

BRICS ACADEMIC FORUM REPORT





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FOREWORD

The Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) co-hosted the BRICS Academic Forum from 3-6 August, under India's presidency of the BRICS in 2021.

This year's BRICS Academic Forum convened academics, experts, researchers, and analysts on a range of international policy issues affecting the five BRICS nations and the world in the run up to the BRICS Summit 2021. The forum was privileged to have the inaugural address by India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, valedictory address by Sanjay Bhattacharyya, India's Sherpa for BRICS, and a conversation with P. Harish, India's Sous-Sherpa for BRICS.

The policy discussions between experts were guided by the four primary themes of the BRICS academic process for 2021—multilateralism, digitalisation, international security, and climate change and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, the sessions included topics such as the post-pandemic world order, green energy, sustainable consumption, global health, counterterrorism, trade and resilient supply chains, SDGs, digital public goods, globalisation, skilling and workforce development, and women's leadership.

Over the course of four days, the BRICS Academic Forum saw participation from nearly 80 experts and academics. Discussions at the forum made it clear that the pandemic has permanently altered the global order. It has highlighted the weaknesses of global institutions in tackling contemporary challenges, and that greater coordination is necessary among nations to respond to global problems.

There was consensus among the experts that the current multilateral system has become 'out-of-sync' with the realities of today's world and that instruments of global governance must become more participatory and representative.

What is particularly troubling is the asymmetric effect of the pandemic on the world's poor. A key learning from COVID-19 has been the need to focus on research, primary healthcare, and community engagement for tackling global healthcare issues. As expected, women have been the hardest hit, and a women-led economic growth can only be achieved if new policy frameworks provide support to those in the informal and gig economy. A welcome development has been the experiments with the use of technology and digital means for achieving the SDGs, especially for those increasingly left behind. Here India's experience with digital public goods was discussed as a model worthy of emulation.

While it was natural for the pandemic to take centre stage at the discussions, experts reiterated their call for keeping a focus on green energy and international security, which continue to be high on the list of priorities for all BRICS nations.

For green transition to succeed, both developed and developing nations were called to fulfill their promises as a precursor to the COP26 negotiations, and to collaborate on developing new technologies and a new taxonomy to support the transition.

A similar focus is required for addressing terrorism, particularly as illegal activities shift online to new internet and digital means. Geopolitical developments are already testing the resiliency of global supply chains. A new mapping of global trade interdependencies has become crucial for making policymaking more targeted and effective.

We are grateful for our colleagues at the BRICS Think Tank Council (BTTC) from Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa for supporting us through the process under India's presidency. We are grateful to BTTC for identifying and deputing the finest scholars from their respective nations for the forum. We are also extremely grateful to the scholars for their time and their invaluable inputs.

We are extremely grateful for the guidance and support of the Ministry of External Affairs, particularly for encouraging us to explore new policy ideas for emerging global challenges. Finally, this report would not be possible without the rapporteurs and editors who worked tirelessly in noting, collating, and summarising the important points discussed at the forum.

H.H.S.VISWANATHAN
Distinguished Fellow
ORF

AKSHAY MATHUR
Director, ORF Mumbai
Head, ORF Geoeconomics
Studies Programme

3 AUGUST 2021 | INAUGURAL

Inaugural Session



OPENING REMARKS
SAMIR SARAN
President, Observer Research
Foundation (ORF)



INAUGURAL ADDRESS
S. JAISHANKAR
Union Minister for External Affairs,
Government of India



VOTE OF THANKS
SACHIN CHATURVEDI
Director General, Research and
Information System for Developing
Countries (RIS)

RAPPORTEUR'S NOTES

DAMYA BHATIA

The BRICS Academic Forum is a track 2, peer-to-peer platform, held since the formation of the BRICS in 2009. This year the forum was jointly held by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS).

Opening Remarks

Samir Saran remarked that the 2021 academic track has been guided by four paramount themes—multilateralism, digitalisation, international security, and climate change and the SDGs.

He highlighted the two dedicated publications being presented at the forum: Future of BRICS, a compendium of essays, and the Road to BRICS Academic Forum. He also mentioned that discussions over the course of the BRICS Academic Forum, involving over 80 experts from the BRICS nations, will be synthesised by the BRICS Think Tank Council and to be presented to the leaders of the five countries.

He also thanked the Ministry of External Affairs, Sanjay Bhattacharya, India's BRICS Sherpa and Secretary (CPV&OIA), and P. Harish, Additional Secretary (ER), for their continued assistance and cooperation.

This was followed by the inaugural address by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar (reproduced in full):



Inaugural Address

Dr Samir Saran, Dr Sachin Chaturvedi, dear friends,

In 2021, BRICS turns 15. In human terms, this is young adulthood, with thoughts shaped and a world view concretised, and with a growing sense of responsibilities. As such, India's presidency of BRICS comes at such an inflection point for this grouping.

But the context is important for the global system as well. This is most tellingly felt in the pandemic that has devastated economies and societies. The juncture then is pregnant with challenges as well as opportunities. The role of the BRICS countries, of the ideas, strategies and policies they contribute, has never been so apparent.

The birth of BRICS was an implicit recognition that the post-war order had peaked. Emerging economies needed to step up to craft a new developmental framework. Each of us was well placed to do this, to share our experiences – in some measures or the other – with partner countries of but not limited to the global South. We intuitively understood that the dominance moment at the end of the Cold War could not be sustained. BRICS was a response to the search for diversity; in many ways, it was an accurate anticipation of multipolarity.

So, let us therefore remember that counter-dominance instinct and principled commitment to multipolarity in all forms – political and economic, academic and institutional, social and cultural – is written into the DNA of BRICS. It was in this spirit of independence and complementarity that India co-founded BRICS. We are confident that this sentiment will continue to define not just BRICS but the larger template for coming decades of the 21st century. BRICS is a statement of global rebalancing that underlines its essential diversity and pluralism.

Now, India's presidency of BRICS is underpinned by four pillars – reform of the multilateral system; counter-terrorism cooperation; technological and digital solutions for Sustainable Development Goals; and enhancing P2P (people to people) cooperation. These pillars may seem abstract or even perennial, but each one of them actually has an explicit, real-world meaning.

An updating and recalibration of the post-World War II multilateral architecture cannot be postponed any further. The pandemic and the normative breakdown in its wake have rudely reminded us that institutions built to tackle problems of the 1940s desperately need to be upgraded and made fit-for-purpose for our century.

An expansion of the permanent membership of the Security Council is a necessary ingredient. But by itself it is not sufficient. Multilateral institutions have been disadvantaged by structural inertia, competitive gridlocks, uneven resourcing and skewed navigation. The proliferation of new and smaller platforms, including of plurilateral and regional groups, is therefore a response to such felt gaps. BRICS itself was actually among the earliest in this regard. Too often, we obsess with one or the other response; more effort and action is actually required to fill the gaps.

Terrorism thrives in some of these gaps. Its nursery lies in conflict-ridden spaces made fertile for radicalisation by malign players, including states. The transition in Afghanistan that we are seeing today and the warfare that has yet again been forced upon its people has sharpened this challenge. Left unattended, its edge will be deeply felt not just in Afghanistan's neighbourhood but well beyond. We are therefore all stakeholders in the quest for a clear, coordinated and undifferentiated response to terrorism. In the 21st century, legitimacy cannot be derived from mass violence, brutal intimidation or covert agendas. Representation, inclusion, peace and stability are inextricably linked.

Emerging technologies, most strikingly digital technology and the energies of the Internet, are a force multiplier in any avenue of human endeavour. As we have learnt to our cost, these can also become an instrument for sources of extremism and motivated misinformation. For us in India, digital tools have proved invaluable in pushing back the pandemic. In the year-and-a-half of living and coping with the Covid-19, they have accelerated contact tracing, vaccine delivery, online and mobile-based diagnosis, and targeted delivery of welfare. India's 800/400 accomplishment i.e. food rations for 800 million people and cash transfers to 400 million – has been streamlined by digitally-enabled technology. The surge in online education has also been noteworthy.

Many of these empirical experiences will stay with us beyond the pandemic. For example, the catalytic implications of technology in the realisation of SDGs are there for us to recognise. The pandemic has demanded a price in terms of economic growth and has challenged SDG timelines. Technology could help us now recover ground and time. India is optimistic on this score, and ready to share what it has harnessed, innovated and learnt in these last years.

Finally, we come to our people – the principal and most essential stakeholders of BRICS, and in fact of our larger developmental enterprise. The past years has made more of us alive to the limitations of an economic model that posits efficiency and pricing as antithetical to people and community or indeed to livelihoods and sustainability. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for a human-centric globalisation was not just a recognition of pandemic-induced distortions, but in fact of broader inequities. Welfare and well-being of people, families and communities cannot be divorced from the global reset and resilience that is occurring in the long tail of Covid-19.

A case in point is the imbalance between the emphasis on IPR in the pharmaceutical industry and the meeting of public health goals. Left untouched, the current practices will only delay the elimination of the pandemic by several years. This is simply not acceptable. But beyond health is a larger economic lesson for the world from the pandemic. The creation of more reliable and resilient supply chains is vital to infuse greater confidence in the global economy and in fact to de-risk it from future pandemics. The global South is particularly vulnerable in that regard. Investments must diversify to provide a certain assurance of sustainability – for livelihoods, for families and communities, and of course for the natural environment.

