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Assessing the network power capacity of Informal International Governmental Organizations (IIGO): comparing BRICS and MIKTA

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Abstract

This paper examines the conditions under which informal groupings such as BRICS and MIKTA create and sustain networks that are able to effectively influence global governance architecture, and compares the level of that network power from a state-centric perspective and covering the period until February 2022. In doing so, it uses a network power capacity (hereafter NPC) framework derived from Hafner-Burton et al. (Int Organ 63(3):559–592, 2009) work on Networks Analysis in International Relations, which is based on five main variables: (1) the existence of strong states

within informal groupings, (2) the existence of strong intra-economic and institutional ties, (3) common norms, values, and culture among members of IIGOs, (4) the level of power symmetry among the members of the informal grouping and (5) the engagement of IIGO members in the networks of existing, established powers through the signature of agreements. In the final analysis, it concludes that BRICS has a stronger NPC than MIKTA, since it has (1) a higher number of powerful members, (2) stronger intra-institutional and economic ties, (3) greater congruence of shared norms and values by its members and (4) more members engaged with the existing established powers (namely the USA and the EU) through the signing of bilateral and multilateral agreements.

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Introduction

Global governance is itself a network system in which relational ties between states, individuals, other IIGOs and civil society organizations are transforming as a result of ongoing shifts occurring in the international system. Multilateralism has recently come under pressure against trends toward bilateralism and unilateralism in global governance. The difficulties Formal International Governance Organizations (FIGOs) face in finding appropriate solutions to international crises in general, and the inabilities of the UN system in

particular, seem to have facilitated these ongoing structural changes in global governance. Despite the fact that the centrality of FIGOs still prevails in theory, in practice, with the integration of a variety of new mechanisms, norms and actors to the global governance landscape, its dominant state-centric and liberal institutionalist nature has been severely challenged (Acharya [2016](#)). In its place, the parcellation and informalization of global governance appear as the new driving factors of states shaping their choices in terms of international cooperation.

The complex, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral nature of global governance has increasingly morphed from formal and rigid forms of global governance to more informal, networked and flexible modes of global governance since the end of the 1990s. This trend toward informal networking models of governance has been accentuated with the ascendancy of rising powers, which are generally attached to the principles of sovereignty and equity in global governance, to the international stage. Rising powers, in their quest for expanded influence and upgraded status in the international system, initially sought to increase their engagement in FIGOs such as the UN Security Council, the World Bank, the WTO and the IMF. Since a higher profile in these formal FIGOs was considered the reflection of the rising powers' growing power in key international issues, this cluster of countries until recently paid very little

attention to less formalized modes of global governance. However, the failure of formal FIGOs to adapt equitably to the global shift of power from the Global North to the Global South in the last decade by increasing rising powers' voting shares and representativeness in these institutions, has prompted these countries to turn away from formal FIGOs in favor of growing interests in alternative and informal platforms of global governance, such as the G20, BRICS and MIKTA groups. Indeed, informal governance networks appear more attractive and functional for emerging countries in many respects, including structural or power-related, behavioral and/or ideational.

There is currently a flourishing literature on informality and informal global governance in IR literature. Whereas an important cluster of existing works focus on informal governance as a type of international cooperation (Kilby [2013](#), Pauwelyn et al. [2012](#); Hardt [2015](#); Kleine [2013](#); Christiansen and Neuhold [2012](#); Stone [2011](#), [2013](#)) and others examine informal governance within FIGOs (Hardt [2015](#), [2018](#); Steinberg [2002](#); Prantl [2005](#); Vreeland and Dreher [2014](#); Kilby [2013](#); Stone [2011](#); McKeown [2009](#); Kleine [2013](#)), some existing research goes beyond this to place a special focus on informal governance outside FIGOs (Andonova [2017](#); Abbott and Snidal [2000](#); Abbott et al. [2015](#); Kahler and Lake [2009](#); Westerwinter [2013](#); Keohane and Nye [1974](#); Fioretos [2019](#); Raustiala [2002](#); Abbott et al. [2018](#)). A handful of studies posit

the reasons for the rise of informality and IIGOs in global governance and their advantages compared to FIGOs in terms of flexibility and low contracting costs (Abbott and Faude, forthcoming; Abbott and Snidal [2000](#); Sauer [2019](#); Prantl [2005](#)).

Informal governance structures outside formal organizations appear as a brand new governing mode creating new advantages not only for relatively weak actors but for strong ones seeking to upgrade their status in the international system by strengthening their bargaining and social power vis-a-vis major powers and their peers (Parlar Dal and Dipama [2019](#); Vabulas and Snidal [2013](#); Parlar Dal [2019](#); Avant and Westerwinter [2016](#)). Informal modes of governance may also help states create new forms of cooperation in newly emerged and emerging issue areas. In short, informal governance appears as a very functional instrument in opening up new issue areas for states aiming to increase their prestige by fulfilling new roles and taking new initiatives in the changing global governance architecture (Westerwinter et al. [2021](#)). Despite the limited number of existing works on rising powers and informality, informal grouping practices seem to have increased in recent years and to have moved ahead of the established literature on informality and informal global governance. This study aims to fulfill this lacuna with its special focus on the network-building capacity, effectiveness and outcomes of IIGOs as new institutional settings in global governance. Moreover, this study seeks to go

beyond the existing literature with its assessment of the linkage between network power capacity defined as the capacity of rising powers to enhance and widen their networking and effectiveness in global governance and IIGOs in the examples of BRICS and MIKTA.

By putting these two IIGOs at the center of the analysis, this paper examines the conditions under which informal groupings such as BRICS and MIKTA create and sustain networks able to effectively influence global governance architecture from a state-centric perspective and covering the period until February 2022. Although acknowledging that networking is not the sole matter of states but also includes several non-state actors ranging from NGOs to the private sector, this article focuses its network analysis solely on inter-state relational governance. The choice of this state-centric perspective in network analysis of BRICS and MIKTA's cases is mainly grounded in our assumption that although global governance has increasingly become transnational in character, inter-state relations remain the driving piece of this new form of governance, and as such states remain the most important nodes in this governance system. Besides, although efforts are made to progressively involve non-state actors in policy-making processes, BRICS and to a certain extent, MIKTA are essentially state-centric informal forum, which heavily rests upon the state apparatus' political agenda and elites' perceptions. In the case

of BRICS for instance, Olivier Stuenkel underlines that 'Intra-BRICS cooperation remains, to this day, a state-driven process, so one could also liken it to "elite socialization" among BRICS governments' (Stuenkel, [2013](#)).

In doing so, it uses a network power capacity (NPC) framework derived from Emilie M. Hafner-Burton, Miles Kahler and Alexander H. Montgomery's 2009 work on Networks Analysis in International Relations, which is assessed on the basis of five main variables: (1) the existence of strong states within informal groupings, (2) the existence of strong economic and institutional ties among members of an IIGO, (3) the prevalence of common norms, values and culture among members of IIGOs, (4) the level of power symmetry among members of an informal grouping and (5) the engagement of members of IIGOs in the networks of existing established powers (through the signature of agreements).

This paper will first delve into a reassessment of the salience of informality in global governance with a special eye to the role, policies and impact of IIGOs in this process. Second, it will attempt to decrypt the relationship between networks and informal governance. Third, the paper will explain our NPC framework and its conditioning factors. Then, in an original focus, it will apply this framework to the cases of BRICS and MIKTA to investigate the extent to which these two IIGOs use their NPC in an

effective manner to be influential actors in global governance, and the conditioning factors that make this possible. The empirical part of this paper seeks to comparatively assess the ways in which informal networking has been successfully operationalized in the cases of BRICS and MIKTA.

From informality to Informal Governance Institutions

The informalization of global governance has started to attract more attention in IR circles especially in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. After 2008, there was almost a consensus among states on the fact that certain FIGOs, namely the IMF and the World Bank, had failed to prevent the 2008 economic downturn. Hence, attention has increasingly turned toward informal governance institutions such as the Group of Twenty (G20) as the best-suited platform whereby financial issues can be effectively tackled at the international level (Drezner [2014](#); Luckhurst [2016](#)). The creation of the G20 mainly stems from the growing view following the 1997 Asian Financial crisis that the Groups of 7/8 no longer represented adequately the global distribution of power with the rise of the new poles of power in the developing world and that they could not effectively tackle global financial crises (Parlar Dal and Dipama [2022](#)). The G20 is an informal forum which brings together the world's largest twenty economies made up of both established and emerging powers (although the recent data show that some G20 countries are no longer ranked among the world's

largest twenty economies) plus the EU provides more voice in global governance issues to rising powers through its expanded membership (Brandi [2019](#), p. 693) as well as ‘opportunities for status enhancement and for pushing global governance reforms’ (Biba and Holbig [2017](#)).

