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DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION REVIEW

Special Issue on South-South Cooperation A Perspective from Multilateralism

Editorial

Special Articles

South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation to Strengthen Multilateralism

Jorge Chediek

“Experimental Multilateralism”: Regaining the Original Purposes of Multilateral Cooperation

Mario Pezzini and Rita Da Costa

(Continued on outside back cover)

Development Cooperation Review

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**“Experimental Multilateralism”: Regaining the Original Purposes of
Multilateral Cooperation**

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**Restoring and Transforming Multilateralism: Role of South-South
Cooperation**

Philani Mthembu

**Strengthening Solidarity for Reciprocity: Rethinking the Role of SSC
in Reinvigorating Multilateralism during Global Crises**

Chuanhong Zhang and Xiaoyun Li

Spotlight

**Rabindranath Tagore - A 19th Century Pioneer of Applied
Cooperation in Development**

Pinaki Chakraborti

SSC Statistics

**Trends of Development Finance from Multilateral Development
Banks (MDBs) to BRICS Countries**

Sushil Kumar

Editorial

Multilateralism has often been considered as a platform to promote 'diffuse reciprocity'. Keohane (1986) defines 'diffuse reciprocity', as a cultural norm within a community where one commits and does things with and for others without demanding or expecting an immediate payback or return, knowing that it will be done later and that all will be better off in the long run as a result. 'Diffuse reciprocity' is an attitude, a willingness to give without demanding a precise accounting of equivalent benefits for each action. 'Specific reciprocity', on the other hand, is described as an exchange mechanism based on immediate equivalence of values in a strictly delimited sequence. Sequence of events, on the other hand, is less narrowly bounded in case of diffuse reciprocity. The fundamental guiding force of multilateralism rests in the spirit of cooperation that sets in a set of norms that would be acceptable to and followed by all. The idea of multilateralism involves the engagement of sovereign states as units of participation at a global level.

South-South Cooperation (SSC), with its set of non-negotiable principles, has bound most of the Southern World in a relationship of diffuse reciprocity, while many sovereign states, mostly beyond the South, are getting more and more engaged in specific reciprocity (for example WTO), leading to increasing inequality, slowing global economic growth amidst rising indebtedness and unemployment. The world is witnessing a rising lack of trust among the nations, often justifying a shift to strong nationalist strategy that shuns cooperation. The spread of the global pandemic and the rising concerns about the prospect of an irreversible threat of climate change are the immediate threats to humanity and recourse to nationalism would contribute to such possibilities further.

The special issue of DCR has been designed to address the role of SSC in enhancing the strength of diffuse reciprocity and tackle the emerging global threats. A fundamental question that binds all the contributions on multilateralism is whether SSC can lead a new frontier of multilateralism given its strong experience of practicing diffuse reciprocity for more than half a century. Four interesting contributions from well known experts on SSC have been incorporated in this issue.

The paper by *Jorge Chediek* on '*South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation to Strengthen Multilateralism*' gives a brief history of UN as a driver of multilateralism and traces the idea of SSC and Triangular Cooperation (TrC) as possible means to strengthen multilateralism, a process that began way back in 1955 Afro Asian Bandung Conference as concretizing SSC to as recent as the BAPA+40 Conference in 2019, that brought in the idea of TrC

in its fold. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the need for international solidarity and multilateralism, more than ever, and therefore, the author suggests some actions and agreements to promote them.

Although efforts at strengthening multilateralism started soon after World War II, they soon lost momentum and it was forgotten, among other national and world matters. In the paper ‘“*Experimental Multilateralism*”: *Regaining the Original Purposes of Multilateral Cooperation*’, authors **Mario Pezzini** and **Rita Da Costa** distinguish between diffuse reciprocity and specific reciprocity, and propel diffuse reciprocity as a way for future multilateral cooperation. The paper discusses the limitations of the existing international cooperation system followed by developed countries and gives some existing examples for basis of a more inclusive cooperation.

The cooperation efforts undertaken by the North have followed a model of specific reciprocity, one endowed with conditionalities, and, therefore, there is a need for the South to lead the way in multilateral cooperation with the principle of diffuse reciprocity. **Philani Mthembu**, in his paper ‘*Restoring and Transforming Multilateralism: Role of South-South Cooperation*’, contests the development aid architecture followed by the Global North and highlights the role of the Global South in building greater resilience and cooperation within multilateral institutions. The paper also draws parallels between South-South Cooperation (SSC) and the model of diffuse reciprocity in multilateralism and suggests a way forward in promoting multilateralism in the ambit of SSC.

In the paper ‘*Strengthening Solidarity for Reciprocity: Rethinking the Role of SSC in Reinvigorating Multilateralism during Global Crises*’, authors **Chuanhong Zhang** and **Xiaoyun Li** have shed light on the need of bringing the principle of solidarity of SSC in reinvigorating multilateralism. They also discuss a possible convergence of North-South Cooperation and South-South Cooperation in view of multilateralism and propose global solidarity to be prioritised during global crises for an equal and just world.

The Spotlight section goes beyond the main theme of this issue, though it is closely linked. It has a paper ‘*Rabindranath Tagore- A 19th Century Pioneer of Applied Cooperation to Development*’ by **Pinaki Chakraborti**, which describes the experiments started by Rabindranath Tagore on creating solidarity at grassroots level with the example of village-level cooperation; the paper also gives some clues as to how Tagore’s views can be reinvented in the context of multilateralism.

The section on SSC in Statistics by **Sushil Kumar** compares the role of multilateral organisations established at the behest of Southern countries vis-a-vis older institutions in terms of their role in economic cooperation.

Reference: Keohane, Robert O. (1986), “Reciprocity in International Relations”, International Organization, Vol. 40, No.1, Pp 1-27.

South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation to Strengthen Multilateralism



*Jorge Chediek**

“The world needs more and better South-South cooperation for the consolidation of a multilateral and more just world that effectively provides opportunities to those who need it the most.”

The ideal of cooperation among developing countries was born in the 1950s as an attempt to establish new patterns of collaboration which addressed the limitations of a world order influenced by imperialism and colonialism, and caught up on the dynamic of the Cold War. However, some developing countries like, India and China had initiated their efforts in development cooperation well before, in the late 1940s, through provision of opportunities in training and knowledge sharing.

The 1955 Afro-Asian Bandung Conference became a landmark event, in which major developing countries committed to the principles of the charter of the United Nations, and called for an international order in which the interests and rights of developing countries were to be fully considered. The declaration, among others, called for the respect for fundamental human rights and for the purposes and principles of the charter of the United Nations; respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations; recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations; abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country; respect for the right of each nation to defend itself, singly or collectively,

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in conformity with the charter of the United Nations; abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defense to serve any particular interests of the big powers, abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries; refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country; settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means, such as negotiation, conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement as well as other peaceful means of the parties' own choice, in conformity with the charter of the United Nations; promotion of mutual interests and cooperation; and respect for justice and international obligations.

The conclusions of this seminal international conference thus represented a commitment to a multilateral world, and to the engagement of all countries, regardless of their size and power, within the principles and instruments of the Charter of the United Nations. In that context, the urge for increased collaboration among developing countries, based on solidarity, respect and mutual interests, represented the first major milestone for what we now call South-South Cooperation.

These countries, eventually joined by many others, coalesced in the 1964 United Nations Conference for Trade and Development with the creation of the Group of 77 developing countries.¹ This group aimed from the start to collaborate to make the international trade and financial systems more favorable to the interests of the developing world. The efforts to promote the collaboration in these areas among developing countries

was called Economic Cooperation among Developing countries, or ECDC, centered mostly on the Geneva spaces of the UN system.

In parallel, there were increasing calls for the United Nations System to more actively promote other forms of collaboration among developing countries. This request became a difficult proposition for the United Nations to accommodate; after all, the UN cooperation architecture was established mostly on the premise that development was to be the result of the transfer of knowledge and resources from the developed countries, thus operating in a way that the best -if not only - answers were to come from the North to the South. The proposition that collaboration among developing countries was an important component of the mission was not prevalent. The leadership and governance of the system also conspired to the incorporation of the South-South perspective to the mandates and the operational modalities of the United Nations, and even less so in the work of the multilateral financial institutions.

