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REPORT

World Governments Summit (WGS) 2025 Report

The Global South: Governance & Aspirations



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Executive Summary

The Global South has been subject to different perspectives and definitions in terms of its representative states' geographical location, status of development, and perceived characterization. The history of the Global South dates to the League Against Imperialism and the Non-Aligned Movement, which prompted the grouping's unification due to its nations' joint experiences of marginalization by the Global North. South-South cooperation emerged due to the shortfall of traditional coordination models' ineffectiveness and challenges throughout history. Actions taken included calls for the New International Economic Order and joint demands for reformation of international organizations, social welfare initiatives, and security efforts. Policy priorities among Global South nations include multilateral reform, climate action, artificial intelligence, and gender equality. This accounts for amendments to the United Nations Security Council, the International Monetary Fund, the operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund, the integration of artificial intelligence for development and military security, and female empowerment policies. BRICS and the African Union have played important roles in acting as



Global South coalitions, while the Voice of the Global South Summit has acted as a platform to unite the groupings' initiatives and goals. Recent South-South Cooperation efforts, such as the BRICS 2024 Kazan Declaration, African Union's Agenda 2063, and the Voice of the Global South Summit's priorities continue to shape how the grouping's governance can look like. This report provides policy recommendations for strengthening the Global South's international position by increasing collaborative efforts amongst themselves to better bridge the North-South divide.

Chapter 1: Defining the Global South

Understanding the Term

The phrase 'Global South' is one that has been heavily debated, with various definitions adopted in different contexts. The term is usually used in relation to the 'Global North.' Geographically, the Global South is understood to encompass nations in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa, while the Global North includes countries in North America, Europe, and Oceania.

Historically, this division was set by the Brandt Line, a conceptual boundary separating the Global North from the Global South, although its accuracy has been questioned.[1] The Brandt Line was curated by the International Commission on International Development Issues (ICIDI) in a report that distinguished the Global North from the Global South, predicated on the view of a prosperous North and an impoverished South.[2] In this regard, states within the Global South comprise 'developing' nations that endure more economic, political, and social turmoil as opposed to the 'developed' nations in the North.[3] The Line constitutes a fuzzy geographical division that situated nations within the southern hemisphere, like Australia, as part of the Global North. Notably, in an interview for this report, Dr. Thomas G. Weiss, Presidential Professor of Political Science at The Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York, argued that the term Global South is now a "simplistic notion." It incorrectly characterizes all of its representative states as developing countries, a description that was more accurate at its establishment but has not been accurate for the last three decades.[4] Nevertheless, there is no doubt in the relevance of the Brandt Line in understanding the traditional characterization of the Global South and how it has come to shape contemporary debates on this front.

Some countries in the Global South have previously been dubbed as 'Third World' nations.[5] Among prominent scholars since the 1960s, the term 'Third World' has been used as a synonym for the "underdeveloped world," "former colonies," and "the South (of the North-South division)."[6] The term is largely dependent on the idea of development;[7] therefore, it allows for negative portrayals of the grouping as weak political states and struggling economies, which does not accurately represent the reality of all the nations it claims to represent. Developed economies in the Middle East are prominent examples of this.[8] Hence, the term Global South has quickly replaced 'Third World' as a catch-all phrase to showcase solidarity with the historical and contemporary struggles of this group.[9]

Moreover, the concept of the Global South has been contested as a part of the North-South developmental dichotomy, which considers factors such as standard of living, societal growth, economic advancement, and political status.[10] In an interview with Dr. Sarang Shidore, Quincy Institute's Global South Program Director, he claimed that China, being a "great power," is not in the Global South.[11] Contrarily, other scholars



have claimed that China is in the Global South as it is “the largest developing country in the world.”[12] In this sense, the Global South is considered to be anarchic and vulnerable to obstacles and crises as it relates to the countries’ economic and political status. For instance, the Middle East has been characterized by its conflicts that strike it as unstable to many worldwide.[13] Many also contend that the Global South is characterized by the realities of previously colonized nations that have been subject to foreign interference from nations in the Global North.[14]

Examining Historical Context

The Global South's evolution is rooted in the contentious histories of both colonialism and imperialism. These concepts have set the stage for colonized nations' objective to become autonomous in their quest for self-determination throughout different historical timelines. There have been several precursors that led to the growing discourse and institutionalization of the Global South's current policy agenda. For example, Pan-Africanism emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a political movement aimed at uniting ostracized communities in the African region to actively oppose imperialistic realities.[15]

Such pan-nationalist ideologies shaped the collective struggle for solidarity and cooperation among Global South nations. Some of these policy aspirations date to 1927, when the anticolonial group the League Against Imperialism (LAI) was created.[16] It was an extension of the Communist International (Comintern), which was a 20th century Soviet-led movement aimed at "promoting world revolution."[17] The LAI consisted of 34 countries that came together to combat issues of colonialism and imperialism by organizing different movements.[18] Consequently, the LAI was seen as a pioneering effort to forge transnational solidarity among nations grappling with economic inequality and colonial rule, which eventually led to various coalitions that united regions within the Global South.[19]



In 1955, the Bandung Conference took place, and Asian and African countries, including China, convened to discuss the role of the 'Third World' in global contexts.[20] Sukarno, then President of Indonesia, and Jawaharlal Nehru, then Prime Minister of India, championed the 'Bandung Spirit,' emphasizing that international solidarity could unite against Western dominance.[21]

