

**TRANSFORMATION IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: THE
BRICS AND ALTERNATIVE EMERGING ALLIANCES
AT THE CROSSROAD OF SUSTAINABILITY**

By

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Glory be to God, my Lord and Savior

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own original work. Where secondary material is used, this has been acknowledged and referenced in accordance with university requirements.

I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the university policy and implications in this regard.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to investigate the extent to which the BRICS can exert leadership in a world in which sustainability becomes ever more crucial, especially in light of the Sustainable Development Goals presently used to track progress and performance before 2030. Moreover, the focus on sustainability is deemed important to assess the ability of the BRICS to 'sustain' their own efforts at transforming global governance vis-à-vis internal and external social, political, economic and environmental fragilities.

The study is based on a critical literature review and a host of secondary data of both qualitative and quantitative nature. The quantitative data, gathered from existing sources, assisted in the identification of trends and patterns within the respective BRICS countries regarding their overall sustainability. The qualitative has been used to draw deductions and conclusions regarding trends within the respective BRICS countries.

The study concludes that the BRICS struggle in terms of sustainability. This is evident in the triad sustainability analysis of the bloc. The BRICS display varying degrees of weakness across all three spheres of sustainability. By contrast, there are other countries from the Global South that perform much better and could be seen as more credible leaders of a transition in global governance that is truly inspired by new values. These are: Botswana, Chile, Costa Rica and South Korea.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	i
DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	viii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Identification of Research Theme.....	1
1.2 Contribution of the Study	3
1.3 The Formulation and Demarcation of the Research Problem.....	3
1.4 Methodology.....	4
1.5 Structure of the Dissertation	5
CHAPTER TWO	7
ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: SUSTAINABILITY, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE	7
2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 Sustainability and Sustainable Development	8
2.2.1 Definitions of Sustainable Development	9
2.3 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).....	11
2.4 The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	12
2.5 The Multidimensional Approach to Sustainability	13
2.5.1 Social Sustainability.....	14
2.5.2 Environmental Sustainability	15
2.5.3 Economic Sustainability	17
2.6 Governance for Sustainable Development.....	17
2.6.1. Leadership and Sustainability	18
2.6.2. Understanding Emerging Powers	19
2.6.3. Emerging Powers as New Leaders?	21
2.7 Conclusion.....	22

CHAPTER THREE	24
SUSTAINABILITY IN THE BRICS:	24
SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABILITY.....	24
3.1 Introduction	24
3.2 The BRICS in the International Context	25
3.2.1. Origin of the BRICS.....	25
3.3 Sustainability within the BRICS	27
3.3.1. Economic Sustainability and the BRICS.....	28
3.3.2. Social Sustainability in the BRICS	34
3.3.3 Environmental Sustainability in the BRICS.....	44
3.4 Conclusion.....	51
CHAPTER FOUR	53
ALTERNATIVE EMERGING ALLIANCES: PROPOSING A SUSTAINABILITY BLOC.....	53
4.1 Introduction	53
4.2 Current Alternative Emerging Alliances.....	54
4.2.1 The MINT/ MIST Countries	56
4.2.2 The CIVEST Countries.....	57
4.2.3 Next 11 Countries	58
4.3 Constituting the Sustainability Bloc	59
4.3.1 Social Progress Index	60
4.3.2 Countries of Interest in the Social Progress Index 2016.....	60
4.4 Environmental Performance Index.....	62
4.4.1 Countries of Interest in the Environmental Performance Index 2016	62
4.5 The Sustainability Bloc	63
4.5.1 Consolidating the Indexes to Create a Sustainability Bloc	64
4.6 The Sustainability Bloc:	65
4.6.1 Social Sustainability.....	65
4.6.2 Environmental Sustainability	68
4.6.3 Economic Sustainability	72
4.7 Conclusion.....	75
CHAPTER FIVE	77
THE BRICS AND ALTERNATIVE EMERGING ALLIANCES AT THE CROSSROAD OF SUSTAINABILITY- AN EVALUATION	77

5.1	Introduction	77
5.2	Overview of Findings.....	77
5.3	Areas of Future Study	80
5.4	Limitations of the Study.....	82
5.5	Conclusion and Recommendations	83
BIBLIOGRAPHY		87

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1- Sustainability as the result of Three Dimensions: Social, Economic and Environmental.....	10
Figure 2 – Millennium Development Goals	12
Figure 3– Sustainable Development Goals	12
Figure 4 - Sustainable Development Goals: Three Pillars of Sustainability	28
Figure 5- GDP Growth (annual %) in the BRICS Bloc 2008-2016.....	31
Figure 6 - Unemployment Rate in BRICS 2000-2014.....	36
Figure 7 - Change in Inequality Levels,Early 1990s Versus Late 2000s Gini Coefficient of Household Income.....	39
Figure 8 – Co2 Emissions in BRICS (Metric tons per capita) 2008-2014	45
Figure 9- Social Progress Index 2016 - Countries of Interest	61
Figure 10 - Environmental Performance Index 2016- Countries of Interest.....	63
Figure 11- Gini Coefficient 2016- BRICS and Sustainability Bloc	66
Figure 12 - Corruption Perception Index 2016 : BRICS and Sustainability Bloc	68
Figure 13 - CO2 Emissions in BRICS and Costa Rica (Metric tons per capita) 2008- 2014....	70
Figure 14 - Chile: Real GDP and Unemployment Rate 2006-2011	72
Figure 15 - GDP Growth (Annual%) Sustainability Bloc	74

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BRICs	Brazil, Russia, India and China
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
G20	Group of Twenty
G7	Group of Seven
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
GovInn	Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation
NDB	New Development Bank
S&P	Standard and Poor
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NHI	National Health Insurance
SUS	United Health Insurance
UN	United Nations
ANC	African National Congress
MINT	Malaysia, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey
MIST	Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea and Turkey
CIVETS	Columbia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey, South Africa.
NEXT 11	Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Turkey and Vietnam.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“There is nothing more difficult, more uncertain or more dangerous than taking the responsibility of introducing a new order of things” – Nicolo Machiavelli

1.1 Identification of Research Theme

The end of the Cold War appeared to usher the international system into a phase of order dominated by a single major power. The triumph of western liberalism and the subsequent demise of the alternative rooted in communism resulted in the reconfiguration of the international system from bipolar to unipolar (Fukuyama 1992: 3). Yet, the turn of the millennium, with the significant rise of emerging economies and the global economic crisis of 2008, has had a sobering effect on the international configuration of power. International economic governance buttressed by the US economy began to fade, largely because of persistent global economic turmoil and uncertainty (Cox 2012:270).

New alliances have emerged and a powerful role has been attributed to multilateral groupings such as the G20 to steer global economic governance. Emerging countries such as China have become particularly active in several policy areas traditionally reserved for dominant powers like the US, Europe and Japan. In particular, a mix of hitherto developing countries and (re-)emerging economies such as Brazil, Russia, India and China have formed an informal alliance known as the BRICs. The idea of the BRICs countries was first launched in 2001 by Goldman Sachs in a report titled *“Building Better Economic BRICs”* (O Neil 2001:1). In 2010 South Africa, perceived as the gateway to Africa, was invited to become the fifth member of this interregional group of states. The report identified these emerging economies as having the potential to dominate the global economy in years to come.

This loose grouping of states, categorized purely on the basis of economic indicators, was anticipated to become a counterforce to western domination. Throughout history, there have been several contestations of international dominance, which have seen an alternation and competition of different types of power. During the Cold War, for instance, two superpowers dominated the scene but eventually only one managed to sustain its leadership effort. As the rivalry between the United States (US) and the Soviet Union demonstrated, global leadership is not only the outcome of temporary achievements, but mostly the result of governance models able to sustain themselves in the long term, especially in so far as internal stability, resilience to external shocks and capacity to adapt are concerned.

In 2013, The Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation at the University of Pretoria released a paper titled "*On the BRICS of Collapse: Why Emerging Economies Need a Different Developmental Model*" (GovInn 2013), which explored trends in the sustainability of the BRICS, including economic, social and environmental indicators. The conclusion of the study was that the BRICS would be unlikely to play a leading role in global politics due to the internal instabilities caused by widespread inequality, environmental destruction and economic imbalances, which would also affect their global credibility and ultimately leadership (GovInn 2013).

Building on this initial assessment, the present study assesses the BRICS countries in relation to global governance based on a wide range of sustainability indicators, including political, social, economic and environmental trends. It then looks beyond the BRICS with a view to identifying which other countries could show more sustainable and effective leadership than the BRICS, especially in the new global scenario dominated by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Rather than focusing on mainstream and traditional approaches to development and progress that are rooted in gross domestic product (GDP) with a particular focus on economic growth, this study will explore other indicators of progress that are often negated. These include socio-political as well as environmental factors that holistically constitute sustainability.

1.2 Contribution of the Study

In light of the fact that leadership in the international system hinges upon countries' abilities to sustain efforts over time, it is pertinent to study the sustainability of new forms of global leadership, especially against the backdrop of the SDGs.

The overreliance on economic indicators and the subsequent negation of socio-political and environmental factors within states has resulted in a narrow focus on economic growth as a driver of success and relative institutional authority globally. Therefore, the key contribution of the study is to offer an innovative insight on the BRICS, their internal sustainability (which impacts stability and capacity to mobilize material and immaterial resources), thus offering an assessment of their sustainability and the impact this may have on the bloc in the long term. By exploring the complex dynamics of social, economic and environmental sustainability, the study contributes to developing a multidimensional approach to global leadership/global governance regime.

In particular, the study will add to the current pool of knowledge on emerging market economies. New and innovative approaches to the study of the BRICS and emerging economies will be introduced to the current body of scholarship by exploring the relationship that exists between sustainability and leadership. This is pertinent not only because leadership can only be exerted effectively if sustained over time, but also because of the growing influence of the discourse on sustainability in reshaping global perceptions of power and authority at the international level.

1.3 The Formulation and Demarcation of the Research Problem

This study is driven by two research questions: 1) Are the BRICS economically, socially and environmentally sustainable enough to lead in international affairs, especially against the backdrop of the SDGs? 2) Besides the BRICS, what other countries could be economically, socially and environmentally to provide alternative leadership in the 21st century?

The study will be demarcated temporally geographically and conceptually. In temporal terms the study will focus on the post-Cold War era (1990 – present), in which emerging economies became prominent within the international system. Although this study will focus on the post-Cold-War era, references will be made to historical examples and illustrations for purposes of contextualization.

Geographically, this study will focus on the countries that form part of the BRICS, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa as well as on the alliance as a whole. These countries are all developing countries located in the global South, they have relatively large and fast growing economies. Furthermore, in the latter part of the study other middle-income and developing countries will be integrated into the study. The study will focus on the relationship between sustainability and leadership, as it emerges from the SDG discourse. Historically, sustainability has been conceptualized as having three critical dimensions: environmental, social and economic, as described in the Brundtland Report of 1986 (UN World Commission on Environment and Development). Thus, a focus on sustainability requires moving beyond indicators such as the gross domestic product (GDP) to embrace new thinking about social progress.

1.4 Methodology

The study will be based on both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data, gathered from existing sources, will assist in the identification of trends and patterns within the respective BRICS countries with regard to their overall sustainability. Qualitative data will be used to draw deductions and conclusions regarding trends within the respective BRICS countries.

The unit of analysis will be the BRICS countries at a state level, but will also consider the interaction of these countries with one another in the alliance, thus venturing into the international level of analysis. This follows closely the approach adopted by the *Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation (GovInn)* in its 2013 report, which will constitute the departure point of the study. In this report, trends within the BRICS were investigated, these include

social economic and environmental indicators within the respective countries. The research will take a mixed method approach but will rely heavily on inductive approaches. Inductive in the sense that the study will result in the emergence of new approaches and advances related to emerging power blocs and the circumstances surrounding their creation.

The research methodology is a critical literature review (desktop research). The data sources will be in the form of secondary data. Secondary data sources will be consulted in the form of books and journal articles as well as periodicals. Periodicals will be of particular importance as they will provide current and relevant insight into what is happening within the BRICS countries in relation to social, economic as well as environmental aspects.

In the latter part of the study, several indexes will be consulted, in the creation of an alternative emerging country bloc based on sustainability. In terms of data analysis and interpretation, a comparative approach will be adopted. Comparing the manner in which the BRICS countries and other emerging alliance have been constituted in relation to the alternative bloc that this proposed by the study.

1.5 Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 of the study will serve as an introductory chapter, in which a brief contextualization of the research problem is provided. The introductory chapter outlines the research question as well as the methodology used in the study.

Chapter 2 will be used to provide an analytical framework for the study. Key concepts such as sustainability and sustainable development in relation to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be integrated. This chapter also engages sustainability and leadership with respect to emerging powers thus, questioning the capacity of emerging powers to exercise leadership in international affairs

Chapter 3 explores sustainability as understood by the Brundtland Report of 1986 and, more recently, in the SDGs. The inquiry of sustainability will be engaged in relation to the BRICS

countries. Therefore, economic and environmental sustainability will be explored in this chapter. This chapter will identify social, economic and environmental trends as they present in the respective BRICS countries. Chapter 4 explores alternative emerging alliances; these alternatives are in relation to the BRICS. This chapter also seeks to create a new emerging alliance using the understanding of the triad approach to sustainability. This chapter questions the negation of social and environmental aspects in the constitution of the BRICS and other emerging alliances.

In conclusion chapter 5 will draw on preceding chapters to make an assessment of whether the BRICS, based on sustainability, are able to lead in the international system. The conclusion will indicate whether the BRICS are in fact sustainable, whether they possess the necessary characteristics to be considered a global leader and ultimately discern whether this interregional grouping has the capacity to lead in global affairs. The concluding chapter will make recommendations on possible alternatives to the BRICS and leadership in international affairs.

CHAPTER TWO

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: SUSTAINABILITY, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

- Our Common Future

2.1 Introduction

According to the Brundtland Report, which was the landmark report produced by the UN World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (Our Common Future 1987: 6). The work of the commission marked the introduction of sustainability into the international development agenda. Sustainability is a multidimensional concept based on three dimensions, namely social, economic and environmental (Littig and Griebler 2005:66).

The discourse on sustainability and sustainable development has been framed by a long history of summits, producing several influential declarations that have shaped the evolving understanding of these concepts. In recent times, two sets of developmental goals have greatly influenced the global agenda. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were developed as a result of the Millennium Declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000. Whereas the Sustainable Development Goals were created in response to the MDGs with a focus on an equal and consistent approach to the triad approach to sustainability that is inclusive of social, environmental and economic dynamics.

The changing dynamic in the global governance arena, that has become increasingly aware of the need to develop and grow economically while remaining mindful of the effect that this may have on the natural environment and the social wellbeing of the global population, has placed greater emphasis on sustainability and sustainable development. This has been observed at

the international as well as at the state level, through the operationalization and implementation of developmental goals such as the MDGs and the SDGs. Countries that seek to exert influence or exercise leadership within the international system should keep up with the expectations of the MDGs and most recently the SDGs.

The objective of this chapter is thus to outline the analytical framework of the study as it unpacks foundational concepts such as sustainability and sustainable development. This chapter will also discuss the MDGS and the SDGs to create a framework upon which sustainability can be assessed. In the conclusion of the chapter, reference is made to the global governance environment in relation to sustainable development, stressing the need for emerging and developing countries to adopt a sustainable approach to development if they seek to exert influence or leadership in international affairs.

2.2 Sustainability and Sustainable Development

The term sustainability finds its origin in the Brundtland Report of 1987 compiled by the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development, in which sustainability was classified according to social, economic and environmental categories (also known as the three pillars of sustainability). The growing discourse on sustainability and sustainable development is largely informed by several influential summits and declarations that have contributed to the understanding of sustainability and sustainable development.

The United Nations Commission on the Environment and Development and The Bruntland Report have been instrumental in the introduction of the concepts such as sustainability and sustainable development onto the global agenda. This has fostered growing discussions on the implementation and operationalization of sustainable development. The Commission particularly, investigated the causes of environmental degradation and attempted to understand the complex interconnections that exist between social equity, economic growth and the impact thereof on the environment (Our Common Future 1987).

In 1992, The Rio Summit, was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The World Commission on Environment and Economy in 1989 laid the foundation for the Rio Summit. This summit produced the Rio Declaration, that states that long term economic progress can only be achieved if it is effectively linked to the protection of the environment. Furthermore, this declaration comprises of 27 issue specific principles, which represent a clear distinction between the three pillars of sustainability by adding the environmental pillar to the social and economic pillars already found the discourse on sustainable development. (Sustainable Environment 2016)

In 2002, The World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Summit promoted North-South partnership to achieve sustainable development and culminated in the Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation. Subsequent summits that have contributed to the discourse on sustainability and sustainable development include the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) and the 2016 summit that was founded on the theme “Post 2015 Agenda: People, planet and prosperity” (Sustainable Development Platform 2016).

2.2.1 Definitions of Sustainable Development

Sustainability is generally understood as the ability to maintain or sustain an entity, process or outcome over a prolonged period (Jenkins 2009: 380). Sustainability as a concept, finds its origin in forestry, expounded by the principle that one cannot harvest more than the forest is able to yield. The Brundtland Report produced at the World Commission on the Environment and Development in 1987 was instrumental in giving the concept the recognition and status it enjoys today (Kuhlman and Farrington 2010: 3437).

It is important to note that, although the concept initially focused predominantly on ecological or environmental issues (Kulman and Farrington 2010: 3437), it has a much broader application that encompasses the two other pillars of sustainability (Bonevac 2010: 88). There have been criticisms regarding the definition provided by the World Commission on Environment and Development. Some of which include difficulties in the operationalization of a

concept such as the conflict that arises between present and future generations and the difficulty in reconciling their respective interests (Elliot 2006: 11). Critiques of the concept have also identified an impasse between environmental concerns and economic objectives. It is furthermore argued that the vague definition of sustainability allows for developmental and economic interests to be mascaared as sustainable when very little is done in the name of sustainability (McKenzie 2004: 3).

Most definitions of sustainable development encompass the idea of three independent pillars of sustainable development; social, environmental and economic. The integrated nature of the concept sustainability is captured in Elkington's "triple bottom line" that incorporates economic (profit), environmental (planet) as well as social (people) concerns. This has resulted in an understanding that environmental quality, economic prosperity and social justice are all key tenets of sustainability. The pillars are also illustrated as three interlocking circles or spheres, with the objective of maximizing the goals prioritized by the interlocking circles or spheres (McKenzie 2004: 3).

Figure 1- Sustainability as the result of Three Dimensions: Social, Economic and Environmental



Source: <https://sisu.ut.ee/env-intro/book/1-1-sustainable-development>

2.3 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The Millennium Development Goals find their origin in the Millennium Declaration which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000. These goals are notable achievable goals that were set to be achieved by the year 2015. They express global concern over poverty, hunger, access to healthcare, education and gender equality and environmental degradation (Sustainable Development Solutions Network 2015).

This set of eight measurable goals was particularly important as it had time-bound objectives for the countries of the world to achieve. Substantial progress has been made in the era of the MDGs, such as developing countries reducing their poverty rate by half between 1990 and 2010, recorded progress in the empowerment of women through access to education, employment, as well as representation in positions of leadership. Furthermore, there has been a recorded improvement in the fight against HIV/AIDS with a reduction of new infections by 40% (Zondi and Mthembu 2017: 40).

