Review
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ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS IN THE BRICS AND CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: IMPROVING GOVERNANCE AND GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

(REVIEW OF THE BRICS SYMPOSIUM, MOSCOW, 20–21 OCTOBER 2022)

Ivan A. Makarov[1], Anna V. Mordashova[2], Stanislav A. Razumovsky[3], Ilya M. Stepanov[4]

[1, 2, 3, 4] National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE); 20 Myasnitskaya Str., 101000 Moscow, Russia.
[1] Doctoral student; ca.anzeexen@gmail.com; ORCID: 0000-0002-6476-390X
[2] Doctoral student; annamordashova@yandex.ru; ORCID: 0000-0002-8235-5731
[3] Doctoral student; srazumovskii@hse.ru; ORCID: 0000-0001-5164-1834
[4] Doctoral student; istepanov@hse.ru; ORCID: 0000-0003-4014-5098

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In 2013, in Shanghai a group of scholars from leading universities of the BRICS countries agreed on development of academic cooperation holding annual scientific events. In 2016, the expert group on public administration (PA) was launched. One of the main goals of the expert group was to hold annual symposia on the development and governance in the BRICS countries and to build a community of scholars who share a commitment to elaborate alternative models of development based on the BRICS experiences in its comparison with models proposed for and by other regions such as Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), Western Europe, North America and AUCUS.

Following the previous International Symposia held in Shanghai and São Paulo, the Fifth Symposium was hosted by the National Research University – Higher School of Economics (NRU HSE University) in Moscow, Russia. The aim of the Symposium was to explore the different approaches of BRICS and other countries to the reforms in their PA systems – which is any restructuring of the administrative part of the public sector in order to solve organizational and/or societal problems associated with its structure. The objective of this Symposium was to develop a comprehensive framework for building the policy and governance capacities of governments to improve their performance.

During the two-day symposium, more than 40 researchers from the BRICS countries and also from the CEE region, from the countries of South-East Asia, discussed the problems of strategic comparative analysis of public administration reforms in the BRICS countries and in the CEE region in recent violated times (plenary session), international projects management in the BRICS region, security and risk management, digitalization and provision of public services, and the assessment of public administration results in the BRICS countries. A special session of the Symposium was devoted to reviewing changes in public policies and governance in BRICS and other countries due to the pandemic spread of COVID-19. Possibilities for further cooperation between universities of the BRICS countries that can contribute to the development of public administration were also discussed.

The process of public administration reforms in the BRICS countries and in the CEE region has a lot in common, because almost all countries passed through the period of colossal social and political transformation, including the transition from socialism in Central and Eastern Europe, the crash of apartheid policy in South Africa and its reassurance as the democratic state, the collapse of the Soviet Union and establishing of Russia as the powerful actor of International order, the fast and miracle breakout of China and India into the group of economic and political World leaders. For these reasons the re-shaping of public administration (PA) towards service public oriented paradigms of PA became the necessity. The social and economic specifics of the development of BRICS countries are granting that the application of existed theories should differ from "standard" Western approaches of implementation of those theories. It is proved by the history of already executed public administration reforms in the BRICS countries.

The symposium started with a plenary session, which was devoted to the comparative strategic analysis of public administration reforms in the BRICS countries and in the CEE region. Some speakers of the plenary session kindly agreed to provide their presentations with the articles, so we will describe their talks briefly, while other plenary presentations will be given in more detail.

The strategic vision of waves of public administration development in CEE countries which became members of the European Union after 1990, was delivered by **J. Nemec** (Slovakia), the Chief Editor of the NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy. The main ideas of J. Nemec' presentation, briefly, can be described: The public administration reforms in the CEE region have passed two waves. The first wave was focused on reestablishment of democratic institutions and included the development of new types of parliaments and local selfgovernments. The second wave happened when the EU renewed its standards for the development of public administration. As some countries of the EU region appeared to be not complying with basic conditions of the EU membership, the EU provided financial support to conduct needed reforms.

Using the indicators of the quality of public administration, research shows, that only four new EU member states are above the EU average according to the World Bank government effectiveness indicator (WBGI). The detailed content of research is presented in the article in this Special Issue, written by Professor J. Nemec based on his presentation during the Symposia.

Professor **J. de Oliviera** (Brazil, Fundação Getulio Vargas) conducted research about public administration development in Brazil. His article is also included in the Special Issue, in the review we marked the key points of his research. The speaker described the history of PA reforms in Brazil and highlighted the most important stages: For the most part of the 20th century, the process was influenced by ideas of Weber, which meant the widespread adoption of bureaucratic administration in the government bodies of the country. From 1945 to 1964, new political philosophy was developed. It was called "National developmentalism". It emerged during the period when the State pushed for rapid industrialization of the country. From 1985 to 1992, the Brazilian government proposed reforms to abandon the philosophy of "National developmentalism" in public administration, as the implementation of this theory in practice led to economic stagnation and high inflation. To improve the situation, the government adopted the ideas of New Public Management along with the liberalization of the economy and gave more responsibilities to the states and municipalities, leading a growth of public administration in these entities. From 1992 to 2002, the Brazilian government entered the new era of management, which also meant that the approach of bureaucratization was no longer applied in public administration. Also, during this period of time there was a gradual reduction in the number of public employees. The process of economic liberalization was ended and the number of public employees sharply increased. The speaker emphasized that the philosophy of "National developmentalism" was back in use. However, this trend ended in 2016–2017 because of the economic crisis, which led to renewed economic liberalization. De Oliviera mentioned that the decentralization process occurred fast, with great fervor, resulting in coordination and decision-making gaps in intergovernmental relations. In addition, there was a push to develop E-Government. Nowadays, Brazil is one of the leaders in the implementation of electronic public administration.

A. Barabashev and **A. Klimenko** (Russia), Professors of the National Research University "Higher School of Economics", conducted research about changes in directions of administrative and social reforms that occurred in Russia during the year 2022 as the turning point between COVID epoch and Ukrainian conflict. The direction of performance management was influenced at that time by the greater emphasis on resilience and security. There was a trend of changing the priority of tasks taking into account geopolitics and import substitution. Henceforth, the need to develop new approaches toward public administration in conditions of uncertainty has emerged. The authors mention the trend toward digitalization of planning. It included the creation of a platform for determining management decisions, monitoring and control as well as risk management based on a single network of distributed data. The authors emphasize the further optimization of mandatory requirements and strengthen evidence-based and risk-based approaches that are needed in public administration. The presenters mentioned that there are significant changes in the direction of public servants' motivation: the patriotic mode of motivation became the prevailed last year instead of prosocial and professional motivation. The authors found out that in Russia there was a simplification of KPI. In addition, the balance of budgeting for civil, military and law enforcement servants shifted in favor to military and law enforcement servants.