In 1961, with the absence of China, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) emerged during the Cold War as a response to the power struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union.[22] The NAM wanted to locate itself as a non-West and non-Soviet bloc at a time of geopolitical divisions. The formation of NAM traces back to a few ideological roots that inspired its creation. One prominent example is when Gamal Abdel Nasser, the former President of Egypt, advocated for the unification of Syria and Egypt under a single government, naming it the United Arab Republic.[23] As a key figure in the Pan-Arab movement, Nasser's vision highlighted the desire for solidarity and cooperation among Arab nations, reflecting a broader aspiration for political unity in the face of colonial legacies. Accordingly, the NAM aimed to unify and promote the interests of Asian, African, and Latin American nations in the Global South during the Cold War. The NAM significantly contributed to pushing the global decolonization agenda with the emergence of newly independent states, like India, Egypt, and Ghana, that are part of the Global South.[24]

In addition, in 1964, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was founded, which provided a platform where underrepresented nations discussed their economic and developmental affairs.[25] Notably, it differed from NAM in that it focused on unfair terms of trade within the umbrella of the United Nations (UN), while the latter was primarily a political movement. The outcomes of the first meeting of the UNCTAD resulted in the signing of the Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Developing Countries for the Group of 77 (G-77).[26] Since then, the G-77 has focused on proposals to reorganize the international order through the Declaration on a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and recent initiatives such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[27] Henceforth, the G-77, as a manifestation of the Global South, has played a major role within the UN due to its status as the largest coalition of developing nations.[28]

Finally, in 1969, Carl Oglesby first used the phrase 'Global South' to highlight the economic and political dominance exerted by the Global North.[29] He was known to be a prominent American left-wing activist.[30] Specifically, Oglesby claimed that long-standing US control over nations in the Global South has led to an unjust and unacceptable societal framework.[31]

Foundations of the Global South

Echoing a modern "neo-Third Worldism," the core of the Global South is embedded in their collective mission to challenge the Global North's dominance in modern contexts.[32] In the interview with Dr. Weiss, he claimed that along with these nations' shared colonial struggle, there also existed "the impulse to not be aligned" with the Global North, which was earlier expressed through the NAM.[33]

The Global North's existing primary control of international organizations and norms, as we see more tangibly through institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), is an example of such dominance. When it comes to the IMF, its conditional loans have often undermined the sovereignty of some Global South countries.[34] This is compounded by the nature of the international development structure that reinforces a zero-sum model, which some analysts have argued sets up the said nations for failure.[35] Given the underrepresentation of the Global South's core interests in international affairs, their shared challenges have enabled them to work more closely together on specific issues.[36] Hence, one could argue that Global South-led multilateral arrangements, like BRICS, are rooted in their member states' joint experience of powerlessness compared to the Global North.[37]

Moreover, coalitions like BRICS have aimed to counter the lack of equitable multilateralism in Western-dominated models, particularly related to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).[38] This was notably mentioned in the BRICS 2024 Kazan Declaration.[39] Various alliances and movements within the Global South have taken it upon themselves to contest these realities, making the idea of challenging traditional dominance a key foundation for characterizing their collective policy objectives. The recent expansion of the BRICS member states exemplifies this.[40] The establishment of such coalitions offers an alternative approach to multilateral cooperation that questions existing hegemonies globally.[41]

Considering the Global South's growing agenda, we can see the move towards reclaiming the importance of protecting regional sovereignty by advancing greater South-South cooperation. With this backdrop, how can we better understand the current state and future of South-South cooperation, and how can the Global South's policy agenda be better institutionalized?

