COP28</u> while remaining an OPEC+ anchor.
Adaptation-centred members	Egypt, Ethiopia	Highly climate vulnerable. Prioritise adaptation, access to finance and development-oriented climate governance.	Limited institutional leverage within BRICS; risk of being marginalised by fossil-fuel dynamics within the expanded bloc.

a Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air and Global Energy Monitor, "China's Coal Expansion: Over 100 Gigawatts Approved in 2022 and 2023", Press Release, August 21, 2024.

b Enerdata, "Brazil Agrees to Join OPEC+ Group of Oil-Producing Countries", February 20, 2025.

c Denzil de Klerk and Tammy-Lynne Bekker, "Beyond Coal: South Africa's Roadmap to Net Zero 2050", SDG Legal, February 24, 2026; Climate Action Tracker, "South Africa: Policies & Action," accessed April 20, 2026, https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/south-africa/policies-action/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

d IDN Financials, "Global Demand Weak, Indonesia's Coal Exports Slump 19.7%", February 3, 2026.

Source: Compiled by authors

These five functional actor groups capture the strategic fault lines that any BRICS-level climate initiative must navigate:

- supply-chain power and industrial leverage (the 'structural pivot');
- justice-framed leadership with domestic constraints (the 'normative entrepreneurs');
- development-first pragmatism with long transition horizons (the 'swing states');
- rent-dependent caution cloaked in solidarity rhetoric (the 'incumbent guardians'); and
- acute vulnerability driving adaptation priorities (the 'adaptation-centred members').

Understanding these roles and the tensions between industrial opportunity, domestic politics, finance access and geopolitical positioning is essential. It is the task of decision makers and change agents to design coalition strategies, differentiated incentives and governance mechanisms that can translate BRICS dialogue into credible, financeable and politically durable climate action.

Convergence and contestation in the BRICS bloc

A significant pattern across BRICS collective positions is that convergence on principles frequently masks divergence in substance. All members support 'just transitions', but they mean fundamentally different things by it. All oppose externally imposed fossil fuel phase-out timelines, yet some are scaling clean energy while others use sovereignty arguments to resist any binding commitment. The bloc's OPEC+ overlap (Russia, Iran, the UAE and now Brazil as an observer) creates a structural tension that no climate declaration can paper over.³

On climate finance, convergence is significant. All BRICS member states agree that the current global financial architecture systematically underserves the needs of the transition. COP29's New Collective Quantified Goal of \$300 billion annually from developed countries by 2035 was seen as inadequate against developing country demands for \$1.3 trillion.⁴ The [2025 Sevilla Commitment](#) and [South Africa's G20 summit leaders' declaration](#) advanced technical work on climate-resilient debt clauses and multilateral development bank (MDB) reform, but geopolitical tensions limited formal consensus outcomes.

³ Reuters, "[COP28 Clashes Over Fossil Fuel Phase-Out After OPEC Pushback](#)", Global South World, December 9, 2023.

⁴ Wuppertal Institut, "[COP29: Not a 'Gift from God'](#)", Press Release, November 28, 2024.

The BRICS energy landscape: Who has power, and why

The BRICS climate and energy landscape is a system of power before it is a collection of policies. The systems mapping identifies three energy regimes currently operating simultaneously within the bloc, creating the 'grey space' of hybrid compromise. This is both the most likely near-term outcome and the most dangerous for long-term transition.

The incumbent fossil-industrial complex: State-owned utilities, national oil companies and the governments that rely on their revenues form a tightly coupled system. This system is characterised by centralised control, export-driven extraction and consistent resistance to transition finance that would alter ownership structures or governance. Iran and the UAE are central to global oil and gas markets and among the world's top producers and exporters. India is the world's second-largest coal consumer and a major producer, with demand continuing to grow and reaching record levels.

The emerging decentralised green regime: Community-owned renewables, distributed solar, green hydrogen pilots, critical-mineral beneficiaries and BRICS-specific finance instruments represent alternative models with local ownership, circular value chains and pluralistic governance. Examples include Brazil's solar cooperatives, South Africa's Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) niches, China's manufacturing ecosystem and Indonesia's mineral sovereignty agenda.

The transition grey space: These spaces are hybrid compromises where Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are ambitious on paper but backed by continued fossil fuel investment and transition finance rebrands of conventional lending with minor environmental conditions. Across all BRICS members, the transition grey space is the dominant current reality.

