



## Structuring Climate Change brick by BRICS

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### Abstract

*The 71<sup>st</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly revolved around the central theme of Sustainable Development Goals directed at attaining poverty and hunger ridden world; premised upon a healthy environment, peace, prosperity, partnership for the present as well as future generations. In this context one should ponder upon the thirteenth Sustainable Development Goal that focuses on the issue of Climate Change which in turn reflects a grave danger to the process of development. Climate Change exercises a disproportionate influence by burdening the poorest and least developed nation states. This calls upon the requirement of an immediate action to be undertaken by the international community which can act as a catalyst in terms of minimizing its impact and the disruptions caused. Climate change has by and large aggravated the natural disasters wherein it has been reported that an estimate around 1.6 million suffered death from 1990 to 2013. As a consequence of this, most of the nation states have more or less opted for national as well as local disaster reduction strategies. Thus by the year of 2015 it can be clearly argued that almost 83 countries implemented legislative provisions for reducing disaster risk. In this context it needs to be noted that it was during the year 2016, wherein around 175 member nation states entered a landmark treaty i.e. Paris Climate Accord under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In this context it becomes imperative to examine the role of regional groupings and their contribution to the 13<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Development Goal. Regional initiatives like European Union aims at averting dangers of Climate Change, which is considered the utmost priority. European Union aims to achieve a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emission and increase in energy efficiency by the year 2020. Another fundamental regional grouping ASEAN has impacted significantly as far as the issue of Climate Change is concerned by ratifying Doha Amendment, Kyoto Protocol and by charting out contribution even before COP 21 held in Paris in the year 2015. Regional groupings at the global south are the considered to be harbinger of change. There is a*



*widespread assumption that the multilateral groupings like, BRICS response to Climate Change is critical to the fate of international system. These five largest emerging economies Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa exercise a considerable influence on global sustainability. This paper seeks to analyse the response of BRICS to the global Climate Change and its impact.*

## **Structuring Climate Change brick by BRICS**

As the year 2016 embarks a new beginning, one could argue that the world has undergone a fundamental transition marked by ratification of the landmark Paris Climate Accord by almost 74 member states including European Union. It needs to be noted that 2016 is turned out to be the substantial year for Climate Change negotiations and Sustainable Development Goals, wherein signatories are required to implement every single measure which is crucial in terms of limiting global warming to no more than 2° C. According to the Chinese President Xi Jinping Paris is a new starting point and not the finishing line. The fact that needs to be pondered upon is that, the BRICS economies are undergoing some of the serious development challenges both internally and regionally, by and large emerged as one of the major emitters of carbon evaluated in terms of volume and not in terms of per capita income.

In this context one could argue that the treaty of Kyoto Protocol entrusted the accountability of minimizing Green House Emission primarily upon the most advanced nation states of the Global North and held them as liable for causing Climate Change. It was during the period of 1990's wherein most of the developed economies assumed a key role in battling Climate Change. However what needs to be pondered upon is the fact that the entire international community is guilty of causing this environmental vulnerability. Statistically, countries like China, Russia and India have emerged as the paramount emitters of the Green House Gases pronounced by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) towards the year 2008.<sup>1</sup> There is a massive increase of 5.8% in the CO<sub>2</sub> transmission by the non annex (1) countries including

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<sup>1</sup> United States Environmental Agency is an agency of the federal government of the United States which was created for the purpose of protecting human health and the environment.



BRICS, as suggested by the report of IEA<sup>2</sup>. The speedy and swift economic growth as well as increased energy requirement by the BRICS nations is going to exercise a notable influence upon Climate Change. This calls in for collective responsibility on the part of the international community wherein BRICS can play a pivotal role in terms of impacting Climate Change mitigation. Thus this paper seeks to analyse the role and the impact of BRICS on Climate Change.

The partnership and synergy showcased by the BRICS economies issues a unique platform in terms of shared knowledge as well as facing challenges, which in turn provides them with comparative advantage over other economies. In fact in the year 2005, economies like India and China started collaborating on the subject of energy security and energy cooperation. Besides this from 2004 till 2007 India and China held series of negotiations on Climate Change. At the dawn of the year 2009 these two states reinforced exchanges and by the year 2010 adopted a Memorandum of Understanding premised on achieving the collaboration on Green Technology. The two countries paid equal attention in terms of bringing into force the Bali Road Map directed at attaining an increase in the Pre 2020 emission minimizing targets. Federative Republic of Brazil and People's Republic of China attained enormous cooperation through signing a Joint Action Plan during 2010 and opening up of the China- Brazil Center for Climate Change at Tsinghua Campus. What can be unleashed in this regard is the fact that BRICS states seek to deepen their cooperation on Climate Change through several Joint Resolutions including the joint statement issued at the 16<sup>th</sup> BRICS Ministerial Meeting upon Climate Change.

