

Understanding CBDCs As a Catalyst for Transformation: Balancing Benefits, Risks, and Global Monetary Shifts in the Digital Era

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Abstract- *A significant number of Central Banks globally are preparing to implement Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) as legal money in their respective nations. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has disclosed analogous intentions, anticipating the introduction of an Indian CBDC in the imminent future. An assessment of such a significant transformation in the essence of currency necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the potential and constraints associated with the implementation of CBDCs. "This study addresses these difficulties conceptually, with a specific focus on the Indian context." We demonstrate that the conceptual challenges can be categorized into three dimensions: monetary sovereignty concerns, national sovereignty issues, and developmental challenges. This study examines the potential effects of implementing a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) in the Indian economy, analyzing its advantages and associated risks. Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) have attracted global interest as a remedy for the shortcomings of privately-operated electronic financial systems.*

Keywords: Digital, Monetary, Challenges, Money, Innovation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital innovation has wrought far-reaching changes in all sectors of the economy. In conjunction with a wider trend of increased digitalization, a surge of innovation in consumer payments has positioned monetary transactions and payment services at the forefront of this evolution. A crucial by-product of the digital economy is the substantial amount of personal data collected and processed for corporate operations. This presents concerns with data governance, consumer protection, and anti-competitive practices stemming from data silos.

This study analyzes the role of central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) in fostering an open, secure, and competitive monetary system that promotes innovation and benefits the public interest. Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) are a type of digital currency, expressed in the national unit of account, and constitute a direct obligation of the central bank. Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) can be structured for utilization only among financial intermediaries (i.e., wholesale CBDCs) or for the broader economy (i.e., retail CBDCs).

The document delineates the distinctive characteristics of CBDCs, inquiring into the implications of their issue for users, financial intermediaries, central banks, and the global monetary system. It outlines the design decisions and their corresponding ramifications for data governance and privacy inside the digital economy. The chapter delineates the comparison between CBDCs and the most recent generation of retail quick payment systems.

II. CONTEXT OF CENTRAL BANK DIGITAL CURRENCIES (CBDCS)

The Global Financial Crisis did much to change the financial landscape and inherently people's trust in the banking system. The emergence of bitcoin is a predictable phenomenon, originating in 2009 when an individual or group using the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto established its theoretical foundation in Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System. Cryptocurrency provides an alternate means of keeping funds and executing transactions outside of conventional banking systems and governmental regulations. The initial issuance of Bitcoin has

generated significant interest in cryptocurrencies, evidenced by the subsequent increase in their value. The celebrated account of a programmer in May 2010 who acquired two giant Papa John's pizzas for 10,000 bitcoins, valued at approximately \$30 at the time, but whose potential worth escalated to \$82 million eight years later.

A continuous influx of new cryptocurrencies presenting enhanced solutions is entering the market. As of February 4, 2019, there were 2,520 cryptocurrencies with a total market capitalization of \$113 billion. This is remarkable since it began with only one cryptocurrency, Bitcoin, ten years ago. Cryptocurrencies, in their present state, are flawed; yet, they could significantly enhance global economic involvement and safeguard against governmental overreach. The World Bank estimates that globally, 2 billion individuals lack bank accounts, with one-third of this population residing in Sub-Saharan Africa. Due

to their minimal adoption costs and internet accessibility without requiring a physical bank, cryptocurrencies present a simple and secure alternative. A significant portion of the unbanked lacks clear identifying information, complicating the enforcement of conventional banking Know Your Customer and Anti-Money Laundering protocols. With a smartphone and internet access, individuals can utilize cryptocurrencies for monetary transactions, which typically incur substantially cheaper fees than conventional methods. The transfer is rapid and secure, with minimal impediments to entrance. It also offers an alternative remedy in nations experiencing hyperinflation. Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) possess the capacity to enhance the payments and financial system by introducing a novel form of digital currency characterized by the following attributes (Figure 1):



Figure 1. Features of CBDCs

In the week concluding on 2 February 2019, Venezuela conducted transactions amounting to 17.1 billion bolivars for bitcoin, in fiat currency terms. This represented the highest recorded transaction amount for Venezuela. The nation's currency, the bolivar, endures severe hyperinflation, and government-imposed capital controls have restricted individuals' access to international currencies. This pattern has been replicated in Argentina, exemplifying a significant case study of Bitcoin's potential beneficial effects for residents confronting devaluation of their fiat currency. Bitcoin serves as a store of value and a method for transferring funds, which may then be converted into alternative fiat currencies like USD,

allowing individuals to evade repressive governmental authorities. The volume of trading the Bolivar and Peso for Bitcoin has surged significantly.

