

Forum: Special Conference on International Development

Issue: Achieving Equitable Growth Across the Global South

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Position: Deputy Chair

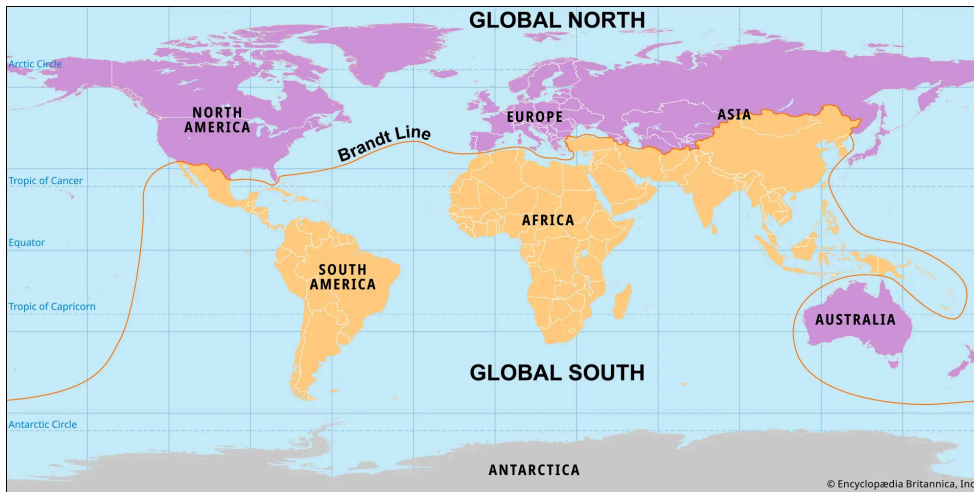
Introduction

Rapid technological advancements in Europe during the Industrial Revolution led to European nations colonizing most of Africa and Asia in the search of natural resources for them to be able to fund their rapidly growing industries. For centuries, most African and Asian nations, even the ones not colonized such as China, were forced into unequal treaties, which vastly impaired their economic development. After colonies gained independence from their colonizers, most of them did not have a stable economy, their industries were lacking and poverty was persistent through the nations. This was mainly due to them being dependent on their historical colonizer, as they primarily exported raw resources to them with cheap prices, and imported added-value products back with high prices. As they faced high import costs and low export revenues, their debt rose.

Political activist Carl Oglesby was the first person to use the term “Global South” in 1969, however, the term became popular and started to be used more when it was used in a report written by a commission chaired by German chancellor Willy Brandt, “North-South: A Programme for Survival”, also known as the Brandt Report. The term does not refer to a specific group of countries, but it is generally used interchangeably with the system of developing countries by the United Nations. Members of Group of 77, which is a coalition of developing countries, can also be considered Global South. Some believe it is unhealthy to categorize countries with a vast array of different ideologies and economies under a single term. (Britannica)

Through the years, the United Nations attempted to find a way to address the development gap between the North and the South. In the name of development, organisations such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC), which was later renamed to South-South Cooperation and then to the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, was formed. These organisations worked primarily on enhancing international collaboration to support the development of the nations in the South, by supporting their collaboration within each other, as well as with the partners from the North. (UNDP)

It is evident that cooperation on a global scale is a key to achieving economic growth across the Global South, however, there are still many issues to be tackled and a long way to go, as there are many obstacles still in the way of a developed Global South.



A picture of the Brandt Line, dividing the Global North from the Global South

The Brandt Line was proposed by Willy Brandt to show how most developed countries were located in the North while most developing countries were located in the South. Almost all of the historical colonial empires are located above the line while their former colonies are located below and are classified as developed nations.

