

VISION: Journal of Indian Taxation
Volume 5, Issue 1, January-June 2018, pp. 1-17
doi: 10.17492/vision.v5i1.13215

A Comparative Study of Tax Structures of BRICS Countries

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ABSTRACT

Government of a country imposes various types of tax structures to collect revenue from public. Economic environment of a country is also affected by tax structure of a nation. Present study is an attempt to understand the tax structure of BRICS countries which include Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The comparison is made among the performance of businesses of BRICS countries on the basis of various tax related parameters such as tax revenue - GDP ratio, number of tax payments, time taken in tax compliance, profit tax paid by businesses in their countries, labour tax and contributions paid by businesses in their respective countries, other taxes paid by businesses to government, total tax rate imposed by countries on businesses etc. In this study it is found that India stands far behind other BRICS nations in most of these parameters. The study recommends further reforms in Indian tax structure so as to remain competitive with other BRICS members.

Keywords: BRICS; Tax structure; Compliance; Goods and Services Tax (GST).

1.0 Introduction

BRICS is the group of five emerging economies viz. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa which was formed in September 2006. This group was originally called "BRIC" before the joining of South Africa in the year of 2010. All the countries of BRICS are developing or newly industrialized. BRICS economies are very large and growing faster than the rest of the world countries in terms of average growth. Tax is the financial liability imposed upon a taxpayer by the Government of that country. By collecting tax revenue government tries to meet the various public needs and create infrastructure for further growth of the economy.

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Tax structure of a country is the set of various rules and laws formed by the Government of that nation. The main objective of raising tax revenue from businesses and individuals is the welfare and development of the society of that country. Maintaining the economic equality in the country is the secondary objective of imposing tax. Economic and social growth of a nation mainly depends on the kind of tax policies it adopts. The higher tax rates and complex tax system of a country curbs its growth. At the same time, the complex Tax Structure of a country also leads to tax evasion and establish the parallel economy in the country. Complex Tax structure forms an unfavourable business environment in the country. On the other hand, wherever nations have simplified tax structure, it has resulted in providing favourable business environment for doing business in the country.

Indian tax structure was very complex especially before implementation of goods and Service Tax (GST) that comprise of large number of taxes, complex tax system and inefficient tax administration. According to the white paper presented by the central government in India on black money in 2012, government of India accepted the presence of parallel economy in the country. According to the estimates, the size of this parallel economy is almost equal to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country. In the present study, Indian Tax Structure is compared with other BRICS countries to analyse the strengths and gaps in Indian tax structure and thereby recommend to strengthen the present tax structure in India.

2.0 Literature Review

Salm (2018) in his paper on "Comparative financing of megacities in multi-level BRICS states" concluded that megacities have a high average tax base, and satisfactory tax administration. The objective of this paper is to address the key issues of megacities of BRICS states. These issues are increasing public expenditures, shortage of houses, issue of social inequality and degradation of environment.

Jalan and Vaidyanathan (2017) in their paper on tax havens concluded that tax erosion and profit shifting of profit is a pervasive phenomenon, due to the suppliers of tax. Objective of this paper is to demystify tax havens – what they mean, what they offer and why they are harmful. This paper explains diagrammatically the use of tax havens by MNCs right from the time of their incorporation.

Mulligan and Oats (2016) in their paper "Tax and performance measurement: An inside story" concluded that post-tax basis of measuring performance of business units might only serve to increase tax risks, preferring instead for the in-house tax executives to remain the exclusive tax knowledge experts. The paper has covered a series

of in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in 2006 with 26 senior tax executives from 15 Silicon Valley-based companies.

Gemmell and Hasseldine (2012) in their paper on tax gap observe that the tax gap, as conventionally defined, is conceptually flawed because it fails to capture behavioural responses by taxpayers adequately. The objective of this paper is the first to comprehensively review recent research on the tax gap. The second contribution of the study is to review methods for measuring the tax gap and compare empirical estimates.

Kravchenko et al. (2015) in the paper titled “A comparative study of regional innovative entrepreneurship in Russia and the United States” observed that American and Russian firms are facing different challenges. Lack of legal framework for innovation and deficiency skill workforce is important issue in Russia. The objective of this paper is to conduct comparative research of small innovative entrepreneurship under different types of institutional environment in Russia and the USA.

