

Interaction of Non-Profit Organizations as a Factor Influencing Socio-Economic Ties among BRICS Countries



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Abstract. This study examines the role of non-profit organizations (NPOs) as an underappreciated instrument for strengthening socio-economic integration among BRICS countries amidst the transformation of the global architecture and sanctions pressure. The relevance of this work stems from the need to identify alternative mechanisms of economic interaction capable of offsetting the constraints imposed by formal institutions. Its scholarly novelty lies in developing a typology of mechanisms through which NPOs influence economic ties within the association, encompassing four primary forms: facilitating trade relations through business associations, shaping a common scientific and educational space, enabling technology transfer and supporting innovative entrepreneurship, and fostering social entrepreneurship and an inclusive economy. Non-profit organizations are considered instruments of soft power and public diplomacy, contributing to the formation of social capital as conceptualized by R. Putnam and J. Coleman – namely, horizontal networks of trust that lower the transaction costs of international engagement. Unlike existing research focusing on intergovernmental cooperation, this study systematizes the practices of non-state actors and quantitatively assesses their economic impact. The methodological framework integrates the institutional approach, the concept of social capital, and comparative legal analysis, employing methods of comparative, content, and statistical analysis. The empirical base encompasses data on 1,247 joint projects undertaken by non-profit organizations from BRICS countries between

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2015 and 2023, as well as official statistics from national bodies and international organizations. The findings indicate that NPOs contribute approximately 1–4% of the association's GDP, create millions of jobs, and reduce transaction costs in international engagement. A significant institutional heterogeneity in national regulatory models governing the non-profit sector is identified, creating barriers to cross-border cooperation. Study limitations include the incomparability of statistical data and the lack of transparency regarding financial flows within the alliance. Future research avenues include longitudinal analysis of NPO activities' effects and comparative studies with the experience of other regional associations.

Key words: BRICS, non-profit organizations, economic cooperation, international integration, civil society, technology transfer, business networks, social entrepreneurship, social capital, soft power, public diplomacy.

Introduction

The BRICS association, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, and since 2024 expanded with the inclusion of new members (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates) into the BRICS+ format, represents a unique platform for multilateral cooperation encompassing over 40% of the world's population and a significant share of global gross product. Traditionally, scholarly attention has focused predominantly on intergovernmental cooperation, trade flows, and investment projects among the association's member states. However, the role of non-profit organizations (NPOs) as agents of economic diplomacy and catalysts for business activity remains insufficiently explored, despite growing recognition of the importance of multi-track diplomacy and the involvement of non-state actors in international relations.

The relevance of this study is underpinned by several factors. First, amid sanctions pressure and the reconfiguration of global value chains, BRICS countries have a vested interest in identifying alternative mechanisms for economic integration capable of offsetting the constraints of formal institutions. Second, the accumulated experience of developed countries demonstrates that the non-profit sector can function as an intermediary between business, government, and society,

thereby contributing to the creation of an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and innovation. Third, the specific characteristics of BRICS countries – marked by considerable cultural, institutional, and economic diversity – necessitate the development of flexible modes of interaction in which NPOs possess comparative advantages. In international scholarship, the activities of NPOs in a global context have traditionally been examined through the lens of soft power, grassroots diplomacy, and public diplomacy concepts, underscoring their role in shaping favorable country images and building horizontal linkages between societies (Nye, 2004).

A review of contemporary academic literature reveals a gradual increase in scholarly interest in the involvement of non-profit organizations in international economic cooperation. Foundational research on the role of civil society in global governance is presented in the works of Western scholars. Koch, Dreher, Nunnenkamp, and Thiele analyzed the factors shaping the allocation of aid by non-governmental organizations (Koch et al., 2008). Keck and Sikkink developed the concept of transnational advocacy networks and their influence on the international agenda (Keck, Sikkink, 1998). Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink investigated the mechanisms through which international

norms impact domestic politics (Risse et al., 1999). Anheier, Glasius, and Kaldor systematized approaches to the study of global civil society (Anheier et al., 2001). In the context of emerging economies, significant contributions include research by Banks and Hulme, which examines the institutional environment in which NPOs operate and their interactions with the state (Banks, Hulme, 2012).

Regarding the BRICS association specifically, there is a limited body of work addressing the role of non-state actors. Researchers note the emergence of parallel civil society structures, including the BRICS Civil Forum; however, their impact on economic processes remains a subject of debate (Perskaya, 2018). An important channel of public diplomacy is regular international events, such as the annual International Youth Volunteer Conference “BRICS To You”, which fosters long-term linkages between NPOs and youth organizations from participating countries. A critical review of the existing literature reveals insufficient attention to the specific mechanisms through which NPOs influence trade and investment cooperation; there is a lack of systematization regarding the forms of their activities and quantitative assessment of outcomes.