Nevertheless, the increasing activism of the G77, as well as the understanding by some UN leaders that this type of collaboration needed to be mainstreamed, led to the call of a UN Conference on the Technical Collaboration among developing countries. After almost five years of preparatory work at the political and technical level, this conference eventually took place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, between 30 August and 12 September 1978. This conference produced the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, for promoting, and implementing technical cooperation

among developing countries. This very important and comprehensive document provided a broad framework for this collaboration, and opened spaces for the engagement of all actors of the international community to support this cooperation modality.²

The plan called for actions at the national, regional, interregional and global levels. Within the UN system, the United Nations Development Programme was given a leading role, through the strengthening of its Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, and with the mandate to promote the further engagement of the rest of the system, particularly the UN Regional Commissions. The document also called for the establishment of a permanent intergovernmental structure under the UN General Assembly, which became the High Level Committee on South-South cooperation that were to meet every two years to follow up on the implementation of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and to promote additional actions to expand this cooperation.

Therefore, as early as 1978 there was a full framework to legitimize and support South-South collaboration within the United Nations. Nevertheless, the system remained mostly committed to the traditional modalities of work, considering that the bulk of the funding continued to be provided by developed countries and the development paradigm of North-South flows remained the controlling ideological framework. This dominance was accentuated by the renewed preeminence in the 1980s of a market-based approach to international development, the paradigm that

came to be simplistically known as “neoliberalism”. This vision stipulated that economic growth was to come from the freeing of market forces and the opening of the economies; as a result, significant resources were devoted to facilitating this processes in most developing countries, with some funding devoted to mitigating the negative effects of the implementation of these policies. The resulting economic growth would then lead to the improvement of the quality of life of the peoples of the South.

In addition to this shift in the ideological framework of development, South-South cooperation did not increase significantly in the last decades of the last century. There were remarkable examples of developing countries committed to supporting other nations, among them India, the People’s Republic of China, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Libya; however, the predominant dynamics of international cooperation continued to be based on the parameters set by the countries of the North, embodied by the work of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD.

The new century introduced some changes to this reality. Most of the nations that followed faithfully the neoliberal paradigm failed to achieve the expected results, as most countries did not achieve the promised economic growth and the social consequences of the reforms were more dire than expected.

At the same time, in spite of the relative lack of success at the global level, several developing countries achieved remarkable development results. The

well-known example of the extraordinary achievements of the People's Republic of China since the Opening up and Reform process launched in 1978, was joined by many other successes such as the rural employment programs in India, the fight against hunger in Brazil, the health systems in Cuba, the model transition from the apartheid regime in South Africa, among many others. These initiatives generated a renewed interest from other developing countries to learn from these examples, thus generating a renewed demand for cooperation flows. At the same time, several of these and other developing countries committed increased resources to facilitate and fund these exchanges, so South-South cooperation became increasingly important.

However, at the political level this collaboration was not adequately reflected in the international legislation. A major step was taken at the first South Summit held in Havana, Cuba in April of 2000, the meeting declaration (article 40) highlighted the importance of what it was then called South-South Cooperation (including technical and economic), as an "effective instrument", and a "vital element in promoting South-South relations and in achieving self-reliance".³ From there on, the position of developing countries was better coordinated from a common position and understanding.

This language implied an expanded vision to South-South cooperation. Not just to promote the improvement of the living conditions of the peoples of the Global South, but also as means to support increased political cooperation and to establish stronger links to allow

more freedom of action of developing countries in the international system through their joint efforts.

As a result, a clear tension emerged between traditional donors, who wanted the cooperation from Southern countries to follow the parameters of established OECD practices and the Paris Declaration process, and to obtain increased resources from these countries to fund the multilateral system without major structural changes.⁴ At the same time, developing countries articulated by the G77 + China fought to keep Southern cooperation as qualitatively different, and not as a replacement but as a complement to North South cooperation, so as not to provide space for developed countries to renege on their commitments in terms of international assistance. The result was a series of annual General Assembly resolutions that maintained the "status quo" and failed to advance the debate beyond those entrenched positions. Significant efforts were waged in changing the institutional positioning of the UN Office for South-South Cooperation within the system, without major changes. In this context, the 2009 High Level Conference on South-South Cooperation, convened in Nairobi, Kenya in December 2009, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, failed to produce major breakthroughs in terms of conceptualization and on the importance and visibility of South-South cooperation,⁵ and no major advances were registered there and over the next few years.

In view of this blockage, the UNOSSC has promoted the convening of another conference on the occasion

of the 40th anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action since 2016. This initiative was initially met with great skepticism by both the UN leadership and most member states, but the strong advocacy of the Office, and leadership of Argentina together with the offer to host the event in Buenos Aires led to the eventual approval of the conference.⁶

The UNOSSC then embarked on an effort to mobilize member states and other actors towards a forward-looking conference, breaking the political impasse and to fit South-South cooperation in the framework established by the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. New allies were found, including within the OECD which had been working very actively on the promotion, reporting and systematization of triangular cooperation.⁷ In addition, the expanded institutional framework of the 2030 agenda opened the way to incorporate other actors beyond central governments to the South-South architecture such as sub-national governments, academia, NGOs, CSOs, the private sector, foundations and others. Many modalities of South-South Cooperation were identified, beyond the traditional technical cooperation, including infrastructure development, academic exchanges, technology transfers, trade, finance, investment and others.

The negotiations on the outcome document of the conference started earnestly in early 2019, with the able facilitation of the Permanent Representatives of Uganda and Lithuania, and the secretariat support of UNOSSC. Despite strong skepticism,

agreements started to build up in a context of addition, accommodating proposals from all sides. As a result, the outcome document became a breakthrough outcome for South-South cooperation. Among other stipulations, it confirmed the principles of South-South cooperation, including the fact that it is complementary and does not replace North South Cooperation, it expands the scope of potential actors of South-South cooperation, it increases the range of activities included, provides a stronger framework for triangular cooperation, and confirms strong calls for all countries to engage in these efforts. It also mandates the UN system to better coordinate its contributions and to develop a joint strategy to support South-South cooperation.

In addition, the Conference itself that took place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, between 20 and 22 March 2019 had the participation of representatives from 160 countries, including five heads of state and government, and with over 70 countries represented at ministerial level. In addition, many other organizations and actors actively participated, with over 140 side events and many individual presentations. The Conference, that came to be known as BAPA+40 thus became a milestone in the global cooperation architecture. In addition, by reaffirming that South-South cooperation is qualitatively different from North-South collaboration, mandating the UN System to support these partnerships, and confirming a central role for developing countries to set their own development priorities, the document constitutes a strong endorsement of multilateralism.⁸

South-South cooperation has now become a feature of the work of the United Nations. As mandated by the BAPA + 40 Outcome document, a UN System Wide Strategy for South-South Cooperation for Sustainable Development has been produced, with the participation and engagement of over 30 UN entities.⁹ An implementation plan is under preparation to report and measure the impact of the activities of the system in this area.

In parallel to this work within the UN system, other efforts were made to expand and strengthen the institutional framework of South-South cooperation. Two development banks were established namely the New Development Bank, in 2014 and the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank in 2016, to provide much required additional funding to developing countries. In addition, existing Banks such as the Islamic Development Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development significantly increased their engagement in South-South cooperation.

Regional initiatives were also scaled up to promote increased cooperation within the regions, including in Africa (through the Africa 2063 initiative and the establishment of the continental free trade area), in ASEAN (through the economic community), and in Latin America through CELAC.

The COVID pandemic has shown that international solidarity and multilateralism are more necessary than ever. South-South cooperation provided many good examples of this collaboration, and the upcoming debates

on the post pandemic world provide a great opportunity to highlight the importance and centrality of South-South cooperation in a more equal world.

To engage in these debates, action and agreements are needed in some areas, namely:

Advocacy: by definition, most developing countries still have serious domestic challenges, and they tend to possess limited resources to support other countries. In this context, it is difficult for the leaders of those countries to justify providing for others, either financially or technically. Consequently, much of the expansion of South-South cooperation in the last few years has come from a limited number of countries. In addition, some of this collaboration is also one way only, through which those countries want to share their successes with others. Building on this valuable collaboration, further efforts are necessary to expand the scope of actors that engage in South-South cooperation, including countries that are less developed, and also to expand the two-way flow of this collaboration, so all actors benefit from this interaction.

