

# GLOBAL SOUTH: AN IMPORTANT DRIVING FORCE FOR THE EVOLUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER

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Since the beginning of the 21st century, the international order has witnessed a notable shift marked by an increasingly active involvement of the Global South in global affairs. This engagement has effectively curtailed hegemonism, Cold War mentalities, and camp politics. The Global South is committed to fostering a more just, reasonable, equal, and representative international order, aspiring to earn a more peaceful, stable, and conducive external environment for sustainable development. In pursuit of these goals, Global South countries have forged a robust community of solidarity and mutual assistance. This united front holds the power to influence global politics and economies, actively contributing to the establishment of an equitable, prosperous, and sustainable world.

## **EMERGING FORCES IN GLOBAL POLITICS**

The Global South emerged within the era of global politics as a new identity and worldview that champions global thinking and coordinated action. It believes challenges can be effectively addressed only through collaborative global efforts. The rise of the Global South has significantly contributed to the overall globalization and a more inclusive and equitable international order.

Viewed through the lens of international politics and economics, the Global South, a product of non-alignment and the Third World, maintains a legacy grounded in anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, and anti-hegemony. In

1991, the UN General Assembly passed the Challenge to the South: Report of the South Commission urging Global South countries to take concerted actions worldwide. The concept of the Global South gains traction as people recognize the global presence of Emerging Market and Developing Countries (EMDCs) whose agenda is an important part of modern global politics. In the meantime, Global South countries, emerging as a collective force, go beyond borders to address development issues, voice global concerns, and undertake tangible actions.

In recent years, the Global South has witnessed a rapid increase in influence, emerging as a new political actor. This growth can be attributed to internal factors (enhanced capabilities, and political awakening) and external factors (a new phase of globalization, and escalating international competition).

Internally, EMDCs have increasingly become pivotal drivers of global economy and essential contributors, and even leaders, in global governance. In 2023, the African Union gained entry into the G20, while the BRICS Summit 2023 agreed to admit Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The African Peace Mission actively promoted the peaceful resolution of the Ukrainian crisis. The Global South advocated for attention to the humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. These latest developments showcase growth of global influence of the Global South. Additionally, emerging multilateral development financing institutions such as the Asian

Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank are giving more priority to the developmental needs of Global South countries.

Externally, as the international power structure becomes increasingly diversified, the West and the United States are seeking to secure support from the Global South to reinforce its dominant or advantageous position in the international order. To secure their dominance, they strategically positioned EMDCs, including China, at the lower rungs of the global industrial and value chains. This was achieved through the dismantling of neo-liberal globalization and adjustments to the globalization model amid a trend of tribalization. The United States and the West are enhancing their influence in the Global South by establishing ideological connections, promoting “near-shoring” and “friendly shoring” and launching global infrastructure initiatives. Although the Global South countries welcome resources from the United States and the West, they still choose an open world economic system, the international order and multilateral cooperation represented by the United Nations over economic protectionism and pan-security represented by the West.

## GLOBAL SOUTH VIEW ON INTERNATIONAL ORDER

The Global South possesses not only the economic foundation for sustainable development but also the political inclination to advance towards a just and equitable international order. This grants a unique advantage and role to the Global South in resolving international conflicts, promoting global development, addressing climate change, and advocating dialogue among civilizations.

### I. Pursuing Peaceful Transformation

The end of the Cold War did not usher in lasting global peace. Neo-interventionism and NATO's eastward expansion have heightened geopolitical tension and turmoil, causing a sharp decline in political mutual trust and security cooperation intentions among major powers. Despite the persistent threat of terrorism, the United States, aiming to preserve its hegemonic position, listed major power competition as the foremost threat in its national security strategy in the post-Cold War era. The U.S. seeks to maintain a long-term competitive advantage over China and contain Russia.