This study aims to address these gaps through a comprehensive analysis of the practices of interaction among NPOs from BRICS countries in the economic sphere. The scholarly novelty of the findings lies in developing a typology of mechanisms through which the non-profit sector influences economic ties among the association’s members, identifying specific barriers and opportunities, and formulating recommendations for the institutionalization of such interaction. The author proceeds from the hypothesis that NPOs perform functions of infrastructural support for economic cooperation, reducing transaction costs and building the social capital necessary for the development of sustainable business linkages.

Methodological framework and theoretical basis of the study

The methodological framework of the study is grounded in the institutional approach, which allows for the consideration of non-profit organizations as specific institutions that structure the interaction of economic agents under conditions of institutional uncertainty and cultural diversity. As a key theoretical framework, the author employs the concept of social capital, as developed in the works of Putnam (1993; 2000), Coleman (1988), and Fukuyama (1995).

According to R. Putnam, social capital refers to the features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam, 1993, p. 167). J. Coleman defines social capital by its function: it is a resource inherent in the structure of relations between individuals and groups that facilitates the achievement of certain ends that would be unattainable in its absence (Coleman, 1988). In the context of international economic interaction, social capital manifests itself in the formation of horizontal networks of trust and reciprocity, which reduce opportunism and enhance the efficiency of economic exchange.

Within the framework of this study, NPOs are viewed as generators of social capital operating through three main mechanisms: (1) creating and strengthening networks of interpersonal and interorganizational linkages among representatives of different countries; (2) shaping shared norms and rules of interaction that reduce uncertainty; (3) enhancing cross-country trust through repeated interactions and joint projects. These mechanisms contribute to reducing transaction costs, which in Williamson’s theory (Williamson, 1985) include the costs of information search, negotiation, contract enforcement, and property rights protection.

The study employs a comprehensive set of research methods. Comparative analysis is used to juxtapose the institutional conditions under which

NPOs operate in BRICS countries, identifying commonalities and peculiarities in national regulatory models of the non-profit sector. The comparative legal method enabled the analysis of member states' legislation concerning the regulation of NPO activities, their organizational and legal forms, and requirements for international engagement, thereby ensuring the validity of statistical data comparison (Dorozhkin et al., 2023). Through content analysis of policy documents, activity reports, and publications of leading NPOs, their areas of work in economic cooperation have been systematized. Statistical analysis is applied to assess the development dynamics of the non-profit sector and its contribution to the economies of the association's member states.

The empirical base of the study includes official statistics from national government bodies of BRICS countries, data from international organizations (the World Bank, UNCTAD, the ILO, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization), analytical materials from the New Development Bank, documents from BRICS summits held between 2014 and 2024, analytical materials from research centers specializing in BRICS issues (including the National Committee for BRICS Research, the BRICS Studies Centre at HSE University, and BRICSPO), as well as the results of monitoring the activities of non-profit

organizations during the period 2021–2024. Quantitative assessments of the economic effects of NPO activities are based on an analysis of data on 1,247 joint projects implemented by organizations from different BRICS countries between 2015 and 2023, information on which was obtained from open sources.

The limitations of the study are associated with the insufficient systematization and comparability of statistical data on the non-profit sector across different countries, differences in national approaches to classifying NPOs, as well as the lack of transparency regarding financial flows and performance outcomes of individual organizations.

Institutional environment of NPO functioning in BRICS countries

Before proceeding to analyze the institutional environment in which NPOs operate, it is necessary to characterize the overall economic context of interaction among BRICS and BRICS+ countries. *Table 1* presents the key economic indicators of the association's member states, which determine the scale and focus of non-profit organizations' activities. The volume of foreign trade turnover and foreign direct investment reflects the intensity of economic ties within which NPOs perform an intermediary function. The considerable differentiation of economic indicators – ranging from China's largest economy with a trade turnover

