

Multipolar Babel? BRICS, Global South Governance, and a Biblical-Theological Critique of New Order Promises

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Abstract

Background: BRICS and wider Global South governance initiatives increasingly frame multipolarity as an ethical correction to Western-dominated global governance, promising representation, sovereignty, development finance, technological inclusion, and a more equitable international order. Purpose: This article evaluates those promises through a Scripture-first theological-policy framework. Methodology: The study applies qualitative documentary analysis, critical discourse analysis, and biblical-theological interpretation to a purposive corpus of official BRICS, New Development Bank, United Nations, and global financial-governance documents, supported by scholarly literature on global governance, multipolarity, political economy, and Christian theology. A PRISMA-informed corpus-construction log is included for transparency. Findings: The analysis finds that BRICS discourse identifies real inequities in the Bretton Woods and wider multilateral architecture, yet its reform vocabulary also depends on moral claims that can legitimate new forms of institutional centralization, digital coordination, financial dependency, and geopolitical loyalty. Originality/value: The article contributes an eightfold biblical discernment framework for testing world-order promises without collapsing Christian critique into either Western apologetics or uncritical Global South romanticism. Conclusion: Multipolarity may correct some injustices of unipolar dominance, but it is not redemption. Scripture requires Christians to test every global order, Western or non-Western, by the lordship of Christ, truth, human dignity, justice, sovereignty under God, and vigilance against political-economic systems that convert inclusion into managed access and peace into idolatrous security.

Keywords: BRICS; Global South; multipolarity; Christian political theology; Babel; global governance; Revelation 13; stigmatized knowledge; technocracy; biblical discernment

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1. Introduction

The rise of BRICS from a diplomatic grouping into a broader platform of Global South coordination has become one of the clearest signs that the post-Cold War language of a single liberal international order no longer captures the structure, aspiration, or anxiety of contemporary world politics. The 2025 Rio de Janeiro Declaration presents BRICS under the theme of strengthening Global South cooperation for a more inclusive and sustainable governance and frames the expanded grouping around political and security cooperation, economic and financial cooperation, and cultural and people-to-people cooperation (BRICS, 2025a). The declaration speaks the language of sovereign equality, inclusiveness, democratic reform, multilateral legitimacy, and a fairer international order. It also welcomes Indonesia as a BRICS member and recognizes several partner countries, confirming that BRICS is not only a symbol of protest but an expanding governance formation.

The attraction of this language should not be dismissed. Many Global South states have experienced global governance less as

neutral cooperation than as hierarchy mediated by debt, conditionality, security asymmetry, sanctions, technology dependence, and limited voice in decision-making institutions. The asymmetry is especially visible in debates over the Bretton Woods institutions, the United Nations Security Council, development finance, climate finance, digital rules, and the governance of artificial intelligence. A serious Christian critique must therefore resist shallow pro-Western reflexes. There are legitimate grievances against unipolarity and against institutional arrangements that have often preserved formal equality while sustaining material and representational inequality.

Yet Christian discernment cannot stop at anti-hegemonic rhetoric. Theologically, the problem is not merely which civilization or bloc governs, but what kind of moral and spiritual order is being constructed. Scripture repeatedly warns that human beings can organize impressive systems of unity, exchange, technology, and security while refusing the authority of God. The canonical pattern begins with Babel, intensifies in the prophetic critique of empire, and culminates in apocalyptic warnings

concerning political power, economic access, deception, and worship. The biblical issue is therefore not whether the order is Western or non-Western, liberal or authoritarian, unipolar or multipolar. The issue is whether a world-order project honors truth, justice, human dignity, legitimate authority, and the lordship of God, or whether it reconfigures human autonomy under new institutional language.

This article develops a biblical-theological and policy-oriented critique of BRICS and Global South governance discourse. It does not argue that BRICS is identical with the final beast system of Revelation, nor does it claim that all multipolar coordination is intrinsically evil. Such claims would exceed the evidence and weaken theological credibility. The argument is more disciplined and, for that reason, more serious: BRICS-type multipolarity must be tested as a contemporary instance of a recurring biblical problem, namely the promise of human unity, peace, prosperity, and inclusion apart from submission to God. In this sense, the phrase multipolar Babel is not a crude label. It is a theological diagnostic category used to ask whether resistance to one form of domination may become the vehicle of another.

The research problem is that most scholarship examines BRICS through international relations, political economy, development studies, or global governance reform, while theological critique often remains either devotional, polemical, or detached from policy documents. Conversely, much Christian commentary on global order treats institutions prophetically but does not demonstrate a replicable documentary method. This article addresses that gap by placing official BRICS and related global governance documents into conversation with global governance theory, critical discourse analysis, Christian social epistemology, and biblical theology.

Four questions guide the study. First, how do BRICS and Global South governance documents frame the promise of a more inclusive, equitable, and multipolar world order? Second, what moral claims are embedded in BRICS discourse concerning sovereignty, development, representation, finance, technology, climate, security, and institutional reform? Third, how does Scripture evaluate projects of human unity, empire, economic control, political worship, and global governance? Fourth, what biblical-theological discernment framework can help Christians distinguish legitimate calls for justice from Babel-like projects of centralized human autonomy?

The article contributes to Christian political theology, global governance ethics, and scholarship on stigmatized or suppressed discourse by offering an evidence-based framework for evaluating world-order promises. Its central claim is that Christians should neither worship the Western liberal order nor romanticize multipolar alternatives. Every order must be judged by Scripture, truth, justice, human dignity, and the lordship of Christ.

2. Context: BRICS, Global South Governance, and the Promise of Multipolarity

BRICS began as a descriptive investment acronym before becoming a political forum and, increasingly, a governance platform. Its significance lies not only in the economic weight of its members but in the symbolic and institutional claim that global governance must be rebalanced away from Western monopoly. The Rio Declaration states that developing countries should strengthen dialogue and consultation in the contemporary realities of a multipolar world and identifies the Global South as a driver of

positive change amid geopolitical tension, economic disruption, technological change, protectionist measures, and migratory challenges (BRICS, 2025a). This discourse positions BRICS as both representative voice and reform engine.

The 2025 declaration consolidates several policy fields into a single moral narrative: multilateral reform, UN Security Council reform, Bretton Woods reform, trade reform, health governance, artificial intelligence governance, climate finance, development financing, and opposition to unilateral sanctions. It calls for a more representative, legitimate, democratic, and accountable multilateral system and explicitly links BRICS priorities to the UN Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact, and the Declaration on Future Generations (BRICS, 2025a; United Nations, 2024). The rhetorical architecture is important. BRICS is not rejecting governance as such. It is contesting who governs, whose norms count, whose development path is legitimate, and whose institutional voice is amplified.