Climate Change measures adopted by the BRICS economies bear two seminal attributes. Primarily, BRICS nations have undertaken procedures of mitigating Greenhouse Gas Emission wherein they are of the perspective that Climate Change is going to exercise a substantial influence upon their economic advancement or only where by measures opted do not act as a hindrance to their economic growth. When a measure undertaken is bound to diminish their chances of economic growth then the BRICS economies will not adopt it. In fact India's NAPCC discern those measures which encourage development while dealing with Climate Change.

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<sup>2</sup> IEA refers to International Energy Agency which is an autonomous agency.



Moreover, the policy posture opted is by and large not managed by moral imperative nor the international climate commitment but implanted the requirement of energy security. For instance countries like South Africa initiated carbon tax upon non renewable energy in order to enhance energy efficiency because of increasing demand for energy and also due to declining coal reserves of mere 50 years. In this context it then becomes imperative to study measures undertaken by BRICS economies independently.

### *Russia*

Global warming has exercised an exceedingly adverse impact upon the Russian state and specifically during the year 2010 marked by the rare extreme heat, dry weather and forest fires covering an area of around one lakh ninety thousand hectares. In spite of Russia's total global emissions being 5%, its Green House Gas emissions reports to 37% a level lower than the one of the 1990's, as a consequence of the economic crisis after the demise of the Soviet Union. In this context what needs to be argued is that Russian economy for a long period of time did not undertake Climate control measures and it was only in the year 2009 wherein the Russian state embraced a Climate Doctrine which is directed at enhancing energy efficiency, broadening the sphere of renewable energy as well as enacting market based measures for instance carbon trading. What cannot be ignored in this regard is the fact that these do not include officially binding agreement but rather a constitutional document which projects the administration's stand upon the question of Climate Change and lays down the objectives, principles as well as requisite action. It was in the year 2011 wherein Russia executed an implementation project which in turn demanded that the administration must embark upon substantive climate strategy in various arenas like agriculture, energy, infrastructure, scientific research as well as transportation. What can be analysed in this regard is the fact that state leadership showcased little attention towards this, particularly within the sphere of renewable energy which amounts for less than 1% of energy need within the Russian state. In this context it becomes imperative to look at Russia position towards Paris Agreement. As far as the Climate Accord at Paris is concerned what can be unleashed is, despite of the fact that Moscow emerges as the state dubious of the objectives of the Accord, it volunteered an authorized Climate Action Plan prior to the commencement of Paris Conference. In fact President Putin maintained that improving life standards on the planet



relies heavily upon the human genius to carve out viable solution to the problem of Climate Change. This definitely astonished most of the scholars who were well aware of Russia's dubious behaviour towards this issue. Nonetheless, this apparently radical posture shadows the genuineness wherein there has been no substantial change in Russian approach to Climate Change or readiness to go ahead conclusively on the issue. Though the Climate Action Plan appears to be a favourable development scholars suggested that Russian Agreement which requires a 30% reduction in emission less than 1990's level could indeed accommodate Russia to intensify its emissions that are presently 35% less than the 1990's level. The Climate Change advocates revealed that within the green house emission consideration arrangement which is premised absolutely upon "Carbon Sink" impact upon the Russian forests, this nation state could have to eventually mitigate its carbon emission by still less than minimal targets spelled out in the scheme. Russian executives have signalled out that they aspire to depend deliberately upon impact of the Russian forests in terms of attaining the targets mentioned in the Carbon Action Plan implying that actual impact of the plan is insignificant. All the while when the entire global community to a great extent allied over the issue of mitigating the hazardous effects of Climate Change Russia continues to maintain the posture of an obscure skeptic.