CBGA-India (2015) in its working paper on International Comparison of Tax Regimes concluded that the progressivity of the tax structure in India is far below the international levels. It also concluded that India needs to increase its tax revenue -GDP ratio for its adequate resource mobilization. It indicates the inefficiency of Indian bureaucracy.

3.0 Need of the study

The present Indian tax structure is very complex which has affected industrial growth rate of country. This study is an attempt to know the strength and weaknesses of Indian tax structure in comparison with other BRICS countries. The scope of the study is looking into the following aspects to understand the loopholes in Indian tax system. Indian tax structure compared with other BRICS countries with the parameters of tax revenue - GDP ratio, number of tax payments, time taken in tax compliances, profit tax and total tax rate is paid by businesses. The findings of the study will recommend further need of reforms in present Indian tax structure.

4.0 Objectives

The very objective of this study is to compare the tax structure and tax policies prevailing in the BRICS countries and to assess the present status in the context of India. The following are the sub objectives.

- (i) To understand tax Structure among BRICS member countries.

- (ii) To compare tax structure of BRICS countries on the basis of key indicators like Tax Revenue-GDP ratio, number of Tax Payments, Time to prepare for tax statements and reporting, profit tax, labour tax, other taxes and Total Tax Rate in percentage terms etc.

5.0 Research Methodology

This is a descriptive research study based on secondary data obtained through authenticated secondary sources. The current study is based on secondary data collected from various journals, newspapers, published articles and website of World Bank. The Sample size for this study have been taken as all five countries of BRICS - Brazil, Russia, India, china and South Africa, All the member countries of BRICS are following democratic rule excluding China. Since the overall economic conditions and environment features of BRICS members are almost similar and therefore their tax structure is comparable. In the present study an attempt has been made to compare these countries on the basis of some selected parameters as indicated by the World Bank. For undertaking the analysis, comparative tables have been formed for all BRICS countries and based on the availability of data diagrams are drawn to help to understand the performance of BRICS countries easily with respect to the key parameters of World Bank.

6.0 Tax Structures of BRICS Countries: An Overview

The following is the brief analysis of basic tax structures that is followed and implemented by BRICS countries.

6.1 Brazil

On analysing the tax structure of Brazil, it is observed that it follows a very complex tax structure. In Brazil there are more than sixty forms of tax slabs, types and structure. Before 1988, government of Brazil was imposing lower tax rates and tax evasion and tax avoidance practices were very common in the country. In 1988 government of Brazil made some reforms in tax structure and increased the tax rates to enhance the budgetary resources through increased tax revenue of the country. However, after implementation of the revised structure in 1988, the Brazil government has taken series of measures to make the tax revenue collection system more efficient and effective. Tax revenue of the country gradually increased from 13.8% of GDP in 1947 to 37.4% in 2005 and it is almost hovering around this even as of 2017. Tax revenue of

Brazil has increased more than international standards. More than 50 percent of total tax revenue is in the regressive form of taxes on consumption.

6.2 Russia

Russian government imposed a Tax Code to collect tax revenue from taxpayers of the country. This tax code is implemented in three stages. The first part of the Russian tax code enacted on 31 July 1998, it is referred to as the General Part which regulates relationships among legislators, tax-collecting authorities, tax agents, taxpayers and, tax audit procedures and enforcement of law. The second part of tax code, enacted on 5th August, 2001, this part specifies the tax rates, schedules of payment and tax calculations methods. The tax Code of Russia is subject to regular amendments which will be made through federal laws of the nation. The tax Code of Russia is designed and implemented in a manner which will cover local, regional and national system for federal. This tax code will not include customs tariffs. Rules and laws of tax rates designed by local and regional taxation authorities will not violate the tax code designed by central government. All the levies or taxes which are not listed of in the tax code are treated void and illegal taxes. The tax code of Russian system tends to use regressive or moderate flat tax rates. It is mainly depends on raising tax revenues from oil and natural gas companies. This tax code system of country highly centralized.