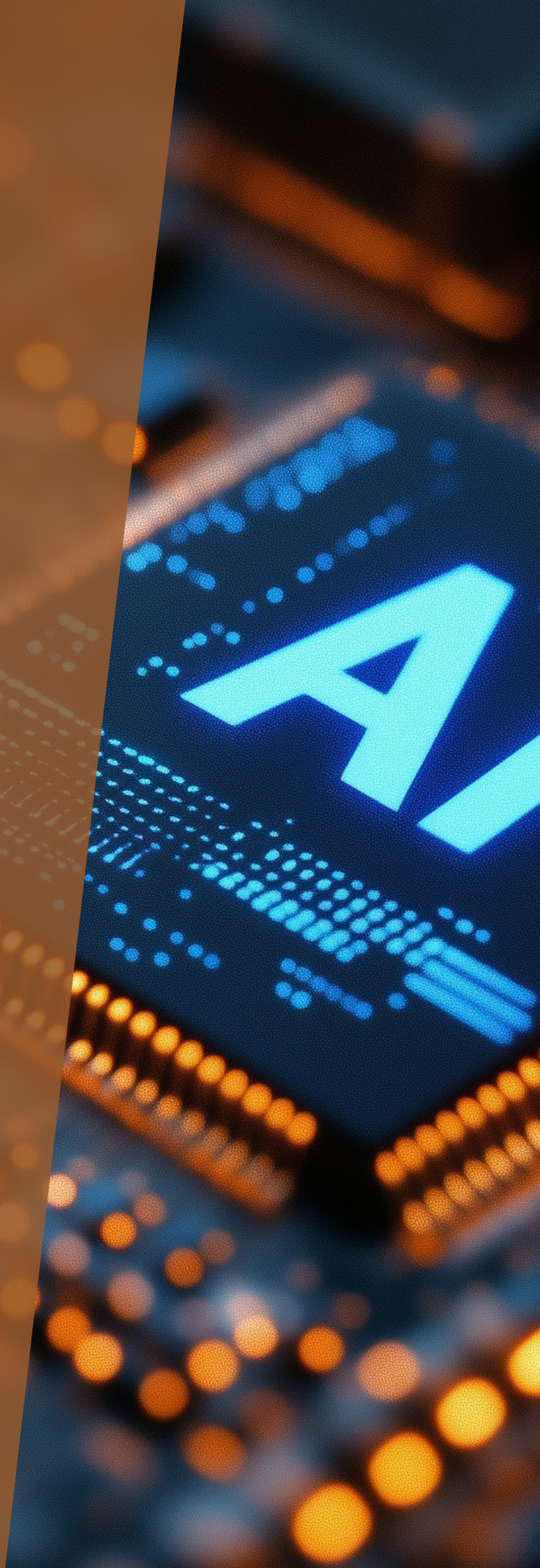


Chapter 2: South-South Cooperation

There has been an aid dependency dynamic from the Global North to the Global South, which includes various forms of external assistance.[42] Given the distinct experiences of both groupings, the North-South cooperation model has had significant barriers to long-term implementation. This traditional model, now largely outdated, was tailored to the needs and objectives of the Global North as a donor versus the Global South as a recipient.[43]

For instance, although the IMF has aided Jordan and Türkiye's economies,[44, 45] this has not always been the case. Zambia's adoption of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) to secure loans from the IMF or WB initially raised hopes for improvement but ultimately led to worsened conditions.[46] This was as the harsh measures proved unsustainable for the developing nation.[47] Consequently, the Global South's dependence on the Global North perpetuated a cycle of stagnation for the former.

In response, countries within the Global South began to seek external and internal solutions for wider self-reliance, leading to different types of cooperation amongst themselves as nations facing similar economic and political conditions. As a result, in 1974, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) approved the creation of a dedicated branch within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to enhance collaboration between Global South nations, which later became known as the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC).[48] According to the UN, South-South Cooperation (SSC) refers to a





joint network amongst Global South nations where they can pursue common objectives "in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains."[49]

Within SSC, a specific form of cooperation called Triangular Cooperation (TrC) has emerged. TrC refers to a collective approach where developing countries establish partnerships with the support of a third party.[50] This third party, an additional cooperating actor, is understood to be either a developed nation or multilateral organization to implement development initiatives,[51] such as the TrC between the Mano River Union and the UNDP.[52] The TrC system reflects the notion that assistance from advanced nations can effectively improve development efforts; they act as a form of financial and technical aid towards their developing counterparts. Simultaneously, there is debate on the TrC model's degree of productivity on account of its trilateral structure and challenges, such as distorted coordination between the affiliated parties.[53] Furthermore, some Global South nations prefer to keep collaborative efforts and coordination amongst themselves rather than seeking help externally. In this regard, some Global South countries have preferred to work bilaterally amongst themselves instead, like Cuba and Venezuela's alliance.[54]

Recognizing the need for greater policy coordination, countries in the Global South expanded their joint efforts to address key economic, political, social, and security objectives, and the sections below discuss these relevant areas of focus in further detail:

1. Economic

In 1974, developing nations demanded the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) that challenged the existing economic system, as it was considered unsuitable for their circumstances.[55] Moreover, the UNGA Resolutions 3201 and 3202 advocate for an NIEO that promotes equity, cooperation, and the sovereignty of developing countries to address their economic disparities.[56] Evidently, the NIEO did not take off due to the debt crisis in the 1980s and US objections to an alternative economic structure.[57]

In response to the demands for change, Global South nations established coalitions to amplify their voices and pursue common economic objectives. A prominent example is the Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OPEC), established in 1960, which united oil-rich nations within the Global South.[58] Since its creation, OPEC nations have gained momentum in the global scene due to their ability to control the oil market as it provides them with major bargaining power and influence over the world's economic system. As such, OPEC can act as a blueprint for how SSC can be a powerful tool for the Global South in achieving its economic objectives.

Similarly, trade plays a huge role in the Global South's development within SSC. The Global System of Trade Preferences (GSTP) agreement in 1988 was a milestone in this sector.[59] According to the UNCTAD, the purpose of the GSTP was to amplify "South-South trade primarily through preferential tariff reductions."[60] Undoubtedly, SSC has been a vital component in advancing trade and growing developing countries' economies. More recently, in 2023, Argentina and Egypt participated in South-South trade that amounted to over $1 billion and led to further discussions of cooperation between the nations.[61]

2. Political

The Global South has actively worked on increasing its political influence in vital multi-governmental bodies and organizations over the decades. Last year, the 79th Session of the UNGA also highlighted a growing consensus on the need to reform multilateralism globally, especially regarding the statements of the grouping.[62] In this light, there is an effort to reform international organizations such as the UN through its Security Council by adding two permanent African seats.[63] This matter is greatly encouraged by SSC organizations like the African Union's (AU) Ezulwini Consensus as it constitutes one of their aspirations for Africa's future.[64] Additionally, the United Kingdom, a Global North nation, has supported this notion while calling for permanent membership for Africa, Brazil and India.[65] However, in the interview with Dr. Weiss, he expressed the unlikeliness of a substantial change at the UNSC given the complexities of the Council's decision-making process.[66] This is in regard to the rigidity of the UNSC's Permanent 5 (P5) veto power and their intricate political dynamics, enabling the improbability of significant changes to the UN system.[67]

Politically, we have also seen the establishment of independent regional institutions and coalitions that serve as platforms for prioritizing and discussing the group's collective objectives. One could argue that some of these efforts are rooted in a broader strategy towards regionalism.[68] The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR) further exemplify networks through which these states can advocate for their interests and collaborate on establishing a more equitable multipolar world order.[69]

