

## ARTIGOS DOSSIÊ

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### Developing BRICS+ Digital Technologies: the Russian contribution in the field of scientific and educational diplomacy

#### ABSTRACT:

The According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the world is going through a 'fifth technological revolution'. Digitalization, artificial intelligence, cognitive research, neurotechnology and cryptocurrencies have radically changed the very nature of international relations and world politics. In these conditions, the countries of the World Majority are faced with the questions of how to ensure economic and technological sovereignty and formulate a development policy in the context of global high-tech inequality. This issue is particularly clearly visible in the agenda of BRICS+, a global association whose values, include inclusiveness and advancement based on scientific achievements, equality, progress and sustainable development. The Russian Federation, as one of the member countries of the association, is among the international actors advocating for technological sovereignty and its protection, as well as equal access to modern technologies. BRICS+ has the potential to become a leading platform for sharing innovations, especially in science and education. Russia is capable of making a significant contribution in these areas since it is known worldwide for its fundamental science, traditions of preparing highly qualified personnel and educational system. Moreover, in recent years the country has acquired unique experience and its own domestic producers interested in distributing their products and services. Russia is able to offer BRICS+ members a transfer of a number of high-tech and promising initiatives in the field of science and education, which are designed to strengthen the positions of states in the international arena and prepare them for all sorts of risks and threats.

**Keywords:** BRICS+; Digital technologies; Technological revolution; Science; Education

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## INTRODUCTION

The trend towards the increasingly active use of digital technologies in public life is one of the current subjects of modern scientific research. Today, the global economy is undergoing large-scale transformations: weakening globalization, fragmentation of markets, redistribution of capital and changes in trade flows. In these conditions, issues of economic and technological sovereignty come to the fore. In these conditions, digitalization, artificial intelligence, cognitive research, nanotechnology, aerospace industry, cryptocurrencies, peaceful and military nuclear technologies, renewable energy sources, etc. deserve special attention. All of them together have radically changed not only economic and social structures, but also the very nature of international relations and world politics.

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report on technology and innovation for 2025 (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, p. 3-8), global technological inequality continues to grow in the world. Thus, by 2033, artificial intelligence (AI) will occupy up to 30% of the entire technology market (about \$4.8 trillion). However, almost all control over this segment is already concentrated in the hands of a limited number of players - mainly in the United States and China. This

led to the emergence of the whole term 'Data metropolis', denoting the existence of digital monopolists. They supply countries with technologies and equipment for the digitalization of public administration and the economy. As a result, a situation arises in which the work of key government agencies is carried out on the basis of hidden code and embedded technologies that only the digital metropolis knows about (Fedorchenko, 2016).

UNCTAD calls the current events the '*fifth technological revolution*', pointing out that the global community can actually observe a redistribution of power in the digital space. In conditions when algorithms are beginning to determine the rules of the game in the economy, defense and education, the lack of an independent technological base threatens strategic vulnerability. This is especially critical for the countries of the Global Majority. The report notes that 118 countries, mainly countries of the Global South, practically do not participate in international discussions on AI and do not have access to computing resources, which creates a threat of their digital isolation. Technological rivalry between the United States and China in the space of the Global South is realized in sectors of the digital economy, including the development of fifth-generation (5G) technologies and communication infrastructure, the development of artificial intelligence technologies and the development of cloud computing.

This situation gives rise to forecasts about the prospects for fragmentation of the world into technoeconomic blocs.

In many ways, this applies not only to AI: such areas as space exploration, the study of peaceful atoms, neurotechnology are beyond the reach of most countries in the world. Digital inequalities have been exposed to extreme levels during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in some of the world's least developed countries, in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, 6% of households had access to online lessons for their children, while only 1% of children had access to e-learning (McKinsey & Company, 2022). And this is in a situation where experts promise that new digital technologies will transform the global labor market. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization report (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2023), revolutionary technological advances could have an unprecedented impact on it, and by the middle of the 21st century, new jobs in the formal sector of the economy could effectively disappear.

This issue is particularly clearly visible in the agenda of an association such as BRICS+, whose values from the very moment of its inception include inclusiveness, development based on scientific achievements, equality, progress and sustainable development (Barabanov, p. 64). Moreover, today the countries participating in

this global platform are focused not only on the development of new scientific and technological capabilities, but also on the development of uniform rules and approaches to their management. Thus, BRICS+ plans to adopt a joint declaration on the governance of artificial intelligence at the summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on July 6–7, 2025. This fact testifies not only to the relevance of developing such documents, but also to the desire and readiness of various states and regions to take the most direct part in these processes, thereby representing the interests of the majority of the world's population. In these conditions, the efforts of the Russian Federation, which is ready to share its knowledge, technologies and human capital with countries that are interested in this and have friendly positions towards Russia, deserve special analysis and attention.