6.3 India

India has designed and implemented a three tier tax system before implementation of GST. In India, taxes were imposed by local governments (Municipal corporations), state governments and central government. Indian constitution has given the authority to all three governments of country to impose a tax. In the constitution of the country there is clear separation of rights to impose the different taxes by local, state and centre governments. Article 265 of Indian Constitution declares that “No Tax should be levied without the authority of Law”. Therefore, each type of tax imposed in the country is supported by its respective laws passed by either state or central government in their respective houses. In India, there are two types of taxes - Direct Taxes and Indirect Taxes. During the year 2016-17, the proportion of direct taxes was below 50 percent of the total tax revenue at 49.6 per cent. In the present tax structure, Indian taxation system and policies have brought in revolutionary changes and supporting its businesses to expand into international market through competitive costs and prices. For this India has implemented a new taxation system called GST.

Broadly, the Indian taxation system can be classified into three groups:

(i) Progressive taxation system

(ii) Regressive taxation system

(iii) Proportional taxation system

Under the Progressive taxation system, the tax rate will increase with the increase in income of public, thus if an individual has higher income, he will pay higher tax due to increased tax rate than individual who is having lower income.

On the other hand, under the regressive taxation system, the tax rate decreases with increase in the income of public and thus an individual who is having lower income will pay low tax on his income.

Under the Proportion taxation system, the tax rates are imposed on a fixed tax rate irrespective of income on which tax is to be charged. Thus, the equal tax rate is applicable to different individuals having different taxable incomes. At present both, the progressive and proportional taxing systems are followed in India. According to Indian taxation laws, slab wise tax liability arises for income tax and while proportional tax is imposed for other taxes, for example: wealth tax service tax, VAT, customs duty and excise duty, etc.

6.4 China

China is the only Communist Country among all the five members of BRICS. Communist government of China follows the principles of communism to design and implement various types of taxes in the country. In china tax revenue collection is one of the key elements of the macroeconomic policies of the country and it also has a high impact on social and economic conditions of the nation. China has made various reforms from in 1994, now the country china has designed a well-developed taxation collection system. At present communist government of china imposing twenty six types of taxes in china which according to their nature can be divided into the 8 categories viz., Custom duties, Agricultural taxes, Behavioral Taxes, Property taxes, Taxes for Special Purpose Resource Taxes, Income Taxes and Turnover Taxes.

6.5 South Africa

The Government of South Africa has imposed taxes in the country at two levels i.e. local government and central government. In South Africa the collection of tax revenues is done by South African revenue services (SARS) on behalf of state governments. Corporate Tax, Income tax, fuel duty and VATs are collected by the central government of South Africa. Funds from central government and municipal rates are collected by local government.

7.0 Taxing System in India (Before Implementation of GST)

In India, proportional and progressive tax systems are followed. According to income tax act of India slab wise tax is imposed on incomes and proportional tax is applicable on other taxes, like customs duty, excise duty, VAT, service tax, wealth tax etc. In India two types of taxes are imposed under. (i) Direct tax (Income tax, wealth tax) (ii) Indirect tax

Income tax: According to Indian income tax act both proportional tax (flat rate) and progressive tax (slab rate) applies. Income tax is calculated on total income. Proportional tax applicable on the income of companies and progressive tax is applicable on the income of individuals.

Wealth tax: Wealth tax is imposed at one percent on the net wealth of individual, Hindu undivided family (HUF) and for company if its net wealth is more than INR.3 million as on the date of valuation. Net wealth is defined as the difference between value of assets and liabilities.

Excise duty: Excise duty is that tax which is charged on production or manufacturing of goods which are chargeable under excise duty.

Customs duty: Customs duty is that indirect tax which is imposed on goods imported or exported from India at the rates specified in Customs tariff act.

Service tax: Service tax is that tax which is charged on services. Service tax is a consumption based destination tax.

Sales tax: Sales Tax is that tax which is charged on selling price of the goods and not on value addition. Cascading effect is the main problem of sales tax.

Value added tax (VAT): VAT is that type of indirect tax which is charged on sale of goods within the state. VAT is the replacement of sales tax. Under this tax system tax is imposed on the value added at every level of production or distribution of goods. It is a multi stage tax system which was introduced to avoid cascading effect of sales tax.

