

Multilateral Diplomacy: Role Of Brics In Altering The Discourse Of Global Governance

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Abstract-With the advent of twenty-first century, the international politics witnessed a shift towards multi-polarization which is premised on a more equitable world order. Multilateralism became the cornerstone of this international system and it seeks to structure the relation between the emerging powers on one hand and also promote the structuring of the basic principles of regimes at the global level on the other. The process of globalization with its economic and regional integration necessitated the rapid growth of multilateral diplomacy at the regional level to fulfill its functions at that level. BRICS emerged as a concrete multilateral group and it seeks to reshape the contours of the international system as the states constituting it were denied a place in the hierarchy of global powers. India too engages with multilateral diplomacy in its foreign policy strategy through various forums including the BRICS. Thus the paper is divided into two parts in order to deal with this aspect of global governance of BRICS through multilateral diplomacy. The first part seeks to analyze the BRICS as an organization of the emerging nations in the region of Asia-Pacific and the prospects and challenges faced by it. In the second part of the paper the role of BRICS nation in determining the global geopolitics of the future and its role as an alternative forum of global governance. Multilateral diplomatic summits thus form an essential part of the architecture of global governance..

Index Terms-Multilateralism, Global Governance, Multilateral Diplomacy, BRICS, Summit, Global South

1. INTRODUCTION

The twenty first century world is a multipolar world and it is premised on a more equitable world order. Multilateralism has become the cornerstone of this multipolar world with the organization of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) playing a crucial role in it. The bloc emerged as a concrete multilateral group and it seeks to reshape the contours of the international system as the states constituting it were denied a place in the hierarchy of global powers. In the period of its emergence, it was predicted as a bloc that has the potential to become the world's principal "engine of new demand growth and spending power" by making an impact among so-called 'Southern' nations (Wilson and Purushothaman, 2003:1). BRICS, in its brief period of existence, expanded its diplomatic role rapidly along with advocating a larger voice both in the sphere of economics as well as security forum (Ayres, 2017). It is more sensitive to issues faced by the global South and thus provides an opportunity in building an alternative world order. Moreover, the summit meeting undertaken by BRICS can at times play a decisive role in the process of complex negotiation. As for instance, in the BRICS summit meeting in Xiamen, China was an opportunity to end a stand-off, for both India and China, at the Dokhlam plateau. However, despite its effort in playing an influential role in challenging the hierarchy of global power and contributing in the development of a multilateral world order, it seems to be constrained by the changes in the international politics. The bloc that emerged as a platform for the emerging state in order to reshape the international order are at times constrained by various factors at all the three level of analysis, that is, at the individual level with the role of leaders representing the states at the forum, the intra-BRICS politics at the state level and the changing dynamics of international politics at the international level. BRICS, nevertheless, is one of the primary regional organizations in the region of Asia-Pacific. It seeks to reshape the international system and the process of global governance through the process of multilateral diplomacy. The process of globalization with its economic and regional integration necessitated the rapid growth of multilateral diplomacy at the regional level to fulfill its functions at that level. So this category of diplomacy can be regarded as a 'sunrise

industry' (Mahbubani, 2013), with its potential to solve supranational problems. The study is limited to the study of the regional organization of BRICS and its role in global governance. There are several multilateral frameworks in the region of Asia-Pacific and more generally in the South, namely IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa), BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) and so on. These emerging multilateral alliances are also influential in presenting a challenge to the European world dominated order and thus working forth for a transformation of the 'global political landscape' (Keukeleire and Hooijmaaijers, 2014: 590). However, BRICS is taken in particular as it is the only 'one of the overlapping non-Western formations to emerge in the new era of bloc- building' (Gowan, 2012: 167). To deal with this aspect of global governance of BRICS the paper is divided into two parts. Firstly, it seeks to analyze the BRICS as an organization of the emerging nations in the region of Asia-Pacific and the prospects and challenges faced by it. In this section a general overview of BRICS is undertaken. A study of role of international politics involved in BRICS as a regional grouping, the intra-BRICS cooperation in impacting it and also the role of personality attitudes in influencing the growth of the organization is evaluated. The second part analyses the role of BRICS nation in determining the global geopolitics of the future and its role as an alternative forum of global governance. It finally examines the impact of this regional organization on the existing global regime and their success or failure in providing an alternative to the West-dominated world and thus their role in defending mutual interest. In it the paper also evaluates the role of India in brief in exercising as its foreign policy strategy in the multilateral forum. Thus this paper seeks to have a deeper understanding of the role of BRICS in bringing forth an alternative forum to the existing global governance.