Definition of Key Terms

Global South

The term refers to the group of nations that are in Africa, South America and Asia, that are underdeveloped. Term is sometimes used exchangeably with the term “developing nation”. (Cambridge Dictionary)

Global North

The term refers to the more developed nations in Europe, North America and developed parts of Asia. The Global North includes some of the major historical colonial empires, such as the United Kingdom and France. (Cambridge Dictionary)

Developing Country

The term refers to countries where those economies and industries are not well developed and have little economic activities, their people usually have low incomes and live in poverty. (Cambridge Dictionary)

Developed Country

The term refers to countries that are economically developed and have a high level of

economic activities with well developed industries. People living in those countries usually are wealthy and have high levels of income. (Cambridge Dictionary)

Exploitation

The term refers to taking advantage of a resource, person or a group in an unethical or unfair way. In context of the agenda item, it refers to the exploitation of the colonies and their resources with unfair treaties. (Oxford Dictionary)

South-South Collaboration

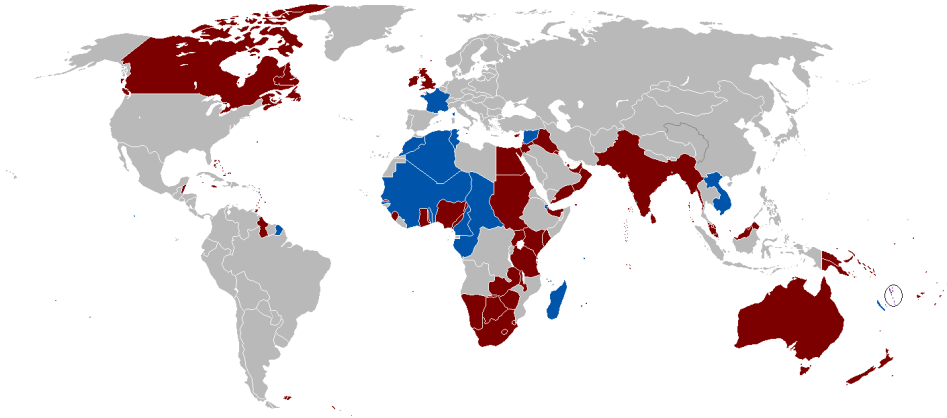
The term describes the knowledge, technology and resource exchange between the countries of the Global South. (UNDP)

General Overview

History of Colonization

The Industrial Revolution started at the end of the 18th century and spread to all of Europe in the 19th. This resulted in a massive surge of production and rapid technological development in European Nations, which led to a higher amount of natural resource consumption in the process of production. As the demand for resources soared, many European Nations (i.e the United Kingdom, France and Germany) were not able to supply their industries with the resources found in their mainland. To be able to continue mass production, and to procure raw materials cheaply to increase profits, they looked at the rest of the world, which wasn't as developed as they were, and thus, were vulnerable. Taking advantage of their weak states, they established mandates and colonies in nearly all of Africa, Asia, and South America. This is called extractive colonialism, which is the type of colonialism where the colonizer aims to procure a specific type of raw material found in a particular area. As most of the nations of Africa, Asia and South America had valuable lands that were rich in natural resources, such as cotton, tin and oil, European Nations wanted to extract those resources and use them for their economic activities. To be able to access the resources, they forced the colonized nations into treaties, which were made solely to benefit themselves and exploit the underdeveloped nations. The Africans and Asians being forced into unequal treaties meant that they were forced to export their natural resources with very low costs to their colonizers, which then was used to supply their production, thus leading in their production rates rising and them being able to produce more value-added products. These products were then exported back to Africa and Asia with high prices. As the European Nations were the only suppliers of such goods, the colonies eventually became dependent on their production.

Also, the high import costs and low export revenues resulted in the colonies getting into high levels of debt, while their ability to finance it only shrunk. As the European nations were developing, African and Asian countries were left far behind. (Carnegie Endowment)(UNDP)



A map from 1920, which shows the British and the French Empire and their colonies

Decolonization and Independence

After the end of WW2, the colonial empires started to break down. Nations such as India, Indonesia and Egypt gained their independence, and eventually a seat in the United Nations. However, the development gap was still present. After a very long time of being dependent on their colonizers, it was not possible to gain total economic independence without a substantial amount of time as they were decades behind in terms of development. They were not directly controlled by European nations, but the exploitation continued. It is stated that previous colonies gained freedom on their economies and actions, but were unable to use it to its full capacity *“because economic decolonization, especially in the Global South, has not always been accompanied by political decolonization”* (OHCHR). Although the colonies were independent, they were still dependent on their historical colonizers.