Cryptocurrencies are undermining the foundational elements of the financial system, presenting central banks with the challenge of individuals possessing the capability to hold, spend, and transfer value independently of fiat money. This poses a significant challenge to the conventional function of central banks in monetary policy, so it is unsurprising that there is increasing momentum among developed banks to examine and comprehend the potential implications of implementing a central bank digital currency (CBDC).

Definition and Characteristics of CBDCs

This section examines the definition and attributes of Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs). Arthur presented a nine-dimensional framework for central banks to express their anticipations on the evolution of a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC). Each dimension can be expressed by one or two binary inquiries. A concise introduction to CBDCs and a comprehensive analysis of the dimensions are presented for clarity. These can serve as a decision tree framework for delineating expectations. The initial four dimensions pertain to system characteristics influencing the central bank aspect of the monetary system, whereas the subsequent five factors mostly impact the private entities utilizing Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC). The dimensions must be evaluated collectively, as each choice within a dimension influences the subsequent possibilities. Each of the nine dimensions includes a question, along by a brief commentary elucidating the ramifications of the selected response to that question. The dimension

analysis highlights the aspects of managed anonymity and institutional integration that require further elaboration. They conducted a subjective evaluation and comparative examination of the various design possibilities. They intend to provide central banks with an initial perspective and a systematic, structured framework for their examination, while acknowledging that the grid remains incomplete. They identified essential criteria influencing the monetary system that a blockchain may support, while also emphasizing the complexities and interconnections among these many levels of investigation. They demonstrated how collaboration among the domains of computer science, economics, and law may enhance the job. This grid serves as an initial unstructured overview of the issue. The gray shaded regions in figure 2 illustrate three distinct forms that CBDC may assume: general-purpose central bank accounts, general-purpose central bank digital tokens, and wholesale-only central bank digital tokens.

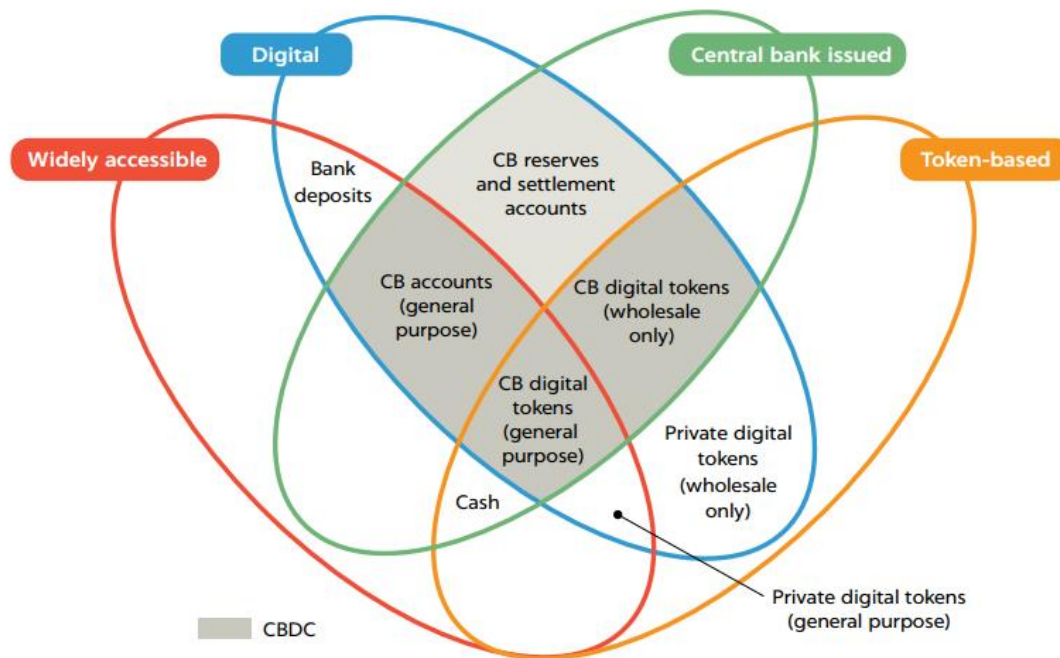


Figure 2: The Money Flower

- The general-purpose, account-based version is the one where the central bank provides accounts to general public.
- The general-purpose central bank digital tokens would primarily target retail payments.