Table 1. Key economic indicators of BRICS and BRICS+ countries

Country	Exports of goods (billion USD, 2023)	Imports of goods (billion USD, 2023)	Foreign trade turnover (billion USD)	FDI Inflows (billion USD, 2022)
Brazil	339.7	287.1	626.8	91.0
Russia	425.3	285.0	710.3	-4.1
India	451.0	677.2	1 128.2	49.3
China	3 380.0	2 560.0	5 940.0	189.1
South Africa	123.3	106.1	229.4	9.0
Egypt*	44.5	89.7	134.2	11.4
Ethiopia*	4.8	18.2	23.0	3.7
Iran*	65.2	58.9	124.1	н/д
UAE*	493.1	358.2	851.3	22.7
* BRICS+ countries that joined in 2024. Compiled from: BRICS JSP 2024 data, World Bank, UNCTAD.				

of nearly \$6 trillion to the smaller economies of Ethiopia (23 billion USD) – determines different models of NPO participation: in large economies, they focus on facilitating large-scale trade and investment projects, whereas in smaller ones, they concentrate on capacity building and resource mobilization for economic development.

The non-profit sector in BRICS countries evolves within diverse institutional contexts, reflecting the specificities of political systems, legal traditions, and historical trajectories of civil society development. To ensure the validity of comparative analysis, it is necessary to consider that the legislation of different countries defines the organizational and legal forms of NPOs differently. *Table 2* systematizes the types of organizations classified as belonging to the non-profit sector in each country.

A comparative analysis of national regulatory models for NPOs reveals both common trends and significant differences that affect the potential for these organizations to participate in international economic cooperation. It should be noted that for the purposes of this study, NPOs refer to organizations directly involved in facilitating economic cooperation: business associations, chambers of commerce and industry, development foundations, educational and research organizations, technical assistance organizations, and social entrepreneurship entities. Religious organi-

zations, political parties, and government agencies are excluded from the analysis, thereby ensuring cross-country data comparability.

According to the latest data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), prepared jointly with the Institute for Applied Economic Research (Ipea), over 897,000 active non-profit organizations are registered in the country. In 2024, the total number of active organizations reached 897,054, exceeding the number registered in 2023 (879,326). A distinctive feature of the Brazilian model is the active participation of NPOs in the implementation of state socio-economic development programs, which creates prerequisites for their involvement in economic diplomacy processes. NPOs account for approximately 2.2% of total employment (roughly 2.4 million jobs), and their contribution to GDP is estimated at 1.7–2.0%¹.

The Russian Federation is characterized by stricter regulation of the non-profit sector, particularly concerning organizations receiving foreign funding. Legislation provides for specific requirements for NPOs that have been granted the status of a foreign agent, including mandatory labeling of materials and additional reporting. However, it is important to emphasize that this status does not prohibit the activities of such organizations but rather establishes additional requirements for their transparency. Essentially

Table 2. Organizational and legal forms of NPOs in BRICS countries

Country	Main organizational and legal forms of NPOs
Brazil	Associations (associações), foundations (fundações), civil society organizations (OSCs), social organizations (OS), public interest organizations (OSCIP)
Russia	Non-governmental associations, foundations, autonomous non-profit organizations (ANOs), non-profit partnerships, associations and unions, Cossack societies, religious organizations
India	Societies, trusts, Section 8 companies, cooperatives
China	Social organizations (shehui tuanti), foundations (jijinhui), civil non-enterprise units (minban feiqiye danwei), GONGOs
South Africa	Non-profit organizations (NPOs), non-profit companies (NPCs), trusts, voluntary associations
Compiled from: national legislation of BRICS countries.	

¹ IPEA – Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada. Mapa das Organizações da Sociedade Civil. 2024. Available at: <https://mapaosc.ipea.gov.br> (accessed: 10.02.2026).

similar requirements for enhanced reporting upon receiving foreign funding exist in Brazil, India, and China (Dorozhkin et al., 2023). In recent years, Russia has seen state support for civil society development institutions, including the creation of specialized foundations and grant programs for projects aimed at strengthening international cooperation within the BRICS framework. According to the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, the register of NPOs contains 221,665 organizations². Issues related to assessing the social efficiency of the non-profit sector in the Russian economy are examined in detail in the work of A.V. Okorokov (Okorokov, 2024).

India has long-standing traditions of non-governmental organization operation, with roots tracing back to the national liberation movement. Today, over 3.3 million registered NPOs operate in India, with sector employment exceeding 12 million people (approximately 2.5% of the workforce). According to a study by the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), 73.4% of NPOs have either one paid employee or none at all, while over 19 million people work as volunteers. The sectoral structure of India's non-profit sector includes religious activities (26.5%), community and social services (21.3%), and education and culture (17.9%)³.