The transition grey space is not neutral. Without deliberate intervention, the incumbent regime incorporates niche innovations in ways that neutralise their transformative potential. This neutralisation could be achieved by absorbing community renewables into centralised utility models, capturing green hydrogen for fossil interests and rebranding transition finance without changing its structural logic. The incumbent regime survives because it is materially embedded, cognitively naturalised and institutionally anchored at multiple levels simultaneously.

Where change is already happening, niches are the protected spaces where alternative practices, technologies and social arrangements are developing outside the dominant regime. Niche innovations are the green shoots of the next energy regime, provided that adequate protection, investment and connection sustain them and prevent their absorption into the incumbent regime on asymmetric terms.

TABLE 2 REGIME DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISTICS

Regime	What it looks like	Where it is strongest
The incumbent fossil-industrial complex	State-owned utilities, national oil companies and the governments that rely on their revenues form a tightly coupled system. It is characterised by centralised control, export-driven extraction and resistance to transition finance that would alter ownership structures or governance.	Iran and the UAE are central to global oil and gas markets and among the world's top producers and exporters. ^e India is the world's second-largest coal consumer and a major producer, with demand continuing to grow. ^f
The emerging decentralised green regime	Community-owned renewables, distributed solar, green hydrogen pilots, critical mineral beneficiation and BRICS-specific finance instruments. Local ownership, circular value chains and pluralistic governance.	Brazil's solar cooperatives, South Africa's JETP niches, China's manufacturing ecosystem, Indonesia's mineral sovereignty agenda
The transition grey space	Hybrid compromises: green bond frameworks built on conventional lending logic. NDCs are ambitious on paper but backed by continued fossil investment; transition finance rebrands conventional lending with minor environmental conditions. ^g	Across all BRICS members, the transition grey space is the dominant current reality.

e IEA, "Middle East: Countries & Regions", accessed April 20, 2026, <https://www.iea.org/regions/middle-east?utm>.

f IEA, "Coal: Global Energy Review 2025", accessed April 20, 2026, <https://www.iea.org/reports/global-energy-review-2025/coal>.

g IISD Earth Negotiations Bulletin, "NDC Ambition and Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner" (UN Climate Change Conference, Baku, November 2024).

Source: Compiled by authors

Six high-potential niches

Against the backdrop of entrenched fossil-industrial interests, the analysis turns to six emerging domains in which alternative models are beginning to challenge the incumbent regime.⁵ Most current BRICS climate investment is concentrated in stabilisation and transitional scaling mechanisms. The consistent gap is in the governance structures, ownership models and infrastructure that determine whether transitional innovations are absorbed or displace the incumbent regime.

- **Community-owned renewables**

Examples include 'solar mamas' in Brazil and India, municipal microgrids in South Africa and off-grid cooperatives in Ethiopia. Here, energy is treated as a public good. The risk is framed as complementary to centralised utilities rather than as an alternative independent infrastructure.

5 Gill Seyfang and Noel Longhurst, "Desperately Seeking Niches: Grassroots Innovations and Niche Development in the Community Currency Field", *Global Environmental Change* 23, no. 5 (2013): 881-91.

- **Green hydrogen industrialisation**

South Africa and Brazil are positioning green hydrogen to shift their industrial sectors toward low-carbon growth.⁶ A key risk lies in how hydrogen pathways are being framed and implemented. Hydrogen still depends on fossil fuel extraction and does not fully eliminate emissions. If adopted at scale, green hydrogen could entrench gas-based infrastructure while being marketed as a clean solution, potentially delaying rather than accelerating the transition.⁷

- **Critical minerals beneficiation**

Shifting from raw material exports to downstream processing and manufacturing allows BRICS countries to move from commodity suppliers to clean technology producers, capturing greater value in global supply chains. Currently, clean technologies are largely manufactured in China and exported to Africa despite relying on critical minerals sourced from the continent.⁸ Without deliberate and coordinated policy intervention, this pattern will persist, locking countries into low-value exports.

- **Transition finance mechanisms**

Hard-to-abate sectors, such as steel, cement and basic chemicals, are highly emissions-intensive and central to transition finance. However, they are excluded from conventional green finance and require large, innovative financing solutions. Instruments such as blended finance, concessional funding, sustainability-linked bonds and risk-sharing mechanisms are increasingly used to close financing gaps.⁹ There is growing concern that transition finance risks becoming a form of whitewashing, in which only a small portion of activities is labelled as transitional while core operations remain emissions-intensive.