During the course of the year, on the road to this BRICS Academic Forum, scholars from universities and think tanks have deliberated on such issues – specifically on global health, the future of work, climate change, global economic recovery, green energy, trade, and digital public goods, and women-led economic growth. This conference represents the culmination of a rich and substantial intellectual exercise. I look forward to policy prescriptions that can make BRICS more effective and our world more secure. Those two aspirations are symbiotic. A world at peace with itself – across domains – will add to BRICS capacities. And enhanced BRICS capabilities will contribute surely to global well-being.

So I thank you once again, and I convey all the best for the rest of the Forum.

Vote of Thanks

In his vote of thanks, Sachin Chaturvedi reiterated the need for the consolidation of the BRICS process, emphasising how the global architecture is unfolding, the fragmentation in supply chains and global economic policymaking in the post-COVID-19 world. He noted that the dialogues held in the run-up to the BRICS Academic Forum have already addressed

several key concerns, including how the larger pandemic-affected economies will tackle global health issues. He also expressed his certainty that the well-founded partnership between ORF and RIS will result in concrete recommendations at the end of the BRICS Academic Forum.

3 AUGUST 2021 | OPENING PLENARY

Post-Pandemic World Order: Challenges and Opportunities for BRICS

SPEAKERS



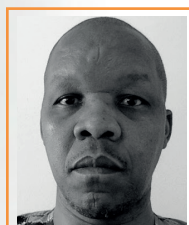
IVAN TIAGO MACHADO OLIVEIRA
Director of Studies on International Economic and Political Relations, Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), Brazil



VYACHESLAV NIKONOV
Chair of the Board, Russian National Committee on BRICS Research, Russia



JIN XIN
Secretary-General, China Council for BRICS Think Tank Cooperation (CCBTC), China



SIPHAMANDLA ZONDI
Chair, SA BRICS Think Tank and University of Johannesburg, South Africa



SACHIN CHATURVEDI
Director General, Research and Information System for Developing Countries, India



MODERATOR
AMB. H.H.S. VISWANATHAN
Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, India

RAPPORTEUR'S NOTES

KALPIT A. MANKIKAR

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the shifting dynamics in international relations. A new imperative emerged for global governance which saw all nations reconfigure their priorities and partnerships. Some developments are for the short-term, others for the long-term. What are the characteristics of the post-pandemic world order? What kind of challenges and opportunities does it offer to BRICS? This session examined the transformations in geopolitics and geoeconomics and explored what BRICS can do to shape the emerging world order.

Amb. H.H.S. Viswanathan posited that the issue of the world order has lingered for some time, and the debate has now gathered pace with the global financial crisis and the emergence of new economies. He said that the BRICS should have a decisive say in conceptualising the new world order in the post-pandemic era, asking the panelists what kind of world order it should strive for.

Ivan Tiago Machado Oliveira opined that the pandemic has altered the speed of transformation and that the world order is never static and constantly changing. He asserted that there was a faster decentralisation of power in the world, and the BRICS has played an important role in this reform. Singling out trade as a key factor in the revival of global economies in the post-pandemic period, he said that rebuilding multilateral institutions like the World Trade Organization would go a long way in reshaping regulations related to commerce. He proposed that the BRICS should play a role in enhancing integration among nations, thereby bringing economies closer to each other. He also said the BRICS' priority must be to rebuild faith in a rules-based system as this is essential for the world order.

Siphamandla Zondi envisaged a new world order with a "just and fair" management of global power that prevents a few nations from wielding might and acting in an arbitrary manner. He warned that ultranationalism and

conservatism were gaining ground and had led to a misplaced belief that the pandemic could be tackled within national boundaries. He added that such forces had sowed doubts over global governance institutions like the World Health Organization and the United Nations, which weakened cooperation among countries. He said that the world order should not advantage only a few but should be in everyone's interest, adding that the BRICS should devote itself to making the lives of people central to its mission.

Two distinct geostrategic poles have emerged in recent times—the US and its allies, and China—leading to power competition. Considering this, Vyacheslav Nikonov drew attention to “external pressures” facing the BRICS, accusing the US of thwarting the rise of new and emerging powers to preserve its own primacy in the global order. He reasoned that this contestation could impact ties among the BRICS nations as well. He termed the strained ties between India and China as a “sad development,” and made a case for the BRICS countries to improve their relations.

Jin Xin called out attempts to “politicise” the issue of the origin of the virus and condemned bids to revive the “Cold War mentality”. He urged the BRICS grouping to work towards forging a new model of solidarity and cooperation to build a new type of international relationship. He added that the regional grouping should work towards safeguarding economic globalisation and against fragmentation of regional cooperation in the post-pandemic era.

Sachin Chaturvedi put forth India's expectation from the bloc. He said that the BRICS should have presented a united front during the health crisis, which could have played a role in stabilising the world order. He added that to stay relevant, the BRICS will need to address the issue of contradictions among the member-states and keep a check on big powers.

The panelists agreed that the BRICS must take on an enhanced role in promoting multilateralism, regional cooperation, and in tackling the global contagion.

4 AUGUST 2021 | SESSION 1

Road to COP26: BRICS Climate Agenda

SPEAKERS



ANA TONI
Executive Director, Institute for Climate
and Society (ICS), Brazil



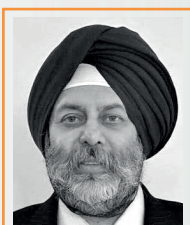
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LAN HONG
Professor, Director of Ecological
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University of China



ROMY CHEVALLIER
Senior Researcher, South African
Institute of International Affairs, South
Africa



AMB. MANJEEV PURI
Distinguished Fellow, TERI; former
ambassador and Deputy Permanent
Representative of India to the UN;
and former lead negotiator for India at
climate change talks



MODERATOR
SHIKHA BHASIN
Programme Lead, Council on Energy,
Environment and Water (CEEW)

RAPPORTEURS' NOTES

DAMYA BHATIA AND ADITYA NATH

As the clamour for net-zero emissions gains steam, it is clear that the road to COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, will be one where political considerations override any firm commitment to climate action. The panel explored the global progress on the Paris Agreement and took stock of how developed and developing nations have fared in their commitments. The session looked to outline a BRICS proposition on climate negotiations, targets and partnerships to ensure climate action in conjunction with developmental goals.

Ana Toni reiterated the two most important issues that need to be addressed with regards to climate change—the integrity of commitments (evaluating promises made in the past, such as that by developed countries to mobilise US\$100 billion a year in support to developing countries) and trust-building, which is indispensable to move forward at the dialogues due to take place at COP26.

According to her, countries must deliver on their promises to reduce emissions and safeguard forest cover. She also noted that the international community can have an impact on countries, forcing them to act. For instance, she suggested that China and India, which import Brazilian products, could hold the country to higher standards of maintenance and accountability.

Addressing the issue of the trust gap, Igor Makharov said that the BRICS can and should play a more important role in climate change and catastrophe prevention. The five member-countries determine the dynamics of global emissions and export carbon-intensive goods, and therefore should establish new models of economic development that are green and inclusive. COP26 can be the first step for the formulation of such a narrative. He also stressed that preventing catastrophic climate change without revising consumption patterns is impossible.

Against this backdrop, Lan Hong discussed how countries can decentralise their own targets by allowing provincial governments to set goals and work towards lowering the cost of capital. Using China as an example, she noted that due to their large size, each province needs personalised plans to reduce CO₂ emissions through new energy options and clean energy vehicles.

Romy Chevallier highlighted South Africa's plan for COP26 and for 2050. She stressed the need for the political leadership to support the transition to a decarbonised society and the willing participation of all sectors of the economy in this process. She emphasised the importance of introducing interim targets aligned with a long-term vision. However, any transition to clean energy must take into account existing inequalities. For instance, vulnerable stakeholders like women and children are at the centre of such energy transitions.

Amb. Manjeev Puri reiterated the importance of a just transition and that this cannot ignore the fact that equity and climate justice continue to be violated. It is necessary to acknowledge that emerging economies with low per capita incomes face a different set of development challenges. He highlighted that the G7 countries continue to contribute up to 40 percent of global emissions, and therefore it would be unfitting to classify the BRICS countries as major carbon emitters. He also noted that India is on track to meet its ambitious targets in line with the Paris agreement. For instance, India is making good progress in achieving its target of having 460 gigawatts of renewable energy by 2030. Amb. Puri also emphasised the importance of technology as a catalyst for the decarbonisation agenda and urged the BRICS countries to take up technology-led collaborations to mitigate climate change.

Shikha Bhasin concluded the discussion by highlighting two areas where collaborative action is vital: creating a financial taxonomy that is equitable; and technology that enables meeting the decarbonisation targets set by the BRICS countries while recognising development goals.