Goods and services tax (GST): GST that has been implemented recently is supposed to be the major indirect tax reform in the Indian tax structure system. GST was

implemented in India on 1 July 2017. It is a single tax imposed on the supply of both goods and services. GST is a destination based tax. Indirect Taxes such as Excise duty, Service Tax, Value added Tax, Octroi and Entry Tax etc have been subsumed in GST. The process of introducing GST is the significant tax reform in India after independence. GST is an indirect tax imposed on manufacturing, sales and consumption of goods and services. GST has replaced all indirect taxes imposed on goods and services by centre and states. Petroleum products and alcohol are out of purview of GST.

Components of GST: The components of GST are as follows:

- SGST – State Goods and services.
- CGST – Central Goods and services Tax.
- IGST – Integrated Goods and Services Tax.
- UTGST – Union territory Goods and Services Tax

8.0 Comparison among BRICS Nations on the Basis of Key Indicators

8.1 Tax revenue to GDP ratio

Tax revenue is the amount imposed by the central government on taxpayers of the country for the purpose of social and economic welfare of public. Some of the compulsory transfers like penalties, fines, and social security contributions are not included in tax revenue collections. Refunds of tax and rectifications of erroneously collected tax revenue are known as negative revenue.

Table 1: Tax Revenue to GDP Ratio for the Year 2017

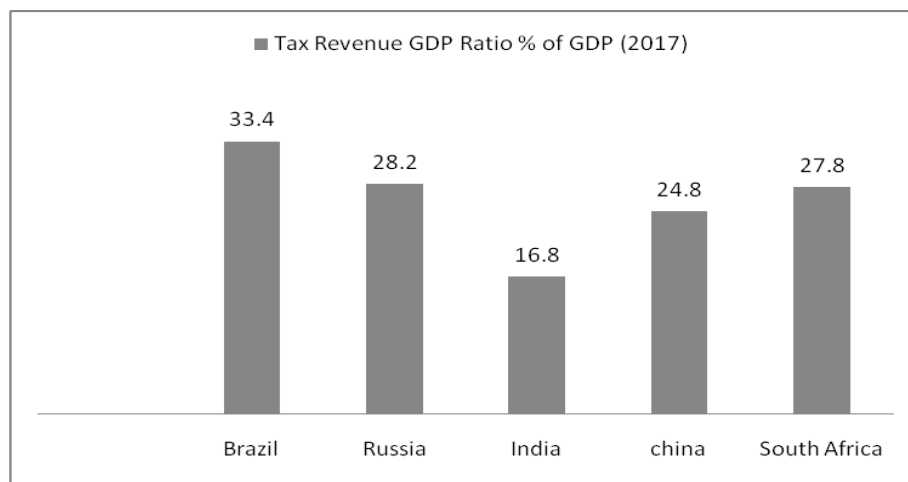
Country	Percentage of GDP (%)
Brazil	33.4
Russia	28.2
India	16.8
China	24.8
South Africa	27.8

Source: OECD (2017)

Tax revenue - GDP ratio is computed by dividing the tax revenue raised by the central Government from the GDP of that nation. It is the method used to evaluate a country's development. Higher GDP of a country is an indicator of higher tax revenue collection. From Table 1, it is clear that India is having tax revenue to GDP ratio 16.8 % which is lowest amongst the all BRICS countries. Brazil's tax GDP ratio is 33.4% which is highest amongst BRICS countries. India's tax GDP ratio is also far behind China

(Figure 1). The reasons behind the low tax revenue to GDP ratio in India are evasion of tax, exemptions and relaxations provided on various types of incomes and low per capita income of country. It is observed that the tax revenue -to-GDP ratio is lowest in India. Therefore it can be said that it becomes difficult to meet required social and economic development needs of a country due to budgetary constraints.