While the MDGs recorded some gains, there are several critiques leveled against this set of developmental goals. The MDGs are said to have failed to effectively consider the root causes of poverty and have also overlooked different types of inequalities. Furthermore, they have underestimated the overall nature of development in their failed make specific mention of economic development. Importantly, these targets/goals were geared particularly towards developing countries while financed by wealth developed states (Ford 2015).

The MDGs have been further criticized for major omissions in their formulation and framework. Critical and cross cutting issues such as social exclusion and inequality were omitted from the MDG agenda. The specific focus on maternal health and combating epidemics such as HIV/AIDS resulted in the omission of other important health issues such as reproductive health. At the level of formulation, the MDGs have been criticized due to the limited participation and contribution given by developing countries in the development of the goals. A further shortfall, is the negation of the interconnectedness of the goals resulting in the vertical approach adopted by programmes, policies research as well as funding (Fehling, Nelson and Venkatapuram 2013 1117-1118).

Figure 2 – Millennium Development Goals



Source World Economic Forum 2015

2.4 The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals succeeded the Millennium Development Goals with a view to defining a roadmap including all countries and not only those in the developing world. Overall, the SDGs point towards a multidimensional improvement in human and ecological wellbeing of individuals, which may be the final goal of human development (Fioramonti 2017)

Figure 3– Sustainable Development Goals



Source: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>
The SDGs range from social to economic and environmental issues, with each of the 17 goals interlinked and interdependent.

The goals include:

- End poverty
- End hunger
- Promotion of good health and wellbeing
- Access to quality education
- Promotion of gender equality
- Access to clean water and sanitation
- Access to affordable and clean energy
- Decent work and economic growth
- Industrial innovation and infrastructure
- Reduced inequalities
- Sustainable cities and communities
- Promotion of responsible consumption and production
- Climate action
- Protection of life below water
- Protection of life on land
- Promotion of peace justice and strong institutions
- Creation of partnerships for the attainment of the goals

These goals are more comprehensive and diverse than the MDGs. They are a broader set of objectives that better capture social, economic and environmental challenges that face the world, and are not only focused on challenges that are present in developing countries.

2.5 The Multidimensional Approach to Sustainability

As discussed, sustainability and sustainable development can be represented as the intersection of three spheres pertaining to social, economic and environmental factors. This relationship between the three spheres is thus illustrative of the need for a balanced approach and analysis of the respective pillars of sustainability (Our Common Future 1987: 6).

One of the central tenets in the development of the concept of sustainability was the assumption that strong and stable economic growth would have a trickle down effect therefore, benefiting all sectors of society. Over time, this assumption has become problematic due to the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, which has been observed between and within different regions in the world. Similarly, the impact of economic growth on the environment has become critical to the debate. In particular, developing countries are faced with new challenges as they attempt to strike the delicate balance between the need to industrialize while remaining cognizant of the impact that unsustainable industrial practices may have on the natural/physical environment. The sustainable development paradigm has taken the international community beyond the fragmented discourse on the social, economic and environmental concerns by, advancing and promoting a more holistic and integrated approach to development. This approach has sought to highlight the linkages and the integrated nature of these aspects of sustainability.

2.5.1 Social Sustainability

The social aspect of sustainability is people-orientated, as it seeks to maintain the stability of social and cultural systems. Under this approach modern society is expected to embrace pluralism as well as encourage grassroots participation in an attempt to create a more effective and inclusive decision-making framework, making equity an instrumental feature of this approach.

“Social sustainability occurs when the formal and informal processes, systems, structures and relationships actively support the capacity of current and future generations to create healthy and livable communities. Socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, connected, democratic and provide a good quality of life” (McKenzie 2004: 18). Social sustainability is simply defined as the capacity of a social system to function at a level of social wellbeing for a prolonged period. Thus, social sustainability considers fairness of opportunity, gender

dynamics- under the broader theme of inequality, as well as access to social services (Harris and Goodwin 2001).

This pillar of sustainability is relatively understudied and underdeveloped as a concept. It is considered the least advanced component of the three pillars of sustainability. In the context of triple bottom line, social sustainability is more difficult to quantify than economic and environmental sustainability. As is the case with the broad definition of sustainability, it is difficult and problematic to reach a single definition of social sustainability. However, McKenzie (2004:7) defines social sustainability as “A life- enriching condition within communities, and a process within communities that can achieve that condition.”

Social sustainability is inclusive of political or institutional sustainability (Littig and Grießler 2005: 68). Political or institutional sustainability is the interpersonal processes such as political participation takes factors such as rule of law, political accountability, transparency and political participation into account all of which are informed by the strength of political institutions (Omanna and Spangenberg 2002:2). The political dynamics as well as institutional frameworks have an impact on the functioning of a society, it therefore imperative to take these dynamics into account. The SDGs cover several aspects that pertain to social sustainability these include; the eradication of poverty and hunger globally. Additional components include good health and wellbeing, quality education, gender equality, a reduction in inequalities as well as the attainment of justice, peace and strong institutions.

2.5.2 Environmental Sustainability

This is perhaps the most popular and well researched of all the pillars of sustainability. The Brundtland definition of sustainability is best suited for environmental sustainability. Environmental sustainability not only focuses on the stability of biological systems but also takes the physical environment into consideration. This approach gives priority to global ecosystems by monitoring the subsystems that give rise to the whole. Issues such as natural resource depletion and degradation, pollution and loss of biodiversity all negatively impact the resilience of the natural and physical environment.

Environmental sustainability considers the ecological impacts of the development as well as the depletion of non-renewable resources over a prolonged period. Additionally, environmental sustainability is the ability to maintain rates of renewable energy production, regulate pollution, and mitigate the depletion of non-renewable resources over a sustained period (Heinberg 2010:7). Environmental sustainability has assumed a central position in the discourse and scholarship on sustainability. It is generally accepted that sustainability is a triangular concept, inclusive of social, environmental and economic aspects. However, the environmental pillar is often given priority over the other pillars. This is perhaps due to the clarity in definition and the primacy of the environment in the Bruntland definition of sustainability.

Emerging economies are currently faced with a unique set of developmental problems. While they seek to fortify economic growth rates and increase their levels of industrialization, the consequences of their desire to industrialize have had detrimental effects on the environment. The World Bank (2012) maintains that the emerging economies have placed significant emphasis on economic development, leaving environmental degradation as an afterthought. Conversely, Tamazian, Chousa and Vadlamannati (2008: 252) contend that the correlation between economic development and environmental degradation is not a linear one, with more economic growth potentially resulting in less environmental degradation.

According to Wentworth and Oji (2013: 4) developing countries have been minor contributors to the emission of greenhouse gases however as some emerging countries, such as the BRICS become global powerhouses in industrial and manufacturing sectors, there is the fear that they too will adopt the same environmentally detrimental industrial processes used by developed countries in their early stages of industrialization.

The discourse on sustainability has been dominated by this pillar of sustainability, however, great effort has been made to incorporate the other two pillars to offer a balanced account of sustainability. The SDGs have identified several environmental concerns as priority areas that should be tackled by the international community, these include; clean water and sanitation,

affordable and clean energy, climate action while protecting and maintaining life below water and life on land.

2.5.3 Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability as a concept is rooted in maximum flow of income, while maintaining a stable stock of income generating assets or capital. Economic sustainability is understood as the ability to marry economic dynamism with long-term prosperity and resilience vis-à-vis external economic shocks (Heinberg 2010: 7).

While emerging economies such as the BRICS have collectively accrued, significant global influence based on their economic growth trajectory, they have been described as a “GDP club” due to the critical importance of GDP and economic size in defining the core essence of the grouping (Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation 2013:3). Sharama (2012:2) argues that these countries could remain “forever emerging” and the anticipated conjunction of developing and developed countries’ economic growth rates remain a myth. Nayyar (2008:10) wonders whether these countries can be considered engines of growth within the global economy, and concludes that although they are not engines of growth, they can be considered stimulators of growth: though they have performed relatively well economically, distinct weaknesses plague their economies. The prevalence of dual economic systems (with relatively dynamic formal economies and widespread informal economic conditions) is also particularly problematic. An additional weakness is a continued dependence of emerging economies on the exportation of minerals and energy, thus hampering the diversification of their respective economies in the long term. In terms of economic sustainability, the SDGs have identified the following priority areas; access to decent work as well as economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure development as well as the promotion of responsible consumption and production.

2.6 Governance for Sustainable Development

As observed earlier, the global governance environment has recently re-prioritized sustainability and sustainable development. This is aptly illustrated by the shift from the

Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals in shaping the international development agenda. As emerging powers vie for leadership in an international context increasingly concerned with sustainable development, it is crucial to assess the extent to which relevance in today's world is closely associated with commitment and achievements in sustainability.

2.6.1. Leadership and Sustainability

According to Kingah and Quiliconi (2016), leadership is defined by three criteria: Willingness recognised as the first aspect of leadership within this criterion, and is observed in political action and diplomatic activities embarked upon by a leading state. Furthermore, the willingness of a state to lead is strongly associated with the interests of the state and whether assuming a leadership role is advantageous in the pursuit of such interests. Leadership is not only determined by ambition or the willingness of a state to be a leader there is also a consideration of the capacity of the aspirant state. The state should be in possession of recognized status functions. Leadership is described as a relationship between the leader and those that are lead. Therefore, there needs to be acceptance or recognition of leadership by other states.

There is disagreement regarding the necessary requirements for a state to be considered a hegemon or a leader within the international system. According to Yilmaz (2010:195) in order for a state to be considered a hegemon, it should have money, production capacity and military power, this aligns with the aspect of capacity as identified by Kingah and Quiliconi. Susan Strange (1988: 565) maintains that if a state is to be considered a hegemon or a leader, it should have structural power in the form of security, production finance and knowledge capacity. Nadkarni and Noonan (2013: 210) contend that in order for a state to be considered a global leader it should possess hard capabilities, in the form of military might and economic power, additionally these hard capabilities should be combined with the willingness to exercise power.

There are varying criteria that outline leadership, however it is imperative to briefly unpack terms or concepts that are often associated with leadership in the global context i.e. hegemon.

Hegemony is understood as a disequilibrium in the distribution of power within the international system. A hegemonic power is a single state or a constellation of states that amasses considerable power so as to exercise leadership or even dominance within the international system (Antoniades 2008: 3). The hegemon is invested in preserving the status quo as this would serve the interests of the hegemon (Yilmaz 2010: 195).

Additionally, hegemony can be understood as not only preserving the status quo but also, as having the capacity as well as power, to alter the norms and rules of the international system. Nye (1990: 186) maintains that hegemony is a contested concept that can be understood in different ways. It is associated with the possession or attainment of aggressive military power, synonymous with imperialism in that a single state controls subservient states. Additionally, hegemony is according to Nye (1990: 189), associated with predominance in economic resources. It is important to clarify the meaning of the concept, as leader and hegemon are often used interchangeably.

Sustainability and Sustainable Development can be introduced as a new criterion for leadership in international affairs. The growing influence of sustainability in the setting of the global agenda as well as its manifestation in domestic or national agendas of states, is a clear indicator of its significance and importance in the global governance environment. It is therefore crucial to question whether emerging powers such as the BRICS -that have increasingly accrued conventional leadership capabilities- are they sustainable enough to lead?

2.6.2. Understanding Emerging Powers

The term 'emerging power' is an emanation from the concept of "emerging market", given that much of the current global governance debate sees economic growth as a source of power (Fioramonti 2013). The term emerging market was coined by the economist Antoine Agtmael

in 1981. The formulation of the term was as a result of a report prepared by the World Bank's International Financial Corp on the creation of a third world equity fund (The Economist 2010).

The use of the term 'third world' was rejected in the pursuit of a more uplifting term, thus the adoption and use of the term 'emerging' (Kalinowski 2012:10). There has been a need for a definitional shift in the post-Cold-War era, considering the irrelevance of the term third world in the context of the collapse of the second world. Although there is no precise definition for the term emerging market, emerging markets are often defined as countries that have social or economic activities that are characterized by rapid growth and industrialization. Alternatively, the World Bank defines these countries as low to middle income countries.

These countries started to surface in the early 1980's and are economically fast growing countries that have adopted liberalization and market orientated economic policies which have contributed to the rapid growth and development. There are varying aspects that characterize emerging markets, these include; modernization, industrialization and rapid economic growth. Furthermore, an important consideration is that of the timeframe of the emergence of these states in the international state system. Emerging powers started to infiltrate the international system in the post-cold war era as they started to endorse and promote economic liberalization and market orientated policies. This has resulted in a successful integration into international trade networks consequently increasing economic growth (Kalinowski 2012:10).

According to Mody (2004: 5) a central characteristic of emerging powers is their transitional nature; the transition includes changes in demographic and social indicators as well as in the development of economic and political institutions. Transition economies, are defined as a group of countries that have changed from being centrally planned economies, to adopting market orientated economic policies. Such countries have embarked upon rapid privatization from state owned companies. These countries suffered from over regulation and have been burdened by excessive and entrenched government bureaucracy. Despite the challenges that they have faced, they have managed to grow and develop their economies. Additionally, these newly accessible economies managed to attract foreign direct investment, as the changing structure of these economies created many opportunities for investment (Kalinowski 2012:10).

There are many advantages within these countries that have contributed to their economic progression. The abundant presence of low cost labour force, low cost capital, extensive government support, and access to markets have all contributed favourably to rapid economic growth and industrialization. Despite the positivity that emerging powers are reflected up with, they are regarded as volatile and unstable. This is due to their susceptibility to external economic shocks, inconsistencies in domestic policy formulation and implementation as well as the prevalence of natural disasters (Tuncer 2012: 1).

Considering the conventional characteristics of leadership in the international system and the growing influence of sustainability and sustainable development its becomes important to question the capacity of emerging economies to become future leaders of the international system. Countries such as the BRICS and others have been identified as future leaders mostly due to their predicted economic growth prospects.

2.6.3. Emerging Powers as New Leaders?

There has been much debate about a shift in global power dynamics in favour of emerging nations. The “rise of the rest” as termed by Fareed Zakaria (2008:1) has been paralleled with the subsequent decline of western dominance in the international system. These countries (emerging economies) have experienced alarming rates of economic growth that have subsequently translated into political influence (Zakaria 2008:3).

Furthermore, their increasing influence coupled with their collective and sustained economic growth has positioned them as contestants of the current status quo. Shaw, Cooper and Chin (2009: 27) refer to these changing dynamics in the international system as an intrusion and simultaneous recognition of a group of emerging economies that are challenging the established order. Furthermore, these countries seek to assert their recently attained influence as they call for a reorientation of power in favour of multipolarity. Indicative of this diffusion of power is the increasing role played by emerging powers within regional affairs as well as within

international affairs, particularly at an international institutional level (Shaw, Cooper and Chin 2009: 27).

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990 has been instrumental in the reconfiguration of power dynamics within the international system. The diffusion of power within the international system has been gradual, however key events such as the 9/11 attacks, protracted American war efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, economic turbulence in the Euro-zone as well as the economic dynamism of China and other emerging powers have all contributed to observed shifts in global power dynamics. According to Cox (2012: 370) a gradual erosion of economic certainty rooted in the west has culminated in the financial crisis of 2008, in which emerging powers appeared to come out relatively unscathed. However, these countries have started to show signs of economic decline in recent times.

Although emerging powers have made several gains in key areas of influence, they are also faced with several challenges. Emerging powers have challenged the established and dominant status quo. However, if these countries seek to lead in international affairs it is imperative that they conform to the global development agenda, rooted in the Sustainable Development Goals that prioritize more than just economic growth.

2.7 Conclusion

The MDGs are a set of global developmental goals that have placed sustainability and sustainable development as the basis for development and the attainment of the objectives set out by this set of goals. The end of the era of the MDGs was succeeded by a broader more comprehensive set of global goals known as the SDGs. The SDGs better capture and represent

the triad approach to sustainable development by considering social, environmental and economic indicators of progress and ultimately development.

In terms of governance that promotes sustainable development, leadership and the growing understanding of emerging powers there are several pertinent interlinkages between these concepts and the way they manifest in the international system. The global governance environment has increasingly prioritized sustainable and inclusive economic growth, that considers both the environmental and social impacts of economic activities and translate in economic growth and development. If a state or a group of state such as the BRICS endeavour to lead in the international system they need to display conventional leadership capabilities but also need to fit into the global development agenda, that has placed sustainability in the form of the MDGs and now the SDGs as the foundational requirement of development.

Emerging countries such as the BRICS and others have been celebrated as prospective leaders in the international system, however this study seeks to ascertain how well these countries fare in terms of their respective approaches to sustainable development by using the three-pillar reading of sustainable development as an analytical tool. By questioning whether the BRICS are sustainable enough to lead in international affairs, the concepts of sustainable development and sustainability, leadership and emerging powers need to be engaged to create a framework that will be used to assess the sustainability of the BRICS countries. The proceeding chapter will make use of concepts such as sustainable development as operationalized and implemented through the MDGs and SDGs to assess the sustainability of emerging power blocs such as the BRICS.

CHAPTER THREE

SUSTAINABILITY IN THE BRICS:

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABILITY

“Economic development, social development and environmental protection are independent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development”

– Agenda for Development, 1997

3.1 Introduction

The BRICS have received ample attention and recognition due to their rapid growth as well as their geostrategic political posturing within international politics. However, this grouping of states is said to be more of a heterogeneous compellation, grouped together purely based on economic consideration and political expediency, which explains why South Africa was invited to join the grouping notwithstanding its much smaller economy. Important questions have surfaced in relation to the BRICS and their sustainability, considering the integrated approach to sustainability that is inclusive of not only economic factors but also speaks to social and environmental dimensions. Much of the optimism surrounding the BRICS has not taken the two other pillars of sustainability into consideration and thus neglects critical socio-political and environmental challenges that present within these states.

This chapter will explore sustainability in the BRICS, using the three dimensions (social, economic and environmental) of sustainability. Indicators of each dimension of sustainability will be identified as framed by the SDGs and discussed in the context of the respective BRICS countries with the objective of offering a holistic account of the internal realities that present within these countries. This approach endeavors to reach beyond the conventional, narrow economic focus that has dominated the discourse on the formation and influence of the BRICS, which assumes that economic growth will result in progress and development. Furthermore, it attempts to offer a more balanced account of sustainability and the three pillars thereof, by unpacking sustainability in each of the pillars respectively. This chapter will draw on

various statistics to illustrate the internal and collective challenges faced by the BRICS countries. These statistics will be used in the framework on the SDGs i.e. healthcare, access to education, gender equality, clean energy and the reduction of inequality to name a few.

3.2 The BRICS in the International Context

The international system has undergone a transformation in recent years; this has resulted in a more heterogeneous configuration of the system. Indicative of this change is the growing prominence of emerging alliances such as the BRICS and other emerging power blocs, which have over time, grown in influence. The increasing role played by blocs such as the BRICS has been observed in their advocacy for the global South, considering the entrenched dominance of the West within the international system. The recent establishment of the New Development Bank and the Currency Contingency Fund is illustrative of the promotion of the Global South by offering an alternative lending option.

Due to their growing influence and advocacy for issues of the Global South, these countries have been identified as future leaders of the world. This lends to the question of whether this group is sustainable enough to render leadership in the international affairs. Considering, their internal weaknesses, socio-political challenges and environmentally detrimental industrial practices.