4 AUGUST 2021 | SESSION 2

Sustainable Lifestyles: Rethinking Consumption— the Forgotten SDG

SPEAKERS



LEONID GRIGORYEV
Principal Adviser to the Head of
the Analytical Centre Under the
Government of the Russian Federation;
Tenured Professor at the HSE
University, Russia



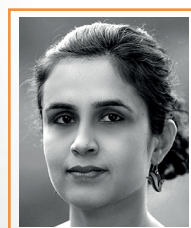
YI WENJING
Research Assistant, Energy Research
Institute of National Development and
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THOKOZANI SIMELANE
Director of Research, Africa Institute of
South Africa (AISA), Human Sciences
Research Council (HSRC), South Africa



SHALU AGRAWAL
Senior Programme Lead, Council on
Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW),
India



MODERATOR
SUNAINA KUMAR
Senior Fellow, ORF

RAPPORTEUR'S NOTES

KRIPA ANAND

The need to balance limited natural resources with consumption-led growth is the biggest challenge facing the 2030 Development Agenda. As countries move up the developmental ladder, increased urbanisation and demand for goods and services is likely to increase manifold. The panel explored how the BRICS grouping can reimagine consumption patterns and align them with the SDGs. The session discussed how the BRICS can shape global discourse and policy formulation on sustainable lifestyles.

In this context, Leonid Grigoryev noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed consumption patterns, especially in the developed countries, which has demonstrated that humankind can live more sustainably. During the initial phases of the pandemic, nearly every country faced significant economic losses and financial markets were affected. However, since early 2021, economic growth has seen a positive trajectory and a return to

previous consumption patterns. He said countries need to formulate strong policies with the aim of achieving sustainable living and work together towards a greener future.

According to Yi Wenjing, China has worked towards energy efficiency and reducing CO₂ emissions. It committed to reduce carbon emissions by about 45 percent by 2020 from 2005 levels, but achieved this target three years ahead of schedule. China has taken many measures to transition to zero carbon buildings and using electric vehicles (the country is the largest manufacturer and buyer of electric vehicles globally). The country is also pioneering shared mobility (that integrates all modes of transport) as a new way of travel, with the aim of reducing carbon emissions in urban areas. Efforts are being made to contain the 'sprawl' of super cities (urban areas with a population exceeding 10 million) and balancing these with small and medium-sized cities.

Thokozani Simelane emphasised the need for the BRICS countries to transition from fossil fuel-based energy sources to renewable energy. The member-countries have since 2009 expressed a desire to embrace renewable energy as a 'sociotechnical' approach to sustainable development. According to Dr. Simelane, from South Africa's perspective, there needs to be a balance between economic development and sustainable consumption. Presently, the chemicals and energy industry is heavily reliant on fossil fuels. Therefore, the transition from using fossil fuels to renewables must be smooth.

According to Shalu Agrawal, developing countries are charting two transitions parallelly—meeting the development needs of their people, and achieving this in a sustainable way. Over the last two decades, India has managed to give millions of people access to electricity

and clean-cooking solutions. India is one of the few countries to formulate actions needed to provide access to sustainable cooling, with the launch of the Indian plan (ICAP) in March 2019. There has also been an unprecedented expansion of the energy efficient LED lighting market in India since 2015 and it is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 24.3 percent over the 2021-2026 period. She also noted that traditionally, Indian culture attached value to sustainable and simple living, but this has changed with time and Indians have become more consumerist. Therefore, there is a need to make sustainability more aspirational.

Sunaina Kumar wondered if the current moment of crisis fueled by the pandemic can be an opportunity to achieve the SDGs. She added that while BRICS countries are currently working towards sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, this spirit must be encouraged and retained as there is a lot more that needs to be accomplished.

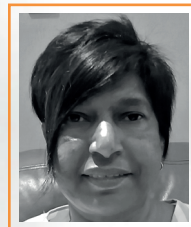
4 AUGUST 2021 | SESSION 3

Building a BRICS Consensus on Counterterrorism

SPEAKERS



ANNA CRUZ
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SHEN YI
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Professor and Dean, Jindal School of
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TIMOFEI BORDACHEV
Academic Supervisor of the Center
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Research University Higher School of
Economics (HSE), and Program Director
of the Valdai Discussion Club, Russia



MODERATOR
PALKI SHARMA UPADHYAY
Executive Editor, WION News, India

RAPPORTEUR'S NOTES

KASHISH PARPIANI

The threats from terrorism and violent extremism continue to pose diverse and complex challenges to international peace and stability. The evolving nature of these threats has meant no individual state can mitigate these challenges alone. This session explored how the BRICS nations can cooperate to counter terrorism and promote international peace and security. In particular, the session discussed how the five countries can cooperate on issues of terror financing, use of the Internet for terrorist purposes, and countering radicalisation.

The panel delved into the scope and imperatives of a BRICS consensus on countering the menace of terrorism. In concurring with the moderator's opening remarks over the diffused nature of transnational terrorism warranting inter-governmental action at the global level, Anna Cruz deemed the recent trend of 'lone wolves' mounting low-cost attacks to have altered

the paradigm of terrorism. However, she referred to Brazil's 2016 law on anti-terrorism and 2019 law against terror financing to argue that Brazil's threat perception of terrorism has only actualised in recent years, since it has not been a major target of terror attacks.

Drawing on Cruz's remarks, Timofei Bordachev alluded to an impediment in BRICS' effort to forge a consensus on counterterrorism on account of the member-states having different experiences with terrorism. In arguing for the need to have "a common or at least a shared understanding" of the threat, he also noted the apparent realpolitik of national interest prevailing over common action, particularly in matters pertaining to internal order and extremist groups that operate on a religious or ethnic basis. To further illustrate this point, he noted that the differing interests of each BRICS country has uniquely informed its views on the degree to which the Taliban must be politically engaged with in Afghanistan.

However, on the scope for the BRICS countries to devise a common approach, Shen Yi called on the five members to consider alternative to military-intensive solutions, such as focusing on approaches that can mitigate the 'root' of the formation of terror groups. In espousing a new approach, he deemed BRICS' focus on development and economic engagement to have the potential to prevent the emergence of extremist movements that mostly thrive in economically backward areas.

On the futility of military-based approaches, Cruz concurred by noting the value of a preemptive approach based on development, job creation and protection of human rights, as opposed to adopting de-radicalisation programmes after threats have already materialised.

In lending additional credence to the viewpoint that the BRICS grouping does indeed hone the scope for a consensus on counterterrorism, Nirmala Gopal noted the understated progress that the grouping has made in cultivating a common understanding of the threat posed by transnational terrorism. In referring to it as the "encyclopaedia of declarations"

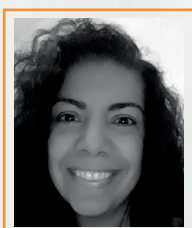
by the BRICS over the past decade, she noted the grouping's work on articulating a common comprehension of terrorist activities, based on the member nations' "aggregated socio-political milieu" and repeated repudiation of terrorists. She deemed this groundwork to have successfully yielded the referenced BRICS Counter Terrorism Action Plan, which could subsequently pave the way for exchange of data, integration of efforts by state and non-state actors in each of the five countries, and the recognition of the role of the internet in the radicalisation of the youth.

But as Sriram Chaulia noted, challenges remain with respect to BRICS member nations inhabiting different subregions, which may continue to inform differing, if not incompatible, threat perceptions. However, with the BRICS Counter Terrorism Action Plan setting the momentum, he called on the BRICS countries to institute greater nuance to their collective action by adopting a regionalised understanding of terror groups and recognising their influence over their respective subregions. Such an approach based on a regionalised understanding of threats can also lead to an intra-BRICS sharing of conflict tactics and prevention methods that may be local or exclusive to specific subregions.

4 AUGUST 2021 | SESSION 4

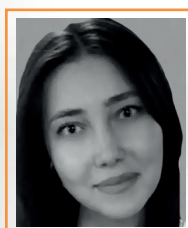
BRICS and the Global Health Agenda

SPEAKERS



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Researcher, Institute for Applied
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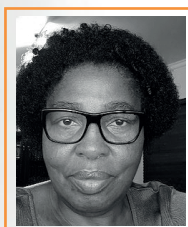
EKATERINA KHEIFETS

Leading Analyst, Department of
Economics and Social Development,
Center for Strategic Research (CSR),
Russia



QI XIAOPENG

Deputy Director, Center for Global
Public Health, Chinese Center for
Disease Control and Prevention, China



AQUINA THULARE

National Department of Health,
South Africa



RITUPRIYA MEHROTRA

School of Social Sciences at Jawaharlal
Nehru University, India



MODERATOR

SHAMBHAVI NAIK

Head of Research, Takshashila
Institution

RAPPORTEUR'S NOTES

SHASHIDHAR KJ

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgency of reviewing the global healthcare agenda. There is a need to review pandemic

preparedness, international cooperation, vaccine development processes, global healthcare regulations, pharmaceutical supply chains, citizen awareness and local capacities. Which elements of healthcare should the governments prioritise? How can international cooperation be improved to ensure the world is better prepared for the next pandemic? How can governments, business and civil society work together to deliver healthcare to the citizens? This panel reviewed the lessons from COVID-19 and explore measures that BRICS can take to improve healthcare delivery.