### *China*

Climate Change has thus so far fabricated visible harmful effects upon China's agriculture as well as livestock rearing sector exhibited by heightened uncertainty in agriculture production, grave harm to livestock breeding, fostered by drought and high temperatures within some region of the Chinese State. China has enormously contributed in field of renewable energy. In this context it needs to be argued that China is not at all well known; in terms of promoting a strong as well as a viable climate in spite of boosting up imposition of environmental laws every second year. The Chinese economy is nevertheless is instrumental in delivering maximum percentage of carbon discharge to the global climate. Most of the observers have pointed out that the momentum of the Climate Change is materializing at a rapid scale than it had been foretold wherein China's Carbon Emissions are making the highest contribution. This is evident from the fact that according to the reports more than 1.6 million have been caused as a consequence of increasing pollution in the atmosphere. Even though China has made constructive efforts to



mitigate Green House Gas Emissions by approximately 2,50,000 ton , the economy still maintains the level of emissions up to 25 million as projected by the Chinese Environmental Minister Chen Jining. In this regard what needs to be pondered upon is the fact that China also embarked on setting up a 2020 Carbon Intensity target as a fundamental comment of its state policy. Additionally, China has embarked on a 12<sup>th</sup> five year plan which in turn constituted a scheme orientation of encouraging green and low carbon development. This clearly gives an indication of its resolve to emerge as a Clean Energy Powerhouse. In fact this Five Year Plan lays down prominence upon economic as well as industrial reestablishment favouring a greener, extra methodical and a lower carbon economy. As one of crucial component of this Five Year Plan, Chinese state has focused on advancing a Regional Domestic Carbon Trading Programs as well as it is further investing in the examination of emissions taxes. This strategy has further settled the goal of 17% minimization of the carbon magnitude and attaining 10% mitigation in carbon potency by the end of year 2015. What can be noted in this context is the fact that China has directed its efforts in order to minimize coal –powered energy to 65% and produce 15% energy from renewable sources during the span of five years from 2011-2015. What can be pondered upon is that China has more or less debarred the newly constructed coal fired plants in the Chinese capital, Beijing. It was in the September 2016 wherein China had proclaimed the ratification of the Paris Accord which has turned out to be the milestone of the Climate Change Mitigation. According to the Chinese President, China would sustain to resist the sources of climate change as well as environmental decay and pledge to seal the coal mines as well as steel mines as a constituent of these efforts. This in turn reflected that Chinese administrators are willing to fight against the challenge of Climate Change and turn it into the opportunity for economic growth and development.

### *India*

As far as India is concerned it needs to be noticed that it is the utmost unshielded economy with in the grouping to Climate Change. In fact most of its residents are reliant upon agriculture or alternative climate sensory arenas. As far as economies like India is concerned it more or less inherently perceives that the domestic effect of climate change and increasing use of coal as vehemently detrimental. What cannot be ignored here is that the substantial climate affect has



been exercised upon modifying the atmospheric conditions within the South Asian continent. The last five decades has been suggestive of the fact that rapidly increasing temperatures have resorted to almost 10 percent decrease in the in the time span of rains and levels of rainfall which in turn has affected agriculture severely. In this regard what can be stated is that National Action Plan for Climate Change is considered to be the foremost measure undertaken by the Indian State to control Climate Change. Although NAPCC highlights the requirement of retaining huge economic growth it in turns enlists key national missions that have played a fundamental role in terms of fostering viable agriculture, expanding energy effectiveness and greenwood coverage, investment in Solar Energy, effective and efficient water usage as well as promoting acknowledgment among the Indian populace regarding Climate Change. Moreover, it needs to be pondered upon that the current programme for example encouraging renewable energy usage as a part of the Electricity Act. The idea is to command the Indian state to obtain from the renewable energy certain amount of grid based power as well as to attain energy effectiveness as spelled by the Energy Conservation act which demands the huge and heavy energy utilization industries must handle energy audits. This also initiated for machines an energy labelling programme. Besides this India also undertake another key initiative labelled as Perform, Achieve and Trade Scheme wherein the provision within the energy concentrated arenas have certain energy targets in the manifestations of certificates as well as trade testimonial in order to adhere to meet their consent requirement. This has further initiated an auction scheme for the extraction and reliance on solar powered energy. Apart from this, other initiatives focus upon the institution of Coal Levy and Renewable Energy Certificate System which sanctions power plants to trade their renewable energy at feed in tariff or sell it apart. Moreover it was on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016 the birth anniversary Mahatma Gandhi, wherein India ratified the Paris Climate Agreement. In terms of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi it is essential to emphasize upon the need of vigilant exploitation of natural resources.