Analysts with knowledge in either sector, seeking to swiftly comprehend the complex consequences of

several design solutions, can effectively discern the overarching aspects of the issue using this tiered dimensional perspective. "It establishes a foundation for a more systematic examination, and although arguments alone created a nine-fold taxonomy, nothing prevents future research from exploring

deeper parameters and broader aspects of inquiry."

Types of CBDCs

Generally, two categories of CBDCs may be identified: one for retail consumers and another for wholesale operations. In the scenario of 'retail' CBDCs, central banks assume the direct function of a bank, but in a wholesale payment system, banks are regarded as intermediaries. The digital currency facilitates interbank payments in a digital format, substituting the value held as central bank reserves or government bonds. Accounts are typically maintained through a funds-based system and electronic money systems. Each bank maintains a singular account with another bank and possesses a solitary banknote to accrue interest. This asset-based approach pertains to the transfer of securities, necessitating verification of information prior to distribution.

A CBDC is a digital representation of a central bank's currency, issued by the central bank and available to the public. It differs from commercial bank money and cryptocurrencies. Countries are motivated to establish CBDCs for numerous reasons. A significant proportion of cashless payments may jeopardize economic stability as banks experience reduced liquidity and central banks relinquish authority over the payment system. Secondly, CBDCs may facilitate financial inclusion by improving access to payment services for the unbanked population. Third, a foreign digital currency may undermine home monetary sovereignty, complicating the management of monetary policy and capital movements. Fourth, current cryptocurrencies face several risks, including energy expenditures, systemic instability due to a run or a "dark hole," and equilibrium selection challenges. Central banks exhibit cautious optimism over the advancement of CBDCs.

III. MAJOR BENEFITS OF CBDCS

The potential for the introduction of a CBDC to affect financial stability risks arises primarily from a significant substitution away from private money. The substitution of central bank currency with CBDC is typically considered to have no impact on financial stability. Despite the fast evolution of the financial system, private banks remain the predominant source of private capital across all jurisdictions. The process of money production is fundamentally linked to the

provision of bank credit, which subsequently underpins a banking system that offers diverse intermediation and payment services. The subsequent analysis concentrates on the ramifications of CBDC replacement for bank deposits and, subsequently, other monetary instruments. In the absence of restrictions on individual holdings, a CBDC, akin to other digital currencies, may result in increased volatility in deposits and/or a substantial, prolonged decline in consumer deposits. This may, in specific situations, influence bank profitability, lending practices, and the comprehensive delivery of financial services. Customer deposit funding is important to the commercial banking operations of maturity transformation and intermediation services. Excluding concerns related to the zero-lower limit, any significant decline in client deposit funding will need that banks evaluate various strategies to uphold regulatory ratios and risk-adjusted profitability. The primary advantages of CBDCs are as follows:

- CBDCs offer a safe store of value: Unlike bank deposits and other liabilities of private financial institutions which are subject to credit and liquidity risk and the possibility of bank failures, CBDC would not carry such risks. As a direct liability of the central bank, CBDCs would be as safe and risk-free as physical cash.
- CBDCs could provide an attractive means of payment: For use in person-to-person, person-to-business, and business-to-business transactions. Additionally, as an electronic means of payment, CBDCs would be on par with fast-payment solutions in overcoming the limitations associated with cash use, such as the need to meet in person and to rely on networks of distribution such as ATMs, which may be particularly difficult in remote locations. Add-on features such as offline payments and programmability, which are being explored, would further enhance CBDCs' attractiveness for payments.
- CBDCs could lower costs: CBDCs could be offered through digital wallets on mobile devices, reducing the costs associated with maintaining physical bank accounts and transaction fees. Issuing and managing cash is expensive,⁴ with costs falling on banks, firms, and households. CBDCs may also reduce the price of cross-border (and potentially domestic) payments by reducing

intermediaries in the normal transaction chain via closer connection or direct access to central bank settlement accounts. Transactions could be settled by directly transferring claims on the central bank's balance sheet. Although introducing and maintaining CBDCs would probably entail substantial fixed costs, marginal operational costs would likely be low.