Aquina Thulare noted that global efforts to halt the pandemic have slowed due to the rise of vaccine nationalism and protectionism. She commended India's and South Africa's efforts

at the World Trade Organization to get a waiver on the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights to allow pharma companies to manufacture more generic COVID-19 vaccines and increase production. "There needs to be a more equitable way for countries to make vaccines and get access to health care," she said. Thulare added that it is important to identify the new COVID-19 variants that are fueling multiple waves of infection around the world and share information on them with the global community. This is especially crucial for countries that may not have the ability or capacity to conduct such studies. She noted that South Africa's efforts to build a vaccine centre will help other countries develop measures for future diseases as well.

Qi Xiaopeng said that the BRICS nations represent countries with great potential and the forum provides a platform to discuss and formulate policies. She detailed China's efforts to provide a

mathematical modelling of the spread of the virus to enable other governments to take appropriate mitigation measures.

Ritupriya Mehrotra noted that pandemic mitigation efforts are being conducted in silos and there is not enough appreciation for the complexity of the problem posed by the disease. “My plea is to look at complexity adaptive research when it comes to health care and pandemics. Mathematical modelling is done in one country, while vaccine production and problems associated with it are in another. Social issues are discussed elsewhere. There is a need to bring everything together,” she said.

She also highlighted an important development in health responses, with countries giving more precedence to private hospitals while neglecting the needs of primary healthcare centres. “Primary healthcare has demonstrated its worth, again, during the pandemic with its relentless efforts to contain the damage caused by the virus. They have been at the forefront when it comes to testing, isolation and vaccination efforts and are truly COVID warriors.”

Ekaterina Kheifets stressed on the need to build trust in communities through primary healthcare centres for vaccination drives. But with countries focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, other areas

of health policies are being ignored, such as vaccination drives for smallpox, polio, tetanus and diphtheria. Similarly, at-risk patients with existing conditions have deferred treatments.

Luciana Mendes Santos Servo said that the growing anti-vaccination movement, being made worse due to social media, is a cause for concern and that there needs to be several communication strategies to counter this. She recommended that governments and healthcare centres engage in conversations with the community, to answer all queries and concerns as a way of providing reassurance and building trust.

Shambhavi Naik said that there is a need to understand why there is vaccine hesitancy and noted two types of hesitancies. “One is when there are people who are outright rejecting the vaccine. The second is a set of people who are waiting for the majority population to get it to make sure that there are no side effects,” she said.

There was also discussion on the BRICS nations establishing unique health solutions focused on the developing world, especially given that India, Russia and China have created indigenous vaccines for COVID-19. But this will require greater cooperation between the countries, and health policies should not get mired in the larger geopolitical issues.

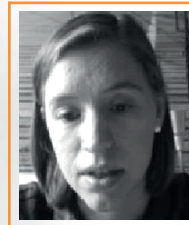
5 AUGUST 2021 | SESSION 1

BRICS Agenda for Trade and Resilient Supply Chains

SPEAKERS



FLAVIO LYRIO CARNEIRO
Researcher, Institute for Applied
Economic Research (IPEA), Brazil



OLGA PONOMAREVA
Research Fellow, Institute of
International Economics and Finance,
Russian Foreign Trade Academy of the
Ministry for Economic Development of
the Russian Federation



TAN YA
Assistant Professor, School of
International Trade and Economics, and
Researcher, Center for BRICS Studies,
University of International Business and
Economics



CYRIL PRINSLOO
Senior Researcher, South African
Institute of International Affairs,
South Africa



NISHA TANEJA
Professor, Indian Council for Research
on International Economic Relations
(ICRIER)



MODERATOR
AMB. MOHAN KUMAR
Chairman, Research and Information
System for Developing Countries (RIS)

RAPPORTEUR'S NOTES

DAMYA BHATIA

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the deficiencies in existing global trading arrangements and supply chain networks. As the world grappled to secure essential supplies, many countries chose a nation-first approach. This panel explored how the BRICS grouping can formulate a 21st-century international trading framework, which can serve the needs of the developing and emerging nations. The session looked to put forth a BRICS-led international trading regime that reduces disruptions and streamlines regulations to promote greater flow in goods and services.

Flavio Lyrio Carneiro used empirical evidence to suggest that participation in global value chains (GVCs) helps diversify risks and improve the resilience of supply chains during a crisis instead of exclusively relying on domestic output. Thus, in times of shock, protectionist and isolationist measures need to be revised and the global trade rulebook should not be suspended. Instead, it is important that the World Trade Organization

have emergency protocols that start to operate in crisis situations to ensure a smooth recovery.

Olga Ponomareva reiterated the importance of openness. She emphasised the need for technological development as a source of supply chain resilience. According to her, cooperation in the sphere of GVCs can help bridge the digital divide amongst the BRICS countries. They could increase the value-added generated within their GVCs and improve competitiveness through the development of technology and implementation of joint research and development projects. Such a shift to a digital economy will depend on government policy and investment.

Adding to this, Tan Ya listed a three-point agenda focused on cooperation, removal of trade barriers, and trust-building. She suggested that international cooperation is vital in fighting the pandemic and there is a dire need for the reallocation of vaccines and medical supplies. She also noted that tariffs need to be lowered further to ensure countries support each other and, most importantly,

maintain trust between all trading partners. To do so, she suggested countries take a step back and focus on restoring trust. Stressing on the Chinese example, she noted how firms use foreign suppliers even when domestic suppliers are available to keep their businesses alive and the GVCs intact.

Cyril Prinsloo noted that the BRICS countries can improve their trade flows by leveraging the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025. He suggested that the five countries should now focus on creating an action plan for the strategy, with investment promotion as a central pillar. Using South Africa as an example, he noted how 20% of the country's total trade is with the other BRICS countries but only 5% of foreign direct investment is from those nations. A combination of better de-risking mechanisms, incentive programmes, preparation of joint proposals and pilot projects, and sharing of data and knowledge will help maintain resiliency in trade amongst the BRICS countries.

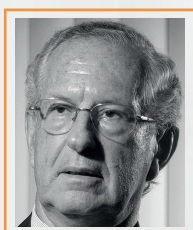
Nisha Taneja discussed the need to create an enabling environment for trade. She noted that there is a dire need to revitalise international trade and investment negotiations with more agreements that deal with the provision of essential goods and services. The BRICS nations need to reinforce a global rules-based environment that can promote various factors like investment, innovation, agility, diversification, and sustainability. To facilitate this, she suggested that the member-countries collaborate by expanding the production of medical goods, share experiences related to trade facilitating measures, and constantly review export restrictions on medical goods and eliminate these when necessary. Countries should also map the elements of supply chains to identify the stress points and mitigate them.

The panelists agreed that to have resilient supply chains, countries need to create better conditions of trust. Amb. Mohan Kumar concluded the session by suggesting that governments should apply transparent trade measures that create an open and enabling environment to keep the momentum of trade, investment, and cooperation going.

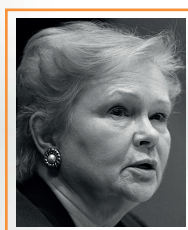
5 AUGUST 2021 | SESSION 2

Mobilising the NDB for Financing SDGs

SPEAKERS



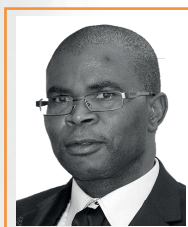
**RENATO COELHO BAUMANN
DAS NEVES**
Researcher, Institute for Applied
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IRINA YARYGINA
Scientific Director, Russian National
Committee on BRICS Research



YE YU
Research Fellow and Assistant Director,
the Institute for World Economy
Studies, Shanghai Institute for
International Studies (SIIS), China



MODIMOWABARWA KANYANE
Executive Dean, Faculty of
Management, Commerce and Law,
University of Venda, South Africa



PRATIVA SHAW
Economic Policy Researcher, Research
and Information System for Developing
Countries (RIS), India



MODERATOR
ILA PATNAIK
Professor, National Institute of Public
Finance and Policy, India

RAPPORTEUR'S NOTES

JUNHEE KIM

Five years since the New Development Bank (NDB) became operational, the BRICS-led NDB has made significant investments in sustainable infrastructure and contributed to the global pool of climate finance. This session took stock of the progress of the NDB and provide an outline for its investments going forward. The session laid particular emphasis on how the NDB can catalyse finance from other sources, including sovereign funds, philanthropic ventures, and commercial banks. The panel discussed how the Bank can become more effective in financing SDGs, particularly in a post-pandemic world where emerging and developing nations face capacity constraints, economic downturn, and societal upheaval.

Renato Coelho Baumann das Neves pointed out that projects mobilising infrastructure for sustainable development are a clear focus for the NDB, being the majority of its approved projects. He emphasised a need to broaden the definition of infrastructure in sustainable development to

also encompass SDGs regarding health, education, and gender equality, and called on the NDB to take further action on these goals. He suggested the NDB use its capacity to influence governments and adopt legislation to make it attractive for private capital to jointly invest in sustainable, long-term projects.