Professor **A. Basu** (Governing Council, Centre for Environmental Management and Participatory Development, India) presented research about reform initiatives that were held in India and their consequent impact.

The proposed reforms were intended to change the role of the bureaucracy focusing on good governance, adopting the introduction of e-governance and empowering citizens. In 2014, "e-Samiksha" was introduced, and it was also revamped in 2020. This is an Indian government Internet website bolstered Information and Communication Technology (ICT) culture within the Government, speeds up monitoring and compliance with a large number of action points, reduces the time taken to deliver services and helps reduce pending issues through a single window interface. Another project is "e-Office". Its goal is to improve government process and service delivery by introducing an electronic file system. This is one of the reasons why India is classified as a 'High' EGDI country according to UN E-Governance Survey-2020. The speaker studied one of the Indian programs which is called 'Karmayogi'. It aims to educate civil service officers to be more creative, constructive, innovative and technology enabled. Indian digital transformation contributed significantly to the construction of e-government and e-administration, which has facilitated the transformation of the administration from a "rules-based to a role-based" model.

Professor **Y. Jing** (China), Editor-in-Chief of the Journal "Global Public Policy and Governance", and the Director of the Center for Collaborative Governance Research at Fudan University, presented a talk about public administration reforms in China. The speaker mentions that the development of these reforms was influenced by the Confucian philosophy, a three-decade practice of planned economy and a shift to marketization and globalization after 1978. Jing emphasizes that the reforms that were conducted in China after 1978 enlarged both the similarities and the differences between Chinese and Western public administration.

Historically, the pendulum between politicization and professionalization swung back and forth. Since 2013 the modernization of the state governance system was conducted. The boundaries between administrative and party organizations got further blurred. The reforms demonstrate that there is a trend in China to strengthen the party-state regime and political leadership. He also mentions policy, which is aimed to delegate powers to local governments. Deregulation and regulation were simultaneously promoted in China. Other policies in the field of public administration were implemented to improve the accountability of government agencies for various errors, low performance and managerial operation. To achieve these goals responsibilities of each government body on all levels were clarified. Also, it was proposed to increase cooperation with external economic and social organizations. The last decade witnessed the rise of radical politicization to introduce systematic reforms. The speaker emphasizes that this may cause the loss of professional competence of the bureaucracy and finally harm its technical rationality and quick response. The speaker mentions the decline of high-powered incentives as a key challenge to Chinese public administration because it could systematically constrain the vitality of the system and subsequently its competence and coordination of the system of public administration. It would be a difficult task to equalize the quality of government across China. Also, it is important to further encourage the participation of citizens in public administration because this will encourage the development of a civic society capable of self-governing and co-governing public affairs. Moreover, it will be important for government bodies in China to develop in accordance with the Fourth Industrial Revolution and to implement independent and risky institutional and organizational innovations.

The last, but not the least, Professor **C. Tapscott** (University of the Western Cape, South Africa) gave a presentation in the plenary session, and described the development of public administration in South Africa and the changes which occurred in this area after the cancellation of apartheid in 1994. Before 1994, South Africa was a unitary state based on the Westminster model, but with three levels of government: national, provincial and local. At the national level, there were separate administrative systems for Whites, Coloureds, and Indians. Local authorities limited powers and in many parts of the country there was no municipality. Key features of this type of government were its focus on the needs of the white minority and the unequal provision of services to the different races. It was also a weak state in terms of service provision. It was undemocratic, illegitimate, economically, and politically unsustainable.

After the end of apartheid in South Africa, a new Constitution was developed, which divided local public administration into three parts: local, provincial, and national. Each part was provided with a set of powers and responsibilities. A new approach to the development of municipalities was introduced – a wall-to-wall local government system. A municipality was given the right to govern, on its own initiative, the local government affairs of its community. This means that while national and provincial governments may supervise the functioning of local government, this must be done without encroaching on the institutional integrity of local government. Professor Tapscott emphasize that it was a challenge to implement reforms of public administration in South Africa because policy makers did not have enough experience. Furthermore, the new Constitution was vague about how different levels of government would be integrated and coordinated, resulting in role confusion and unfunded mandates. The speaker mentions that the adoption of neo-liberal policies in the 1990s was accompanied by the adoption of New Public Management (NPM) as a mode of administration in the public sector. This included a focus on the privatization of many government services, outsourcing, and cost-recovery for the provision of public services.

Tapscott C. notes that the NPM negatively influenced the development of public administration in South Africa. It has weakened the capacity of the state when it should have been strengthened. The tendering of a wide range of public services has opened up opportunities for corruption in supply chains at all levels of government. There was also no understanding of accountability for failures in service delivery to citizens. In conclusion, Tapscott C. emphasizes that the task of creating a democratic, non-racial and equitable society was more difficult than expected. He notes that there is an urgent need to restore efficiency and effectiveness to the public sector in South Africa.

The first thematic session "Managing public administration in the post-COVID-19 world" contained six papers that were thematically divided into two parts. In the first part, the studies were focused on the problems of administrative structures during the COVID-19 pandemic considering the characteristics of the political systems of the BRICS countries. The second part of the session presented the results of studies on administrative issues in specific areas of social policy most affected by the pandemic. Studies presented covered employment, education, immigration, social support for residents, and other areas.

The first paper "China's model of mass mobilization under COVID-19 pandemic: A case study on publicity propaganda" is devoted to the study of the publicity propaganda model that has developed in China during COVID-19 pandemic. **Y. Lu** and **X. Xiao** (China Foreign Affairs University) study the Chinese experience of publicity propaganda as an approach aimed at achieving social mobilization during the pandemic. The research objective is to figure out what mechanism China established to achieve social mobilization in public health crises through discourse construction and ideological leadership since 2020.

The methodology was to analyze firstly the structural prerequisites, and then specific governance techniques in accordance with the organization theories of the New Public Administration school, based on discourse analyses of media texts. Sources of media texts included government online accounts at all levels, official media and We Media. "Social mobilization" and "publicity propaganda" are the key terms of the research, defined by the authors as follows: to illustrate the model of social mobilization in China, we analyzed the structural prerequisites of social and political organization in China, as well as specific management methods in accordance with the organizational theory of the school of new public administration. The source of information for discursive analysis was the texts of official media sources.

So, the authors presented three structural prerequisites of China's social mobilization that strongly influence the results of social mobilization. Firstly, this is the authoritarian leadership of the media, which means that the authorities are able to impose any political ideas on the audience at all levels of the state media. The second is Leadership and Supervision over the Media by the CPC (the Communist Party of China) that allows to fight effectively against rumors and provide the information selected for the public and which is supplement to the government. Third – the Identification People with Publicity-Propaganda, that is, with the increased role of public feedback in political decision-making, which is also reflected in the information materials of the official media. In practice, this may be expressed in the recognition of mistakes made or the expression of solidarity with the conditions for certain categories of citizens.