3.2.1. Origin of the BRICS

In a ground-breaking paper titled *“Building Better Economic BRICs”* Jim O Neill of Goldman Sachs introduced the idea of the BRICS. The BRICS were created in 2001 based on their economic size and future growth trajectory. This economic alliance is representative of the emerging powers that are located within a multipolar international system. The term BRICs and later BRICS (with the inclusion of South Africa) has subsequently been adopted by academia, policy makers as well as the media despite its unstable analytical foundation (Morazán, Knoke, Knoblauch and Schäfer 2012: 6).

Although the BRICS started as an economic alliance, these countries have managed to transform the static economic conceptualization of the group into a dynamic politically relevant alliance. These countries have been identified as economic giants with growing international and regional influence. At the time of their creation they collectively comprised 25% of world GDP and 15% of world trade (Petropoulos 2013: 24). However, as elucidated by Piper (2016: 1) economic growth should not be confused with levels of human development.

After the release of O'Neill's report on the BRICS, the countries met in a meeting initiated by President Vladimir Putin of Russia. Foreign Ministers of China, Russia, Brazil and the Defense Minister of India met on the side-lines of the 2006 UN General Assembly session in which a decision to cooperate was arrived at (BRICS 2015). The catchy acronym, BRICs, as created by O'Neill has been accepted and embraced by member states to navigate their respective interests through collective action. The BRICS have emerged as being more economically and politically influential than any other emerging power alliances, this is due to collective political will intended to foster cooperation among member states.

Although the creation and subsequent institutionalization of the BRICS has been beneficial to member states, this bloc has also experienced challenges. For example; a lack of synergy within the BRICS is illustrated by the presence of historical regional tensions between member states such as China and India, due to protracted territorial disputes. Another crucial disjuncture in the group is the historical international standing and status of countries such as China and Russia in the current global governance structure. These countries are referred to as "status quo" powers because they have benefited from the current status quo and would therefore have an interest in defending and maintaining it, for as long as they benefit from it. The historical international status of countries such as China and Russia is portrayed by their United Nations Security Council seats (Hein 2010:6).

Despite the miscellany of this interregional grouping of states, their influence cannot be ignored as they have gained considerable traction and following. Their collective economic resilience during the 2008 global economic crisis and the establishment of the NDB as well as

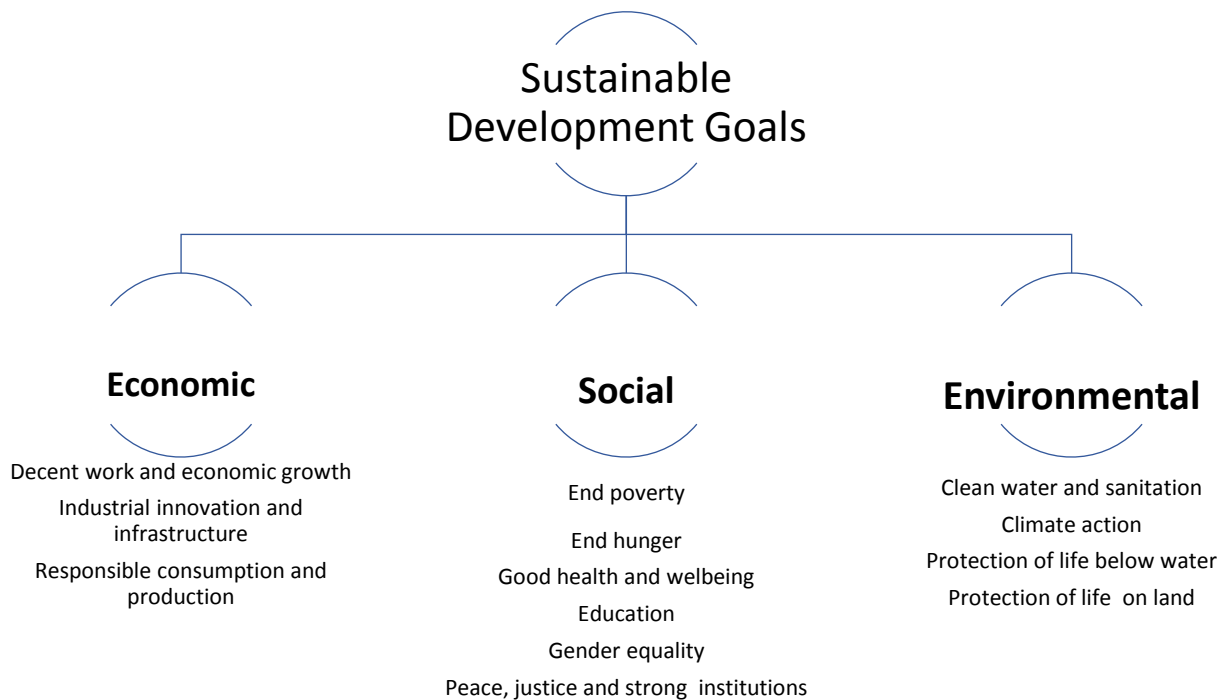
the Currency Reserve Agreement have positioned them in a unique and relatively advantageous position within the international system.

3.3 Sustainability within the BRICS

This section will explore how the three pillars of sustainability namely social, environmental and economic manifest within the BRICS countries. This approach is foregrounded in the SDGs that are inclusive of priority development areas within the three pillars of sustainability. The SDGs evolved from the MDGs that focused on elementary developmental issues such as poverty and hunger. Whereas SDGs are inclusive of more complex and comprehensive set of goals that consider issues such as various kinds of inequalities (gender equality is also included as a specific goal) (Globalization for the Common Good Initiative 2017). The imbalance in the discourse on the three pillars of sustainability is illustrated in the formation and general understanding of the BRICS. The creation of the BRICS was based on the economic capacity of the five (5) member countries that form part of the alliance. However, little if any attention has been given to social and environmental indicators of sustainability, such as inequality, education, healthcare, and environmental protection. This section pays attention to all three pillars of sustainability in relation to the BRICS and explores a balanced sustainability assessment of the BRICS.

The economic trends within the BRICS countries have recently started to show signs of decline with three out of the five member states recording protracted recession. Although the downward global economic trend has contributed to this decline, internal weaknesses within the BRICS countries have also impacted their growth prospects. Political instability and uncertainty, persistent inequality and social crisis as well as increasing rates of pollution and environmental degradation, that can be attributed to environmentally detrimental industrial practices, have all negatively impacted sustainability in the BRICS. Bringing into question, whether the formation of the alliance was sustainable to begin with. The economic focus of in the formation of the BRICS and the negation of social, political as well as environmental aspect is an indication of the narrow economic foundation of the BRICS.

Figure 4 - Sustainable Development Goals: Three Pillars of Sustainability



Source: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

3.3.1. Economic Sustainability and the BRICS

The global economic outlook has impacted economic growth and development of many developing countries and has also slowed growth in many developed countries. South Africa has not been spared from the economic turbulence recently observed in the global community. The South African economy has been greatly impacted by threats of ratings downgrades, policy uncertainty and instability as well as political turbulence, corruption and maladministration.

South Africa's GDP growth has declined from 1.5% in 2014 to 1.3 in 2015 and 0.6 in 2016, these rates are particularly alarming as the country continues to show serious signs of economic decline. There are various contributors to this decline in economic growth some of which include depressed commodity demand, low global commodity prices, decreased rates of investment, a large public sector wage bill, electricity shortages, persistent drought and subsequent water shortages. The local currency has depreciated by more than 30% between

2014 and 2015. Unemployment remains high at 25.3% with youth unemployment at a staggering 52.5% (Kumo, Chulu and Minsat 2016). High unemployment rates result in greater income inequality therefore, widening the gap between the rich and the poor, which can be traced along racial lines within the South African context (Bhorat 2015).

South Africa has recently struggled with electricity generation and this has negatively impacted the country's economic outlook. Improvements in electricity production will contribute towards economic growth and development by addressing hindrances and obstacles to production. This has contributed to growing expectation of improved investor confidence and sentiment thus increasing rates of investment. However, recent domestic political events have adversely impacted investor confidence and have resulted in uncertainty. The persistent political instability and slowing economic growth have resulted in a growing risk of ratings downgrade throughout the year 2016 (OECD 2016).

After President Zuma's announcement of yet another cabinet reshuffle in 2017, the finance ministry was once again affected by the constant reshuffling. The local currency took a dive, followed by a ratings downgrade by two agencies (S&P and Moody's) to junk status. The economic implications of the decisions made to reshuffle the cabinet and the subsequent destabilization of the finance ministry is anticipated to have had a series of negative implications on the South African economy (Aljazeera 2017).

Years of instability in the mining industry has negatively affected the sector, which is the bedrock of the South African economy. The labour unrest that has enthralled the country has had an adverse effect on investor confidence. In 2012 police shot and killed 34 protesting miners in Marikana and as a result 78 people were injured, this 'tragedy' set into motion prolonged instability and volatility in the mining industry. The degeneration of investor confidence in South Africa has been compounded by what has come to be known as South Africa's longest and most economically taxing labour strike. The six-month long strike affected international mining companies like Anglo American Platinum and Lonmin, and has cost platinum producers almost two billion US dollars in lost revenue. It has resulted in a 40% decline in global platinum production and contributed to the economy contracting in the first

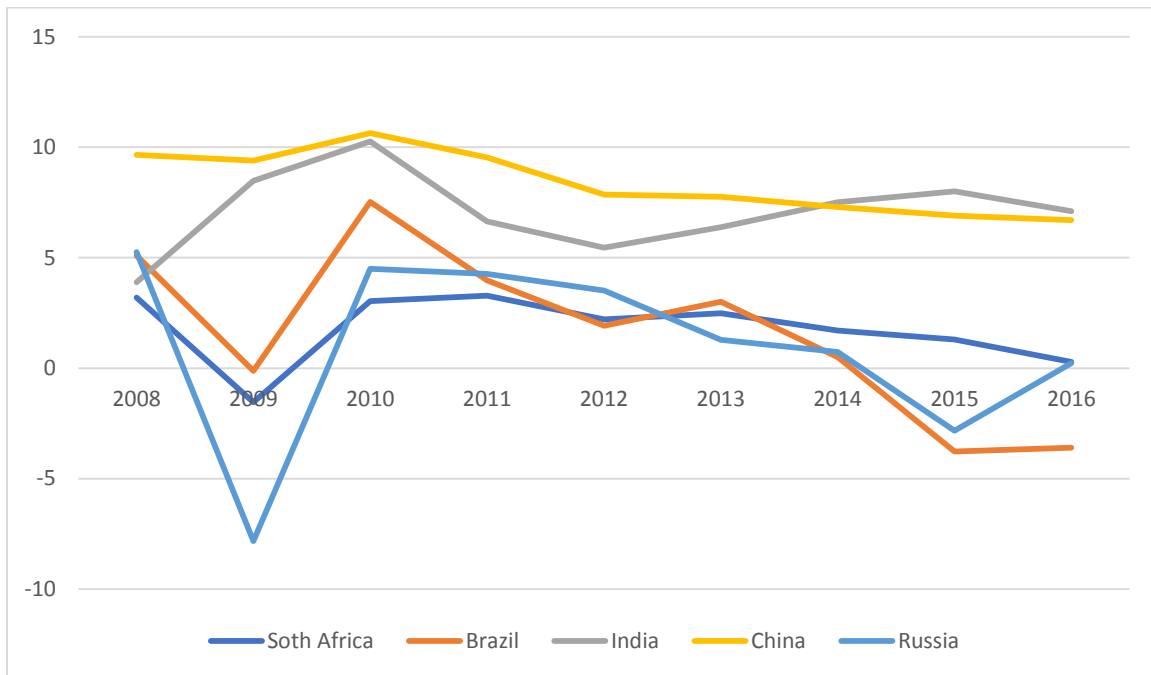
quarter of 2014. Continued instability and volatility in the mining industry has plummeted the economic growth outlook of the country, to rates well below what is needed to for substantial job creation in a country where a quarter of the workforce remains unemployed (Maylie 2014).

Like South Africa, the Brazilian economy has been adversely affected by political uncertainty and instability that has had a negative effect on the economy. The recent political turmoil that was experienced by Brazil has translated into economic recession (OECD 2016). This trend is clearly divergent from the premise that the BRICS was initially formulated upon. Recent trends indicate an improvement in the economic outlook of Brazil as the country continues to recover from protracted economic recession (World Bank 2016).

Although, the Brazilian economy has experienced tremendous challenges in recent times, the economy has managed, over last ten years, to transform with respect to economic inequality. The skewed nature of the economy is reflected in the existence of a small number of rich elites while most people remain poor. However, there has been an emergence of a growing middle class, which has resulted in falling rates of income inequality. Much like South Africa, Brazil's economy is anchored in the mining and agricultural sectors. Sectors such as telecommunications, banking and commerce also contribute greatly to the economy of Brazil (Focus Economics 2017).

In 2014, Latin America's leading economy shrank by 2.1%, fueling speculation of an impending recession. The decline in economic growth has been attributed to amongst other things the hosting of the 2014 FIFA World Cup among other contributors. The international spectacle attracted one million international tourists that injected 13.2 billion UDS into the economy, equivalent to what the country spent in preparation for the event (Bobb 2014). However, trends of downturn had started to surface as early as 2011, when economic turmoil in the Eurozone and to a lesser extent the US were cited for weakening demand for Brazilian imports and subsequently decreasing the flow of money into the economy. Economic growth slowed from 7.5% in 2010 to 2.7 in 2011 and has continued to plummet into recession in the years following 2012 (Reuters 2012).

Figure 5- GDP Growth (annual %) in the BRICS Bloc 2008-2016



Source: World Bank 2016 (Data)

Brazil experienced notable economic growth before 2015 illustrated by an average growth rate of 4.5% between 2006 and 2010 (World Bank 2016). Economic growth started to show signs of decline between 2011 and 2014; this was partly influenced by the sluggish global economic climate that emanated from the global economic crisis of 2008. Recent figures show cause for concern as GDP has declined by 3.8% in 2015 alone.

According to the OECD (2016) the Brazilian economy contracted for six consecutive quarters which resulted in an unemployment rate of 11.8% as well as an increase in private sector debt. Although President Temer, successor to impeached Dilma Rousseff, made several commitments to rescue the ailing Brazilian economy, investor confidence remains low. This is a troubling trend for a country that had foreign direct investment account for 4.2% of GDP in 2015.

Although China is the second largest economy in the world, it too has started showing signs of decline. In the past 30 years, China's real GDP has grown at an average annual rate of 10% and currently stands at 6.8%. The move from a centrally planned economy to a market

economy has resulted in substantial economic development. Despite China's sustained economic growth, it remains a developing country (based on per capita income data). The socio-economic challenges that persist in China, directly challenge the neoliberal phenomenon of the trickle down-effect and illustrates how GDP alone falls short as an indicator of economic sustainability (World Bank 2017). Over 70 million people located in the vast rural areas of China remain poor. Although rapid economic growth has resulted in urbanization, it has been accompanied by the associated challenges of high levels of inequality, poverty and a lack of access to basic services.

This Asian giant is considered the largest exporter, manufacturer and holder of foreign exchange reserves in the world. Economic growth and development in China can be attributed to large-scale capital investment as well as increases in productivity. Additionally, historically high rates of saving have contributed to economic growth through domestic investment. The increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) in China, has contributed considerably to its economic growth trajectory. This surge in FDI can be attributed to the introduction of economic and particularly, investment, reforms coupled with increased incentives for investment (Morrison 2014: 11).

There have been several shortfalls in the economic growth strategy adopted by China that could compromise its economic sustainability. China has expressed a desire to move from the fast growth model that it is currently using, to a smart growth model, with the intention of reducing reliance on energy-intensive and high polluting industries. The 2008 global economic crisis exposed the vulnerability of the Chinese economy due to its dependence on trade and exports; real GDP declined from 14.2% in 2007 to 9.6% in 2008 and further plunged to 9.2% in 2009 (Li, Willett and Zhang 2012: 3).

Like South Africa and Brazil, the Russian economy is anchored on its vast abundance of natural resources. The economy is largely dependent on the extensive oil and gas reserves of the country. Recent international economic trends and commodity price index volatility have had a negative effect on the Russian economy. Low oil prices have been central to the decline

of the Russian economy however, economic sanctions imposed in 2014, as a reaction of the actions taken by Russia in the Ukraine, have also had a negative effect on the economic outlook of the country. Russia transitioned from a centrally planned economy to a market economy after the fall of communism. The transition was accompanied by years of high uninterrupted economic growth, mostly driven by high commodity prices. However, in recent times the Russian economy has declined as commodity prices remain unpredictable and unstable. In 2006 GDP stood at 8.2%, this figure declined in 2008 to 5.3%. In the years following the recession of 2008 the Russian economy slipped into recession with real GDP growth recorded as -7.8% in 2009. The situation improved slightly in the following years with GDP recorded as 3.5 in 2012 (Global Finance 2017).

Domestic decline in real income has impacted domestic demand while the recession has persisted from 2014-2016. Inflation has halved from 15.9% in 2015 to 7.4% in 2016 showing signs of stabilization and recovery. The unemployment rate within Russia stood at 5.6% which is categorized as near minimum rates (World Bank 2016) has recently entered a 400-billion-dollar deal with the Russian company Gazprom, in which Russia will supply China with 38 billion cubic meters of natural gas over a period of 30 years. This deal will reduce Russian dependence on European buyers who have continued to impose sanctions due to Russia's involvement with the situation in the Ukraine (Buchanan 2014). Despite the income injection this deal will provide, the Russian economy continued to decline. In the first three months of 2014, capital flight was estimated to exceed 60 billion US dollars. The stock exchange had declined by a whopping 20% since the beginning of the year and the local currency dropped 8% against the US dollar. The economic situation in Russia was so dire that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) considers the economy to be in recession and has downgraded its growth forecast for the year 2014 from 1.3% to 0.2%. Additionally, the Russian economic outlook took a further blow in 2015 when the economy was downgraded to junk status by S&P (Farchy 2015).

The protracted economic growth that once justified the inclusion of Russia in the BRICS has faded. Prior to the 2008 global economic crisis, annual economic output stood at 7% bolstered by increasing oil and gas prices. Whereas output for the period between 2010 and 2012 was a meagre 4% illustrating clear economic decline before the IMF downgrade (Focus Economics² 2017).

India's economy is largely a service based economy, unlike its counterparts that are either reliant on trade in natural commodities or cheap manufactured goods. In the period that followed the 2008 global economic recession, India's economy has been characterized by high rates of inflation, deflated GDP, a weak local currency and a soaring current account deficit. This declining trend has not been divergent from the patterns observed in the economies of other member states of the BRICS. According to the IMF economic growth in India has declined from 9% in 2008 to 4.6% for the 2013/2014 financial year (International Monetary Fund 2014). The anticipated improvement and recovery of the domestic economy has been attributed to a booming IT sector, an essential pillar of the Indian economy, accounting for 25% of exports (Kumar 2014). Although the Indian economy exhibits several weaknesses and deficiencies, India is categorized as one the fastest growing emerging economies in the world.

