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BRICS, China and India: Convergence or Divergence

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Abstract

It is no doubt a fact that, Post Cold War world order has transformed into a multipolar world order. Within this milieu, the world's economic centre of gravity has been shifting rapidly eastward and southward with the initiation of a new emerging forum named as "BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa)" as an upcoming center of power in global politics. The BRICS has become a vanguard in expressing a concern, asking for bigger 'representation of South' in various global multilateral forums and financial institutions. Undoubtedly, if one may consider BRICS from realist perspective, it try to makes an impressive aura on global forum with a view that interests of States and institutions are not always identical, yet may remain complementary in many respects. Nevertheless, it seems to be a far off issue for member countries like China and India who are conceived of their own issues in relations. The present paper tries to assess the factors of convergence and divergence in Sino-Indian relations and will try to assess as, how this global platform would be accommodated the divergences.

Keywords: *BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), U.N (United Nations), U.S.A (United States of America), U.S.S.R (United Soviet Socialist Republic), N.A.M (Non Aligned Movement), M.T.C.R (Missile Control Technology Regime), I.S.R.O (Indian Space Research Organization).M.B.T (Main Battle Tanks)*

Introduction: It is no doubt a fact that, Post Cold War world order has been transformed into a multipolar world order. Within this milieu, the world's economic centre of gravity has been shifting rapidly eastward and southward, with the initiation of a new emergence of new forum called "BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa)" as new epicentre in global politics.¹ Addressing the global governance issues has been one of the concerns in the politics of developed and developing countries in recent times. In 2003 the institutional investment firm of Goldman Sachs issued a research report that coined a catchy acronym: the "BRICs economies/" or Brazil, Russia, India, and China. At the time of writing, the four large emerging economies collectively represented only 15 percent of the gross national product (GNP) of the six major advanced industrial economies: the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, and Italy. Economists Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman, however, predicted that "in less than 40 years" the BRICs were

¹ Fen Osler Hampson and Paul Heinbecker, 'The "New" Multilateralism of the Twenty- First Century', *Global Governance*, 17, 2011, p. 299.

likely to catch up with the six. The BRICs would then become the world's principal "engine of new demand growth and spending power, which could offset the impact of graying populations and slower growth in the advanced economies. Since then the international financial press has run with the label, which has caught the imagination of investors much as the term emerging markets did a few years back. This article critically examines the 'BRICs countries' concept.

The BRICS has become a vanguard in expressing this concern, asking for bigger 'representation of South' in various global multilateral forums and financial institutions. The BRICS thrust has been on addressing various essential issues like global accountability, social justice, financial legitimacy; and most of these issues concern various multilateral bodies like the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, the United Nations (UN), and the Group of 20 (G-20). On the whole, an increasingly multipolar world order has invited new modes of thinking in multilateralism, involving global multilateral or financial bodies more intently in the existing developed developing divided politics, popularly known as North-South stratagem more than those of any other forums, BRICS seems to be rising rapidly to address this politics and dialogue. The expressions 'multilateralism' and 'multipolarism' bring new insights in the context of the rise of BRICS. According to the advocates of international theory any realistic examination of global multilateral initiatives should begin with demarcating the level of engagements, cooperation and the prospect of institutional capability. The international institutions occur when states wish to maximize sovereignty but are willing to sacrifice it in order to gain common and collective goods, as they realize that these goods are beyond their own individual capacities and that they need to pool resources.² In BRICS, the constituent members collectively wish to gain a number of objectives at broader global level. For instance, a primary objective of BRICS as stated in its first 'joint statement' at the Yekaterinburg (Russia) summit was to 'advance the reform of global financial institutions, so as to reflect changes in the world economy'. The locus standi of BRICS as an international organization can be broadly identified in two mainstream theoretical prisms: *realism* and *liberalism*. Realism contests that without ceding power to the global bodies, states as actor maximize their global objectives collectively.³ Though the global strategic interests of individual BRICS countries are not necessarily congruent nevertheless, many common objectives bind them together and prompt optimism. The China-India association within BRICS, despite their contrasting foreign policy interests, is a fine example in this context.

