

India's Global South Strategy: Balancing Leadership, Leverage & Diplomacy

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India Global South Strategy Latest News

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's July 2–9 visit to Brazil for the BRICS summit was his longest in 11 years, including four additional stops—Ghana, Trinidad & Tobago, Argentina, and Namibia—underscoring India's strategic outreach to the Global South.

Global South

- The **Global South** refers to countries primarily in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Oceania that are often characterized by lower levels of economic development, colonial histories, and a shared interest in reforming global governance to be more equitable.
- While not a strictly geographical term, it contrasts with the "Global North," which includes wealthier, industrialized nations like those in North America and Western Europe.
 - Australia and New Zealand, both in the southern hemisphere, are not in the Global South.

- The term has gained currency in international relations and diplomacy to signify a collective identity among developing countries, especially in forums like the **BRICS**, **G77**, and the **Non-Aligned Movement**.
- These countries often advocate for **fairer trade terms**, **technology transfer**, **climate justice**, and a **multipolar world order**.
- India has positioned itself as a key voice of the Global South, especially through initiatives like the **Voice of Global South Summit**, aiming to amplify the concerns of developing nations on global platforms such as the **G20**.

India as the Leader of the Global South

- India has been actively working to project itself as a bridge between the developed and developing worlds, and to emerge as the voice and leader of the Global South.
- **Hosting the Voice of Global South Summits**
 - In 2023 and 2024, India hosted the Voice of Global South Summits, bringing together over 120 developing countries to discuss common concerns such as climate change, debt crisis, food and energy insecurity, and digital divide.
- **Leveraging G20 Presidency (2023)**
 - India used its G20 presidency to champion the cause of the Global South, advocating for inclusive growth, equitable development, and debt relief for poor nations.
 - It succeeded in pushing for the African Union's permanent membership in G20 — a significant diplomatic move that cemented India's leadership credentials.
- **Development Partnerships**
 - India continues to expand its development assistance and capacity-building programs in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia.
- **Countering China's Influence**
 - India seeks to offer an alternative model of development to China's Belt and Road Initiative — one that is less debt-driven and more transparent.
- **Moral and Historical Positioning**
 - Drawing from its non-aligned legacy and role in founding the NAM (Non-Aligned Movement), India invokes its history of anti-colonial solidarity to align with the aspirations of the Global South.

India's Gaza Stance Strains Ties with Global South

- India's pro-Israel position during the Gaza war post-October 7, 2023, has led to concerns among Global South nations.
- This shift was reflected in India's defeat to Pakistan in the UNESCO Executive Board vice-chair election, and reduced high-level participation in India's Second Voice of the Global South summit.
- Many developing countries now perceive India as aligning with major powers and not speaking out against Israel's actions in Gaza.

India Shifts Tone on Israel to Safeguard Global South Ties

- At the BRICS foreign ministers' meet in June 2024 and again at the July 2025 BRICS summit, India joined in sharply criticising Israel's actions in Gaza, marking its strongest multilateral rebuke yet.
- These statements also condemned strikes on Iran, signalling India's strategic balancing between its ties with Israel and its aspirations for leadership within the Global South.
- While Israel remains a key defence partner, many Global South nations view its actions in Gaza critically — pushing India to recalibrate its stance to maintain influence in the bloc.

India Secures BRICS Support on Terror, Balances Gains Amid Gaza-Iran Trade-off

- During the BRICS summit in Rio, India achieved a diplomatic win by getting the grouping — including China — to strongly condemn the Pahalgam terror attack and affirm support against cross-border terrorism and terror financing.
- This came despite prior skepticism from several Global South nations over India's Operation Sindoor strikes in Pakistan.
- To counter that narrative, India sent multi-party delegations to explain its stance.
- While New Delhi gained crucial language on terrorism in the BRICS declaration, it had to accommodate concessions on Gaza and Iran-related paragraphs.

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