3. Social

Another major sector of SSC is systematically tackling social welfare issues such as health, education, and poverty. While many of these states share societal struggles that impact day-to-day lives, SSC actions are critical to improve circumstances and aid social development. SSC and inter-regional cooperation models such as the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) and the UNOSSC assisted Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) to tackle social relief in matters like employment.[70] In the healthcare sector, SSC is important in the application of sustainable schemes and strategies that align with the Global South's developmental needs. One example is Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), given the creation and work of collaborative bodies like the Central American Integration System, Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO), and Union of South American Nations. These have designed many protocols, commissions, agreements, and forums for health diplomacy in the region.[71]

Although SSC's terms and conditions have been argued to be opaque,[72] it has several benefits, as the implementation of conditionality in projects is reduced.[73] Additionally, cultural relativism is considered within programs that protect populations' identities and cultures. The SAPs in the Philippines had major social repercussions, specifically in its educational sector.[74] Subsequently, in partnership with the UN, the country has engaged in SSC and TrC to revive social welfare, including education, while considering the Global South's "knowledge and experiences."[75] In this sense, the multilateral SSC allows the Global South to more widely engage on an international stage alongside the Global North. Simultaneously, through TrC, programs and initiatives have helped nations in the Global South to better tackle poverty. The success of poverty relief projects under the India, Brazil, and South Africa Fund (IBSA Fund) affiliated with the UNOSSC is a prime example of so.[76]

4. Security

Additionally, concerning defense security, countries in the Global South regularly advance different forms of military cooperation. Partaking in defense discussions and military dealings is vital for Global South nations' stability and security undertakings. In this light, China has engaged in military activities in LAC through key infrastructures, sponsored firms, and projects.[77] Such security developments portray the use of SSC as a tool for these countries to diversify from their traditional allies through agreements and collaborative projects. States like India and China have exceeded some Western nations' military spending and abilities.[78] In this regard, the emergence of major global powers within the Global South has assisted in strengthening SSC activities in international affairs.[79] Hence, South-South exchanges like the Voice of the Global South Summit (VOGSS) that is headed by India, are crucial in maintaining relations within the grouping through SSC.[80]

Respectively, another key priority relates to both food and water security concerns. The climate crisis, urbanization, population rise, and the spread of infection further exacerbate the existing fragile circumstances of some of these countries.[81] International institutions like the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) thus encourage effective solutions for Global South states through mutual partnerships.[82] In this regard, SSC initiatives like the Arab Coordination Group's (ACG) investment of $10 billion to aid food security are instrumental.[83] In addition, there are SSC efforts headed by the Arab Bank for Development in Africa (BADEA) to improve food security in African and Arab territories.[84]

Considering these initiatives, the Global South's specific policy priorities come into question. How is the Global South currently tackling prominent global challenges such as multilateral reform, climate action, artificial intelligence, and gender equality, and are its states in alignment regarding these priorities?

Chapter 3: Policy Priorities of the Global South

Multilateral Reform

The veto system at the UN continues to face criticism and calls for reformation due to the leverage it provides the Permanent Five (P5) members.[85] Countries like Brazil and India have led on these calls and have actively advocated for permanent seats at the UNSC with veto power for their respective countries. As Latin America's largest economy, Brazil has called for a seat to create a more balanced global order that reflects the interests of developing nations in the Global South.[86] Similarly, India has advocated for its seat in light of its advancing role militarily and economically.[87] Alongside Germany and Japan, Brazil and India are part of the Group of Four (G-4) that has called for its participants to acquire permanent seats at the Council and for a re-evaluation of veto power to enable an inclusive system that is more responsive to the diverse needs of all its member states.[88]

Nations in the Global South have also contended for reforms at the IMF in light of their economic struggles that spring from some of the organization's policies and existing structure. This is due to the IMF's disproportionate quota system that influences nations' reserves in the Special Drawing Rights (SDR) structure, as well





as the organization's conditional loans disservice to many of its recipients such as Egypt during the Suez Crisis of 1956.[89] Given the IMF's shortcomings, countries like Kenya have strived for amendments at the IMF to adapt to the economic rise of the Global South.[90] According to the President of Kenya, William Ruto, he engaged in international discussions on "lending instruments, issuance of special drawing rights (SDRs), addressing debt distress, and governance reforms" at the IMF.[91] As of October 2024, the Executive Board at the IMF confirmed policy amendments such as "a long-term annual lending envelope of SDR 2.7 billion ($3.6 billion) and approved a package of policy reforms and resource mobilization to support that lending capacity."[92] They also approved the arrangement of SDR 5.9 billion ($8 billion) in subsidies from the organization's internal holdings towards the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust (PRGT).[93] Additionally, the Board authorized reforms on surcharges that they expect will lead to a 36% decrease in nations' fees.[94] However, with the severity of conditions indebted nations endure, especially with the climate crisis, some critics have argued that this is not enough and that the basic removal of surcharges would be more effective.[95]

Climate Action

Although nations in the Global South have not been significant contributors to historical carbon emissions, they have been disproportionately affected by the subsequent impact of climate change.[96] This is also attributed to these nations' vulnerability and exposure to adverse living conditions.[97] Given the necessity of increasing climate finance, some developing nations within the Global South find themselves financially restricted in effectively reversing the repercussions of climate change in their respective regions.[98] These efforts have further exacerbated the North-South divide, as countries in the Global South receive significantly less climate finance than those in the Global North. This is due to the Global North nations' perceived outlook on the economic and political risks of providing climate finance. Additionally, the notion that Global South countries should prioritize national development over environmental conservation is of relevance.[99] In an interview with Dr. Shidore, he highlighted the importance of the UN principle of 'Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities' wherein "the primary responsibility for climate finance lies with the Global North."[100] Consequently, due to the Global South's reliance on external financial aid, this shortfall has made it challenging for them to fund large-scale renewable energy projects themselves.