The researchers then presented three structural preconditions in China, which have a strong influence on the outcome of social mobilization. The first is authoritarian control, with government new media and government media platforms that can be used to coerce audiences at all levels. The second is the CCP's guidance and supervision of the media. This enables them to effectively fight rumors and provide information that is selected for masses and being a match to the government's vision. The third precondition concerns the increasing role of public feedback in political decision-making and is reflected in official media information materials: the "identification of the public with public relations and propaganda". In practice, it may be expressed as a recognition of mistakes or an expression of solidarity with the situation in which certain categories of citizens find themselves.

The results obtained in this study include three processes by which China mobilizes through public relations propaganda: distributive processes, meaning the construction of the social landscape; integrative processes, meaning the use of distributed media platforms; and socioemotional processes, considering the "war preparation" discourse. These processes are defined by the authors according to the organizational theory of the New School of Administration founded by H. George Frederickson.

The researchers detailed the impact of these processes on the outcome of social mobilization in China. For example, in constructing the social landscapes, they found that material symbols of the pandemic (such as Wuhan City, nucleic acid testing sites, mobile cabin hospitals, medical gowns and masks, health QR codes, etc.) and non-material symbols (for example, opinions of famous physicians and community members) helped the media strengthen social mobilization.

Analyzing the integrative process, the authors found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, publicity-propaganda in China was highly decentralized by various media: while mainstream media TV and official new media platforms remained the most reliable sources of information for Chinese users, users adhered most to WeChat (90.8%), followed by TV (78%), then Weibo (69.8%), news APPs (51.6%) and social platforms such as Tik Tok and Kuai Shou (47.3%). So, the decentralization of promotional information allowed more people to participate in the communication network, and it spread the will of the decision-makers as the common will of society, unifying interests and encouraging assimilation.

Finally, China's publicity-propaganda during the pandemic constructed a "war preparation" (Zhang and Wang, 2020) discourse that reinforced the control of the masses and their own self-consciousness by responding to collectivist cultural traditions and evoking historical memories of the struggle against aggression, and by turning COVID-19 into an enemy against the people and the government in order to strengthen the united front and sense of a community with a shared future between the government and the people.

Comparing the fight against pandemic to a war can greatly motivate people to comply with pandemic prevention measures on their own initiative. By constructing COVID -19 as a common enemy of the people and the government, China has promoted the fight against the virus as a war against an aggressive enemy, with war-related discourse appearing in almost every official media report.

In conclusion, the authors stated that the propaganda during the COVID-19 pandemic in China has created a benign and replicable mechanism of social mobilization.

The second paper was “Managing the health-economy paradox during the Covid-19 pandemic – governance challenges in India, Brazil and South Africa”. **C. Tapscott**, **J. de Oliveira**, and **R. K. R. Kummitha** (Northumbria University). This article examined the issue of balancing policy priorities regarding public health maintenance and economic revitalization. The study noted that under normal circumstances these two sectors should be mutually reinforcing, but in the pandemic these priorities became contradictory. The authors called such a problem as “The Health-Economy Paradox”. The authors therefore explored how the political and administrative systems of the three BRICS countries (India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) acted to reinforce the link between health and economic priorities during the pandemic.

As a theoretical justification, the work used the theory of Paradox and Foucault’s concept of governability to explain how the three countries could overcome the contradiction they faced. Following the work of Bulkley et al. (2007) the authors used a mode of governing approach as encompassing the rationalities, entities, and technologies of governance that shaped the ways in which government policies were implemented.

Then the paper considered these modes to explain differences in the political and administration systems of IBSA countries. After that, the economic and health outcomes were compared to the pandemic management systems established in the countries studied.

First, the authors noted the difference in political preferences, called rationality, in response to The Health-Economy Paradox. The pandemic response policy in South Africa favored saving lives, so the country introduced strict quarantine measures. India had a similar approach, although opposition to national government policies later would arise. By contrast, in Brazil, health risks were downplayed and the government emphasized the importance of maintaining an open economy.

The researchers also found differences in terms of the organization of state structures responsible for combating the pandemic. So, in South Africa the response to the pandemic was very structured with a National Coronavirus Command Council reporting to the Presidency and implementation of policy overseen by a National Joint Operation Centre. The Indian federal government provided technical assistance, guidelines, and advisories to the state government. Brazil did not have a central authority to deal with the pandemic, but some state and municipal governments, together with civil society organizations played a significant role in combating the virus.

The authors concluded that (overcoming The Health-Economy Paradox) the political and administrative systems of Brazil, India, and South Africa in a pandemic were effective, based on the results obtained in terms of health and economic indicators.

The authors noted that the number of deaths per million in Brazil was 8 times that of India and nearly double that of South Africa. Despite South Africa's singular focus on health, it fared worse than India in its efforts to save lives.

In terms of the economy, Brazil has not fared better than the other two IBSA countries despite efforts to rescue the economy, perhaps due to pre-existing economic structural flaws, and continues to struggle with high inflation. The South African economy suffered severely in 2020 and 2021. The Indian economy suffered in 2020, but has since recovered significantly, although inflation has also increased.

So, the study showed, that none of the three countries managed to entirely resolve the health-economy paradox, although India appeared to be the most successful. In the case of South Africa and Brazil a focus on one dimension of the paradox ultimately resulted in a zero-sum outcome where neither public health, nor the economy were spared.

The third paper "COVID-19 and governance challenges for BRICS in post-COVID World. A framework for new COVID response strategy" by **H. Mishra** (New Delhi Television Ltd), presented at the first part of the session, was focused on the problem of the weak ability of public administration institutions especially Health Management Systems in BRICS countries to counter the covid-19 pandemic.

The study provides detailed comparative statistics on the impact of the pandemic on public health in the BRICS countries. The author notes important facts such as "while in India the number of people who were infected is almost 30 percent more than in Brazil but the number of people who died is I think around 30 percent more in the case of Brazil" or "there is some countries especially Brazil and South Africa where the number of people who died from COVID is alarmingly very high in comparison to other countries which had much better vaccination records".

Summing up the data on infected and dead from COVID, the author cited data in general for the BRICS countries. So, the total number of confirmed cases in BRICS countries is 113.2 million and the total confirmed deaths included 1.73 million. At the same time, the author noted that, in comparison with global values BRICS countries accounted for 18.1 percent of the total COVID cases officially recorded.

This essentially means that almost one in five people infected with COVID on earth lived in a BRICS country.

Citing this data, the author called for a collective response to the challenges of the pandemic at the level of the BRICS community of nations: "Given these very disturbing facts, the BRICS actually need a collective response strategy to combat such a pandemic in the future".

Part of the study reflected on the features of practical steps in the field of combating the consequences of the pandemic, using India as an example.