In 1969 the framework “North and South” was first used by political activist Carl Oglesby, referring to the “North’s dominance over the global South”. It started to be widely used and became popular after it was used in a report published in 1980 by a commission chaired by German Chancellor Willy Brandt, “North-South: A programme for survival”, also known as the Brandt Report. Brandt drew a line in the world map, dividing the developed North from the poor South. The term “Global South” does not refer to a specific list of countries or a group of nations, however, through the years, the term was being used interchangeably with various other terms, such as “developing nations” or with numerous UN organisations, such as the G77. (Carnegie Endowment)(Britannica)

Effects on Development, Indonesian Example

The effect of colonialism was mainly known to be negative on the nations that were under the rule of foreign nations. Colonizers mainly aimed to maximize their economic profits and thus, organized economic activities in their colonies for that purpose. This was usually beneficial to them only as they exploited the native people and the natural resources. However, a recent study shows along with the negatives, the investments to infrastructure and production may actually have long-term benefits to the development of the nation.

Extraction of a natural resource on a massive scale requires a substantial amount of investment to be made to the region. Mines and farms for the extraction of the raw materials; roads,

railroads and ports for the transportation and factories for the processing of the raw materials to goods. Indonesia, Dutch East Indies at the time, was a colony of the Netherlands. The island of Java was the main population center of the Dutch Empire in its colony in the Indies. The Dutch forced the peasant population to take part in sugar cultivation and processing efforts in colonial factories. Exports of processed, high quality sugar to Europe resulted in the colony being one of the most lucrative colonies in the entire World. Before the introduction of sugar processing by the Dutch, Javanese economy was mainly based on rice production. When the Dutch came and set up factories to process sugar cane, it made a number of investments and changes in the Indies. They have made developments to the local infrastructure, building roads and railways for the transportation of processed sugar to the ports, to be carried to Europe. A study shows villages located in close proximity to factories were more likely to have paved roads, and today have a higher density of roads. They also had a higher chance of having electricity, and a high school. These results show the support of colonial investments to the development of the nations. They even sometimes collaborated on the wealth of people living near where the investments have been made, as people living closer to factories have a higher per-capita consumption than those who live far away.

However, not all effects were positive. The Dutch also implemented the “Cultivation System” in 1830, which required every villager to use 20% of their farmland for the cultivation of crops. But this caused widespread famines as most were forced to use more than 20% of their farmland, thus, the system was abolished in 1870.

Sugar production continued in the Indies long after decolonization, until its collapse in the Great Depression. Indonesia is a major importer of sugar today. (Harvard)



A map of Dutch East Indies, historical colony of the Kingdom of Netherlands

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Pivotal Countries in South-South Cooperation

Countries that are in the Global South have been collaborating economically and technically to support each other's development process'. As some countries were more developed compared to some other countries, they "have been formally recognized as 'pivotal' to South-South Cooperation". (UNDP)

India

India is considered as a member of the Global South who has gained enough economic power to be considered as a regional power. With its cooperation programme, it makes billions of dollars of investment to its partners in the Global South, which increased its influence in the region, sparking a geopolitical rivalry for the leadership of the Global South with China. (UNDP)

Brazil

Currently in 2025, Brazil has the 3rd largest economy in the Global South and 10th largest globally (IMF). It is considered as a pivotal country in the development of the Global South and in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, it consults annually with regional partners about the planning and funding of cooperation programmes. (UNDP)

South Africa

"South Africa has 'sought to position itself as a leading voice of the global south'". (Carnegie Endowment). In 2003, with 2 other pivotal countries, India and Brazil, they founded the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA), aiming to promote South-South Collaboration, combating poverty and equitable development while also increasing trade among the three countries. In areas other than the economic field, South Africa also is active diplomatically. "President Cyril Ramaphosa has spoken of the need to strengthen the voice of the Global South in the multilateral system"(House of Commons Library), this shows South Africa also aims for the development and strengthening of the Global South on global diplomacy.

