

India and Global South: A Theoretical Analysis of India's Initiatives in Global South

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Abstract: Global South refers to Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. It belongs to a group of terms, such as Third World and Periphery, that describe regions outside Europe and North America, predominantly low-income and often politically or culturally marginalised. Today, India (one of the community members), with its rising stature in the international order, is trying to create an inclusive environment for the Global South countries. India's multivector engagement in the Global South via educational, humanitarian, technological, and other assistance, trade, and investments is praiseworthy. In the Voice of Global South Summit (2023), India recently announced the 5 C's, i.e., consultation, cooperation, communication, creativity, and capacity building. Further, a Centre of Excellence for the Global South was announced. The present study attempts to understand why India is employing this approach. How do different theoretical lenses of International Relations view India's multi-vectored engagement in the Global South?

Keywords: Global South, Multivector Engagement, Theory, Foreign Policy, Aids.

India's emergence as a global power is a defining feature of the 21st century. In recent years, India has increasingly gained visibility in the international arena, both in terms of its growing economy and its expanding role in global governance. As a significant member of the Global South, India's role is paramount. Leveraging its rising economic stature, India strives to create an inclusive environment for all, especially the Global South. This is particularly important for The Global South, which denotes regions outside Europe and North America, primarily low-income and often politically or culturally marginalised. As the world grapples with intricate issues and chances for progress, the influence of the Global South is continuously changing. Calls for fair representation and substantial participation in global governance are central concerns. There is a noticeable shift in power dynamics, with the Global South gaining prominence in shaping global politics and cooperation. In this discourse, India is using its position in the international order to mainstream Global

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South countries' problems to address them. In this paper, the researcher attempts to understand India's Global South Multivector Foreign Policy and analyse how the Realist and Liberal Schools of International Relations view this policy.

India's Global South Multivector Foreign Policy

Multi-vector foreign policy denotes a foreign policy approach which supports friendly and reliable relations with all countries. A country will develop friendly ties with all if multiple competing actors exist in the region. This approach enables the upholder of this policy to gain beneficial cooperation from all countries in her national interest. The Multi-Vector Policy, or Multi-Vector Doctrine, was a foreign policy strategy implemented by Ukraine under President Leonid Kuchma from 1994 to 2005. This approach aimed to balance Ukraine's relationships with key global powers—the United States, the European Union, and Russia. By pursuing this strategy, Ukraine intended to maintain a neutral stance between Russia and the Western world.

Interestingly, the name of multi-vector foreign policy may be new, but its underlying elements have historical roots. During the Cold War, India followed a policy of non-alignment, which shares similarities with the multi-vector approach. This historical continuity in India's foreign policy is not just significant; it is crucial, indicating the evolution and adaptation of its approach to the changing global landscape. Additionally, India's current principle of strategic autonomy aligns with the core elements of multi-vector policy. In today's multipolar world, countries must engage with various actors to protect their interests effectively. Under India's multi-vector foreign policy, its engagements in the global south are diverse and multi-pronged, which provides a rich scope for study.

The global south is the talk of the world and the most dominantly used vocabulary in deliberation involving power shifts and reorganisations. The international community is observing a change in power dynamics as the Global South takes on a more significant role in influencing the future of global politics and cooperation. As a part of the Global South community, India is attempting to use its rising economic stature to create an inclusive environment for everyone, especially the Global South. India's multi-vector engagement in the Global South is not a one-size-fits-all approach but a diverse and multi-pronged diplomatic effort to build relationships and partnerships with countries in the developing world across various regions. This approach, characterised by a commitment to South-South cooperation, solidarity, and mutual support to address common challenges and promote shared interests, reflects the diversity and inclusivity of India's foreign policy, making it a comprehensive and far-reaching endeavour.

India's multivector engagement in the Global South is evident through

various regional initiatives and partnerships. In Africa, India has significantly strengthened its ties through initiatives like the India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) and implementing the Africa-India Framework for Cooperation. Further, by extension, lines of credit were given to African nations for infrastructure projects, invested in capacity-building programs, and collaborated in healthcare, agriculture, and technology transfer. Diplomatic exchanges, trade agreements, and cultural cooperation have strengthened Latin America and the Caribbean. India's investment in energy, pharmaceuticals, and IT services has increased bilateral trade. India supports development projects and scholarships to students from the region. In South East Asia, via the 'Act East' policy, India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement and the ASEAN-India Business Council, collaboration for maritime security, counter-terrorism, and disaster management has strengthened the relations. Shared interests in energy security, trade, and diaspora drive the strategic partnerships with countries in West Asia and the Gulf region. India's proactive role in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East is a testament to the impact of its foreign policy. The recent India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) announcement strengthened the relations. In Central Asia, initiatives like the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline and Development cooperation in education, healthcare, counter-terrorism, and capacity building. Lastly, to enhance cooperation, India's engagement with Caribbean and Pacific Islands countries through the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC), development assistance, scholarships, and technical training programs.