The author highlighted some shortcomings in the actions of state bodies in the fields of healthcare management, migration, social protection and education. Based on the results obtained, the author was additionally able to argue the expediency of developing collective actions at the BRICS level.

The presentation concluded with recommendations on the areas of joint action of the BRICS countries in the post-COVID future. In a general sense, the author noted that the BRICS member states need to formulate a new institutional framework for cooperation with each other and with the BRICS countries to collectively combat COVID-19 pandemic in the future.

Speaking about practical steps, the authors suggested to set up a COVID-19 response fund based on The New Development Bank. This could be used to strengthen Public Health institutions in areas affected by COVID in the BRICS countries. Himanshu Shekhar Mishra also pointed out the importance of cooperation in medical research, biotechnology, and other areas.

The fourth paper of the session devoted to the theme: "BRICS and youth unemployment in a post Covid-19 world" was presented by **L. C. van Jaarsveldt** (University of South Africa). The paper analyzes the dynamics of youth unemployment in the BRICS countries and examines the cases of India and South Africa on this issue in more detail. The current measures to support youth employment at the BRICS level and outline the need for their development, considering the specificities of the labor markets of the BRICS member countries, were presented.

The author indicated that compared to other age groups, young people had more difficulty saving or finding work during and after the pandemic. This is because this social category is more likely to work in industries where there are fewer opportunities for telecommuting, such as the food industry, the travel industry, and the service industry.

For the purposes of this study, young people were defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 in accordance with the views of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization and the World Bank. At the same time, the study also showed that in the BRICS countries, young people are primarily defined as people aged 15 to 29 years. However, in South Africa, this age ranges from 15 to 34 years, as some people struggled during the apartheid era and did not have the opportunity for development.

Analysis of the dynamics of the indicators shows that youth unemployment has risen in all BRICS countries. For example, in China, unemployment more than doubled between 2018 and 2021 (from 9.6% to 19.9%), and in South Africa, unemployment rose to 61.4% in the pandemic year of 2019.

This has resulted in negative social actions. For example, in 2022 protests erupted in India over the limited number of jobs available due to rising youth unemployment. The author states "There are limited posts, and millions of people are applying for 35,000 posts, so this resulted in the demonstrations and protests that took place against the Ministry of Railways." Similar episodes were also observed in South Africa.

In addition, the data presented prove that South Africa has the worst unemployment rate among the BRICS countries. In addition to the very high unemployment rate among the country's youth (61.4% among 15- to 24-year-olds), it is noted that 44.4% of them have lost hope of finding a job and have completely abandoned the job search. The author added that "One of three young people in South Africa between the age of 15 and 24 are disengaged with the labor market frustrated gave up on finding work. And according to statistics South Africa has over 10 million young people between the age of 15 and 24 and of them only 2.5 million is currently in the labor force or in the labor market".

Next, the author presented positive evaluation of existing measures aimed at supporting youth employment in South Africa (Expanded Public Works Program, National Youth Service Program, Tax incentive encouraging employers to hire young works, Annual Job summit) and at the BRICS level (for example, Russia-SA combined research projects on science, biology, space and medicine, China-SA Young Scientist Exchange Program, BRICS Youth Summit, BRICS Youth Forum, The BRICS Youth camp and others).

Therefore, the author concluded that further measures are needed to tackle the youth unemployment crisis in Europe, pledging to youth employment: "We have to think of ways to invest in our youth to make up for the past two years they have lost due to the pandemic, ways of creating programs for them to get the necessary skills and knowledge to enter the labor market with strengthened knowledge".

The fifth paper "Knocking your 'shocks' off! – inducing a regulated, positive economic shock" was presented by **V. Kumar** (speaker) and **S. Dash** (Jindal Global University). This study focused on the analysis of the macroeconomic effects of the pandemic. The authors also demonstrated the impact of some economic policy measures (for instance, reduction in bank interest rates and setting up price ceiling for essential commodities) on eliminating the negative socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic.

The study is presented in the following steps: Effects of Covid-19, Steps for Positive Shock, BRICS Arrangement, Setting off Inflation, and Analysis. Firstly, the speaker noted that the pandemic contributed to an increase in the national budget deficits because of higher public spending and lower tax revenues. At the same time, GDP declined due to lower demand.

Next, two settings related to positive shock were discussed. The first is a "reduction in bank interest rates". In the author's view, this would lead to a reduction in the interest rate paid by the bank to the consumer. As a result, rational consumers will choose to invest in the economy rather than save in the bank for a higher return on investment (ROI). The second setting is a "decreasing premium amounts of insurance" that can lead to providing insurance companies with a plethora of resources for investment. This will be facilitated by an increase in demand for insurance products, primarily life and health insurance, as the authors suggest. Then the investments will provide a considerable amount of "locked" financial resources to the economy.

After that, the authors considered measures for Essential commodities that are produced and circulated in the BRICS economic space. These include Price Ceiling for Essential Commodities and Possibility of Agreement between BRICS. The authors consider the possibility that the government could enforce a maximum price for the essential commodities thus protecting the interest of the poor section of the community. However, given the risks of inefficiency from price regulation, it is also proposed to consider the option of trading essential goods within the framework of the BRICS agreements, which will ensure demand within the BRICS and at the same time prevent inflation.

The paper also addressed the impact of the proposed shock measures on changes in supply and demand and examined the mechanism for controlling inflation by stimulating savings. In conclusion, attention was given to the problem of the capitalist model of the economy and the risks to the poor. These issues are examined by the authors in the context of the proposed shock measures.

The last paper of the session was “Socio-economic impact of Covid-19 on marginalized communities of India: A study of Telangana and the Andhra Pradesh states” by **S. Junuguru** (Woxsen University) and **N. Sudhaveni** (Centre for Economic and Social Studies).

The study objectives are:

1) to analyze the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic on the vulnerable population, including the effects on livelihoods, access to essential goods and basic services, awareness of critical health and hygiene issues;
2) to assess the impact of school closures on different vulnerable social groups, with special reference to Scheduled Caste students.

The authors reveal the research problem as follows: “The marginal communities are among the poorest and the most vulnerable occupational communities of the State. The community is caught in a vicious circle characterised by low incomes, low educational and skill levels, lack of occupational diversity, financial incapacity to adopt technology, seasonal migration and gross under-representation in formal employment and legislative and governance institutions. As a result, the community has not been able to break into a higher socio-economic trajectory.”

The paper empirically examines the socio-economic status of the marginal community in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh States and the challenges that they encounter. The respondent sample consists of school heads (principals / headmasters) teachers and students. Based on the findings, the study suggests the way forward for enhancing the livelihoods of the community.