The aftermath of the 2008 crisis also witnessed the acceleration of power transitions from the Global North to the Global South, giving way to the rise of a group of states economically and diplomatically increasing their influence in the changing international order. The quest of the so-called rising powers for expanded autonomy vis-a-vis the major powers and for more equal and fair representation and participation in major FIGOs has further paved the way for the rapidly increasing salience of IIGOs in global governance. The vocalicity of the rising powers has also led to the informalization of global governance and the emergence of new poles of power in the international system. One of the signs of the rise of informality in global governance is the growing role played by the G-groups to the detriment of the UN General Assembly in several key international issue areas such as politics, economics, development cooperation and the environment.

So, what does the term ‘informality’ and/or ‘informal governance’ refer to? Broadly speaking, informal governance signifies ‘any rules, norms, and institutional structures and procedures that are

not enshrined in formally constituted organizations or in treaties' (Westerwinter et al. [2021](#)). Harsh defines informal governance as 'a means of decision-making that is uncodified, non-institutional, and where social relationships and webs of influence play crucial roles [and that] also include decision-making led by, or occurring entirely within NGOs at all levels' (Harsh [2012](#)). IIGOs generally lack a formal founding treaty governing their structure, relations between parties, and relations between themselves and the world, as well as a permanent secretariat dealing with the daily activities of the structure (Roger [2020](#)).

Informality should not be used interchangeably with IIGOs, because it can take various forms, which are categorized in the literature as informality within institutions, around institutions, and of institutions (Westerwinter et al. [2021](#)). Informality within institutions, also referred to as internal informality, pertains to a mode of governing used in both formal and informal institutions, characterized by informal arrangements, understandings, practices or norms operating within IIFOs and FIGOs (Vreeland and Dreher [2014](#); Steinberg [2002](#); Hardt [2015](#), [2018](#); McKeown [2009](#); Kleine [2013](#); Stone [2011](#), [2013](#)) with the aim of facilitating the achievement of consensus among the participants. The second form of informality, informality around institutions, is often associated with transgovernmental initiatives

or discussions of the ‘third UN’ (Weiss et al. [2009](#)) and refers to the important role played by transgovernmental networks (Keohane and Nye [1974](#); Raustiala [2002](#); Slaughter [2004](#); Bach and Newman [2010](#)), such as permanent representatives in multilateral diplomacy (Pouliot [2015](#)) in the decision-making process of FIGOs. Informality of institutions refers to informal governance structures outside formal organizations; it became much more apparent with the emergence of IIGOs such as the G-Group (G7 and G20) and other informal groupings such as BRICS and MIKTA, which are generally characterized by their lack of a constitutional treaty and permanent secretariat. Some scholars contend that states are more likely to establish an informal IIGO when bureaucrats, not politicians, dominate negotiations, because bureaucrats tend to favor informal, cross-border solutions to cross-border issues (Roger [2020](#)).

Although informal governance and informality are used in both FIGOs and IIGOs, they have acquired growing attention with the emergence of rising powers and IIGOs, institutions for which informality is their first distinctive feature. On this point, it appears important to investigate what explains the informalization of global governance and rising powers’ recourse to IIGOs. In this vein, this paper enumerates several reasons that could explain states’ (especially rising powers’) increasing recourse to informal modes of governance.

First, the growing number of state members in FIGOs, combined with the increasing heterogenization of international society since the decolonization period, have rendered the decision-making process harder in FIGOs (Oye [1985](#); Kahler [1992](#); Axelrod and Keohane [1985](#)) and decreased the efficiency of these formal organizations.

Consequently, the increasing perception among states that formal modes of governance fail to promote their interests started to grow and formal governance structures became less attractive, especially for rising states with great power ambitions. To avoid repeating the errors of formal governance institutions and to sustain the efficiency of informal modes of governance, membership in informal governance structures is generally open to small clubs of states sharing common interests (Westerwinter [2013](#)). Hence, informal governance structures offer an alternative to inefficient, formal governance institutions because, while preserving the sovereignty of their members, informal institutions are better equipped to solve transnational problems (Roger [2020](#)). The flexible governance rules of IIGOs further enhance their capacity to adapt to new circumstances in an international system essentially marked by uncertainty (Vabulas and Snidal [2020](#); Koremenos et al. [2001](#); Thompson [2010](#); Kleine [2013](#)). The view of IIGOs as preferable is then based on a functionalist perspective that emphasizes the relative efficiency of informality in bringing about sustainable solutions to global issues (Raustiala

[2002](#); Aust [1986](#); Abbott and Snidal [2000](#); Lipson [1991](#); Koremenos [2016](#); Prantl [2005](#); Benvenisti [2006](#); Sauer [2019](#); Kleine [2013](#)).

Second, other scholars contend that states use international institutions as a means of power creation, projection and enhancement (especially in terms of bargaining capacity) and to achieve more favorable outcomes (Westerwinter [2013](#); Vabulas and Snidal [2020](#); Stone [2011](#), [2013](#); Avant and Westerwinter [2016](#)). This point is especially important for rising powers, which seek the enhancement and recognition of their status in international relations (Parlar Dal [2019](#); Parlar Dal and Dipama [2019](#)). Informal institutions provide some margin of maneuver for participating states, which can influence policy outcomes by maximizing their outstanding agenda-setting and negotiation power (Steinberg [2002](#)). From this perspective, rising powers are more likely to participate in informal institutions because these institutions grant them the opportunity to make efficient use of their comparatively superior power and to benefit from a larger room for maneuvering (Westerwinter et al. [2021](#)).

Third, another factor that plays an important role in states' preference for informal governance pertains to the state of domestic politics. In general, democracies are characterized by a strict separation of powers whereby the legislative, executive, and judiciary are independent from each other and

equally influence domestic politics and foreign policy preferences (Mansfield and Milner [2012](#); Milner [1997](#); Simmons [2000](#); Milner and Peter Rosendorff [1997](#); Dai [2005](#); Martin [2000](#)). Foreign policy preferences are shaped by inter-institutional negotiations that can turn out to be tempestuous and costly regarding states' membership in formal international organizations and the adoption of international treaties (generally requiring legislature approval). To escape from the rigid procedures associated with the membership process in FIGOs, democratic leaders can opt for modes of international cooperation that are less demanding in terms of domestic politics than formal governance structures (Westerwinter et al. [2021](#), 15–16; Abbott and Snidal [2000](#); Lipson [1991](#); Aust [1986](#)). In contrast, in autocracies where the essence of political power is concentrated in the hands of the executive, with very minimal power granted to the parliament in determining the domestic and external policies of the country, the situation is likely to be different. As such, compared to democracies, autocracies may have less incentive to join informal institutions, since there is no difference in the preference-shaping process of autocracies in formal versus informal institutions (Westerwinter et al. [2021](#)). Nonetheless, some authors underline that non-democracies may have other reasons for using informal modes of cooperation, especially in their interactions with other autocracies (Carlson and Koremenos [2021](#)).

From informality to networking: Why do rising powers have recourse to networking?

Networking can be defined as an informal means through which states participate in global governance by establishing relations with private actors. Networks defined as informal forms of coordination between actors are used in both formal and informal governance institutions to mediate participants' interests and coordinate activities, exchange information, and share knowledge (Gu et al. [2008](#)). Networks and IIGOs interact and influence each other because, while networks are driven and shaped by informal institutions, they also drive and shape informal institutions. It is worth mentioning that networks have a certain level of hierarchy because power plays an important role between the participants and establishes hierarchies among members according to their structural positions within the network or to their material contribution to the structure. It should be underlined that the most powerful participants, in addition to their ability to influence and shape the attitudes of the other participants toward organizational changes (Krackhardt [1992](#)), are also key information distributors among strategic groups (Smith [2005](#)).

Networks that are created to achieve specific policy outcomes (Kirchner [2006](#)) through shared common interests generally lack a centralized pole of power and a legitimate dispute settlement authority (Podolny and Page [1998](#)) and are based on

consensus-building (Ansell and Gash [2008](#), 544) and the pooling of resources (Jon and Peters [2000](#), 25; Kooiman [2000](#)).

It stems from these different definitions that networks present three distinctive features, namely interdependence among participants, flexibility in organization and decision-making processes, and complementarity of resources and knowledge (Hamschi and Rebiai [2014](#)). Some point out that networks are also prone to corruptive behavior, favoritism, and abuse of authority due to their flexible character (Baez-Camargo & Ledeneva [2017](#); Luo [2008](#); Kim [2000](#), 179).