Stronger Institutional Arrangements: at the national level, most of the institutions that manage cooperation in developing countries are designed to receive flows from traditional donors. As a result, they tend to lack the capacity to organize demand and supply for cooperation with other developing countries, including legal mechanisms and funding structures. Several cooperation agencies are already evolving to establish that

capacity, and it should be an important component of assistance from other developing countries, and from other partners including traditional donors and particularly UN organizations. Initiatives such as the UNOSSC-Japan-Brazil Programme for the strengthening of cooperation agencies, and the Reverse Linkages supported by the Islamic Development Bank represent good examples of efforts that should be further scaled up. The joint contribution of the South Center, the Islamic Development Bank and UNOSSC on the national ecosystems is also a valuable tool to build in this area.

The Southern led development Banks mentioned above, viz. the Islamic Development Bank, New Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Development Bank, represent spaces to channel financial and technical resources from within the Global South.

At the regional level, there should be a stronger commitment of regional and sub-regional organizations to promote and facilitate cooperation among their members, which is after all their mission. There are very good examples, such as the work of the Ibero-American Secretariat, the ASEAN work, the initiatives of the African Union and others. More mechanisms are necessary to promote interregional cooperation to strengthen the collective positioning of the Global South.

At the Global level, there is a need of a better coordinated engagement of the developing countries in the governing structures of the United Nations, in order to achieve even deeper engagement of the UN system in support of South-

South Cooperation. In this regard, it is critical to revitalize the role of the G77 plus China, in specifically providing thought leadership and proposals to advance the agenda beyond already agreed principles and practices. The establishment of effective links between the growing contributions of think tanks from the South with the political spaces in New York and Geneva should be further enhanced, building on examples such as the collaboration of the South Center on issues of trade and intellectual property. A better informed positioning from the South would allow developing countries to take the lead in shaping the global agenda, instead of being mostly responsive to initiatives that come from the North or from UN institutions.

Reporting: there is a criticism (particularly from traditional donors) that there is no adequate information on the flows of South-South cooperation. In that context, there is pressure from these partners to join the OECD reporting methodologies and mechanisms. On this matter, there is resistance from most Southern countries to utilize this approach, as South-South cooperation adopts many forms that are not well captured by these modalities, which emphasize the financial dimensions. At the same time, it would be particularly useful for the countries of the South to report more systematically on their cooperation, for which more advances are needed in the development of those methodologies. Many developing agencies from the South, among them the Brazilian Cooperation Agency have already established these reporting tools, including through the measurement of non-monetary contributions. More work

is needed in this area, and organizations as the UNOSSC could become a repository and disseminator of these practices.

Related to the above, it is very important to have information on the results achieved by South-South cooperation. On this issue, there is also pressure from the traditional donors that want to promote their evaluation frameworks. There are already many ongoing efforts to establish impact evaluation mechanisms for South-South Cooperation, such as the one being developed by the IBSA think tanks. There is a need to expand these efforts at the academic and political level, as it is critical to show to the leaders and the peoples of the Global South that this collaboration is helping build a better world.

Corollary: The further expansion and success of South-South cooperation will represent a great contribution to multilateralism. On one hand, the development cooperation landscape will benefit from the more proactive engagement of all actors, providing a broader set of options for the challenges of developing countries. At the same time, this expansion should also provide a broader ideological framework for the development debates, with an agenda that is genuinely global and is aimed at supporting the challenges of developing countries factoring in their own perspectives.

The COVID crisis has shown that global crisis necessitates global responses. Within the context of common but differentiated responsibilities, South-South collaboration must become

a key component of the efforts to recover and to regain the march on the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. In sum, the world needs more and better South-South cooperation for the consolidation of a multilateral and more just world that effectively provides opportunities to those who need it the most. As Pope Francis has said “it is our duty to rethink the future of our common home and our common project” by strengthening multilateralism and cooperation between states.

Endnotes

- ¹ The Group currently includes 134 countries
- ² The report of the Conference, including the Plan of Action, was approved by the General Assembly on 12 September 1978, through Resolution 33/134. It should be noted that since the year 2004, 12 September is commemorated as the United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation
- ³ Group of 77 South Summit, Havana, 10/14 April 2000
- ⁴ The Aid Effectiveness process launched by the 2005 Paris Declaration, under the auspices of the OECD, opened a process that led to the 2011 Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, which operated under a relative tension with South-South cooperation until BAPA + 40 (vid infra)
- ⁵ Approved by the UN General Assembly Resolution 64/222
- ⁶ UN General Assembly Resolution 71/244, paragraphs 30 and 31
- ⁷ Among those are the Global Partnership Initiative on Effective Triangular Cooperation, and the very good work of the OECD Development Cooperation Directorate
- ⁸ The report of the Conferences was approved by UN GA Resolution 73/291
- ⁹ The preparation of the Strategy was mandated by the BAPA+40 outcome document, and the final version is available in the UNOSSC website

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INDIA, US EXTEND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION AGREEMENT TILL 2026

The Statement of Guiding Principles (SGP) on Triangular Cooperation for Global Development Agreement, first signed in November 2014, underscores the importance of India-U.S. partnership to promote global stability and prosperity. It provides a framework for promoting cooperation between the two countries to meet the developmental aspirations of partner countries, particularly in Asia and Africa. It was now being amended to extend the validity of the SGP agreement up to 2026 and the Second Amendment to the SGP was signed between India and the US on July 30, 2021.

With this amendment, the scope of capacity building activities undertaken jointly by India and the United States is expanded. “Under the Agreement, India and U.S. will continue to offer capacity building assistance to partner countries in multiple sectors, focusing primarily on agriculture, regional connectivity, trade and investments, nutrition, health, clean and renewable energy, women empowerment, disaster preparedness, water, sanitation, education and institution building,” said the statement released by Ministry of External Affairs.

The agreement aims to fulfil the joint commitment of the two nations to work together and utilise their combined capacities to provide demand-driven development partnerships. This agreement will support India’s other ongoing and future development partnerships, capacity building and technical assistance as well with countries across the world.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, GOI. (2021, July 30). Extension of the Agreement on Statement of Guiding Principles on Triangular Cooperation for Global Development between India and the US [Press Release]. Available at <https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/34088/Extension+of+the+Agreement+on+Statement+of+Guiding+Principles+on+Triangular+Cooperation+for+Global+Development+between+India+and+the+US>

“Experimental Multilateralism”: Regaining the Original Purposes of Multilateral Cooperation



*Mario Pezzini**



*Rita Da Costa***

“..we need inclusive ‘tables’ where countries engaged in different development trajectories could discuss individual development paths and forms of international co-operation needed to support them”

The increasing complexity of global challenges calls for innovative and inclusive solutions by countries and require updated approaches to international cooperation. The COVID-19 pandemic reinforces the urgency of a novel approach to design transformative recovery strategies, including their financing frameworks, to address a diffuse discontent that is visible in street manifestations, but also in the decline of voters’ turnout and in the weakening trust in governments. In particular, there is a need to renew the trust on the multilateral system by regaining its original purpose. To that end, what is required is understanding the complexity of these new and interconnected challenges, testing what works and does not work, learning by monitoring to develop appropriate strategies and policies, reporting regularly and publicly on progress towards high level goals. However, these actions will face significant resistance due to obstacles to the perception of change and bureaucratic practices.

The Origins of Multilateralism: From Diffused Reciprocity to Lack of Trust

Modern multilateralism was conceived with the purpose of enabling collective action between national states for ethical purposes that inspire cohesion between people and places, political

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concerns to prevent and contrast attempts to ignite conflicts, and for the search of renewed economic development opportunities capable to address visible asymmetries and underemployment of resources. Among the principles stated in the United Nations primordial charter for a new international governance, three are worth to be mentioned: equality and self-determination of nations, respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms and a more subjacent principle that underpins the more explicit ones: diffuse reciprocity. In fact, multilateralism entailed expectations of “diffuse reciprocity”, a concept identified by Robert Keohane and John Ruggie, meaning that cooperation is “expected by members to yield a rough equivalence of benefits in the aggregate and over time” (Ruggie, 1992), (Eilsrtup -Sangiovanni, 2016). That is, multilateralism can be understood as the practice of solidarity in the expectation that in the long run its benefits will outweigh immediate short-term disadvantages (Maull, 2020).

