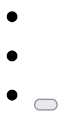


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BRICS Academic Dialogue on international security



The poster features the logos of ORF (Observer Research Foundation), BRICS (India 2021), and RIS (Research and Information System for Developing Countries) at the top. The main title is "BRICS ACADEMIC DIALOGUE ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY". Below the title, it lists the "KEYNOTE ADDRESS" and "SPEAKERS".

KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

- AMB LATHA REDDY
- AMB BALAKRISHNAN
- SIPHAMANDLA ZONDI

SPEAKERS:

- VASILY KASHIN
- SHRUTI PANDALAI
- LUIS GIESTEIRA
- VARUN SAHNI

At the bottom, there are flags for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, each followed by the text "BRICS INDIA 2021".

2021
Jun
18

- [Academic Dialogue](#)
- [BRICS](#)

Participants:

Speakers:

1. **Dr Felipe Giesteira**, Coordinator, Defense and Foreign Policy Studies, Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA), Brazil
2. **Dr Vasily Kashin**, Deputy Director, Centre for Comprehensive European and International Studies (CCEIS), HSE University, Russia
3. **Amb Dr. Bhaskar Balakrishnan**, Science Diplomacy Fellow, RIS
4. **Shruti Pandalai**, Associate Fellow, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, India

5. Professor Siphamandla Zondi, Chairperson, South Africa BRICS Think Tank (SABTT)

Moderator:

Professor Varun Sahni, Vice Chancellor, Goa University

Keynote Speaker

Amb Vijay Latha Reddy, Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation

The world is facing a multitude of complex security challenges ranging from structural power shifts, violent extremists and non-state actors, transnational organised crime, abusive governance to inter and intra-state conflicts that perennially jeopardise international stability. There is a realisation that these challenges cannot be faced by individual nation-states and a need for BRICS countries to come together, as a minilateral entity, to collaborate and find solutions to counter these threats.

Amb Vijay Latha Reddy, in her keynote address, referencing the Media Statement of the BRICS Foreign Ministers' meeting, highlighted the urgency that issues of international security have taken, which are made complex by the bilateral relations between some of the BRICS countries. She emphasised the need to find common ground for cooperation.

In this backdrop, Dr Felipe Giesteira, Coordinator, Defense and Foreign Policy Studies, Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) emphasised the need for a comprehensive and coordinated 'grand strategy' for BRICS countries to address shared international security challenges, particularly, cyber security. He also mentioned that illicit financial flows, financing of terrorism, and cyber security constitute the 'three pillars' of Brazil's international security approach and cyber security could be the common theme for BRICS member countries to tackle together.

Dr Vasily Kashin, Deputy Director, Centre for Comprehensive European and International Studies (CCEIS), HSE University, highlighted Russia's national security policy and the fact that Russia has remained a strong military power. Dr Kashin mentioned Russia's defence agreements with BRICS nations, most notably with India and China and the desire to come up with solutions related to information security technology and surveillance technology. Russia is looking to diversify and increase investments in surveillance technology to 50 percent of its defence budget by 2030. To contribute to this agenda and manufacture 'quality' weapons surveillance technology, the expertise and coming together of other BRICS nations will be needed.

Professor Siphamandla Zondi, Chairperson, South Africa BRICS Think Tank (SABTT) shared a very interesting view that issues of transnational security are increasingly impacted by the changes in the international finance system, terror financing, and other forms of criminality. As the international financial system has developed, so have the severity and scale of cyber crimes. The uncertainties surrounding crypto currencies and the lack of checks and balances around it has made it easier to finance terrorism. There is a shared concern amongst BRICS countries that technology is becoming an enabler to very complex forms of threats to humanity including physical threats like human trafficking and drug trafficking. Professor Zondi stressed on the need for an intergovernmental agreement for internet governance that is 'inclusive, representative, and equitable' to respond better to security threats.

Amb Dr Bhaskar Balakrishnan, Science Diplomacy Fellow, RIS argued that the security scenario has evolved after the end of the Second World War. Amb Balakrishnan mentioned three changes that have changed the nature of threats in the international system. These include: (i) The emergence of a multipolar world; (ii) increasing prominence of non-state actors; and (iii) advances in technology.

Advances in technology related to artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics have amplified the need for a solid

cyber security infrastructure. BRICS countries should work together on these issues with expert groups. With the exchange of information, sharing of best practices and policies, and capacity building efforts, an increased cooperation at the BRICS can be achieved.

According to Ms Shruti Pandalai, Associate Fellow, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, there is a continued interest in the BRICS forum and its relevance in the ‘fractured global order’. There is an opportunity in the current global scenario for BRICS to deliver. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the economies of BRICS countries equally, apart from China that actually grew a record 18.3 percent in the first quarter of 2021. BRICS countries’ understanding of security issues should broaden to include areas of health, trade, and job security. Under India’s BRICS presidency, a major priority is the reform of key international organisations for a more inclusive global governance. These include reforms at the United Nations, World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the United Nations Security Council. With regard to vaccine diplomacy, while BRICS countries have collaborated to establish the BRICS vaccine research and development centre, with a joint vaccine cooperation effort, a lot more can be achieved by sharing of information and delivery.

Ms Pandalai also brought up the issue of internet sovereignty, highlighting the problems of technonationalism, 5G, and global disinformation campaigns. On [April 13-14](#), the National Investigation Agency (NIA) conducted a BRICS webinar for the first time on the misuse of the internet by terrorists. While the conversation regarding cyber security and transnational organised crime has started, there is a need for immediate action. India has prioritised ‘knowledge innovation’, which is an area of opportunity for BRICS nations to work together on specific areas including health, agriculture, science, and technology.

Professor Varun Sahni concluded the session by asking a pertinent question about the reasons why states continue to make significant diplomatic efforts and invest political capital to come together time and again, despite fundamental issues and issues that are bilateral in nature. He went on to explain that this could be because of three reasons—to aggregate power, to solve problems, or to build community. The answer to this question could lie in the way BRICS countries tackle security issues in the future.

This report was written by Kripa Anand

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