Major Role of The India in the New Global South: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

This research paper aims to analyse the role of India's G20 presidency in navigating the complexities of the contemporary international landscape. The current study is conducted using secondary data from books, government publications, open-source databases and other literature sources. The objectives of this article are to analyse the country's opportunities and challenges in the context of India in the G20 summit. With its G20 presidency, India proposed that the African Union become a permanent member of the G20, and the motion was officially accepted at the G20 summit in September 2023.India made the proposal with the aim of garnering stronger support from Africa, which is part of the Global South, and also to curb the influence of China, which is seeking to strengthen its ties with Africa.

Keywords: India, G20, Presidency, Opportunities, Challenges and New Global south, The African Union (AU)

Introduction

India hosted the G20 Leaders' Summit on September 9-10, 2023, which brought together the G20 Heads of State and Government. The priorities of India's G20 Presidency exhibited a clear vision that is inclusive and pragmatic. These priorities encompass a wide range of substantive discussions, including strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth (G20, 2023), accelerating progress on sustainable development goals (SDGs), multilateral institutional reforms, green development for a sustainable future, technological transformation and digital public infrastructure, international taxation and women led development. These priorities are also supported by 125 countries from the Global South during the" Voice of the Global South Summit" in January 2023.

The Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' promotes consultative, outcome-oriented, demand-driven development partnerships that respect the sovereignty of partner countries, where voices of the Global South are India's voice, its priorities India's priorities to be implemented in south-driven development partnerships.

In today's scenario, the role of multilateral organisations like the G20 is also crucial for addressing global challenges that no nation can tackle alone. G20, as a forum for the world's largest economies, provides a platform for cooperation and collaboration to create a more sustainable, prosperous, and equitable future for all.

It is important to mention that under India's G20 Presidency, India's aim is to amplify the voice of the Global South, responding to its priorities, recognising the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and identifying simple, scalable and sustainable development solutions that can transform our societies and economies.

India's usage of the term "Global South" embodies three elements. First, China is positioned outside the framework, implying India's standing as the representative of the developing world. Second, as India understands the traditional North-South problem and the context of North-South disparities, its use of the term suggests its intention to add the topic of resolving issues faced by countries located in the Southern Hemisphere to the discussions in multilateral forums led by major countries, such as the G7 and G20. Finally, India maintains a stance that intentionally does not clarify which countries are included in the scope of the Global South and keeps

the definition vague. This ambiguity indicates the possibility of including all countries other than developed countries and China, and as a result, India seems to have succeeded in bringing into view the Global South, a group of emerging and developing countries, as a single political actor.

The African Union (AU) permanent membership in G20

India's relationship with African countries is centuries old (Chaturvedi, 2016). Notably, India's development cooperation with Africa is a partnership based on solidarity, non-prescriptive, and mutual benefits. The intersection of African resurgence and India's growing economy and global profile has opened up new avenues for deepening the multi-faceted development partnership between the two emerging growth poles of the world (RIS, 2015) and the African Union's membership in the G20 is the greatest accomplishment of India's G20 presidency and the African Union's membership of G20 will substantially contribute to addressing the current global challenges. It is essential to note that the inclusion of the African Union in the G20 will always be hailed as a landmark of inclusivity and will give the Global South a greater voice. In addition, the G20 reaffirms its robust support for Africa, including through the G20 Compact with Africa and the G20 Initiative to Support Industrialisation in Africa and LDCs (G20, 2023).

India-Africa collaboration

The close relationships between India and African countries today date back to before the Global South strategy was conceived. The India and African nations have steadily strengthened their ties through the CII- EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership, a working-level meeting first held in 2005, and the India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS), a summit-level meeting held regularly since 2008.

Good example of human resource development support is the plan by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras to open an overseas branch campus in Zanzibar, Tanzania, in eastern Africa in October 2023. The Indian government's direct involvement in human resource development in a face-to-face manner, such as by sending professors from India to branch school, is a characteristic of the support it provides.