Background of this Relationship

India has consistently stood out as a leading and steadfast advocate for the Global South, making support for these nations a central pillar of its foreign policy since achieving independence. This commitment is deeply rooted in India's own experience as a formerly colonised nation. "Even after gaining independence in 1947, India remained a vocal supporter of the liberation and sovereignty of colonised nations across Asia and Africa. The aftermath of World War II saw the establishment of the United Nations as a pivotal international institution, coinciding with the emergence of a bipolar world order dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union, each advancing capitalist and communist ideologies, respectively. While embracing the institutional framework of the United Nations, India maintained a principled distance from the power politics of these superpower blocs" (Marjani, n.d.). Instead, India actively championed the Non-Aligned Movement, advocating for newly independent nations to protect their national interests and avoid subordination to significant powers. "In the contemporary context, especially since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, India has consistently called for an immediate

cessation of hostilities and emphasised dialogue and diplomacy as the paramount means to resolve the crisis. India has consistently stressed the importance of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all parties involved” (Marjani, n.d.). India's stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict underscores its unwavering belief in the necessity of robust institutional mechanisms to prevent and mediate conflicts on the global stage.

In recent years, India has been an outspoken advocate for comprehensive reforms within the United Nations. This advocacy is driven by the recognition that countries from the Global South often feel marginalised in global forums dominated by more economically and politically powerful nations, including those from Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific Islands. India actively collaborates with the United Nations through South-South Cooperation. This broad framework fosters collaboration among developing countries across various domains such as politics, economics, social issues, culture, environment, and technology. India's Neighbourhood First Policy and its proactive Vaccine Diplomacy initiatives testify to India's steadfast commitment to nurturing cooperation among Southern nations. Overall, India's foreign policy approach reflects its historical journey and proactive role in advocating for the interests and aspirations of the Global South on the global stage.

According to projections from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in September, India has recently become the world's fifth-largest economy. This achievement places "India among the top economies globally, trailing only the United States, China, Japan, and Germany" (Correspondent, 2022). Despite its rapid economic growth, India remains steadfast in its commitment to the Global South. While the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict has significantly impacted the global economy, attention from major powers like the United States and Europe has primarily focused on addressing this crisis. India, in contrast, has advocated for inclusivity within the United Nations and has raised concerns on behalf of the Global South, which includes regions like Africa and Latin America, preparing to face their economic challenges. (Marjani, n.d.)

India serves as a crucial bridge between the developed nations of the North and the developing countries of the South. This role is underscored by Africa and Latin America's keen interest in deepening their engagements with India to capitalise on its economic growth. Despite the complexities of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, India's foreign policy strategy is notable for maintaining close ties with Western nations and Russia, ensuring a balanced approach to global diplomacy.

In multilateral forums, particularly during its G20 Presidency, India has leveraged its position to advocate for the interests of Global South countries. Notably, India's efforts contributed to the African Union gaining

permanent membership in the G20, a significant achievement for representation from the developing world. The Voice of Global South Summit, initiated by India, further underscores its commitment to amplifying the voices and addressing the priorities of developing nations. This summit aims to catalyse inclusive global development by advocating for access to technology, knowledge, and critical resources necessary for building prosperous societies in the Global South. Various initiatives were launched to emphasise the need for new human-centric development, like Aarogya Maitri, Global South Centre of Excellence, Global South Science and Technology Initiative, Global South Young Diplomats Forum, and Global South Scholarships. India also ensured the region remained central at the G7 Summit.

India's foreign policy has evolved significantly, driven by shifting geopolitical dynamics and economic opportunities, as well as its aspiration for greater regional and global influence. Emphasising multilateralism, India has forged purpose-driven partnerships with emerging economies, characterised by bilateral trade agreements with countries such as the UAE, Singapore, and Korea. These partnerships are grounded in principles that prioritise mutual benefit and address the developmental needs of their respective populations (Ito, 2023).

Theoretical Frameworks

India's approach towards the Global South can be described as multifaceted and all-encompassing, reflecting its extended neighbourhood policy aimed at fostering engagement with regions across the globe. This strategy includes frameworks such as Look East, Act East, Look West, and Look Far East, which underlines India's efforts to deepen relations and collaborations with diverse geographical areas, echoing the philosophical principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (Lekhi, 2023).