International cooperation stemmed within this framework of multilateralism. In his famous 1949 inaugural address, US President Harry Truman said: “We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas”. Subsequently, a programme of development assistance came up to bridge the gap between the so-called ‘developed’ and ‘underdeveloped’ nations, imposing a linear view of development primarily focused on GDP growth. As the developed nations had managed to become rich and

technologically advanced, they sought to benevolently assist the financially underdeveloped countries to achieve the same. Over 70 years since Truman’s speech, development cooperation is often presented as an altruistic way to grant assistance and aid to people’s suffering from misery and poverty.

Diffuse reciprocity should be, therefore, at least in principle, at the heart of the original notion of ‘modern’ multilateralism and international cooperation efforts. However, in international relations, two basic forms of reciprocity can be distinguished: specific reciprocity and diffuse reciprocity, and the former is seen to prevail. While the concept of specific reciprocity refers to a simultaneous exchange or one with strictly delimited sequence, diffuse reciprocity provides mutual benefits sequentially or over a long term (Bolewski, 2007). This is associated with another distinction: commutative justice and distributive justice. The first is based on the satisfaction of mutual self-interests, the latter reaches beyond into the realm of global public interest enhancing social solidarity and community interests where (global) public goods are concerned. Despite the centrality of diffuse reciprocity and distributive justice for multilateralism, they have not been mainstreamed in the modern multilateral architecture. Thus, while powerful states are increasingly unwilling to be constrained by multilateral organizations, poorer states are increasingly discontented with what they see as the institutionalisation of discrimination. For many, the current system seems to perpetuate global economic asymmetries (Pisani & Ferry, 2021).

The result is a growing lack of trust in international system based on a lack of both input and output legitimacy. The latter refers to the fact that multilateral organisations and global governance arrangements are not fostering reduction of inequalities. This is exacerbated by a deficient input legitimacy: the recurrent lack of representation of the developing world in key global institutions (Debuysere, 2021).¹ Although inclusivity was an important principle of the Bretton Woods institutions in the early years, the predominance of the leading economies in these institutions has been codified in a much more substantial way through the allocation of voting rights (not to mention the location of Breton Woods institutions and the practice to pegging currencies to the US dollar) (OECD, 2021). The international cooperation system, embodied in the official aid assistance, has mirrored these limitations in terms of legitimacy and has privileged conditionality of aid over ownership. In High Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness and International Conferences on Financing for Development conditionality, Southern voices have argued that the “market structural reforms” tied to aid have promoted growth at the expense of the poor majority in recipient countries, facing the decline of domestic industries and the increase of unemployment (Fine, Lapavitsas, & Pincus (Eds.), 2001). Other critics of conditionality question the enforcement of one-size-fits-all instruments applied to countries with diverse development contexts (Alonso, 2001). The absence of developing countries around the multilateral tables where official

development assistance is discussed does not need to be demonstrated (OECD, 2017).² The incentives derived from today’s aid system and architecture has led to suboptimal results in aid coordination and limited diffuse reciprocity in multilateralism. Moreover, the COVID-19 crisis has evidenced how the current dynamics of the multilateral architecture and the international aid system were not conducive to global security and prosperity for everyone. In addition, by acting on their self-interest, many countries are undermining the possibility of successfully addressing the global pandemic and multilateral organizations are coming short on their promise of enabling states to achieve collective goals that they could not have reached by themselves. Today is more evident than ever that inaction will be very costly.

What do we need to change? Building a New Narrative of Governance Arrangements for Development

Transforming multilateralism and international cooperation is not going to take place from one day to another. When looking at the increasing number of global shared challenges, it is evident that we need to move beyond specific reciprocity, conditionality and self-interest to a system based on diffuse reciprocity, and shared ownership. For this, we need an updated narrative on development, based on a fresh look on the future challenges as well as on the considerable changes we have witnessed in the last decades. In many instances, the glasses of our lenses continue to

operate on inertia and outdated frames. They distort the perception of a world that has considerably changed actors, objectives and modalities from what was the case immediately after the World War II.

The Actors

Decolonisation naturally played in favour of a wider inclusion and participation of countries in global decision-making. Moreover, the epochal transformation of the economic geography in the last decades has multiplied the actors engaged and concerned by international cooperation. Global socio-economic progress has been remarkable before the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, emerging economies in the Global South, such as the BRICS, have not only experienced significant GDP growth, but have also ensured a decrease in poverty and an impressive expansion of the middle-class. Moreover, emerging and developing countries are active in international cooperation, going from what concerns the provision of public goods to the dialogue on strategy building and policy making and passing through the financial support of programs. Not to mention that developing countries are the Prince in the Hamlet when it comes to development targets. Those countries deserve a peer status around the “tables” where development cooperation is discussed and designed. Unfortunately, this is not the case, and the shortcomings of the multilateral system have been felt most keenly by developing countries that are kept in an unfair and inadequate category of “recipients”.

Why are we facing a problem of legitimating and ultimately of diffuse

reciprocity? Without addressing the political reasoning behind the resistance toward a more inclusive system, let us stress on some economic and conceptual factors. Development was often and unfortunately still is conceived by some actors as the evolution of countries along a single path - one traced by the rich countries. The ‘latecomers’ on this journey are perceived to be held back by internal ‘obstacles’ for which they are solely responsible and which they ought to remove as quickly as possible. They are believed to benefit from trade, financial aid and ‘conditionality’ on best practices identified by ‘advanced’ countries that have already developed their economy and that can presumably transfer development know-how to the poorer countries. Once development ‘takes off’, market mechanisms are supposed to kick in and permanently keep the populations of developed countries ‘out of danger’.

Words like ‘development’ and ‘cooperation’ became synonymous with ‘economic growth’, ‘assistance’, and ‘regulation to ensure the safeguarding of well-functioning markets’. In this view, dialogue between donor and recipient countries is not always considered necessary. While individual projects requires ‘on the ground’ collaboration between Northern and Southern actors, it is believed that policy design and evaluation - for example, deciding which forms of spending could be classified as official development assistance - is the domain of donors alone (deciding whether expenses conditional on the purchase of goods from the donor country were eligible, or if export credits, military assistance or private

charity could be considered as 'aid'). Development cooperation has risked becoming a self-referential mechanism assessed not that much on results frameworks, but rather on the compliance with principles approved by the donors themselves. Success became success in reaching targets set up by donors and not in reaching development impact according to developing countries' goals and strategies.

The above conjecture about a single path for development and a consequent limited need for dialogue between developed and developing countries should have definitely lost credibility. There is a wealth of examples of emerging countries that have grown in a 'non-orthodox' way, and, on the other hand, plenty of examples of 'diligent' countries that have not benefited from following 'orthodox' recommendations. Not to mention that in many cases, developed countries themselves adopted different practices in the past from those they preach as prerequisites for development in the present. So why should we assume that the adoption of 'advanced' country standards is a necessary and sufficient condition for development? Why should we listen to only those voices? We actually need, now more than ever, to learn from each other and recognise the asymmetric nature of information and knowledge that only dialogue can address. Diffuse reciprocity implies the recognition of the 'otherness' and we need inclusive 'tables' where countries engaged in different development trajectories could discuss individual development paths and forms of international cooperation needed to support them. For this to happen, we need to revive our interpretative

discourse, discuss narratives and recognise the specificities of developing countries and the global structures (economic, financial, political, etc.) that condition their levels of wellbeing, rather than considering them as mere recipients of standards they did not have a say in defining.

The Goals

Not only the actors, but also the goals of the cooperation systems have changed overtime and international cooperation should recognise it. The Bretton Woods era managed to reconcile greater economic openness with the acceptance that countries need protecting jobs and develop domestic industries as well as building comprehensive welfare systems to support those who could not find their place in a changing society. However, this era was followed by one assigning a strong emphasis on market mechanisms that were allowed to ride roughshod over social and environmental protections regarded as essential. Today, we work under the general guidelines defined by the Sustainable Development Goals, but we should further engage in their implementation, at least for what concerns their underlying inspirations. The SDGs are built on the idea that economic growth and development, although connected, are not synonymous. We should put in place inclusive forms of growth as, indeed, a series of development 'traps' persist, beyond the lone emphasis on 'poverty trap'. Those traps feed vicious cycles that cause a deep social discontent. Therefore, not only national public policies but also international cooperation should be mobilized and strengthened for escaping these development traps, as often market

mechanisms can instead reinforce those (OECD et al., 2019).³ However, we have a lot of work to do. For example, aid distribution remains based on GDP-GNI (Gross Domestic Product- Gross National Income), despite the efforts of SDGs to propose new development measures. No doubt that this reflects a mix of bureaucratic inertia, analytic obstacles to the perception of change, and an almost exclusive emphasis on financial resources for development.