At the 18th working-level meeting of the CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India- Africa Project Partnership in 2023, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar emphasized India's continued engagement in Africa by pledging to supply Indian-made COVID-19 vaccines to 42 African countries where vaccine rollouts have been delayed amid the pandemic, and confirmed that priority will be given to cooperation in the areas of digital transformation, the environment, health, and food and water security. Keeping in mind India's selected theme of "One Earth, One Family, One Future" for its G20 presidency, the country seems to be touting the fact that it has actually reached out to the Global Soutth.

Challenges and Opportunities of India's G20 Presidency

India pressed for sustainable development goals such as climate change, renewable energy, green growth initiatives and health crises while addressing challenges such as poverty, inequality, and rural-urban disparities. As one of the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases and a country vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, India has a vested interest in advancing global efforts to combat climate change. India championed initiatives that promote clean energy, climate resilience, and green growth while advocating for the needs of developing countries.

It is important to mention that under the Indian G20 presidency, the trade and investment group reached a consensus on five important action-oriented outcomes. As mentioned above, Intra-South exports grew at an annual average rate of 13 per cent between 1995 and 2022, far outpacing the growth of world exports at 7.5 per cent during the same period. G20 reaffirms the rules-based, non-discriminatory and transparent multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core.

The Prime Minister of India stated in his speech that the Indian presidency's top priority has been increasing the participation of MSMEs in global trade and value chains. G20 recognises the role and significance of digital technology, technology-based tools, and appropriate policy and institutional measures in facilitating MSMEs' access to information, finance, and markets. Additionally, G20 member nations issued the Jaipur Call for Action to

Aayushi International Interdisciplinary Research Journal (AIIRJ)

VOL- XI	ISSUE- XII	DECEMBER	2024	PEER REVIEW e-JOURNAL	IMPACT FACTOR 8.02	ISSN 2349-638x

improve MSMEs' access to information. The G20 recognises the importance of ensuring the reliability and predictability of international trade and cargo operations. They emphasise the need to promote international paperless trade transactions 9 and invest in logistics infrastructure to stimulate global trade demand.

The G20 Agriculture Working group was created in 2011 during France's presidency of G20. At that time, there was a high volatility in global food prices, and the whole world was affected, including the Global South. It has since become an essential forum for discussing agriculture related issues and enhancing cooperation among the G20 members. Agriculture issues are critical for achieving the SDG goals, especially the goal of zero hunger (SDG 2). Under the Indian G20 presidency, the Deccan High-level Principles on Global Food Security were adopted.

It is essential to mention that these principles provide a basis to ensure global food security, more specifically, Global South through G20 actions and programmes with collaboration multilateral organisations. The Agriculture Market Information System (AMIS) and MAHARISHI initiative, i.e., Millets And other Ancient Grains International Research Initiative are two major achievements in this context.

On the sidelines of the Delhi Summit, Prime Minister of India and leaders of the United States, Brazil, Singapore, Bangladesh, Argentina, Mauritius, Italy, and UAE launched the Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA).26 It is a multi-stakeholder alliance of government, industries and international organizations. Currently, 22 countries and 12 international organizations have already agreed to join the Alliance and the majority of these countries are from Global South. GBA aims to serve as a catalytic platform, fostering global collaboration for the advancement and widespread adoption of biofuels. Due to Net Zero targets, the IEA predicts a 3.5-to-5-fold growth potential for biofuels by 2050, generating a tremendous opportunity for India as well as for the global south. According to the Indian Biogas Association (IBA), a biofuel alliance could generate USD500 billion in opportunities for G20 nations over the next three years.