3.3.2. Social Sustainability in the BRICS

The triple burden of poverty, unemployment and inequality are developmental challenges that many developing and emerging economies are faced with. South Africa continues to struggle to address social challenges as they are invariably linked to economic sustainability. The prevalence of dual economies and the neoliberal economic approach adopted by the post-apartheid political leadership has entrenched and reproduced social challenges within the country.

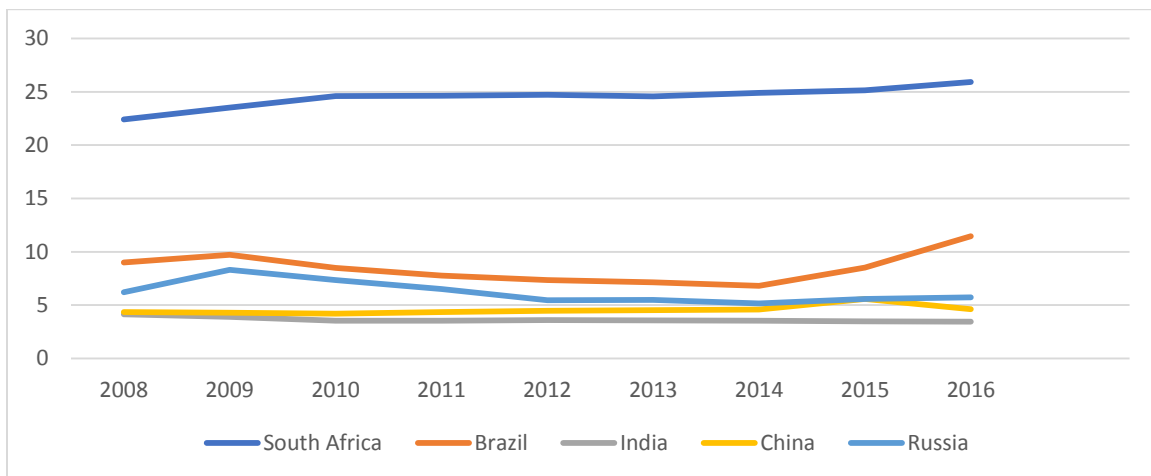
South Africa is considered the most unequal society in the world, with a Gini-Coefficient of 0.7 (0.4 considered critical) this figure is relatively high and could potentially lead to social unrest. The spate service delivery protests that have engulfed the country since 2004, the tragic xenophobic attacks of 2008 (International Social Security Association 2013) as well as the

recent pre-election violence during the 2016 municipal elections coupled with continued student protests are illustrative of social unrest that is already taking place in South African society. The historical and structural problems that exist in South Africa perpetuate inequality and income disparities along racial lines (Azikwe 2016).

According to Statistics South Africa on average white South Africans earn six (6) times more than their black counterparts. Government has made a concerted effort to combat the social disparities that face South Africa, through the formulation and implementation of redistributive and transformative policies (Cohen 2012). The effects of poverty and inequality affect the rural population more severely than the urban population, this can be attributed to South Africa's apartheid history that created the homeland system characterized as separatist zoning policies that divided the population and geographically entrenched inequality. The levels of poverty have decreased noticeably but still bear the racial markers of apartheid (Leibbrandt, Wegner and Finn 2011:1). According to Statistics South Africa (2014: 12) 12.6 million South Africans lived in extreme poverty in 2006, and in 2011 the figure decreased to 10.2 million. Although considerable gains have been made in the mitigation of poverty, inequality has worsened over the years to a Gini-coefficient of 0.7 in 2010. A central poverty alleviation mechanism is the distribution of social assistance grants by government; these include the old-age grant, the controversial child support grant and the disability grant.

Unemployment, captured as access to decent work by the SDGs, is a persistent socio-economic problem in South Africa that particularly affects the youth, almost a quarter of South Africa's population remains unemployed. In 2016 youth unemployment stood at a staggering 47.6% (Trading Economics 2017). To address the problem, the South Africa government proposed the implementation of a youth wage subsidy, this was met with hostility by the trade union movement, questioning the sustainability and longevity of such an approach. The Unemployment Insurance Fund has recently broadened its coverage to include previously marginalized groups, such as domestic workers, seasonal workers and the taxi industry. However, an important question that remains is how to create employment opportunities to sustainably deal with this growing problem. (International Social Security Association 2013).

Figure 6 - Unemployment Rate in BRICS 2000-2014



Source: World Bank 2017 (Data)

According to the Minister of Health Dr. Aaron Motsoaledi there is a substantial gap between public and private healthcare. The disparity that exists between private and public sectors is not to South Africa. The Minister contends that private sector only caters for 16% of the population, while the remaining 84% of the population receives “second rate” healthcare in the public sector. Government intends to address such disparities in the healthcare sector through the introduction of the National Health Insurance (NHI) system. The NHI is expected to afford citizens their right to access affordable, high quality healthcare services irrespective of their socio-economic status. The NHI is aimed at addressing the disparities between health and wealth in South Africa (Sapa 2013).

South Africa has experienced significant challenges in the sector of education, which is a priority area captured in the SDGs, these challenges have presented at both the basic as well as tertiary levels. However, the tertiary educational sector has experienced the most turbulence in recent times. In 2015, the nation’s students embarked on a nationwide shutdown of institutions of higher learning under the collective banner of #FeesMustFall. Students demanded “*free and quality decolonized education*” from the government. Protracted protest and unrest within the tertiary educational sector persisted into 2016. South Africa’s tertiary education system is one of the most sophisticated and advanced on the continent despite glaring weaknesses and challenges at the basic level. The possibility of free tertiary education

remains a contested terrain, as the students remain resolute to their call for free higher education while the government attempts to balance the figures to accommodate the demands made by students (Naicker 2016: 54).

The South African political landscape has been particularly turbulent in the last couple of years, posing a serious threat to the political stability of the country. According to Nleya (2011:3) there has been a sharp increase in the incidence of service delivery protests targeted at local government in South Africa. In 2008, a total of 162 protests were recorded, in 2009 there were 314 protests across the country an exponential increase was recorded in 2012 with 470 protests, translating into more than one protest a day. The 2016 local government elections in South Africa have been identified as a critical moment in the South African political landscape. These elections saw a growing decline of political support for the African ANC across a multitude of municipalities, furthermore, the ANC that has held a convincing majority since 1994 lost three major metropolitan cities, to the Democratic Alliance (Pather 2016).

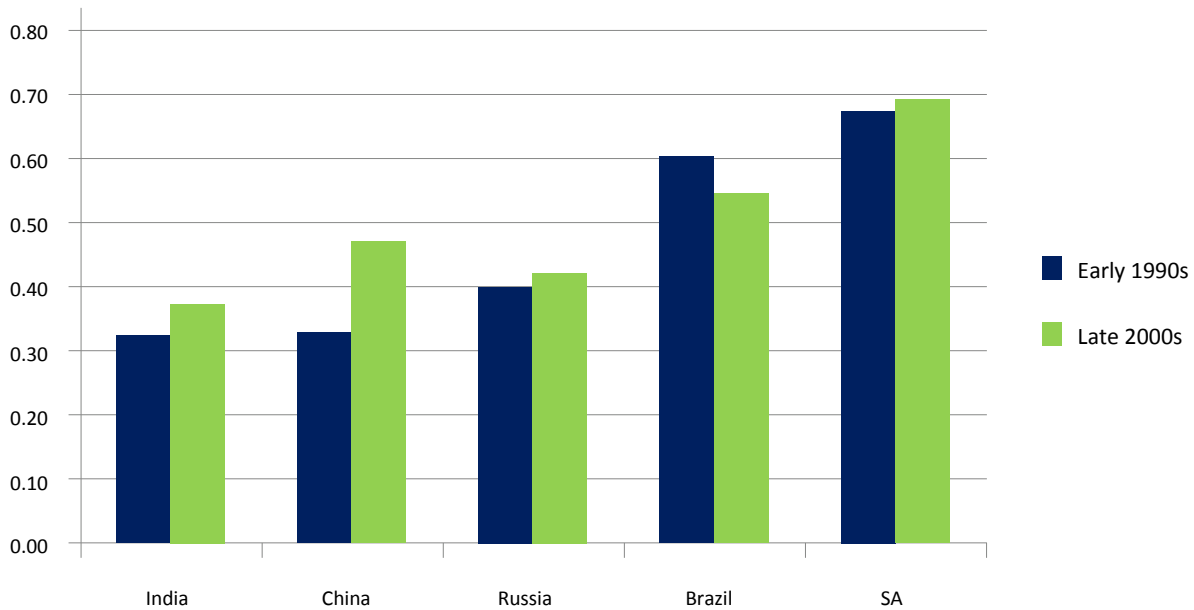
In addition to the Gupta Gate saga of 2013, the same politically connected family has been implicated in allegations of state capture. It is alleged that they unduly influenced the appointment of cabinet ministers to secure channels of engagement for their many business interests in the country. The Public Protector's report, "*State of Capture*", has made numerous links between the notorious Gupta family and the political aristocracy of South Africa (Wiener, Penny and Grootes: 2016). South African President, Jacob Zuma has also fallen prey to droves of motions of no confidence and several attempts to remove him as the President of South Africa. According to the #ZumaMustFall movement, the country has recently suffered from widespread social unrest, economic decline, political instability and uncertainty, and growing concerns regarding the constitutionality of decisions made by the president (Munusamy 2016).

Brazil has traditionally exhibited high levels of poverty and inequality; however, the South American country has been particularly successful in its attempt to combat the triple burden of poverty, unemployment and inequality. This has been attained through a combination of economic growth strategies, redistribution and carefully crafted social policies.

Innovative social policies in conjunction with sustainable social transfer payments have also played a significant role in the eradication of poverty and inequality in Brazil. Indicative of the success of social policies in Brazil is the increase in years of schooling, which subsequently places the population in a better position in the labour market. Additionally, government has steadily increased the minimum wage since the early 2000s, which in turn has reduced disparities in disposable income (Robobank 2014). Conditional cash transfers such as *Bolsa Familia* that are reaching over 11 million families (26% of the population) provide poor households with direct cash support on condition that the households meet certain requirements such as ensuring that children are kept in school and that they regularly go for health check-ups (International Poverty Centre 2007). For example; the implementation of these social policies in Brazil has resulted in an improvement in other social indicators. Life expectancy has improved from 62.7 in 1980 to 73.3 in 2011 and the literacy rate has also improved considerably. However, inequality and income disparities are persistent problems in Brazil. Although more people are moving into the middle class many of them remain close to, or may easily fall back into poverty (Robobank 2014).

According to Oxfam (2013: 6) Brazil has made noteworthy progress in the addressing poverty and inequality. Between 2003 and 2012 levels of poverty decreased from 35.7% - 16.0%, and inequality as qualified by the Gini Inequality Index decreased from 0.583 to 0.530. The successes in addressing poverty and inequality in Brazil can be attributed to social welfare programmes such as *Bola Familila*, which focuses to citizens living in poverty. *Bolsa Familia* is the largest conditional cash transfer programme in the world with a reach of 13 million poor Brazilians. The programme has had a significant impact of poverty contributing to a 33% decline in absolute poverty and a 13% reduction in inequality (2003-2013). The full complement of conditional cash transfer programmes implemented by Brazil to tackle poverty and inequality cater for at risk citizens such as the elderly, children and the disabled.

Figure 7 - Change in inequality levels, early 1990s versus late 2000s Gini Coefficient of Household Income



Source: OCED, *Divided We Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising*, 2011

Brazil has achieved universal coverage in primary education however, continues to struggle with the quality as well as outcomes of the educational system. Lower and upper secondary levels are particularly problematic. Major problems within the Brazilian educational system are access, underfunding, quality, retention as well as equity. Challenges surrounding equity are like those faced by South Africa and India in that a dichotomous system exist as a divide between the rich and the poor is created based on inequality and thus vast disparities in wealth. (World Bank 2016).

The divide between the rich and the poor is propagated by the pervading presence of private education. Although access to education in Brazil is universal the public-private divide has created problems that pertain to access to tertiary education. Public education is under-resourced and of an inferior quality to private education, which offers much better prospects for entry into tertiary education.

Healthcare is considered a constitutionally entrenched right that should be universally accessible to all Brazilian citizens. Brazil has expanded its healthcare coverage thus improving access and resulting in a reduction of inequalities within the sector. There have been recorded increases in life expectancy of Brazilians from 68.5 in 1995 to 73.4 in 2010. There have also been recorded gains in child mortality as mortality rates dropped from 41.4 to 18.6 per thousand births. Such gains have been attributed to increased public expenditure as well as the development and implementation of programmes such as United Health System (SUS) that have improved the state of healthcare in Brazil and have also contributed to expansion of services in poor and marginalized regions (Oxfam¹ 2013: 10). The SUS ensures universal health care coverage for all Brazilians, recognizing access to healthcare as a right for all citizens. The SUS Brazil has laid the foundation for an improved and responsive health system. Although considerable gains have been made in terms of the universality of healthcare in Brazil several challenges remain. The overall quality of healthcare in Brazil has been brought into question; illustrated by persistent regional inequalities which are perpetuated by an urban rural divide. It is noted that the South and South-East regions of the country have better facilities. There is also a piecing public- private divide within the sector that also contributes to the discourse on quality and access (New York University 2011).

Political discontent and frustration have not only been limited to South Africa, Brazil has also experienced a spike in the incidence of anti-government riots and demonstrations. These demonstrations have been used to articulate growing frustration within the Brazilian population. Although the protests pertaining to the Olympic Games in 2016 gained substantial attention, according to Wassenberg (2016) Brazil has been in a state of protest for much of 2016 in what has come to be known as 'a national movement against the government.

The 2014 FIFA World Cup and most recently the 2016 Olympic Games stood as beacons of frustration, as citizens took to the streets to express their discontent and dissatisfaction with the degree of government spending on these sporting events. Additional concerns articulated by protesting citizens were; poor service delivery and sprawling political corruption and maladministration. In a poll conducted Pew Research Centre, 61% of the respondents believed that hosting the 2014 Soccer World Cup was not beneficial to Brazil, as the money

could have been redirected to education and other public services (Whitefield 2014). According to Washington Post (2016) the Olympic Games protests took aim at two targets, firstly Michel Temer (then interim President) who took over after Dilma Rousseff was suspended secondly, and the financial implications that the games would have on the country considering its fiscal predicament. The conditions that the Brazilian people found themselves in 2016 are in sharp contrast to the stable fast growing economic conditions experience when Brazil won the bid to host the games (Wassengberg 2016).

India is also faced with an array of socio-political challenges much like the other BRICS countries. The existence of political and social barriers in India as well as unequal access to opportunities have fostered the development of disparities along, gender, caste and religious lines. In the private sector, the average wage among urban casual workers is 40 per cent lower for women than for men and 30 per cent lower in rural areas, demonstrative of disparity and inequality that exists along gender lines, expressive of the need to tackle gender inequalities as espoused by the SDGs. The caste system has been decisive in the reproduction of inequality and income disparity in India. Caste-based discrimination has traditionally restricted Dalit workers to casual low-paid labour particularly in sectors such as agriculture and has encouraged the pervasiveness of discriminatory social norms within Indian society. The caste system acts as a social barrier preventing lower caste sectors of the population from accessing well paid employment in the formal sector. Not only has the caste system perpetuated inequality and income disparity but has also impacted social cohesion in India (Oxfam² 2013).

Education is often considered to be a tool that facilitates social upward mobility. Considerable advances have been made to attain universal access to education; through initiatives like *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (the education for all movement) and through the Right to Compulsory and Free Education Act of 2010. However, the quality of education is a persistent problem in India (Oxfam² 2013). An additional challenge is that of healthcare as facilities display symptoms of neglect with decaying infrastructure, constant shortages of staff and the unavailability of medication. The failure of public healthcare has been confronted by a poorly regulated private sector which is estimated to account for 82% of patient care. The abundance

of healthcare providers in urban regions sharply contrasts the scarcity of providers in rural areas which, is reminiscent of urban-rural divide that exists in India. Dynamics of exclusion in society are not only limited to health care, but can also be observed in access to basic infrastructure. Half of Indian citizens practice open defecation due to a lack of sanitation (59 per cent of Muslim households continue to have no access to a toilet in their homes or in immediate surrounding) showing the religious aspects of inequality and exclusion that exist in India (Oxfam² 2013).

India continues to struggle with inequality and representation in varying sectors. A case in point is that of gender representation. According to Rao (2016) India comes in well below the global average of female representation in parliament. India records a mere 12% compared to a global average of 22.4%. Countries such as South Sudan and Saudi Arabia fair better than India in terms of female representation in parliament. Skewed gender representation also manifests in the private sector where 1 in 10 directors in India are women. Gender inequality has been prioritized in the new developmental agenda and has been identified as one of the SDGs that should be attained in years to come.

Social challenges in China have been instrumental to the continued categorization of the Asian giant as a developing country. Despite China's spectacular economic progress over the past last 20 years, social challenges such as poverty, inequality, access to healthcare and education are persistent. Although China has progressed economically, this country continues to struggle with social sustainability and stands as a representation of the failure of economic development to translate into social progress.

High income inequality in China has been associated with rapid economic growth. China has generated relative wealth over the past 20 years, however with this economic development was accompanied by an unequal distribution of wealth thus resulting increased income inequality. According to Wildau and Mitchell (2016) China is one the world's most unequal nations in the world, with the richest 1% of households in the country owning a third of the country's wealth. In 2012 China's Gini-Coefficient was 0.49, where the World Bank considers 0.40 as severe inequality. In relation to other BRICS counties such as South Africa and Brazil

who record 0.63 and 0.53 respectively in terms of income inequality, China fares relatively better.

The rural-urban divide is a phenomenon that is not unique to China but has had serious implications for China. Due to the geography and economics of the country the manifestation of the urban- rural divide has resulted in the entrenchment of patterns of inequality and unequal distribution of wealth. Rural life in China is culturally undervalued and stigmatized, especially among the younger generation that has grown up in an era of a 'cosmopolitan lifestyle.' Migration from rural to urban is greatly motivated by economics and better opportunities to evade rural poverty that was rife prior to the reforms (Zhang 2011).