The extent of CBDC adoption and its economic impact will ultimately hinge on their design. Central banks are evaluating the stated advantages against the potential hazards, notably the possibility of banking disintermediation. Consequently, they are deliberately investigating strategies to ensure that CBDC adoption does not have significant negative impacts on the economy. This paper will concentrate on CBDCs specifically created for this purpose. The majority of countries are contemplating the issuance of a non-remunerated CBDC, which is the central theme of this study. All deployed or piloted CBDCs to date are non-remunerative, which effectively curtails deposit movement. The monetary policy ramifications of remunerated CBDC will be examined as an extension in Section VII. Central banks are contemplating CBDC designs that impose a limit on individual holdings at a specified maximum. The objective is to restrict the extent of possible migration from retail bank deposits to CBDCs, which affects monetary policy. Imposing effective limits on holdings would hinder the widespread adoption of CBDCs and, for example, render digital bank runs into CBDCs unfeasible.

IV. POTENTIAL RISKS OF CENTRAL BASE DIGITAL CURRENCY (CBDC)

CBDCs are gaining popularity globally, with many countries exploring the potential benefits of launching their own CBDCs. However, several challenges need to be addressed. Here are some of the significant challenges:

- **Technical Infrastructure:** The technical infrastructure required to support CBDCs is complex and costly. Central banks must develop robust systems to ensure the security, privacy, and integrity of CBDC transactions. This will require significant investments in hardware, software, and cyber security.

- **Interoperability:** To ensure seamless use across different platforms and by different parties, CBDCs need to be interoperable with existing payment systems. Achieving interoperability will require collaboration and standardization across different jurisdictions and payment systems.
- **Legal and Regulatory Frameworks:** CBDCs will need to be governed by robust legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure they are used safely and responsibly. New laws and regulations will need to be enacted to address CBDC transactions and ensure compliance with know-your-customer (KYC) and anti-money laundering (AML) rules.
- **Privacy and Data Protection:** CBDCs have the potential to provide greater privacy and anonymity for users. However, this can also create risks for money laundering, terrorist financing, and other illicit activities. Central banks will need to balance the need for privacy with the need to prevent illicit activities while ensuring compliance with data protection regulations.
- **Financial Stability:** CBDCs have the potential to disrupt existing payment systems and financial intermediaries, which could affect financial stability, particularly if CBDCs are widely adopted and replace cash and bank deposits. Therefore, central banks must carefully consider CBDCs' potential impact on financial stability and take the necessary precautions to mitigate risks.

V. MONETARY SHIFTS IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Throughout the long arc of history, money and its institutional foundations have evolved in parallel with the technology available. Numerous recent payment innovations have leveraged enhancements to foundational infrastructures that have developed over many years. In recent decades, central banks globally have implemented real-time gross settlement (RTGS) systems. More than 55 countries have implemented retail Fast Payment Systems (FPS), enabling instantaneous payment settlements between homes and companies at all hours. FPS also facilitates a dynamic ecosystem of private banking and non-banking payment service companies. Instances of FPS encompass TIPS in the eurozone, the Unified

Payments Interface (UPI) in India, PIX in Brazil, CoDi in Mexico, and the FedNow proposal in the United States, among other others. These advancements demonstrate how innovation may flourish on the foundation of stable currency supplied by central banks.

Significant alterations to the current monetary system are emerging. Retail payment demands are evolving, characterized by a decline in cash transactions and a transition towards digital payments, particularly with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Alongside gradual enhancements, numerous central banks are diligently pursuing the development of CBDCs as a sophisticated form of central bank currency for the digital economy. Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) may further stimulate innovations that enhance the efficiency, convenience, and security of the payment system. Although CBDC programs and pilots commenced in 2014, current efforts have intensified significantly.

The primary criterion for assessing modifications to a fundamental aspect such as the monetary system should be its alignment with the public interest. The public interest should be interpreted widely to include not just the economic advantages derived from a competitive market structure but also the quality of governance frameworks and fundamental rights, such as the right to data privacy.