In the context of the space sector, the space technology has had a significant impact on the quality of life of the human being, and the world's dependence on space and space assets is increasing daily. By 2040, the current USD 447 billion industry is projected to surpass USD1 trillion. It is essential to note that the theme of this year's SELM (Space Economy Leaders Meet) under India's G20 presidency was "Towards a New Space ERA (Economy, Responsibility, Alliance)", reflecting the importance of New Space in shaping the global economy. SELM also emphasised the importance of bilateral and multilateral partnerships involving space agencies, industries, and academic institutions in order to address the challenges of outer space's long-term sustainability and also recognised the growing number and diversity of space players. In addition, leaders have encouraged all spacefaring nations to promote international cooperation and capacity building in support of space aspiring nations.

As one of the largest development finance flows, remittance offers immense potential to contribute to the achievement of Agenda 2030 and financial inclusion. On the other side, the high cost of remittances stops them from reaching their full potential. It is more than the G20 goal of 5 per cent and more than twice as much as the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), of 3 per cent by 2030. A one per cent reduction in the cost of remitting USD 200 would result in an additional USD 6.05 billion being sent to low and middle-income countries.

India's G20 presidency in 2023 has prioritised Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). Typically, it encompasses digital IDs, digital payments, and trusted data sharing. When we observe the achievements of DPI in India, it becomes evident that it can serve as a model for both the global community, more specifically Global South.

Throughout its G20 Presidency, India has emerged as a global leader in driving equity, transparency and accessibility by strengthening its digital public infrastructure (DPI). It is important to mention that three areas were discussed during the digital economy minister's meeting in 2023: the first one is DPI for digital inclusion including financial inclusion and innovation, building digital economy more safe, secure and resilient and digital skilling for building global future for ready workforce. G20 also

welcome the "G20 Framework for Systems of Digital Public Infrastructure, a voluntary and suggested framework for the development, deployment and governance of DPI (Outcome Document of Digital Economy Ministers Meeting, 2023).

It is essential to mention that India's digital transformation started in 2015 with the introduction of the Digital India initiative. The central concept of this initiative is inclusion and leaving no one behind. As stated by the Prime Minister of India during the G20 Digital Economy Ministerial Meeting conducted on August 19 in Bengaluru,31 India currently has over 950 million internet users and some of the lowest data costs in the world.

Today, approximately 1.3 billion Indians have a digital identity known as Aadhaar, and India has utilised the strength of the JAM trinity - Jan Dhan bank accounts, Aadhaar, and Mobile - to revolutionise financial inclusion in India. In India, approximately 10 billion UPI (India Instant payment system) transactions occur each month, and more than 45 per cent of global real-time payments occur in India. The CoWIN portal helped the Covid vaccination drive in India. More than 2 billion vaccination doses and digitally verified certificates were delivered through this app. Infrastructure and logistics are mapped using technology and spatial planning by the Gati-Shakti platform. India also developing Bhashini, a language translation platform enabled by AI. It will promote digital inclusion in all of India's diverse languages.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi announced two India-led initiatives, namely the Global Digital Public Infrastructure Repository and a Social Impact Fund (India has pledged an initial commitment of USD 25 million), during the Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit on November 22, 2023. These initiatives are intended to promote the development of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in the Global South.

Since the adoption of the G20 Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development36 in 2016, G20 leaders have consistently recognised the key role of the G20 in contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The G20's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been regularly reaffirmed and reviewed by the Action Plan's annual updates. Recently, The

G20 Development 15 Ministers' Meeting was held on June 11th -13th, 2023, in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh (India), and the outcome document proposed an ambitious seven-year action plan for accelerating progress on Sustainable Development Goals, which presents a coordinated, integrated, and inclusive road map for G20 actions.

The outcome document also mentioned that the 2023 Action Plan will focus on actions that will have a transformative effect on accelerating progress towards achieving all SDGs, including digital transformation, gender equality and women's empowerment; and implementing sustainable, inclusive, and just transitions on a global scale, leaving no one behind and enhanced the representation of developing countries in the decision-making process of the international finance institutes in order to realise the 2030-development agenda.