Much like the other problems that manifest in China's social landscape, challenges in healthcare can be traced back to the reform of the late 1970's. The challenges that present within the healthcare sector in China have had implications for access and equity. China's healthcare system has been greatly influenced by the rural-urban divide and the inequality that has manifested as a result. According to (IMB 2006) the introduction of market reforms and subsequent economic growth has not translated into improvements in China's healthcare profile. The shift away from state administered healthcare and the eradication of rural programs such as 'barefoot doctors' has had an adverse effect on healthcare in China, especially in rural and outlying areas. Problems within the sector include a lack of access to affordable healthcare and inefficient use of resources.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980's the Russian Federation underwent fundamental and definitive transformation in its social security infrastructure. The Federation experienced significant increases in the prevalence of inequality coupled with a widening gap between the urban and rural population. The Soviet paternalistic model rooted in a communist welfare state guaranteed full employment, subsidized prices for consumer goods and services, as well as the provision of public goods like education, healthcare services, housing and a state-run pension system that ensured universal coverage. During the transition from a centrally planned economy into a free-market economic inequality has steadily increased. The "Gini-Coefficient increased from 0.397 in 2001 to 0.422 in 2009. On the contrary, a sharp

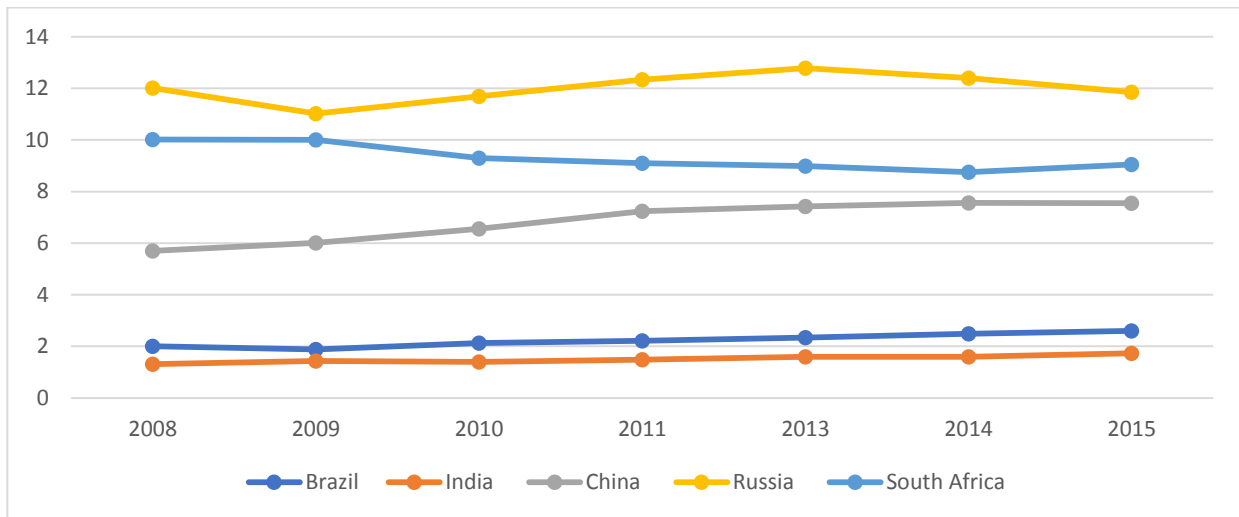
decline in the rate of poverty has been recorded from 27.5% of the population living in poverty in 2001 to 13.2% in 2009 (Denisova 2012: 8).

A sizable decrease in absolute poverty (29% in 2000 to 13% in 2011) has been observed due to rapid economic growth in the post-communist era. Although some improvement has been recorded in the quality of life of Russians many continue to struggle. It is estimated that more than 18 million Russians live below the poverty line. Poverty and inequality in Russia are systemic issues that are caused by the failure of the system to adequately address and combat issues of social protection and welfare. The country has poor social security mechanisms that effectively lift people out of poverty. The absence of social security mechanisms is further exacerbated by a shrinking working age population and increased burden placed on the state to look after its aging population (Oxfam 2012: 2).

3.3.3 Environmental Sustainability in the BRICS

China's environmental degradation has fundamental political, economic and social ramifications for its future development. China is confronted with environmental challenges that manifest in water shortages, urban and industrial related air pollution, acid rain and desertification caused by unsustainable agricultural practices. There is a clear relationship between the rapid economic development of China and the myriad of environmental challenges it is faced with. The 11th Five-year plan for Environmental Protection confirms this, by placing an equal emphasis on both economic growth and environmental protection (Ploberger 2011: 4).

Figure 8 – Co2 Emissions in BRICS (Metric tons per capita) 2008-2014



Source: World Bank (Data)

China has recently been identified as a colossal global air polluter having overtaken the US as the largest emitter of carbon dioxide gas in the world; this can be attributed to the energy-intensive economic growth strategy it has adopted. China has aggressively strengthened its trade partnerships with Africa motivated to its thirst for natural resources that fuel its economy. Investment in Africa has been concentrated in extractive sectors such as mining, and the oil industry. As previously mentioned the BRICS collectively accounted for 40% of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2010 however, it is prudent to note that China accounted for 22% of emissions, corroborating the accretion that it is in fact a colossal global air polluter, even in relation to developed industrialized countries (Ed King 2015).

Rapid industrialization through the beneficiation of primary resources into manufactured products has had detrimental consequences for the natural environment. Increasing dependence on non-renewable fossil fuels such as coal and oil has also contributed to environmental degradation. In 2012, China accounted for a 70% increase in global carbon dioxide emissions. China has come to the realization that the energy-intensive developmental route it has adopted has resulted in economic losses due to pollution and unsustainable environmental practices. According to the 2010 Global Burden of Disease Study, air pollution

costs China 300 billion USD annually and contributes to 1.2 million premature deaths (Zhou 2013: 19).

Many of China's environmental problems are derived from its rapid industrialization and economic progression. According to Green Peace East Asia (2012) China is faced with a looming water crisis. Known to be the factory of the world, this Asian giant is faced with a conundrum, as water supply dwindles alongside, an astronomical demand particularly for industrial and agricultural functions. According to the New York Times (2016) more than 80% of China's underground water supply utilized by households, factories and farms is unfit for drinking due to extensive contamination from industry and agriculture.

Although rapid industrialization has lifted many out of poverty and created immense opportunity for the people of China, it has been accompanied by serious health implications. Due to poor regulation, weak enforcement of the law and the prevalence of local corruption, large amounts of toxic waste have been directly discharged into rivers and lakes with minimal repercussions. As a result, many rural villages located near factories have suffered ill-health; these villages have been termed "cancer villages" due to the prevalence of cancer among villagers. Some rivers that have been adversely affected by careless toxic waste dumping include the Yellow River that has been overexploited as well as the Yangtze River that is well renowned for its alarming levels of pollution (Green Peace East Asia 2012).

Although China is the largest polluter in the world, the government has taken great strides to try and mitigate the effects pollution and reduce emissions. Wentworth and Oji (2013:7) maintain that 50 billion USD has been invested yearly in the renewable energy sector by China since 2009, additionally China has depicted its commitment to a green economy as portrayed in its 2006 Five-Year Plan, that contained policies designed to address issues related to sustainable development, environmental protection and energy efficiency. Subsequent Five-Year plans have articulated a commitment to establishing a green economy, promoting sustainable development and ultimately achieving green growth, however developing a green economy in the short to medium term seems to conflict with already established economic growth objectives. Despite the conflict that exists between economic growth and the

environment, Beijing has contributed 6 million USD in support of South-South cooperation on climate change under the auspices of the United Nations (BRICS Post 2014).

South Africa has also been identified as a mega polluter and is considered as to be largest polluter on the African continent. Furthermore, South Africa is considered the 13th largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world. According to Greenpeace (2012) Eskom, the state-owned power utility is a major contributor to pollution and environmental degradation in South Africa. The power utility is almost entirely dependent on coal for the generation of electricity. In 2007, the state-run entity was the second largest power utility emitter of carbon dioxide internationally.

Regardless of the well documented environmental effects of using coal to generate electricity and the ongoing debate surrounding climate change, the South African government has embarked on constructing two additional coal-based power stations namely Kusile and Medupi. It is estimated that Kusile alone, will generate 37 million tons of carbon dioxide annually and will increase South Africa's contribution to climate change by 10%. These power stations will have significant implications on the environmental sustainability of South Africa (Blignaut 2012: 69).

South Africa's energy crisis has resulted in the pursuit of alternative energy generation methods. Some of these alternatives are relatively controversial and have attracted considerable attention from detractors. Conservationists argue that the extraction of shale gas in the Karoo will result in irreparable environmental damage. These include human health hazards associated with chemical pollution, damage to surface resources and contamination of underground water sources. Those that a pro-fracking argue, that gas is a cleaner alternative to conventional coal power generation, burning 50 % cleaner than coal. (De Wit 2011).

The exploration of nuclear energy has also stirred up considerable interest and opposition, citing not only the economic feasibility of this method of energy generation but also consider the risks it presents. The environmentally detrimental implications of nuclear energy remain jarred in the minds of many as the Fukushima disaster stands as a stark reminder of this

method of energy generation. There has been considerable negative public sentiment towards the use of nuclear energy in South Africa. The controversial nuclear deal currently being explored by South Africa is not only opposed based on its environmental impact but also due to the political implications and suspicion of corruption (Omarjee 2016).

South Africa has taken the lead in advocating a green economy approach to development in Africa. However, like China; the challenge of transition in the short to medium term will significantly affect economic growth. In the case of South Africa, the eminence of the energy mineral complex and its centrality in the economy may present substantial challenges in the pursuit of a somewhat greener economy. Despite this, the South African government has taken advantage of the green economy viewing this sector as an opportunity for job creation, as the country continues to struggle with soaring rates of unemployment.

India is also faced with an environmental-developmental conundrum, as a delicate balance exists between economic growth and its subsequent impact on the environment. The World Bank estimates that environmental degradation and pollution are costing the Indian economy 5.7% in GDP annually (Diagnostic Assessment of Select Environmental Challenges in India 2013). Although China has come to be known as the biggest outdoor polluter on the globe, India has also recently struggled to keep air pollution at bay. It is reported by Greenpeace that India has surpassed China in recorded air pollution related deaths. The concerted effort taken by Chinese authorities to combat rates of air pollution has resulted in an observed decline in rates of pollution and thus air pollution related deaths. It is thus imperative that New Delhi employ similar measures as those adopted by Beijing, as failure to do so may result in increased and record breaking levels of air pollution (Pillai 2016).

According to the Washington Post (2016) rates of air pollution are so high in India that it kills an estimated 500 000 people every year. It is important to consider the economic cost of such levels of pollution. Child mortality in India stands at 23 % this can be directly and indirectly attributed to environmental degradation. In a recent survey of 178 countries conducted by the World Bank India was ranked 155th, the survey also placed India far below its fellow BRICS member states. Additionally, according to a survey conducted by the World Health

Organization (2014) 13 out of 20 of the world's most polluted cities are in India. Considering the detrimental effects that industry and economic activities have had on the environment, the Indian government has made a concerted effort to counter degradation and promote sustainable growth and development under the leadership of the National Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.

This has been achieved through investment in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power. The advancement of the green economy has been viewed as a possible poverty elevation mechanism and crucial in the lowering of economic disparities rampant in India. Wentworth and Oji (2013:9) contend that before India realized the benefits of the green economy, it regarded international controls of carbon emissions generated from fossil fuels as unfair and placed the responsibility for mitigation on the industrialized west.

Where China and India particularly struggle with air pollution, it appears a central environmental challenge for Brazil is water related pollution as well as threats to biodiversity, especially in relation to the Amazon. Brazil along with South Africa and Russia are considered the highest per capita emitters of greenhouse gases. As is the case with its counterparts, economic growth and development in Brazil occurred at the expense of the environment.

Brazil's environmental situation is particularly delicate due to the impact that industry has had on the Amazon, which is considered as one of the world's most diverse ecological systems. Brazil is a global leader in ethanol exports, it is estimated that it provides 70% of global supply. Ethanol is considered an alternative to petroleum that has contributed to climate change. Although ethanol is an alternative to petroleum it has resulted in far reaching environmental problems. As the ethanol industry in Brazil expands and develops, more hectares of sugarcane are planted and this particularly impacts rural communities, by prolonging existing problems of landlessness, hunger, unemployment, and agrarian conflicts. The export boom in the ethanol industry in Brazil has not benefited most the population, but has rather entrenched existing societal disparities. This is seen in the legitimization and reproduction of the occupation of rural land by multinational agribusiness (Kenfield 2007).

Government and industry contend that ethanol production and the export thereof will culminate in economic growth and sustainable rural development, while simultaneously curbing the scourge of global warming by decreasing dependency on fossil fuel generated energy. Conversely environmentalists contend that the monoculture of sugarcane cultivation has had devastating effects on the environment as well as traditional agricultural practices as it has crowded out conventional crops such as maize.

The process of rapid industrialization in Russia, under the former Soviet Union contributed greatly to environmental degradation. In the Post-Soviet era, the Russian Federation has embraced the energy sector as a crucial part of its economic development strategy. However, questions regarding the sustainability of the energy sector have surfaced, considering the non-renewable nature of the sources of energy. The extent of environmental degradation in Russia can be seen in its direct impact on the quality of life of citizens. According to Yablokov (2010:2) 490 000 people died in Russia because of environmentally related illness.

Furthermore, there has been a considerable decline in life expectancy over the past 20 years. The steady decrease in life expectancy can partly be attributed to environmental degradation. Water quality is of concern in Russia due to the introduction of environmentally unsustainable technology in agriculture and industry. This has been coupled with the dumping of poorly treated agricultural, industrial and municipal waste that has significantly contributed to widespread water pollution in Russia. The state of natural water sources has been impacted by environmentally unsustainable practices. A meager 12-14% of rivers and lakes in Russia are considered ecologically clean. Additionally, due to poor environmental practices, the quality of underground water has also started to deteriorate in quality (Hays 2016).

Environmental problems in Russia can be associated with industrialization and economic development. Many developing countries like Russia struggle with the developmental conundrum associated with the environment. It is cheaper and more profitable in the short-term to apply environmentally unsuitable practices to attain economic development.

3.4 Conclusion

The constitution of the BRICS is purely based on their economic growth prospects. In a paper published by the Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation titled *On the BRICS of Collapse? Why emerging Economies Need a Different Developmental Model*, the paper makes some very significant pronouncements about the future of the BRICS and its future as an emerging power alliance. One of the most profound accretions made in this paper is that the only uniting factor within the alliance is the scale of their respective economies in terms of GDP as well as their sustained economic growth rates over the past two decades. The alliance known as BRICS is essentially termed a “GDP club” (GovInn 2010).

Sustainability is a triangular concept, comprised of three pillars namely social, economic and environmental pillars. Within the discourse on sustainability as well as with respect to its practical application, an imbalance has emerged. In that, great emphasis has been placed on the interplay between the economic and environmental pillars respectively, with little regard for the social pillar and how it interplays with other pillars. This is evident in the formation of the BRICS and the disregard of the other pillars of sustainability in its creation. The alliance is purely based on economic growth prospects of the respective member states and negates factors such as political stability, environmental sustainability social inequality, access to basic services such as education and healthcare. Which are all very closely linked to the maintenance of social stability.

This Chapter unpacked sustainability in the BRICS using the SDGs as a framework. For this study, the SDGs have been segmented into three to resemble the three pillars of sustainability. In terms of economic sustainability, the SDGs identify decent work and economic growth as well as industrial innovation and infrastructure development as priority areas. In relation to the BRICS countries such as South Africa have struggled particularly with unemployment with 52.5 % youth unemployment. In terms of economic growth all the BRICS have shown signs of decline however, countries such as Brazil, Russia and South Africa have reached concerning levels of economic recession. This brings into question the economic outlook of these countries, which was foundational in the creation of this bloc.

The second pillar of sustainability is social sustainability. Issues such as the need to end poverty, the eradication of hunger, access to healthcare and education as well as gender equality are captured in the SDGs. The goal to end hunger and poverty is recorded in the progress made by countries such as South Africa and Russia in their respective post-apartheid and post-soviet existence. All the BRICS have struggled to balance the disparity between rural and urban facilities especially in the context of access to healthcare and education. Countries such as South Africa and Brazil have struggled with turbulence, instability and poor performance regarding education. In South Africa, this manifested as #FeesMustFall and national call for free education, whereas in Brazil challenges manifest as entrenched inequality and ring-fenced access entrenched by private education. Gender equality is a SDG that is more specific than the general understanding of inequality, in the BRICS a country that particularly struggles with this and other forms of inequality is India. Some authors have attributed entrenched inequalities to caste system.

Environmental sustainability is expressed by goals access to clean water, sanitation, protection of life under water and life on land, combating climate change is also a priority under this pillar. In terms of the BRICS, countries such as China and India have been categorized as mega polluters and struggle particularly with water and air pollution, Russia has also recorded alarming rates of water pollution. It is interesting to note that in India half of the pollution practice open defecation illustrative to poor sanitation. Brazil's ethanol industry has ironically contributed to other environmental problems such as deforestation to make way for millions of hectares of sugar cane plantations.

Considering, the challenges and shortfalls displayed by the BRICS in terms of economic, social and environmental sustainability. It has become evident that these countries struggle with sustainability as it is expressed by the SDGs even in areas such as economic sustainability that initially brought them together. This therefore begs the question, if this bloc continues to struggle with internal challenges as unpacked in their respective countries are they then able to render leadership on an international scale?

CHAPTER FOUR

ALTERNATIVE EMERGING ALLIANCES: PROPOSING A SUSTAINABILITY BLOC

“They are too blunt a tool and can sometimes group countries by the most superficial of reasons, glossing over deeper differences that are much bigger drivers of their future outlook.” – Gemma Godfrey.

4.1 Introduction

The BRICS have been faced with the dual challenge of lifting their large populations out of poverty, while remaining cognizant of the impact that economic activities may have on the natural and social environments. The growing trend of economic, social, political and environmental problems in the BRICS is a clear indication of the persistent challenges that manifest with respect to sustainability. As we have seen, the formation of the grouping is rooted in the economic growth prospects of the bloc. While the GDP's of these countries has started to show signs of decline, there are also clear weaknesses in their respective socio-political contexts.

The social context is a marginal and somewhat neglected domain in the discourse on sustainability. The BRICS have large populations that are plagued with several social ills such as persistent inequality, poverty and unemployment. Political challenges in the BRICS have presented both within the individual member states as well as with the bloc as a collective. The well entrenched argument of the political heterogeneity of the bloc, weak institutions, weak observation of rule of law as well as persistent corruption and maladministration are among some of the political challenges that are manifest within the bloc.

Although considerable efforts have been made to address these problems the growing desire to develop economically has further marginalized social and the environmental issues, assuming, that economic development and progress will resolve these challenges further down the line. The challenges presented in the context environmental sustainability with respect to the BRICS are closely linked with the economic activities of these countries. The industrial

practices adopted by these nations and the impact that they have on the natural environment pose a serious challenge to sustainability. The BRICS have continued to work towards economic progression and development while adopting the same environmentally detrimental practices adopted by the developed countries. This has sprung them into the status of mega global polluters.

The BRICS have emerged as the most influential emerging alliance and have assumed the role of advocating for countries of the developing South. Considering the internal challenges that they are grappling with this chapter endeavors to explore alternative emerging alliances. These alliances have emerged as alternatives to the BRICS and have been constituted using similar descriptive indicators as those used to constitute the BRICS. These alliances include emerging country groupings such as the Next 11 (*Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Turkey and Vietnam*), CIVEST (*Columbia, Indonesia Vietnam, Egypt Turkey, and South Africa*) and MINT/MIST (*Malaysia, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey/ Malaysia, Indonesia*).

Recognizing that most alternative emerging alliances are constituted using a similar narrow economic focus as that has used to create the BRICS, this chapter will explore the possibility of an alternative emerging alliance using sustainability and (economic, social and environmental factors) as a framework. The objective is to identify a set of countries that fare better than the BRICS countries in terms of economic, social and environmental sustainability thus challenging the entrenched economic focus in the creation of groupings such as the BRICS and other emerging alliances.