Indian perception towards BRICS

The Indian perspective of BRICS is important for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the Indian economy stands next to the Chinese economy, as claimed by media.⁴ India is one of the most impressive economies in the global economic setting; and most notably, the sustainability of the Indian economy has been impressive amidst the global financial crisis. Thus, the rise and momentum of BRICS is equally dependent on the Indian economy. Secondly, India's connection

² David Galbreath, 'International Regimes and Organizations', in Trevor C. Salmon and Mark F. Imber (eds), *Issues in International Relations* (2nd Edition), London: Routledge, 2008, p.122.

³ Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries Leaders, Yekaterinburg: Russia, 16 June 2009, at <http://www.bricsindia.in/firstSummit.html> (accessed on May 18, 2014).

⁴ "India passes China to become fastest growing economy". The Wall Street Journal. 11 February, 2015.

with individual BRICS member countries both at regional and global levels like, through India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA), it is closely connected to both Brazil and South Africa at the intercontinental level; it is equally connected at regional level with Russia and China in the RIC (Russia-India-China) formulation. India is also attached to Brazil, South Africa and China in the BASIC climate forum. India is also an observer member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), in which China and Russia are the core members. Thirdly, among BRICS countries, India is seen as a 'pro- Western' country. India's foreign policy dialogue has mostly been 'South-South' vis-à-vis developing-world centric, a central theme that remains core to the IBSA, BASIC and BRICS bearings. New Delhi is one of the most promising developing countries and has asked for more democratization of the world decision-making process than any other country. These constructive reasons make India one of the most important countries in BRICS.

The China-India association within this grouping also puts Indian perspective on BRICS in a different league, despite the two countries being seen as adversarial powers. India's dialogue in BRICS is based on South-South politics. Unlike China, New Delhi has not really tried to address issues in BRICS that carry much political bearing in global politics. In fact, India's course in BRICS has been more economic-centric, attempting to bring equity in the global order in global governance issues and themes. The former Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh's statement during Plenary Session of the Fourth BRICS Summit in New Delhi has made it clear. He deliberated on three things: (a) intra-BRICS complementarily and cooperation; (b) infrastructure development in developing countries; and (c) addressing the deficiencies in global governance. Dr. Singh stated clearly that '... institutions of global political and economic governance created more than six decades ago have not kept pace with the changing reality of the world'. Within the rubric of 'non-alignment', India carefully crafts its foreign policy, and distances itself from a power formulation or designed bloc, and that seems to be evidenced within BRICS.⁵

BRICS and Security Implications of India:

If one may consider BRICS from realist perspective, it provides an impressive aura on global forum with a view that interests of states and institutions are not always identical, yet may remain complementary in many respects. Yet, it seems to be a far off issue for India as its security implications are still a major concern for its governance.

Over the years, defence and development capabilities on the matters of security have often been debated by the statesmen, policy makers and strategy experts. It is also not sure that the desirable strategies in whatever form, fails to reach the desired goals. This leads to the discontent in inter regional and intra regional dimensions of the security. The collapse of Soviet Union is a classic example of the flawed strategy. Both the super powers U.S.S.R and U.S.A were trying to exhaust each other during the cold war period. Both of them have narrowed down the objectives of containment of the ideologies of each by defeating each other. The fact of the matter is that while preparing for the defence and security matters, countries often ignore the core priorities of their security. If we look at India's defence planning since 1964, not much sincere efforts has been made by the Defence Ministry of India to make an in depth assessment of their core priorities¹⁶. In view of

⁵ "China and IBSA: Possible BRICS Overreach?", *Strategic Analysis* (Routledge), vol. 37, no. 3, May-June 2013, pp. 299-304;

⁶ *ibid*, P.5.

the lack of this seriousness, the country have had to face several jolts like Kargil conflict of 1999, several gruesome terror attacks in the country etc.

The decade of nineties witnessed drastic changes in the World Order. These were the end of cold war, the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, the reunification of Germany and the most important was disintegration of Soviet Union. The break up of Soviet Union was the most important event which had impinged the security environment of India. New Delhi was completely bewildered by this traumatic event, which had heralded the end of a strategic alliance (between India and Soviet Russia), that had long provided India with a measure of security against the combined military strength of peoples Republic of china, Pakistan and United States of America. The Soviet Union was the major arms suppliers to India in 1960's and remained so until its disintegration in 1991. Besides, it was also a major market to the Indian exports. India's export was very much affected with the collapse of such a mighty empire. This led India to join the policy of liberalization⁷. The disintegration of Soviet Union brought forth unprecedented changes in India's security environment, portending the end of an era when India could rely on the Soviet Union's political and military support and also the Soviet veto power in the United Nations (UN) Security Council on various issues. India had reasons to be worried as Soviet military support constituted more than 70% of Indian Weaponry. The Indian policy of credit on friendly basis for arms deal seemed unlikely to continue in post-soviet era.