Why do rising powers turn to network as a preferred method of cooperation? First, due to the involvement of multi-stakeholders, networking possesses some comparative advantages in terms of the capacity for its participants to access information faster, and in terms of solving complex problems, building and strengthening mutual trust and solidarity among participants (Ledeneva [2018](#)). According to Huppé et al. ([2012](#)), networks ‘combine the voluntary energy and legitimacy of the civil society sector with the financial muscle and interest of businesses and the enforcement and rule-making power... of states and international organizations’ (Huppé, Creech and Knoblauch [2012](#)). Rising powers are generally in quest of enhancing their power and as such, they are always looking for new opportunities and expertise. This is

why networks serve as the most effective platform wherein rising powers can strengthen their learning and expertise and propose innovative solutions to specific global issues, which in turn would lead to the recognition of their power in international relations.

Second, networking provides some comparative economic advantages to rising powers, which generally aspire to achieve strong economic capabilities. Since networks are characterized by the participation of multiple stakeholders, including the private sector, rising powers can use governance networks to advance their economic agendas. The established, reciprocal confidence, as well as the likelihood of peer pressure in networking, contributes to lower transaction costs and alleviates the risk of free-riding by network members (Lew [2013](#); Burt [2000](#); Horak [2016](#)). Rising powers engaged in networking can enhance their economic benefits and interests and decrease the costs related to social and economic interactions in the international system by building a more permanent relation of trust and resource dependence (Van Warden [1992](#)).

In addition, rising powers in their quest for widening their strategic partnerships can make use of networks when they face uncertainty in the choice of potential strategic partners in the international system. Since networks facilitate the flow of information by reducing investigation cost

and mitigating the risk of opportunism (Gulati and Gargiulo [1999](#)), rising powers can easily find potential partners by exploiting the availability of information provided in networking. This is due to the fact that networking creates some level of 'relational embeddedness,' which refers to the influence of the close ties of an actor, making 'behavior predictable and... [alleviating] some of the fears that create difficulties among strangers' (Granovetter [1992](#)).

Another reason rising powers engage in networking is that networking can help enhance their domestic legitimacy. Indeed, due to the fact that policy initiatives within networks are decentralized and strengthen local and private initiatives, through networks, rising powers have another opportunity to become closer to the local people by promoting local initiatives (Paris [2009](#)). In the same vein, rising powers are generally known to be very protective of their sovereignty while at the same time willing to play a key role in global governance. The flexible character and ease of adjustment of networks constitute another impetus for rising powers to choose networking. The flexibility feature and the fact that the functioning and organization of networks can be easily modified to respond to changing needs allow rising powers to preserve their autonomy while at the same time strengthening their activeness in global governance.

Some scholars have discussed the sociological and relational patterns of global governance networks to break up with the conventional state-centric form of global governance networks. In this respect, Qin Yaqing used the concept of relational governance to distinguish it from rules-based governance and define it 'as a process of negotiating socio-political arrangements that manage complex relationships in a community to produce order so that members behave in a reciprocal and cooperative fashion with mutual trust evolved over a shared understanding of social norms and human morality' (Qin, [2011](#), p.133). He argues that relational governance primarily emphasizes 'negotiation', 'arrangements' to illustrate the non-static and the dynamic feature of governance, the governance and harmonization of human relations, not of individual actors, and trust as a supporting pillar (Qin, [2011](#), p.133) and concludes that global governance should include both aspects of rules-based and relational and that one element might weigh more than the other depending on the sociocultural settings and calculation of transactional costs and that in this vein that relational approach is more present in communitarian societies and that ruled-based governance approach tends to be more dominant in individualistic societies, mainly western societies (Qin, [2011](#), p.143).

Stone uses the concept of global public policy or 'global agora' which mainly emerged with the

international actors' efforts to overcome transboundary problems and have led to new forms of 'soft' authority or 'soft law,' to distinguish it from national processes of policy making and to highlight that national public institutions no longer serve as the sole organizing center for policy (Stone, [2008](#), p.20). She contends that a 'global agora' 'encompasses a wider array of political relationships inspired by liberal democracy through to coercive arrangements of strong authoritarianism, as well as to patterns of disorder, randomness, and an absence of rational imposition of planning' and might constitute a pluralistic policy-participation space without necessarily leading to a retreat of the state (Stone, [2008](#), p.22). She argues that networks 'can be thought of as creating spaces of assembly in the global agora' and that they 'are potentially a means for civic engagement and a vehicle for expanding participation' and can be a force for 'market deepening' as well as important vehicles in agenda setting and a venue for societal voices (Stone [2008](#)).

Another scholar, Ole Jacob Sending argues that although the constructivist concept of the logic of appropriateness can provide a structural explanation of individual actions based on the idea that norms shape actors' identity, it fails to explain individual action based on its assumptions of agency-structure co-constitution as well as of changes in ideational structures leading to changes in political action (Sending, [2002](#), p. 443). Adler-

Nissen further utilizes the ‘stigma’ term to correct ‘the general understanding that common values and norms are the building blocks of social order,’ and to demonstrate ‘that international society is in part constructed through the stigmatization of “transgressive” and norm-violating states and their ways of coping with stigma’ (Adler-Nissen, [2014](#)). She concludes that contrary to the conventional understanding, states are not passive objects of socialization, but active agents and that ‘stigmatized states cope strategically with their stigma and may, in some cases, challenge and even transform a dominant moral discourse’ and that ‘instead of seeing international society merely as a stable community, supported by shared values and norms, as IR theory—in particular the English School—tends to, it should be seen as a construction, which depends on stigmatization to ensure its ontological security and moral cohesion’(Adler-Nissen, [2014](#)). Furthermore, she used the Bourdieusian reading of “the international” according to which the international system is hierarchical and that processes of exclusion are intrinsic to international society and state is not a unitary actor but rather incorporated in its citizens to claim that ‘national representatives negotiate with different “minds of state”” through the meta field of diplomacy or transnational diplomacy (Adler-Nissen, [2011](#)).

Assessing IIGO’s network power capacity (NPC) in global governance: the BRICS and MIKTA cases

Positing a network power capacity framework

To assess the conditions under which rising powers in IIGOs are likely to create and enhance networking and hence to increase the effectiveness of their networking compared to each other in global governance, this paper created a network power capacity (NPC) framework based on five main variables: (1) the existence of strong states within informal groupings, (2) the existence of strong intra-economic and institutional ties, (3) the sharing of common norms, values, and culture among members of IIGOs, (4) a level of power symmetry among members of an informal grouping and (5) the engagement of IIGO members in the networks of existing, established powers through the signature of agreements. Given that a state has a high NPC when all these five (or a majority of these) conditions exist. In this context, networks driven by rising powers are likely to be created and to be more effective (stronger) when the following conditions or are met:

- *Variable 1* The existence of strong and influential states within informal groups.

The main argument here is that the existence of powerful states (in terms of GDP and political influence) within informal groupings enhances the capacity of the members of this grouping to create effective networking ties. This is due to the fact that the powerful states, through their strong bargaining

power, can lower the risks of exit and persuade the other members to engage in networking through incentives and pressure.

- The more powerful states an informal grouping has, the stronger its NPC.
- *Variable 2* States in informal groupings are political and economically interdependent (through economic ties; mutual membership in international organizations).

This variable is drawn from neoliberal theory, according to which factors such as increasing economic interdependence and overlapping membership in international institutions facilitate networking among states due to the increasing level of complex interdependence. As Halfer et al. argues 'States that already have extensive ties through some networks ~ trade, IGOs, democracy! Maybe more likely to be linked in other networks' (Hafner-Burton et al. [2009](#), p. 568). They pursue that 'Group socialization of nodes through interactions in a given subgroup can prompt changes in characteristics of individual nodes. Nodes in a cohesive subgroup favor those in-group and treat those outside with enmity. Nodes in structurally similar clusters face similar constraints and opportunities and therefore are more likely to act in similar ways. Similar behavior does not imply cooperation, however, structurally equivalent nodes may also compete, depending on the roles associated with their positions. For example, two

states in the same postcolonial preferential trading arrangement may compete for trade privileges and aid from the former colonial power' (Hafner-Burton et al. [2009](#), p.569). This paper acknowledges, however, that deeper institutional and economic ties does not necessarily lead to positive engagement and might also lead to tensions among states because as Hafner-Burton et al. note ([2009](#), 578–579), 'Membership reflects affiliations rather than direct network ties, however. Although mutual membership in international institutions may lead to more opportunities for mutual interaction, socialization, and information transfer, it does not necessarily lead to positive ties, as is often assumed in international relations' (Hafner-Burton et al. [2009](#), P.578–579).

- The stronger the economic and institutional ties among members of an informal grouping, the stronger its NPC.
- *Variable 3* The extent to which states in informal groupings share common norms, values, and culture.

This variable is drawn from the constructivist perspective of social interaction and socialization, according to which states with similar social and institutional identity are likely to establish and conduct peaceful relations due to the high level of mutual trust and a convergence of interests.

- The stronger the shared norms and values (democracy, sovereignty, and non-intervention principles) in an informal grouping, the stronger the NPC of this grouping.
- *Variable 4* The extent to which states in informal groupings are relatively equally powerful (i.e., enjoy symmetric power relations).