4.2 Current Alternative Emerging Alliances

The international state system has recently experienced changes in the configuration of power. Zakaria (2008: 3) has described this shift in international power as the “Rise of the Rest.” This essentially refers to the surfacing of emerging economies in a system dominated by traditional powers. The emergence of the BRICS has been momentous in the realm of emerging economies; as this bloc has grown and developed to assume a leadership role among

emerging markets of the South. They have advocated for global governance reform in the corridors of the United Nations General Assembly, by calling for a more fair and representative United Nations Security Council. They have also challenged the global financial architecture represented by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Which has resulted in the establishment of the New Development Bank and a Contingency Fund that offers an alternative leading option for developing countries (Hein 2010:6).

Although the BRICS have emerged as the most prominent of emerging alliance blocs in the global South, there are several other groupings that have been created over the years, to rival the BRICS. These blocs vary in size and country selection. However, they have one thing in common, all of them are constituted using the economic growth prospects of the selected countries as a core indicator of convergence. These groupings are often created by investment bankers and financial institutions with the aim of identifying countries that are best suited for investment. These groups, especially the BRICS, do not only have economic utility but have also grown and developed to perform a very specific political function.

There has been some discussion about the utility of the creation of such categories or groupings. According to Spence, Palmer and Oliver (2014) the creation of these emerging economy blocs has its advantages and disadvantages. The forced convergence of different countries that face varying challenges, results in a less nuanced analysis of issues and challenges and has oversimplified and generalized the outlook of such alliances or groupings. Categories or groupings of this nature obscure important differences that exist within the grouping or category. Whereas the general advantage of these groupings, is that they certainly attract attention and can offer a simple and generalized tool of analysis. These groupings are created based on economic growth prospects, while paying close attention to the composition of markets in the included states. This is informed by the originators of these blocs, which are often investment banks or financial institutions. These groupings or blocs are blunt tools, that often group countries together based on very superficial markers. Therefore, they gloss over entrenched differences that may offer a deeper and a more nuanced understanding of the realities that manifest in these countries.

The alternative emerging alliances (alternative to the BRICS) that will be explored in this chapter include, CIVEST, MINT/ MIST and the Next 11. These are well known groupings that have gained substantial traction after the establishment of the BRICS. Their creation has been largely dependent on a comparison between them and the BRICS. They have essentially been created to challenge or rival the BRICS.

4.2.1 The MINT/ MIST Countries

MINT is a grouping of states that is comprised of Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria/ South Korea and Turkey. This bloc was established in 2013. Despite their diverse histories, cultures and geopolitics these countries were brought together based on their economic conditions. The MINT countries have common challenges which include the need to advance and develop their infrastructure, expand an already growing middle and decrease rates of poverty and inequality. Further similarities include their large and youthful populations that translate into consumer markets as well as readily accessible workforces (Durotoye 2014:99).

Although these countries have shown great promise in terms of their economic growth prospects based on their large and youthful populations, they face serious challenges. All the MINT countries share the common challenge of corruption. Mexico, particularly struggles with the scourge corruption, collusion and bribery. Furthermore, the South American country continues to struggle with a notorious and obstinate narcotics trade which breeds instability and other social problems (Gan Business Anti-Corruption Portal 2017). Indonesia needs to pay closer attention to its internal socio- political dynamics illustrated by high rates of poverty and inequality. One of Nigeria's major problems is domestic security which is threatened by the existence and prolonged terror exerted by terrorist formations such as Boko Haram. Turkey has also recently experienced growing incidence of terror and domestic insecurity which poses a threat to the political and economic stability of the country (Durotoye 2014:99).

According to Mastsangou (2015) who questions if the MINT is in fact the next BRICS, all the MINT countries score poorly on the Transparency International Corruption Index (2014) illustrative of their common challenge of corruption and maladministration. Furthermore, poor

infrastructure is said to be an impediment to the economic growth and development of these countries. This is coupled with social problems such as poverty, inequality, youth unemployment, unequal education opportunities and soaring crime rates. Despite the challenges faced by the individual member states of this grouping, a major problem is the initial constitution and development of this bloc. Like the BRICS this group was developed by Jim O'Neil of Goldman Sachs using economic growth as the central premise for the establishment of the group. The countries that form part of the grouping all exhibit high levels of risk in several sectors such as infrastructure, corruption and social capital. The fact that these countries also have much smaller economies than those countries that form part of the BRICS has made this acronym not as groundbreaking as the BRICS (Mastsangou 2015).

4.2.2 The CIVEST Countries

In 2009, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) developed yet another emerging economy acronym. The acronym was introduced by Robert Ward (EIU) and Michael Geoghegan of HSBC (Fahad and Yaser 2013:1). The premise of the introduction of this bloc was that these countries would be the ones to watch, after the BRICS, in the post global crisis era. CIVETS are comprised of Columbia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa. This acronym was developed in reaction to the BRICS and it was predicted that these countries would display fast rates of economic growth over the coming decades.

The six (6) CIVETS countries share some common characteristics such as; youthful populations, relative political stability, limited reliance on commodity exports as well as relatively developed financial markets (Korkmaz et al 2012: 231). Guerra-Barón and Méndez. (2015: 7) agree that the major contributing factors that have contributed to the creation of the CIVETS are the existence of a youthful and growing population, that translate into consumer markets as well as a readily accessible workforce, dynamic and growing economies, relatively stable political conditions as well as varying degrees of international and regional power in relation to the international hierarchy of power in the international system.

4.2.3 Next 11 Countries

The Next 11 (N-11) was created in 2005 with the purpose of identifying countries that could have a “BRICS-like” impact in the international system by rivaling the influence of the G7. Although this grouping of states was brought together on the basis of a shared characteristic of having large and youthful populations, it is noted that the diversity and size of the group makes it difficult to generalize. The Next 11 include; *Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Turkey and Vietnam*. Due to the size and diversity of this grouping of states, they may not have the same transformative impact that the BRICS have had on the world economy.

According to Kuepper (2016) the diversity of this grouping pose several threats and opportunities. One opportunity is the geostrategic location of the states included in this group, this includes Europe, Latin America, Africa, South East Asia and the middle East, offering access to large and diverse markets. Political risk has been highlighted as a possible threat as some countries display signs of political instability and volatility, Egypt and Pakistan as cases in point.

There are several overlaps in the selection and inclusion of states in the N-11, MINT/MIST and CIVETS. Countries such as Mexico, Turkey, Nigeria, and Indonesia are found in both the MINT countries as well as in the N-11. Due to the observed overlap, similar challenges of corruption, internal security risks, the need for infrastructure development and pervading challenges posed by socio-political risks are carried over from one grouping to the next. Much like the BRICS countries these countries have been bundled together based on their economic growth prospects, opportunity for investment and access to markets. In the constitution of these blocs, very little attention is paid to socio-political challenges faced by these countries and very little consideration is given to their collective as well as their respective individual environmental impact.

4.3 Constituting the Sustainability Bloc

In the light of the weaknesses observed in the discussion on alternative emerging alliances; this study will propose the creation of Sustainability Bloc. This study will primarily make use of two indexes to create an alternative bloc that places greater focus on sustainability rather than the narrow economic growth focus that has dominated the discourse in the past. In so doing, social and environmental factors will be integrated and incorporated into the GDP reliant framing of progress and development. This approach builds on the analysis of the BRICS in *Chapter Three*, framed by the SDGs.

The creation of the BRICS and other emerging power alliances or blocs have been based on their economic growth prospects, supported by the assumption that economic growth will result in societal development and progress, through trickle-down economics. As observed in *Chapter Three* of this study, although the BRICS initially showed substantial promise economically, the social-political and environmental challenges within their respective countries have compromised their sustainability and overall wellbeing. Furthermore, in recent years, the BRICS have also started to show signs of economic decline – disproving the initial premise of its creation.

Considering how other emerging power blocs have been created, with a focus on economic growth. The proposed Sustainability Bloc will be drawn from two indexes, namely the Social Progress Index and the Environmental Progress Index. The justification for the use of these indexes is that each of them focus on a sphere of sustainability that has been negated in the creation of other emerging power blocs. Each of the indexes will be analyzed separately to identify countries that display socio-political and environmental stability. Developed countries as well as less developed countries will not be considered, thus leaving those countries that fall somewhere in the middle of the respective indexes. The analysis of the two indexes will then be consolidated to produce a single list of countries that considers both socio-political as well as environmental dynamics within the selected countries. Following the identification of countries of interest from the two indexes, the bloc will be analyzed using the SDGs framed by socio-political, environmental and economic aspects of sustainability.

4.3.1 Social Progress Index

The Social Progress Index, measures the extent to which a country provides for the social and environmental needs of its citizens. The principal focus is not on economic growth but rather on the social and environmental wellbeing of countries. Economic growth has managed to lift millions of people out of poverty however, a model of development based on economic progress alone is incomplete. There is a need to expand our understanding of society beyond the narrow focus on economic growth as the only indicator of progress. The Social Progress Index is a comprehensive framework that measures social progress independent of GDP, but remaining complimentary to it (Social Progress Index 2016).

The framework employed by this Index promotes inclusive economic growth, this is important considering growing rates of global inequality. The Index is divided into three categories, the first category is basic human needs (nutrition and basic healthcare water and sanitation, shelter and personal safety). The next category is foundations of wellbeing (access to basic knowledge, information and communication, health wellness as well as environmental quality). The last category is opportunity, (personal rights, personal freedoms, tolerance, inclusion and access to advanced education) (Social Progress Index 2016).

4.3.2 Countries of Interest in the Social Progress Index 2016

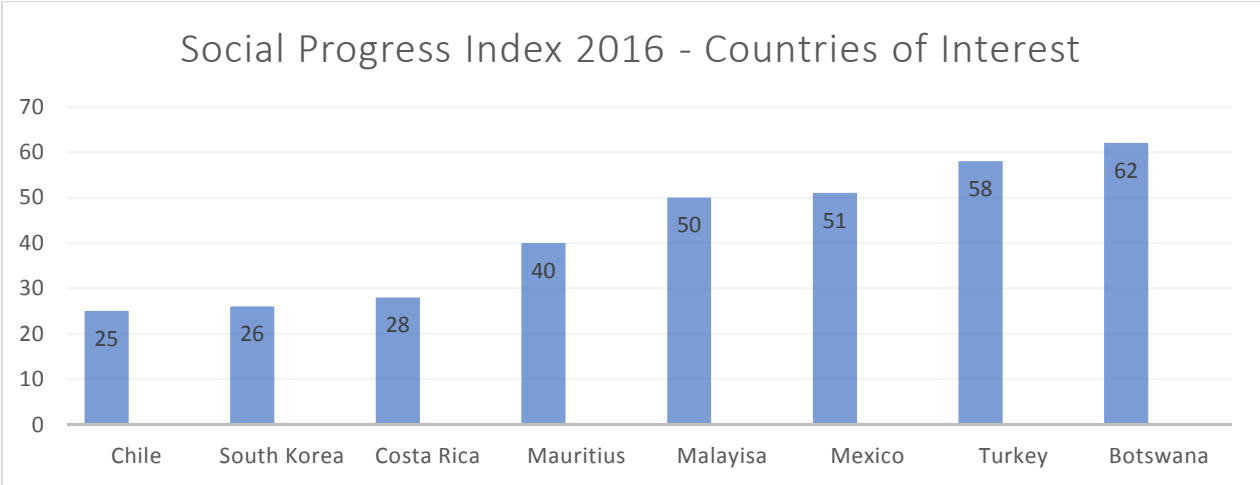
In the identification of countries that could possibly form part of the *Sustainability Bloc*, special consideration is taken regarding the regional spread of the bloc. The bloc should be made up of developing countries or emerging countries that are in different regions. These countries should also show signs of socio-political stability and environmental sustainability.

Bearing this in mind, a few countries from Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa as well as Asia have been identified as they display strong socio-political stability and are ranked in the top three tiers of the Social Progress Index. Countries that fall in the high social progress tier are Chile, South Korea, and Costa Rica. These countries are ranked very close to one another at number 25, 26 and 28 respectively. Other countries of interest that also fall within this tier are, Israel and Argentina. Although they fall slightly lower than the afore mentioned countries

(Social Progress Index 2016). The inclusion of Israel would need to be carefully considered due to its tumultuous political environment.

In the Upper Middle tier of the Social Progress Index (2016) there are a few countries of interest that could possibly form part of the Sustainability Bloc. These countries include Mauritius which is ranked at 40, Malaysia at 50, Mexico at 51, Turkey at 58 and Botswana at 62. In terms of regional spread Mexico as a Latin American country would be compared to higher ranking countries that also originate from the Latin American country, therefore countries such as Chile and Argentina would be better options than Mexico. Sub-Saharan Africa has two candidates, the island state of Mauritius and the Southern African county of Botswana. Mauritius is ranked much higher than Botswana however Botswana presents a stronger case to form part of the bloc due to its population size as well as its strategic geographic location.

Figure 9- Social Progress Index 2016 - Countries of Interest



Source: Social Progress Index 2016 (Data)

There are a few countries that have been identified as countries of interest with respect to the Social Progress Index. These countries are located about four regions, namely Latin and Central America, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. Many countries that are located within these regions are developing and in some instances emerging.

4.4 Environmental Performance Index

The Environmental Performance Index was developed by the Yale School for Forestry and Environmental Studies. It ranks countries based on their performance on high-priority environmental issues. These issues are segmented into two categories, namely; protection of human health and the protection of ecosystems (natural environment). The Index considers both, human impacts of environmental challenges as well as the impacts of such challenges on the natural environment. The categories that form part of the index, include; health impacts, air quality, water and sanitation, water resources, agriculture, forests, fisheries, biodiversity and habitat as well as climate and energy (Environmental Performance Index 2016).

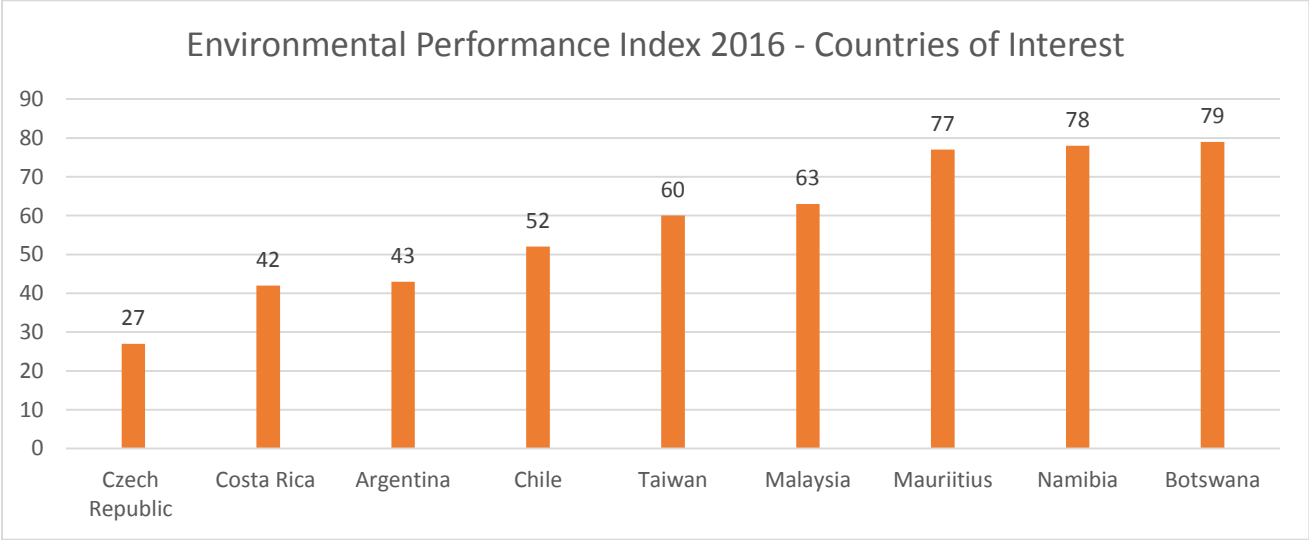
4.4.1 Countries of Interest in the Environmental Performance Index 2016

The Environmental Performance index differs from the Social Progress Index, in that the results of Environmental Performance Index are not stratified and discussed according to different tiers. The discussion of the results is organized according to key issues such as air quality, water quality and climate change. In identifying countries of interest that could possibly form part of the Sustainability Bloc, the regional spread of the countries identified is carefully considered. The intention is to select developing and emerging countries that perform well in this index.

As such, countries from different regions, namely Latin and Central America, Sub Saharan Africa and Asia, have been identified as countries of interest. Emerging and developing countries within the Latin and Central American region, that are ranked high on Environmental Performance Index include the Czech Republic at number 27, Costa Rica is 42nd, Argentina 43rd and Chile at number 52 on the Index. With respect to the Asian region, countries such as Taiwan at 60, Malaysia at number 63, the Philippines at 66 and South Korea at 80 have been identified as countries of interest. Sub-Saharan Africa is a chronic under-performer when it comes to comparative regional analysis of environmental sustainability. This index has identified three countries within the sub-Saharan region as being the top regional performers. These countries include Mauritius at 77, Namibia at 78, and Botswana at 79.

Like the Social Progress Index, the Environmental Performance index has identified countries that span across four regions. These countries are ranked in the top 80 countries out of a total of 180 countries that form part of the Index.

Figure 10 - Environmental Performance Index 2016- Countries of Interest



Source: Environmental Performance Index 2016 (Data)

4.5 The Sustainability Bloc

The proposed alternative Sustainability Bloc is a grouping is states that take social as well as the environmental issues into account. In the creation of this bloc, two indexes have been consulted, namely the Social Progress Index and the Environmental Performance Index. The bloc makes use of sustainability as a foundational concept in its creation. This is due to its awareness of the shortfalls of the GDP focused approach that traditional emerging alliances are built on.

Emerging power blocs have traditionally been created by economic growth centered approaches to progress and development. A major disadvantage with such an approach is its negation of social and environmental issues that in themselves detract from economic growth and development. This then impacts on the sustainability and longevity of such groupings as well as on their collective strategic objectives.

If the individual countries of a grouping such as the BRICS are plagued with internal socio-political and environmental challenges, as observed in *Chapter Three* of this study, this impedes on the sustainability of such a grouping. It is therefore, important to consider the social and environmental challenges alongside economic aspects.

The creation of the Sustainability Bloc is primarily based on the results of the two indexes. As stated these indexes focus on environmental as well as social indicators, rather than the GDP, economic growth centered approach in the creation and development of other emerging blocs. According to Fioramonti (2015) Traditional developed countries, such as the G7 are faced with distinct social and environmental challenges. This “outdated club of countries” (G7) has assumed a de facto international leadership role based on progress and development being interlinked with industrialization and economic growth. New powers such as the BRICS equally struggle when it comes to sustainability. China and India have particularly struggled with environmental sustainability. Whereas, Brazil and South Africa display alarming rates of inequality and social instability, Russia has experienced a near collapse in good governance, social cohesion and struggles with poor management of natural resources.

Although many developed and developing countries are faced with social and environmental challenges as they continue to focus on GDP centered approaches to progress and development, Fioramonti (2015) confirms that there are alternatives that fare better in terms of sustainability and wellbeing. There are several countries that have been able to merge high levels of economic progress with human and environmental (ecological) wellbeing.

4.5.1 Consolidating the Indexes to Create a Sustainability Bloc

In this study, The Social Progress Index (2016) and the Environmental Performance Index (2016) have both been used in the identification countries of interest from different regions of the global South. A concerted effort was made to include countries from a variety of regions from the global South. In keeping with the approach used in Chapter Three, the SDGs will be consulted in the analysis of the Sustainability Bloc.