On the contrary, the hostile relations with Pakistan and China lead to an increase in India's defense budget in the decade of nineties. According to the military balance budget report (1995-96), India's defense budget for 1995- Rs 225 bn showed a real increase of some 6% over 1994 out turn of Rs. 235 bn. Similarly, the overall defense outlay for 1996-97 was revised to 29, 498 bn from 27,798 bn⁸. In view of disintegration of the Soviet Union, certain dilemmas were created for India's military policy. Its growing concern about the looming obsolescence of much of its Soviet supplied weapon has been a justification of its demand for the modernization of its inventory. The acute financial crisis faced by the Indian leadership had brought military modernization; programme and the further arms build up activities to a standstill. According to Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, Former Director, Institute of Defence studies and Analysis (IDSA), "Indian Army is in dire need of some 1500 main battle tanks (mbt), 500 infantry Combat vehicles and some 500 pieces of 155mm self – propelled guns." In another similar case the Indian Air Force, which was modernized earlier in 1980's with induction of Mirage-2000 fighter planes, Mig-29 and Mig-27 fighter aircrafts, now needed further up gradation of its persisting striking capability. The fact was that, the disruption in the supply of Soviet Weaponry had shattered India's defence build up in the post cold war phase.

Another major setback which occurred with the disintegration of Soviet Russia was the identity crisis to the Non-Alignment policy (NAM) of India. The changed international order, expansion of capitalist mode of thinking put up a challenge to the identity of NAM. This was because of the basic

⁷ Ross. H. Munro, "The Loser : India in the nineties". National Interest No. 33, Summer 1993. According to the Foreign Ministry publication the Common Independence States was given low priority to India. The Indian govt. also tried to adjust the post-soviet world reality. This was one of the reason, Narsimha Rao government had adopted the liberalisation policy of economic reforms. Strategic Analysis. Jan 1998. Vo. XXI, No. 10. P.1467 - P.1485.

⁸ The Stateman, 1 March, 1997.

prerequisite of NAM that is, 'equidistance from both the communists and the capitalists'. This motto was affected with the fall of Soviet led Communist regime. Indian state had to rethink its foreign policy in the changed strategic environment due to the collapse to Communist Russia. As Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral, former prime minister of India quoted, "whom you are going to be non-aligned against". The non-aligned states still continue to harp on the virtues of non-alignment. They are emotionally so attached to the idea of it, that they desire it to be revived and argue that NAM can and will become a platform for projecting North-South cooperation, as the new world order has become unipolar by nature⁹. The changing Russian priorities and its ominous impact over Indo-Russian relations can also be witnessed by the scrapping of the "Cryogenic Rocket" technology transfer deal. In Jan 1991 India had signed an agreement with the former Soviet Union to purchase "Cryogenic Rocket Engines" worth \$ 250 million for its space programmes. On 11 May, 1992, the United States of America exerted pressure over Soviet Russia for the cancellation of this deal, by imposing a two year ban on Glavkosmos, The Russian Space Agency and Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) for the allegation of violation of the provisions of the Missile Control Technology Regime (MTCR). Though Russian's argued that, MTCR was not opposed to the peaceful space ventures. Thus, the sale of equipments of the cryogenic Rocket technology to India was meant for peaceful purpose. But the U.S. on the other hand insisted that, India would be well equipped with the know-how to build the Inter Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM). This led to the scrapping of the cryogenic rocket deal with India in 1993 by Russia in view of mounting pressure from the United States of America. In May 1992, Prof. U.V. Rao, the then chairman of ISRO stated that, the proximity of the Sriharikota rocket launching center to the equator and India's generally low launch costs made it a potential threat to the multi-billion dollar space market. It has firmly believed that these impositions were motivated by commercial consideration for the protection of U.S. space industry. It has also been reported by the Russian media that, Moscow had ignored the U.S. imposition over the Glavkosmos, its space agency, that it would have been deprived of \$4 billion worth of financial assistance. The Russians thus, found themselves in a situation of dilemma. This in turn had serious implication for India's security from the U.S. and its allies along with China, a potential threat to India.