Russia is among the countries that advocate technological sovereignty and its protection, as well as the active implementation of modern digital capabilities. The key task for the country is not just to use such systems and devices, but to create its own ecosystem – from chips and models to strategies and programs for their use. Otherwise, the risks of losing independence in the digital sphere will only grow. The key doctrinal document of the Russian Federation – the Concept of Russian Foreign Policy 2023 – specifies as one of the priorities of foreign policy is (The Foreign Policy Concept

of the Russian Federation, 2023):

...to ensure fair access for all states to the benefits of the global economy and the international division of labor, as well as to modern technologies in the interests of fair and equitable development (including solving the problems of global energy and food security).

The principle of fairness in the distribution of technology is one of the key dogmas promoted by the country in the international arena. Speaking at the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2025 (SPIEF-2025), Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasized (TASS (a), 2025), that positive technological changes should be widespread, bringing benefits and advantages to all countries and regions. It is important to note that in this study, the term 'technology transfer' is understood as the successful application and adaptation of a wide variety of technologies through export to other countries or regions.

Digital technologies act as two elements: on the one hand, their transfer is a certain tool, with the help of which borders and long distances between countries and people are erased, thereby transforming borders into a certain convention and creating a common, for example, scientific or educational community; on the other hand, digital technologies can become a conductor for the development of humanitarian diplomacy. This type of

diplomacy includes the implementation of projects designed to improve the well-being of ordinary citizens. Russia is traditionally known in the world for its fundamental science, traditions of training highly qualified personnel and education system. Today, the country is able to offer BRICS+ member countries a transfer of a number of high-tech and promising initiatives covering various segments of the population and spheres of activity. This seems especially relevant for such areas of humanitarian cooperation as science and education. These areas of interaction not only reflect the common values and ideals of the BRICS+ community, but also directly influence the sustainable development of the participating countries. Digitalization of science and education contributes to the continuity of their development and is a factor in the sustainable economic development of society (Vlasova, Shamatonova, 2024).

Russia is actively investing in innovation, research and development (R&D) and the introduction of digital platforms into scientific and educational projects through various systems of partnerships that bring together representatives of government agencies, research centers, universities and various social institutions (New Technologies in World Politics, 2025). The Concept of the Humanitarian Policy of the Russian Federation Abroad from 2022 positively assesses the role of modern digital technologies in promoting Russia's

humanitarian activities abroad, speaking primarily about the possibilities of the Internet (The Concept of the Humanitarian Policy of the Russian Federation Abroad, 2022). This includes access for citizens of other countries to remotely participate in various educational, scientific, social and cultural events held in Russia, acquire new skills, become imbued with the achievements of Russian culture and history, receive an education in Russian and improve their qualifications. The document separately emphasizes the specificity of the Russian position in the implementation of multilateral humanitarian cooperation in the fields of science and education. As noted, when implementing humanitarian policy, Russia attaches great importance to the development of common rules of cooperation, the exchange of advanced practices in organizing activities, the introduction of the best Russian experience abroad and the use of the best foreign experience to promote the improvement of humanitarian policy in Russia. Thus, the state emphasizes at the highest level the equal status of dialogue in the implementation of projects in the field of scientific and educational diplomacy. The range of interaction in this area for Russia is truly large.

Taking into consideration science and education, the key direction of the humanitarian policy of the Russian Federation abroad is to increase the competitiveness of Russian education, scientific research and development and their promo-

tion on the world market. The rapid development of the digital environment provides new opportunities for the development of this area, confirming its status as the most important factor in the transformation of key components of the modern system of science and education. Today, Russia pays primary attention to issues of digital education. Despite the lack of a single interpretation of this term, it is used quite broadly and implies types of educational activities, including training in the e-learning format, training using distance learning technologies, as well as training using information and electronic capabilities (Semenova, Smakkueva, Batdyeva, Chegemlieva, 2023). For example, the possibilities of generative artificial intelligence technologies, aimed primarily at personalizing the educational process based on Russian systems and programs and creating our own digital technology infrastructure, are of particular interest. Another area of application of artificial intelligence in Russian education is the personalization of the learning process, which involves the use of machine learning algorithms to analyze the level of knowledge and abilities of each schoolchild or student. This approach is intended to increase the effectiveness of the educational process and programs in the long term, and ensure the achievement of high indicators of knowledge quality. Universities and other educational institutions involved in the continuous

learning system are becoming a key element of the institutional environment as the basis for the country's innovative development and the formation of a knowledge economy on a national scale (Vlasova, Shamatonova, 2024).