Figure 1: Tax Revenue-GDP Ratio (2017)



Source: OECD (2017)

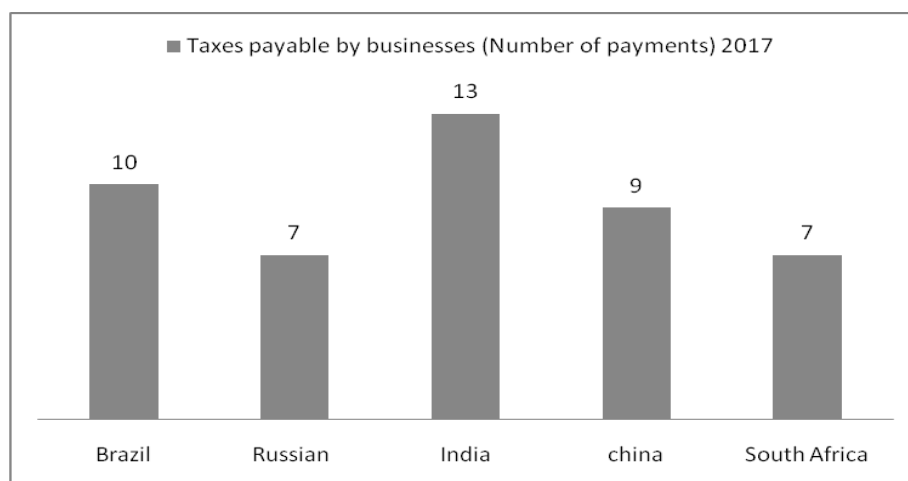
8.2 Number of tax payments

Number of tax payments means the total number of taxes paid by businesses of a country, it also includes electronic filing. The tax is counted as paid once a year even if payments are more frequent. In the analysis it is observed that India lags behind in terms of number of taxes paid by the businesses when compared with other members of the BRICS (Table 2).

Table 2: Taxes Payable by Businesses (Number of Payments)

Country	2017
Brazil	10
Russian	7
India	13
China	9
South Africa	7

Source: World Bank indicators (2017)

Figure 2: Taxes payable by business (2017)

Source: World Bank indicators (2017)

In case of India, there are 13 numbers of taxes payable by businesses which is the highest number of taxes payments amongst all BRICS countries (Figure 2). On the contrary, all other BRICS countries are quite ahead with relatively very lesser number of tax payments. Russia and South Africa are the least in terms of number of payments of taxes being paid by businesses in BRICS countries. In India this is on account of excessive number of taxes and multiplicity of taxes, the number is larger. India needs to cut down on certain number of taxes or club them. Due to complexity and multiplicity of taxes, India has implemented one nation one tax i.e. GST. GST has replaced most of the indirect taxes. Under the GST system of taxation, the number of payments has been reduced to a certain extent. Besides, the time required in complying with the tax payment formalities has also been reduced.

8.3 Time taken to tax compliances (in hours)

Time taken to tax compliance is the no of hours spent in a year by the businesses to prepare files and other formalities to pay taxes to the government. Total hours spent by the businesses for completing the tax payment processes in India is very high (214 hours) as compared to other BRICS members (Table 3 and Figure 3). The Indian business houses have been spending lesser hours in tax compliances next to Brazil only. Again in this indicator, India is higher than China. India needs to simplify its tax structure to reduce its tax compliance time. With the implementation of new tax

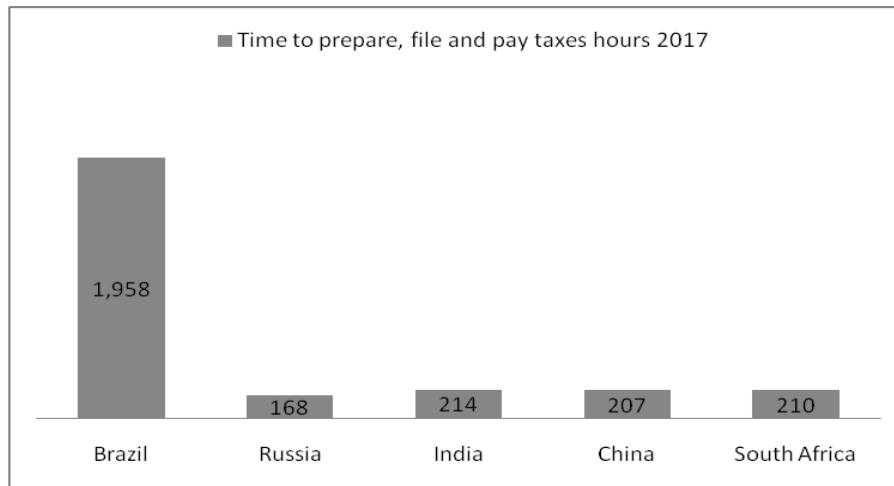
structure, the GST, and modified compliance structure, it may be possible that time consumed in tax compliances for the businesses in India will come down further.

