

13th BRICS Summit

September 13, 2021

Prime Minister Modi on September 9, 2021, chaired the 13th BRICS Summit virtually. The theme for the BRICS Summit was 'BRICS@15: Intra BRICS cooperation for continuity, consolidation, and consensus'. Countering terror, particularly in the context of the Afghanistan upheaval, dominated discussions with all heads of state collectively agreeing to combat the export of terror and cooperate to mitigate the humanitarian crisis in the war-torn country.

In news: BRICS seeks 'inclusive' intra-Afghan dialogue

Placing it in syllabus: Foreign Affairs

Dimensions:

- Important Decisions
- What is BRICS: History , Structure, Mandate
- Can BRICS play a key role in Afghanistan?

Content:

Important Decisions:

- The theme for the Summit was '**BRICS@15: Intra-BRICS cooperation for continuity, consolidation and consensus**'.
- India had outlined **four priority areas** for its Chairship. These are:
 - **Reform of the Multilateral System**
 - **Counter Terrorism**
 - **Using Digital and Technological Tools for achieving SDGs and**
 - **Enhancing People to People exchanges.**
- In addition to these areas, the leaders also exchanged

views on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other current global and regional issues.

Intra Afghan Dialogue:

- The 13th BRICS summit called for an **“inclusive intra-Afghan dialogue” for stability** in Afghanistan.
- BRICS leaders called for refraining from violence and settling the situation by peaceful means in Afghanistan, through an inclusive intra-Afghan dialogue so as to ensure stability, civil peace, law and order in the country.
- They **underscored the priority of fighting terrorism**, including preventing attempts by terrorist organisations to **use Afghan territory as terrorist sanctuary** and to carry out attacks against other countries.
- They emphasised the **need to address the humanitarian situation** and to uphold human rights, including those of women, children and minorities.

Counter Terrorism:

- The five nations resolved to **adopt a “counter-terrorism action” plan** following Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan.
- Leaders expressed strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations whenever, wherever and by whomsoever committed. including **the cross-border movement of terrorists, and terrorism financing networks and safe havens**.
- They rejected double standards in countering terrorism and extremism conducive to terrorism and called for **expeditious finalisation and adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism** within the UN framework
- They welcomed adoption of the **BRICS Counter-Terrorism Action Plan** for the implementation of the **BRICS Counter Terrorism Strategy**.

BRICS Counter Terrorism Action Plan:

- During the **12th Annual Summit held virtually in 2020, the BRICS Counter Terrorism Strategy** was endorsed.
- The BRICS Counter Terrorism Strategy laid down that the BRICS Counter Terrorism Working Group (CTWG) may discuss to consider elaborating a Plan of Action containing specific measures to implement the BRICS CT Strategy fully and effectively in due course.
- Accordingly, within the framework of the BRICS Counter Terrorism Strategy, a **BRICS Counter Terrorism Action Plan** has been prepared in 2021.
- The BRICS Counter Terrorism Action Plan **defines the approach and actions of the BRICS countries** towards areas of Counter Terrorism cooperation.
- The Counterterrorism action plan aims to “further strengthening result-oriented cooperation between BRICS countries” in areas such as “preventing and combating terrorism, radicalization, financing of terrorism, misuse of the internet by terrorists, curbing travel of terrorists, border control, protection of soft targets, information sharing, capacity building, international and regional cooperation, etc”

New Delhi Declaration:

- At the conclusion of the Summit, the leaders **adopted the “New Delhi Declaration”.**
- Leaders commended the adoption of the **revised Terms of Reference for guiding BRICS engagement.**
- Leaders committed to preserving and **further strengthening the consensus-based working methods in BRICS.**
- ***On Covid:*** Leaders highlighted the need for cooperation on study of origins of the SARS-COV-2 – an important aspect of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Called COVID-19 **extensive immunization as a global public good.**

- Recognised the importance of experience and knowledge-sharing on traditional medicines.
- **UN & Multilateral Reforms:** For the first time, BRICS has taken a collective position on strengthening and reforming multilateral systems.
- Leaders endorsed the **BRICS Joint Statement on Strengthening and Reforming the Multilateral System** adopted by BRICS Foreign Ministers on 1 June 2021.
- Leaders acknowledged that continued relevance of the UN system would be determined by its ability to adapt to contemporary realities.
- They pledged resolve towards strengthening and reforming the multilateral system to make global governance more responsive and agile, effective, transparent, democratic, representative and accountable to Member States.
- They **called for reforms of the principal organs of the United Nations** including instilling **new life in the discussions on reform of the UN Security Council** with a view to making it more representative, effective and efficient, and to increase the representation of the developing countries.
- **On climate issues:** Leaders expressed commitment to the full implementation of the UNFCCC, its Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement, and to the principles of UNFCCC including 'Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities' in the light of different national circumstances.
- They welcomed the launch of the **BRICS alliance for Green Tourism** to promote measures which can shape a more resilient, sustainable and inclusive tourism sector.