- **Indigenous and traditional knowledge**

Knowledge of ecosystem management, climate resilience and sustainable land use only delivers real planning value when communities have the authority to shape decisions and implementation. Co-learning on climate, ecosystem health and decision-making structures should be community-led and expert-guided. Without this, there is a risk that traditional knowledge is formalised and repackaged by institutions rather than governed and applied by the communities from which it originates.

6 Fabianna Bacil et al., "Seizing the Green Hydrogen Opportunity? Comparing Strategies for Industrial Transformation in Latecomer Countries", *Energy Policy* 211 (April 2026) 115111: 2.

7 Thomas Burman et al., "Hydrogen Readiness: A Trojan Horse for Fossil Fuel Lock-In", *ClientEarth*, April 2025.

8 Dinkneh Gebre Borojo and Miao Miao, "The Impacts of China's Low-Carbon Technology Trade on Modern Energy Access in Africa: The Role of Domestic Absorptive Capacity," *Scientific Reports* 16, no. 1 (2025): 2927.

9 Sayuri Shirai, "An Overview of Approaches to Transition Finance for Hard-to-Abate Sectors" (Working Paper Series, Asian Development Bank Institute, December 2023).

- **BRICS financial architecture reform**

Reforms to the New Development Bank (NDB), the development of BRICS-aligned credit-rating mechanisms, the expanded use of local currency settlement and the establishment of community climate funds together form a foundational financing architecture for transformation.¹⁰

The 2026–2027 critical juncture

There is a convergence between Türkiye hosting COP31, the current US G20 presidency and the Global Partnerships Conference as the bridging event to the UK G20 presidency in 2027. This creates a concentrated window that can either amplify momentum from Brazil COP30 and South Africa's G20 or fragment attention through agenda congestion and capacity strains. Capitalising on this moment requires sequencing coherent asks across these forums, anchoring political pledges in concrete financing arrangements and coordinating coalitions.

The economics of energy have already crossed a structural threshold. Onshore wind and solar photovoltaic are now 53% and 41% cheaper, respectively,¹¹ than the lowest-cost fossil fuel alternatives. New fossil fuel infrastructure is not merely facing future stranded risk but is also already economically irrational at scale. However, capital lock-in, incumbent subsidies and policy inertia insulate existing fossil assets even as their economic logic deteriorates.

The 2026 Iran conflict and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz have sharpened this dynamic acutely. The disruption of approximately 25% of the world's seaborne oil trade has been described by the International Energy Agency's executive director as 'the greatest threat to global energy security in history'.¹² For BRICS member states, the conflict creates a differentiated but urgent imperative. Importers like China and India, directly exposed to disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, face accelerating incentives to reduce hydrocarbon import dependence through domestic renewable buildout. This logic is consistent with the bloc's 2025–2030 Energy Cooperation Roadmap, which explicitly prioritises technological sovereignty and South–South collaboration. Yet the bloc remains internally fractured. Hydrocarbon exporters have structural interests opposed to rapid transition, and the contest between fossil fuel exporters and green industrial policy leaders within BRICS will shape not only the bloc's energy mix but also the geopolitical order for decades.

10 Odilile Ayodele, "The Emerging BRICS Financial Architecture: A Catalyst for Global Governance Reform?", *Politikon* 52, no. 1 (2025): 99–118.

11 Gunnar Luderer et al., "Impact of Declining Renewable Energy Costs on Electrification in Low-Emission Scenarios," *Nature Energy* 7, no. 1 (2022): 32–42.

12 International Energy Agency, "The Middle East and Global Energy Markets", accessed April 30, 2026, <https://www.iea.org/topics/the-middle-east-and-global-energy-markets>

A genuine just transition for BRICS nations requires deliberate institutional architecture, not merely the disruption of incumbent hydrocarbon flows. Geopolitical tensions may constrain coordination within BRICS, but they may also catalyse the development of parallel regimes, such as alternative financing mechanisms, local currency trade and energy diversification strategies. These could reshape the trajectory of global energy, finance and governance transitions.

The narrative battle: Why stories matter

The BRICS energy system highlights embedded paradigms and assumptions exposed through narratives at global energy agenda forums, where energy security and decarbonisation compete with national sovereignty. Coal as an energy source, in several BRICS contexts, is more than an economic preference. It remains a symbol of national development and sovereignty. Renewable energy is perceived, in some policy circles, as a foreign, elite-led agenda.