Chinese outlook and BRICS: The Chinese outlook towards BRICS is tied with its global relations strategy and linked to limited key determinants like geographic location of China, shifting power base, contemporary global power politics and its legacy. The authoritarian Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has shown maturity over the years in its foreign relations strategy and has gone beyond Asia vis-à-vis extra-territories to maximize their foreign policy goals and objectives. China's association with BRICS is based upon the assumption that Beijing is quite serious in both political and commercial ties, being open to multilateral power politics at various stages and levels of global politics. The Chinese dialogue and the perspective of Chinese scholars clearly point out that BRICS is not simply a loose organization in Beijing's global economic and foreign policy practice. The dynamism of BRICS for China is a matter of global importance, and the thesis links to the politics of multipolarism.¹⁰

⁹ Abhijit Ghosh, 'The breakup of Soviet Union and its impact on India's Security'. Edt. Book "Security Issues in South Asia". Minerva Associates Publisher, Calcutta, 1998. P.138.

¹⁰ Shen Qiang, 'How to Assess Obama Administration's New Geo-Strategy toward Asia', *Foreign Affairs Journal*, 98, winter 2010: 35.
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China, a potential challenge to India: It is no doubt a fact that any national security doctrine of India has always been inclusive of threats from the Peoples Republic of China which gradually emerge as global power and has acquired formidable economic and military capabilities in the first few decades of the 21st century. Its growing economy is expected to overtake the U.S. economy between 2020 and 2050 A.D. India and China has began a significant transformation and revitalization of their relationship in the post cold war phase though, the threat from China to India was rated high until 1988 because of the unresolved border dispute between India and China. The border dispute led to military conflict in 1962. Since late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in Dec. 1988 the relations witnessed a positive gesture. The process has continued and has been consolidated through the return visits of Chinese premiere Le Peng in Dec 1991, and with the than Prime Minister of India Mr. Narsihmha Rao's visit in Sept 1993, a string of other political, economic, cultural and military exchanges also took place¹¹.

Ever since the disruption of Sino-Indian friendship in the decade of fifties, the relations shall be categorized in following phases:

- (a) From 1949 to 1954, a period of limited relations with numerous gestures of friendship on India's part and considerable response on China's part.
- (b) From 1954 to 1959, the "Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai" period when on the surface Sino Indian relations were remarkably good, whereas beneath the surface there were numerous points of friction and conflicting purposes and aims.
- (c) The period from 1959-1970, with a sharp turn for the worse in the relations in 1957, open armed conflict in late 1962, with China assuming a distinctly hostile posture.
- (d) From 1971, till now the relations have undergone significant changes.¹²

It would be prudent to acknowledge that there are three major areas of dispute between India and Peoples Republic of China. *The first*, is the Sino – Indian border question. The border issue has often been observed as a vexed problem in the normalization of the Indo – Chinese relations since 1950's. The northern frontiers of India in the Himalayas, extending from Ladkha to Arunachal Pradesh, remained in the past under the lamaist sphere of influence, with those as the center of the people's faith. At the time, China extended the inherent right to occupy Tibet, the 'Dalai Lama' (Religious leader of the Tibet), fled away and took asylum to India. The Tibetan crisis heightened the anti China feeling in the Himalayas and helped India in integrating the entire belt in the Indian mainstream. Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, the then Union Minister of Home Affairs Government of India quoted, "All along the Himalayas in the north and north east, we have on our side of the frontier, a population ethnologically and culturally not different from Tibetans or Mongoloids. The undefined state of the frontier and the existence on our side of a population with its affinities to Tibetan or Chinese has all the elements of potential trouble between China and India. The very slow progress over the border talks, had given rise to misgivings that Beijing probably want to keep this issue alive till it has totally pacified Tibet to its satisfaction. *The second concern* in national security matters in India is the Chinese growing influence in the countries of South East Asia. Over the

¹¹ Sujit Dutta, "India - China Relations in the post cold war". Strategic Analysis. Feb 1994 Vol. XVI No. 4. Also refer - Hindustan Times, 9 Sept. 1993, N. Delhi edition.