The People's Republic of China exhibits a specific model of non-profit sector organization, characterized by significant state involvement. Most large non-profit organizations engaged in international activities are quasi-governmental structures (GONGOs – government-organized non-governmental organizations), closely inter-

acting with state authorities (Zhang, 2025). Nevertheless, in recent years, a gradual diversification of the sector and an increase in the number of independent NPOs have been observed, particularly in the fields of ecology, education, and social entrepreneurship. According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the PRC, approximately 900,000 NPOs operate in the country, providing employment for 12–15 million people⁴.

The Republic of South Africa is characterized by the most developed non-profit sector among African states, owing to the historical legacy of the anti-apartheid struggle and the active role of civil society in the democratization process. The legal framework governing NPO activities in South Africa is among the most liberal, ensuring a significant degree of organizational freedom and access to international resources. According to the national register, as of the end of 2024, 289,184 registered NPOs were operating in the country. NPOs account for approximately 1.5% of GDP and provide about 1.1 million jobs⁵.

Comparison of the data in *Tables 1 and 3* reveals certain patterns. Countries with larger foreign trade turnover (China, India) also possess a more extensive non-profit sector in absolute terms; however, the share of the population employed in NPOs in these countries is lower than in South Africa or Brazil. This may be explained both by features of their economic structure and by differences in the regulatory environment. Countries with more liberal NPO regulation (South Africa, Brazil) demonstrate higher relative employment in the sector, confirming the significance of the institutional environment for the development of the non-profit sector.

² The Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation. Information portal about the activities of non-profit organizations. Available at: <https://unro.minjust.ru> (accessed: 10.02.2026).

³ Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA). Invisible, Yet Widespread: The Non-Profit Sector in India. New Delhi, 2002. Available at: https://link.springer.com/rwe/10.1007/978-0-387-93996-4_445 (accessed: 16.02.2026).

⁴ Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China. Statistical Bulletin on Civil Affairs Development. 2024 Available at: https://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/202502/t20250228_1958822.html (accessed: 16.02.2026).

⁵ Council on Foundations. Nonprofit Law in South Africa. 2024. Available at: <https://www.cof.org/country-notes/south-africa> (accessed: 16.02.2026).

Table 3. Comparative characteristics of the institutional environment for NPOs in BRICS countries

Country	Number of NPOs (thousands)	Share of NPOs in GDP (%)	Employment in NPO sector (million people)	% of population employed in NPOs	Degree of regulatory freedom*
Brazil	897.1	1.8	2.4	1.1	4
Russia	221.7	1.1	1.2	0.8	2
India	3,300.0	2.4	12.0	0.8	3
China	900.0	0.8	13.5	0.9	2
South Africa	289.2	1.5	1.1	1.8	4

*On a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 denotes maximum freedom.
Compiled from: data from national statistical offices, the World Bank, CIVICUS reports.

Thus, despite substantial differences in regulatory approaches, all BRICS countries acknowledge the importance of the non-profit sector for socio-economic development. At the same time, variations in the degree of regulatory freedom, access to resources, and opportunities for international engagement create asymmetry in the capacities of national NPOs and necessitate the development of mechanisms to harmonize legal regimes in order to facilitate cross-border cooperation (Brown, 2000).

Forms and mechanisms of NPO participation in strengthening economic ties

An analysis of non-profit organizations' practices within the BRICS space allows for the identification of four primary forms of NPO participation in strengthening socio-economic ties among the association's member states. Each of these forms is implemented through specific mechanisms of influence on economic actors and the institutional environment of interaction, while all of them contribute to the accumulation of social capital in the Putnamian sense – the formation of networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation.

The first form relates to facilitating the development of trade relations through the organization of business missions, trade exhibitions, forums, and conferences. Business associations and chambers of commerce and industry perform intermediary functions between entrepreneurs from different countries, providing informational support, arranging business contacts, and lobbying

for business interests. In terms of social capital theory, these organizations create “bridging” capital, connecting representatives of different countries and cultures. As noted by A.O. Naumov and colleagues, the role of such organizations is particularly significant given the cultural and linguistic barriers characteristic of interaction among BRICS countries (Naumov et al., 2023). The Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RSPP), the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), and similar structures are actively developing bilateral and multilateral formats of interaction (Markov, 2024).

The second form encompasses the activities of scientific and educational NPOs and university alliances aimed at implementing joint research projects and knowledge exchange. Unlike educational exchanges, this format is focused on creating specific intellectual outputs and innovative solutions, which directly contributes to shaping a common scientific and technological space. According to a study by M.A. Lukashenko and colleagues, in 2024, just ten leading Russian universities published 998 articles jointly with foreign organizations, a significant portion of which involved partners from BRICS countries (Lukashenko et al., 2025).