Competing worldviews function as 'narrative lock-ins', constraining the ability to build public and political support for decarbonisation, even as the economic case for renewable energy becomes increasingly compelling. Five narratives co-exist in tension across BRICS:

- **Climate justice and historical responsibility:** This framing positions climate change as a legacy of historical injustice, strengthening the moral basis for BRICS' calls for climate finance. However, some BRICS members are themselves major emitters, complicating the narrative of responsibility.
- **Developmental sovereignty:** This perspective prioritises economic growth in developing countries, positioning climate action as secondary to broader development goals, providing a rationale for continued investment in fossil fuels. However, this framing is increasingly challenged by younger generations calling for development pathways that are economically inclusive and environmentally sustainable.
- **Technological transformation and green industrialisation:** This reframes climate action as a source of economic opportunity, highlighting its potential to drive industrial growth, innovation and competitiveness. China exemplifies the strength of this narrative, having leveraged the energy transition to build global leadership in clean technologies.
- **Just transition as distributive justice:** The distribution of transition costs and benefits is at the centre of climate action, emphasising equity, inclusion and social justice. South Africa has been particularly influential in advancing this framing through the Just Energy Transition model. However, the 'just transition' risks becoming a rhetorical label without delivering meaningful redistribution.
- **Multipolar climate governance:** This argues that global climate governance should evolve to reflect a multipolar world, positioning BRICS members as co-architects of

emerging global norms. It provides the ideological foundation for initiatives seeking to reshape rule-setting, financing and cooperation beyond traditional Western-dominated systems.

- **Narrative sovereignty:** This is particularly influential. Eco-ubuntu draws on the Southern African philosophy of ubuntu, centred on shared humanity and collective wellbeing, and extends it into the ecological domain. It reframes energy justice through the lens of interdependence, where individual well-being is inseparable from community resilience and environmental health. In this framing, ‘I am because we are’ evolves into a deeper recognition that ‘we are because the ecosystem sustains us’. Energy sovereignty emphasises the right of communities to shape and control their own energy systems, shifting the narrative from externally imposed transitions to locally driven empowerment and autonomy.

The BRICS Climate and Energy Compass

This strategic framework offers a decision-making guide for sovereign, just and resilient energy transitions, developed through consultations and workshops with energy experts across the BRICS bloc. Designed as a navigation tool, it identifies five interconnected axes that shape how BRICS countries plan their energy and climate strategies and inform the design of multilateral processes.