2. BRICS AS A MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATION

2.1. An overview of BRICS

The idea of BRICS, a group of 'emerging' nations, started as a mental construct of Jim O'Neill, an investment banking analyst in 2001 (Chandrasekhar, 2014). BRICS was

converted from an idea into an institution, by the nations concerned, with the meeting of foreign ministers held, on the margins of Group of 8 meeting, between Brazil, China, Russia and India in St. Petersburg on 2008. The next year the first Summit of 'BRICs' was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia. South Africa became a part of the bloc in the 2011 Sanya Summit held in China, after the decision was taken at a foreign ministers' meeting in 2010 (Ayres, 2017). It emerged as a potential bloc to primarily counterbalance the developed world vis-à-vis the emerging nations (Troitskiy, 2015: 76). The financial crises of 2008 and the resilience which the member states of the BRICs nation displayed was the rallying point for the institutionalized cooperation among them (Stuenkel, 2013: 611). The legitimacy crisis that was caused in the international financial order led to this cooperation among this group of emerging powers that were relatively stable in the economic front. The trust that developed among them in the financial area finally led to a spillover effect, with the BRICS nations further developing cooperation in broader areas though the root cause of their emergence have gradually disappeared. The international politics, its cooperation and conflict among the member states are also impacting the aspect of global governance and thus form a crucial part in the study of BRICS.

2.2. International Politics and BRICS

For Stuenkel (2015), BRICS as an organization has its growth, both individually as well as jointly. This growth is undeterred by the United States stand to remain a unilateral power. For him multipolarity is an inevitable growth of this present world system. BRICS as an organization signify a unified version of multipolarity and the bloc as such 'unify to diversify' international leadership. Russian leaders used their noteworthy diplomatic capabilities in order to bring about intra cooperation in the organization. This rise of the BRICS and its prospect for joint development is not completely supported by Carmody (2013) as he argued that the development of this bloc indicates a decline in global governance as this does not lead to transnational norms of development. This is evident in the commercial competition in the Sub-Saharan African nations. There is the growth of an unorganized version of multipolarity in which the leading states compete with each other for acquiring the scarce natural resources available. Another strand of argument put forth by Joseph Nye (2015) enunciates that the US has the capability to define the world order, which at this present moment remain unrealized. He is quite optimistic in stating that the country has the potential to provide the leadership role and to revive the world order as it did in the post-World War period, provided it recognizes its error and at the same time redoubles its effort to become a global hegemon. The current decline is relative one and not absolute. So for him, the case of BRICS as an organizing principle with the prospect to create a multipolar world is weak. The bloc is to become an influential group in the international sphere, but neither a hegemonic power nor a power that challenges the United States hegemony in the foreseeable future (Hau et al, 2012: 188). Though in the recent times questions are raised regarding its significance amid the disruptions caused by the increasing socio-economic problems among the member states, however BRICS continue to be relevant in its own right in the international sphere despite these differences (Khadkiwala, 2014). It continues to remain as a

coalition of emerging nations that challenge the discourse dominated by the West and also successfully provide an alternative idea of the aspect of global governance (Khadkiwala, 2014). The bloc primarily emerged as a potential unit to counterbalance the policies of the developed states (Troitskiy, 2015). In a multipolar world order, it has gradually evolved into a significant coalition (Khadkiwala, 2014). Since it evolved incrementally into a forum that is more comprehensive in nature and one that holds dialogue on diverse issues, thus it can be regarded as a multilateral forum (Khadkiwala, 2014). The intra-BRICS cooperation impacting the organization's role as a forum in global governance also forms a crucial aspect