In conclusion, the authors present the findings of the study, the main of which are the following:

1. Migrant workers in India were leading a life where vulnerability and exploitation were the norms. The COVID-19 crisis has made their vulnerability more visible to everyone.
2. The migrant workers have been left completely on their own to fend for themselves. This crisis has exposed a lack of communication between the central government and the states and between the states themselves. Borders among and within states have also hardened, stripping the migrants of their mobility and dignity.
3. The COVID-19 crisis and its impacts on internal migrant workers in India require collective solutions. The state has an obligation to protect rights. Business as an employer, service provider, and sometimes as an intermediary recruiting these workers has the responsibility to respect rights and comply with laws.

4. It is needed reliable estimates of both internal and international migrants. Without reliable estimates, any future policy proposals for migrant labour are not going to be effective.
5. Public health system particularly the primary and secondary care needs to be strengthened and investment should be increased.

Session 2, "Public administration and international project management" was focused on studies of international cooperation through the elaboration and implementation of projects. They focused primarily on the scope of the BRICS community and explored both the opportunities and barriers for collaboration among member states of the BRICS – among themselves and in relation to external actors. As some researchers noted, the BRICS coalition already has multiple ongoing international projects, and there are numerous possibilities for further mutually beneficial multilateral cooperation in various areas that cover all fundamental socio-economic spheres – human capital, material capital and finance – although nations outside the BRICS and CEE were observed to occasionally interfering with international collaborative projects due to difficult bilateral relations.

The possibilities of trilateral cooperation between Russia, India and China in the energy sector were analyzed in the presentation by **P. Hou** (Xinjiang University) "Hey, let's be serious: Russia-China-India energy cooperation in times of turbulence". He believes that the BRICS bloc can provide an appropriate institutional framework for geographically motivated energy cooperation. Such cooperation would be mutually beneficial, serving as a response both to the financial pressure Russia is experiencing in current circumstances and to India and China's growing energy demand. Thus, Hou intends to examine available open-source data on these countries' governance models from the angle of international relations and apply the neofunctionalism theory to explore opportunities and suggest a model for such cooperation. In turning to neofunctionalism – which emphasizes the concept of territory in international integration while taking into account non-state actors, Hou aims to use European integration processes as a reference without intending to replicate them exactly in BRICS. He notes that while early stages of energy cooperation are expected to be primarily driven by state actors, the private sector can play an important role in it in the longer term. Preliminary exploration of the topic has yielded conclusions that the establishment of regional energy cooperation requires policy coordination motivated by propositions from top political leaders, as well as appropriate financial instruments and a way to ensure regional stability, which can be aided by organizations such as the New Development Bank and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Despite anticipating certain challenges in analyzing spillover effects, Hou believes this study can not only aid the three countries' development, but also show how international interactions can affect global public policies and how the formation of new regional policies can lead to the establishment of a new governance model that may serve as an alternative to the European model.

In a similar vein despite a different subject of study, **T. Zaytseva** (Lomonosov Moscow State University) presented the report titled "Possible research areas and collaborative research within the BRICS countries" that contained an over-view of existing mechanisms and possible opportunities for wide-reaching scientific collaboration between BRICS countries. Such collaboration, as she noted, can be expected to be fruitful even in spite of existing language barriers thanks to multiple similarities and synergies of the BRICS countries, including, but not limited to: comparable levels of technological and economic development, similar degrees of state intervention in economic processes, similar positions in the global political landscape and aligned political goals, complementary strengths in economy and technology, and the transcontinental nature of the coalition. T. Zaytseva proposed to explore possibilities for scientific cooperation through the prism of universities and the three distinct roles they fulfill: policy advisory, scientific, and educational role. As policy advisory institutions, universities should collaborate to support existing BRICS cooperation mechanisms, and to set up a system for sharing public administration experience and best national practices within BRICS and possibly among other countries. As research organizations, universities should contribute to the creation and realization of a long-term cooperative development strategy encompassing all aspects of the socio-economic development of the BRICS coalition. Additionally, further support for numerous existing and proposed collaborative research initiatives is warranted, many of which – such as the BRICS innovation contact points – have already proven effective. Finally, from the educational perspective usage of any opportunity for knowledge exchange is recommended, and it is pointed out that this may help all BRICS universities achieve higher positions in international ratings. Multiple formats of cooperation can be used to fulfill these tasks, including joint educational programs such as the BRICS Network University, joint publications, sharing of key information and data and comparative studies that such sharing enables, financial collaboration, and further development of academic networking events and institutions, such as the current conference or the BRICS University League.

J. Zhao (Fudan University), **X. Xu** (Princeton University) and **J. Qian** (Fudan University), carried out research with the title "The empirical evidence of U.S. voting on China-related projects in multilateral development banks" on possible obstacles rather than opportunities for international cooperation, studying the influence that the USA have on the decision-making processes of multilateral development banks such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, and the impact of this its influence on China. Citing the complex history of both Sino-American relations and multilateral development banks over the last two decades as the research background, X. Xu presented an empirical study demonstrating the impact of various unilateral and bilateral political and economic factors – as well as, uniquely, the characteristics of individual projects – on the U.S. behavior when voting on approval of China-related projects in multilateral development banks. The authors' analysis of the impact of bilateral international relations on multilateral development banks represents a significant contribution to the topic: only few previous studies examined this impact, as opposed to focusing on the political influence of individual countries. Furthermore, even among studies taking bilateral factors into account, few papers examined the case of Sino-US relations. For this study, the authors compiled an original database on multilateral development bank projects covering the period from 2004 to 2020 and examined it using the logistic regression method. The presented study found that greater U.S. trade deficit with China and a higher US GDP growth rate are associated with a lower chance for U.S. to approve a China-related multilateral development project. An increase in the difference in American and Chinese political positions in the United Nations General Assembly is also associated with a reduced approval chance, but to a lesser degree. On the other hand, the parameters of the specific project do not play a significant role in the decision-making process. Thus, the study reveals the factors that motivate a nation to oppose international cooperation, and demonstrates that bilateral factors have a greater impact than unilateral factors. It does not, however, reveal the exact mechanisms how each factor affects multilateral development banks' decision-making processes, which appears to be a primary venue for further research.

Session 3 "Managing crisis, security and risks in public administration" was focused on the factors that affect security at national, international and local levels, and proposed both new theoretical approaches and practical reforms that may help predict, prevent and combat crises, improve security and ensure stability in the BRICS and in other countries. Notably, all of the studies presented have concerned multiple member states of the BRICS, either commenting on further possibilities of international collaboration or effectively relying on the exchange of knowledge and experience for comparative analysis of the BRICS countries in general.