G20, which is the premier forum for international economic cooperation, with its convening power, provides a unique platform for tackling development challenges and to provide an impetus for the achievement of SDGs. It has significant potential to drive reforms to improve the enabling environment for development and to remove constraints to sustainable growth and poverty reduction. Development cooperation in the G20 encompasses various modalities, namely financial assistance, capacity building, and policy reform. The primary emphasis is placed on the promotion of economic growth. Additionally, there is a strong emphasis on fostering global development partnerships and addressing global or regional systemic concerns. Encouraging private sector participation is also considered crucial. India recently hosted an important conference on the voice of the Global South (MEA, 2023) and outlined the following sectors that are crucial for the development of the Global South.

After the G20 summit in November 2023 (during the 2nd Voice of Global South Summit on 17 November 2023) the Prime Minister of India inaugurated the centre (DAKSHIN), which stands for Development And Knowledge Sharing Initiative, and is hosted by RIS. The vision of the centre is "to foster knowledge sharing and mutual learning for building capacities and developing sustainable, affordable, and

locally relevant solutions by collating resources, experiences and strategies to overcome developmental challenges the Global South faces and promote globally inclusive partnerships".

DAKSHIN aims to foster a new development paradigm where the Global South shares experiences of development solutions of, for, and by the Global South, and is open to partnerships through triangular cooperation modalities. The work programme includes a mechanism that actively focuses on common challenges faced by developing countries in order to ensure simple and affordable solutions for accelerated and inclusive socio-economic growth. The Global South Centre of Excellence is another significant contribution from India during its G20 Presidency.

Conclusion

The G20 leaders' declaration focuses on promoting robust, sustainable, balanced, and inclusive growth. It seeks to accelerate progress on SDGs and come up with an action plan accordingly. It envisions a green development accord for the future's sustainability. It also endorses voluntary principles on hydrogen, the Chennai principles for a sustainable and resilient blue economy, and the Deccan principles on food security and nutrition, among others.

With India holding the G20 presidency in 2023, it has secured the support of African countries by playing an instrumental part in the African Union's accession as a permanent member of the G20.

The G20 has reiterated the fundamental significance of gender equality and has made a commitment to reducing the digital gender gap by 50 per cent by the year 2030. The G20 leaders additionally underscored the importance of revitalising multilateralism and implementing reforms within international financial institutions. These measures are pertinent in effectively addressing global debt risks, with a specific focus on developing nations.

The development experience of India may provide solutions that are simple, scalable, and sustainable, which can transform respective economies and societies. To accomplish its common goals, the Global South would rely on both what Southern countries can do together and what they can

seek together on the global 20 agenda. Developing nations are deeply concerned about the increasing fragmentation of the international landscape and aspire to have an equal voice in the international development discourse.

Important commitments for developing countries under the Indian G20 presidency include creating resilient global value chains and assisting developing countries to move up the value chain, welcoming Jaipur's call for action to boost MSMEs, adopting the G20 Generic Framework for Mapping Global Value Chains (GVC), adopting high level principles on digitalisation of trade documents, and recognising the significance of the WTO's 'Aid for Trade' initiative. Introducing digital upskilling and reskilling programmes, G20 principles on harnessing data for development, and launching a data for development capacity building initiative, and calling on developed nations to fulfil their ODA obligations. For eliminating hunger and malnutrition G20 encourage efforts to strengthen research cooperation on climate resilient and nutritious grains, nurture the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food and commit to strengthening the agriculture market information system (AMIS). In the context of renewable energy, the G20 acknowledges the significance of sustainable biofuels and the setting up of the Global Biofuels Alliance.

India handed over the baton to Brazil on 1st December 2023, to be subsequently passed on to South Africa in 2025. This is the most opportune moment for taking up critical issues faced by the Global South. Several key takeaways from the New Delhi summit in 2023 would continue to be pertinent to the Brazilian and South African G20 summits, including development finance, life style for sustainable development, women-led development, and digitalisation.

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