Table 3: Time Taken to Prepare Files and Pay Taxes (In Hours)

Country	2017
Brazil	1,958
Russia	168
India	214
China	207
South Africa	210

Source: World Bank indicators (2017)

Figure 3: Time to Prepare, File and Pay Taxes (2017)



Source: World Bank indicators (2017)

8.4 Profit tax paid by businesses (% of commercial profits)

Profit tax is that percentage of tax which is paid by businesses out of their commercial profit. In case of India, businesses are paying 23.5 per cent profit tax which is higher than three BRICS nations and lesser than one country i.e. Brazil. High percentage of profit tax reduces the opportunities of expansion and reinvestment of business (Table 4 and Figure 4). In China and Russia profit tax is very low as compared to other BRICS nations. It is expected that in India GST will help to reduce the profit tax

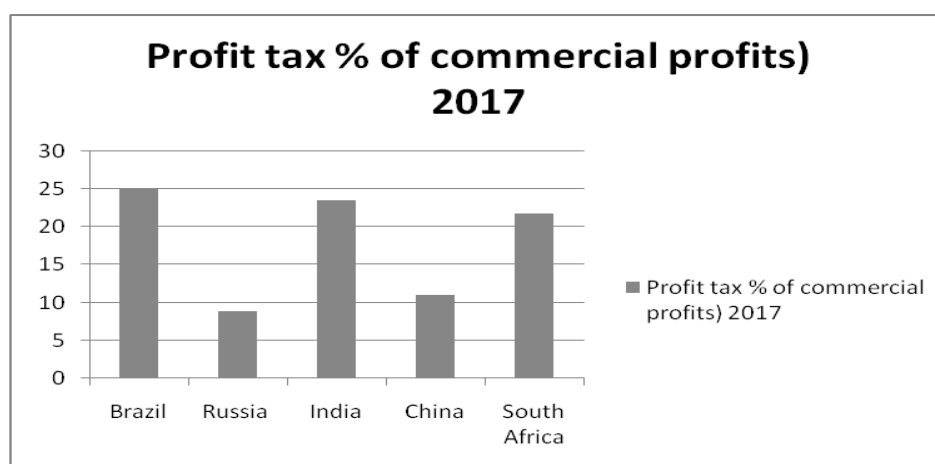
payable by businesses in the phased manner and it will also result in increased number of tax payers.

Table 4: Profit Tax (% of Commercial Profits)

Country	2017
Brazil	24.9
Russia	8.8
India	23.5
China	11
South Africa	21.7

Source: World Bank indicators (2017)

Figure 4: Profit tax (% of Commercial Profits)



Source: World Bank indicators (2017)

8.5 Labour tax and contributions paid by businesses (% of commercial profits)

Labour tax and contributions are those mandatory amounts which are paid by the businesses to government for the welfare of labour.

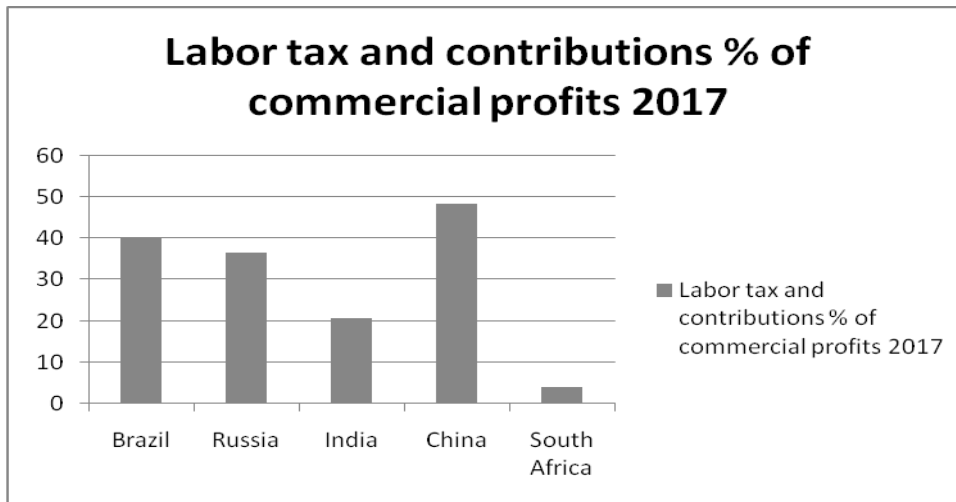
Table 5: Labour Tax and Contributions % of Commercial Profits