2.3. Intra-BRICS Co-operation Impacting the Organization

The diplomacy undertaken by the BRICS posit a form of 'collective resistance' in order to gain recognition as well as appreciation in the international sphere (Grincheva and Lu, 2016: 25). BRICS summits undertaken on an annual basis are an example of multilateral diplomacy. These summits play an important role in the architecture of global governance by creating multilateral institutions through which members gain political clouts in the international scene. Such organizations also play the role of an institution in the mean process and they organize as well as coordinate the relations based on the general principle of conduct among the member states (Karns and Mingst, 2004). Now, the annual BRICS Summits held discuss a wide range of issues including terrorism, cybersecurity, piracy, health, SDG, finance, trade, science and technology and other concerns that are threatening the international system. However, there are political divergences among the BRICS member states. As such, it has to struggle in order to maintain its relevance and its mandate. As for instance, despite the lofty declarations made by the member states in the Goa summit on certain issues like to establish BRICS agri- research platform, Sports Council, Railway Research Network, and various other forum along with BRICS Rating Agency in order to bridge the existing gap in the global financial architecture, the bloc actually stand divided on various key issues like terrorism, naming terror groups and so on (Pant, 2016). The geopolitical fissure among the member states makes its future look bleak (Pant, 2016). Their pursuit of common goals is at times threatened by their disturbed security relations (Ayres, 2017). There is a growing economic as well as political power among the BRICS nations. Their recent rise in visible in the field of global governance, trade policy, in democratization and in social provision (Hau et al, 2012: 187). Despite being in the common platform for bringing about global reform in the international sphere, there are deep differences between them (Ayres, 2017). The unfriendly bilateral relationships between the nations threaten their pursuit of their common goals. It is not much clear whether a durable common interest for the formation of a multilateral organization is being provided by the bloc (Ayres, 2017). The foreign policy relations among the BRICS countries are at times mutually opposed as they at certain times lack in trust among themselves. The most obvious example is India and China, in which the Doklam issue is evident. Also, the relation of South Africa and Russia or India and Brazil is also very thin. China and

Russia are in a different league altogether compared to the other three members of the bloc in the matter of global security as they have permanent seats in the United Nations Security Council. Besides this, the two countries have an authoritarian system of government, unlike the other three members which are democracies. This makes it evident that in the aspects of the pursuit of ingenious initiative of global nature BRICS always step backward (Troitskiy, 2015: 77). This also led to the creation of a separate trilateral consultation forum called IBSA Dialogue forum by the other three members of the bloc (Ayres, 2017). Nevertheless, despite the convergences and divergences among the members, they meet on a regular basis on the pretext of BRICS summit held annually. The first BRICS summit held in 2009 was a successful one as it as it led to the growth of a political platform (Stuenkel, 2014:1). Despite its differences in multiple aspects, the main driver behind this summit was to strengthen the international status of the member state and to create a balance against the developed countries' dominance. It seeks to strengthen the intra-BRICS cooperation and thus reduce the trust deficit between its members. However, the root cause of its success lies in its successful role in creating a narrative of a momentous shift in power, from the Euro-centrism and from the United States, towards the countries of emerging-market. Thus there was the advent of a post-American world order (Zakaria, 2008) or a post-Western world.

2.4. Role of Personality's Attitude in Shaping BRICS

For BRICS, constituting a bloc and conducting summits brought them to a common forum and they conducted diplomatic practice and benefitted from it both collectively and individually. Also, the role of the leaders and their attitude towards the whole process also determines its success or failure. There was a high-profile championing at the first summit on the part of the Brazil's President. For Brazil, it gained a lot in this involvement as its identity was reaffirmed. Russia, being in a state of relative decline at that period of time, benefitted the most from the bloc as it gave the state a chance to improve its status. Its leaders played a crucial role in initiating it as it further benefited Russia in reinforcing its powerful role within the larger international system (Grincheva and Lu, 2016: 30). The BRICS diplomacy pursued by Russia helped in reforming the key economic as well as the security structure and thus increased its voice in the world (Roberts, 2011, 38). Though a low-key approach was undertaken by Indian leader at the 2009 summit, however this changed in the recent period. India gained on its part considerably as it was put in the same platform as China, thus compensating its economic gap with China. The agentic confidence and assertive leadership demonstrated by China in its cautious approach towards the summits in matters involving its national interest (Cooper and Farooq, 2016: 73). China seek to nurture an environment of cooperative nature through the BRICS diplomacy, in which it basically seeks to put forth an image of a softer nation to the global audiences (Grincheva and Lu, 2016: 30). For South African leaders, the BRICS forum and its diplomacy is a complement to its pursuit of South-South strategy (Qobo and Dube, 2012: 18). The country remains a significant regional economic and political player in which acceding to the BRICS reflects the