The institutional framework for scientific and educational cooperation encompasses various organizational forms: joint research centers and laboratories (e.g., the Center for Fundamental Sciences at Novosibirsk State University and

Table 4. Russian-Chinese Educational Associations

No.	Russian-Chinese association	Russian participating universities	Chinese participating universities
1	Association of Classic Universities of Russia and China	20	31
2	Russian-Chinese Association of Higher Education Institutions in Culture and Arts	30	14
3	China-Russia Alliance of Agricultural Education and Innovative Research	9	8
4	Association of Technical Universities of Russia and China	39	35
5	Association of Universities "Volga – Yangtze"	49	38
6	China-Russia Union of Higher Pedagogical Educational Institutions	12	10
7	Russian-Chinese Association of Medical Universities	49	55
8	Union of Journalism Education of Universities of China and Russia	15	21
9	Association of Universities of the Far East and Siberia of Russia and Northeastern Regions of the PRC	20	73
10	China-Russia Association of Arts Universities	3	7
11	Association of Rectors of Transport Universities of Russia and China	20	100
12	Russian-Chinese Association of Economic Universities	18	20
13	Russian-Chinese Association of Tourism and Hospitality Universities	7	14

Compiled from: ruschinalliance.unecon.ru.

Chongqing University), expert councils and associations (the Expert Council on Russia's Participation in BRICS at HSE University), and major international forums (the BRICS Universities Rectors Forum). Of particular note is the system of Russian-Chinese educational associations (*Tab. 4*).

Analysis of the data in Table 4 demonstrates the formation of a deeply diversified system of scientific and educational integration. The Association of Technical Universities (39 Russian and 35 Chinese universities) and the Association of Medical Universities (49 and 55 universities, respectively) create a critical mass of participants for joint research in strategic sectors. The significant predominance of Chinese universities in the Association of Transport Universities (100 vs 20) and the regional association "Far East and Siberia – Northeast China" (73 vs 20) indicates a deliberate effort to build interaction in areas of particular geo-economic significance.

The third form encompasses the activities of NPOs in the sphere of technology transfer and support for innovative development. Technology platforms, incubators, accelerators, and venture capital funds facilitate the commercialization

of research outcomes and the dissemination of best practices. An example is the activities of the BRICS International Alliance of Strategic Projects, which in 2024 and the first half of 2025 conducted over 150 events, organized more than 19 foreign delegations to BRICS countries, and hosted 17 foreign delegations in Russia. This activity generates social capital through the creation of repeated interactions that build trust among participants (Kiselev, Nechaeva, 2018).

The fourth form is represented by socially oriented NPOs working in the fields of sustainable development, inclusive economy, and social entrepreneurship. These organizations facilitate the involvement of marginalized population groups in economic activity, the development of microfinance, and support for small entrepreneurship. The economic effect of socially oriented NPOs' activities is manifested indirectly through the expansion of the consumer market, the formation of new demand segments, and job creation (Weerawardena et al., 2010).

Based on the consolidation of data from World Bank reports, the International Labour Organization, national statistical offices, and specialized

studies of the microfinance sector, the author has derived the following estimates of the economic effects of socially oriented NPOs' activities in BRICS countries:

- microfinance coverage: socially oriented NPOs and microfinance institutions provide access to financial services for 45–60 million households not covered by the traditional banking system, with a total microcredit portfolio of approximately USD 35–42 billion (author's estimate based on data from CGAP, MIX Market, and national regulators);

- job creation: social entrepreneurship support programs facilitated by NPOs contribute to the creation of 2.5–3.2 million jobs annually, predominantly in rural areas and depressed urban territories (estimate based on data from the ILO, Rosstat, IBGE, and China's NBS);

- inclusion of marginalized groups: NPO programs on economic inclusion reach 18–25 million people from vulnerable population categories.

Discussion: Contentious issues and alternative approaches

The role of non-profit organizations in international economic cooperation remains a subject of scholarly debate. A critical analysis of existing positions allows for a more objective assessment of the prospects for NPO participation in strengthening economic ties within the BRICS framework (Nurhayati et al., 2025).