### *Brazil*

As a nation state with abundance in biodiversity as well as extensive tropical forests Brazil appears to be the state most fragile to Climate Change as a consequence of its nebulous; biologically diverse system. In this context it needs to be noted that Brazil has undergone



substantial amount of trouble as a result of adverse impact of Climate Change. One of the gravest dangers as far as Brazilian state is concerned is marked by the extreme desertification within the North East which is by and large in the semi arid region. With acute droughts this region which more or less exacerbates the condition marked by drying up of key rivers, shortage of vegetation, rise in temperatures as well as its accumulative effect upon its populace. Though, Brazil ejaculate 2% of carbon emissions, it has funded heavily upon renewable sources. It needs to be pondered upon that almost 85% of its electric power is generated from renewable energy as well as transport arrangement relies absolutely on bio fuels. What can be unleashed in this regard is the fact that emissions within the Brazilian state by and large emanates from the malpractices such as deforestation, agriculture and land use which amounts to almost 81% of the country's emissions. Therefore, in case of Brazil emission control measures are driven towards minimizing deforestation activities. In fact National Policy on Climate Change Law in Brazil bestows lawfully authorized as well as bureaucratic arrangements in order to adhere to the issue of Climate Change. It encourages the advancement of low carbon economy as well as promotes systematic examination to enact Vulnerability and appropriate adaptation provisions. The fact needs to be taken note of is that Brazil ranks amid the few nation states which have set up a profound system to promote research in this direction. Furthermore, it has also put in place a Panel on Climate Change, a miniature of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This legislation also provides for financial policy and one such scheme is National Climate Fund which furnishes for monetary and tax initiatives for the development of clean energy as well as consistent phase off fossil fuel utilization. Brazilian state has moreover undertaken sector specific resolution in terms of addressing mitigation and modification marked by underlined targets for various arenas marked by agriculture, energy, industry, land use as well as waste management.

### *South Africa*

Climate Change exercised a profound danger to food safety, health infrastructure, ecological services, water amenity and conjointly upon biodiversity with the South African state. What cannot be ignored in regard is the fact that acknowledging huge amount of impoverishment as well as inequity within South Africa constitutes the gravest threat to the national development of



the Republic. As far as the issue of Climate Change is concerned it needs to be argued that the Republic of South Africa has insignificant jurisprudence upon the matter of Climate Change and elect gradual policy action to counter the challenge of Climate Change in different arenas. In this context one could refer to the example of the measures undertaken within the ambit of South Africa's Energy Policy including the Renewable Energy Feed in Tariffs along with Subsidies as well as Solar Water Heating Scheme and Energy Effectiveness in tandem with the need to encourage renewable resources of energy. However the introduction of a bidding system has more or less terminated or replace Feed Tariffs scheme by the leadership in South Africa. As unleashed in the White Papers on National Climate Change as the fundamental Climate Change as South Africa's dominant Climate control initiative spelled out a mitigation policy as well as dispenses a foundation of post 2012 Climate Change conciliation. The idea is to encourage substantial advancement embracing social, economic and environmental advancement. South Africa has evolved as the first nation state within the African continent to have inaugurated a Carbon Tax regime which it has enacted during the year 2015, which has been imposed upon fossils including coal, crude oil along with natural gas. The idea is to encourage clean technology as well as minimize the probability of South Africa's exports subjected to carbon adaptation tariffs.

### *Way Forward*

The issue that surfaces in the context of Climate Change is that in case of initiatives undertaken by the BRICS economies are adequate enough or not. In terms of the negative aspects, if the BRICS economies are more unprotected, as a consequence of Climate Change there is more probability of them agreeing to the irrevocable commitments. Thus it is in larger stake of BRICS economies to partake if there is grave threat emanating from Climate Change. What can be noted in this regard is the fact that countries like China prohibited new coal plants within Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou as a consequence of rising levels pollution in these cities. While accordingly the positive aspect focuses that initiatives such as financial backing as well as technology transmission will influence BRICS substantially. Presently, BRICS are amidst are the greatest Green House Gas polluters in the world and lack of efforts on their part towards Climate



Change mitigation it appears to be a daunting task in the near future wherein BRICS have flexibility arenas and goals to be opted.

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