M. Gellen (University of Public Service) has presented the paper "Crisis management experience in Hungary. Managing expectations and realities: a systems approach" that contains the theoretical analysis of crisis management from the point of view of systems theory, using the example of Hungary. In general agreement with Ali Farazmand's theory of "sound governance", M. Gellen proposed to view every country as a complex adaptive system: a collection of elements that is greater than a mere sum of its parts due to certain additional traits. In the context of public administration, some of the most important of such traits are: self-sustaining holism, internal regulation supported by centralization and hierarchy, and a membrane (such as a national border) separating the internal and external environments. When viewed in this light, a crisis is an abnormal condition of the system that threatens its balance, and it is something the system adapts to by modifying its internal processes through regulation, selection and prioritization – which, interestingly enough, can result in the system becoming even more organized than before. M. Gellen then described the case of Hungary, noting that concepts tested with relative ease on smaller countries can be applied to nations as large as the members of the BRICS. Drawing on his professional experience, the speaker noted that crisis management in Hungary is a dual battle, as the system has to respond not only to internal imbalances but also to constant external political pressure from the European Union. International coalitions such as the BRICS and the EU itself can be seen as systems. However, he argued that, despite exhibiting many properties of a system, the EU specifically cannot be considered a proper system in the same way a nation can be. The reason for that is the vagueness of the EU's uniting principles and goals. In trying to force its member states to fully adopt these principles and goals, the EU may be applying negative stimuli to them.

Such negative stimuli typically only cause systems to resist external pressure, which, ultimately, undermines international cooperation. M. Gellen concluded that in order to facilitate management of possible crises and ensure its stability and prosperity, the BRICS coalition should take this experience into account and develop international relations based on functional cooperation and mutual benefit rather than political homogenization and pursuit of abstract goals. In this conclusion, he supported the propositions for international collaboration made by multiple other presenters.

S. Zarochintcev (Russia) discussed the topic "National security risk assessment: Anticipatory governance and indicative approach for the BRICS states". The author proposed to analyze national stability from a different, though not outright contradictory, perspective, suggesting a new data-based approach for national security risk assessment. In the light of the challenges the modern world presents including the complex and hybrid nature of modern threats, the ever-escalating turbulent geopolitical situation, the widespread economic and energy crises, and the increasing frequency and intensity of natural and anthropogenic disasters, the ability to timely identify risks and threats to national security has become more important than ever.

However, a gap between the theoretical and practical mechanisms of risk assessment has become clear. S. Zarochintcev argued that the currently popular deliberative risk ranking methodology, based on expert opinions, is insufficient, and proposed instead an indicative approach to national security risk assessment. This approach identifies risks and threats by assessing multiple social, economic, political and other indicators and searching for significant deviations from the norm. While finding the exact indicators that present sufficient data that accurately reflects reality and allows to predict risks may be a challenge, the suggested indicator-based methodology allows for quantitative evaluation, early identification, ranking and prioritization of risks. This indicative approach combines the objective tools of data-dependent governance with the philosophy of anticipatory governance and represents a step towards implementing the fundamentally new vision of public administration represented by the data-dependent governance model.

S. Zarochintcev believes that being intended to respond to the challenges of the modern everchanging world, the indicative approach to risk assessment should become of considerable interest to any modern government.

In particular, he pointed to the possibilities of international cooperation within the BRICS coalition, which it offers and which makes it possible to share not only raw data and indicators, but also the risk assessment methodology to identify varied risks for different nations using the same methods.

D. Anil (Jindal Global University), with his report "Crime and Public Administration" has researched security in BRICS on a more grassroots level, reviewing the deficiencies of suggesting reforms for BRICS police forces. A capable law enforcement force is important for economic and social development of any country, and ensuring the effectiveness of the police is doubly important for some of the BRICS countries (primarily India and China) given their ongoing or recent rapid urbanization, which is associated with a rise in crime rates. Yet all of the

BRICS countries suffer from low level of police effectiveness coupled with widespread public distrust of police, resulting in high crime rates (except in Russia) and generally low level of citizen security. Analyzing the specifics and reasons for these shortcomings in each of the BRICS countries, Anil identified the problems as multifaceted. Many of these problems are common to some or all of the BRICS countries: police are either excessively militarized (particularly in Brazil and Russia; this is also associated with police brutality) or too ineffective in dealing with crime (in India and South Africa); are often under significant pressure, being understaffed (except in Russia and China) and underfunded; are commonly highly corrupt; and in some cases are politically dependent, serving the ruling party or local politicians more so than the citizens and the law. Anil also pointed out some country-specific shortcomings, including the Brazilian police's failure to stifle gang influence, the Chinese police's lack of transparency, the Indian police's extremely inefficient feudalistic structure, and the South African police's insufficient representation of minorities, while stressing the Russian police's predatory relationship with the populace. Based on this analysis, Anil argued that significant reforms are required to improve law enforcement effectiveness, combat police brutality and reduce public distrust of the police in the BRICS countries. In conclusion, he outlined the main directions and necessary steps of the reforms for each BRICS nation. The common core principles of the proposed reforms were: demilitarization, improved training with a focus on de-escalation and human rights protection, organizational restructuring where necessary, and higher recruitment rates.

Session 4 "Assessing the results of the public administration reforms" has discussed the topic of usefulness and necessity of reforms in various areas of public administration in the member states of the BRICS and in CEE nations – a topic that was a concern of multiple other presenters as well. The papers presented here were devoted to analyzing a wide variety of aspects of potential and actual reform initiatives. One of the presented studies examined some of the factors that determine the very capacity of public administration for innovative reform design and implementation. Another study assessed the degree of success of already carried out reforms and analyzed the factors that may have affected this degree of success. Finally, the third presentation featured recommendations on directions for future developments.

G. Balasubramanian and **R. K. Kakani** (Indian Institute of Management) have conducted research titled "Exploring the individual antecedents of innovation of careerist public administrators". The authors tried to find the factors that make reforms possible on individual level, namely, to extract the individual antecedents of innovative thinking among Indian public administrators. In the current unstable conditions and in the face of massive resource disparities between and within nations, it is now more important than ever to increase the efficiency of public administration, improve prudent policy-making and optimize public service delivery to ultimately tackle various socio-economic challenges.

With India (like many other countries, including members of BRICS) recently transitioning from traditional Weberian-styled rigid bureaucracy to the efficiency- and delivery-oriented principles of New Public Management, there is now a greater opportunity for change and innovation in public administration that can significantly aid combating socio-economic disparities, as long as administrators actually successfully use this opportunity.

Thus, Balasubramanian and Kakani have analyzed factors that determine bureaucrat's ability to innovate, specifically having chosen to focus on personal, as well as environmental, antecedents. To this end, they have conducted a survey of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers and combined its results with additional sources to create a dataset covering 216 respondents. The authors then applied the variant ordinal regression method to the dataset in order to examine the dependence of respondents' capability for innovative thinking on multiple individual and environmental factors. The individual factors considered were: age, gender, educational background, age at the time of joining IAS, tenure as a district magistrate, and whether the respondent has been recruited into IAS directly or promoted from a lower position. Additionally, geographical location of service and the regional India Innovation Index were considered as environmental factors. After confirming their results, they found that, out of the listed factors, the most significant was educational background, with education in the fields of commerce or being associated with greater capability for innovative thinking than law or arts education. The age of the respondents had a negative impact (i.e., younger candidates were more innovative), whereas most other factors are more-or-less insignificant or only had a marginal impact, including, interestingly enough, geography of service, despite India's size and complexity. The authors concluded that, in order to improve bureaucrats' capability for innovation (and thus, for reform design and implementation), it was recommended to seek out potential innovators among younger candidates, to institute training courses and strengthen mentorship programs focused on innovation, and also to incentivize innovation within performance measurement and reward mechanisms.