Financial governance sits at the center of this contestation. The Rio Declaration urges quota-share realignment in the International Monetary Fund and greater representation of emerging market and developing economies in Bretton Woods institutions (BRICS, 2025a). The BRICS Rio de Janeiro Vision for IMF Quota and Governance Reform argues that the IMF must remain adequately resourced while becoming more legitimate, accountable, and representative (BRICS, 2025b). The New Development Bank (NDB), established by the original BRICS countries in 2015, presents itself as a multilateral development bank created by emerging and developing countries for emerging and developing countries, with a mandate to mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects (NDB, 2022). Its 2022-2026 strategy targets USD 30 billion in funding, increased local-currency financing, non-sovereign operations, private capital mobilization, and a significant climate-finance orientation (NDB, 2022).

Technology governance is also central. The Rio Declaration treats artificial intelligence as a development opportunity while calling for global AI governance that addresses risks, builds trust, ensures inclusive collaboration and access, and places the United Nations at the core (BRICS, 2025a). This language resonates with wider global digital governance initiatives, especially the UN Global Digital Compact, which links digital cooperation, data governance, platform accountability, AI governance, and human rights under a multilateral frame (United Nations, 2024). For Christian ethical analysis, the central question is not whether international cooperation on AI is needed. It plainly is. The question is whether global digital cooperation can protect persons and communities without creating unprecedented systems of surveillance, behavioral management, censorship, and conditional access.

Climate and sustainability discourse plays a similar role. BRICS documents connect development, climate finance, environmental protection, resilience, and sustainable infrastructure. The NDB strategy assigns strong emphasis to climate-smart and disaster-resilient projects while using country systems and local priorities as part of its institutional identity (NDB, 2022). From one angle, this is an appropriate correction to development models that externalize ecological damage. From another angle, sustainability language can become a moral technology of governance when it authorizes remote technocratic decision-making over energy, land,

finance, mobility, and consumption. The Christian task is therefore neither denial nor submission, but moral discrimination.

The context is thus morally complex. BRICS discourse cannot be dismissed as mere propaganda, because it raises real issues of representation and institutional inequity. It also cannot be received as neutral liberation, because it gathers financial, digital, climate, security, and governance questions into a global reform vocabulary that may expand central coordination. A Scripture-first analysis must take both dimensions seriously.

3. Literature Review

3.1 BRICS and the Post-Western World Order

The literature on BRICS and the post-Western order is divided between those who see emerging powers as reformist participants in existing institutions and those who see them as challengers to Western dominance. Stuenkel (2015, 2016) argues that emerging powers are not simply adapting to Western rules but are remaking global order through new institutions, narratives, and networks. This does not necessarily mean a coherent anti-Western bloc. BRICS members differ in regime type, security priorities, economic models, and regional ambitions. Nevertheless, the bloc has accumulated symbolic power as a platform through which major non-Western states articulate dissatisfaction with the distribution of authority in global governance.

Hurrell (2006) cautions that the space for would-be great powers is shaped by liberal hegemony, institutional structures, and the ability of rising powers to convert material capacity into rule-shaping authority. Ikenberry (2018) likewise argues that the liberal order faces crisis not only from external challengers but from its own contradictions, including domestic backlash, legitimacy deficits, and uneven benefits. These accounts help explain why BRICS discourse can appear morally compelling even where its institutional alternatives remain underdeveloped. The weakness of a hegemonic order creates the rhetorical conditions for post-hegemonic promises.

A recurring question is whether BRICS functions as a transformative coalition or as a loose diplomatic club. Stephen (2014) reads the BRICS challenge through historical materialist analysis, emphasizing that emerging powers may contest institutional hierarchy while remaining embedded in global capitalism. Nölke et al. (2015) similarly show that large emerging economies have distinctive domestic capitalism structures that shape their foreign economic policies and their relationship to global order. These contributions are important for the present study because they prevent simplistic readings of BRICS as either liberation movement or monolithic threat.

3.2 Global South Agency and the Ethics of Institutional Reform

Global South agency scholarship challenges the assumption that normative innovation flows from North to South. Acharya (2014, 2018) argues for a global international relations attentive to regional worlds, plural origins of order, and the role of non-Western actors in constructing global norms. This literature corrects the epistemic imbalance by which Western institutions often define rationality, development, and legitimacy for others. In that respect, BRICS and Global South discourse can be read as an attempt to reclaim agency over the language and institutions of development.

Ethically, however, agency is not the same as righteousness. Christian critique must affirm the moral importance of representation without assuming that every claim made in the name of the Global South is just. The problem of empire is not exhausted by geography. Scripture indicts domination, deception, economic predation, and idolatrous power wherever they appear. A Global South actor may resist external domination while building internal systems of coercion. A Western institution may speak of rights while practicing selective morality. Theologically, all powers must be judged under God.

3.3 Multipolarity, Sovereignty, and International Political Economy

Multipolarity is often presented as a structural correction to unipolar dominance. Yet a multipolar world is not necessarily more just; it may simply be less centralized around a single hegemon. Realist, liberal institutionalist, constructivist, and critical political economy approaches differ in how they evaluate such change. Keohane (1984) emphasizes cooperation after hegemony through institutions; Cox (1981) insists that theories of order are never neutral because they serve some purpose and some social forces; Slaughter (2004) analyzes governance through networks; Rodrik (2011) highlights the tension among democratic politics, national sovereignty, and deep globalization. Together, these literatures show that governance reform cannot be evaluated only by counting poles of power. One must ask how power is organized, legitimated, monitored, and contested.

International political economy also warns that financial architecture can discipline states even without direct colonial administration. Debt, currency dependence, reserve systems, development-bank conditionalities, sanctions, credit ratings, and payment infrastructures can structure freedom and dependency. The NDB emphasis on local-currency financing and absence of policy conditionality responds to real concerns (NDB, 2022). Yet private capital mobilization, thematic bond markets, digital infrastructure, climate finance, and development metrics may still integrate states into systems of external assessment and compliance. The question is not whether finance is needed, but whether finance becomes a moral regime that defines acceptable development and controls access to economic participation.

3.4 Global Governance, Technocracy, and the Problem of Centralization

Global governance literature often treats central coordination as a pragmatic response to cross-border problems. Climate change, pandemics, financial crises, digital harms, AI risk, migration, organized crime, and war cannot be addressed by isolated states. Yet global governance can also narrow political imagination by converting moral and political questions into technical problems managed by expert networks. Foucault's (2007) account of governmentality remains useful here because it shows how modern power governs populations through knowledge, measurement, security rationalities, and normalization rather than only through direct coercion.

Digital governance intensifies the issue. Zuboff (2019) describes surveillance capitalism as a political-economic logic that converts human experience into behavioral data. Although her focus is corporate power, the analysis applies to public-private governance arrangements in which digital identity, platform moderation, AI risk classification, financial inclusion, welfare delivery, and security surveillance converge. Recent scholarship on

AI governance similarly emphasizes that AI systems affect not merely technology policy but sovereignty, markets, rights, and public-private power (Tallberg et al., 2023; Srivastava & Bullock, 2024). A biblical critique of global governance must therefore include the management of access and visibility.

