

BRICS PARTNERSHIP FOR STABILITY, SECURITY AND GROWTH

Fourth Academic Forum, New Delhi

The BRICS nations are experiencing a unique set of circumstances in their socio-economic and political evolution. The debates that dominate the discourse within each of the BRICS nations today, whether on traditional security or non-traditional security, are linked to the challenges that confront the global community today. This offers an interesting opportunity and a matrix with multiple possibilities to cooperate, share and work together.

While it is always simplistic to attempt to capture the broad and rich arena that current developments offer the BRICS nations to collaborate on, there are inherent advantages in viewing the contemporary and evolving challenges and aspirations of the BRICS nations, through the prism of “Stability, Security and Growth”. Stability from financial shocks, governance failures within the BRICS and globally, from erratic demand cycles for exports and resources and from systemic contagious failures in the global financial markets. Security of access to means of sustenance, basic infrastructure (health, sanitation, education), availability and equity of opportunities for individuals across social classes, religions and gender; across regions, communities and security of development space and the environment. Growth – through new markets and innovations in appropriate technologies; are common themes that should be addressed and discussed by the BRICS nations, each of which is in transition and each of which is committed to advance their economies, capabilities and the daily lives of their peoples.

In order to effectively work with the “Stability Security and Growth” framework, BRICS need to address four fundamental issues that will define and shape the socio-economic and political landscape over the course of this decade. They include - strengthening institutions and institutional capacities to equip international frameworks with suitably resilient response mechanisms in this age of uncertainty; sharing concerns about sustainable development in order to live up to the collective responsibilities of BRICS nations; sharing practices and experiences to learn and respond to the immense socio-economic challenges within and outside BRICS nations; and finally exploring the innovation landscape through promotion and expansion of new avenues for cooperation and growth to enhance lives and livelihoods, as well as respond to the ethical and development imperatives that demand urgent attention. These themes are reflected in the agenda.

Global Governance

Strengthening Cooperation and Responding to Challenges

BRICS Vision 2020: The BRICS nations have multiple common denominators and are well poised to assume leadership in a number of areas of global governance. Defining and outlining the collective vision for 2020 would help the nations measure and reflect upon the quantitative and qualitative performance indicators over the course of the present decade, refining and streamlining collaborative processes. It would be useful not only to discuss five big ideas for the coming decade that the BRICS could engage with as nations but also discover new areas and formats that could enhance ways in which the people, students, artists and civil society in each of the nations are able to engage with each other. The BRICS format may now need to devolve below the level of policies and politics to the constituency of the people.

Institutionalizing Coordination Frameworks for Crisis Response: The BRICS nations are part of multiple multilateral forums – where they seek fair and equitable representation. Creating and institutionalizing a framework for cooperation in such forms as the United Nations, within the BRICS consortium would be instructive for the purpose of furthering common agendas as well as sovereign policy imperatives. Furthermore, recent events in West Asia and North Africa have brought into focus the issue of interventions. Developing a regional crisis response system of multilateral diplomacy is a global imperative. BRICS countries are of the view that use of force in international relations has to be avoided as far as possible.

Sustainable Development

Shared Concerns, Collective Responsibilities

Climate Change, Food Security and Water: The BRICS nations are supportive of the agreements reached by the 17th Conference of Parties at Durban. However, there is recognized need for increased policy coordination and unity on the negotiations table. Specifically, BRICS nations must resolve to work together to incorporate the complete range of equitable mitigation and adaptation measures needed to respond to climate change, through the “Durban Platform for Enhanced Action”. Meanwhile, the recent upswing in global food prices over the

last five years is a trend that is unlikely to abate given the exponential increases in population, especially amongst the developing countries. In an effort to safeguard against hunger, starvation and malnutrition, the BRICS nations must highlight and act upon the agreed food security agenda; discuss ways to curb excessive speculation in commodity markets and promote mechanisms to promote efficient food production and distribution practices. Simultaneously the BRICS nations also need to develop coherent policy mechanisms to address water scarcity and water sharing issues.

Urbanization: China and India have some of the most rapidly urbanizing populations in the world. The mass transfer of people to cities is already creating various sustainability problems related to water, waste, transportation, shelter, food etc. The huge scale and pattern of rapid growth in many of the BRICS nations has led to a severe strain on urban infrastructure and resources. Additional capability and capacity building in cities through shared knowledge, investment and skills should be prioritized amongst the BRICS nations.

Socio-Economic Landscape

Sharing Practices and Experiences

Universal Access to Healthcare

Over the past decade and an a half, several international forums, including the World Trade Organization and the World Health Organization, have been engaged in developing a global regime that would enable that medicines and healthcare can be made affordable to every citizen in the world. The BRICS members, both individually and collectively, have provided political and intellectual support to such endeavours and continued coordination of efforts would ensure that common goals are realised in the foreseeable future.

Skilling and Direct Investments in Education Sector: The BRICS nations have some of the youngest populations in the world. The imperative of secondary education in many of the BRICS nations needs to be reevaluated. The key to sustaining and productively employing a large number of workforce entrants lies in the successful administration of skill training in vocational areas. Furthermore, foreign direct investment between the BRICS countries in the education sector would help leverage the economic power of the grouping along with simultaneously helping to create a sustainable socio-economic landscape.

New Avenues for Cooperation and Growth

Exploring the Innovation Landscape

BRICS Development Bank and Impact Investment Fund: The BRICS countries are the new economic drivers of the global economy. A BRICS development bank which invests back into development initiatives within the member countries and least developed nations would be instructive in the strengthening of the financial cooperation mandate. Furthermore, about one eighth of all assets managed in the USA are allocated to “impact investments” or “social investments”. With a view to the future, it is clear that social, economic and environmental sustainability are going to be essential for economic development and growth. It is time for the BRICS to create an investment mechanism, which invests back into sustainability and development initiatives both within the BRICS and outside in the least developed economies of the world.

Technology Sharing, Innovation & Cooperation across Industries: Along with the tremendous potential for resource and technology sharing and mutual research and development efforts, coordination across key sectors such as information technology, communications and high end manufacturing is needed. Meanwhile innovation has been at the core of economic development; while policy related innovations are known to contribute to stability, security and growth in economies – technological innovations have the same potential. One way of conceptualizing technological innovation is the ‘change in products, processes and practices’ where in ‘practices’ not only include new organizational and shop floor practices but new business models which combine existing technologies in an innovative manner to provide efficiency and or equity benefits. The reduction of non tariff barriers to entry and production are required to fully develop the innovative cutting edge markets within the BRICS countries. Pharmaceuticals and agro products are key areas of cooperation where talks are already underway between the BRICS countries. Joint cooperation on research and development in the two sectors amongst others, would also aid in overall economic growth.