



India's Role in Amplifying the Voice of the Global South

For Prelims: [United Nations](#), [International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#), [International Solar Alliance](#), [BRICS](#), [Quad](#),

For Mains: Challenges to multilateralism and global governance reform, Role of India in representing the Global South's concerns

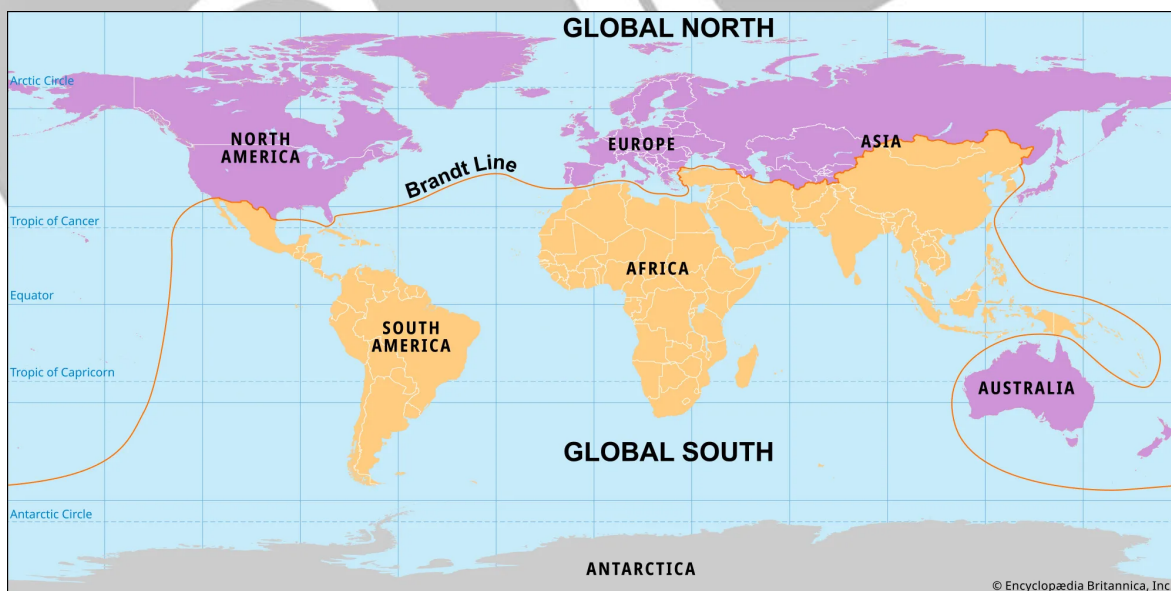
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Why in News?

India's External Affairs Minister convened a **High-Level Meeting of Like-Minded Global South Countries** in New York on the sidelines of the **80th session of the [United Nations General Assembly](#)**.

- The meeting sought to strengthen solidarity, push for [UN reforms](#), and ensure global governance reflects developing countries' priorities, and pointed out that [multilateralism](#) is **weakening** just when the Global South needs it most.

Click here to Read: [What is Global South?](#)



What Role is India Playing in Championing the Voice of the Global

South?