3.5 Christian Political Theology, Babel, Empire, and Eschatological Discernment

Christian political theology has long wrestled with the relationship between divine sovereignty and earthly power. O'Donovan (1996) argues that political authority must be understood in light of the resurrection and the moral order disclosed in Christ. Cavanaugh (2009) critiques modern political myths that authorize coercion while portraying religion as uniquely violent. Leithart (2012) reads Babel and empire as recurrent temptations toward political consolidation against God. Wright (2006) situates the nations within God's mission while refusing to grant them ultimate authority. These works support a theological approach that can evaluate global politics without reducing Christianity to partisan geopolitics.

Biblical studies on Genesis, Daniel, and Revelation provide the canonical architecture. The Babel narrative presents human unity, technological capacity, and urban ambition under the sign of autonomous self-exaltation. Daniel portrays empires as beastly when they become violent, proud, idolatrous, and oppressive. Revelation depicts political-economic power not merely as administration but as worship-demanding sovereignty, where access to buying and selling becomes tied to allegiance. Bauckham (1993) and Beale (1999) both emphasize that Revelation unmasks imperial claims by setting them before the throne of God and the Lamb. This unveiling is crucial for Christian discernment in any age of global-order promises.

The gap, then, is clear. Existing scholarship offers strong tools for analyzing BRICS, global governance, and empire separately. What remains underdeveloped is a replicable Scripture-first framework that evaluates BRICS-type multipolar discourse as a moral and theological phenomenon while honoring legitimate Global South grievances. This article seeks to fill that gap.

4. Theoretical and Theological Framework

4.1 Global Governance and Multipolarity Theory

The first layer of the framework treats BRICS as a site of global governance contestation. The article does not assume that global governance is automatically illegitimate. Rather, it asks how governance authority is distributed, justified, and disciplined. This requires attention to representation, accountability, sovereignty, institutional design, and material dependency. Multipolarity is analyzed as both a structural condition and a moral narrative. Structurally, it refers to the diffusion of relative power away from one hegemonic center. Narratively, it refers to a promise that such diffusion will produce fairness, pluralism, and dignity for marginalized states.

This distinction is essential. A world may become multipolar without becoming just. Multiple centers of power can compete in ways that intensify militarization, resource capture, digital fragmentation, and strategic dependency. Conversely, a multipolar arrangement may open space for neglected actors if it creates genuine accountability, policy autonomy, and institutional reform. The study therefore refuses both unipolar nostalgia and multipolar romanticism.

4.2 Christian Social Epistemology and Discernment

The second layer is Christian social epistemology. Contemporary global governance depends heavily on knowledge claims: expert consensus, risk assessments, sustainability indicators, development metrics, fact-checking systems, AI safety standards, climate models, financial ratings, and public-health classifications. Christians should not despise knowledge, expertise, or evidence. Scripture condemns false witness and commands wisdom. However, knowledge systems are socially organized, institutionally funded, and politically deployed. Discernment therefore requires testing not only the content of claims but also the incentives, authorities, exclusions, and moral assumptions that shape public knowledge.

This is especially important for stigmatized knowledge and suppressed discourse. Some claims are stigmatized because they are false, harmful, or poorly evidenced. Others are stigmatized because they threaten institutional legitimacy, expose hypocrisy, or challenge dominant narratives. A Christian approach avoids both gullibility and institutional idolatry. It asks for evidence, refuses slander, honors truth, recognizes propaganda, and remains alert to how labels such as conspiracy theory can sometimes end inquiry prematurely. In this article, the concept applies to world-order discourse by asking which concerns about centralization, surveillance, financial control, and technocratic rule are dismissed too quickly and which are unsupported speculation.

4.3 Biblical Theology of Babel, Empire, Idolatry, and Political-Economic Worship

The third layer is biblical theology. Genesis 11:1-9 presents Babel as a project of concentrated human unity, technological achievement, and name-making apart from God. Psalm 2 portrays rulers taking counsel against the Lord and his Anointed, thereby relativizing all political pretensions before divine sovereignty. Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 interpret imperial succession through both human symbolism and beastly imagery. Matthew 24 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 warn about deception, lawlessness, and false security. Revelation 13 and Revelation 17-18 disclose political-economic power as a system of worship, seduction, commerce, coercion, and judgment.

These texts do not authorize careless date-setting or simplistic identification of every contemporary institution with final prophecy. They do authorize sober pattern recognition. The pattern is not mere international cooperation but human order that seeks salvation, security, identity, and destiny without God. The biblical concern is the spiritual logic by which power promises peace while demanding loyalty, promises inclusion while managing access, and promises development while redefining human beings as units to be measured, optimized, and governed.

4.4 A Scripture-First Test of New Order Promises

A Scripture-first test begins with the confession that Jesus Christ, not any nation, bloc, market, empire, technology, or

multilateral institution, is Lord. It therefore evaluates global order by subordinate criteria: truth, dignity, justice, responsible authority, freedom of conscience, protection of the vulnerable, resistance to idolatry, and refusal to make economic participation conditional on false worship or ideological submission. This test is neither withdrawalist nor naive. It allows Christians to support concrete justice where it appears while refusing to absolutize any political arrangement.

Figure 1 summarizes the framework. The movement from unipolar grievance to multipolar promise may generate paths of partial justice or paths of rebranded centralization. The decisive question is not which geopolitical camp wins, but whether the resulting order protects truth, human dignity, accountability, and worship of the true God.