X. Li (Tongji University) studied the recent poverty alleviation efforts undertaken by the Chinese government and ruling party in the context of reforms made within the last several years. In the research "Impoverished households and distribution of government subsidies in rural China: Evidence from CFPS dataset" he examined the exact effect of the Chinese poverty alleviation policy implemented in the last several years. Since 2015, this policy was subjected to sweeping changes, transitioning to a targeted poverty alleviation approach, which combines an application of external intervention with process coverage into a state and party policy initiative to improve citizens' personal income through state power and cadre mobilization. In addition to this, there have been profound changes in the identification system, which became able to analyze multiple non-income criteria on household and various administrative levels and was thus able to point out numerous poor areas that have not been designated as such before; the scale of funding, which in the 2015–2020 period has been larger than in the thirty preceding years; and cadre mobilization, with responsible teams undergoing significant structural adjustments. To determine whether these efforts have achieved their initial intention and, if not, what may be the reasons for that, Li has applied multiple quantitative and qualitative methods to China Family Panel Study data over the 2010–2018 period, supplemented by a series of field investigations. He used a household-level recipient perspective and, unlike many scholars, focused on the problem of poverty exclusion rather than analyzing whether impoverished households were receiving appropriate benefits. His analysis has revealed that even though the number of Chinese households with income below the absolute poverty line has indeed declined sharply in recent years, by all other measures, such as relative and weakly relative poverty lines, a significant number of impoverished households remain; furthermore, the overall degree of income inequality has grown.

He also found that over 35% of affected households did not receive subsidies to which they were entitled. Further examination, based on various statistical methods, showed that impoverished households had less access to government subsidies, measured by almost all criteria, especially in the case of income-based poverty. Based on additional qualitative research, Li highlighted the primary factors that appear to have caused this, namely elite capture (at the local cadre level) and flexible execution (at the resident cadre level), with the main reason being policy intensity.

Finally at this session **A. Gupta** (Government of West Bengal) in the presentation titled as "Future-proofing administrative reforms governing sustainable financing and procurement in context to BRICS coupled with CEE region" presented the proposition for developing procurement framework for the BRICS and CEE countries. As the ecological environment continues to become a more serious concern, there is a need to ensure that financing and procurement practices, which Gupta describes as fundamentally interlinked, should be aligned with the principles of sustainable development, as exemplified by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and by the Paris Climate Agreement, among other regulations and initiatives. More specifically, corporate-level environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors, depletion of non-renewable resources, decoupling of usage of these resources from economic growth, and general resource usage optimization have to be considered as the parameters of financing and procurement sustainability. This sustainability can be achieved through administrative reforms, international cooperation and new legislative and regulatory measures that will ensure: a) alignment of financing towards SDGs and better coordination of public and private sector actors on national and international level to connect the supply and demand for financing sustainable development; b) decoupling of usage of non-renewable resources, gradual transition to renewable resources, and optimization of global material usage; c) practical implementation of a paradigm shift in procurement from traditional finance-driven procurement through green procurement towards sustainable procurement that accounts for both economic, environmental and social factors; d) ubiquitous compliance to relevant ISO standards (ISO 14001, 20400 and 26000); e) widespread ecolabeling of products to facilitate environment impact monitoring. For these measures to be achievable Gupta proposed to compile multiple existing initiatives and regulations into a single, unified, actionable framework that incorporates all of the necessary criteria for sustainable financing and procurement.

To accelerate sustainable development, the members of the BRICS and CEE blocs can and should take additional measures and establish a system of international cooperation. By leveraging their similar characteristics and different complementary strengths (including the developed service and automobile sectors in CEE and the great opportunities in the energy, manufacturing and agricultural sectors of the BRICS) to share technologies, resources and asymmetric trade, these countries can ensure sustainable development and build an environmentally friendly yet powerful circular economy.

The report of **A. Svetlicinii** (University of Macau) "Competition law enforcement with "Chinese characteristics"" refers to the reform of the Chinese institutions responsible for the enforcement of the competition law. In China, there are several enforcement authorities responsible for the enforcement of the competition (anti-monopoly) law. That is why there was a need to create a coordination body which would guide and harmonize the enforcement practices of these institutions. This body which coordinates other authorities is the Anti-Monopoly Commission of the State Council. Enforcement authorities are divided into specialized body, which was entrusted with anti-monopoly law enforcement according to the law (Anti-Monopoly Bureau), and bodies, which are not specialized in anti-monopoly regulation, but they have some rules about competition in different sectors (Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, China Securities Regulatory Commission).

The institutional reform of anti-monopoly institutions can be divided into three periods of time.

The first period (2008–2018) began in 2008 when the Antimonopoly Act came into force. During this period, several institutions were responsible for prosecuting price-related and non-price-related anti-competitive practices, as well as merger control. In the second period (2018–2021), a separate antimonopoly institution was created in 2018, merging the functions of all previous authorities (State Administration for Market Regulation). However, this body had some other tasks under other laws related to market regulation and trade. Therefore, in 2021 (the third period), an independent authority, the Anti-Monopoly Bureau, was spun off from the structure of the State Administration for Market Regulation, with only one task: to enforce the Anti-Monopoly Law (AML).

The evolution of the development of anti-monopoly bodies consists not only in the creation of an independent specialized body, in the unification of rules and simplification of the structure of anti-monopoly bodies, but also in the quality of the work of the newly created institution. To confirm this, the author examines statistical data on the number of years of administrative penalties, monopoly agreements, the amount of fines and confiscation, and the number of cases where the companies were prosecuted for not notifying their merger. In conclusion the author emphasizes that we can see that there is a growth in importance of the anti-monopoly law enforcement in China's economic regulation.

The presentation of **S. Sutaryo** (Universitas Sebelas Maret) and **P. G. Amidjaya** (Universiti Malaysia Sarawak) "NPM reforms and government administration performance: A comprehensive study in Indonesian local governments in 2010s decade" was devoted to New Public Management reforms started in Indonesia in 1998, and included the following areas: decentralization through the local autonomy, increasing democracy, public sector accounting reform, increasing supervision (external audit, legislative oversight, and internal audit), improving public accountability.