E-Learning has become an important part of Russian education, which is emphasized primarily by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, leading Russian providers of e-learning products and services, and such major Russian companies as Severstal, VimpelCom, Rosgosstrakh, etc. In recent years, Russia has gained extensive experience in introducing digital technologies into the educational environment. The pandemic period has demonstrated the serious need to form a full-fledged digital ecosystem across the vast territory of Eurasia. However, this period was not the only moment that accelerated the development of domestic digital capabilities in the field of science and education. We should not forget about the existence of such a phenomenon as 'technological sanctions' (Danilin, 2022). In addition to Russia, also Iran, China and a number of other countries were forced to face them as well.

Western countries are trying in every way to limit the access of the World's Majority countries to a number of technologies in the energy, IT, education, science, healthcare and other areas. From this point of view, the Russian example is extremely indicative: the Russian case demonstrat-

ed how quickly and in a coordinated manner the countries of the 'collective West' can restrict access to their technologies and programs, even if they have been used for decades. Moreover, it is worth noting that the restriction of Russia's access to global software and platforms did not begin in 2022, but even before the start of the Special Military Operation in Ukraine. For example, in 2018, news began to appear about a ban on Russian government officials using the most popular fonts 'Times New Roman', 'Arial', 'Courier New' and others in their work activities (Egorov, 2018). All of them belong to the Monotype Imaging corporation, which refused to license its fonts for Russian programs due to anti-Russian sanctions. Since 2022, the pressure has certainly increased. In March 2024, Microsoft announced that it was blocking access to its cloud services in Russia. Now Russian companies are officially banned from using Office 365, OneDrive storage and other digital products (TASS, 2024). Another example is the blocking in the fall of 2022 of access to the platform of the American company Zoom, which was also used for educational and scientific purposes (IZVESTIYA, 2022). The owner restricted access to it by closing the option to pay for commercial licenses. In addition, Zoom disabled access to paid accounts for universities. This decision was certainly related to the tightening of sanctions pressure on the company.

Such conditions, of course, had an impact on decision-making centers, as well as the strategy for further development of science and education in Russia. In order to get out of the situation, the country began an accelerated transition to domestically produced software. In addition, over the past few years, domestic analogues of Zoom have already been presented by both large IT developers and startups that have recently announced themselves. Communication services are being developed by Yandex, MTS, Kontur, VK, Sber, TrueConf, IVA and others. Although free versions of Western products are still available, the audience of services in Russia is gradually decreasing, and their niche is being occupied by domestic products. Many universities and colleges are abandoning Microsoft products and using the My Office package. Domestic applications for video and conference calls have become more common: Sferum, TrueConf, Yandex.Telemost. Moreover, the Russian Federation's activity in the field of digitalization at all levels of education does not end there. A major breakthrough was the activity of IT holding T1, which completed the digitalization project of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations. Following successful testing, a partnership agreement was signed between the university and the company on the sidelines of SPIEF-2025 (RAMBLER (a), 2025). In just a few months, T1 implemented a mobile application for students, pro-

vided the university with a digital checklist, personnel electronic document management, and also re-created a system for assessing scientific potential and transferred educational processes for students from Zoom to the Russian DION service.

In recent years, Russia has accumulated extensive experience in the field of creating digital educational and scientific content, digital devices for learning, cloud technologies, educational networks for communication, and even digital gaming elements. As the country's official authorities have stated many times, Russia is ready to share its knowledge and capabilities with the BRICS+ member countries (TASS, 2021). Moreover, the association already has platforms that are fruitfully cooperating, through which scientific and educational ties have been established between the BRICS+ member countries. These include the BRICS Network University, the Association of BRICS Research and Educational Centers, and the BRICS University League. Thus, Russian universities conduct online advanced training courses, scientific conferences and round tables on the basis of the Network University, including the annual BRICS International School for students, young scientists, diplomats, international online competitions in information security in the CTF (Capture the flag) format, research in the field of environmental geochemistry, physics, chemistry and biology, advanced training programs on the issues of international coopera-

tion within the BRICS framework and modern research methods in international relations, and so on (RUDN UNIVERSITY, 2024). There is also a mechanism for regular consultations at the level of the ministries of education and science of the BRICS member countries. This platform allows for the coordination of various aspects of multilateral cooperation, including the intensification of the introduction of digital technologies in the educational process. Thus, on May 26, 2022, following the results of the ninth meeting of the BRICS education ministers, the parties agreed on the possibility of hosting online courses of the five countries on national platforms, including the Modern Digital Educational Environment system developed by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science (Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, 2022).

It is worth commenting separately on Russia's readiness to provide access to its scientific infrastructure facilities to the member countries of the association. For example, the initiative to create the BRICS Steering Committee in the field of science, technology and innovation and the BRICS GRAIN (BG) project belonged to the Russian Federation. BG is a platform that provides access to megascience projects for scientists from BRICS countries. It gives an opportunity to representatives from different countries to conduct research in the field of high technologies, nanotechnologies,

energy, astronomy and fundamental sciences. No less important direction is Russian scientific research, first of all, scientific digital periodicals. We will add that the Russian publishing house Nauka, which creates scientific journals, including in foreign languages, was one of the initiators of the BRICS Digital Resources project. It will provide researchers in more than twenty countries on three continents with access to Russian scientific digital publications (RAMBLER (b), 2025).