China

Although being classified as a developing country and a historical member of the Global South, it is a significant political and economic force in the region. It aims to further increase its economic influence by making new trade agreements with the Nations in the Global South and reduce dependency on the Global North. (Carnegie Endowment)

G77

Group of 77 was first formed in 1964 with a joint declaration of 77 nations, it aims to promote the economic interests and support the development of its members. Nearly all of its current 134 members are historically classified to be in the Global South. (Wikipedia)

UNDP

The United Nations Development Programme was established to oversee international collaboration, information sharing and the exchange of experts. It has several other sub committees such as the TCDC and ECDC. In recent years, it established the South-South Cooperation, replacing TCDC. This implies they started to focus more on the Global South. (UNDP)

Timeline of Events

15 August 1947	India gained independence from the British Empire.
August 1949	The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established the first technical aid programme.
1964	G77 is formed by the joint declaration of 77 states, to safeguard economic interests of its member nations.
1965	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is established.
1969	The term “Global South” was used for the first time by Carl Oglesby.
30 August- 12 September 1978	The United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries was hosted in Buenos Aires Buenos Aires Plan of Action(BAPA) was adopted on its last day.
30 August- 12 September 1978	At the same conference, adoption of BAPA also meant the TCDC would be supported more.
2003	The General Assembly formally used the term “Special Unit for South-South Cooperation” instead of the TCDC.

6 June 2003	Brazil, India and South Africa adopt the “Brasilia Declaration”, formalizing the IBSA Dialogue forum.
2012	The General Assembly renamed the “Special Unit for South-South Cooperation” to “United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)”.
31 December 2024	The UN General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/79/236. This implies that the issue is still relevant in the modern day.

UN Involvement

As the era of colonialism ended, many nations in the Global South were severely underdeveloped and under the burden of crippling debt. Their technologies and industries were not developed enough to compete with the nations of the western and the eastern bloc, and the amount of debt they had meant they did not have enough capital to develop. That was when the UN decided to support the process of development. Several international organisations were formed to aid the development of developing nations, some specifically focused on the global south. The United Nations aimed to strengthen international collaboration with deployment of foreign experts to support the development initiatives being carried out. In 1965, earlier UN programs were combined, creating the UNDP. This helped oversee the development of experts and funding of multiple projects.

Committees more focused on developing countries were formed as well, such as the Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, which aimed to share experience and use experts to create technical knowledge, aiding the development of the developing nations. However in the 70s, the developing nations increased cooperation and started to negotiate agreements, collaborating to help close the economic gap between them and the Global North, simultaneously, the phrase “South-South Cooperation” gained currency when the General Assembly formally used the term instead of the TCDC in 2003 while dealing with cooperation among developing countries. Occasionally, South-South Cooperation were supported by more developed partners in the North, these collaborations were named “Triangular Cooperation”. One other organisation founded was the G77, it was formed in 1964 by 77 nations with the purpose of addressing economic needs of developing countries, and by increasing their manufacturing capacities. It hoped to increase domestic production and thus reduce dependency on wealthier countries. Currently, it has 134 member states and nearly all of them are historical members of the Global South. (UNOSSC)(UNDP)

Relevant UN Documents

Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, 1 May 1974,

A/RES/3201(S-VI) <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/218450?ln=en&v=pdf>

Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Co-Operation Among Developing Countries, 30 August to 12 September 1978, **A/CONF.79/13/Rev.1**

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/56998?ln=en&v=pdf>

Draft decisions recommended by the Working Group, 28 May 1993, **TCDC/8/L.5**

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/169718?ln=en&v=pdf>

Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 30 August 2017, **A/RES/71/318**

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1302789?ln=en&v=pdf>

South-South cooperation adopted by the General Assembly, 31 December 2024, **A/RES/79/236**