Ye Yu focused on how the NDB could enhance the mobilisation of resources for infrastructure financing. She lauded the NDB's rapid response to the pandemic but emphasised that crisis management should not fall on the NDB but on the IMF or the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, as the NDB's crisis management may occupy resources intended for infrastructure projects. She opined that the NDB could maximise mobilisation through contributing more concessional resources to incentivise members, being more proactive in coordinating and co-financing with other development banks and including private financing. She also emphasised the NDB's low disbursement rate and suggested supporting projects in their early stages with a projects preparations fund.

Irina Yarygina highlighted the significance of low carbon, green hydrogen energy and the multilateral and highly collaborative support network needed for its implementation and success. She called on the NDB, public institutions and national governments to collaborate to establish energy security for the future. Dr. Yarygina noted that public and private capital will be needed to fund the comprehensive production, storage, and usage of hydrogen power.

Modimowabarwa Kanyane focused on the sustainable and inclusive nature of the development that the NDB needs to support. He emphasised the importance of the informed prioritisation of SDGs based on local needs in tandem with flexible lending conditionalities. Civil societies play a critical role in the development of their

communities and maintenance of infrastructure. He underscored the “human touch” needed for large projects to be embraced by the public.

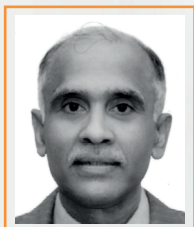
Prativa Shaw also highlighted the NDB’s low disbursement. She emphasised that the alignment of the NDB’s goals with the SDGs should be applauded. She also noted the importance of social development and the need for it to converge with physical development for inclusive progress.

Ila Patnaik wondered about the challenges facing the BRICS countries due to the pandemic and the role the NDB can play in remedial measures. She stressed that going forward, the NDB needs to engage with the private sector to meet the SDGs and the BRICS’ goals of inclusive development.

5 AUGUST 2021 | SESSION 3

In Conversation: Why BRICS Matters

SPEAKERS



AMB. P. HARISH

India's BRICS Sous Sherpa and
Additional Secretary (Economic
Relations) at the Ministry of External
Affairs



AKSHAY MATHUR

Director - ORF Mumbai and Head - ORF
Geoeconomics Programme

RAPPORTEUR'S NOTES

KASHISH PARPIANI

The 13th BRICS Summit is being organised amid the perilous COVID-19 pandemic that has devastated economies and societies around the world. Moreover, as India's

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar noted in his inaugural address at the 2021 BRICS Academic Forum, the pandemic has “rudely reminded us that institutions built to tackle problems of the 1940s desperately need to be upgraded and made fit-for-purpose for our century.”

With the failures of the post-war order now writ large, the BRICS grouping—with its early origins dating back to the BRIC Foreign Ministers meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in 2006—rightly anticipated the imperatives of a multipolar world. Under India's chairship, the 13th BRICS Summit is set to focus on four pillars: reform of the multilateral system; counter-terrorism cooperation; technological and digital solutions for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and enhancing P2P (people to people) cooperation. Amb. P. Harish discussed India's 'BRICS@15' agenda in a conversation with Akshay Mathur.

In tracing the evolution of the BRICS grouping since its first summit in 2009, Amb. Harish underscored the platform's success in actualising representative multilateralism, by bringing together leading developing economies, that account for 40 percent of global population, a quarter of global GDP, a third of the world's landmass, and 16 percent of global trade. He also noted the distinct features of the BRICS cobbling, with the member nations' focus on three well-defined areas of cooperation (viz. political and security, economic and financial, and cultural and people-to-people exchanges), and its distinction as the “only plurilateral to have a bank of its own” (the New Development Bank).

In recounting these features, Amb. Harish contextualised India's 'BRICS@15' agenda, which is set to emphasise intra-BRICS cooperation for continuity, consolidation and consensus. The emphasis on 'continuity' is warranted, he said, due to the lack of a permanent BRICS Secretariat and the grouping's constant evolution with members taking turns to assume chairship. Similarly, the pursuit of 'consolidation' is important to ensure that intra-BRICS cooperation is effective and efficient under

the many institutional structures and cooperation mechanisms that have emerged over the years. Finally, the focus on 'consensus' stems from the BRICS forum's characteristic of being driven by agreement of each member, and not merely by majority.

On the four pillars of focus at the upcoming summit, Amb. Harish particularly welcomed the finalisation of an action plan for the implementation of the BRICS Counterterrorism Strategy, and underscored India's own experience with harnessing technology and digital solutions for achieving the SDGs. On the latter, he also noted India's record of developing such solutions in open-source formats and announced India's willingness to share them with BRICS partner nations for their respective efforts to achieve goals and standards set under the SDGs. Citing several Indian digital platforms across the e-governance, health and fintech sectors, Amb. Harish particularly invoked India's CoWIN platform, which has been the mainstay of its immunisation efforts against COVID-19. He expressed India's willingness to

share its learnings on mass vaccination, in line with the BRICS' recognition of extensive immunisation against COVID-19 as a global public good.

Under the focus of advocating for the reform of the multilateral system, Amb. Harish reiterated the BRICS foreign ministers' call to reform and strengthen the World Health Organization (WTO) and underscored the member-nations' support for ongoing discussions at the WTO for a TRIPS waiver on the intellectual property rights of COVID-19 vaccines.

Beyond the ongoing challenges posed by the pandemic, Amb. Harish also alluded to the urgency of pursuing the realisation of the SDGs, given that COVID-19 that has impeded global collective action, eroded years of gains on SDGs, and pushed many developing nations back on their goals. Amb. Harish called on the BRICS grouping to lead global efforts to offset this loss in progress. By pooling their collective strengths and national experiences to prioritise a sustainable development paradigm across areas like economic engagement, trade, sustainability and climate change, he argued that the BRICS countries can set a new precedent on the value of technology and digital means in tackling developmental challenges.

5 AUGUST 2021 | SESSION 4

BRICS Framework on Digital Public Goods: Health, Education, and Financial Inclusion

SPEAKERS



JOSÉ EDUARDO MALTA DE SÁ BRANDÃO

Deputy Director of Studies on International Economic and Political Relations, Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), Brazil



EKATERINA KHLUNOVA

Deputy Director for BRICS STI, Cooperation, International center for Innovations in science, technology and education, Russia



FENG CHENG

Research Fellow and Assistant Director, Deputy Director of Fintech Research Center, China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, China



ASHRAF PATEL

Researcher at the Institute for Global Dialogue, South Africa



ABHINAV PRAKASH

Assistant Professor, Shri Ram College of Commerce, University of Delhi, India



MODERATOR

SUNAINA KUMAR

Senior Fellow, ORF

RAPPORTEUR'S NOTES

SHASHIDHAR KJ

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the importance of digital solutions as a means to respond to global challenges swiftly. It is clear that a new generation of digital

public goods (DPGs) are emerging to serve the healthcare, education and financial services needs of the citizens. How can digital public goods be supported? What is the role of government, business and civil society in ensuring the efficacy and integrity of digital public goods? The panel examined developments in field of digital public goods and explored measures that BRICS can take to support their deployment.

As access to the internet accelerates, where it moves from being an additional communications service to an essential commodity like clean water, electricity, food and transportation, the United Nations highlighted the need for building more DPGs. Broadly, DPGs are software, data sets,

standards and content that are free cultural works and contribute to sustainable national and international digital development. The internet can be considered a DPG, but it differs from other public goods. While most public goods are funded by the state, the development of the internet has mostly been with the help of private enterprise. In the digital age, there is a need to rethink the role of the state and private sector when it comes to building DPGs. Sectors like health, education and financial inclusion hold great promise for new DPGs, but there are many obstacles to overcome.

“We have three models for DPGs. First is where the corporations control DPGs and most of them are through private companies. The second is when DPGs are controlled by the state. When it comes to India, it follows a middle path,” said Abhinav Prakash. He used IndiaStack as an example of this middle way of building DPGs. IndiaStack, a private-sector project, created several software application programming interfaces (APIs) as digital infrastructure that could be used by governments, businesses, startups and developers.

India's biometric authentication system (Aadhaar), electronic know your customer (e-KYC), and the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) were cited as examples of success.

Prakash also highlighted the subtleties of the debates of building DPGs in India. "When we talk about DPGs, the debates focus on privacy, security etc. But in India, the debate has been on the access of data and talk about affordability with trying to make devices and services cheaper," he said. India is yet to pass a comprehensive personal data protection law to safeguard users' data. As multinational technology companies expand their presence, questions of data sovereignty arise. Resolving these issues is thorny as they often clash with intellectual property rights and respecting the law of the land.

"There is a problem when it comes to intellectual property. Especially in the BRICS," said Ekaterina Khlunova. "There are 13 working groups which are looking at various regulations and laws where data and

intellectual property can be shared," she added. She proposed that ministers of different countries that handle intellectual property and privacy issues meet to iron out these bumps.

Khlunova mentioned the Russian government's efforts in the education sector to build DPGs as a public and private sector partnership. "The Russian government provides funds for digitalisation for different platforms. This state system gives 100 universities content for students. This information system consists of online courses and user support, and increased interaction between higher education," she said while explaining that the Russian government has created a digital platform for researchers with a single point of authorisation to databases, publications, and information on opportunities of support for their projects. Further, with the COVID-19 crisis deepening, she mentioned Russia's efforts to bring together commercial entities and the scientific community at universities for research and development projects.