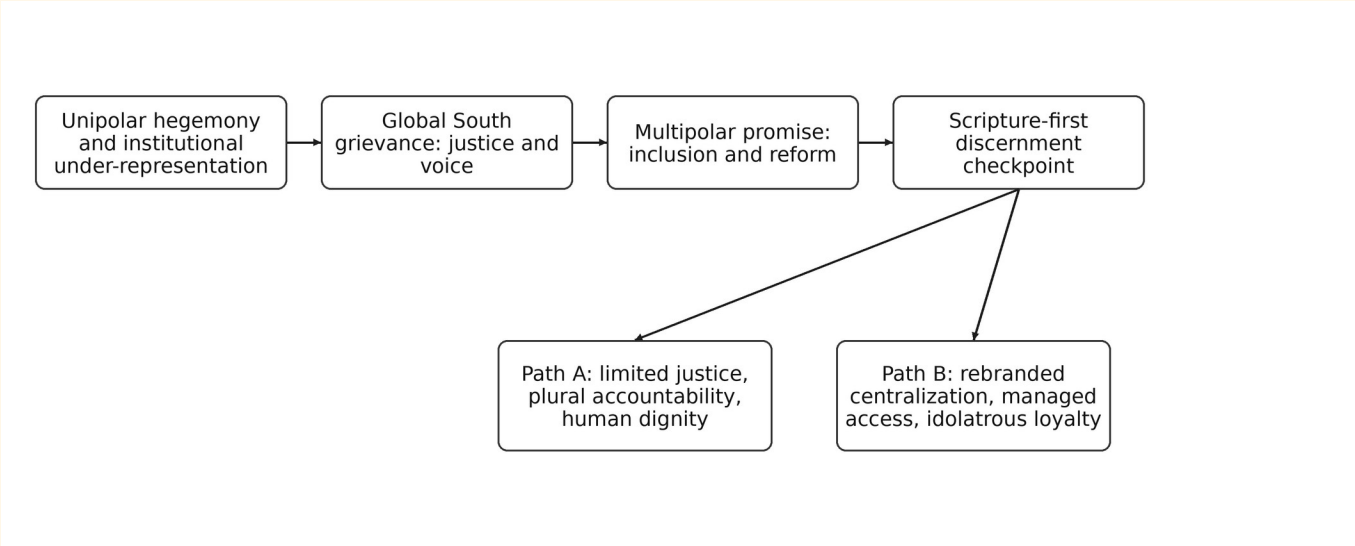


Figure 1. From unipolar hegemony to multipolar Babel? A Christian discernment framework.

5. Methodology

This study uses qualitative documentary analysis, critical discourse analysis, and biblical-theological interpretation. Documentary analysis is appropriate because the object of inquiry is not the private intention of policymakers but the public language through which institutions justify governance reform, moral authority, and future order (Bowen, 2009). Critical discourse analysis is appropriate because BRICS, UN, and development-finance documents do more than report facts; they construct problems, authorize solutions, assign moral status, and normalize institutional futures (Fairclough, 1992). Biblical-theological interpretation is appropriate because the article asks how Scripture evaluates these moral-political claims.

Table 1. Documentary corpus and analytical relevance.

Corpus category	Main examples	Selection rationale	Analytical relevance
BRICS summit declarations	Rio de Janeiro Declaration 2025; Kazan Declaration 2024	Official statements of collective priorities and moral vocabulary	Identifies promises of inclusion, reform, sovereignty, peace, development, and multipolar order
BRICS financial-governance documents	Rio de Janeiro Vision for IMF Quota and Governance Reform	Documents reform claims regarding representation, quota shares, legitimacy, and Bretton Woods governance	Supports analysis of financial justice, institutional voice, and dependency
New Development Bank documents	NDB General Strategy 2022-2026	Core institutional strategy of a BRICS-created development bank	Shows operationalization of development finance, climate finance, local-currency lending, and private-capital mobilization
UN global-governance documents	Pact for the Future; Global Digital Compact	Global framework referenced by BRICS and relevant to digital and institutional coordination	Shows convergence between multipolar reform discourse and wider multilateral governance vocabulary
Scholarly global-governance literature	Works on BRICS, global IR, multipolarity, IPE, AI governance, governmentality	Peer-reviewed and academic sources for interpretation	Prevents theological claims from floating above policy and IR scholarship
Biblical and theological literature	Works on Babel, empire, Revelation, political theology, public theology	Serious theological sources for canonical interpretation	Grounds discernment in Scripture and avoids unsupported prophetic speculation

Inclusion criteria were: public availability, direct relevance to BRICS or global-governance reform, explicit moral or institutional claims, publication by an official institution or reputable academic publisher, and usefulness for biblical-theological evaluation. Exclusion criteria were: purely journalistic commentary unless

The document corpus was purposive rather than exhaustive. The aim was to identify texts that publicly express BRICS and related global-governance promises in policy-relevant language. Primary documents included the 2025 Rio de Janeiro Declaration, the BRICS Rio de Janeiro Vision for IMF Quota and Governance Reform, the NDB General Strategy for 2022-2026, the UN Pact for the Future and its annexed Global Digital Compact, and selected Bretton Woods reform materials. Scholarly literature was used to interpret multipolarity, global governance, political economy, AI governance, documentary methodology, and Christian theology. Table 1 lists the core document categories and their analytical relevance.

used only for context, duplicative summaries, inaccessible documents, speculative claims without evidence, and sources whose relevance was merely tangential. The final corpus emphasizes official documents because the study analyzes institutional self-presentation rather than media interpretation.

The coding process was abductive. Initial codes were derived from the research questions and from the policy vocabulary of the documents: inclusion, equity, sovereignty, representation, reform, development, finance, technology, climate, peace, security, stability, resilience, legitimacy, and accountability. The second cycle grouped these codes into moral promises and governance mechanisms, following qualitative content analysis principles that allow themes to be developed systematically from textual evidence (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Krippendorff, 2018). The theological cycle then evaluated those themes through biblical categories: Babel, empire, idolatry, truth, dignity, justice,

worship, economic access, and eschatological vigilance. Table 2 and Table 3 present the applied coding logic.

To improve transparency, the study uses a PRISMA-informed flow diagram for corpus construction. This does not convert the article into a systematic review, because the purpose is interpretive documentary analysis rather than exhaustive evidence synthesis. However, PRISMA 2020 offers useful reporting discipline by making visible the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion logic (Page et al., 2021). Figure 3 reports the document-selection flow used for this manuscript.

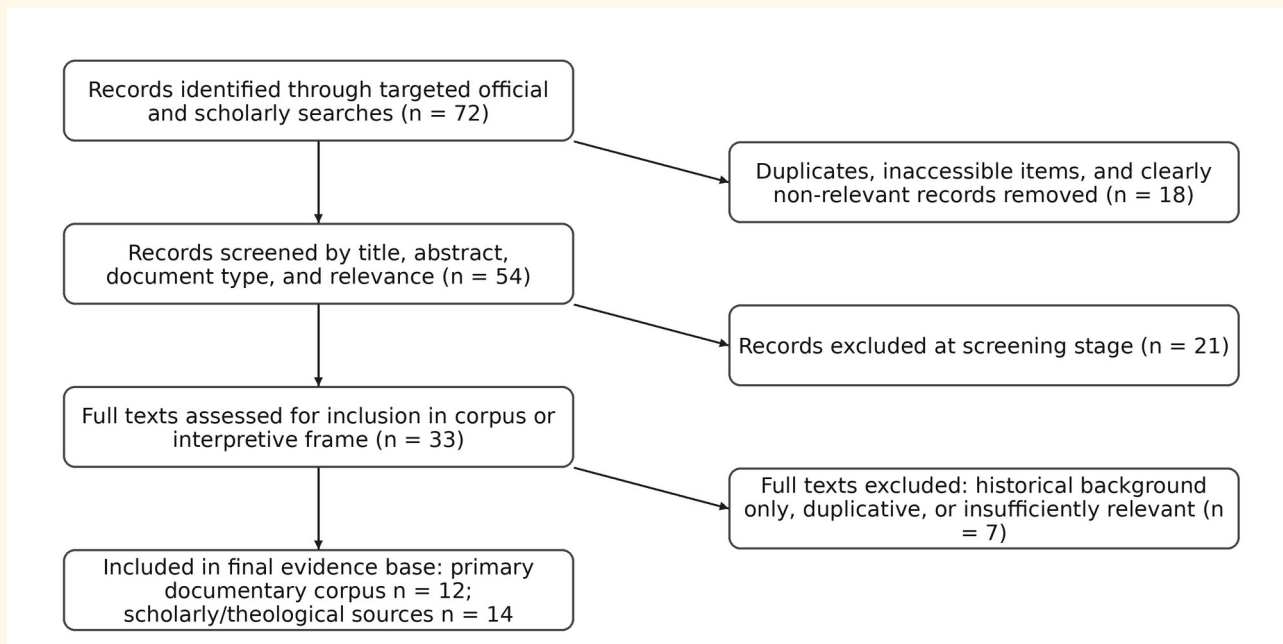


Figure 3. PRISMA-informed corpus construction flow for the documentary evidence base.