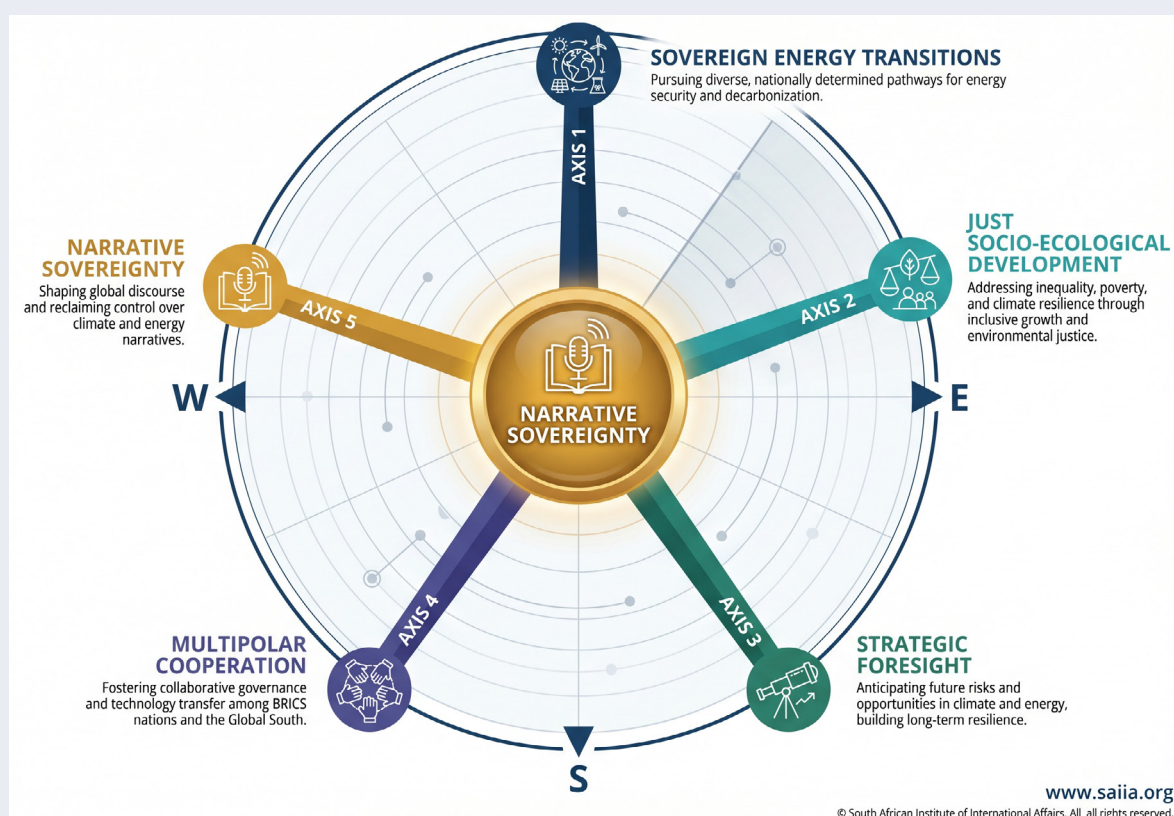
TABLE 3 BRICS CLIMATE AND ENERGY COMPASS		
Compass axis	Core question	Key action
Axis 1: Sovereign energy transitions	Who owns and controls the energy system?	Invest in local clean technology manufacturing; protect critical mineral assets; maintain public ownership at the centre of energy infrastructure.
Axis 2: Just socio-ecological development	Who benefits from the transition?	Treat energy as a public good; design projects for community ownership from the outset; centre Indigenous knowledge in energy and land planning.
Axis 3: Strategic foresight and risk navigation	Are we anticipating disruptions or reacting to them?	Establish foresight and scenario planning units; build adaptive regulation; implement low-risk experiments to anticipate and respond proactively to geopolitical energy shocks.
Axis 4: Multipolar cooperation and regional integration	Are we building BRICS-led alternatives or reproducing Global North-dominated models?	Strengthen and invest in joint research and development; expand local currency settlement for intra-BRICS climate trade; build sub-national implementation capacity.
Axis 5: Narrative sovereignty (centre of compass)	Who defines what development means?	Support local storytellers, artists and educators as part of the transition agenda to create new narratives that promote eco-ubuntu and energy sovereignty as culturally grounded frames.

Source: Compiled by authors

The BRICS Climate and Energy Compass brings together three complementary frameworks:

- five transformative pillars (structural foundation);
- five governance principles (system operation); and
- five strategic imperatives (where change must be driven).

Figure 1 BRICS Climate and Energy Compass



Source: Compiled by authors (AI-assisted)

Together they clarify the 'what,' 'how' and 'where it matters most' in disrupting entrenched lock-ins. A key insight is that existing policy efforts are heavily concentrated on near-term stabilisation and transitional scaling. What remains consistently underdeveloped is the longer-term imperative where governance structures, ownership models and narratives determine whether emergent solutions are absorbed or fundamentally reshape systems.

Strategic priorities and recommendations

Climate finance is the strategic fulcrum for advancing shared BRICS climate action and just energy transitions. Three priorities address the most critical finance challenges and systems blockages identified through the research.

Priority 1: Systemic reform of global and BRICS-internal financial architecture

The current global financial architecture is not designed to deliver just transitions at the scale and pace required. Dollar-denominated, market-rate-return-conditioned and risk-averse, it systematically underweights the concessional and long-term finance required for the BRICS transition. Reform is essential at both the global level (MDBs, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change finance architecture) and within BRICS, particularly the NDB, which has committed 40% of its investments to climate transition by 2026.¹³

The BRICS bloc should:

- Advocate for MDB reform: Push for climate funding that is easier to access, more affordable and available over longer timeframes, with stronger protections against unsustainable debt.
- Enhance the NDBs' role: Increase NDB capacity through updated risk policies for affordable, local-currency lending. Explore new BRICS-specific instruments such as dedicated climate funds and regional bond markets.
- Develop alternative revenue models: Invest in green bonds, carbon taxes or carbon markets to reduce reliance on fossil fuel-generated revenues.

Priority 2: Catalysing investment in hard-to-abate sectors

Conventional green finance flows easily toward solar panels and wind farms, but it rarely reaches the steel mills, cement kilns and fertiliser plants that generate the most persistent share of emissions. Bridging this funding gap requires dedicated transition-finance mechanisms and purpose-built instruments aligned with the long timelines and technological uncertainty of heavy-industry decarbonisation.