The level of symmetry or asymmetry in power relations among members of an informal grouping influences its NPC. When states within an informal grouping hold relatively equal power, the NPC of this grouping is enhanced because the negotiation process is likely to be conducted fluidly and peacefully due to the expected equal outcomes.

- The higher the level of power symmetry in relations among members of an informal grouping, the stronger its NPC.
- *Variable 5* The extent to which states in informal groupings are engaged with other established powers' networks.

IIGO members' level of interaction with the networks of established powers influences the NPC of this grouping. When rising powers in an informal grouping are already engaged in other existing networks established by great powers, the informal grouping can benefit from the inter-networking's

exchange of information and from the experiences and knowledge of the existing networks. To assess this variable, we will count the number of all kinds of bilateral agreements (political, economic, and military) concluded between MIKTA/BRICS members and the EU/USA, although not in an exhaustive manner.

- The more members in an informal grouping are engaged in existing established powers' networks, the stronger the NPC of the informal grouping.

Based on the five independent variables or conditioning factors of our NPC framework, the next section of this study will test the following hypothesis (dependent variable): *The greater the IIGOs' NPC, the greater their effectiveness and impact in global governance.*

Table [1](#) presents the NPC framework with its dependent variable and five independent variables to explore the cases of two selected IIGOs: BRICS and MIKTA. In the following section, data collected for each independent variable will be separately interpreted for each IIGO in order to assess the extent to which their NPC impacts their performance in global governance and to determine whether there exists a correlation between NPC and the effectiveness of IIGOs. Here it is important to remember that high NPC means high effectiveness of IIGOs in global governance.

Table 1 Network power capacity framework. Assessing BRICS and MIKTA's networking power in global governance: testing the variables

While BRICS and MIKTA have differing diplomatic, institutional, and bureaucratic structures, they share a common understanding about the future of global governance and the role that rising powers could play outside formal international settings, where they enjoy more flexibility and speed in issue-based global policy areas in general and in crisis management in particular. BRICS and MIKTA share more commonalities in terms of their narratives, club characteristics, and global ambitions than other IIGOs like G20, for instance. Despite their different priorities, forum structures, and member profile, these two IIGOs have some common features, such as skepticism of the West, criticism of the international order, and distrust of IIGOs' unequal decision-making mechanisms, which favor the major Western powers. While BRICS has generally been considered a cluster of first-tier emerging powers, MIKTA is deemed to be a second-tier emerging power forum with limited impact in both the Global South and the Global North (Colakoglu [2016](#)). It is also difficult to claim for BRICS and MIKTA that their members are all like-minded, emerging powers. On the contrary, in many issue areas, they have diverging approaches and policy preferences (Chaturvedi and Saha [2017](#)). In the case of BRICS, conflict patterns always have the potential to overshadow cooperation patterns,

since China, India, and Russia are engaged in an enduring status competition marked by geopolitical rivalries and conflicts of interests. In the MIKTA case, a similar status competition among members as seen in the BRICS case does not exist, which could have led to the strengthening of cooperation among members (Parlar Dal [2019](#)). However, compared to BRICS, MIKTA has limited global outreach despite its ambitious agenda (Cooper [2015](#)) and cannot become an effective IIGO that could fully attract the attention of both major and rising powers. Despite the willingness of recent rotating presidencies to revitalize the grouping by expanding its agenda, MIKTA is still far from creating impact as a result of its limited global outreach and its narrow engagement within other FIGOs and IIGOs. As clearly illustrated in the example of MIKTA, the lack of geopolitical rivalries and the existence of friendly relations among members do not result in further cooperation in such an informal grouping, as had been expected by many international observers. This point also confirms the necessity of taking into consideration other conditioning factors that are closely connected with their network power capacity while determining the effectiveness of IIGOs in the international system.

It is important to underline that, in the BRICS case, networking appears to be more like a default option congruent with the weaknesses of the club model. Indeed, in its initial stages, the BRICS group acted

like a club of countries agitating for tangible reforms in the international system (lobbying for reforms in FIGOs and establishing the New Development Bank) and pursuing more reformist and challenging politics while avoiding sensitive issues such as UNSC reform (Cooper [2016](#); Cooper & Farooq [2013](#)). Yet, growing internal divisions among members of the BRICS group over several important issues (Cooper [2016](#); Mansingh [2010](#); Chen and Chen [2010](#), 114–121) led to the failure of this club model and to a progressive shift of the BRICS group toward the less challenging networking model. The opposite is observed in the MIKTA case; since its outset, MIKTA has operated mostly as a network model, rather than a club, with more flexible politics and less challenging stances vis-a-vis the international order (Cooper [2016](#); Lee [2016](#), 3).

In this regard, a qualitative and quantitative comparison of BRICS' and MIKTA's NPC variables may give us new clues about their effectiveness in global governance. An integral assessment of the NPC of these two IIGOs in relation to their informal power in global governance arises as a way of explaining these organizations' capability in enhancing cooperation among their own members in issue areas where inflexible, formal structures and power asymmetries in the existing FIGOs (Colgan and Van de Graaf [2015](#)) don't allow states to take new decisions and initiatives together with their peers or to successfully manage the

complexity of their interactions with major powers.

In this regard, a network power approach encompassing multiple conditioning factors seems indispensable to understand in which ways and under which conditions IIGOs make substantial contributions to global governance and their rising powers networks. Here we will apply our NPC framework, respectively, to BRICS and MIKTA by collecting the necessary data relevant to the five independent variables of the framework to compare their NPC for each variable. As a second step, a comparative NPC ranking table will be provided in order to assess their network capacities and incapacities, which will determine their global governance effectiveness.

- *Variable 1* The higher the number of powerful states an informal grouping has, the stronger its NPC.

With respect to Variable 1, there are more powerful states in the BRICS group than in the MIKTA group. In global political and security issues, whereas two BRICS countries (China and Russia) are permanent members in the UNSC and hold veto power over global political and security issues, no MIKTA member is a permanent member of the UNSC. Likewise, while two BRICS members, namely China and Russia, are official nuclear powers according to the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), no MIKTA country is officially a nuclear power (Arms Control Association [2020](#)).

Regarding the level of military power, whereas all the BRICS countries except South Africa rank among the world's largest ten military powers in 2021, only South Korea ranks among the world's ten largest military powers in the MIKTA group. Whilst within the BRICS group, Russia, China, and India rank, respectively, as the world's second, third, and fourth largest military powers in 2021, South Korea in MIKTA ranks as the world's sixth-largest military power (Global Fire Power [2021](#)).

Economically, while the BRICS countries' cumulative GDP share amounted to 25.22% of the world's total GDP in 2020, China and India ranked, respectively, as the second and sixth largest economy with a GDP share of 18.5% and 3.11%, respectively, in 2020 (International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook October 2020). In contrast, beyond the fact that the MIKTA countries' cumulative GDP share is lower than that of the BRICS and amounted to a mere 6.65% of the world's total GDP in 2020, only one MIKTA country, namely South Korea, ranked among the world's ten largest economies in 2020 with a GDP share of 1.84% (International Monetary Fund [2020](#)). A comparison of the individual GDP of each group's members and of each group's cumulative GDP share shows that the BRICS group has much greater potential to impact global economic governance than the MIKTA group.

Institutionally, by considering the voting power share of the BRICS and MIKTA countries in the IMF, China, India, and Russia hold, respectively, 6.08%, 2.63%, and 2.59% of the IMF's total voting power and rank, respectively, as the third, sixth, and seventh most powerful states in the IMF's decision-making process. Most importantly, whereas China and Russia appoint their own executive director in the IMF, no MIKTA country has such an opportunity, since all the MIKTA members are represented by executive directors elected for a block of countries (IMF Website). Thus, compared to MIKTA members, BRICS members through their important quota share and voting power appear to benefit from more influence and power in status-quo international institutions.

In terms of soft power projection capacity, whereas China and Russia in BRICS rank, respectively, as the world's eighth and thirteenth country and are included in the world's top twenty countries, within MIKTA, only South Korea is included in this range of ranking, in which it holds eleventh place (Brand Finance's Global Soft Power Index [2021](#)).

In terms of regional leadership and actorness, BRICS countries are regional powers in their respective regions: Brazil in Latin America through the Union of South American Nations (USAN), China in East Asia through its established Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), India in South Asia through the South Asian Association for

Regional Cooperation (SAARC), South Africa in Southern Africa through SADC, Russia in East Europe and Central Asia through the Eurasian Economic Union. Although the same can be said for MIKTA countries since Mexico has regional influence among the states south of its border, Turkey has a key regional influence in the Middle East, South Korea's strategic outreach across Asia and the Pacific and Australia plays a leading state in the South Pacific region, this paper argues that the level of regional actorness of BRICS member is stronger due to their relatively higher material capability.