The Global South treasures international security based on the UN Charter, underscoring the importance of the peaceful settlement of international disputes. Multilateral

mechanisms dedicated to global and regional security governance, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS, are making beneficial endeavors in this respect. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, focusing on regional security threats, has included countries with territorial disputes, such as India and Pakistan, as members. Saudi Arabia and Iran were invited to join BRICS following their reconciliation.

In the face of new international security crises, such as the Ukrainian crisis and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, most countries in the Global South have taken determined positions based on their understanding of the crises, humanitarian concerns, and their own national interests. They actively engaged in promoting peace and dialogue. The majority of Global South reject deploying arms or imposing unilateral sanctions on belligerents. Moreover, they oppose the pan-security approach that labels specific countries or enterprises as security threats groundlessly. Most of them refuse to take sides in major power conflicts, accommodating their legitimate interests rationally. Some economically robust countries in the Global South autonomously manage their relations with relevant countries based on their interests. Given the current security landscape, the Global South is advocating for a reform of the post-war international security order. It is also calling for a more representative UN Security Council and restrictions on the power of permanent members.

### II. Pursuing Development Rights

Over a long time, many Global South countries with limited resources and development capabilities, have relied heavily on financing from donor countries and internation-

*On October 30, 2023, at the Security Council's open meeting on the political and humanitarian aspects of Syria, China clearly expressed its opposition to external forces undermining the security and stability of Syria.*



Photo/Xinhua

al organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Formulating independent development policies aligned with their own national conditions has proven challenging for them but they need to secure more equitable, independent, and mutually beneficial development and cooperation opportunities urgently. Countries like Cuba, Venezuela, and Iran, situated in the Global South and subjected to longstanding financial and trade sanctions from the United States and the West, find themselves largely disconnected from development resources within the global financial and trade system. The U.S. strategies of “decoupling and breaking the chain” and “small yard and high wall” in science and technology also impose significant restrictions on the access of emerging technologies by the Global South.

The Havana Declaration, adopted during the G77 and China Summit in September 2023, expressed profound concerns regarding the current unfair international economic order, highlighting its most severe impact on developing countries. The declaration urged a comprehensive reform of the international financial architecture, aiming for more inclusive and coordinated governance. It emphasized the importance of enhancing cooperation among countries, promoting representation of developing countries in global decision-making processes. Furthermore, it firmly opposed the implementation of laws and regulations with extraterritorial effects and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions against developing countries. The declaration reiterated the urgent need to eliminate these measures immediately.

Affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, global economic and security challenges, and limited technological innovation capability, the Global South faces significant obstacles in attaining sustainable development goals. There is an urgent need for an international order that empowers them to harness the development opportunities presented by the fourth industrial revolution. Their collective goal of the Global South is to advance and modernize through new industrialization and deeply engage in it through science, technology, and innovation. Furthermore, the Global South closely follows AI developments and relevant regulations, aiming to enhance their own AI technology and applications and actively participate in the development of global regulations.

### III. Pursuing Environmental Justice

The rise of the Global South happened during an era

emphasizing environmental justice. Capital and technology-constrained countries in the Global South anticipate a transformed international order that can address the specific needs of developing countries regarding climate change. Despite the international community reaching a consensus on common but differentiated responsibilities, developed countries have fallen short in meeting their financing commitments and altering the business models of multilateral development banks and international financial institutions. In 2022, the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) made a breakthrough agreement to provide loss and damage funding for underdeveloped countries hit hard by climate disasters.

A new generation of politicians in the Global South generally regards green development as their philosophy of governance. Kenyan President Ruto, Colombian President Petro, and Brazilian President Lula all place special emphasis on global green development cooperation. The Global South is also progressively enhancing its capacity, including scientific and technological capabilities to address climate change through South-South cooperation. A case in point is the China-Brazil Joint Laboratory for Space Weather built to conduct scientific studies, such as the near-Earth space environment of the two countries and develop weather early warning models.