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to consolidate the results of both indexes and narrow down the countries of interest into a small group of countries representative sustainability. The countries that will be considered in the proposed bloc fare well in both indexes and display relative economic stability and sustainability. Although, this is not the central premise upon which this bloc is constituted.

4.6 The Sustainability Bloc:

- Costa Rica
- Chile
- South Korea
- Botswana

4.6.1 Social Sustainability

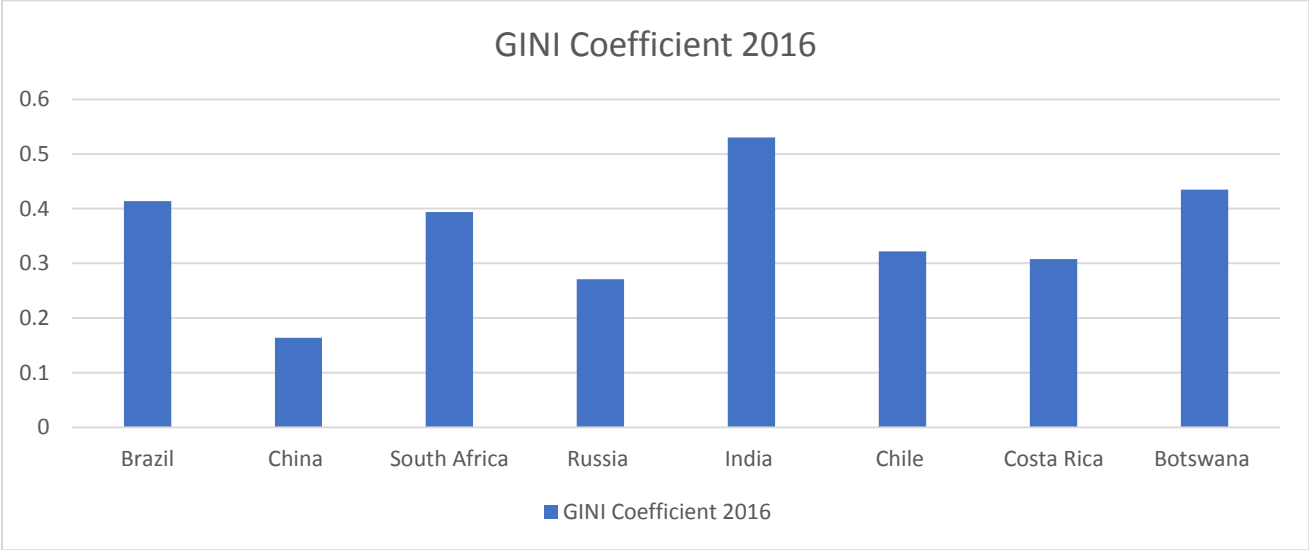
The SDGs are used as a framework to analyze the sustainability bloc. The SDGs outline socio-political issues that should be prioritized in terms of the global developmental agenda. Some of these goals include, the eradication of poverty, access to good healthcare, education, gender quality as well as peace, justice and strong institutions. These indicators are considered in the composition of the Sustainability Bloc.

According to the World Bank (2017) Costa Rica's political stability, and steady economic growth have contributed to the country recording the lowest poverty rate in Latin America. This is illustrated by a reduction in poverty from 22.3 to 20.5% from 2014-2016. This is indicative of the overall strong human development indicators displayed by the Central American country. Costa Rica, completely discontinued its military and redirected the funds previously allocated to the military to health, education and pensions. It is considered world leader when it comes to environmental protection and governance. As it stands, 99% of electricity production within the country is generated from renewable energy as the country aspires to become a carbon neutral society (Happy Planet Index 2016).

According to the OECD Better Life Index (2016) 87.3% of Chileans have attained secondary education. Furthermore, life expectancy is 79 years, which is relatively high compared to other developing countries. It is said that 71% of citizens are satisfied with the quality of local water, which is reflective of and contributory to environmental sustainability. According the Happy Planet Index, (2016) Chile is ranked 35th out of 140 countries that form part of the index. The South American country ranks high in the following categories, life expectancy, wellbeing as well as inequality and lags in the ecological footprint category (102 out of 140 countries).

The long-term objective adopted by the government of Chile is to transform Chile into a country void of poverty and that displays high levels of economic prosperity and human development. This aligns with the SDGs that have framed the global developmental agenda. Chile has strong indicators of progress in terms of economic freedom, democracy and rule of law. According to the Happy Planet Index (2016) Chilean people are among the happiest in the world.

Figure 11- Gini Coefficient 2016 – BRICS and Sustainability Bloc



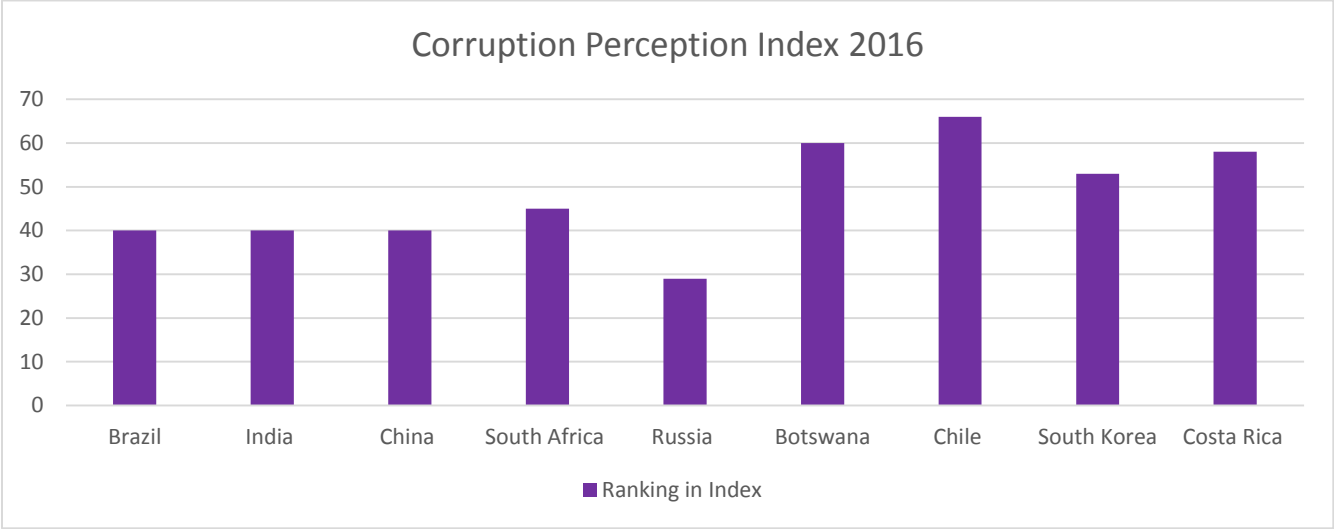
Source: United Nations Development Programme: Human Development Reports 2016 (DATA)

The steady increase in human development, decreasing rates of poverty and inequality and strong democratic institutions are some of the gains that have been recorded in Chile. Although the South American country fares well in various sectors, inequality remains persistently high within society. In response to this challenge, the country has taken a concerted effort to reduce the education gap. This is evident in the steady increase of enrollments into higher education (200 000 in 1985 – one million in 2013) (Larroulet 2013).

South Korea is ranked 18th out of a total of 188 countries in 2016 Human Development Index. The country displays positive indicators for gender equality and representation, illustrated by its positioning in the Gender Inequality Index, that places the country 10th out of a total of 159 countries. Efforts at reducing gender inequality are observed in the continued effort to have female representation in various sectors, for example 16.3% of seats in parliament are filled by female parliamentarians. Efforts at improving gender representation, which is a SDG, are observed in the 88.8% of adult females that have completed their secondary education (Human Development Report: 2016).

In terms of institutional strength and governance, Botswana fares very well and this is evident in various indexes. Botswana ranks high in indexes such as the Transparency International - Corruption Perception Index, Ibrahim Index of African Governance and the World Bank's Going Business Report (Hanson 2004). This is informed by the stability of its democratic institutions, the openness of its political system and the infrequency of public demonstrations that turn violent. The government has created an environment conducive for sustainable economic growth, through carefully crafted policies and deliberate social redistributive initiatives. Furthermore, the country has realized that natural resources are not an infinite resource and have started planning for a future without minerals (Lewin 2011: 81). Botswana has adopted a more sustainable developmental trajectory than that adopted by other fast growing and relatively large African economies.

Figure 12 - Corruption Perception Index 2016: BRICS and Sustainability Bloc



Source: Transparency International. 2016 (DATA)

All the countries identified to form part of the sustainability bloc, perform better than all the BRICS countries in terms of corruption perception. Botswana and Chile are particularly top performers in terms corruption perception (Transparency International 2016). Botswana has transformed from being one of the poorest countries in the world at independence in 1966 to an upper middle income status countries in the mid 1990s. This can be attributed to the discovery of diamonds that are the bedrock of the economy. The countries developmental agenda is informed by five pillars, that include; sustainable environment, rapid economic growth, economic independence and social justice. These pillars align well with the SDGs. Botswana is ranked 62nd in terms of the Social Progress Index and 79th in the Environmental Performance Index. Botswana, comes in slightly behind South Africa which is ranked 59th in the Social Progress and is slightly ahead in terms of Environmental Performance Index (Social Progress Index and Environmental Performance index 2016).

4.6.2 Environmental Sustainability

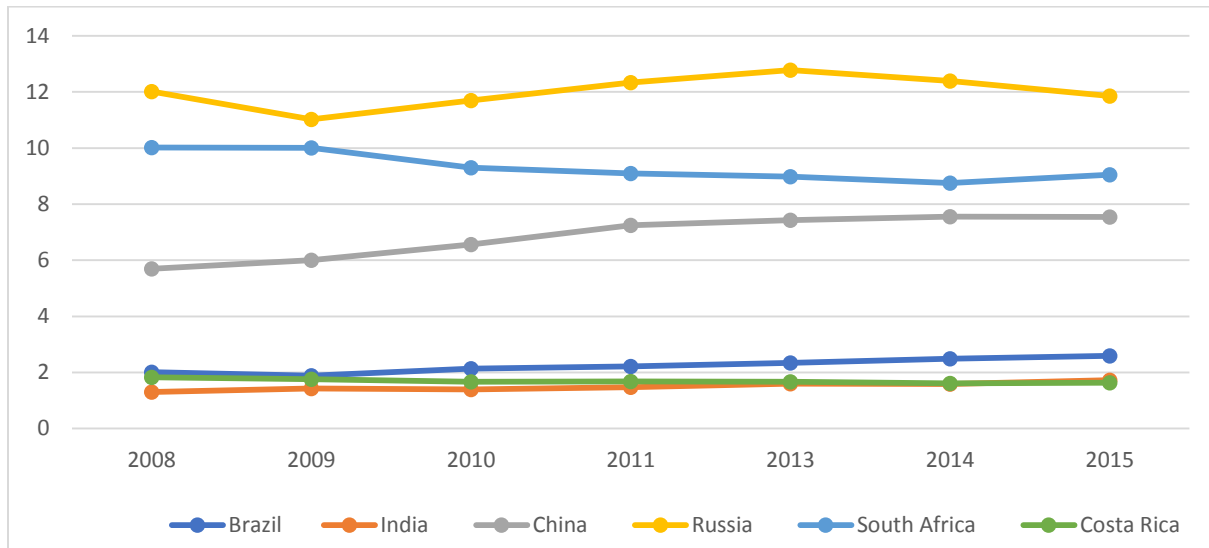
With respect to environmental sustainability, there is tension between the preservation of the natural environment and economic growth. Environmental protection forms part of the SDG agenda, highlighting issues such as climate change, access to clean water and sanitation, as well as biodiversity. In an effort to balance environmental protection and economic growth

many states have adopted 'green growth' this is; economic growth that also considers the environmental impact. Therefore, in the selection of countries that form part of the sustainability bloc, it is important to consider the environmental impact and performance of selected countries.

Costa Rica is considered world leader when it comes to environmental protection and governance. As it stands, 99% of electricity production within the country is generated from renewable energy as the country aspires to become a carbon neutral society (Happy Planet Index 2016). The Central American country has adopted a green approach to economic growth, which means that growth is predominately driven by the effective use and management of natural resources and the mitigation of pollution. The central premise of green growth is the effective use and management of natural resources and the minimization of pollution are compatible with economic growth. This analysis considers broad social and environmental performance beyond GDP growth.

Costa Rica records much lower rates of CO₂ emissions than most of the BRICS countries. Costa Rica is considered a world leader when it comes to environmental protection, ranking highly on various indexes such as the Happy Planet Index. According to Fioramonti (2015) Costa Rica produces 99% of its energy from renewable sources and has a carbon footprint that equates to one third to that of the United States of America. Costa Rica has adopted a green approach to economic growth, which means that growth is predominately driven by the effective use and management of natural resources and the mitigation of pollution. The central premise of green growth is the effective use and management of natural resources and the minimization of pollution compatible with economic growth. This analysis considers broad social and environmental performance beyond GDP growth.

Figure 13 - CO2 Emissions in BRICS and Costa Rica (Metric tons per capita) 2008- 2014



Source: World Bank 2017 (Data)

In a “post GDP era”, countries located in Asia are under-performers with respect to environmental and social indicators. Countries such as China India and Russia are cited as chronic underperformers despite their continued GDP strength. South Korea is considered a continental leader in terms of post- GDP indicators. It has enshrined sustainable development in its national policy strategy. This is illustrated by how the country invested 80% of fiscal stimulus to clean and sustainable development. This has also aided the country in its early recovery from the effects of the 2008 financial crisis (Fioramonti 2017: 178).

Although South Korea is a growing leader in sustainable green growth, the country has doubled its greenhouse gas emissions from 1990-2005. This, along with the growing importance of environmental sustainability on the global agenda has pushed the government to invest in green growth initiatives, these initiatives form part of the national developmental strategy. In 2009, the government planned to invest 85 billion USD, in clean energy technologies and implementing its green growth plan which has also resulted into a job creation mechanism.

The emphasis on environmental sustainability is credited for Korea's early recovering from the global economic crisis- indicative of the link between economic growth and the environment. A case in is the construction of Songdo, which is smart city, that is built up rather than out. The aim of this city is to reduce the cost of construction, pollution and wasted energy using recycled grey water, the promotion of shared car and bike facilities as well as buses powered by renewable energy (Dollesin 2012).

Chile is ranked 52nd in the Environmental Performance Index. The county's strong economic growth has resulted in environmental pressures that have pushed the government of Chile to strengthen environmental policies as well as infrastructure. Chile's has doubled the energy production that it derives from renewable resources since 2000. In fact, renewable energy accounts for 32% of energy supply in Chile. Furthermore, Chile has implemented pollution prevention and decontamination plans are the main instrument for the air management and have helped reduce air pollution (OECD 2016).

In Botswana, the tourism industry is reliant on biodiversity. The country struggles with an array of environmental challenges that can be attributed to climate change. These issues include prolonged drought, crop failure and water shortages. This means that Botswana has had to pay closer attention to the effects of climate change. This has resulted in the adoption of initiatives such as the 'Low carbon development pathway' and the grassroots green fund, that promote the protection of the environment and sustainable development (UNDP in Botswana 2012). As a result of the realisation of the need to pay closer attention to sustainable development the government of Botswana, supported by nine African countries, spearheaded the Gaborone Declaration for Sustainable Development. As an African-led initiative geared towards sustainable development on the continent, the declaration aims to ensure that the contributions of natural capital to sustainable economic growth, maintenance and improvement of social capital and human well-being are quantified and integrated into development and business practice (Gaborone Declaration 2012).

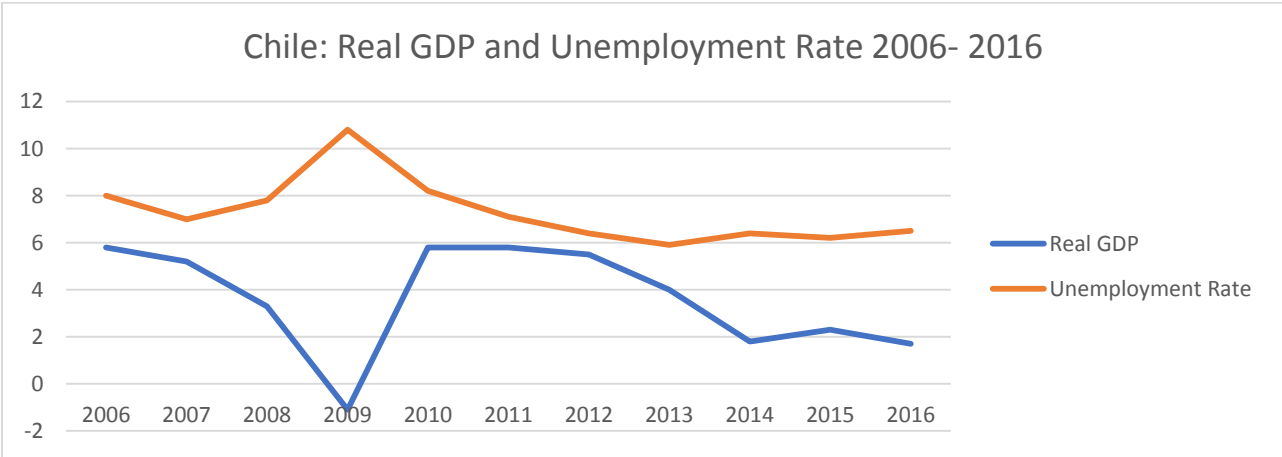
4.6.3 Economic Sustainability

The economy of Costa Rica has been built on investment in human capital, environmental sustainability and political stability. The country has invested in social development. The choice to invest in healthcare and education has reinforced social gains within the country. As a result, its citizens are equipped with the skills needed for the rapidly expanding manufacturing and service sectors. Natural Capital investment through protection of forests and biodiversity has benefited the eco-tourism industry which is the backbone of the county's economy.

Costa Rica has a strong track record of environmental sustainability illustrated protecting forests and biodiversity. Export led economic growth coupled with high levels of foreign direct investment have resulted in generous social service provision.

Costa Rica as adopted a green approach to economic growth, which means that growth is predominately driven by the effective use and management of natural resources and the mitigation of pollution. The central premise of green growth is the effective use and management of natural resources and the minimization of pollution are compatible with economic growth. This analysis considers broad social and environmental performance beyond GDP growth.

Figure 14 - Chile: Real GDP and Unemployment Rate 2006-2011



Source: IMF World Economic Outlook 2016 (Data)

Despite the decrease in GDP from 6.1 in 2011- 1.6 in 2016, rates of unemployment have remained relatively stable as a result of increasing initiatives that support self-employment in response to stagnating wage employment (World Bank 2017). This speaks to the post-GDP perspective adopted by the SGD developmental agenda that looks beyond GDP growth but rather considers more sustainable indicators such as access to decent work and industrial innovation. Chile, is expected to become a developed country in years to come however, there are a few problems that need to be addressed. These include skewed income distribution, over populated urban areas accompanied by their associated social and economic implications (Griffen et al 2008: 72).