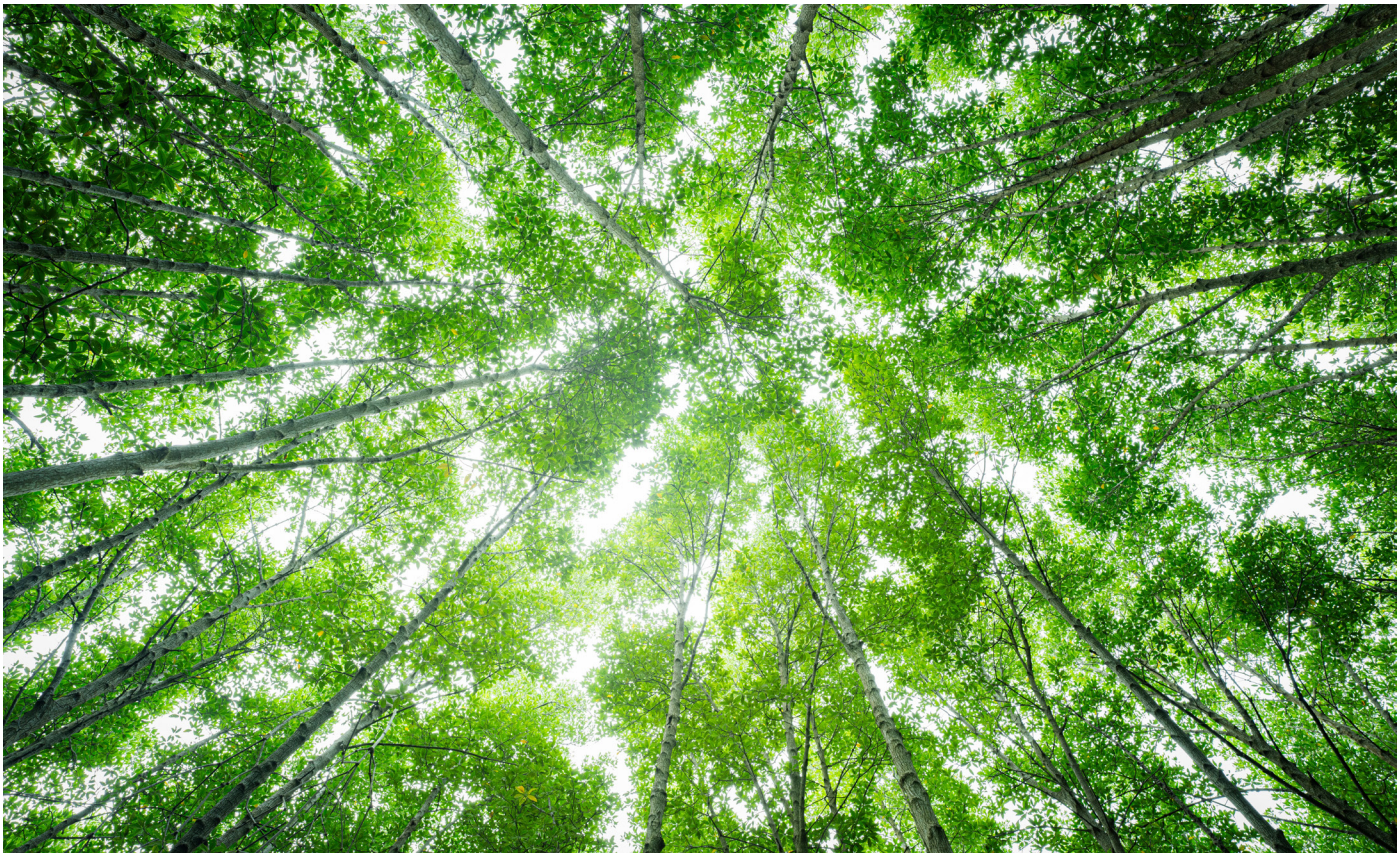
Considering this, the Loss and Damage (L&D) fund was created to secure financial assistance from Global North nations to compensate for the losses and damages inflicted by climate change on Global South communities.[101] The Fund also aims to re-establish justice towards low-income countries that suffer the most from climate change.[102] The idea and efforts for the Fund date to its first proposal 30 years ago by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in attribution to the detrimental effects of global warming.[103] At COP25, the G77 and China called for both a technical body and a funding mechanism for the L&D fund where only the technical body was approved, with the funding request denied by wealthy nations.[104] After persistent advocacy, particularly from Pakistan, the G77 successfully included L&D financing in the 2022 UN Climate Change Conference (COP27) agenda,[105] where the L&D Fund was officially launched.[106] During COP28, based in the United Arab Emirates, the Fund was implemented.[107] As of today, the Board of the L&D Fund is headquartered in the Philippines and comprises 26 representatives, with 14 from developing nations and 12 from developed ones.[108] These members are distributed across various regions, including Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific, as well as representatives from the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), among others.[109] Since its establishment, the L&D fund has been a significant victory for developing nations in the Global South, providing an opportunity to repair the impact of climate change in their regions.