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4072191?ln=en&v=pdf>

Treaties and Events

Buenos Aires Plan of Action

From 30 August to 12 September 1978, the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries was hosted in Buenos Aires. In the conference, the Buenos Aires Plan on Action (BAPA) was adopted and was endorsed by the General Assembly in the month of December of the same year. It included multiple recommendations to address the challenges in development. It also discussed the need for international collaboration and actions needed to be taken both on national and international levels. (UNOSSC)

Formation and Strengthening of the TCDC

BAPA also promoted and implemented the TCDC, while identifying multiple focal points it should focus on. 25 years later in 2003, the TCDC was renamed to South-South Cooperation, the new name reflects the increase of focus and importance on international collaboration of developing countries. (UNDP)

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

International Support Institutions

International support regarding this issue comes in the form of knowledge sharing. In order to increase technical knowledge, experts from different countries support the development projects in the developing countries. Multiple reports and UN resolutions discuss the importance of support from the international community. Multiple international organisations, UN bodies, groups of interest such as the G77 and governments have been working for decades to address this issue. However, these efforts are not enough as the institutions managing the collaboration are not well developed. Lack of information and resources are still an obstacle to the development of collaboration in the Global South.

Effect of South-South and Triangular Cooperation and Economic Support

One of the main obstacles obstructing the development of Global South is lack of capital and the inability to produce it locally. Although South-South collaboration and triangular cooperation has been playing a major role in development, many nations of the Global South were unable to receive sufficient investment and thus do not have capital, and are in crippling debt.. This obstructs the development efforts as without capital to invest, the Global South is unable to invest into agricultural/industrial development. This keeps them in a state of dependency, as they are forced to import the necessary goods from the Global North with high prices.

The UN and international groups of interest continue to work on similar solutions, however, current obstacles need to be considered in further efforts to support the development of the Global South.

Possible Solutions

Support of the Global North to Previous Colonies

It is evident how the development efforts of the Netherlands supported the current infrastructure and industry of its former colony, Indonesia. Although this solution is being partially done by the triangular cooperation, the institutions overseeing and supporting it need to be strengthened. If done correctly, international investments have the possibility of supporting the Global South in its development. Former colonial powers, such as France, should collaborate with its historical colonies and experts to determine the appropriate investments, such as how the Netherlands invested into sugar cane industry and its infrastructure, and fund the development efforts. Triangular Cooperation is beneficial and should be strengthened, however, to ensure mass collaboration, there needs to be greater cooperation that is supervised by the UN, to make sure the investments are beneficial and not political.

Internal Collaboration Between the Global South

China has been developing rapidly over the last few decades, and is currently making trade deals with the nations in the region. It and other more developed countries compared to the rest of the

Global South has the capability of supporting the development in the region with international investments. This also supports the idea of being independent from the Global North. Existing trade deals should be continued and the exports of locally produced goods should be encouraged with appropriate prices, contrary to the colonial past. Countries that are identified as “pivotal” would be major contributors to this solution.

Not only the more developed nations can support the development efforts, but even the poorer countries may contribute as well. South-South Cooperation and G77 was formed with that purpose, with strengthening regional economic collaboration with joint investments and trade deals to supply growing and developing industries, Global South may start to develop faster and more effectively.

Notes from the Chair

This issue has been ongoing since the independence of the colonies, and is not an issue that can be solved in a short time frame or with general solutions. Serious time and effort needs to be devoted to the development of the Global South. Investments to establish the capacity to process resources and produce goods locally should be the first priority, as this will be a step towards self-sustainability. The more developed nations of the Global South are already supporting the economic development of the region, but oversight and support mechanisms should be established as the current collaboration is not enough.

Every country in the Global South has a different culture, economy and history. Some countries are industrialized and developed like China, while some countries in Africa are underdeveloped. Many experts agree classifying them under the roof of “Global South” is incorrect, a more organized support plan that specifically focuses on overcoming the obstacles that hinder the development efforts has to be made.

Here are some links that would be helpful in researching this topic:

–<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Global-North-and-Global-South>

–<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/cn/UNDP-CH-PR-Publications-UNDay-for-South-South-Cooperation.pdf>

–<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/05/global-south-colonialism-imperialism?lang=en>

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