rising international influence and developing nature of global governance (Carmody, 2012: 223). Thus the process was driven by the attitude of the leaders of those states. It is their approaches to address the common challenge in the international forum, the personal chemistry between them and their zeal to institutionalize on critical issues that constitute the primary aspects of their leadership role. However, since the origin of the term 'BRICs' almost sixteen years ago, there has been a shift in the meaning and scope of the bloc. BRICS is the harbinger of a new financial architecture and it has the potential to benefit not just the member states of the organization, but the global financial system too (Sen, 2017: 27). BRICS emerged just as an economic construct of the emerging powers for the negotiation of a 'post- American world order' (Pant, 2016), a forum to articulate the voice of the emerging nations. This rationale, although present, is rather not dominant now as tackling other pressing area of challenges has a crucial place among the member states has also become the area of convergences among the members as well. The BRICS as a group was meant to be, originally, a purely economic category that was bonded as a bloc due to their fast-paced economic growth. However, it was never conceived to deal with political matters (Khadkiwala, 2014). Now the issues in the summits and the diplomacy undertaken are dominated by the political and security concerns of the member states rather than the economic ones. This group of nations is certainly working together for defending their mutual interests (Editorials, EPW, 2011). Along with the role of convergences and divergences in intra- BRICS states and the role of leadership, it is the changing dynamics of international politics that has a role in BRICS summit diplomacy and vice-versa. All these factors on their part play a crucial role in the global governance process of the BRICS.

3. BRICS as an Alternative Forum for Global Governance

The BRICS group can primarily be recognized as a force that is irreplaceable in global governance. Although there were divergent rationales among the member states behind their alliance, however there remained certain commonalities among them. The need to challenge the embedded power structure constituted by the West was the prime driver of their formation (Saran, 2017: 5). They faced challenges in the prevalent system of global governance dominated by the developed nations of the West. The nations constituting the bloc were capable of challenging this dominance as a group, a task which they were unable to do on their individual basis. Thus BRICS as a regional grouping formed to bring forth a governance architecture that is more inclusive in nature. The cooperation that exists among the five members of the group not only helps in fulfilling their interests as developing nations but also the global governance as a whole. It can be termed as an accelerator in the process of its alteration of the economic governance structure of the world too. Since in the past, global governance rules and the norms guiding it favored certain regions over the others, BRICS as an organization through its development will address some of these limitations. Global governance in this context can be defined as the 'management of transnational issues through voluntary international cooperation' (Altinay, 2010). The

United Nations defines global governance as 'the sum of laws, norms, policies and institutions that define, constitute and mediate trans-border relations between states, cultures, citizens, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, and the market...bring more predictability, stability and order to their responses to transnational challenges... which go beyond the capacity of a single state to solve'. This aspect of global governance is not a new one. The Rhodian Law of the Sea that governed the maritime losses, the Hawala system operative in areas of South Asia, Mediterranean and West Asia for over thousands of years and so on provides evidences of this practice of multilateralism and global governance in the earlier times too (Altinay, 2010). In today's globalized world however, the interdependence among the states is of complex nature. The aspect of global governance has become a challenge with the technological progress, with the high speed transfer of capital and goods (Viswanathan, 2017). Global governance serves basically three purposes as per the United Nations. Firstly, it manages trans-border relations among the various sections of the society. Its second purpose is to ensure a world order that is stable and thirdly it attempts to bring together states on issues of common concern which requires collective effort to tackle them (Viswanathan, 2017). Thus the primary variable that should guide the process of global governance is the creation of an equitable order. This can be ensured through the process of ensuring an equal participation of all the actors whose interest is concerned, and the upkeep of this factor is very well ensured by the BRICS. Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman (2003) in their paper "Dreaming with BRICs: The Path to 2050" mapped out the GDP growth, the per capita income and the currency movements of the BRICs nations for the next 50 years, that is until 2050, and came up with the assumption that 'in less than 40 years, the BRICs economies together could be larger than the G6 in US dollar terms'. Currently the worth of their economy is less than 15 percent of the G6 (US, UK, Japan, France, Germany and Italy). Though a great deal of uncertainty is associated with such long-term prediction, however it is done with a great deal of calculations. Certain conditions need to be fulfilled in order to realize this prediction, which of course seems very dramatic due to the volatile nature of the world economy. However the group still has the potential to emerge as a competitor to the Western developed states in their collective strength. The BRICS grouping can shape the contours of the world economy as together this regional organization accounts for about 43 percent of the total population of the world, 17 percent of the world trade and about 30 percent of the GDP of the world (BRICS India, 2016). The global governance framework that BRICS seek to develop will thus be vital for the development of the political stability of the world order in general and BRICS in particular (Viswanathan, 2017). BRICS seeks to influence the aspect of global governance through several avenues to provide for a multilateral world order that is open and equitable. One priority area of influencing is through its economies, the prime reason of its birth as a bloc. The 2008 crisis led to the creation of a financial crisis in the international financial order and this then led to the pairing of the group of countries those were in the state of relative stability. This cooperation among them as a bloc increased their bargaining power, although

