

BRICS and Climate Change: Debating Issues, Policies, Politics and Actions.

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Extended Abstract

Climate change has been a vital and continuous concern of BRICS summit governance since it started in Russia in 2009. Over the years BRICS summits have focused on supporting United Nations' work on climate change, more so G20 and UN summits' growing action on sustainable development, climate change and biodiversity. BRICS cooperation was further enhanced since Russia's Ufa Summit of 2015, with member states working on food security, nutrition and agriculture to control climate change, through continued exchange of information and sharing of experiences on relevant national policies, plans, programmes, and climate change adaptation and mitigation adaptation strategies. Exploration of approaches to accelerate low-carbon and climate resilient transition and achieve sustainable, balanced and inclusive recovery and development, have been key areas of focus following the long-term effects of COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crises and struggles of developing countries to achieve sustainable development since the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2022. BRICS countries have played active and leading roles in the multilateral processed around climate change and contributed greatly to global low-carbon, climate resilient and sustainable development; however, attainment of global carbon neutrality goals come with their own difficulties and challenges, in the context of world economic recovery, and efforts to eradicate poverty and protect the rights of communities.

There are further hurdles when varying regional circumstances and capabilities are considered in terms of increase of green leaf area, low-carbon energy consumption, reduction in the dependency of coal-fired power projects, augmentation of non-fossil-based fuel. Aspects of repurposing of coal-based power plants and energy transitions not only have implications for climate actions but control the bigger picture of land, extraction, and water harnessing across international borders, that have the capacity of magnifying slow-moving environmental catastrophes, in case of India and China for instance. How then does one look for common grounds to work around resource mobilisation keeping in mind intensification of cooperation for mutually beneficial climate action that makes way for sustainable and equitable development. The major objective of this research will be to analyse the implications of global treaties pertaining to environmental protocols, climate conventions and disaster protection in reference to climate events both sudden and slow onset and the roles of member states thereof in working towards climate governance and disaster reduction. The analysis will be framed and informed by the emerging complex debates around climate justice and will draw on English language and translated published reports, policy documents, news and research available in public domain from the period between the Paris Agreement till present.

Understanding the nature of multilateral treaties and how to they work in the age of de-globalisation will be an important broader question for this policy research, to set the context of discussion. How climate science, knowledge and communication (narratives), inform or shape climate policy successes and failures in recent years, would be one of the empirical concerns. A related aim will be to focus on what is being done such as what is being offered by the BRICS, that may be perceived as workable 'solutions' by the global community. The reasonings given by BRIC countries for signing important multilateral treaties that aim to mitigate climate change, such as the Kyoto Protocol, maybe varied. According to some observers, Russia ratified the treaty only because Europe enabled its membership to the WTO. Hence considerations related to energy, macro-economic goals and trade policies are closely linked to global climate agreements.

How have the BRICS historically balanced the disaster-hazard, economic development-trade and geo-political dimensions, in their negotiations around climate treaties and agreements, will be another important question that will be analysed. Since the success of a BRICS based climate governance model will be based on high levels of consistent cooperative work between the concerned nation states, any adverse incidents/events that affect their mutual ties, will also render the climate related policy actions fragile. Yet, one of the important reasons why increasing attention is being given to the climate policy contribution of BRICS is the emission intensive nature of production and consumption in these countries and the apprehension that their commitment towards climate policies were mainly rhetorical. Some of the BRICS nations (China, India, Russia) are witnessing a large and growing concentration of highly energy intensive

heavy industries as well as urbanization, while experiencing intense and frequent episodes of environmental hazards and more recently pressures to counter the slow growing domestic economies.

As floods, forest fires and drought related events increase in frequency, intensity and unpredictability, understanding and addressing climate change will be central to protect vulnerable human habitations, ecosystems dependent sectors and address food and water security. Some observers have argued that labour safety and productivity in several BRICS nations such as India, China and South Africa, was adversely affected by environmental hazards (ILO). However, energy rather than labour protective concerns tend to drive national policy. For instance, one of the reasons why Russia is less interested in climate induced vulnerabilities of local population is because of it being a major fossil fuel producing economy. According to observers, high proportion of oil and gas export revenues in Russia's federal budget (Yale Review) as well as the prospect of Arctic oil and gas reserves, as climate warms and the permafrost thaws (IPCC AR6), has made Russia, less conscious about climate change induced damage to ecosystems and vulnerable human habitation and livelihoods. In recent times Russia and China have collaborated on the Vostok oil project, resulting in policy prediction that these countries may drift away from mainstream climate adaptation goals. For instance, Russia's climate adaptation policies are imagined around technological advancements and absorption by its vast natural forests. Climate change knowledge is changing the definition of progress even as most of the global economies and societies, remains energy intensive. Observers note that while China's emission has been declining, it is still struggling to balance economic growth targets with energy transition (Economist). Recent energy sector outlook reports (IEA 2025) suggest that the direction of climate change will be determined by the challenge of how energy is produced, transported and consumed in the coming years.

Climate change governance mechanisms and strategies are also geopolitical instruments that are used by the BRICS nation states to compete with and reduce Western economic and financial influence. With shifts in patterns of global development financing towards BRICs, climate change policies should become an essential precondition for development projects, if understanding and addressing current and future adversities from warming is to retain its relevance. For instance, the ISA (the international solar alliance) first developed during the Paris conference by India and France, is involved in financing solar energy electrification in the LDCs and SIDs. China has committed to providing technological support via geostationary satellite for disaster monitoring, forecasting and early warning for hazards, to the African and Pacific nations (WMO). The idea that air, water, forests and oceans, irrespective of national jurisdictions, were essentially types of global commons, and entities that jeopardise their sustainability should be held accountable, are increasingly difficult to envision within a narrow definition of national sovereignty. Here, BRICs would have an important role to play in demonstrating their compliance with climate commitments that seek to protect national interests while protecting the idea of shared commons. During the United Nations COP16, BRICs representatives pledged to find USD 200 billion per year to prevent the destruction of the natural world (Reuters 2025). Future then, would increasingly look towards the BRICS to contribute financially towards supporting the transitions in their own and other vulnerable nations, for a climate just world.