GDP remains both an overarching policy objective and the principal measure of the health of society despite available alternative indicators. Income related metrics -such as GDP per capita -misrepresent countries' realities since they fail to capture development as a multi-dimensional, multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder process and to internalise the existence of global and regional public goods. Moreover, injection of financial resources is not a 'deus ex machina'.

The Modalities

Together with the targets, we ought to update the modalities of international cooperation by moving from bilateral, mainly financial, relations to multilateral efforts to understand each other and experiment innovative forms of cooperation. Of course, a new approach to international public finance and investments is crucial and the volume of finance should increase considerably. Particularly now, when we face the worst crisis of this century. Today's recovery calls for special efforts (for example measures for financing developing countries debts) but also for more structural changes. We still need a tool

that supports countries facing financing gaps and that addresses the pressing challenges that now confront rich and poor nations alike, as the Covid-19 and climate change crises underscore. In this respect the Global Public Investment (GPI) approach proposes five evolutions, or paradigm shifts, to move from an old-fashioned 'aid' mentality to a new common framework for financing social, economic and environmental challenges in rich, poor, and middle-income countries alike:

- From a narrow focus on reducing poverty to meeting broader challenges of inequality and sustainability.
- From seeing international public money as a temporary last resort, to valuing it as a permanent force for good.
- From one-directional North-South transfers to a universal effort, with all paying in and all benefitting.
- From outdated post-colonial institutions to representative decision-making.
- From the patronising language of "foreign aid", to the empowering multilateralism of a common fiscal endeavour.

Some of these evolutions are already underway; others need concerted effort to prod them in the right direction. In any case, it is time to write the next chapter in the history of financing sustainable development.

However, additional tools for action should be developed further as well. Development cooperation, fundamentally based on flows of financial assistance in traditional donor-

recipient relationships, falls short of responding to countries' evolving challenges. An increasing emphasis should be put on supporting countries to address the policy challenges they are facing, the design of inclusive development strategies for the recovery, the challenges connected with global warming and the growing discontent across national borders. We need to comprehensively address development challenges with tailored approaches according to each region and country's needs. We need repeated and structured interaction between actors for trust building and knowledge sharing: sustained public policy dialogues so countries - but also cities, unions, NGO, etc. - can discuss and compare, as equals, national, regional and global strategies.

Indeed, as countries attain higher levels of income, breaking the poverty trap becomes no longer development's sole objective. For example, developing countries also face a need to break the institutional trap, where weak institutions provide low quality public services, compromising citizens' trust in and satisfaction with their governments, and decrease people's willingness to pay taxes, making it even more difficult for governments to respond to society's expectations. Moreover, as countries reach middle-income levels they risk entering into the middle-income trap, where economic growth tends to slow down and requires new engines based on higher levels of productivity and on capital- and skill-intensive manufacturing and service industries. Not to mention traps related to weak social protection system that confine population to poor health conditions and in informal economies.

In short, a new consensus on a renewed multilateralism would not seek to disseminate standards and influence developing countries via conditionality, but rather it would aim to foster structured policy experimentation through learning by doing and monitoring among 'peers'. It would guarantee broader participation and ownership, to update our international cooperation practices and frameworks. Regaining trust and diffuse reciprocity starts by bringing 'inclusiveness' at the core of the system, and recognising all actors, especially those who have not had an adequate seat in the multilateral table. It would require updating income-centred notions of 'development' to consider it multidimensionally, and a continuous process, updating our economic policy models to take into account heterogeneity, variety and networks as the elements that will shape the journey towards development, acknowledging and fixing for faults, such as inequalities originating from current international dynamics. The current shocks of COVID-19 make this the right moment to move from a charitable view of multilateral relations to one based on solidarity as an investment to approach global shared challenges relaying on trust and diffuse reciprocity.

And how do we get there?

Fortunately, we do not start from scratch and some interesting examples of cooperation on a more inclusive basis do exist today and others existed from the beginning. They may serve as a source of inspiration for designing more advanced experiments in international cooperation and promote diffuse reciprocity whilst

creating incentives for commutative and distributive justice. For reasons of space, we limit the examples to the following three.

The *Marshall Plan* was pivotal in shaping multilateralism. It was implemented with original working methods: it was more than an administration; it consisted of networks of public officials gathering to discuss different reconstruction initiatives. They formed committees, which would meet regularly to share experiences and build trust among member countries; all members exchanged as equals and took unanimous decisions. From the beginning, two styles emerged side by side: an interpretive discourse destined to evolve over time and based on a shared understanding of social and economic public policies and phenomena; and a normative discourse aimed at formulating standards and prescriptions in the field of public policy. It is worth noticing that the interpretative discourse was an indispensable asset in the multilateral work as it was the basis to build the widest possible consensus around a common narrative and vision. We should revamp the importance of such interpretative work.

Other examples exist at regional level and in fact the regional dimension of multilateral cooperation should be further developed; two of them are mentioned below.

First, the *European structural funds* whose objectives were not limited to fighting extreme poverty nor to help only least developed countries, as in Europe, the most significant part of the support goes to middle income countries. The Union shaped a place-based approach

to accompany regions exploiting their untapped development potential and therefore balance the effects of markets and common currency in terms of labour and capital mobility. The cohesion fund concentrates particularly on local and regional public goods and is governed on tables that include all European countries, independently from the level of their contribution to the fund. The reason is simple; it has to do with the mutual benefits that the policy is supposed to produce for the Union as a whole.

Secondly, the PIDA from the African Union (AU) is another example where collaboration across countries in a region is key. It addresses two main questions: How to mobilise private investments into multi-sectoral regional infrastructure projects? How to deal with the soft elements that are critical for improving overall connectivity performance? The Programme's 'table' serves to give ownership to countries when it comes to investment in infrastructure brought to or produced in Africa. Partners are brought to the table and participate in discussions and knowledge sharing. Promoting more and better investments in soft and hard infrastructure is key to accelerate Africa's productive transformation, economic diversification, improved resilience, and create jobs. In fact, the impact of COVID-19 in Africa⁴ is threatening to reverse the development progress attained in the region over the past years. Moreover, improved connectivity is imperative to achieve greater market integration and the key goals enshrined in the AU's Agenda 2063 and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). This is an immense

opportunity for private investment, and yet its contribution remains notoriously low.⁵ African governments have been the largest promoters of infrastructure, at above one third of total commitments (USD 38 billion in 2018). However, the COVID-19 crisis has dented their fiscal space, threatening to widen the infrastructure financing gap even further (African Union, 2021).

There are other multilateral approaches that look forward to learn from and experiment with to generate new global governance mechanisms and practices. They include, for example, the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee, a global multi-stakeholder mechanism for education to transform the ‘enabling environment for action’ or global education coordination mechanisms to transform the way we cooperate globally on education.⁶ Another example is the Global Fund, always at the forefront of exploring new options to improve health outcomes where they are needed the most. Triangular cooperation also provides interesting tables to explore and learn from collaborations in which traditional donor and developing countries (often middle income countries) facilitate South-South initiatives through the provision of funding, training, technological systems and knowledge sharing. In fact, BAPA+40 recognized triangular cooperation as a modality that builds partnerships and trust, among all partners, and that combines diverse resources and capacities, under the ownership of the requesting developing country, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

All actors in the international cooperation system need to multiply learning and exchange platforms, and bring the best of upcoming investments that will serve for a COVID-19 recovery to lead fairer development paths. There are valuable lessons from past and current experiences. The Marshall Fund provided orientations in terms of new methods for organising dialogue, promoting exchange of practices and debate across peers with longstanding gains until today. The European structural funds provide examples on how to bring other actors to the table, by including middle-income countries on the basis of different contributions with a win-win purpose. PIDA is a clear example of a recipient driven mechanism that provides important lessons on how to improve ownership in decision making of international support by placing African needs and agendas at the forefront. The North and South can get together and regain the spirit of diffuse reciprocity and achieve the original purpose of multilateral cooperation- to doing better in the longer term by working together- through experimenting and learning by monitoring from different configurations of ‘tables’.