The assessment of Variable 1 in our case studies indicates that the BRICS group has more powerful states than the MIKTA group in political, economic, security, institutional and soft power capacity; as such, the BRICS informal grouping is likely to have a much stronger NPC in global governance than the MIKTA grouping.

- *Variable 2* The stronger the economic and institutional ties among members of an informal grouping, the higher its network-power capacity.

Regarding membership in formal global institutions like the UN, the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, the WHO, the ILO, and the G20, BRICS and MIKTA members have overlapping membership, since all the BRICS and MIKTA countries are members of the above-mentioned

organizations. Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that whereas within the UN two BRICS countries, China and Russia, are permanent members in the UNSC, no MIKTA country enjoys permanent membership in the UNSC. Considering the key role the G20 plays in global governance issues since 2008, this paper contends that the G20 provides an important networking platform for both BRICS and MIKTA countries, especially in terms of coordinating and adopting common positions in global issues.

The level of differentiation between BRICS and MIKTA is more pronounced when it comes to membership in selected regional organizations. In this context, regarding BRICS, China, India, Russia, and Brazil are members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a bank of which South Africa is a prospective founding member, but has yet to join. Whereas four BRICS members, namely South Africa, China, Brazil, and India, are members of the African Development Bank (AfDB), three BRICS countries—China, India, and Russia—are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the East Asia Summit (EAS). Brazil, India, and South Africa have created the IBSA Dialogue Forum, an international tripartite group aiming to promote and strengthen cooperation among the three countries. Pairs of BRICS countries, namely China and India and China and Russia, are members of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Asia–Pacific

Economic Organization (APEC), respectively. In sum, there is one organization (AIIB) of which four BRICS countries are members, four organizations (SCO, EAS, ADB, and the IBSA Dialogue Forum) of which three BRICS countries are members and two organizations (ADB and APEC) in which two BRICS countries share overlapping membership.

With respect to MIKTA, four MIKTA countries, namely Australia, Korea, Indonesia, and Mexico, on one hand and Turkey, Mexico, Australia, and Korea on the other share overlapping membership in the Asia–Pacific Economic Organization (APEC) and the OECD, respectively. Four MIKTA countries (Indonesia, Korea, Australia, and Turkey) are also members of the Asian Development Bank and the AIIB. Three MIKTA countries, Indonesia, Australia, and Korea, are members of the East Asia Summit. Two MIKTA members, namely Turkey and Korea, on the one hand and Korea and Australia on the other, are, respectively, members of the African Development Bank and the OECD-DAC.

Within BRICS, although there is only one regional organization in which four BRICS countries are members (compared to four in the case of MIKTA), the number of organizations in which three BRICS countries are members totals four, compared to only one organization in MIKITA's case. With respect to membership in formal and informal organizations that include two countries, BRICS totals three organizations compared to two for

MIKTA (UNSC, APEC, and ADB in the case of BRICS; OECD-DAC and AfDB in the case of MIKTA).

One can deduct from Table [2](#) that BRICS and MIKTA have an equal level of institutional overlap because although four MIKTA members have overlapping institutional connections in four IIGOs (against only one for BRICS), three BRICS members have overlapping membership in four institutions (against only one for MIKTA) and the two groupings share similar levels of institutional overlap within the major FIGOs and the G20.

Table 2 Overlapping institutional memberships of BRICS and MIKTA countries.

In terms of economic ties within BRICS, among China's top trading partners in terms of export sales in 2020 are Korea (4.3%), India (2.6%), Australia (2.1%), and Russia (2%). Whereas within the BRICS group, only India ranks among China's top trading partners in terms of exports with a share of 2.6% in 2020, Brazil's top trading partners include two BRICS members, namely China (32.3%) and India (1.4%), with a cumulative share of 33.7%. Within BRICS, China and India rank among Russia and South Africa's top trading partners in terms of export sales in 2020 with a cumulative share of 18.3% and 15.2%, respectively (IMF [2021](#)).

One can see that there is always at least one BRICS member that ranks among its peers' top trading partners and that China also ranks at the top of the row in terms of export share for all the four other BRICS members, indicating that China is the commercial hub within the BRICS group (Oropeza [2014](#)).

Regarding the level of intra-economic ties within MIKTA, no country ranked among Turkey's top trading partners in terms of export sales in 2020 (its top trading partners include: Russia, 2.7% and China, 1.7%), and only Korea ranks among Mexico's top trading partners with a share of 0.8% (China and Brazil's shares of Mexico's total exports are 1.86% and 0.70%, respectively). In the same vein, whilst two MIKTA countries, namely South Korea and Australia, rank among Indonesia's top trading partners with a cumulative share of 8% (compared to a 19.5% share for China and a 6.4% share for India of Indonesian total exports), only Korea and Indonesia rank among Australia's top trading partners with a cumulative share of 7.8% (compared to a 43% share for China and a 3.4% share for India of total Australian exports). In the case of South Korea, Mexico, and Indonesia rank among its top trading partners with a cumulative share of 2.8% (compared to a share of 25.8% for China, 2.3% for India, and 1.3% for Russia of total South Korean exports (IMF 2021), it can be deduced from these statistics that the level of intra-MIKTA trade is very low, because China appears to

be ahead of all other MIKTA members in terms of the export share of each MIKTA country, and a MIKTA country like Turkey does not have a peer MIKTA member among its potential trading partners.

Therefore, compared to the BRICS case, the cumulative share of MIKTA members in their peers' total trading percentage appears to be lower, and the level of economic ties between BRICS members seems to be stronger than those between MIKTA members. It is worth mentioning that factors such as the BRICS's New Development Bank as well as the relatively larger geographical dispersion of MIKTA members contribute to enhancing economic ties among BRICS members and the intra-BRICS trade rate. In sum, BRICS members have equal institutional ties with but stronger economic ties than MIKTA countries and, as such, the BRICS group is likely to have a stronger NPC in global governance.

- *Assessment of Variable 3* The stronger the shared norms and values in an informal grouping, the stronger the NPC of this grouping.

Looking at the political regime of the BRICS countries through the 2020 democracy index ranking, one can see that whereas South Africa (45th out of 167), Brazil (49th out of 167), India (53rd out of 167) are classified as flawed democracies, Russia (124th) and China (151st) are

categorized as authoritarian regimes (The Economist Intelligence Unit [2021](#)). As we can see, no BRICS member is classified as a full democracy and, as such, democratic values do not constitute shared norms among BRICS members.

With respect to the political regime of the MIKTA countries, the 2020 Democracy index identifies Australia (9th) and South Korea (23rd) as considered full democracies, Indonesia (64th) and Mexico (72nd) as flawed democracies, and Turkey as a hybrid regime (104th). Thus, the MIKTA group has some democratic strengths because it includes two full democracies, two flawed democracies, and one hybrid regime (The Economist Intelligence Unit [2021](#)). Therefore, compared to BRICS, MIKTA members appear to be more democratic and, as such, the level of shared norms is higher since there is no outsider country (autocratic regime) in the grouping. That the promotion of the liberal norms lies at the center of the MIKTA group can be read in the words of the South Korean foreign ministry who explains the new group as ‘one between middle power nations that share core values of democracy and free market economy and have the willingness and capability to contribute to the international community’s development’ (Jongryn [2015](#)).

It is obvious that compared to BRICS, all MIKTA countries share some kinds of democratic values although at the individual level the promotion of liberal values at the domestic level does not seem to

be at the core of MIKTA's common agenda, at least in practice considering the backsliding trend of liberal political values in some members such as Turkey.

It is worth pointing out that although the BRICS countries share fewer democratic norms than the MIKTA countries and are considered norm-spoilers, they nonetheless share some other common values in global governance, such as the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-intervention, and are fierce advocates of these shared values in global governance. The common goal of BRICS is to get rid of the western hegemony in global agenda setting by protecting some of their core principles such as the principle of sovereignty and non-interference. These shared norms frequently lead to common reactions from BRICS countries in international cases of military interventions from established powers, such as the cases in Venezuela, Libya, and Syria as well as to their criticism's over the western sanctions against Russia following the Ukrainian invasion. Yet, it should be mentioned that BRICS countries sometimes pursue narrow national objectives which trumps their common position. With that said, MIKTA countries do not seem to share a high level of common values in international politics beyond their commitment to minimal democratic values.

Thus, the BRICS members share more common norms and values than the MIKTA members do and

are therefore likely to have a stronger NPC in global governance.

- *Assessment of Variable 4* The higher the level of symmetric power relations among the members of an informal grouping, the higher its NPC.