Table 2. BRICS governance promises and biblical-theological discernment criteria.

Policy theme	Representative promise	Potential governance risk	Biblical-theological test
Inclusion and representation	Amplified Global South voice in multilateral institutions	Elite bargaining may replace people-centered accountability	Does inclusion protect image-bearers or only redistribute elite seats?
Sovereignty	Respect for national development paths and non-interference	Bloc dependency and strategic alignment may limit real autonomy	Does sovereignty remain accountable under God and neighbor-love?
Financial reform	Quota realignment, local-currency finance, reduced conditionality	New debt channels, private-capital dependency, and compliance metrics	Does finance serve justice without controlling access?
Technology and AI	Inclusive AI governance and digital capacity for development	Surveillance, censorship, data extraction, behavioral management	Does digital cooperation preserve truth, conscience, and human dignity?
Climate and sustainability	Climate finance, resilience, sustainable infrastructure	Technocratic control over energy, land, mobility, and consumption	Does stewardship remain accountable to creation and local responsibility?
Peace and stability	Dialogue, multilateralism, diplomatic resolution	False peace that suppresses justice or demands ideological loyalty	Does peace rest on righteousness or on managed silence?

Table 3. Coding framework for policy-discourse and theological analysis.

Analytical level	Code family	Guiding question	Evidence indicator
Policy discourse	Problem construction	What crisis is named and who is responsible?	Terms such as inequality, underrepresentation, unilateralism, digital divide, financing gap
Policy discourse	Moral promise	What good is promised?	Inclusion, fairness, development, sovereignty, peace, resilience, sustainability
Institutional mechanism	Governance instrument	How is the promise to be achieved?	Reform of quotas, UN-centered AI rules, development-bank lending, climate finance, partnership platforms
Critical discourse	Omission and silence	What risks or affected persons are underdiscussed?	Limited treatment of coercion, censorship, religious liberty, debt discipline, data power, internal repression
Biblical theology	Canonical pattern	Which biblical warning is relevant?	Babel, beastly empire, deception, false peace, commercial seduction, economic

Analytical level	Code family	Guiding question	Evidence indicator
Normative synthesis	Discernment outcome	What Christian judgment follows?	access Support, caution, resistance, or qualified cooperation

Credibility was pursued through triangulation across official documents, scholarly interpretation, and biblical-theological sources; explicit separation of evidence from interpretation; and a source audit of cited claims. Limitations remain. The study does not measure policy outcomes empirically, does not interview policymakers, and does not claim to represent the views of all BRICS states or all Global South communities. It also does not claim prophetic certainty. Its theological judgments are typological and normative, not predictive in a date-setting sense. Ethically, the study uses public secondary documents only and involves no human participants.

6. Findings and Analysis

6.1 The Promise of Inclusion: Representation or Rebranded Centralization?

The dominant moral claim in BRICS discourse is inclusion. The Rio Declaration repeatedly calls for more representative, legitimate, democratic, and accountable international institutions and stresses the greater participation of emerging market and developing countries, least developed countries, and underrepresented regions in global decision-making (BRICS, 2025a). This claim addresses a genuine problem. A global system that treats states as formally equal while concentrating agenda-setting authority in a few powers lacks moral credibility. Biblical justice requires attention to the weak, the marginalized, and those excluded from decision-making that affects them.

Yet inclusion can be ambiguous. It may mean wider accountability, or it may mean adding new elites to existing structures. The biblical question is whether institutional reform protects persons and communities or merely redistributes prestige among ruling groups. Babel was inclusive in one sense: a unified project, shared language, common city, collective ambition. Its problem was not fragmentation but unity ordered toward human name-making. Therefore, the Christian critique of global governance cannot treat inclusion as inherently righteous. Inclusion must be judged by telos, authority, truth, and treatment of the vulnerable.

This finding matters for BRICS because the bloc’s inclusion language often operates at the level of state representation, not necessarily at the level of religious liberty, local accountability, civil society freedom, or protection from state coercion. The Global South deserves voice, but voice must not be reduced to the voice of governments. Christians must ask whether peasants, workers, churches, dissidents, minorities, families, and local communities are truly served by new governance arrangements or only spoken for by them.

6.2 The Promise of Sovereignty: Liberation or Bloc Dependency?

Sovereignty is another central BRICS term. The Rio Declaration affirms sovereign equality and respect for national development paths, while the NDB strategy highlights country systems, member priorities, and development without policy conditionalities (BRICS, 2025a; NDB, 2022). These commitments respond to long-standing grievances against externally imposed policy models. For many developing countries, sovereignty has been compromised not by formal annexation but by structural

dependency, debt discipline, sanctions exposure, aid conditionality, and policy prescriptions embedded in financial access.

Still, sovereignty can be invoked selectively. States may demand sovereignty externally while denying subsidiarity and accountability internally. A government may resist Western conditionality while subjecting its own citizens to surveillance, censorship, corruption, or religious constraint. A bloc may promise autonomy from one hegemon while cultivating dependency on another set of markets, technologies, security patrons, or payment systems. Christian political theology therefore treats sovereignty as real but not ultimate. Nations are accountable to God, and rulers are judged by justice, truth, and protection of the vulnerable.

The policy implication is that BRICS sovereignty claims must be evaluated concretely. Do local-currency financing and non-conditional lending create policy space, or do they create opaque obligations? Do digital sovereignty initiatives protect citizens, or do they expand state control? Does strategic autonomy increase freedom for communities, or does it require alignment with new geopolitical patrons? Sovereignty is morally valuable when it protects responsible creaturely order under God; it becomes idolatrous when it shields injustice from correction.

6.3 The Promise of Financial Reform: Justice, Control, and Monetary Architecture

BRICS financial discourse identifies representation and dependency problems in the international monetary and development-finance system. The Rio Declaration calls for IMF quota realignment, greater voice for emerging market and developing economies, and a more legitimate Bretton Woods system (BRICS, 2025a). The IMF Vision document similarly frames quota and governance reform as essential to legitimacy and representativeness (BRICS, 2025b). The NDB operationalizes an alternative financial imagination by emphasizing infrastructure finance, sustainable development, local-currency operations, and the absence of policy conditionalities (NDB, 2022).