The rapid development of digital technologies creates the opportunity to implement and strengthen scientific and educational diplomacy through technology transfer. Not all countries have their own technological base to build different spheres of the economy and the system of state administration according to digital standards. They have to make a choice - whose equipment and technologies to acquire. This choice can determine the future contour of the international course of this country. Such a practice is quite often used by world leaders to compete with each other. A significant element is not only the supply of technologies, but also their subsequent maintenance. The issue of training personnel with the appropriate qualifications and knowledge is also quite acute in this agenda. The presence of joint educational network institutions, scientific programs and laboratories is designed not only to facilitate the process of exchange and transfer of

knowledge, but also to form an equally accessible and inclusive character for all countries. A study of the impact of digital technologies on Russia's scientific and educational agenda demonstrates that new technological opportunities open a new chapter in cooperation with BRICS+ countries. The Russian side is interested not only in the joint creation of digital technologies and systems, but also in their further implementation in the creation of other BRICS+ projects, which is intended to reduce vulnerability to analogues of Data metropolises and give impetus to the development of science in the countries of the association. A striking example is the 13th meeting of BRICS Ministers of Science, Technology and Innovation, held in Brazil in June 2025. As part of the event, Russia initiated the development of joint databases and scientometrics BRICS+ (TASS (b), 2025). The Russian side proposed creating such databases on medicine, genetics and materials science. At the same time, the Russian delegation raised the important issue of the dependence of scientists from BRICS+ countries on Western scientometric systems. Publications in international journals indexed by Western databases still remain one of the main criteria for assessing scientific work in a number of countries of the association. A possible solution to this situation is the creation of our own digital database and research with a list of publications approved by all BRICS+ countries. Active work in this direction is

already underway, but it will require coordinated actions by most countries.

For the Russian Federation, which today finds itself in a difficult international situation, one of the key priorities in the area of implementing strategic tasks of national development is the fullest possible use of the potential of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with friendly states that share the basic idea of building a polycentric world order. The Russian economy has demonstrated resilience to external pressure and continues to work actively on creating a modern scientific and technological cluster in the country. Artificial intelligence and quantum technologies are actively developing in the country, which is of great importance for science, economics, and security. Today, Russia has not only unique technologies in the field of space, energy, computing power, but also highly qualified specialists and a rich history of international humanitarian aid to the countries of the world majority. The development of its own digital technologies allows us to control the flow of data, protect critical information and reduce dependence on foreign platforms. This is a positive trend and one of the key reasons for further deepening the integration of the efforts of BRICS+ members aimed at modernizing and improving the sphere of science and education.

## CONCLUSION

Summarizing the key findings of this study, we note that:

a) digitalization processes have become a key component of the trend associated with the formation of a modern scientific and educational space that ensures the continuity of learning and retraining throughout life (lifelong learning);

b) without the development and implementation of digital technologies by domestic producers, the digital sovereignty of any country is under threat. In addition to the digital divide that is obvious today and the accumulation of key digital capacities in only a few countries, the threat is now also posed by unlawful restrictive measures (sanctions);

c) the imposition of unlawful sanctions by a number of states and associations undermines the foundations of polycentricity, which is especially sensitive for the BRICS+ member countries, which act as the most transparent and inclusive platform and represent the interests of the global majority. Russia, being one of the leaders of the platform, opposes any hegemony and neocolonial policy. However, today we can clearly observe the manifestation of these phenomena in world politics;

d) implementation of strategic tasks in the field of digitalization is impossible without taking into account the objective trend of the formation

of global scientific and educational spaces. This trend is contradictory in nature, caused by both the significant difference in financial and economic, scientific and technological, and personnel potential of individual state actors, and the noticeable influence of the current international political situation on the dynamics of cooperation in the scientific and educational spheres. If the necessary measures are not taken in time, then external influence may at some point in time complicate the population's access to a number of modern opportunities and strike a blow to the socio-economic well-being of the entire society, including slowing down the development of science and education;

e) digital technologies are both a subject for development in themselves and provide an opportunity to create new joint projects in other areas. On the one hand, the creation of digital technologies is already an agenda for joint initiatives of the BRICS+ member countries, on the other hand, these technologies directly provide new opportunities for the further development of ties in science and education. Russia is capable of acting as a donor of technologies, ideas and new areas for cultural and humanitarian cooperation with the member countries of the global association, which potentially covers a much larger number of areas, including culture, sports, healthcare, tourism, etc.

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