In international relations, symmetry and asymmetry are assessed mainly by taking into account the material (military and economic) capabilities of states (Pfetsch [2011](#)). This variable stems from the general idea that symmetric relations, which are based on a relatively equal distribution of material power, are more stable than asymmetric ones (Deutsch [1963](#); Rubin and Brown [1975](#)). Since negotiations among such states are likely to be mutually beneficial (Rubin and Brown [1975](#), 199; Pruitt and Lewis [1977](#), 185) and the expected outcomes of negotiations are generally assumed to be fair, the parties involved in symmetric relations are unlikely to block or break off the negotiations (Pfetsch [2011](#)).

The level of power asymmetry among BRICS members is higher than that among MIKTA members, mainly due to the Chinese (Shambaugh [2013](#)) and Russian factor. Politically, whereas within BRICS only Russia and China are UNSC permanent members and hold a veto power over global political and security issues, no MIKTA country is a permanent UNSC member. Whereas within BRICS Russia and China are nuclear powers

according to the Treaty of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, no MIKTA country is considered a nuclear power. Considering the voting power share of BRICS and MIKTA countries in the IMF, whilst China and Russia hold, respectively, 6.08% and 2.59% of the IMF's total voting power and elect their own executive directors in the IMF, all MIKTA members are represented by executive directors elected to represent a block of countries. Economic asymmetry also exists in the BRICS group due to the Chinese factor, because its share of the world's GDP (18.5%) is far larger than the cumulative GDP share of the remaining four countries (amounting to 8.56% of the world's GDP). In contrast, there is no such great difference between the MIKTA countries' share of the world's total GDP: South Korea (1.84%), Australia (1.63%), Indonesia (1.28%), Mexico (1.20%), and Turkey (0.7%) (International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook 2020).

Thus, the relatively higher level of power symmetry within MIKTA grouping compels us to deduce that the MIKTA grouping is likely to have a stronger level of NPC than the BRICS grouping.

- *Assessment of Variable 5* The more states in an informal grouping are engaged with existing established powers via the signature of agreements, the higher the NPC of this informal grouping.

As Table 3 indicates, whereas MIKTA countries have concluded in total 23 agreements (economic, political and military) with established powers (the EU and the USA), the BRICS countries have concluded 29. It is worth pointing out, however, that the MIKTA group has concluded a larger number of FTAs with the established powers (three with the EU and three with the USA) than the BRICS countries, which have concluded three FTAs with the EU only.

Table 3 Lists of agreements signed (and still in force) between BRICS and MIKTA countries with established powers (the EU and the USA)-Non-exhaustive list.

Despite the relatively higher number of FTAs concluded between MIKTA countries and the established powers, however, their network relations with the established powers are still in a lower position especially in political and security areas (without ignoring the fact that Turkey is a strong NATO member). Indeed, China and Russia, through their permanent membership in the UNSC, are actively engaged in the established powers' security and political networks. Moreover, China and Russia, as nuclear powers, are parts of the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal concluded between Iran and the P5 + 1 (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the USA—plus Germany) together with the European Union. This long-established engagement with established powers has enhanced BRICS' capacity to speak with one

voice on several important issues such as reforms in the IMF and the WB, climate change, and the post-2015 Development Agenda (Pretoria News, n.d; Raman [2018](#)).

Therefore, the BRICS group is more engaged with established powers' networks and thus is likely to have a stronger NPC in global governance than the MIKTA group.

It stems from Table 4 that with respect to Variable 1 (The higher number of powerful states an informal grouping has, the stronger its network-power capacity), the BRICS group is likely to have a stronger NPC in global governance than MIKTA, because the BRICS group includes some of the most powerful economic (China and India), military (Russia, China, and India) and political states (China and Russia) in the Global South, and one BRICS member, namely China, is simultaneously an economic, military and political power in international politics.

Table 4 NPC ranking of BRICS and MIKTA.

Regarding Variable 2 (The stronger the economic and institutional ties among members of an informal grouping, the stronger its NPC), the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data above showcases that whereas BRICS ranks first in terms of economic ties, MIKTA and BRICS rank equally in terms of institutional ties. Indeed, BRICS members are more economically connected than MIKTA members, since China stands out as the

largest trading partner for almost all the four peer countries. The same cannot be said in the case of MIKTA, where the level of economic ties is very low and where China actually appears to be one of the largest trading partners for almost all the MIKTA countries. BRICS' stronger ties are partly explained by the fact that the BRICS group is older and less geographically dispersed and enjoys stronger institutional settings such as the establishment in 2014 of the New Development Bank, which certainly contributes to increased intra-BRICS trade.

Further, BRICS and MIKTA obviously seem to enjoy relatively equal institutional ties among their members. Although there is only one regional institution (the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank) in which at least four members share overlapping membership in the case of BRICS (compared to four organizations in the MIKTA case), as seen in Table [2](#), among the BRICS members, China, Russia, and India share common membership in three international organizations (AIIB, SCO, and EAS). Likewise, both China and Russia are UNSC permanent members and are also members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization alongside India. In the MIKTA case, in addition to the membership of four MIKTA countries in the Asia–Pacific Economic Organization, the ADB, the AIIB, and the OECD, other institutional ties of the grouping are, respectively, three MIKTA countries' membership

in the East Asia Summit and two MIKTA countries' membership in the African Development Bank (Korea and Turkey) and in the OECD-DAC (Korea and Australia). However, a comparative assessment of these two IIGOs' economic ties shows that the BRICS group has wider economic ties compared to those of MIKTA, giving the former group an advantage in global governance networks. This last point confirms BRICS' stronger NPC when compared to that of MIKTA about variable 2.

The analysis of Variable 3 (The more shared norms and values in an informal grouping, the higher the NPC of this grouping) reveals that MIKTA members more than BRICS members seem to share common democratic values because the democratic index score of all the countries shows that there is no purely autocratic regime within the MIKTA grouping. Therefore, although the democratic level varies from one MIKTA country to another, all of its members share some minimal democratic values.

Drawing upon the democratic peace theory according to which democracies are likely to harmonize their priorities and interests and cooperate peacefully, as well as from the socialization process of the constructivist perspective, according to which actors get socialized through social interaction with their peers, it can be claimed that in theory, MIKTA is likely to have a stronger NPC in democratic global governance. However, in practice, pushing for democratic values is not one of the prioritized areas

of the group. On the other hand, despite the fact that BRICS acts as a norm spoiler rather than a norm entrepreneur, especially in major international institutions like the UN, its members seem to possess a cluster of commonly shared norms and values, such as sovereignty, non-interference, and institution-building.

Nevertheless, in practice, BRICS appears more as a state-centric community coordinating the self-interests of its members than a reformist, institution-transforming community. The neo-colonial and semi-imperial ambitions of its strongest members (China and Russia) and the autocratic nature of the state systems of most of its members also prevent BRICS from being an efficient norm creator in global governance.

However, the establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), as well as its civil, youth, women, and business-related initiatives, can be seen as an outcome of its members' commonly shared values and norms. The launch of the BRICS Emergency Assistance Loan by the NDB in April 2020 to be disbursed to BRICS members in order to help them fight against the pandemic is a good illustration of how norm-creation and shared values can lead to strengthening an IIGO's NPC.

With respect to Variable 4 (The higher the level of symmetric power relations among the members of an informal grouping, the higher its NPC), the analysis above indicates that the level of enmity and

great power competition among MIKTA members is lower than that among BRICS members. MIKTA, as a middle power grouping (Parlar Dal et al. [2016](#); Parlar Dal [2019](#)), seems to be characterized by more symmetrical power relations than BRICS. It can also be argued that MIKTA members' global ambitions are more limited than those of BRICS members and that intra-MIKTA relations are not informed by status competition emanating from geopolitical rivalries in the grouping. In the BRICS case, status competition among its members is high since two BRICS members, namely China and Russia, are fiercely in search of great power status in the international system. On the other hand, BRICS appears as a more homogenous IIGO than MIKTA in terms of its global reach, its international system-related reform aspirations, and its anti-Western stance. Among BRICS members, China, Russia, and India are both partners and rivals, and this coexistence of cooperation and competition seems to paradoxically strengthen BRICS' NPC and effectiveness in global governance as evidenced by the BRICS group's higher NPC on all the above-mentioned variables except variable 4. Power relations among BRICS members are less symmetrical than those among MIKTA members. Here China can be seen as one of the important driving factors impacting the emergence of power asymmetries among BRICS members since China's material power is far higher than that of other members. On the other hand, Russia's membership in the UNSC alongside China, its strong military

capabilities and assertiveness, its Soviet legacy and former superpower status, its distinct actorness in the energy security, and its continuing security challenge to the Transatlantic Alliance constitute additional factors in the widening power gap between the stronger members of BRICS and the group's other members. The China–Russia–India triangle can be seen as the main source of the relatively higher asymmetrical power relations among BRICS members. This means that compared to MIKTA, BRICS' level of symmetrical power relations is lower, and this negatively impacts its NPC and its level of effectiveness. Here what is striking is the increasing competition in recent years between China and India in Southeast Asia, and between China and Russia in Central Asia, Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Africa. The less powerful members of BRICS, Brazil and South Africa, have also been impacted by the rise of geopolitical competition among the most powerful members. The same cannot be said for MIKTA, whose members are neither hegemonic powers in their respective regions nor rivals in the international system, which positively impacts the level of MIKTA's symmetrical power relations. Therefore, MIKTA is more likely to have a stronger NPC in global governance than BRICS.