Although there is a misconception that the Global South cannot contribute to reversing climate patterns, these nations are actively committed to addressing the UN's SDG 13 of 'Climate Action.'[110] For instance, despite its significant urbanization, Brazil has made efforts to decrease its use of Greenhouse Gases (GHG).[111] In 2024, Brazil assumed the Presidency of the Group of 20 (G20). Brazil's leadership in this platform has been significant, as the Presidency enabled them to focus on specific policy priorities of importance to the Global South. This was apparent in the country's emphasis on environmental policies and implementation of substantial climate finance required to address environmental crises.[112] Similarly, the Global South has actively focused on

the UN's seventh goal of 'Affordable and Clean Energy.'[113] This has been tackled by embracing renewable energy as a sustainable method to meet their demands through environmentally friendly sources such as hydrogen, solar, and wind.[114]

Moreover, destructive environmental effects disproportionately impact indigenous communities and populations in these regions. They have long faced systematic challenges that have drastically disrupted their livelihoods, worsening entrenched inequalities and ineffective support mechanisms.[115] Both mitigation and biodiversity efforts must be addressed more adequately to combat climate change.[116] Nevertheless, in response to these issues, countries have initiated biodiversity action through environmental policies that help protect the rights of indigenous peoples.[117]

For instance, as a policy priority, Brazil has focused on preserving the Amazon Rainforest to safeguard the environment and rights of indigenous peoples.[118] Additionally, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169 established the basis for protecting the land ownership rights of indigenous peoples on an "international legal standard."[119]



Artificial Intelligence

Increasingly, countries are prioritizing the integration of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) within their development strategies and initiatives. Due to the rise of AI, global governance has been transformed as nations turn to it as a tool for development.[120] The Global North has been at the forefront of implementing AI to enhance their industries' competitiveness. Although there is a lot of discourse on technological development and its importance, the Global South's role in its advancement has not been adequately highlighted in these debates. Nigeria and Ethiopia, for example, have increasingly focused on utilizing AI for economic advancement by encouraging innovative and entrepreneurial practices to achieve this goal.[121] Furthermore, acknowledging that the Global South can be a valuable contributor through a skilled workforce and knowledge of the AI global landscape could help bridge the cooperation gap between the North and South.[122] In this context, Tunisia has noted that efficient technological transfer can play a pivotal role "to bridge the digital gap" between these regions.[123]

Furthermore, there are recent discussions of AI's integration into international affairs and military activity.[124] AI has the potential to boost military and defense in terms of digital security and operational efficiency, which is crucial for national stability and international security.[125] Despite the pressing relevance of this subject matter, developing nations have not been significantly involved in this domain.[126] Prominent technological advancement discussions have primarily been headed by major global powers like the United States.[127] Global South nations have instead used AI-driven security policy domestically to counter technological and socio-political challenges, such as cyber risks and crime. India initiated several military computerized projects such as the 'Android Malware Detection Solution.'[128] Additionally, countries like Algeria, El Salvador, Jordan, and the Philippines provided representatives for the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) at the UN's Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW).[129] As part of the 2023 meeting, Pakistan also provided a proposal on the Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) that called for the GGE to address its dilemmas, such as prohibiting any weapon that "causes incidental harm to civilians and civilian objects that exceeds the direct military advantage anticipated" among other propositions.[130]

Gender Equality

Global South nations have engaged in different measures that aim to address gender disparities. Their development of gender equality policies and women's empowerment initiatives is not a new phenomenon. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), as far back as 1995, discussed matters in relation to violence, poverty, media, and environment for women, amongst other priorities.[131] It has also been recognized as central in framing the UN's 2030 Agenda.[132] Every five years since 2005, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which is a working group within the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), oversees and evaluates nations' gender equality progress in relation to the action plan.[133]

It is important to recognize that gender equality goes beyond women's representation alone, as it intersects with other themes like food security. For instance, according to FAO, at a staggering rate of 43%, women play a significant part in the world's agricultural workforce.[134] In this regard, nations in the Global South have been involved in noteworthy South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) activities towards uplifting women and their participation while being assisted by financial institutions like the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).[135] At the core of IFAD's policy support, they encourage initiatives to fall within three principal goals of "economic empowerment," "decision-making and representation," and "equitable workload balance" to target gender equality and food security.[136]

Additionally, it is vital to address the impact of gender inequality on emerging economies. For example, the gender pay gap influences women's labor participation, which has the power to strengthen economies through expansion of its trades and sectors.[137]

Regions in the Global South, like Latin America and the Caribbean, have targeted this issue through policies and projects that encourage women's work and economic engagement.[138] According to a 2023 report by the World Economic Forum (WEF), as a result of such initiatives combined with other political and social policies, "Latin America and the Caribbean has closed almost three-quarters of its gender gap."[139]

This prompts an important consideration: Can these diverse coalitions be institutionalized into larger frameworks to enhance dialogue and collaborative problem-solving among these nations? As we explore in the next chapter the selected cases of BRICS, the African Union, and the Voice of the Global South Summit, we aim to examine the potential for these collective efforts to address the Global South's most pressing global challenges more effectively.