- **Bridging Divides in Global Forums:** India acts as a mediator between North and South on climate change, trade, and security issues. Projects itself as a “Vishwa Bandhu” (friend of the world), advocating inclusivity in global governance.
 - During its [G20 Presidency \(2023\)](#), India ensured the **African Union’s inclusion as a permanent member**, a landmark move for Southern representation.
 - India’s active participation in [BRICS](#), [Quad](#), and the **Voice of Global South Summit** reflects its commitment to global governance reform and strategic balance.
- **Multilateral Reform Advocacy:** India persistently demands reforms in global institutions like the **UNSC, World Bank, and IMF** to reflect the voices of developing countries.
- **Sustainability and Climate Leadership:** India is leading sustainable development efforts among developing nations. The [Mission LIFE](#) and the **ISA** and the [National Green Hydrogen Mission](#) reflect India’s sustainable development leadership.
 - As the 3rd-largest producer of wind and solar energy, India is supporting climate justice for vulnerable nations.
- **Digital and Technological Innovation:** India is a global leader in [Digital Public Infrastructure \(DPI\)](#). Platforms like [Aadhaar](#) and [UPI](#) have inspired over 12 countries to adopt similar systems, enhancing digital equity and inclusion in the Global South.
- **Humanitarian and Development Assistance:** India is emerging as a first responder in global crises through humanitarian missions such as [Operation Dost](#) (Turkey), [Operation Karuna](#) (Myanmar), and Operation Kaveri (Sudan), reinforcing its role as a key development partner.
 - India has extended **Lines of Credit (LOCs) worth USD 12 billion to 42 African countries** as part of its development finance initiatives.
- **Strategic Autonomy and Foreign Policy Balance:** India maintains a policy of strategic autonomy, engaging with both the West and Global South without aligning rigidly.
 - India played a key role in establishing the [Non-Alignment Movement \(NAM\)](#) to promote self-determination for developing nations.
 - Unlike China’s aggressive diplomacy, **India offers a non-threatening, consultative leadership model.**

What are the Concerns of the Global South in the Current World Order?

- **Lack of Representation in Global Institutions:** [UN Security Council \(UNSC\)](#) still reflects **post-World War II power structures**. India, the world’s most populous country and a major economy, **still lacks a permanent seat in the UNSC despite decades of advocacy**.
 - The undermining of the UN system by major powers (like the US) has left **smaller countries with no neutral forum to address regional conflicts or economic grievances**.
 - [International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#) and [World Bank](#) governance is dominated by developed countries, limiting the voice and influence of developing nations.
- **Unfair Global Trade Rules:** [World Trade Organization \(WTO\) dispute resolution system](#) is paralysed, harming smaller economies who rely on rules-based trade.
 - Rising [protectionism](#) and high tariffs hurt export-dependent developing countries.
 - Environmental standards like the [European Union’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism \(CBAM\)](#) impose green tariffs that hurt exporters in countries like India and those in Africa, often favouring developed economies.
- **Weakening of Multilateralism:** Multilateral institutions face legitimacy crises and funding shortages. WHO was criticised during the pandemic for alleged bias and lack of early action, eroding trust.
 - WTO reforms have stalled due to lack of consensus between the Global North and South.
- **Climate Injustice:** Global South contributes least to climate change but suffers the most from its impacts (e.g., floods, droughts, food insecurity).
 - Climate finance promised by Global North (e.g., USD 100 billion/year) remains delayed and insufficient.
 - The global south faces mounting pressure to reduce emissions without considering historical responsibility or development needs.

- **Weaponisation of Interdependence:** [Supply chains](#), energy, and finance are increasingly used as tools of geopolitical pressure.
 - Vulnerable countries face tech restrictions, or sanctions, even if unrelated to conflicts. For example, after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Africa and South Asia faced food and fertilizer shortages due to disrupted grain and urea exports.
- **Debt Crisis and Financial Vulnerability:** Many Global South countries like Sri Lanka are facing high external debt, worsened by Covid-19 and inflation.
- **Inequitable Access to Technology:** The digital divide is widening as [Artificial Intelligence, semiconductors, and green tech patents](#) remain concentrated in the US, EU, and China, leaving most Global South LDCs excluded from access and innovation.
- **Rise of Geopolitical Blocs and Strategic Exclusion:** Global South countries are increasingly pressured to pick sides in US-China or US-Russia rivalries. This undermines strategic autonomy and distracts from development goals.
- **Normative Double Standards:** The Global South criticizes the West for selective human rights advocacy, acting on Ukraine while ignoring Gaza, and Global South countries often face external interference in internal matters.

How does South-South Cooperation (SSC) Complement & Challenge North-South?