During its presidency of the G20, India undertook significant commitments spanning from promoting biofuels to advocating for reforms within international development banks. These initiatives underscore India's aspiration to play a pivotal role on the international stage, particularly within the Global South, where these issues are critically important.

The Global South is significant due to its vast population, diverse cultures, and abundant natural resources. Economically, its influence is rapidly increasing, with projections suggesting that three out of the four largest economies by 2030 will emerge from this region. This economic rise is paralleled by enhanced political visibility as countries in the Global South assert themselves on the global stage through various initiatives and diplomatic efforts.

India's current policy stance, emphasising solidarity with the Global South, garners support from diplomats and researchers, particularly those

from older generations in India who have championed these causes. India remains steadfast in advocating for the interests and aspirations of the Global South, evidenced by its persistent efforts and growing support for securing a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. “As India positions itself as a leader among developing nations, it also seeks to leverage its existing relationships with countries in the Global North to act as a bridging power, facilitating triangular arrangements and fostering greater cooperation and understanding between diverse global regions” (Marjani, n.d.).

From a realist perspective, India's engagement with the Global South can be analysed through the lens of geopolitical interests. This involves expanding India's influence, countering the dominance of other major powers, and securing access to crucial resources and markets. Realist theories provide valuable insights into India's strategic calculations and competitive interactions with other global actors within the Global South context. In this view, India seeks to expand its influence and counterbalance the dominance of other major powers, particularly in regions where it has historical ties or strategic interests. For instance, India's partnerships and collaborations with countries in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia can be understood as efforts to enhance its strategic footprint and access to resources, markets, and alliances.

Conversely, the liberal school emphasises South-South cooperation, highlighting collaborative efforts among Global South countries to tackle common challenges and pursue shared interests. India's foreign policy towards the Global South exemplifies this approach through initiatives such as development assistance, capacity-building programs, and trade partnerships. India positions itself as a leader in fostering South-South cooperation, leveraging its own development experiences and expertise to support and empower other nations in the Global South. This approach is rooted in India's experiences with development and its aspiration to promote a multipolar world order where developing countries have more excellent voice and agency in global affairs. Initiatives like the India-Africa Forum Summit and the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Dialogue Forum exemplify India's commitment to fostering solidarity and cooperation among Global South nations.

On the other hand, other frameworks, like the constructivist perspective, explaining India's relations with the Global South can be analysed in terms of shared identities, norms, and values that shape international interactions. India has often emphasised its historical solidarity with other formerly colonised nations and its commitment to principles such as non-alignment, sovereignty, and multilateralism. Constructivist theory highlights the role of ideas, perceptions, and identity in shaping state behaviour and international relations. India's advocacy for reforms in

global institutions like the United Nations reflects its belief in a more inclusive and representative global governance architecture that gives voice to the Global South. Further, India also employs soft power and cultural diplomacy to strengthen its relations with the Global South. Bollywood movies, Indian cuisine, yoga, and traditional medicine are cultural exports that enhance India's appeal and influence in these regions. India's historical and cultural ties with countries in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East provide a foundation for building diplomatic partnerships and fostering goodwill.

Most importantly, economic considerations are crucial in India's relations with the Global South. Rapidly growing African and Southeast Asian economies present trade, investment, and economic cooperation opportunities. India's Look East, Act East, and Look West policies manifest its efforts to deepen economic engagements with countries in these regions, leveraging economic diplomacy to strengthen bilateral and multilateral relations.

India's relations with the Global South are complex and multifaceted, shaped by geopolitical, economic, ideological, and cultural factors. Theoretical frameworks like realism, liberalism, constructivism, and concepts of soft power help provide a deeper understanding of India's strategic calculations, motivations, and aspirations in its engagements with countries across the Global South.

Conclusion

'Together, For Everyone's Growth, With Everyone's Trust' is the motto that India believes in. "Our G20 priorities will be shaped in consultation with not just our G20 partners, but also our fellow travellers in the Global South, whose voice often goes unheard", Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi at the Voice of Global South Summit (Ministry Of External Affairs, 2023)

India aims to establish itself as a developing world leader but must support this ambition with concrete actions. Beyond concentrating solely on partnerships with developing nations, India could leverage its existing relationships with Global North countries to act as a bridging power in triangular arrangements. Promoting collaboration and cooperation in this manner would lead to a more representative global order, fostering the emergence of a more responsible power not fixated on zero-sum outcomes, creating a win-win situation for all parties involved.

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