Ashraf Patel mentioned the issues seen in South Africa in building DPGs for public education during the pandemic as many students did not have access to basic resources like laptops and affordable access to the internet. "Gaps in the usability, accessibility and capacity were accentuated

due to the pandemic. The transfer of knowledge happened overnight from traditional to virtual and digital means without the skills or capacity building done,” he explained. The government, he noted, has not invested sufficiently in building DPGs and broadband infrastructure. Although it offers social grants to the rural population, there is no digital infrastructure for its distribution. He added that South Africa needs a robust information and communications technology policy, and that interoperable digital infrastructure must be built.

José Eduardo Malta de Sá Brandão discussed Brazil’s digitalisation efforts and the challenges it faces. He warned that with increased digitalisation, instances of cyberattacks and data theft will also increase. And so, governments must focus on buttressing cybersecurity even as DPGs are built.

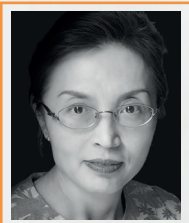
Feng Cheng stressed on the importance of having a national policy on digital inclusive finance. She mentioned that China has made strides in adopting digital inclusive finance, efforts that paid off during the pandemic. “By the end of 2020, the number of mobile payments and internet users in rural areas reached 79 percent. Linking people from the rural areas helped them to get through the pandemic. If enterprises wish to get a loan from banks, they can get it within three minutes with the use of these digital technologies,” she explained. Products for supply chain finance, e-commerce finance, and insurance are being developed to offer new opportunities for people, she added.

The panel also addressed the gender divide in accessing DPGs in the BRICS nations. Countries like India, Brazil and South Africa have lower literacy rates among women. Additionally, the needs of women homemakers differ from those of working women. Future DPGs need to address these issues to ensure that the digital gap is closed or there is no exclusion.

5 AUGUST 2021 | SESSION 5

BRICS and the Global Economic Recovery

SPEAKERS



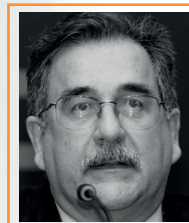
GAO HAIHONG
Professor and Director, Research Center for International Finance, Institute of World Economics and Politics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), China



ILA PATNAIK
Professor, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, India



KAGISO TK POOE
Senior Lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa



MARCELO JOSÉ BRAGA NONNENBERG
Researcher, Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), Brazil



MIKHAIL GOLOVNVIN
First Deputy Director of the Institute of Economics of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), Russia



MODERATOR
RAJAT KATHURIA
Dean, School of Social Sciences, Shiv Nadar University

RAPPORTEURS' NOTES

NANDINI SARMA AND SHRUTI JAIN

The pandemic has served a devastating blow to the global economy. Multilateral financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank have initiated programmes to help economies that are most in need of assistance. Governments have infused more than US\$10 trillion, in aggregate, of financial support in their respective jurisdictions to support their economies. How effective has the economic response been? Has assistance reached the nations, firms and people most in need? What economic governance do we need to take to ensure a revival of the global economy in the long-term? The panel examined the success of current efforts and explored measures that the BRICS can take to revive the national and global economy.

According to Marcelo José Braga Nonnenberg, the pandemic has not had a uniform impact of economies around the world—developed economies in North

America and Europe have suffered more than those in South America and Asia. He added that the pandemic has negatively impacted globalisation, with more countries replacing foreign inputs with domestic inputs to reduce their exposure to global shocks. Furthermore, global supply chains have been affected; for instance, operations have shifted from a 'just-in-time' to 'just-in-case' type of economy. With Russia, China and India already playing a significant role in producing and supplying vaccines to the world, he highlighted the importance of the BRICS countries in collaborating on the trade and supply of vaccines and other medical goods.

Mikhail Golovnin pointed out that while a few countries have experienced some rebound and recovery, not all have been able to overcome the challenges. According to him, China, Turkey, and India have shown remarkable recovery despite being seriously impacted by the

pandemic. However, there is rising uncertainty about potential future waves. According to Golovnin, such uncertainty negatively impacts macroeconomic indicators. For instance, investments and targeted industries such as transport and tourism have been strongly impacted.

The pandemic has also caused some positive spillovers in terms of the production and export of medical equipment. However, it was pointed out that one major negative short-term impact is inflation, affecting even the advanced economies. According to estimates, global inflation is likely to increase up to three percent by the end of 2021. There are also some medium-term and long-term impacts on the banking systems, derivative markets, and securities markets, which are still not regulated enough at the global level. Additionally, the level of debt has risen across government and non-financial corporations, and exchange rate volatility could pose a challenge to the emerging markets. According to

Golovnin, the BRICS plays a crucial role in representing the emerging economies, and there is a need for a common agenda for such economies. He also drew attention to the need for reforms in existing multilateral organisations and the need for a new global governance system.

Gao Haihong posited that China has been on a slower economic growth path since 2010. The COVID-19 outbreak coincided with the ongoing shift of China's economy from being investment-driven to consumption-driven and service-led. According to her, Chinese authorities took mindful measures to revive the economy with minimum damage to avoid unwanted consequences such as debt accumulation, overleverage or financial instability. Going forward, one of the big challenges will be to keep the growth momentum going. She highlighted that there is a growing worry that weak household consumption and high savings rate will have a scarring effect on the economy. According to her, there are still many diverging forces that could prevent a sustainable recovery from the pandemic. The situation may differ for each of the five BRICS countries, but the risks and challenges remain the same.

Kagiso TK Pooe pointed out that the rethinking of supply chains may have ramifications for African countries, and it is thus important to ascertain what the economic model will look like for the BRICS countries going forward. He urged greater investment in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Changes in the global supply chains will also force a rethink on agriculture and how to better use agricultural resources, including water supply. Another important issue for the BRICS countries that requires better thinking is the transition from the fossil fuel regime and reducing the dependency on non-renewable energy resources such as coal. Furthermore, he also encouraged greater utilisation of the National Development Bank through more investment in research and development.

According to Ila Patnaik, the first set of pandemic-response measures in India included many focused on the health sector—the rollout and production of vaccines and

creating adequate hospital care and oxygen supply. The second set related to tackling the loss of livelihood through fiscal and monetary measures, including providing free food through the public distribution system. The second wave was more devastating than the first but the learnings of the first wave provided relief from the weakened economy. Although this is a positive development, there have also been several challenges such as rising global and commodity price inflation. Patnaik highlighted that fiscal and monetary policies have a limited capacity in terms of providing additional economic growth due to the high risk of inflation and fiscal deficits. She indicated that India has turned to long-term policy reforms such as appropriate resource allocation through disinvestment and privatisation. According to her, the BRICS lacks a common economic agenda, which must be rectified to facilitate the free flow of capital and labour, and tackle issues pertaining to international trade.

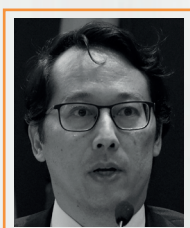
Nandini Sarma was a Junior Fellow at ORF.

Shruti Jain is a Junior Fellow at ORF Mumbai

6 AUGUST 2021 | SESSION 1

Building a Post-Pandemic Workforce: An Agenda for Jobs

SPEAKERS



LUIS CLAUDIO KUBOTA
Researcher, Institute for Applied
Economic Research (IPEA), Brazil



ALEXANDER IGNATOV
Researcher, Center for International
Institutions Research, Russian
Presidential Academy of National
Economy and Public Administration



WANG YANZHONG
Director-General, Institute of Ethnology
and Anthropology, Chinese Academy of
Social Sciences (CASS)



NJABULO SITHEBE
Special Advisor to the Co-Chair of
the Economic Cluster, Government of
South Africa



SANDHYA S. IYER
Associate Professor, Tata Institute of
Social Sciences, India



MODERATOR
SABINA DEWAN
Founder and Executive Director,
JustJobs Network

RAPPORTEUR'S NOTES

MAHIKA MEHTA

The COVID-19 pandemic has catalysed the transformational shifts already underway in the nature of work, jobs, and livelihoods.

Increasing digitalisation and technology adoption have disrupted the twentieth-century playbook on social security, education and skilling, and employment relations. In light of these rapid changes, particularly post-pandemic, this session discussed how social safety and protection can be ensured even as the nature of work increasingly takes on more informal characteristics. The panel explored the new models of education and skilling that are required to equip the present and future workforces and look to best practices among the BRICS nations that can be further adapted and adopted. The

session also lay emphasis on how the future of work can be made more inclusive, ensuring twentieth century inequities are not replicated in the twenty-first century.

Luis Claudio Kubota pointed out that the pandemic has exacerbated the existing challenges to the Brazilian labour market. Due to lockdowns, about 70 percent of the workforce employed in the services sector have been hit hard. He observed that Brazil's competence in cash transfer schemes is helping the country address the gaps in employment created by COVID-19.

Furthermore, Alexander Ignatov emphasised that Russia has experienced job losses mostly in their backbone industries such as manufacturing and services, and that low-skilled workers are the worst hit due to COVID-19. He highlighted that digitalisation is playing a paramount

role in building a post-pandemic workforce, and is changing the way we live and work. Additionally, Russia is relying on cash transfers along with reforming bureaucratic procedures to help the workforce. He urged the BRICS nations to continue meaningful dialogue on e-commerce, including examining its implications for jobs.