What is BRICS: History , Structure, Mandate

- BRICS is the acronym coined to associate five major emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

History:

- **Born in the shadow of the 2008 global financial crisis**, BRICS aimed to pool the burgeoning power of the world's leading emerging economies to the benefit of each member and to spur global financial reform
- The leaders of **BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) countries met for the first time in St. Petersburg, Russia**, on the **margins of the G8 Outreach Summit** in July 2006.
- Shortly afterwards, in September **2006**, the group was formalised as **BRIC during the 1st BRIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting**, which met on the sidelines of the General Debate of the UN Assembly in New York City.
- After a series of high level meetings, the **1st BRIC summit was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia on 16 June 2009**.
- BRIC group was **renamed as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) after South Africa was accepted as a full member** at the BRIC Foreign Ministers' meeting in New York in September **2010**.
- Accordingly, South Africa attended the **3rd BRICS Summit in Sanya, China on 14 April 2011**.
- Since 2009, the governments of the BRICS states have met annually at formal summits.

Structure and Mandate:

- The group at **each summit elects one of the heads of state of the component countries to serve as President Pro Tempore** of the BRICS.
- The BRICS members are known for their significant influence on regional affairs.
- BRICS is an important grouping bringing together the major emerging economies from the world.
- Based on **World Bank data (2019)**, BRICS represents:
 - **41% of world population** with 3.14 billion people

- Total combined area of **29.3% of the total land surface of the world**
- **24% of global GDP**
- **16% of world trade**
- **Bilateral relations among BRICS states are conducted mainly based on non-interference**, equality, and mutual benefit.
- The existence of the **BRICS grouping does not signify a formal or informal alliance**; there are multiple economic, territorial, and political disputes between the five governments.
- Currently, there are two components that make up the financial architecture of BRICS, namely, the **New Development Bank (NDB)**, or sometimes referred to as the BRICS Development Bank, and the **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)**.
- Both of these components were signed into a treaty in 2014 and became active in 2015.

Can BRICS play a key role in Afghanistan?

Importance:

- The US and its allies withdrawal from Afghanistan has led to a new crisis and it is still unclear how this will affect regional and global security
- Afghanistan could **potentially become a threat to its neighbours, a source of terrorism and drug trafficking**
- Two of the five members of the organisation – Russia and China – continue to have a diplomatic presence in Kabul where a Taliban interim government is expected to take formal charge
- BRICS leaders paid “special attention” to the situation in the war-ravaged Afghanistan to prevent it from becoming a source of terrorism and drug trafficking.

- **All heads of state collectively agreed to combat the export of terror and cooperate to mitigate the humanitarian crisis in the war-torn country.**
- **Russia is interested in stopping the exodus of Afghans** from the country after the Taliban takeover
- As neighbours, **India and China are concerned about preventing attempts by terrorist organisations to use Afghan territory as terrorist sanctuary** and to carry out attacks against them as well as drug trade within Afghanistan.
- China's biggest worry in Afghanistan, say analysts, is the potential for a security vacuum to cause trouble within its own borders.
- China has a border with Afghanistan and is probably most concerned and has the most at stake
- Beijing also has **potentially beneficial economic ties** it could deepen and develop with the new Taliban government, such as the mining and extraction of Afghanistan's mineral deposits, including rare earth minerals that are vital to high-tech manufacturing.
- India supported the former United States-backed Afghan government, while its rival and neighbour Pakistan has more of a relationship with the Taliban, making the stakes higher for New Delhi.

Challenges:

- While there is much to be gained from mutual cooperation, the relationships between the five BRICS nations are marked by shifting alliances and diverging strategic interests – especially where Afghanistan is concerned.
- BRICS nations share an interest in not having extremism take root in Afghanistan as it did prior to 9/11. That would unify them, but beyond that, they have different interests
- BRICS countries are evidently divided on the issue of

engagement with the Taliban with Russia and China adopting a proactive policy on the issue.

- A Russian media report informed that the Taliban has invited Turkey, Qatar, China and Iran to the upcoming swearing-in ceremony. China extended an emergency aid of \$31 million to Afghanistan to help the Taliban run the government.
- India is also a member of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or “quad”, along with Australia, Japan and the US – which is increasingly concerned about China’s behaviour.
- This doesn’t make it easy or as easy for India and China to cooperate in the BRICS framework
- Tensions still simmering between China and India over border clashes this past winter could also create challenges for cooperation.

Mould your thought: What are the important outcomes of the 13th Summit of BRICS? Critically evaluate the interest of the grouping in the resolution of the current Afghan Crisis.

Approach to the answer:

- Introduction
- Discuss the important decisions of the 13th Summit
- Discuss the concerns of BRICS about the Afghan Situation
- Discuss the potential of the grouping and its decision regarding Afghanistan
- Discuss the hurdles in implementation of its Afghan Strategy
- Conclusion