Chapter 4: Selected Cases in Global South Governance

BRICS

While there is no formally adopted 'Global South government,' the policy agenda of the BRICS grouping has gained significant visibility and influence in key global governance platforms. It was initially founded in 2006 by influential players, including Brazil, Russia, India, and China, under the name 'BRIC.'[140] With the addition of South Africa in 2010, it transformed into the well-known 'BRICS'.[141] Since then, BRICS has gained significant momentum and has attracted a growing number of nations to join its coalition, including the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Iran, and Ethiopia.[142] According to some observers, BRICS is now "enroute to becoming a representative of the Global South."[143] Given that Russia and China are part of BRICS, their large economies challenge the typical classification of the Global South as developing nations. Nevertheless, BRICS was founded based on its members' shared objectives of engaging with new and, at times, alternative forms of global governance, which emphasize a novel form of economy-centric values and similar contemporary experiences.[144] As an ally of the Global South, the aim of forming this group was to promote the diverse voices and interests of its member states.[145]

The Kazan Declaration was a key outcome of the 2024 BRICS Summit in Russia, which was held in October 2024.[146] Many prominent Heads of State attended the Summit,





including China's President Xi Jinping, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, the UAE's President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, and Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian.[147] In the Declaration, they called for the IMF's "quota realignment," and support of "enabling settlements in local currencies in line with BRICS Cross-Border Payments Initiative (BCBPI)." They also expressed worry over "the disruptive effect of unlawful unilateral coercive measures, including illegal sanctions."[148]

Furthermore, BRICS has prioritized changing the status quo in terms of the traditional economic system by increasing SSC efforts and pushing for a "multilateral trade system."[149] This is exemplified by the creation of BRICS' New Development Bank (NDB), which intended to address the funding shortage "for infrastructure and sustainable development in the Global South."[150] The NDB also aims to increase green finance for nations in BRICS through projects that advance climate objectives.[151] In terms of their social agenda, the bloc has focused on enhancing levels of education by establishing the BRICS Network University (BRICS NU) in which they promote collaboration among member states in higher education and research.[152]

The African Union

Since 2002, the African Union (AU) has played an essential role as a vital organization for its representative states and regions in the Global South.[153] Pan-Africanism is a keystone for the AU as it creates a basis for solidarity between its states and prompts their unity towards gaining momentum.[154] It grew from its Pan-African predecessor of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which from 1963 to 1999 existed with the purpose of protecting African countries' sovereignty, encouraging collaboration between member states, boosting global cooperation, and eliminating "all forms of colonialism from Africa."[155]

Over this time, the notion of "African Solutions to African Problems" took center stage while also acting as the theme of the 1996 African Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution (ACPCR).[156] This principle was carried to the AU, building on member-states' "anti-imperialism" mission;[157] the AU strove, as per Article 3(j) of its Constitutive Act, to advance Africa's developmental prospects "at the economic, social and cultural levels."[158] The 6th AU Mid-Year Coordination Meeting that occurred in July 2024 is exemplary of the solidarity between the organization's member states.[159] This is while the participants signed a declaration that emphasized cooperation to sustain economic strength, enhance citizens' living conditions, coordinate action for the region's fiscal and developmental integration, and nurture harmony in the territory.[160]

The AU's Agenda 2063 initiative is representative of the Africa envisioned by the body that prioritizes poverty elimination, productive agricultural systems, education accessibility, and securing people's housing.[161] Additionally, the agenda also calls for member states to "strengthen domestic resource mobilization" efforts to boost Africa's economies through decreasing their aid reliance and advancing their African "multilateral lending institutions to global status."[162] Additionally, one of the organization's priorities involves ensuring people's security, which is addressed through the AU's Peace and Security Council's Protocol Article 13 and an African Standby Force (ASF).[163] In accordance with Article 4(h) and 4(j) of its Constitutive Act, the organization has the right to maintain peace by intervening in "grave circumstances," as well as member states' rights to seek the AU's interference.[164] Prominent cases of intervention include the ASF's work in Somalia, the Lake Chad Basin, and Ethiopia.[165] In terms of climate change, the organization initiated the 'African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan', targeting issues like "risk management," "capacity development," and "enhanced climate policy."[166] Furthermore, through the AU's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the organization has taken on information technology and gender initiatives.[167] This accounts for projects such as the Africa Coast to Europe (ACE) and the NEPAD/Spanish Fund for African Women's Empowerment.[168]

The Voice of the Global South Summit

The creation of the Voice of the Global South Summit (VOGSS) is another significant milestone in the process of Global South governance. The establishment of this summit was driven by the need for increased representation of countries in the Global South to voice their priorities, which was highlighted during India's Presidency of the 2023 G20 Summit.[169] Considering India's commitment to this initiative, the country has been at the forefront in heading the VOGSS, conducting its first virtual meeting in January 2023.[170] Although there have only been three VOGSS meetings to date, its attendance by over a hundred nations in the Global South attest to the summit's significance.[171] The VOGSS is grounded in India's vision of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future,' positioning the Summit as a prominent forum to seek collaborative solutions among its members.[172]

Effective multilateralism is a key point in the VOGSS agenda.[173] For instance, discussions took place on the reform of vital institutions like the UNSC to be "fit for purpose," as well as a focus on the fulfillment of the SDGs.[174] The Health Ministers' Session at the third summit discussed the enhancement of healthcare systems through "strengthening initiatives aimed at enhancing food security... including with the help of indigenous health systems and traditional medicines."[175] In addition, VOGSS opened a platform for Global South nations to discuss issues in relation to finance, education, trade and technological innovation.[176] Talks on "gender equality," "sustainable development," and "climate finance" were also discussed in depth.[177] Overall, talks were initiated on the importance of SSC in implementing collaborative initiatives within the grouping.[178]

Given the diverse approaches the Global South has taken to establish a cohesive international structure, it is essential to explore how these initiatives can be translated into actionable policy recommendations. Considering the North-South divide, what concrete steps can be taken to bridge the gap, and how can policy frameworks be designed to facilitate meaningful engagement and representation of the Global South within broader global governance structures?

