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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. BRICS grouping succeeded up to a point but it now confronts multiple challenges due to changes in the geopolitical order. Comment. (250 words)

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Approach

- Start the answer with writing about the success of the BRICS group.
- Discuss the challenges confronting the BRICS in the new geopolitical order.
- Suggest a way forward for maintaining relevance and utility of the group in the future.

Introduction

BRICS represents 42% of the world's population, 30% of the land area, 24% of global GDP and 16% of international trade. It acts as a bridge between Global North and South.

The BRICs called for the reform of multilateral institutions in order that they reflect the structural changes in the world economy and the increasingly central role that emerging markets now play.

Body

Challenges With the BRICS

- **Marred by Various Issues:** Group has seen conflicts such as China's aggression in eastern Ladakh last year brought India-China relations to their lowest point in several decades.
 - There is also the reality of the strained relations of China and Russia with the West, and of serious internal challenges preoccupying both Brazil and South Africa.
 - On the other hand, China's image at global level has also been tarnished due to the Covid-19. In this backdrop, it is questionable whether BRICS matter or not.
- **Heterogeneity:** It is claimed by critics that heterogeneity (variable/diverse nature of countries) of the BRICS nations with its diverse interests possess a threat to the viability of the grouping.
- **China Centric:** All the countries in the BRICS group trade with China more than each other, therefore it is blamed as a platform to promote China's interest. Balancing trade deficit with China is a huge challenge for other partner nations.

- **Global Model for Governance:** Amidst, global slowdown, trade war and protectionism, the critical challenge for the BRICS consists in the development of a new global model of governance which should not be unipolar but inclusive and constructive.

The goal should be to avoid a negative scenario of unfolding globalization and to start a complicated merging of the global growing economies without distorting or breaking the single financial and economic continuum of the world.

- **Not Been Effective:** The five-power combine has succeeded, albeit up to a point. However, China's economic rise has created a serious imbalance within BRICS. Also the group has not done enough to assist the Global South to win their optimal support for their agenda.

Way Forward

- **Cooperation Within the Group:** BRICS need to shed the centrality from China and create a better internal balance, reinforced by the urgent need for diversification and strengthening of regional value chains, all exposed during the pandemic.

Policymakers have been encouraging an increase in intra-BRICS cooperation in diverse areas like agriculture, disaster resilience, digital health, traditional medicine and customs cooperation.

- BRICS did well in its first decade to identify issues of common interests and to create platforms to address these issues.

For BRICS to remain relevant over the next decades, each of its members must make **a realistic assessment of the initiative's opportunities** and inherent limitations.

- **Commitment to Multilateral World:** BRICS nations need to recalibrate their approach and to recommit to their founding ethos. BRICS must reaffirm their commitment to a multi-polar world that allows for sovereign equality and democratic decision making.
- They must build on the success of the NDB and invest in additional BRICS institutions. It will be useful for BRICS to develop an institutional research wing, along the lines of the OECD, offering solutions which are better suited to the developing world.
- BRICS should consider a BRICS-led effort to meet their commitments under the Paris Agreement on climate change and the UN's sustainable development goals. This could include e.g. setting up a BRICS energy alliance and an energy policy institution.
- BRICS nations should strive for peaceful and politico-diplomatic settlement of crisis and conflict in various regions of the world.

Conclusion

Thus, the future of BRICS depends on the adjustment of the internal and external issues of India, China and Russia. Mutual communication between India, China and Russia is important for moving ahead.