Endnotes

- ¹ The IMF’s quota system, for example, determines contributions based on a country’s “relative position in the world economy” (as determined by their gross domestic product [GDP], openness and economic variability) and allocates votes on IMF decisions accordingly, as well as access to allocations of special drawing rights. In 2010, the IMF doubled the size of the quota, its largest one-time increase. However, changes in quotas must be approved by an 85 per cent majority, which in effect gives a veto power to the United States.

- 2 See the report of the High Level Panel on the DAC chaired by Mary Robinson: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/Report-High-Level-Panel-on-the-DAC-2017.pdf>
- 3 OECD et al. (2019). Latin American Economic Outlook 2019: Development in Transition, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/g2g9ff18-en>.
- 4 The growth of Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was the second fastest rate in the world between 2000 and 2019, although it has not generated sufficient quality jobs.
- 5 On average, the private sector committed only USD 6.4 billion annually (7.5 per cent of the total commitment for Africa's infrastructure) between 2015 and 2018 (ICA, 2018); ICA (2018), Infrastructure Financing Trends in Africa 2018. This is much lower than in other regions: USD 33.3 billion in East Asia, and USD 26.6 billion in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- 6 <https://sdg4education2030.org/who-we-are>

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Restoring and Transforming Multilateralism: Role of South-South Cooperation



*Philani Mthembu**

“Rather than a one size fits all model, multilateralism in a multipolar world will thus see some countries having greater policy space in their own regions while maintaining mutual relations with the rest of the world”

Given the lack of international cooperation witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic, a growing number of actors are questioning the state of multilateral order and warning of the implications of a ‘crisis of multilateralism’. This has been quite evident as countries such as South Africa and India have raised their voices and taken diplomatic efforts against vaccine nationalism and efforts to block a waiver of certain sections of the TRIPS Agreement at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) by mostly countries of the Global North. This has exposed a real weakness in the multilateralism system, that even during a pandemic, countries and corporations have favoured narrow nation interests and profits over the collective good. The broader effect of this lack of cooperation has been to serve immediate interests of some countries of the Global North, but to the detriment of the collective interests of the global population. Indeed, the short sighted strategies of countries and corporations in the Global North have fostered the conditions for more variants of COVID-19 to emerge, which invariably come back to hurt countries and populations in the Global North. The experiences of COVID-19 point out towards the deviations between what multilateral institutions and their agencies were created for, and the practices at play.

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As countries in the Global North have deviated from the principles of multilateralism, the conversation has also focused on the potential demise of the Western-dominated order, with leaders and foreign policy establishments in the West growing increasingly anxious about the future and potential role of non-Western countries in shaping the future of multilateralism. Instead of seeking to prevent the rise of Southern powers, as has been seen in the efforts of the United States to contain the rise of China, it will arguably become more important to seek to build bridges that create greater mutual understanding of the reformist agenda of Southern countries within multilateral institutions and agencies.

Southern powers have called into question various practices in the multilateral order and their utility in advancing an inclusive development agenda within a stable international order. While traditional donors and powers in the Global North have often sought to project their development cooperation as advancing the interests of recipients, it is often recipients themselves that have argued that the practices of donors work against their interests and erode valuable policy space due to the various conditionalities. This brings to mind important questions about reciprocity in international cooperation and the key drivers of cooperation in the international system.

Robert Keohane (1986) defines 'diffuse reciprocity', as a cultural norm within a community where one commits and does things with and for others without demanding or expecting an immediate payback or

return, knowing that it will be done later and that all will be better off in the long run as a result. 'Diffuse reciprocity' is thus an attitude, a willingness to give without demanding a precise accounting of equivalent benefits for each action. 'Specific reciprocity', on the other hand, is described as an exchange mechanism based on immediate equivalence of values in a strictly delimited sequence. Going back to the example of the COVID-19 pandemic, one could argue that Southern countries such as South Africa and India, who are calling for a TRIPS Waiver are calling for a diffuse reciprocity approach in tackling the pandemic in efforts to ensure that all are able to benefit in a more equitable manner that brings long term returns. On the other hand, countries in the North have, more often than not, followed a model of specific reciprocity, focusing on short term gains, which has negative repercussions for all as profits and narrow national interests are privileged.

South-South cooperation, with its set of non-negotiable principles, has bound much of the global South in relationships of diffuse reciprocity. However, many countries beyond the South are getting more and more engaged in practices that can be characterised as specific reciprocity, leading to increasing inequality and slowing global economic growth amidst rising indebtedness and unemployment. The world is now witnessing a rising lack of trust among the nations, often justifying a shift to strong nationalist strategies that shun cooperation. The spread of global pandemic and rising concerns about the prospect of an irreversible threat of climate change are the immediate threats to humanity.

Recourse to nationalism would only contribute to such possibilities further since it would diminish any prospects of enhanced international cooperation to a challenge affecting all of humanity.

What has been particularly alarming in recent times is how countries that played an integral role in conceptualising and establishing the multilateral order are shunning many of its key prescripts and embracing elements that hark back to economic nationalism. The following article seeks to address the role of SSC in enhancing the strength of diffuse reciprocity in order to tackle the various emerging global threats to multilateral cooperation. It is particularly focused on whether SSC can lead to a restoration and transformation of multilateralism given its strong experience of practicing diffuse reciprocity for more than half a century. Indeed, it is quite important, given that a world starkly divided into those exercising specific reciprocity and those exercising diffuse reciprocity would not bode well for the development prospects of many developing countries. With this in mind, and in the midst of a pandemic, it is ever more important to assess what role South-South cooperation can play in re-establishing the centrality of multilateralism and international cooperation.

Towards a More Fragmented Global Order: Assessing the Role of the Global South

While many agree that the multilateral order is under great strain, it is unclear whether the world is moving towards a more fragmented order or whether countries in the Global South working

with counterparts in the Global North can assist in building greater resilience and cooperation within multilateral institutions. In building resilience within these structures, it will also be necessary to proactively bring in new ideas on reform measures, which is needed to ensure that these institutions remain central areas of engagement in the world. This is made even more important given the unilateral initiatives and actions by the United States (US) and some of its European allies, particularly towards China and Russia. An inclusive reform oriented process involving all the relevant stakeholders will be important in order to ensure that the multilateral order does not disintegrate and usher in a more fragmented global order with a growing trend towards the pursuit of narrow national interests rather than longer term development objectives that work in the interests of the collective. Indeed one of the key drivers of South-South cooperation has been the importance of countering the urge towards a zero-sum game in international relations, one which many countries in the global South have been at the receiving end of.

While countries of the Global North have been generally expected to dedicate a greater portion of their resources towards development cooperation, countries in the Global South have not been expected to do so and yet have continued to grow their footprints as sources of development cooperation. They have also continued to be of great importance to shaping many of the key modalities of cooperation in various multilateral fora. They have done this by either establishing or reforming their own

development cooperation architecture, which comes with various modalities such as extending concessional finance, training counterparts in the developing world to build up their self-reliance and state capacity, and through various other forms of cooperation including volunteer programmes in the developing world. Indeed countries of the South are no longer only playing an important normative role in advancing the principles of South-South cooperation, but have also established various new development finance institutions such as the various export and import banks, and through structures such as the BRICS New Development Bank. These new and reformed structures give Southern countries an opportunity to not only call for a diffuse reciprocity model of cooperation, but to demonstrate its benefits in a practical manner.

In the past the US and European countries have largely dominated multilateral institutions, however in future, they will have to become more accommodating in accepting the views and practices of non-Western countries such as the member states in the Global South. Multilateral institutions will, thus, have to ensure they are able to accommodate the co-existence of a whole range of schools of thought instead of a consensus enforced through the economic and military power of a hegemonic power. Indeed while some practitioners and scholars from the global North have argued that heterogeneity is a weakness in South-South Cooperation, it is arguable that the opposite is true. Heterogeneity has been an important strength of South-South Cooperation, with countries not having

strong impulses to impose a particular modality of cooperation as long as it is aligned to the key tenets and principles of South-South Cooperation. Rather than a one size fits all model, multilateralism in a multipolar world will thus see some countries having greater policy space in their own regions while maintaining mutual relations with the rest of the world. This will be important in order to avoid a fragmented global order characterized by a zero-sum game. What will be an important pillar is the idea of mutual respect for countries to choose their own paths. However, multipolarity may not necessarily guarantee practices of diffuse reciprocity within institutions of global governance.