Wang Yanzhong pointed to China's aim to upscale vocational training to improve labour force participation. He noted that efforts to contain the pandemic to protect people's health and those to generate more and stable employment must be viewed as equally important. Dr. Ning Yafang noted that social security measures are playing a pivotal role in maintaining employment levels in China, and that the country is working towards upgrading the skills of its population to weather the changing market demand.

Njabulo Sithube noted that the pandemic has had a detrimental impact on the employability of young people in South Africa. Although there has been a considerable recovery in jobs for the skilled working population, the

youth and unskilled workers continue to suffer. He reiterated the need for focused economic recovery plans to absorb the youth into the workforce. South Africa is banking on the recent boost in demand for digital skills in the domestic economy to drive the services sector and generate employment.

Sandhya S. Iyer observed a similar trend in India, where out-of-school youth are not being absorbed in the labour market. The pandemic has had an unequal impact on different sections, and it has been especially tough for women; while male migrant workers are returning to urban areas after the lockdown, there is a disparity in the revival of jobs for women. She urged all the BRICS countries to be mindful of the rise in poverty rates and other inequalities among the working class. She also cautioned about overestimating the jobs that can be digitised in developing nations.

Digitalisation is a double-edged sword as it offers a world of opportunities but is available and accessible to only a section of society. A key learning is the need to recognise various transformations that are accelerated by the pandemic, Sabina Dewan noted.

6 AUGUST 2021 | SESSION 2

BRICS Agenda for Women's Leadership and Women-Led Economic Growth

SPEAKERS



LALITHA KUMARAMANGALAM
Former Chairperson, National Commission for Women, India



MARCELA TORRES REZENDE
Researcher at the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), Brazil



SARAH MOSOETSA
Associate Professor of Sociology (Wits), Chief Executive Officer (NIHSS), National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, South Africa



VICTORIA PANOVA
Vice-President for International Relations, Academic Supervisor, Far Eastern Federal University, BRICS Russia Expert Council, Russia



WU HUIFANG
Deputy Dean, College of Humanities and Development Studies, China Agricultural University, China



MODERATOR
RADHICKA KAPOOR
Senior Visiting Fellow, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations

RAPPORTEUR'S NOTES

STELIN PAUL

The debilitating socioeconomic effects of the pandemic were asymmetrically faced by women. For recovery to be equitable and inclusive, it must be women-led and women-centred. How can the economic, social and political inequities faced by women be reduced to ensure that they have their rightful place in the world as drivers of economic growth and sustainable development? How is the changing global economy changing the opportunities available to women? Are there specific measures that can be taken to improve female labour force participation, women-led financial inclusion and women-led enterprises? The panel examined the post-pandemic policy, business and socioeconomic landscape for women and explored how BRICS can support women-led economic growth.

The speakers referred to women being more engaged, formally and informally, in sectors like education and health, reiterating that women carried the pandemic crisis on their backs. Victoria Panova noted the impact of women's participation in the labour force—not only do women form a large part of the informal sector, which was severely hit by the pandemic, but were also among the first to be pushed out of the formal sector as the crisis worsened.

Highlighting the situation in Brazil, Marcela Torres Rezende discussed how the loss of income, security and employment has resulted in the participation rate (the number of people currently employed or in search of a job) falling below 15 percent. But this regression was not limited to the rate of participation; the BRICS countries also witnessed an inevitable rollback in sectors like health

and education. Despite this, the BRICS' recovery agendas make minimum references to making women the nucleus of the post-COVID-19 world.

Radhicka Kapoor sought potential policy measures that can ensure a higher share of women in the labour force, women-led financial inclusion, and women-led entrepreneurship. In response, Panova stressed on the need to introduce high-level social infrastructure in all five BRICS country. Governments should make higher public investments by allocating a certain percentage of the GDP to create better facilities, including crèches, classrooms, transport and providing maternity leave. She also recommended the creation of toolkits to empower women economically, but this can only be done after a better assessment of the situation. Panova also suggested that detailed sex disaggregated data be collected to better comprehend the effects and arrive at a possible solution. Adding to this, Rezende proposed introducing financial policies like quotas and loans to women, irrespective of race and class. She also suggested that governments lower the interest rates for micro, small and medium enterprises managed by women, and introduce tax incentive for firms that employ vulnerable women.

Wu Huifang suggested three possible ways to increase the contribution of rural women to the economy in the post-pandemic world—an expansion of women-based industries, including livestock breeding and tourism; increased exposure to e-commerce to transcend development-based hemming; and the use of village-level or higher-level organisations to introduce

economic policies constructed around the needs of micro entrepreneurs. However, Wu maintained that this is only possible after formally organising rural women and by strengthening leadership roles for women in federations at the grassroots level.

Rezende also detailed the dismal number of women in leadership positions in the BRICS countries, a sentiment shared by all the panelists. Women leaders around the world appear to have tackled the COVID-19 wave with considerable ease, highlighting that a clear path must be available for more women to reach high positions of decision-making.

Discussing the South African example, Sarah Mosoetsa recommended gender mainstreaming in different sectors, including global governance, energy, trade and investment, science, innovation, and technology. Meanwhile, Lalitha Kumaramangalam stressed on the importance of and need for education that includes technical and financial skills. She demanded greater exposure and access to technology for women to minimise the technological gap brought on by digitisation. A greater enrolment of women in artificial intelligence and STEM industries so women can participate on an equal footing with men in sectors that will shape the future.

The panel also acknowledged that women in the BRICS states face similar challenges and to forge a sustainable and resilient path to recovery, the countries must learn from each other and mend the gaps exposed by the pandemic.

6 AUGUST 2021 | CLOSING PLENARY

Towards a Reformed Multilateralism

SPEAKERS



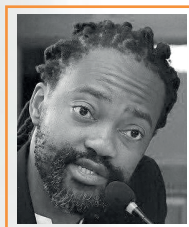
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AMB. H.H.S. VISWANATHAN
Distinguished Fellow, ORF



MODERATOR
AKSHAY MATHUR
Director, ORF Mumbai, and Head, ORF
Goeconomics Programme

RAPPORTEUR'S NOTES

AARSHI TIRKEY

The BRICS countries have shown their commitment to reforming multilateralism. What the world needs today is a reinvigorated and 'reformed multilateralism' to effectively address the diverse challenges of our time. What specific measures do we need to reform the UN and its principal organs, as well as other multilateral institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO)? How can we make the multilateral system more resilient, efficient, effective, transparent and representative? The panel examined the current state of reforms for multilateral institutions and explored how BRICS can build a truly effective representative multilateralism for successful global governance.

Multilateralism is going through a crisis—there is weakening and fragmentation of multilateral institutions today, and these issues happen to be

cross cutting, overlapping and contradictory. Moreover, many changes have taken place in the post-Second World War era, and the world has moved towards multipolarity. In this context, André de Mello e Souza highlighted that the original objective of BRICS was to reform the Bretton Woods institutions. Countries that have been marginalised need to be given a seat at the table, and inclusiveness and effectiveness should be the guiding principles for designing new institutions of global governance. These new frameworks need to focus on the priority areas of health and climate change, while more knowledge and expertise can be brought in from private and non-state actors.

The global community and economy are at a crucial stage, and old multilateralism is no longer capable of meeting these significant challenges. There may be a need for new multilateralism that could perhaps be delivered and strengthened by the BRICS grouping. Yaroslav Lissovlik suggested that a possible venue for reform is to create platforms that bring together old institutions, such as the Bretton Woods ones, and new institutions like

BRICS and regional development organisations. For instance, the BRICS economies can consider forming their own bloc within the WTO. The BRICS countries can also explore the potential for creating sovereign wealth funds to engage with vaccines distribution, health, green development, and in building cooperation links with WHO. Lissovolik also highlighted that greater activism is needed to build platforms that are open and inclusive and engage in trade and investment, which can be important for the Global South and North.

The pandemic has also shown that humankind is vulnerable and must work together for a shared future. Jin Xin emphasised that while multilateralism is the only way forward, however, what is needed is open and inclusive multilateralism and not selective. Countries need to uphold multilateralism based on international law and order, and safeguard and strengthen the authority of current international mechanisms. Multilateralism also needs to keep up with the time, and this requires reform of international organisations like the WTO, International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Countries must optimise the existing multilateral institutions even as they innovate to create new ones. In this context, the BRICS grouping can provide and become a bridge between developed and less developed countries.

The establishment of structures like the BRICS reflects the rise of southern powers and the increasing multipolarity of the global order. There is a need for new thinking, global governance reforms and new institutions

to solve the current and pressing global problems. Philani Mthembu commented that the multilateral system has largely been homogenous over the last few decades. Countries need to take on fresh ideas into existing multilateralism, and the formation of the BRICS must be seen as added value in the existing multilateral structure. The BRICS grouping needs to strengthen multilateral institutions and act as a bridge between the Global South and North and build a new multilateral architecture.