The 2010s decade marks the second decade of NPM reforms in Indonesia. The authors evaluated how the NPM has translated into public accountability, especially in local governments, because there are still numerous cases of public dissatisfaction over local government documented by the Ombudsman. Also, there is a limited number of studies that examine this comprehensively throughout the decade. The focal research question of the presentation was: how NPM reforms (external audit, legislative oversight, and internal audit) affect local government performance in Indonesia.

To investigate the issue, the authors turned to Agency Theory. As the principal acts public, agent is a local government, which is supervised by the external audit, legislative board, and internal audit. Using quantitative analysis (descriptive statistics, panel data regression) of secondary data from authorized government institutions, the researchers studied how independent variables (external audit, legislative supervision, internal audit) have an impact on a dependent variable (local government administration performance). Control variables in this research model are local development, local government complexity, local government wealth, local government expenditure, local population.

As a result of the study, the authors made the following main conclusions:

– local government performance in Indonesia has reached considerably good accomplishments;
– new public management reforms in Indonesia have contributed to the performance improvement in Indonesian local governments;
– the supervision activities from the internal audit, legislative supervision and external audit are crucial for maintaining local government accountability, proven by positive effect;
– there are still local governments with medium and low performance that should be given attention by the Central government;
– there should be no more regional disparity in local government performance.

Session 5 was devoted to digitalization and provision of public services. The session started from the presentation of **O. Danar** “Strengthening the administrative reform and bureaucratic control through digitalization”. The author stressed that the pandemic accelerated the digitalization of services in Indonesia. The newest mechanism to control the administrative and bureaucratic performance called SAKIP (Sistem Akuntabilitas Kinerja Instansi Pemerintah) refers to the “accountability system for public sector performance”. SAKIP consists of six components: strategic plan, employees’ agreement, performance measurement, management of performance’s database, performance report, performance review and assessment.

The implementation of E-SAKIP in Indonesia has the effort to strengthen the bureaucratic control and it can be called partly the implementation of administrative reform. Some local governments support the process of E-SAKIP, and some prefer to maintain the status quo.

The implementation of E-SAKIP faced some challenges: human resources which are not yet proficient with digitalization, double data input process, individual rejection (status quo supporters), and communication process. The Covid-19 pandemic that has occurred in Indonesia since 2020 had an impact on the stability of bureaucratic performance as the backbone of policy implementation. There are several areas that are necessary for the stable operation of the bureaucracy in pandemic age. Firstly, the implementation of digital bureaucracy which allows for public services to be more affordable. Secondly, standardization of services, which means that there is no superiority of one group of people over another in the availability of services. The last one is professionalism of the apparatus, which is necessary for the stability of work.

Both traditional SAKIP and E-SAKIP have several benefits and drawbacks. Benefits of E-SAKIP are the following, it allows to promote faster and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation tools, compatible to support agile governance (quicker decision making and policy action), quicker understanding (due to quick access), double verification (manual and digital). Also, there are several disadvantages: it depends on electronic devices, needs more adjustment with current regulations and laws, and needs special access.

The author believes that the digitalization of SAKIP is necessary to support a comprehensive evaluation of the government's accountability through digital monitoring and evaluation. However, it also possibly raises some new challenges. Digitalization the process of government administration is one of the essential parts of administrative reform. In this case , the implementation of E-SAKIP in Indonesia has demonstrated how the government tries to cope with new working conditions during the pandemic. However, in a practical field, the implementation of E-SAKIP can face several challenges, such as a lack of proficient human resources or individual rejection of digitalization.

The author concludes that the assessment process confirms that E-SKIP generates greater benefit rather than conventional SAKIP. Thus, it is important for the government to manage the challenge of aligning the E-SAKIP implementation.

The last presentation of this session "Using tax data for decision-making and policy development" was delivered by **V. Tiutiuriukov and N. Guseva** (HSE university). Taxes have many functions (fiscal, allocation, regulatory), but the authors in their study based on the information function of taxes (collection, accumulation and analysis of information on the economic activity of separate enterprises and economy as a whole). There were raised several research questions. What is the analytical potential of the tax statistics for the assessment of socioeconomic situations and trends? What are the limitations of the tax statistics and information of statistics agencies from the standpoint of such analysis?

Digitalization of tax administration in the BRICS can be considered in several examples. In Russia, there is a system, which collects and analysis of data on tax returns and transactions, keeps electronic VAT invoices, tax risk assessment, and estimation of the tax gap. Also, there are online cash registers (it using "fiscal data operators", provide real-time information on retail operations, making visible the location of the transaction, the goods or services sold, their price, and certain other indicators), *Chat-bot Taxik* (reported to answer 300,000 most popular questions on tax administration), personal account of a taxpayer, e-signature, online filing of tax returns.

The Federal Tax Service of Russia has published a variety of different statistics, such as the reports on the state registration of legal entities and individuals, the reports on the accrual and remittance of taxes, duties and other obligatory payments, reports on the tax base and on the structure of tax accrual of various taxes since 2006, the information on state control and licensing.

In India, digitalization of tax administration consists of e-returns, e-registration, e-waybills, e-invoicing, Goods and Service Tax Network (GSTN) (B2B e-invoicing, B2C QR code requirements, GST annual returns, GST assessments, GST departmental audits), e-verification: return filing, requests, responses, etc.

In turn, in China we can observe electronic VAT invoices, VAT calculation and payment, and the action plan "Internet+Taxes" which is a simplified system of online tax reporting and tax payment, currently for individuals.

In South Africa there is e-filing, including Mobi App (processing of tax returns sped up: within 48 hours from submission in 2007 South African Revenue Service handled 1.6%, in 2008 – 34%), a chatbot on the mobile South African Revenue Service app, data-driven Compliance Risk Detection (computer algorithms + human curatorship). Also, the South African Revenue Service is planning to launch a pilot electronic online portal for travelers to make voluntary customs declarations ahead of their arrival or departure to/from South Africa. In addition, the South African Revenue Service plans to employ Artificial Intelligence to detect non-compliance.

Using the tax data in Russia (personal income tax), the authors made several conclusions: the amount of average monthly remuneration under the labor agreement increased by 15.9% (half of the accumulated inflation), the amount of average accrued work-related bonus increased by 31.2%, the directors' fees amounted to 0.1% of total remuneration, but per recipient, they were from 2.9 to 4.6 times of employee's remuneration.

There are some advantages and disadvantages of using tax data. Benefits are raw data, received directly from the taxpayers, detailed breakdown by the categories of taxpayers, their income and property, and data on tax benefits (tax expenditure). On the other hand, there are no data on exempt income and property, tax classification instead of statistical one.

To conclude the review of the Conference program and presentations, we would like to point out the great theoretical and practical potential of research based on the rich data material and historical and cultural heritage of the BRICS countries, which is very different from the theories and practices based on the most studied cases of the Western world, and – it has many similarities with the countries of other world regions, such as Asia and Eastern Europe.

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