Will Multipolarity Favour Practices of Specific Reciprocity or Diffuse Reciprocity?

Following the fall of the Soviet Union, the US emerged as the sole superpower in global politics, ending years of bipolarity in the global political and economic system (Krauthammer, 1990). However, much has since occurred to dispel the notion that unipolarity would be the dominant post-Cold War configuration of global order. Indeed the rise of Southern powers has gradually ushered in an increasingly multipolar world order that requires new thinking, global governance reforms, and new institutions to solve the most pressing problems of the day. The role of Southern powers in their respective regions and on the global stage can already be felt in various areas of the global political economy, with some of them even surpassing the economic size and military prowess of Northern counterparts such as France

and the United Kingdom (Mthembu, 2018).

Due to the increasing number of actors within and outside of the state centric system all applying different types of pressure, the exercise of global governance will increasingly have to factor in the inclusion of non-traditional actors in problem solving. This is crucial not only because of the growing issue of lack of skill set needed in areas in international relations that state actors are not always in possession of, but also because they bring in greater legitimacy and a diversity of voices and options in resolving tensions in the multilateral system. Attempts to not only involve more state actors, but to also create spaces for think tanks and the research they produce have become more evident in recent years. The business community and various civil society stakeholders have also increasingly been granted the space to engage with policy makers on the sidelines of major international summits. This has been evident under the cooperation mechanism created by the BRICS grouping (Mthembu, 2019).

Using their growing economic clout individually and as a collective, Southern powers have thus been able to push for gradual reforms to the existing global institutions while also applying pressure in the form of creating new structures such as the New Development Bank of the BRICS, the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) led by China, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and the IBSA, which all exert pressure on the various reform processes while championing key principles of South-South cooperation (Mthembu, 2019).

Southern powers, along with calling for reforms to existing multilateral institutions and establishing new ones, are also faced with the arduous task of building bridges and indentifying countries in the global South and North that are receptive to the notion of incorporating new actors and ideas into existing structures. This will help in building greater resilience and usher in an era of greater cooperation, especially pertinent in the wake of the cooperation failures seen prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Future of South-South Cooperation

It should not come as a surprise once again to observe a growing interest in South-South cooperation in contemporary global politics as leading countries of the developing world reignite the tradition under vastly different and more favourable conditions. Previously, one could argue that these countries possessed very little material resources at their disposal to impact the international system and realise their ideas, they can today apply a lot more resources towards their ideas.

The central tenets of SSC are self-reliance among developing countries, most of which have been subjected to colonialism and other means of foreign domination. As an idea and principle, it is multifaceted and strongly informed by the notion of developing the South through equitable access to trade, investment and technology within a multilateral institutional framework.¹ Developing countries have consistently argued that they have limited policy

Key Goals of South-South Cooperation
1. To take advantage of existing complementarities within developing countries by developing direct cooperation and eliminating intermediaries from the North
2. To create new complementarities and interdependence through coordination of development planning and achieving better scale economies
3. To introduce some of the major principles of the New International Economic Order (for example, mutual benefit and solidarity) into transactions among developing countries' cooperation partners
4. To strengthen the bargaining positions of the South vis-à-vis the North through selective delinking and greater collective self-reliance

space when it comes to issues such as trade and development, and consistently made efforts to increase their policy space and have a relative autonomy over decision making and the use of indigenous resources. The Harare Summit (1986) of the NAM² expressed the key goals of SSC as follows:³

Operating under vastly favourable conditions, leading countries from the global South find themselves in a position where they have made progress in achieving many of the key tenets of South-South Cooperation. They have thus been able to build up their individual and collective capacity and agency in international relations, shaping normative and operational modalities of international cooperation through the growing development cooperation and through existing and new structures of global governance. In order to continue and give greater momentum to their efforts to transform multilateral structures, leading countries of the global South will have to ensure that instead of acting only in their individual capacity, they put emphasis on bringing along their various regions

and their cooperation structures. This will build greater resilience and ensure that the ideals of South-South cooperation have a greater opportunity to shape international practices. This may create the conditions for more diffuse reciprocity given that the key tenets of diffuse reciprocity would be well established in the various regional cooperation settings. Southern powers will also have to ensure that triangular cooperation programmes and projects are implemented in keeping in view the key tenets of South-South Cooperation.

Endnotes

- ¹ G77, Joint Declaration of the Seventy Seven Developing Countries made at the Conclusion of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Geneva, June 15, 1964
- ² Political Declaration of the 8th Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1-6 September 1986
- ³ Research Centre for Cooperation with Developing Countries (RCCDC), Challenges and Prospects of South-South Cooperation: Synthesis Study, Ljubljana and Harare, RCCDC and Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies, 1987

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INDIA-US STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP DISCUSSIONS HELD IN WASHINGTON

India-US 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue was held in Washington on September 1, 2021. Indian and US defence and foreign ministry officials met to discuss development in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific and discussed ways to enhance cooperation in counter-terrorism and maritime security. "They also considered possibility of enhancing collaboration in areas of counterterrorism, HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief) and maritime security," the external affairs ministry (India) said in a statement.

Various aspects of India-US strategic partnership were considered and deliberated upon, including defence, global public health, economic and commercial cooperation, science and technology, clean energy and climate finance, and people-to-people ties. Opportunities for increasing cooperation in the above mentioned fields based on mutual interests, and a possible collaboration in contemporary areas such as space, cyber security and emerging technologies were explored.

India was represented by Vani Rao, Joint Secretary (Americas), Ministry of External Affairs and Somnath Ghosh, Joint Secretary (International Cooperation), Ministry of Defence; and the US delegation was led by Ely Ratner, Assistant Secretary, Defence for Indo-Pacific affairs and Ervin Massinga, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, State for South and Central Asian Affairs, State Department in the bilateral 2+2 intersessional meeting of officials.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, GOI. (2021, September 2). India-US 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue [Press Release]. Available at <https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/34211/IndiaUS+22+Intersessional+Dialogue>

Strengthening Solidarity for Reciprocity: Rethinking the Role of SSC in Reinvigorating Multilateralism during Global Crises



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“The fundamental goal of strengthening global solidarity during global crises is to achieve substantive equal partnerships between all countries in the future.”

From Solidarity to Reciprocity: The Transformation of South-South Cooperation

Solidarity has been the core spirit of SSC when many Asian and African countries were struggling for independence in 1940s. The spirit of solidarity also forged the Non-Alignment Movement a few years later, which features the common identity, equality and solidarity between the third-world countries. The key objectives of SSC were political: the defense of sovereignty, opposition to colonialism and hegemony of the “North” as well as building a fairer international economic order. The spirit of solidarity was represented in both the domestic economic development strategies of southern countries and the creation of south-led international organizations like the Group of 77 (G77), United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), etc. During the 1950s and 1970s, development planning,

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state intervention, import institution featured the national economic strategies of many developing countries to varying degrees. The New International Economic Order (NIEO) advocated by UNCTAD has contributed to creating a fairer international investment and trade regime although the world economy was still in the control of the developed countries. These indicated that the influence of solidarity between southern countries has gradually spread from political sphere to economic field although the economic cooperation between Southern countries were rather limited back then.

The 1980s, however, witnessed the decline of the solidarity spirit due to a number of factors: the dominant influence of two superpowers urged the developing countries to choose side for patronage; the debt crisis of the third-world countries, the imposition of structural adjustment programmes from major international financial institutions and traditional donors, the fragmentation of the common identity of third-world countries caused by the “take-off” of East Asian counties and economic development in Latin America (Bergamaschi et al., 2017). The political reason was not attractive enough to forge the foundation of South-South Cooperation, and the major areas of South-South Cooperation identified by the South Conference in late 1980s, which include trade, finance, industry, business, transport, information and communication, and people to people exchange, were ignored to a large extent as the voice of advocacy was too weak to be heard (Chaturvedi 2012, 18).

The global economic crisis in the 1990s not only eroded the economic growth of many developed countries, but also threatened the sustainability of their aid budgets for developing countries. Many traditional donors could not meet their promise of aid provision. At the same time, the persistence of poverty in many recipient countries led to new discussions on the effectiveness aid from traditional donors to recipient countries. The aid fatigue and underperformance of aid projects made scholars from both the North and the South reflect on the inherent inequality embedded in this type of aid-recipient dichotomy. On the contrary, the resilience showed by the newly emerging economies like China and Brazil revived the South-South links as the investments from these countries to other developing countries started to grow. However, different from the SSC featuring political solidarity, the new SSC focused more on reciprocity, that is, equality, mutual respect, mutual benefit, non-interference and non-conditionality.