Country	2017
Brazil	40.2
Russia	36.3
India	20.5
China	48.1
South Africa	4

Source: World Bank indicators (2017)

In India, businesses are paying 20.5% labour tax and contribution of commercial profits is lower than three BRICS nations. Only in case of South Africa, businesses have been paying lesser labour tax and contributions as compared to India (Table 5 and Figure 5).

Figure 5: Labour tax and Contributions (% of Commercial Profits)



Source: World Bank indicators (2017)

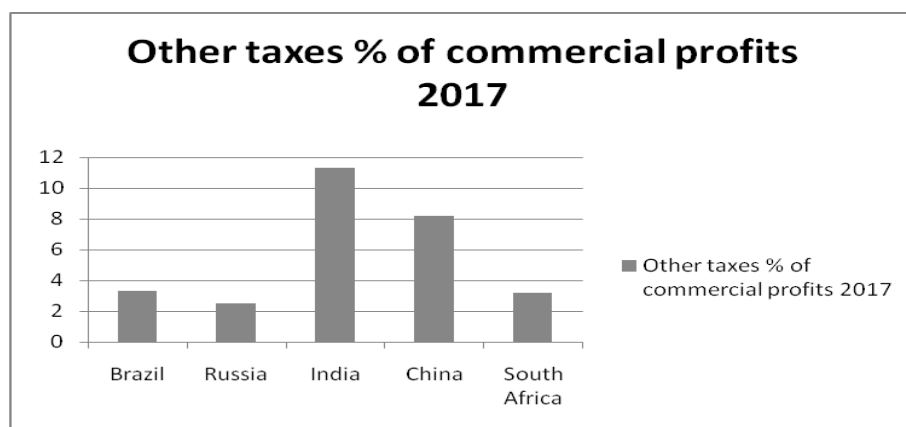
8.6 Other taxes paid by businesses (% of commercial profits)

In this study, the other taxes paid by the businesses have also been considered for the analysis purpose. The other taxes which are payable by businesses mainly consists of - turnover taxes, property taxes and also certain other small taxes such as municipality fee and vehicle and fuel taxes etc. The following are the data available for this analysis (Table 6).

Table 6: Other Taxes % of Commercial Profits

Country	2017
Brazil	3.3
Russia	2.5
India	11.3
China	8.2
South Africa	3.2

Source: World Bank indicators (2017)

Figure 6: Other Taxes as % of commercial profits (2017)

Source: World Bank indicators (2017)

In case of India, businesses are imposed other taxes to the extent of 11.3% which is highest among all other BRICS nation (Figure 6). In Russia, the extent of similar taxes is just 2.5 % which is the lowest businesses pay in Russia as compared to other BRICS nations. It is obvious that lower percentage of other taxes imposed by the government encourages and motivates the businesses. There is a case for India to reduce other taxes percentage as levied to businesses. The provisions of new tax structure of GST will help to reduce the levy of other taxes on businesses.

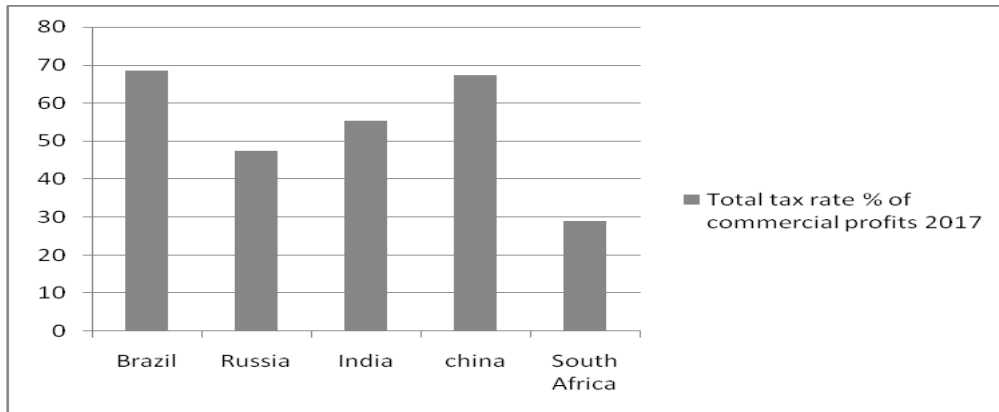
8.7 Total tax rate paid by businesses (% of commercial profits)