The examination of Variable 5 (The more states in an informal grouping are engaged with the existing established powers (namely the USA and the EU) through the signature of agreements, the higher the

NPC of this informal grouping) showcases that BRICS is more engaged with established powers than MIKTA thanks to the signature of agreements. Whereas BRICS members have concluded a total of three Free Trade Agreements with the EU and nine agreements with the USA, MIKTA members have signed a total of six FTAs (three with the USA and three with the EU. In fact, Russia and China's UNSC membership gives them a privileged status in dealing with the major actors of the international system. China and Russia are also parties to the Iran Nuclear Deal concluded in 2015 with established nuclear powers. On the other hand, Russia is an important ally of many European members in the field of energy, despite the fact that many European countries are seeking to decrease their dependence on Russian gas by diversifying their energy suppliers. The newly signed EU–China Comprehensive Investment Agreement in January 2021 and the EU–China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation are all concrete examples of China's engagement with the EU. Similarly, the EU has reached eleven agreements with Brazil, India, and South Africa (five agreements with Brazil, three agreements with India, and three agreements with South Africa). Here it is important to note that the BRICS countries are more engaged with the EU than the USA in the field of trade. In the MIKTA case, both the USA and the EU signed an equal number of FTAs with MIKTA countries. Among the BRICS countries, Russia and China have the most limited diplomatic engagement with the USA when

it comes to the conclusion of agreements. However, despite their existing power competition and geopolitical conflicts, the USA, China, and Russia have strong institutional and diplomatic ties that make them exclusively interdependent in many issue areas of global governance. The assessment of Variable 5 shows that BRICS has been more engaged with established powers as a result of its members' conclusion of agreements with both the USA and the EU, which raises its NPC and effectiveness as an IIGO compared to MIKTA.

Parallelism between NPC and enhanced influence in the global governance of MIKTA and BRICS

It stems from the analysis of the tables above that the BRICS group has a relatively higher NPC than the MIKTA group, at least in theory. This relatively higher NPC has sometimes contributed to enhancing the BRICS group's interdependency (Laidi, [2012](#)) and their influence on global governance issues. In this respect, BRICS countries have with one voice asked for key reforms in the IMF and World Bank through joint communique in order to increase the representativeness of the global south in these institutions (Stuenkel, [2013](#)). Indeed, at the G20 finance ministers' summit held in Horsham in 2009, the BRIC countries reiterated their commitment to global governance reforms in the following:

We draw our special attention to the reform of international financial institutions. We stand for

reviewing the IMF's role and mandate so as to adapt it to a new global monetary and financial architecture. We emphasize the importance of a strong commitment to governance reform with a clear timetable and roadmap. We consider that IMF resources are clearly inadequate and should be very significantly increased through various channels. Borrowing should be a temporary bridge to a permanent quota increase as the Fund is a quota-based institution. Hence we call for the completion of the next general review of quotas by January 2011 (BRICS Information Center, [2009](#)).

With respect to the World Bank, BRICS countries asked for 'the speeding up of the second phase of voice and representation reform in the World Bank Group, which should be completed by April 2010,' and called it 'imperative' that the next heads of the IMF and the World Bank be selected through 'open merit-based' processes, irrespective of nationality or regional considerations (BRICS Information Center, [2009](#)). These recommendations of BRICS have been found in various G-20 communiqués showing that a harmonization of the BRICS approach to global governance increases their influence on global governance issues. These had been materialized by the G-20's leaders supports to the 'threefold increase of resources available to the IMF' and to 'the issuance of new special drawing rights (SDRs)' and their promise to 'build a stronger, more globally consistent, supervisory and regulatory framework for the future financial sector' (Government of Canada, [2009](#)). The voices

raised by the BRICS countries have been translated into policy since the IMF accepted the quota share reforms in 2010 and this has led to the increase of BRICS countries' voting share in the IMF, especially China's, Russia's, and India's. The same cannot be said for the MIKTA group whose members do not as a group produce common position to ask for reforms in the traditional financial institutions. There are only evidences of Turkish elites asking for fairer representation of the global south in key institutions in their political discourses (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [2011](#)).

Besides, BRICS countries have most often adopted a common position against international sanctions and military interventions, which they see as a transgression to states' national sovereignty and a tool used by western powers to strengthen their legitimacy in global governance. BRICS countries have firmly condemned international sanctions (especially the double standards in the implementation of these sanctions with regard to the US' illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003) imposed on Russia following Ukraine invasion and with the exception of South Africa, BRICS countries abstained to vote for the UN resolution that authorized NATO's military intervention in Libya in 2011 and have continuously blocked any initiative within the UNSC to authorize a military intervention in Syria (Laidi, [2011](#)). As a Brazilian Minister of Foreign affairs declared: 'Brazil will not

accept a document that is identical to the one that was passed against Libya and that led to airstrikes' (Cited in Laidi [2011](#)).

In a joint communique¹, BRICS representatives rejected calls to exclude Russia from the G20 in the aftermath of the Crimean Crisis, thus assertively undercutting Western attempts to isolate Russia (Stuenkel [2014](#)). The final document of the BRICS meeting in 2014 stated that 'the escalation of hostile language, sanctions and counter-sanctions, and force does not contribute to a sustainable and peaceful solution, according to international law, including the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter' (Republic of South Africa, Department of International Relations and Cooperation [2014](#)). Furthermore, China, Brazil, India, and South Africa (along with 54 other nations) abstained from the UN General Assembly resolution criticizing the Crimea referendum (Keck, [2014](#), p. 31), despite the gravity of the situation.

The translation of the BRICS' relatively higher NPC into global policy is further illustrated with the group's creation in 2014 of the New Development Bank (NDB) (Reuters, [2013](#)) to serve as an alternative to the status-quo financial institutions like World Bank and IMF (The Guardian, [2013](#)) and to slowly reduce the United States' institutional centrality which provides it with a hegemonic privilege (Stuenkel, [2016](#)). Through the NDB, BRICS seek to coordinate and defend their common

position and push for reforms in existing IFIs and as such to become key agenda setters in global financial issues. In the same vein, the establishment of the 'BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)' constitutes 'a framework for providing protection against global liquidity pressures' (Islam [2019](#), p.480).

The same cannot be said for the MIKTA group which although issuing joint statements on several issues (such as the 17/12/2021's joint statement on Afghanistan, the 21/05/2021's statement on Covid, their 10/01/2016 joint statement on Korean Nuclear Test) fails to join coordinated actions to these statements. Theoretically, the MIKTA group is attached to the principle of a rule-based multilateralism since its vision statement outlines that 'MIKTA countries are like-minded on many of the global challenges of our time and are active contributors in major international forums. We have both the will and the capability to contribute to protecting public goods and strengthening global governance' (MIKTA [2015](#)). Moreover, the MIKTA group is explicitly committed 'to the purposes and principles of the United Nations (UN) Charter and other universally recognized norms governing international relations' (Akram [2021](#)). Nonetheless, some argue that MIKTA does not highlight a clear link between aim and initiative (Robertson [2018](#)) and that after its establishment MIKTA lost its dynamic and activeness within the fading 'middle power moment' in global politics and domestic

turmoil in member countries (Carr [2020](#), p.10).

This view is corroborated by some MIKTA members' diplomats who accepts that 'in multilateral spaces MIKTA remains a concept in the making and coordination among the members is still in its infancy' (Kim et al. [2018](#): 483; Karadeniz [2020](#)). With respect to the UNSC reform, Turkey seems to be the only member which raised its voice about the necessity to reform the UNSC through the 'world is bigger than five' statement of the president.

Despite their lower NPC, the MIKTA group is more influential on development cooperation issues than the BRICS group and this has been materialized with the launch on 29 January 2021 of the 'MIKTA Development Cooperation Institutions Network,' which will serve as an official consultation channel and adopted the joint statement (MIKTA [2021](#)). At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that, over the last decade, individual MIKTA countries have already tried to position themselves as brokers and facilitators in the sphere of global development, although with mixed results. In this context, while Korea hosted the 2011 Busan meeting where OECD-led discussions about 'aid effectiveness' gave way to a more inclusive arrangement to address 'development effectiveness' across the board, Indonesia co-chaired the newly established Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), and Mexico hosted the first major GPEDC meeting in 2014 (Haug [2017](#), p.64). Over

the last four years, MIKTA Chairs have also organized meetings and events that focused on sustainable development or related issues (Haug [2017](#), 65). In this vein, the MIKTA development seminars or workshops were held in Australia (2014), Korea (2015), again Australia (2016), and Turkey (2017) (Haug [2017](#)). At the first workshop in 2014, the MIKTA Foreign Ministers underlined that ‘development cooperation is the area where MIKTA can immediately work together to promote global efforts to support prosperity and stability in developing countries’ (MIKTA [2014](#); Haug [2017](#)).