A Christian ethical reading must acknowledge the justice dimension here. Debt dependency, currency hierarchy, and selective access to liquidity can burden vulnerable societies and restrict policy options. When financial architecture privileges already powerful states, it can become a mechanism of structural domination. Scripture repeatedly condemns exploitative debt, dishonest scales, and economic systems that crush the poor. To that extent, calls for fairer financial governance deserve serious consideration.

However, financial reform can also create subtler forms of control. Development finance increasingly comes tied to metrics, ESG taxonomies, digital reporting, risk scoring, public-private partnership structures, and climate-finance standards. Even without formal policy conditionality, capital access may be governed by institutional criteria that shape national priorities. Furthermore, de-dollarization rhetoric does not automatically free societies if the alternative is another concentrated monetary architecture vulnerable to political pressure or digital control. Revelation’s concern with buying and selling under conditions of allegiance is not a technical prediction about a single instrument; it is a theological warning that economic access can become a means of worship-demanding power.

6.4 The Promise of Technological Cooperation: Digital Development, Surveillance, and Human Dignity

Technology appears in BRICS discourse as a development opportunity, especially through AI governance, digital infrastructure, capacity building, and closing the digital divide. The Rio Declaration calls for AI governance that upholds shared values, addresses risks, builds trust, supports access, respects sovereign laws, and places the United Nations at the core of global cooperation (BRICS, 2025a). This overlaps with the Global Digital Compact's vision of an inclusive and safe digital future (United Nations, 2024). Such cooperation is not inherently wrong. Digital infrastructure can support education, health, finance, disaster response, agricultural productivity, and public service delivery.

The risk is that inclusion into digital systems may become compulsory integration into managed life. Digital identity, interoperable data systems, AI-enabled risk scoring, platform governance, biometric authentication, central bank digital currencies, and automated eligibility systems can make human participation more efficient while also making it more conditional. The biblical category of the image of God requires that persons never be reduced to data profiles or compliance objects (Middleton, 2005). Human dignity includes embodied life, conscience, worship, family, local belonging, and moral agency.

The manuscript therefore proposes a dignity-and-access test. A digital governance initiative should be judged not only by coverage and efficiency but by whether it preserves privacy, due process, contestability, non-discrimination, religious liberty, and the possibility of ordinary life outside total digital mediation. Global South digital development must not become the laboratory for technocratic governance experiments conducted under humanitarian language.

6.5 The Promise of Sustainable Governance: Stewardship, Technocracy, and Moral Authority

BRICS and NDB documents place sustainable development, climate finance, resilience, and infrastructure at the center of their governance claims. The NDB strategy commits a significant share of approvals to climate change mitigation and adaptation and emphasizes climate-smart, disaster-resilient, technology-integrated, and inclusive projects (NDB, 2022). From a Christian standpoint, creation care is not optional. The earth belongs to the Lord, and human dominion is stewardship rather than license for destruction.

Nevertheless, sustainability can function as a powerful moral vocabulary that authorizes expansive governance. If sustainability is defined only by transnational expert systems, it may override local knowledge, property rights, household livelihoods, energy needs, and national development priorities. The problem is not environmental responsibility but technocratic moral monopoly. Christians should therefore affirm stewardship while resisting the conversion of creation care into a centralized system for managing populations, consumption, mobility, and economic participation.

This tension is especially acute for the Global South. Poor countries need energy, infrastructure, water, food systems, and industrial capacity. A governance regime that denies development in the name of climate morality can perpetuate poverty. Yet a development regime that ignores ecological damage can harm the poor first and worst. Biblical stewardship rejects both exploitative industrialism and anti-human environmental technocracy.

6.6 The Promise of Peace and Stability: Biblical Warnings about False Security

BRICS discourse presents multilateral dialogue, diplomacy, indivisible security, and peaceful dispute resolution as alternatives to polarization and conflict. These are morally significant aspirations. Scripture commends peacemaking and condemns violence, oppression, and arrogant kings. A Christian critique should not mock peace language merely because it appears in political documents.

Yet Scripture also warns against false peace. Prophets rebuked those who declared peace where there was no peace. The New Testament warns about deception, lawlessness, and security narratives that may obscure rebellion against God. The issue is not that peace is bad, but that peace can be rhetorically separated from truth, repentance, justice, and worship. Stability can mean the protection of the vulnerable; it can also mean managed silence under powerful interests.

The BRICS peace claim must therefore be tested by consistency. Does opposition to unilateral coercion include opposition to all unjust coercion, including coercion by BRICS members? Does defense of international law apply to allies and adversaries alike? Does security discourse protect civilians, religious minorities, and dissidents, or only state sovereignty? A biblical test refuses selective morality.

6.7 From Unipolar Domination to Multipolar Babel?

The analysis suggests that BRICS discourse contains both corrective and dangerous possibilities. It is corrective where it exposes the moral failure of a global architecture that concentrates authority, liquidity, norm-production, and legitimacy in Western-dominated structures. It is dangerous where it implies that a redistribution of geopolitical power is sufficient to produce a righteous order. The Babel problem is not Westernness. It is autonomous human centralization under the promise of security, name, and destiny.

Multipolar Babel describes this danger. The phrase does not mean that every BRICS initiative is demonic or that every Global South reform claim is deceptive. It means that a supposedly plural order can still become Babel-like if it concentrates decision-making upward, absorbs local sovereignty into bloc discipline, manages economic access through compliant infrastructures, controls digital visibility, and treats human destiny as a technocratic project. In such a system, the tower may have many flags, but the spiritual logic remains the same.

7. Biblical-Theological Discussion

7.1 Babel and the Spiritual Logic of Human Unity without God

Babel is the first major biblical account of unified human political-technical ambition after the flood. The builders possess common language, technical skill, urban ambition, and a shared project of self-preservation and name-making. The divine judgment is not against architecture or cooperation as such, but against human unity organized in autonomous defiance of God. Babel therefore functions as a theological lens for evaluating any world-order promise that treats human coordination as salvation while excluding divine authority.

Applied to BRICS and global governance, the Babel test asks whether unity serves justice under God or whether it becomes a substitute for God. A multipolar system may appear to decentralize

power, but if it still imagines salvation through elite-managed global coordination, it remains spiritually vulnerable. A world can be linguistically plural and institutionally multipolar while sharing the same Babel ambition: to secure humanity's future by human technique, financial architecture, digital coordination, and political consolidation without repentance.

7.2 The Beastly Character of Empire in Daniel

Daniel's visions teach that empires are not merely administrative structures. They are spiritual-moral realities that can become beastly when power detaches itself from humility before God. Daniel 2 shows successive kingdoms under divine sovereignty, while Daniel 7 presents imperial powers as beasts whose violence contrasts with the human-like rule associated with the saints of the Most High. The point is not that all political authority is beastly, but that imperial power becomes beastly when it devours, boasts, coerces, and demands loyalty against God.