In an ideal world, multilateralism should favour the weak and incentivise the strong to work in that direction. According to Amb. H.H.S. Viswanathan, with changes in the global order, “multilateralism has become outdated”. Global institutions can be reformed in these changing times. The UN General Assembly (UNGA) is the biggest multilateral forum in the world, but it does not have any ‘teeth’. Countries need to look at the UNGA and arrive at ways to strengthen it, not as a rival to the UN Security Council (UNSC) but as a partner to it. Unless the UNSC is reformed and expanded in a time-bound manner to make it more representative, it could lose legitimacy.

This sentiment was echoed by other panelists as well— instead of abandoning old institutions, there is a need to reform them. The BRICS is ideally suited to take the lead on this initiative, since it has helped establish new and unique institutions, such as the New Development Bank.

6 AUGUST 2021 | CONCLUSION

Valedictory Session



CLOSING REMARKS

SACHIN CHATURVEDI

Director General, Research and Information System for Developing Countries



VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

**AMB. SANJAY
BHATTACHARYYA**

India's BRICS Sherpa and Secretary (CPV&OIA), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India



CONCLUDING REMARKS

SAMIR SARAN

President, ORF

RAPPORTEUR'S NOTES

KRIPA ANAND

Closing Remarks

Sachin Chaturvedi highlighted the four pillars central to India's BRICS presidency, as mentioned by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in his inaugural speech at the BRICS Academic Forum 2021. These include, the importance of the multilateral system, counterterrorism strategies, digital solutions and

working together to achieve the SDGs. He stressed the importance of the BRICS countries cooperating with multilateral institutions, specifically the UN.

This was followed by the valedictory address by Sanjay Bhattacharyya, India's BRICS Sherpa and Secretary (CPV&OIA). His address is reproduced in full below:



Valedictory Address

Dr. Samir Saran, Dr. Sachin Chaturvedi, Academics and Analysts from the BRICS Community, Namaskar!

It has been my pleasure to have followed the journey of the BRICS Academic Forum through the last few months. Some of you may recall that in April, at the launch of the BRICS Academic Forum process 2021, I had conveyed that we (i.e. the BRICS Sherpas) would lean on you for innovative ideas to carry forward the BRICS aspirations and to strengthen its global impact and relevance. The Minister for External Affairs also referred to it in his inaugural address to the Forum.

BRICS Academic Forum, since its inception in 2009, has been instrumental in enhancing cooperation and in the research and capacity building among academic communities of BRICS countries. The Forum has deliberated on the most pressing development issues faced by BRICS countries and the Global South — issues of economic growth, investment and infrastructure, cooperation and sustainable development; challenges of technology, digitalisation and big data; emerging opportunities in food and health security and education. You always came up with useful recommendations for the BRICS leadership. The BRICS Think Tank Council, established in 2013, helped in bringing continuity in the deliberations.

BRICS finds its roots in the meeting of Foreign Ministers in 2006, held on the margins of UNGA in New York. This is therefore a milestone year for BRICS, we have completed 15 years. It is a moment for celebration and reflection. There have been numerous achievements in BRICS: we are the only plurilateral grouping with a Bank of our own, we have a financial safety net in the Contingent Reserve Arrangement and we are creating a Vaccine R&D Virtual Centre as a response to not just the pandemic but the growing needs. We have seen tangible intra-BRICS cooperation in various sectors, however, cooperation in some areas could have been stronger. 15th anniversary of BRICS is therefore an opportune moment to reflect on the achievements and missed opportunities and to visualize the direction we would like BRICS to take, in coming years. The calls for diversity and pluralism are louder, the demands for of global reform governance and multipolarity are stronger and BRICS is at the heart of it.

I understand that BRICS Academic Process, through the last few months, has delved on various issues of importance for BRICS cooperation including multilateralism, international security, digitalization, climate change, gender and SDGs. I have listened very carefully to all your suggestions. We strongly value your insights as we take forward intra-BRICS cooperation.

During our Chairship in 2021, we have tried to strengthen intra-BRICS cooperation under the overall theme of BRICS@15: Intra BRICS Cooperation for Continuity, Consolidation and Consensus with 4 priorities -reform of the multilateral system, counter terrorism cooperation, technological and digital solutions to SDGs and people-to-people cooperation.

In June, this year, our Foreign Ministers issued a Joint Statement on Reforming and Strengthening of the Multilateral System. We have reached agreement, at experts level, on concluding a BRICS Counter Terrorism Action Plan to enhance practical BRICS cooperation in this important area.



During this year we have tried to assimilate digital and technological solutions for the achievement of SDGs in the context of various BRICS mechanisms. We hope to come up with a BRICS portal for Digital Public Goods. The BRICS Agriculture Research Platform, another digital platform, will address issues related to sustainable agricultural development, hunger, poverty, nutrition, climate resilience, etc.

Some other important outcomes that are expected to be achieved in the coming weeks include the BRICS Agricultural Cooperation Action Plan 2021-24; Innovation Action Plan 2021-24; Cooperation on Disaster Resilience; and Cooperation in Digital Health, a very important issue, and Traditional Medicine. Agreement among BRICS Space Agencies for BRICS Satellite Constellation is expected to be signed and the Mutual Customs Assistance Agreement is also likely to be concluded. Hence, we have had an active and fruitful year thus far in the BRICS pillars of Political and Security and Economic and Financial cooperation.

It has always been India's endeavour to enhance People-to-People and Cultural exchanges, which constitutes the third pillar of BRICS cooperation. This pillar not only adds flavour and vitality to the movement but also deepens the quality of our relations and interactions. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had especially called for strengthening of this pillar of BRICS cooperation. BRICS Games, Youth meetings, Film Festivals, Business Council & Forum, Women's Business Alliance, Academic Forum, Think-Tank Council, Civil Forum, Young Scientist Forum, Parliamentarians exchanges, etc are now regular P2P mechanisms. BRICS Ministers for Culture, Youth Affairs, Sports, Tourism also meet regularly to strengthen our cooperation in the areas.

As I mentioned, we have used the opportunity of our Chairship to embark also on an exercise to consolidate intra-BRICS cooperation and to streamline processes. As part of this exercise we have revisited the Terms of Reference of BRICS mechanisms and agreed to update the document, this has been done at the Sherpa Track. Further, we have requested the Indian representatives at the Academic Forum to review the major decisions taken in BRICS, including the MoUs and Agreements signed, and to prepare a report on their implementation status. I am told that work on that document is presently ongoing and we can expect a detailed report in coming weeks.

This will be a good beginning. Unlike many other plurilateral groupings, BRICS does not have a dedicated secretariat. While each rotating Chairship takes upon itself the responsibility of secretariat functions, availability of historical data relating to BRICS decisions, under its numerous tracks, remains a challenge for all BRICS partners. As we have a vibrant academic community in BRICS, it may be useful to have our Academic Process act as a repository of documents, reports and information on BRICS, perhaps in the format of a BRICS portal.

The BRICS Academic Forum has provided a stage for deliberations and discussions among the leading academic institutions of BRICS countries on issues of common interest. I am glad that the forum continues to strengthen dialogue, floats new ideas and proposes solutions on numerous issues of global significance.

This year's deliberations, at the BRICS Academic Track, have also provided interesting perspectives on these issues. These issues are crucial and critical for the future of mankind and the responsibility that BRICS countries bear in this regard. We are at a unique crossroad and the Covid pandemic has brought these issues into sharper



focus. The deliberations in the academic circles have laid the groundwork and done the grunt work to set the aspirational levels for agreement that we governments can expect to achieve in the days to come.

I believe we need to challenge ourselves continuously and work together, towards expanding common ground while reducing differences, for making real progress in intra-BRICS cooperation. This will send a strong message to the global community and will boost the standing of BRICS in international affairs. I am confident that with the support of our BRICS academic partners, we will be able to achieve this goal through dialogue and consensus.

I thank you all for your participation and would like to use this opportunity to thank Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) for their masterly steering of the BRICS Academic Process in 2021.

I will make sure your valuable suggestions are circulated to fellow BRICS Sherpas and is also brought to the knowledge of the BRICS Leadership.

I thank you.

Concluding Remarks

In his concluding remarks, Samir Saran noted that over 80 speakers from the five BRICS countries were able to come together to debate and discuss vital issues. He remarked that Sanjay Bhattacharya's message outlined the progress the Track 1 format has made under the Indian Presidency and through the years. It represents a research challenge for the BRICS think tank community, the academic community and researchers, as it is important to keep up with the energy and speed at which Track 1 is moving the BRICS agenda.

He noted that a key takeaway from the BRICS Academic Forum discussions is that the assumptions and understanding of institutions, economic architectures, international relations and domestic frameworks have been dramatically implicated by

the pandemic. The BRICS grouping must be at the forefront of defining the new world order, which will be characterised by changes in the rules of multilateralism, plurality in international decision-making bodies, social protection of informal workers, digitalisation of society, and embracing women-led international economic and political order.

He reiterated S. Jaishankar's remarks in his inaugural speech that terrorism remains an enduring challenge for humankind and the BRICS nations must come together and strengthen the global resolve to respond to this threat.

Kripa Anand was a research intern at ORF Mumbai.



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