for a temporary period. However, it has its own benefits in the form of attaining the status of agenda setters at that period of time. This incidence led to the reforms in the International Monetary Fund as was seen in the period of 2010 in the context of IMF quota reform. Thus it shows the relevance of the grouping to create an alternative institution in the area of global governance (Stuenkel, 2013). Similarly, the creation of Contingency Reserve Agreement and the New Development Bank as agreed to in the Fifth annual Summit held in Durban can be regarded as another development that has the potential to undermine the Bretton Woods institution's dominance (Khadkiwala, 2014). However, it is important to note that to be on the upfront as a bloc to challenge the West in aspect of global governance, BRICS has to maintain its economic growth and development. Intra-BRICS cooperation in the dimension of finance leads to cooperation in other areas of concern, which can be regarded as a spillover effect (Stuenkel, 2013). BRICS cooperation among its members can also be observed in area of multilateral diplomacy. Multilateral diplomacy can be defined as "the practice of involving more than two nations or parties in achieving diplomatic solutions to supranational problems" (Mahbubani 2013: 248). Though the process of globalization has literally created an interconnected world with the shrinking of the globe, however the global village created by globalization needs councils to fulfil its functions. The role of the councils can be fulfilled by the multilateral diplomacy, which is also regarded as a 'sunrise industry'. In the conduct of this multilateral diplomacy, the annual summits held among the member states on an annual basis since 2009 are of particular significance. It discusses a wide range of issues including terrorism, cybersecurity, piracy, health, SDG, finance, trade, science and technology and other concerns that are threatening the international system, those issues that have a direct influence on the aspect of global governance.

4. ROLE OF INDIA

Though during the period of Cold War, India preferred bilateral policies over the multilateral one as its foreign policy means, however in the present century the picture is altogether a different one. It realized the inadequacy of its traditional approach of bilateralism in resolving issues. For a more meaningful contribution to the global governance architecture in general and for the development, peace and prosperity of its Asian region in particular, it has adopted multilateralism as its foreign policy stand (Zhengduo, 2014). India to attain this goal has resorted to multilateral diplomacy and the development of regional multilateral organization. India is a traditional critic of the Western states' dominance in the multilateral trade regime and as such it forms coalition with the other emerging powers in order to challenge this dominance of the West (Stephen, 2016: 596). It has thus become member of various multilateral organizations in the Asia-Pacific region to realize this objective, the BRICS being one of them. However, China, due to the sheer size of its economy, is one of the most important members of the BRICS. Chinese support is crucial to make the group relevant. This unprecedented rise of China in Asia has to certain extent disturbed the balance in the area. India now pursues a policy stand that maintains relation with Russia and has a strong strategic relationship with the United States

(Stephen, 2016: 595), an anomaly in the organizations existence and a step which has the potential to disrupt its very objective.

5. THE WAY AHEAD

Thus, at the backdrop of tension between India and China, the two big states of the bloc, it can strain the unity of the bloc. It seems that the bloc is bonded together on just the aspect of being non-Western. It is a weak organization when it comes to solving serious problems among its members. Also, scholars writing in the initial phase of the BRICS argued that though the bloc seek to establish a multipolar world, which is evident from the Yekaterinburg Summit in 2009 itself, but to be regarded as a 'coherent political grouping' will take a long time for that development (Editorials, EPW, 2011). Nevertheless, the world politics is progressively shifting towards a multi-polar system in which regional integration and economic globalization are important players in this shift. Despite the divergences, the bloc is a unique organization for its cooperation. They cooperate in various area of global governance including security areas, economic front, multilateral trade, their annual multilateral summits, counter-terrorism, in the United Nations and so on. There is a larger concern among the members for representing as an alternative forum for Western-led international financial institution and global governance. The BRICS should work towards for a world order that is more equitable and reasonable, a world where the rules are no longer defined by the Western powers alone. Thus the global governance architecture as well as the financial architecture needs a thorough overhaul in the light of this regional organization of BRICS.

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