The BRICS bloc should:

- Design blended finance facilities with binding technology transfer clauses and community benefit agreements for heavy-industry decarbonisation.

¹³ New Development Bank, "[NDB Board of Governors Approved the Bank's General Strategy for 2022–2026](#)", May 19, 2022.

- Strengthen green value chains within BRICS by making it easier for member countries to trade and invest in green technologies, materials and services. Working together on critical minerals would be most impactful.
- Create BRICS agreements to share technology by pooling patents and forming joint ventures that require local production and skills transfer.

Priority 3: Localising climate finance and building sub-national capacity

National climate ambitions routinely falter in the absence of strong provincial and municipal implementation capacity. Expanding direct access to finance at the local level – by reducing reliance on national intermediaries – offers one of the most powerful levers for accelerating impact.

The BRICS bloc should:

- Create dedicated funding channels for local governments, communities and grassroots organisations with simpler application processes and community approval provisions.
- Invest in broad capacity building by offering training for provincial and municipal officials, community leaders and local businesses on project design and climate risk assessment.
- Support community-led ownership by ensuring local communities have real decision-making power and fair benefit sharing in energy initiatives.

What happens next: Pathways to impact

The Strategic Priority Action Plan (see Table 4 below) is operationalised through concrete pathways with specific timelines, responsible actors and measurable milestones. Three phases should be pursued concurrently rather than sequentially.

TABLE 4 STRATEGIC PRIORITY ACTION PLAN

Phase	Horizon	Core actions	Regime flip metric
Immediate	0–12 months	Establish independent national climate commissions in all BRICS members. Launch the BRICS Climate and Just Transition Review Mechanism. Operationalise NDB climate commitment with revised risk frameworks.	Commissions established; NDB local-currency climate bonds issued; first review cycle implemented.
Medium term	1–3 years	Coordinate MDB reform advocacy at G20, IMF/World Bank and UNFCCC forums. Support the six innovation niches through targeted funding and cross-niche connections. Establish the BRICS Climate Knowledge Commons and the BRICS fellowship programmes.	Concessional finance ratio increased; distributed renewable capacity ratio reaches 1:2; community benefit agreements majority of BRICS-funded projects.
Structural	3–5 years	NDB fulfils a large component of climate finance commitment through instruments reaching hard-to-abate sectors and community-scale projects. Establish regional value chains for critical minerals with binding local beneficiation. Institutionalise BRICS Ombuds for Climate Justice.	Critical minerals are being benefited within BRICS; climate finance is flowing directly to subnational or community entities; representation parity has been achieved in BRICS climate governance.

Source: Compiled by authors

Accountability framework

The multi-tier framework ensures that commitments translate into enforcement mechanisms, escalating from national to international levels:

- **National tier:** Independent climate commissions with a constitutional or statutory mandate, mandated to investigate complaints from communities and sub-national entities.
- **BRICS tier:** Climate and Just Transition Review Mechanism providing peer review of member state progress and public reporting on Regime Flip Metrics, with the ability to suspend voting rights in BRICS institutions for non-compliance. Authorised cross-border civil society monitoring.
- **International tier:** Enhanced NDCs; transparent Paris Agreement reporting; collective BRICS positions in other forums conditioned on member state compliance.
- **Redress mechanism:** A BRICS Ombudsperson for Climate Justice with an independent mandate to investigate systemic violations of community rights, recommend policy changes and facilitate mediation.

- **Regime-Flip Metrics should track transformation, not activity:** shifts toward public and community ownership; transition finance tied to real-economy decarbonisation; expansion of local-currency intra-BRICS energy trade; and resilience indicators including reduced fossil-fuel price volatility and wider clean-tech manufacturing distribution. These indicators signal durable, locally embedded systemic transformation.

From navigation to transformation

The energy transition in BRICS requires simultaneously addressing material lock-ins (fossil infrastructure, technology dependencies, inadequate finance), cognitive lock-ins (developmentalism, sovereignty arguments for fossil investment) and narrative lock-ins (coal as development, renewables as foreign imposition).

The BRICS Climate and Energy Compass serves as a navigation tool, with the three strategic priorities providing the action agenda and an Accountability Framework ensuring commitments become reality.

The 2026–2027 window is real. The grey space of perpetual compromise is also real. Whether BRICS moves from navigation to transformation will be determined in the next 18 months. The research ends here. The work begins.

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