Furthermore, it is important to underline that BRICS’s countries capacity to use their relatively higher NPC to influence global governance face some challenges because the group’s common interest is most often traded off with national interest calculations. In this respect, the issue of widening permanent membership at the UNSC remains a dividing issue among BRICS members. Although India and Brazil have mainly been the fiercest advocates of widening the number of UNSC permanent members, China and to some extent Russia seem to be less enthusiastic about the inclusion of India and Brazil in the UNSC due to geostrategic rivalry and to their willingness to keep the status quo and their privileged position within this ‘club of the Big.’ The fact that the IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) dialogue forum established in 2004 under India’s leadership to discuss issues about the expansion of the UNSC permanent and

non-permanent membership, south–south cooperation and the growth and development of use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes (Government of India [2004](#)) still pursues its actions in parallel to those of BRICS further reinforces BRICS' members' division over the issue of UNSC reform, especially.

This lack of harmonization of national interests in the BRICS case is further illustrated by China and Russia's vote for UN sanctions against Iran, despite that Brazil was making efforts to avoid these sanctions and solve the issue through mediation (Laidi [2011](#), p.11). Additionally, despite that BRICS countries agree on the necessity to get rid with the traditional and implicit clause within IFIs which makes IMF president always European and World Bank president always American, self-interest calculations and intra-BRICS competition trumped their common position during the election of Dominique Strauss-Kahn's successor to head of the IMF. BRICS countries failed to support the Mexican candidate which led to election of Christine Lagarde (Laidi [2011](#)).

Although BRICS economic ties seem to be stronger than MIKTA's on the bilateral level, it is important to note that fears about the negative effects of Chinese trade supremacy, especially on India's regional actorness ambition and on Brazilian industrial development, are likely to refrain the group from adopting common position on global

trade issues and from deepening the economic integration among the BRICS countries. This is why BRICS countries rely more on bilateral agreements as well as on strengthening their economic ties with their respective region rather than with the group. According to former President of Brazil, Dilma Roussef, 'regional integration is the best way to strengthen Brazil's position with regard to the Asian products that are inundating the region' (Cited in Laidi [2011](#)). This is illustrated by the fact that whereas China supports the Doha round, India is a skeptic. At the same time, Border disputes between China and India and their overlapping sphere of interests in the Indian ocean, Russia's suspicion of Chinese' closer ties with central Asian countries as well as the fact that BRICS' countries' approach to the global political order differ significantly are factors that impede networking among BRICS countries (Stephens [2011](#)). For instance, China and Russia seem less enthusiastic about the enlargement of the permanent membership of the UNSC to India and Brazil (Stuenkel [2013](#), p.623).

Conclusion

This study confirms, with some cautions, however, that rising powers' recourse to networking and their network power play a determinant role in the reshaping of informal governance, which has largely expanded in recent years in its scope and agenda with the involvement of new actors and IIGOs in the global governance architecture. The

increasing number of IIGOs since the 2000s seems to have transformed the networking mechanisms and procedures among multiple actors of the international system. IIGOs have gradually become new poles of attraction for international observers and political leaders since they also serve as status clubs for emerging powers in search of upgraded international status vis-a-vis major powers. The continuing shift of power from the Global North to the Global South has been accelerated by the entrance of new IIGOs into the scene with annual summits and side events. In this process, BRICS, for instance, has appeared as the sole representative of the Global South and, despite its limitations in reforming the Bretton Woods organizations and institution-building, has generally been cast in the sacred role of challenger to the global status quo and the Western hegemony. Given the high expectations on the part of international society regarding BRICS's actions and its 'constructed' challenger and reformist role, BRICS' performance and effectiveness in global governance need to be investigated, which raises the following questions: To what extent have IIGOs like BRICS become effective players in global governance, and what factors might make them more effective than their peers? Taking these questions as a point of departure, and based on the novel analytical framework presented here, NPC, this study established a linkage between IIGOs' network power and their effectiveness in global governance. To this purpose, a cluster of five NPC

variables were both explained and assessed for our selected IIGOs, BRICS and MIKTA, in order to verify our main hypothesis which investigates whether effective IIGOs in global governance have a higher NPC or not and whether there is a correlation between BRICS's and MIKTA's effectiveness in global governance and their networking capacity from a state-centric perspective and with a focus on the period until February 2022. A comparison of BRICS' and MIKTA's NPC shows that BRICS ranks first in four areas (variables 1, 2, 3, and 5, whereas MIKTA ranks first only in one area (variable 4).

Accordingly, as detailed in the above section, BRICS has a stronger NPC than MIKTA since it has (1) a higher number of powerful members, (2) stronger equal institutional but stronger economic ties, (3) a higher degree of shared norms and values among its members and (4) more members engaged with the existing established powers (the USA and the EU) in terms of signed bilateral and multilateral agreements. This overall comparison of the two IIGOs illustrates that relational networks matter in global governance not only for making IIGOs effective actors capable of peacefully managing power shifts, but also for facilitating the socialization of states, including both major and rising powers in IIGOs. In fact, the networking capacity of rising powers in IIGOs indicates their ability to bypass or disrupt existing institutional arrangements through the use of various strategies against major powers, such as power bargaining,

cooptation, and persuasion (Vabulas and Sinidal [2020](#), 40–50). This is illustrated on several occasions for the BRICS group with their common positions adopted with respect to the quota reforms in the IMF as well as to the Syrian and Ukrainian crises. Despite their non-negligible potentials in coordinating development cooperation policies, MIKTA members have failed to join practices to their rhetoric and fail to adopt and defend common positions regarding several issues such as the IMF quota formula, the Ukrainian and Syrian crises. Nonetheless, BRICS's higher NPC has sometimes failed to translate into common position in global governance issues due to the influence of national self-interests and internal rivalries, which led, for instance, to the lack of support to India and Brazil's UNSC permanent membership from China and to some extent Russia and to the lack of harmonization of their position in some international instances such as the Doha negotiations.

A closer assessment of the NPC of IIGOs like BRICS and MIKTA gives us clues about how rising powers can accommodate their differing demands in flexible institutional settings and prioritize their common interests (Parlar Dal et al. [2019](#)) while adapting to new power shifts. The analysis of IIGOs from a network approach provides new insights about the functioning of informal governance and its system management capabilities through collaboration with major powers and other FIGOs.

In this regard, this study has proven that IIGOs can be functional and effective actors for managing power shifts in the international system only if they strengthen their networking power inside and outside their groupings. As summarized in Table 4, the existing differences in the NPC of BRICS and MIKTA explain why MIKTA has a lower performance in shaping outcomes and creating policy impact in global governance compared to BRICS. Since this paper covered the period until February 2022, the Ukraine crisis that out broke on 24 February 2022 with Russia's invasion of Ukraine could potentially change the dynamics of BRICS' NPC compared to that of MIKTA's because the recent developments have so far shown that MIKTA group has adopted a relatively common approach to the Ukraine crisis, especially with respect to voting patterns in the UNGA as demonstrated by the fact that all of its member countries voted in favor of the UNGA resolutions of the March 2, 2022 and April 7, 2022, respectively, condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the humanitarian consequences of this aggression. In contrast, in the BRICS' case, whereas Brazil voted in favor of and Russia against these two resolutions, the other three countries, namely China, India, and South Africa, abstained to vote, and these abstentions cannot be automatically interpreted as an act of support to Russia at this stage. It is important to note, however, that neither MIKTA group nor BRICS group has so far issued a joint statement about the situation undergoing in Ukraine since February 2022.

On the other hand, it must be remembered that IIGOs can function in an accountability gap since they are not under the pressure of democratizing forces, in contrast to FIGOs. The fact that IIGOs are much more prone to state power and are weakly institutionalized also carries the risk of decreasing their legitimacy in the eyes of international society. In addition, democratic principles are not among the commonly shared norms of many IIGOs, as seen in the cases of BRICS and MIKTA, and this may certainly weaken their image as legitimate and responsible agents of ‘good informal governance.’

Last and not least, since IOs are always in need of strengthening their legitimacy and positive identity, IIGOs, like FIGOs, must seek to adopt good governance principles in order to increase their international recognition. For this purpose, they should reinforce their NPC not only in their own groupings but also in relation to other FIGOs by developing their economic and diplomatic networks with major powers. Further studies may well go beyond our findings on two IIGOs by applying our NPC framework to a broader range of cases.

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