This matters because contemporary global governance often presents itself as rational management rather than empire. Yet beastliness may appear through technocratic language when systems instrumentalize persons, suppress truth, manipulate dependency, or make participation contingent on compliance. The Christian question is not whether a government or bloc calls itself inclusive. It is whether its practices honor the image of God and remain accountable to truth and justice.

7.3 Nations, Rulers, and Rebellion in Psalm 2

Psalm 2 relativizes all geopolitical power by portraying nations and rulers as capable of collective rebellion against the Lord and his Anointed. The psalm does not deny national existence. It denies ultimate political autonomy. The nations rage because they interpret divine authority as bondage. This is a permanent temptation of political modernity: to treat God's rule as an obstacle to human self-definition.

For Christians evaluating BRICS, the psalm guards against two errors. The first is Western idolatry, in which liberal institutions are treated as the moral summit of history. The second is multipolar idolatry, in which rising powers are treated as instruments of automatic liberation. Psalm 2 calls all rulers, whether Western or non-Western, to serve the Lord with reverential fear. The question is not who has the most grievance but who bows before the true King.

7.4 Deception, Watchfulness, and False Peace in the New Testament

The New Testament repeatedly connects the last days with deception. Matthew 24 emphasizes watchfulness because many

will be misled. Second Thessalonians 2 warns of lawlessness, delusion, and the refusal to love the truth. These warnings do not permit Christians to call everything deception. They require testing. The danger is not only false information but disordered love: people embrace deception because it serves their desires, fears, ambitions, or resentments.

World-order narratives are especially vulnerable to this dynamic. Those wounded by Western hypocrisy may embrace any anti-Western bloc as righteous. Those fearful of authoritarian powers may baptize Western dominance as the lesser savior. Those exhausted by crisis may surrender liberty for stability. Christian watchfulness resists all such temptations. It insists that truth is not owned by a geopolitical camp.

7.5 Revelation 13 and the Political Economy of Worship and Access

Revelation 13 is central because it joins power, worship, deception, and economic participation. The beast exercises authority; the false-prophetic power deceives; the inhabitants of the earth are pressured toward worship; buying and selling become conditioned by allegiance. The text is not merely about commerce. It is about the totalizing integration of political, religious, and economic life under counterfeit sovereignty.

Responsible interpretation avoids claiming that any present institution is the final system. Yet the passage provides a criterion: Christians must be alert whenever systems condition economic or social participation on ideological, spiritual, or biometric compliance. This includes not only future scenarios but present trajectories in which access to finance, platforms, public services, travel, employment, or speech becomes dependent on centralized authorization. The concern is not technology alone. The concern is technology joined to worship-demanding power.

7.6 Why Christians Must Test Every World-Order Promise

Scripture does not call Christians to panic. It calls them to discernment, faithfulness, truthfulness, and endurance. The biblical critique of empire is not an excuse for passivity; it is a summons to refuse idolatry while practicing justice. Christians may support reforms that protect the poor, increase accountability, reduce exploitative dependency, and preserve legitimate sovereignty. They must also resist reforms that centralize control, obscure truth, undermine conscience, or redefine persons as manageable units of a global system.

Figure 2 summarizes this biblical-theological test. The lordship of Christ and authority of Scripture stand at the center; Babel, empire, truth, worship, access, and dignity function as diagnostic categories around that center.

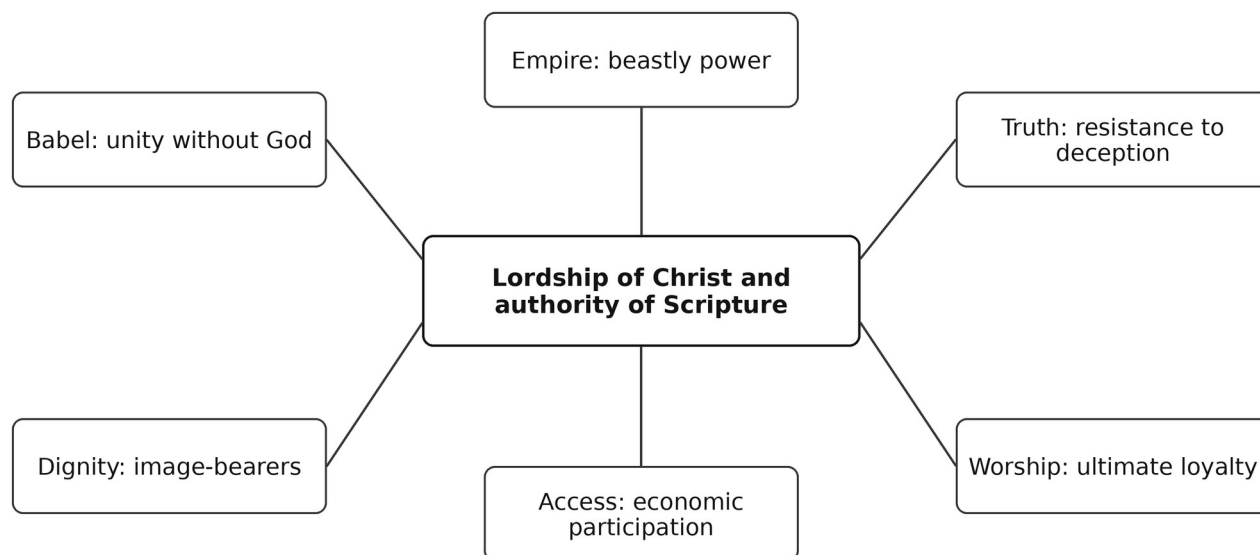


Figure 2. The biblical-theological test of new order promises.

8. Toward a Christian Discernment Framework for Global-Order Claims

8.1 The lordship test

Does the proposed order acknowledge moral accountability under God, or does it enthrone human autonomy as final? Christians cannot require secular institutions to use confessional language, but they can examine whether those institutions preserve space for truth, conscience, worship, family, and local responsibility, or whether they treat humanity as self-creating and self-redeeming.

8.2 The truth test

Does the order require deception, censorship, propaganda, manipulated consensus, or narrative control? A system that claims justice while suppressing legitimate criticism already contains a seed of Babel. The truth test applies to Western fact-management regimes, authoritarian censorship, platform governance, and any BRICS or UN discourse that excludes inconvenient evidence.

8.3 The dignity test

Does the order protect human beings as image-bearers or reduce them to populations, data subjects, risk profiles, consumers, workers, voters, carbon units, or biometric identities? Human dignity requires more than inclusion in systems. It requires that systems remain answerable to the moral worth of persons.