In this context, the examination of CBDCs offers a chance to reassess and reinforce the public interest rationale for digital currency. The monetary system is a public benefit that influences daily life and supports the economy. Advancements in technology related to finance and payments may yield significant advantages; however, the ultimate impact on individual welfare within society is contingent upon the underlying market structure and governance frameworks. This technology might either promote a virtuous cycle of equitable access, enhanced competition, and innovation, or it could incite a vicious cycle of entrenched market dominance and data aggregation. The result will hinge on the regulations overseeing the payment system and if they will facilitate open payment platforms and a competitive equilibrium.

The central bank's interest in CBDCs arises at a pivotal moment. Recent advancements have prioritized various possible advances related to digital money. The initial factor is the increasing focus on Bitcoin and

other cryptocurrencies; the subsequent factor is the discourse surrounding stablecoins; and the final factor is the involvement of major technology companies in payment and broader financial services.

It is clearly evident that cryptocurrencies function as speculative assets rather than currency, and are frequently employed to enable money laundering, ransomware attacks, and various other financial crimes. Bitcoin, in particular, possesses limited beneficial features for public interest, especially when accounting for its excessive energy use.

Stablecoins seek to acquire legitimacy by being collateralized by actual currencies. Consequently, their efficacy is contingent upon the governance supporting the assurance of the backing. They also possess the capacity to disrupt the liquidity of the monetary system and undermine the function of money as a coordinating mechanism. Regardless, if the alleged support pertains to traditional currency, stablecoins are merely an adjunct to the conventional monetary system and do not represent a transformative innovation.

The most notable recent trend has been the involvement of major technology companies in financial services. Their business model is founded on direct user interactions and the data that are an indispensable by-product of these interactions. As large technology companies penetrate the financial services sector, the user data from their established e-commerce, messaging, social networking, or search platforms provides them with a competitive advantage through robust network effects. The influx of users to a specific platform enhances its appeal for prospective users, resulting in a 'data-network-activities' or 'DNA' loop.

The network effects that support major technology companies can be both advantageous and disadvantageous for users. The DNA loop can establish a beneficial cycle, promoting enhanced financial inclusion, improved services, and reduced costs. Conversely, it drives the payments market towards further concentration. In China, two major technology companies collectively dominate 94% of the mobile payments market. Authorities have recently responded to apprehensions of anti-competitive tactics that marginalize rivals in related digital services, including e-commerce and social media. The concentration of market power is prompting authorities in certain economies to progressively adopt

an entity-based strategy to regulate large technology firms, in addition to the current activities-based approach.

VI. CONCLUSION

CBDC could affect financial stability. Should CBDC demonstrate significant appeal and become preferential to bank deposits, banks would encounter competition from the central bank and, as outlined in the research, would need to elevate their deposit rates to maintain competitiveness. "This would diminish their profitability and/or the demand for their loans. Consequently, they may assume greater risk." Banks may augment their dependence on wholesale funding; yet, this could elevate their funding costs, resulting in analogous consequences. Bank funding may become increasingly erratic, prompting banks to maintain higher levels of liquid assets and/or reduce lending activities.

Central Bank Digital Currencies may exacerbate bank runs and intensify financial crises. The occurrence of flight to safety twice within a decade (in 2008 and 2020) makes this issue decidedly non-hypothetical. While customers can convert their bank deposits into central bank money through cash withdrawals, they are effectively deterred by the associated costs and challenges of managing substantial cash holdings (e.g., storage and insurance, transportation, and accessibility limitations). The introduction of CBDC could facilitate a seamless and nearly costless transition to digital currency. CBDC might facilitate 'digital runs' on the central bank with unparalleled speed and magnitude. The transition might be significant, particularly during periods of stress, and the motivations to withdraw funds could be more acute and widespread than presently observed, if bank deposits lacked insurance or if deposit insurance were restricted. Indeed, even with deposit insurance, a restricted coverage ratio and protracted claim settlement processes during bank insolvencies may diminish the efficacy of the insurance mechanism in deterring runs. It is important to acknowledge that in instances of individual bank failure, instantaneous withdrawals from the insolvent bank to other banks are already theoretically feasible. Consequently, CBDC is unlikely to influence the probability of bank runs. Introducing restrictions on deposit convertibility into CBDC may heighten the likelihood of widespread bank runs. The implications of imposing such

restrictions remain ambiguous regarding the central bank's capacity to ensure the one-to-one convertibility of CBDC into cash and reserves, given the specified limitations.

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