### IV. Pursuing Openness and Inclusiveness

As an informal designation of a community, the Global South is characterized by its high tolerance for differences. It comprises many countries with varying ideologies, social systems, religious customs, and levels of development. Its perspective on the international order reflects its commitment to respecting and supporting the diversity of the world. The US subprime mortgage crisis in 2008 and the riots at the US Capitol in 2021 reaffirmed the political determination of the Global South to pursue a development path aligned with their national conditions. Additionally, these events deepened its understanding of the diversity within the international order featuring various development models.

The Global South countries have gradually moved away from the neoliberal development model represented by the Washington Consensus to focus on mutual learning from development experience and expertise through international exchanges. For instance, right before her visit to China, Honduran President Xiomara

Castro wrote “the refounding of Honduras demands new political, scientific, technical, commercial and cultural horizons”, demonstrating her political will to draw inspiration from China’s development. Uruguay, Brazil, and China have gained international acclaim for their respective achievements in renewable power generation and inclusive social initiatives, thereby bolstering the global influence of the Global South in sustainable development. The Global South countries view the development models and achievements of others as valuable examples.

The Global South is a constantly evolving global identity. Although the Global South countries have explored distinctive development paths, such as the Non-Aligned Movement, import substitution, and neo-liberal reforms, they consistently make development explorations within the context of the international order and the global system. The Global South has always reiterated the importance of South-South cooperation and North-South Dialogue, demonstrating its commitment to an open and inclusive international order.

### **CHINA’S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GLOBAL SOUTH: PROSPECTS**

China has unequivocally asserted that it is an integral member of the Global South. In his closing speech at the 2023 BRICS Business Forum, President Xi Jinping affirmed that “as a developing country and a member of the Global South, China shares a common destiny with other developing countries and actively pursues a shared future with them. China has steadfastly championed the common interests of developing countries and endeavored to enhance the representation and voice of EMDCs in global affairs.”

China has actively collaborated with other Global South countries to promote a more just and rational international order. The Bandung Spirit, championed by China in the 1950s, laid the foundation for South-South cooperation. In 1991, China and the G77 jointly presented a position paper as the G77+China group for the first time at the Preparatory Meeting of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Since then, the G77+China has evolved into a crucial mechanism for the Global South. International mechanisms initiated by China such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the BRICS, and the Belt and Road Initiative, have provided additional channels for the Global South to actively shape

the international order. The BRICS expansion and the African Union’s accession to the G20 signify the shared commitment of the Global South to uphold multilateralism and promote reform within the global governance system. China played a leading role in these processes.

In July 2023, China put forward four proposals on strengthening cooperation among the Global South countries: eliminate conflicts and jointly build peace; reinvigorate vitality and promote development; be open and inclusive for common progress; be united and discuss cooperation. China underscored its readiness to collaborate with a vast number of EMDCs to advance the implementation of Global Development Initiatives, Global Security Initiative, and Global Civilization Initiative. The goal is to jointly build a Community of Shared Future for Mankind. These proposals strongly align with the Global South’s perspective on the international order, indicating a promising prospect for China to collaborate with the Global South. To effectively promote the cooperation and development of the Global South countries, attention should be directed towards the following aspects:

Firstly, it is imperative to acknowledge the significance of the Global South. The Global South plays a constructive role in supporting economic globalization, safeguarding international peace, and advancing the agenda of sustainable development amid significant global changes. Despite being underdeveloped, the Global South has achieved notable development milestones and possesses substantial potential. It is contributing significantly to the Community of Shared Future for Mankind.

Secondly, it is crucial to effectively enhance the unity of the Global South. With certain countries and actors attempting to sow divisions within the Global South, China should stand more closely together with developing countries and strengthen the unity and resilience of the Global South through the ongoing improvement and implementation of BRICS and the G77+China.

Thirdly, there is a need to raise public recognition of the Global South. With the implementation of Belt and Road initiative and dissemination of research results on the Global South regions, the public can develop a heightened awareness of the Global South. This increased awareness will help individuals recognize that the rise of the Global South contributes to the development of a more just and equitable international order. By then, garnering more public support for new international relations and South-South cooperation will become achievable. 