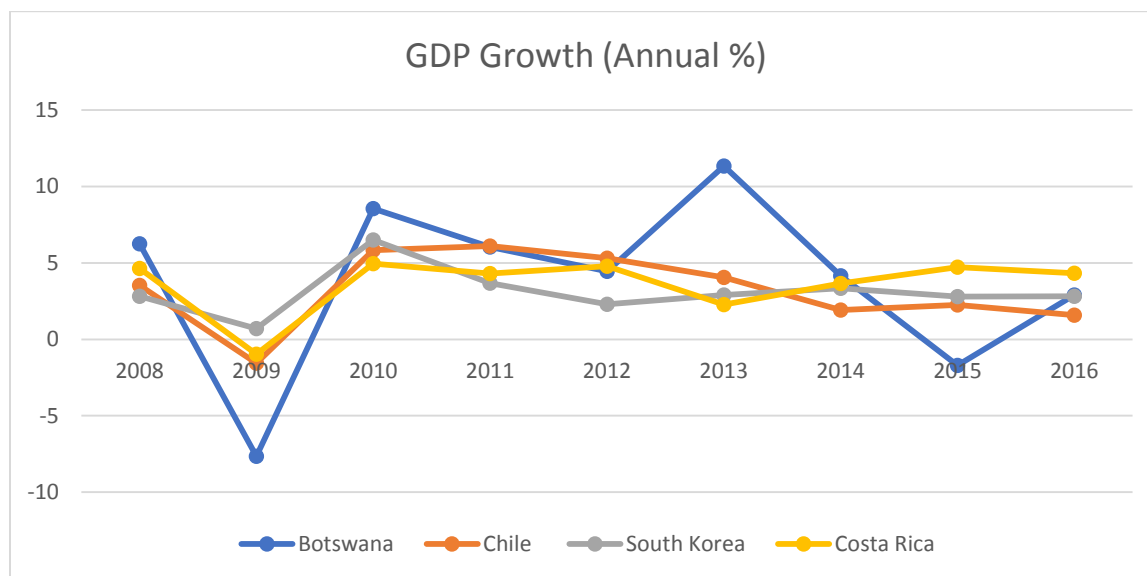
In terms of the Asian region South Korea has been identified to form part of the bloc. South Korea has been identified as a growing and influential emerging market and forms part of other emerging alliances such as MIST and the N-11. However, its inclusion in other alternative emerging alliances has been largely due to the GDP and growth orientated perspectives to progress and development that these alliances are founded upon. South Korea is ranked 26th out of a total of 128 countries in the Social Progress Index. South Korea has displayed improving and better quality of life through infrastructure development, industrialization and economic development and new and innovative environmental governance approaches. According to the World Bank (2012) South Korea has adopted “low carbon and green growth” as its economic development philosophy. South Korea’s commitment to environmental sustainability is displayed by the inclusion of a green approach to economic development in the nations national development strategy. Interestingly, South Korea ranks 26th in the Basic Human Needs category, but is ranked 54th in freedom of express and slipping the broad category looking opportunity.

Botswana is an upper middle income country that has been touted as one of Africa’s success stories. The Southern African country has had relative economic and political stability since independence. Despite its economic and political stability, this southern African country is faced with various challenges including unemployment, migration and a high HIV infection rate. Botswana is a diamond rich country; this resource abundance has been accompanied by carefully planned policies to manage the commodity. The government owns 50% of the only

mining company in the country and profits are redirected into social development (Hanson 2004). This approach to redistribution has benefited both the private sector as well as the people of Botswana as the people share in the wealth generated by the mining industry, which is the backbone of the economy.

Botswana's economy is characterized as one of the most successful in the world. Despite being one of the poorest countries in the world at independence, this was turned around through carefully planned policies, good governance and effective redistribution. Botswana has achieved noticeable rates of development post-independence and is now considered a middle-income country alongside countries such as Chile and Argentina. Progress and development in the Sub-Saharan country have been observed in shrinking dependency on international development assistance, an increase in life expectancy, and improvements in infrastructure development, education and poverty rates (Lewin 2011: 81).

Figure 15 - GDP Growth (Annual%) Sustainability Bloc 2008-2016



Source: The World Bank 2016 (Data)

According to (Lewin 2011: 81) Botswana's extraordinary economic growth was facilitated by the diamond mining sector. The discovery of natural resources in developing countries has not always resulted in economic prosperity and growth. This is evident in countries such as the

Democratic Republic of Congo, Serra Leone, and Zambia that have had to deal with various challenges that have surfaced as a result of their abundance in natural resources. As observed in other resource-rich countries, mineral-based economies are susceptible to bad governance and perpetual instability. The ethnic homogeneity of the population of Botswana means that the country has been less prone to ethnic polarization which has been a major problem in many African countries in terms of governance and leadership, especially those that are abundant in natural resources (Lewin 2011:81).

4.7 Conclusion

Several alternative alliances have been created in relation to the BRICS. Many of these groupings have been formed to somewhat challenge or rival the BRICS. However, many of these groups have not had the same impact and influence as that had by the BRICS in the international system. These include groupings such as MINT/MIST, the CIVETS countries as well as the Next 11. These groupings were created by investment banks and financial institutions that identified them as opportune destinations for investment, thus placing great emphasis on economic factors while negating the social and environmental wellbeing of these nations.

This chapter challenged the centrality of economic factors in the creation of emerging power blocs by consulting various indexes, mainly the Social Progress Index and the Environmental Performance Index. The objective was to highlight the two other spheres of sustainability (social and environmental) rather than the dominant economic growth-focused approach that has been employed in the constitution of other emerging alliances. Interestingly, the performance of the BRICS bloc in these indexes that focused more on social wellbeing and environmental sustainability was unsatisfactory with many of them struggling in the Environmental Performance Index. This is confirmation that the preoccupation with growth does not necessarily translate in social progress, development or environmental sustainability.

In the last section of the chapter a sustainability bloc is proposed. This was informed by the results of the Social Progress Index and the Environmental Performance Index. The countries

that are identified are from different regions. These include South and Central America, Sub-Saharan Africa as well as Asia.

The bloc is made up of countries such as Costa Rica which is a leading nation in the discourse on sustainability, topping several indexes that speak to wellbeing such as the Happy Planet Index. Chile has also been included on the basis of its strong performance in the Social Progress Index, displaying social indicators in sectors such as education. South Korea is a front runner that has remained cognizant of the delicate and necessary balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability. Botswana is the only sub-Saharan nation included in the bloc. Despite its dependence of the extractive sector for economic growth and progress, Botswana has effectively redirected the proceeds of its mining industry into social welfare to the benefit of its citizens.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BRICS AND ALTERNATIVE EMERGING ALLIANCES AT THE CROSSROAD OF SUSTAINABILITY- AN EVALUATION

“If ever there was a controversial icon from the statistics world, GDP is it. It measures income, but not equality, it measures growth, but not destruction, and it ignores values like social cohesion and the environment. Yet, governments, businesses and probably most people swear by it.” - François Lequiller

5.1 Introduction

The BRICS have grown in influence and relevance over the past couple of years. This has resulted in a growing belief that they could be the future leaders of the international community. The objective of the study was to investigate the sustainability of the BRICS countries by questioning whether these countries are sustainable enough to lead in international affairs. The outcome of sustainability assessment of the BRICS countries resulted in the creation of an alternative bloc rooted in sustainability, this group of states is proposed as a Sustainability Bloc that display better sustainability indicators (social, economic and environmental) than those observed in the BRICS countries. In concluding this study, this chapter offers an overview the main findings as well as the limitations thereof. Furthermore, this concluding chapter will outline some ideas for future research and investigation. In the final section of this chapter recommendations are suggested.

5.2 Overview of Findings

The first chapter outlined the research question (s) of the study. This study was driven by two research questions: 1) Are the BRICS economically, socially and environmentally sustainable enough to lead in international affairs, especially against the backdrop of the SDGs? 2) Besides the BRICS, what other countries could be economically, socially and environmentally enough to provide alternative leadership in the 21st century?

The study focused on the relationship between sustainability and leadership, as it emerges from the SDG discourse. Historically, sustainability has been conceptualized as having three critical dimensions: environmental, social and economic, as described in the Brundtland Report of 1986 (UN World Commission on Environment and Development). Thus, a focus on sustainability requires moving beyond indicators such as the gross domestic product (GDP) to embrace new thinking about social progress and development.

The second chapter outlined the analytical framework of the study and clarified important concepts that formed an integral part of the study. These concepts include, sustainability and sustainable development, MDGs and SDGs, BRICS and emerging powers, leadership and governance. This chapter made some pertinent linkages between concepts and the way they manifest in the international system. The global governance environment has increasingly prioritized sustainable and inclusive economic growth, that considers both the environmental and social impacts of economic activities and translate in economic growth and development. If a state or a group of states such as the BRICS endeavour to lead in the international system they need to display leadership capabilities but also need to fit into the global development agenda, that has placed sustainability in the form of the MDGs and now the SDGs as the foundational requirement of development.

The third chapter unpacked sustainability in the respective BRICS countries using the SDGs as a framework. For this study, the SDGs have been segmented into three to resemble the three pillars of sustainability. In terms of economic sustainability, the SDGs identify decent work and economic growth as well as industrial innovation and infrastructure development as priority areas. Chapter three concluded that, in relation to the BRICS countries such as South Africa have struggled particularly with unemployment as 52.5% of the youth remain unemployed. In terms of economic growth all the BRICS have shown signs of decline however, countries such as Brazil, Russia and South Africa have reached concerning levels of economic recession over the last couple of years. This brings into question the economic outlook of these countries, which was foundational in the creation of this bloc.

The second pillar of sustainability discussed in the third chapter of the study is social sustainability. Issues such as the need to end poverty, the eradication of hunger, access to healthcare and education as well as gender equality are all captured in the SDGs. The goal to end hunger and poverty is recorded in the progress made by countries such as South Africa and Russia in their respective Post-Apartheid and Post- Soviet existence. All the BRICS have struggled to balance the disparity between rural and urban facilities especially in the context of access to healthcare. Countries such as South Africa and Brazil have struggled with turbulence, instability and poor performance regarding education. In South Africa, this manifested as #FeesMustFall and national call for free education, whereas in Brazil challenges manifest as inequality and ring-fenced access entrenched by private education. Gender equality is a SDG that is more specific than the general understanding of inequality, in the BRICS a country that particularly struggles with this and other forms of inequality is India. Some authors have attributed entrenched inequalities to caste system.

Environmental sustainability is expressed by the following SDG's; access to clean water, sanitation, protection of life under water and life on land, combating climate change is also a priority under this pillar. In terms of the BRICS, countries such as China and India have been categorized as mega polluters and struggle particularly with water and air pollution, Russia has also recorded alarming rates of water pollution. It is interesting to note that in India half of the pollution practice open defecation illustrative to poor sanitation. Brazil's ethanol industry has ironically contributed to other environmental problems such as deforestation to make way for millions of hectares of sugar cane plantations.

Considering, the challenges and shortfalls displayed by the BRICS in terms of economic, social and environmental sustainability. It has become evident that these countries struggle with sustainability as it is expressed by the SDGs even in areas such as economic sustainability that initially brought them together. This therefore begs the question, if these countries continue to struggle with their internal challenges as unpacked in their respective countries are they then able to render leadership on an international scale?

The fourth chapter challenged the centrality of economic factors in the creation of emerging power blocs by consulting various indexes, mainly the Social Progress Index and the Environmental Performance Index. The objective was to highlight the two other spheres of sustainability (social and environmental) rather than the dominant economic growth-focused approach that has been employed in the constitution of other emerging alliances. Interestingly, the performance of the BRICS bloc in these indexes that focused more on social wellbeing and environmental sustainability was mediocre with many of them struggling in the Environmental Performance Index. This is confirmation that the preoccupation with economic growth does not necessarily translate in social progress, development or environmental sustainability.

In the last section of the chapter a Sustainability Bloc is proposed. This was informed by the results of the Social Progress Index and the Environmental Performance Index. The countries that are identified are from different regions. These include South and Central America, Sub-Saharan Africa as well as Asia. The bloc is made up of countries such as Costa Rica which is a leading nation in the discourse on sustainability, topping several indexes that speak to wellbeing such as the Happy Planet Index. Chile has also been included on the basis of its strong performance in the Social Progress Index. In terms of sustainability, South Korea is a front runner that has remained cognizant of the delicate and necessary balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability. Botswana is the only sub-Saharan nation to be included in the bloc, despite its dependence of the extractive sector for economic growth and progress, Botswana has effectively redirected proceeds of its mining industry into social welfare to the benefit of its citizens.

5.3 Areas of Future Study

The work done on alternative emerging alliances is limited, this is evident in the economic focus on these formations. Alternative alliances like the MINT/MIST, CIVETS and BRICS have all been created by investment firms as groupings of countries that have investment potential. In the creation of these groupings, very little consideration was taken regarding the socio-political and environmental situation in the identified countries; this has implications for the long-term sustainability of these countries as well as their long term economic outlook. It is

therefore important to note the economic cost of unsustainable socio-political and environmental indicators. Further research is needed in the area of alternative emerging alliances beyond their narrow economic convergence. This can be achieved by investigating how a negation of other indicators of sustainability impact of their longevity, impact and sustainability of these alliances and the individual countries that form part of these alliances.

An additional area that requires further study would be the link, if any, between sustainable development and leadership in global affairs. The global developmental agenda is rooted in the millennium developing goals and later the sustainable development goal. Initially the MGDs were primarily focused on less developed and developing countries, however the SDGs have focused on a wider range of countries. Therefore, an area for further study would be the link between sustainable development and leadership. Emerging power blocs such as the BRICS have been identified as the future leaders in international affairs; how does their sustainability contribute to their leadership capacity?

A definite area of future study is the proposed sustainability bloc. The sustainability bloc proposed in this study is developed using alternative indicators to those used to develop other alternative alliances. The bloc departs from the dominant economic basis for the creation of other emerging alliances. This bloc is rooted in socio-political and environmental indicators of sustainability. This allows for a more multidimensional approach in the formation of such blocs. Further research can be conducted with respect to the formulation of alternative emerging blocs and how other indicators (social and environmental) are neglected in their formation. This would be particularly interesting as such research would offer insight into how these blocs are created and their ability for effective cooperation. Importantly, the creation of bloc such as the BRICS, that have been brought together based on their economics may struggle in terms of other spheres of sustainability and this will have a long-term effect on the internal stability of these countries. It is therefore important to adopt a holistic and long-term approach. Further research needs to be conducted into countries such as Chile and Costa Rica, that are economically stable but also fare well in terms of socio-political and environmental indicators, this is illustrated by the overall rates of wellbeing in these countries. A country such a Botswana that has also been included in the bloc, due to its ability to maintain relative

economic growth, based on an extractive industry, has managed to sustain economic growth while investing in social welfare.

It may be beneficial to further investigate countries such as Botswana, Chile, Costa Rica and South Korea in order to determine whether a consideration of economic, socio-political and environmental factors could result in a sustainability bloc that has more longevity than already established emerging power blocs. These countries have displayed interesting trends in relation to sustainability and green economic growth. Further research into the developmental approaches adopted by these countries could unveil valuable lessons necessary to guide other developing and emerging countries. This will offer an alternative to the BRICS that have shown that they struggle with green approaches to economic growth and, other aspects of sustainability outlined by the SDGs.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this study manifested in the selection of indicators, the definition of sustainability identifies three spheres these include the social, economic as well and environmental. Linking the SDGs to the multidimensional definition of sustainable development. The analytical framework of the study founded in the SDGs and the multidimensional definition of sustainable development. A limitation of the study is sufficiently linking the three spheres of sustainable development to the SDGs and incorporating the SDGs as indicators of sustainable development.

An additional limitation of the study is maintaining consistency is the analysis of the respective BRICS countries. This manifested in an imbalance in how some countries were analyzed in comparison to other countries. Some countries have more accessible data than others resulting, in an imbalanced account of some countries in comparison to others. This was also a limitation with respect to the sustainability bloc, some countries display strong indicators in some sectors; this also resulted in an imbalance in the analysis on certain countries.

In constituting the sustainability bloc there are some limitations that can be identified. The creation of this bloc is founded in the use of two indexes that focus on the two spheres of sustainability that are often neglected in the creation of alternative emerging alliances, namely social and environmental sustainability. A significant limitation of this approach is the use of two indexes as this limits the ability of the researcher to cross reference and compare how the selected countries perform in other indexes.

5.5 Conclusion and Recommendations

It is evident that the BRICS find themselves at a crossroad in sustainability, in their efforts to become global leaders. They have been identified as the future leaders of the international system, however the growing influence and significance of the SDGs and the global developmental agenda has raised new questions in relation to the leadership aspirations of this grouping of states. The point of departure of the study was to question whether the BRICS countries are sustainable enough to lead in international affairs. Using the SDGs as an analytical framework, the BRICS clearly struggle in terms of sustainability (economic, social and environmental indicators). The study proposed an alternative bloc to the BRICS and other alternative emerging alliances. The Sustainability Bloc is a reaction to the BRICS and other alternative emerging alliances, that are have been created using the narrow economic indicators as the basis of their formation. The sustainability bloc focuses on the two other spheres of sustainability that are often neglected in the creation of alternative emerging alliances.

It has become evident in recent years that the BRICS have started to show significant signs of economic decline; this is the basis upon which these countries were brought together. Countries such South Africa, Brazil and Russia have all entered economic recession while China struggles to maintain double digit economic growth. It is evident that BRICS was created as an economic bloc that has grown in its scope and areas of cooperation. However, if this grouping seeks to sustain itself in the long-term there is a need for the member states to invest in social and environmental sectors.

The BRICS and other emerging alliances need to further invest in their internal stability. The challenges that present within their sociopolitical and environmental contexts do not only hinder their progress and development but also hampers their leadership aspirations. In the context of the global developmental agenda framed by sustainable development and the SDGs. The study has illustrated the shortcomings of the BRICS in their collective aspiration to attaining hegemonic status, this can be seen through their consistent underperformance in relation to their collective and individual structural power. Member states of the BRICS should be at the forefront of promoting and advocating holistic development and progress, rather than unsustainable, growth centered approaches that they are hinged on. There is therefore a need for these countries to place more of a focus on the SDGs in their domestic policies, and to cooperate as a bloc on the promotion and attainment of sustainable development, with the SDGs in view.

The BRICS should learn from the countries included in the Sustainability Bloc. Countries such as Costa Rica have placed the protection of the environment and eco-tourism at the core of the economy, while Botswana has adopted a redistributive approach to regulating its profitable regulated mining industry, to the benefit of its citizens. It is recommended that the BRICS countries strongly consider their sustainability across all three spheres of sustainability and devise actionable interventions to deal with their lagging performance. There should be a careful consideration of the SDGs in the formulation and implementation of policy within the respective BRICS countries. Lessons can be learned from countries such as those included in the Sustainability Bloc.

The Sustainability Bloc has displayed better socio-political indicators than rates recorded in the BRICS. In keeping with the lessons that can be learned by the BRICS from the Sustainability Bloc, focus should be placed on socio-political issues such as inequality, unemployment, and corruption. This can be achieved through a reconsideration of the economic growth model adopted by these countries as well as through the implementation of better governance models. The BRICS have been considered status-quo beneficiaries that have benefited from the current system therefore bringing into question their real desire to transform the system. Whereas countries that have been selected to form part of the Sustainability Bloc have

adopted innovative approaches to economic growth that translate in the benefit of their citizens.

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