Total tax rates paid by businesses are the amount of taxes and mandatory contributions payable by businesses after accounting for allowable deductions and exemptions as a share of commercial profits. Taxes withheld (like personal income tax) or collected and remitted to government (like - VAT, sales tax) are not included.

Table 7: Total Tax Rate Paid by Businesses % of Commercial Profits

Country	2017
Brazil	68.4
Russia	47.5
India	55.3
china	67.3
South Africa	28.9

Source: World Bank indicators (2017)

Figure 7: Total Tax rate as % of Commercial Profits

Source: World Bank indicators (2017)

India falls under third rank in the category of total tax rate. However, Brazil and China exceed India's total tax rate amongst BRICS nations (Table 7 and Figure 7). In spite of quite high total tax rate, tax revenue to GDP Ratio of India is lowest amongst the BRICS nations. Therefore, the key indicators used above for the assessing the tax structure of BRICS nations raise concerns over the Indian Taxation Policies and Administration which calls for tax administration and management. However, there is positive sign of GST which may bring required improvements in the Indian tax structure, system and administration.

9.0 Conclusion

Tax revenue to GDP ratio is computed by dividing the tax revenue raised by the central Government from the GDP of that nation. It is the method used to evaluate a country's economic and social development. Higher GDP of a country is an indicator of higher tax revenue collection. From the analysis in the study, it is clear that India is having tax revenue to GDP ratio 16.8 % which is lowest amongst the all BRICS countries. Brazil's tax to GDP ratio is 33.4% which is highest amongst BRICS countries. India's tax GDP ratio is also far behind from China. The reasons for lower tax revenue in case of India despite higher tax structure may be on account of evasion of tax, exemptions and relaxations provided on various types of incomes and low per capita income of country. India lags far behind when compared against number of taxes paid by business. India is having 13 taxes payable by businesses, which is the highest number of taxes payments amongst all BRICS countries. All other BRICS countries are quite ahead

with relatively very lesser number of tax payments. Russia and South Africa businesses have been paying least number of taxes in BRICS countries. In India this is due to the excessive number of taxes and multiplicity of taxes. India needs to cut down on certain number of taxes or club them. Due to complexity and multiplicity of taxes, India has implemented one nation one tax i.e. GST. GST has replaced most of the indirect taxes. GST has reduced the number of payments of taxes and also reduced time required to complete tax payment formalities. Total hours spent by the businesses to pay tax in India is very high (214 hrs) as compared to other BRICS members. India is spending less hours in tax compliances from Brazil only. Again in this indicator India is higher than China. India needs to simplify its tax structure to reduce its tax compliance time for this India has launched GST. GST will reduce the time taken in tax compliances.

In India businesses are paying 23.5 % profit tax which is higher than three BRICS nations and less than one country i.e. Brazil. High percentage of profit tax reduces the opportunities of expansion and reinvestment of business. In China and Russia profit tax is very low as compared to other BRICS nations. In India Businesses are levied 20.5 % labour tax and contribution of commercial Profits is very lower than three BRICS nations. Only South Africa is paying less labour tax and contributions than India. In India businesses other taxes are at 11.3% which is highest among all other BRICS nations. In Russia only 2.5 % other taxes are paid by businesses which is lowest among other BRICS nations. Lower percentage of other taxes encourages the businesses. India needs to reduce other taxes percentage paid by businesses. GST will help to reduce to pay other taxes. India is having third rank in total tax rate. Brazil and china exceed India's total tax rate amongst BRICS nation. In spite of quite high total tax rate, Tax revenue to GDP Ratio of India is lowest amongst the BRICS nations.

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