The first contentious issue concerns the very nature of the BRICS association and its capacity for deepening integration. A number of researchers view BRICS primarily as a political project and are skeptical about the prospects for developing genuine economic cooperation (Jacobs, Van Rossem, 2014). The empirical data presented in this study — 1,247 joint NPO projects in 2015–2023, over 330 universities participating in educational associations between Russia and China alone, more than 150 events organized by the BRICS International Alliance of Strategic Projects in a single year — attest to the existence of substantive

cooperation at the civil society level. The author contends that the economic interests of BRICS countries in diversifying partnerships create a genuine foundation for deepening cooperation, in which NPOs play a supportive yet significant role (Markov, 2024).

The second point of debate relates to assessing the degree of autonomy of the non-profit sector in BRICS countries (Popova, 2019). Critics point to the high degree of dependence of many NPOs on state funding and control, particularly in China, where most international NPOs are quasi-governmental structures. The data in Table 3 show that the degree of regulatory freedom varies considerably — from 2 points (Russia, China) to 4 points (Brazil, South Africa). However, even under conditions of limited autonomy, NPOs are capable of performing useful functions in facilitating economic interaction, as evidenced by the scale of their activities (Petroni, 2021).

The third controversial issue concerns the relationship between the economic and political functions of NPOs. Some researchers (Esenbaeva, Kuznetsov, 2024) focus on the macroeconomic aspects of BRICS cooperation, including de-dollarization, assigning NPOs a secondary role. The author shares the view that economic integration has a socio-cultural dimension in which NPOs possess comparative advantages. Building trust and developing business networks are areas where the non-profit sector is indispensable.

The fourth issue pertains to the optimal model for institutionalizing NPO interaction. Various approaches exist, ranging from the creation of a formalized structure to the preservation of flexible network interactions⁶. The author advocates a position of gradual, step-by-step institutionalization.

⁶ Chukov R.S. (2017). Problems and prospects of global institutionalization in modern world politics: On the example of the Group of Seven, the Group of Twenty and BRICS: Candidate of Sciences dissertation. Saint Petersburg.

The fifth aspect relates to the impact of BRICS expansion on the prospects for NPO interaction. Nach and Newadi note that the inclusion of new members creates additional opportunities but complicates coordination. The author contends that expansion creates favorable conditions for NPOs by increasing the potential field for their activities (Nach, Newadi, 2024).

The sixth question concerns the relationship between the economic and socio-humanitarian functions of NPOs. V.V. Perskaya rightly notes that the BRICS partnership is aimed at ensuring not only economic growth but also improving the welfare of peoples (Perskaya, 2018). The author maintains that economic and social functions are complementary, and the most effective projects are those that integrate both.

Conclusion

This study allows us to assert that non-profit organizations represent a significant, albeit underutilized, resource for strengthening socio-economic ties among BRICS countries. An analysis of the institutional environment in which NPOs operate has revealed substantial heterogeneity in national regulatory models governing the non-profit sector, ranging from relatively liberal regimes in Brazil and South Africa to considerably more restrictive ones in China and Russia. This creates structural obstacles for cross-border cooperation but simultaneously opens opportunities for developing flexible mechanisms of collaboration.

The systematization of forms of NPO participation in the socio-economic interaction of BRICS countries has demonstrated the diversity of channels through which they exert influence, encompassing the facilitation of trade relations, the formation of a common scientific and educational space, technology transfer, and support for inclusive development. The application of the theoretical

framework of social capital has allowed for the conceptualization of the mechanisms through which NPOs operate: they generate “bridging” social capital by creating cross-country networks, shaping shared norms, and strengthening trust, which leads to a reduction in transaction costs in international engagement.

Quantitative assessment of the effects of non-profit sector activities confirms its notable contribution to the economies of BRICS countries: NPOs account for 0.8 to 2.4% of GDP, create millions of jobs, and implement hundreds of joint projects annually. Of particular significance is the activity of scientific and educational NPOs, which build the intellectual infrastructure for long-term cooperation.

The expansion of BRICS to the BRICS+ format in 2024 creates both additional opportunities and new challenges for the non-profit sector. The inclusion of Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE increases the institutional and cultural diversity of the association, necessitating more flexible mechanisms of interaction. At the same time, the expanded geography of cooperation opens new avenues for the activities of NPOs as instruments of soft power and public diplomacy.

The findings of the study confirm the initial hypothesis that non-profit organizations perform functions of infrastructural support for economic cooperation among BRICS countries, reducing informational and cultural barriers, forming networks of trust and reciprocity, developing human capital, and contributing to innovative development. The full realization of this potential is possible provided there are concerted efforts to institutionalize NPO interaction, harmonize national regulatory regimes, and establish sustainable mechanisms for supporting joint projects.

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