Complementary Aspects

- **Bridging Development Gaps:** SSC helps address gaps in finance, technology, and capacity-building that **North-South aid often cannot cover**.
 - Initiatives like the **India-UN Development Partnership Fund** have extended demand-driven assistance to **Pacific Island nations and Africa**, offering flexible and context-specific support.
- **Promoting the SDGs through Local Solutions:** Unlike one-size-fits-all models, SSC aligns with the 2030 Agenda by providing context-specific and sustainable solutions to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).
 - For instance, **Colombian strategies to fight hunger** and **Brazilian agricultural technology** have been successfully replicated in African contexts.
- **Triangular Cooperation as a Middle Ground:** SSC also works in **conjunction with developed nations through triangular cooperation**, where Northern partners support Southern-led initiatives.
 - This **creates synergy rather than competition**, as seen in FAO-led agricultural projects supported by China and implemented in Latin America.
- **Solidarity During Crises:** SSC has played a key role during global emergencies. **India's vaccine diplomacy during Covid-19** is an example of solidarity-driven responses that complemented (or filled the void left by) **North-South efforts**.
- **Strengthens Global Resilience:** By enabling flexible, peer-driven solutions, SSC helps countries confront overlapping crises such as climate change, pandemics, and debt distress.

Challenging Aspects

- **Geopolitical Realignment:** Growing South-South trade and investments (**China-Africa, India-ASEAN**) shift global economic gravity, contesting the centrality of the North.
 - **The rise of new southern powers (e.g., India, Brazil, South Africa) is shifting the center of global governance and challenging Western-led alliances.**
- **Critiquing Selective Conditionality:** Many Global South countries have raised concerns about the West's use of aid as a tool of influence, with strings attached related to governance or policy reform.
 - SSC presents a counter-model that is non-conditional and sovereignty-respecting.
- **Shifting Trade and Investment Patterns:** Nearly 60% of high-tech exports from developing countries are traded within the Global South, indicating growing intra-South economic interdependence beyond traditional North-South flows.
- **Redefining Development Leadership:** The rise of Southern powers like India in initiatives such as the [International Solar Alliance \(ISA\)](#) challenges the notion that development leadership and

solutions must come from the Global North.

What Measures can Strengthen the Global South's Voice with India's Leadership?

- **Building Collective Platforms:** India can institutionalize platforms like the [Voice of the Global South Summit](#) as regular annual/biannual forums to ensure developing nations have a united voice in global governance debates.
- **Reforming Global Institutions:** India should lead efforts to push for **UNSC expansion, IMF and World Bank reforms**, ensuring the Global South has fair representation and voting power in decision-making.
- **Mobilizing Development Finance:** With support from partners like Japan and multilateral banks, India can champion a **Global South Development Fund** to finance infrastructure, digital transformation, and climate resilience projects across the South.
- **Driving South-South Trade and Connectivity:** India can work to reduce tariff barriers and promote **intra-South trade agreements**, expanding initiatives like the [Asia-Africa Growth Corridor \(AAGC\)](#) to counter global inequalities in trade flows.
- **Coordinated Peace and Security Role:** India can mobilize the Global South to play a greater role in **UN peacekeeping, conflict mediation, and inclusive peacebuilding**, showcasing Southern contributions to global stability.
- **Balancing Global Partnerships:** India's multi-alignment strategy can help the Global South engage constructively with the Global North, ensuring that Southern concerns on **trade, climate, and finance** are not sidelined in Western-dominated forums.

Conclusion

A stronger Global South requires unity, credible leadership, and equitable participation in global governance. Guided by the Indian ethos of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam ("One Earth, One Family, One Future")**, India can amplify Southern priorities with inclusivity and balance. Its leadership can help transform the Global South from a passive voice into an active shaper of the world order.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. How does South-South Cooperation complement or challenge the traditional North-South framework in addressing global development gaps?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Mains

Q. "If the last few decades were of Asia's growth story, the next few are expected to be of Africa's." In the light of this statement, examine India's influence in Africa in recent years. **(2021)**

Q. Evaluate the economic and strategic dimensions of India's Look East Policy in the context of the post Cold War international scenario. **(2016)**