8.4 The sovereignty test

Does the order protect legitimate national, local, ecclesial, familial, and personal responsibility, or absorb authority upward into opaque institutions? Biblical sovereignty is not absolute state autonomy. It is ordered responsibility under God, limited by justice and neighbor-love.

8.5 The justice test

Does the order correct injustice without creating new dependency? Genuine reform should reduce exploitative hierarchy,

protect the poor, and expand accountable agency. It should not merely replace one patron with another or translate colonial dependency into debt, technology, climate, or security dependency.

8.6 The worship test

Does the order demand ultimate loyalty, ideological conformity, or spiritual compromise? Political systems become idolatrous when they claim the authority to define final meaning, moral legitimacy, and human destiny. Christians may obey lawful authority, but they may not worship power.

8.7 The access test

Does the order condition economic participation on compliance with centralized systems? Revelation 13 requires special vigilance where finance, identity, technology, and allegiance converge. The Christian concern is not every payment innovation but any system that turns ordinary life into permissioned participation under false authority.

8.8 The eschatological vigilance test

Does the order normalize conditions resembling biblical warnings about final political-economic consolidation? This test is not date-setting. It is moral preparedness. Christians should recognize trajectories of centralization, deception, and worship-demanding power while continuing ordinary faithfulness in work, church, family, and public witness.

9. Implications

9.1 Christian Scholars

Christian scholars should engage BRICS and global governance with intellectual seriousness rather than slogan. The task is not to produce pious commentary after secular analysis but to develop genuinely theological social science that can read documents, institutions, incentives, and Scripture together. This requires methodological transparency, fair representation of opposing arguments, and courage to question dominant narratives without embracing weak evidence.

9.2 Churches and Pastors

Pastors should help believers avoid two errors: political naivety and conspiratorial recklessness. Congregations need biblical categories for empire, deception, economic access, and worship, but they also need pastoral discipline that refuses fear-driven speculation. Teaching should form Christians who are watchful, truthful, charitable, and prepared to suffer rather than compromise worship.

9.3 Christian Universities

Christian universities should train students to evaluate global systems through Scripture, evidence, and disciplinary excellence. This requires courses and research agendas that integrate international relations, political economy, technology ethics, theology, and biblical studies. The Global South especially needs Christian institutions capable of resisting both imported secular technocracy and uncritical anti-Western nationalism.

9.4 Global South Policymakers

Global South policymakers should pursue fair representation and development finance without surrendering accountability to new centers of power. The article's framework encourages policymakers to ask whether reform enhances local agency, protects conscience, avoids unsustainable debt, limits surveillance, and preserves democratic and community accountability. A policy is not righteous merely because it opposes Western dominance.

9.5 Christian Entrepreneurs and Economic Actors

Christian entrepreneurs should pay close attention to emerging payment systems, digital identity infrastructures, ESG requirements, AI governance standards, and trade realignments. They should pursue economic creativity and service while maintaining freedom of conscience and refusing business practices that require falsehood, exploitation, or ideological worship. The access test is especially relevant for Christian participation in increasingly permissioned economies.

9.6 Public Theology and Geopolitical Discernment

Public theology must recover the ability to speak about world order without becoming captive to empire. It must expose Western hypocrisy where present, recognize Global South grievances where real, and still refuse the illusion that history can be redeemed by a new geopolitical bloc. Christian hope rests neither in Washington, Brussels, Beijing, Moscow, New Delhi, Pretoria, Brasilia, nor any multilateral summit. It rests in the kingdom that cannot be shaken.

10. Conclusion

This article has argued that BRICS and wider Global South governance discourse should be evaluated with both justice and discernment. The 2025 Rio Declaration and related documents express legitimate concerns about underrepresentation, Bretton Woods governance, development finance, digital inequality, AI governance, climate finance, and the instability of the contemporary international order. These concerns cannot be dismissed by Christians who take justice seriously. The Global South has often carried the burdens of systems it did not design and cannot easily reform.

At the same time, the article has shown that multipolarity is not redemption. The replacement of one dominant center with several centers does not overcome the biblical problem of Babel, empire, deception, idolatry, and economic control. A multipolar order may

create space for representation and policy autonomy. It may also normalize new forms of technocratic coordination, financial dependency, surveillance infrastructure, and bloc loyalty. Theologically, the issue is not which civilization leads the system, but whether the system honors truth, justice, human dignity, sovereignty under God, and the lordship of Christ.

The article's original contribution is an eightfold Christian discernment framework: the lordship test, truth test, dignity test, sovereignty test, justice test, worship test, access test, and eschatological vigilance test. These criteria allow Christians to affirm concrete reforms without surrendering spiritual judgment. They also help Christian scholars, pastors, universities, policymakers, and economic actors resist both Western idolatry and multipolar romanticism.

The final posture is not panic but watchfulness. Christians should not be seduced by any new order promise that offers peace without truth, inclusion without dignity, development without freedom, technology without conscience, finance without justice, or unity without God. The church's calling is to bear witness to Christ in the midst of empires, to seek justice without worshiping power, and to remember that the kingdoms of this world remain accountable to the kingdom of our Lord (Yoder, 1972).

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Appendix A. Corpus Log and PRISMA-Informed Selection Notes

The corpus log records the evidence base used in the manuscript. The study is a theological-policy documentary analysis, not a systematic review of intervention effects. PRISMA 2020 was used only to improve transparency in source identification and selection. The final evidence base includes 12 primary documents and 14 core scholarly/theological sources directly used in the analysis, with additional background references used for theoretical framing.

Primary official-document corpus: BRICS Rio de Janeiro Declaration 2025; BRICS Rio de Janeiro Vision for IMF Quota and Governance Reform 2025; BRICS Kazan Declaration 2024; New Development Bank General Strategy 2022-2026; United

Nations Pact for the Future 2024; Global Digital Compact 2024; Declaration on Future Generations 2024; relevant IMF quota-reform materials; relevant World Bank shareholding and development-finance reform materials; BRICS AI governance statement; BRICS climate finance framework; WTO reform references in BRICS summit texts.

Search logic: targeted searches were conducted for official BRICS documents, NDB strategy documents, UN future-governance documents, Bretton Woods reform materials, and scholarly sources on BRICS, multipolarity, global governance, international political economy, AI governance, documentary analysis, and Christian theology of empire. Records were screened for relevance to the research questions, publication quality, public availability, and usefulness in distinguishing evidence from theological interpretation.

Appendix B. Author Declarations

Conflict of interest statement: The author declares no competing interests.

Funding statement: This research received no external funding.

Data availability statement: All data analyzed in this study are publicly available official documents, published scholarly literature, and biblical texts. A corpus log is provided in Appendix A.

Ethics statement: This study uses secondary documentary data only and involves no human participants, interviews, surveys, experiments, or private records.

Bible translation: Unless otherwise indicated, biblical references are to the Christian Standard Bible (CSB).

Transparency note: The study uses PRISMA 2020 as a reporting template for documentary corpus construction only; it is not a medical or intervention-review design.