Policy Recommendations

1. Build a Consensus between Global South Coalitions

Given the various areas of focus in diverse Global South coalitions, a few countries need to take leadership over creating an initial consensus that promotes the alignment of policies and goals implemented by each separate effort. Many of the priorities of coalitions coincide, such as the overlap between BRICS and the African Union's aims to enhance agriculture and trade for food security.[179,180] The harmonization of targeted actions would strengthen the Global South's efforts institutionally and give it a broader international scale. Hence, we encourage building a consensus between organizations in the Global South including MERCOSUR, BRICS, African Union, and the Arab League, amongst others. This policy alignment can uplift the coalitions, broaden their allies, integrate their priorities, and simultaneously build new networks of cooperation between Global South nations to attain their aligned objectives.

2. Introduce a Working Global South Governance Charter

Considering the misconceptualization and ambiguous nature of the term 'Global South,' a Charter is necessary to clarify its definition and formally align Global South nations together. For example, the Global South Governance Charter can determine which nations are categorized as part of the Global South through signatories. Building on the successes of previous South-South Cooperation initiatives, the Charter will be formulated on terms that correspond to Global South nations' aspirations for the future. In addition, the working Charter will specify a clear scope of the goals, objectives, and purpose of a potential policy unification of the Global South across different thematic and regional areas. A Charter would amplify the priorities of Global South nations in a manner that suits its representative states politically, economically, and socially.

3. Design a Global South Plan of Action

Despite the Global South facing a range of interconnected challenges, there is no unified "Action Plan" to guide these nations toward sustainable internal development and greater collective progress. A policy-oriented implementation plan is required to produce action-driven initiatives beyond the Global South Governance Charter. There is a pressing need to create a cohesive 'Global South Plan of Action' that can strengthen the political, economic, and social spheres within the nations. Key objectives of the Action Plan could include tackling gender inequality and leveraging artificial intelligence and advanced technologies for developmental growth. By focusing on these strategic priorities, the Global South can forge stronger intra-regional ties and more effectively advocate for its interests and needs on the global stage. This unified approach would enable Global South nations to address immediate challenges and long-term development goals, empowering them to shape a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient future.

4. Institutionalize South-South Cooperation

Acknowledging the lack of a broader Global South governance umbrella, we encourage the creation of a multilateral organization dedicated to the Global South, which could host different offices across major continents and geographic areas in the Global South. This could take the form of 'Host City Offices.' Founded on South-South Cooperation (SSC) initiatives and prospects, the institutionalization of a guiding Global South body will create collaboration amongst its member states under one stable platform. Accounting for some Global South nations' call for multilateralism in international affairs,[181] institutionalizing SSC will offer them a greater hand in those global governance issues that impact them. This will include better coordination on issues relating to poverty, the climate crisis, food insecurity, and health. Additionally, Global South nations will be able to discuss their military and security priorities considering the accelerating rise of the militarization of AI.

5. Encourage the Formation of a Global South Financial Body

Given the persistent financial aid dependency of the Global South on the Global North, it is crucial to explore alternative financial mechanisms that can promote greater economic autonomy for Global South nations. Creating a financial organization that overlooks and handles key economic aspects of the Global South is necessary. The New Development Bank (NDB), established by BRICS, might be one candidate for such an organization. As such, the burden of development financing can be shared by several diversified bodies that can potentially unlock more funding sources. These countries can cultivate greater regional cooperation and economic integration by enabling Global South nations to utilize the NDB for development financing rather than traditional Western-led financial institutions.[182] This would help bridge the North-South divide and shift the global financial architecture toward a more equitable system. Therefore, we encourage the empowerment of the NDB as a true 'Global South Bank'—a platform through which nations can exercise greater control over their development agendas, customize financial solutions to their unique needs, and reduce the traditional dependencies on Bretton Woods institutions like the IMF and World Bank. That said, donor countries who contribute the most to aid budgets will still influence requirements and regulations.

6. Amplify the Voice of the Global South Summit

India's Voice of the Global South Summit (VOGSS) has prompted many Global South nations to participate in unified discourse regarding their struggles and challenges. Leaders in attendance highlighted issues such as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic instability, poverty, and climate crisis.[183] Given the success of the platform, we encourage the amplification of the VOGSS in collectively discussing the groupings' priorities and objectives. In the interview with Dr. Shidore, he expressed the benefits of the Summit in bringing "Global South states in one place,... deepening the conversations, and producing actionable recommendations."[184] Additionally, the VOGSS provides an opportunity to operationalize policies suited for the Global South, which can signal to the Global North the wants and needs of the grouping. This will allow for greater North-South and South-South Cooperation and address coordination issues that may occur during Triangular Cooperation.

7. Propose a Global South Legal Body

An overarching judicial body could address conflicts and legal issues unique to Global South nations. The establishment of a Global South Supreme Court could aid in promoting stability and contribute to the maintenance of international and national security standards. This would ensure that global norms are upheld within the Global South as they work through destabilizing factors that can halt their development, such as wars. Consequently, this higher-level court can settle disputes and open an opportunity for the Global South to move forward in addressing other areas of development to bridge the North-South divide.

8. Integrate a Global South Climate Action Treaty

With the urgency of climate action, there ought to be increased efforts in addressing environmental crises that impact the livelihoods of civilians in the Global South. Despite Global South nations' call for climate action through platforms like the G20, the Global South has a limited financial scope to address these prevalent issues. Expectations for targeting climate change have been difficult for Global South nations to achieve due to their circumstances as opposed to the Global North. In this light, while the first step of an L&D fund has been operationalized, there should be greater unity in committing to climate action. Therefore, we propose creating an equitable 'Climate Action Treaty' for Global South nations. This Climate Action Treaty can be curated to practical standards set by nations in the Global South to tackle the issue of climate change.

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