¹² Sita Gopalan, "India's China Policy". Strategic Analysis, March 1992, Vol. XIV No. 12, pp 1401. Also see The Hindu, 12 April, 2005.

years, China has an increasing involvement in Myanmar, which not only impinges on India's trade and maritime security, but also has adverse impact on the security of North Eastern region of Indian. China's continuing efforts aimed at the strategic encirclement and containment of India were a potential source of competition and rivalry. *The third concern* is China's arms sale to the other countries of South Asia. China's continued clandestine assistance to Pakistan in the military and nuclear field and in the acquisition of a missile based delivery capability has been a concern for India. During an interview, K. Subramanian, stated that, there is no direct threat to India from China. But their equations with other countries in the Asian continent do cause concern over India. The illegal supply of cheap small arms to the insurgent groups active in the North-eastern states of India is also a concern for India's security. Another similar involvement of China has been its contiguity in north Myanmar, where insurgency is not only endemic but continues to have links with insurgents, who received Chinese support through Myanmar, should not be lost sight off.

Concluding Remarks: The rise of BRICS has been attractive in the politics and overall scheme of North-South vis-à-vis developed-developing world politics. The developing world looks united and forceful with the rise of BRICS. Both China and India take this lead ahead, but a fact which remains relevant is China's lead remains one of the most promising and foremost attractions within BRICS. This may cause a concern for India whether the strategic and security interests of India would be accommodated parallel to that of China with a realist thought that, China is a great concern in matters of security for India. During recent years, it became important for India to reassess its strategic priorities with the changing time. The expansion in economic status of India also, putting credible pressure on the Indian state to renovate its strategic goals. The traditional allies of India remains same, as the geographical contiguities do not permit the India to change its neighbors but, the priorities in the bilateral relations may subject to transformation. In dealing with Pakistan, we must prioritize the issue of terrorism and we must let Pakistan to realize our assertiveness in this regard. In case of China, we must make him clear that unlike their personal interests, we have our national priorities therefore; China must respect those priorities equally. Predicting the course that Sino-Indian relations will take over the next ten to twenty years as age of Asianism, it is clear that the leaders of China and India have placed greater significance on a stable relation in the post-cold war phase. However, one cannot conceal the fact that the dichotomy of relationship based on issues like unresolved border dispute, a fundamental difference in government and political structure, fulcrum of going ahead to next as dominant power in Asia cannot be overlooked. It would be better to predict that the Sino-Indian future would be marked as quite competition.

Notes:

1. In 2003 the institutional investment firm of Goldman Sachs issued a research report that coined a catchy acronym: the "BRICs economies/" or Brazil, Russia, India, and China, the four large emerging economies collectively represented only 15% of the gross national product (GNP) of the six major advanced industrial economies: the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, and Italy. Economists Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman, however, predicted that "in less than 40 years" the BRICs were likely to catch up with the six. The BRICs would then become the world's principal "engine of new demand growth and spending power," which could "offset the impact of graying populations and slower growth in the advanced economies."² Since then the international financial press has run with the label, which has caught the imagination of investors much as the term emerging markets did a few years back. For details refer to: Leslie Elliott Armijo, "The BRICS Countries (BRAZIL, RUSSIA, INDIA, AND CHINA) as Analytical Category:

Mirage or Insight". *Asian Perspective*. Vol. 31, No. 4, Special Issue on "The BRICs Countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) in the Global System" (2007), Pp. 7-42.

2. Mark. W.Frazier has argued for five variables to predict this quite competition. These variables are: first, each state's nuclear weapon status and doctrine. Second, their respective relation with United States. Third, their respective relation with Pakistan. Fourth, their efforts fir structural reforms and integration with global economy. Fifth, their domestic political structures specially foreign policy making institution and general ability of their governments to cope with internal security challenges. For details see Mark.W. Frazier, "Quite Competition & the Future of India China Relations" in edited book titled 'The India China Relationship: What the United States need to Know' edited by Fracince. R. Frankel and Harry Hardings. 2004. Woodrow Wilson Centre for International Scholars, Columbia University Press, NewYork.