The new South-South Cooperation gained its momentum in the 2000s as the emerging and developing countries began to form coalitions and different forums such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), CIVETS (Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, and Turkey), IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa), FOCAC (Forum of China-Africa Cooperation), etc. to promote their common interests, agendas and visions for global governance and international development. Concurrently, the volume of aid, trade and investment between Southern countries is also increasing tremendously. The South has contributed to more than half of the world’s growth

in recent years with the decrease of ODA from developed countries (World Bank, 2017). The estimated non-DAC countries' contribution to ODA has reached 15.2 per cent.¹ The intra-south trade is accounting for more than a quarter of all world trade. The outflows of foreign direct investment from the South represent a third of the global flows; and remittances from migrant workers to low- and middle-income countries reached 466 billion dollars in 2018, which helped lift millions of families out of poverty."²

In most recent decade, many scholars started to argue that SSC, led by the emerging economies in particular, is transforming the landscape of global development cooperation through a "silent revolution" that might lead to the death of existing donor-recipient aid system (Woods, 2008; Jing et al., 2020). Some scholars straightforwardly pointed out that ODA based on the experiences of the North could hardly provide effective prescriptions for the development of the South and it only focused on managing modernization's "bads" rather than promoting its "goods" (Jing et al., 2020). However, the new development assistance system should not replace the existing ODA system but strengthen the system through integrating the emerging economies into it. The new framework based on the principles of reciprocity can not only promote horizontal partnership, increase the aid effectiveness, but also bring in more resources for development through advocating structural reforms. Such reforms could create the necessary conditions for mutual benefit and autonomous decisions on development policies in the global south (Esteves & Assuncao, 2014). But the question remains

how this could be operationalised in the new international scenario with the heterogeneity of developing countries in the face of global crises.

Collapse of Multilateralism and Challenges to Reciprocity of SSC

The global outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic as a global health disaster and the social-economic crisis it caused has accelerated our time into an era of "mutual dependence". No country can deal with the crisis alone. At the same time, the pre-existing conditions like de-globalization, the rise of populism and "thinning of multilateralism" were exacerbated to some extent with the global spread of the pandemic as many developed countries focused on dealing with domestic issues. The US-China trade conflict, the US withdrawal from the World Health Organization and the Paris agreement during Trump era, as well as the politicisation of the pandemic led by the United States further divided the global community and the goal to restructure the global solidarity led by the United Nations System has become more difficult.

The asymmetry in mobilizing the public resources, in facing this challenge, has widened the gap between developed and developing countries. According to the statistics released by UNCTAD (2021), the developed economies had committed on average almost 30 per cent of their GDPs to fight the pandemic, while the average size of relief package in developing countries does not even reach 5 per cent (including 10 per cent of China, 6 per cent of India) as

of May 25, 2020. General government health expenditure in low- and middle-income countries amounts to only 3 per cent of GDP and in the group of least developed countries (LDCs) just 1 per cent, against 10 per cent in high-income countries. Meanwhile, the economic recession hit by the pandemic has been far more severe for developing countries than developed countries and it will take longer time for the South to recover due to their higher capacity constraints in both providing health facilities and resource mobilization. At the global scale, the resource constraints in the least developed countries will make achievements of 2030 agenda for sustainable development goals impossible if no further actions on global cooperation are taken.

The global outbreak of the pandemic and the consistent appearance of the new variants of the virus make the whole world rely on vaccine to build immunity against the virus. Providing timely and equitable access to vaccines against COVID-19 for all people is crucially important and key to control the wider negative impacts of the pandemic. However, this presents enormous challenges in developing countries, especially when taking into account competing health priorities and broader commitments in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (OECD, 2021). The global community witnessed “vaccine nationalism” in some developed countries; the countries prioritised their own citizens and insisted on priority access to vaccines through bilateral deals (Mancini & Peel, 2020). Over 50 per cent of the vaccine doses that the principal producers have pledged to

deliver in 2021 have been pre-ordered by wealthy countries (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021) and some even reserve vaccine volumes far more than their populations (NYT, 2020).

The better performance of the Southern countries in the global crisis brings a silver lining to the cloud. At the beginning of the pandemic, the new forms of transnational solidarity like South-North Cooperation (for example, China provided aid to Italy and Russia sent medical team to the United States) were born to tackle the global challenge. Some recipient countries also provided support to southern partners (for example, Mongolia and Pakistan provided support to China). As the largest developing country, China made commitment of making vaccine a global public good and joined G20’s Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) to relieve the debt burden of the least developed countries. So far, China has provided vaccines and other types of support to more than 100 countries and quite a few international organizations. The first virtual meeting of the International Forum on COVID-19 Vaccine Cooperation was held on August 5th, 2021. President Xi Jinping announced that China will strive to provide two billion COVID-19 vaccine doses to the world throughout this year and offer 100 million U.S. dollars to the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) facility. A joint statement was jointly released by the 23 Southern countries after the Forum. These efforts indicate that solidarity was overriding reciprocity in SSC during the global crisis.

The active action taken by the Southern countries resonated with the North. The most impressive example is the G7's Build Back Better World (B3W) initiative, which promised to "provide a transparent infrastructure partnership to help narrow the \$40 trillion needed by developing nations by 2035". This is certainly good news for many developing countries who are struggling with infrastructure provision deficiency. However, according to the United States government officials, the objective of this mega-project is not just a G7 consensus on the need for a shared approach to China on trade and human rights, ..., to offer their standards and their way of doing business (Holland & Faulconbridge 2021). What concerns us here is not the competition it brings to the developing world, which to some extent will benefit many developing countries and help improve the quality and standards of Chinese Belt and Road Initiative projects. The question is the business model it promotes with developing countries. Will it combine aid with trade and investment or is it just a pure business model? Do the standards they plan to impose on the developing countries really be fit for them? What about the issues of efficiency and effectiveness of the cooperation between countries at different development stages? The fundamental question here is "Can the North follow the same principles of reciprocity in SSC when conducting development cooperation with the South?", that is, "Can the norm of reciprocity advocated by the SSC be applied to NSC" during the crisis period? What will be the best approach to addressing the issues of global public goods provision in a world

with countries of big divergences in size, capacity, interests, and values?

Convergence of NSC and SSC: Feasible, Good or Bad?

Before we try to answer these questions, let us review the norms that the world has been following in development cooperation. For a long period of time, the western world has advocated overtly 'charity and responsibility' to be the driver for providing development assistance to other developing countries. However, their altruistic character was often overshadowed by "conditionality" and "selectivity" imposed by donors on the recipients. The discussion on aid and development effectiveness since mid-1990s demonstrated the self-reflection of the traditional donors, which gave rise to the principles of "ownership" and "accountability" in evaluating the aid effectiveness. A series of actions were taken by the OECD-DAC countries to solidify its position in international development cooperation both in reality and in rhetoric with the aim to mobilize more development finance and improving development effectiveness.

The rise of the new SSC further accelerated the reform of north-dominated development cooperation regime. One of their attempts was to incorporate the emerging economies into their system by creating Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), a multi-stakeholder platform that brings together all types of development actors to advance the effectiveness of their development efforts, to deliver results that are long-lasting, and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs).³ The most important task of GPEDC is to explore synergies between NSC and SSC. The latest progress report, published in 2019, covered the data from 86 partner countries and territories, more than 100 development partners and hundreds of civil society organizations. Although, GPEDC was co-launched by OECD and the United Nations Development Programs (UNDP), yet many southern experts still consider it a northern dominated scheme with the motive of imposing their rules and standards on the emerging economies. No meaningful participation from China and India in the first two high-level meetings led many people doubt the sustainability of the platform (Li et al., 2018).

Another important action taken by OECD is the creation of Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD), a new international standard for measuring the full array of resources in support of the 2030 Agenda. The objective was to monitor not only ODA, but also private resources mobilised through official means flowing to developing countries. The TOSSD has developed a lot since its first establishment in 2015. The framework is more comprehensive than before. The reporters include bilateral and multilateral providers, trying to cover the resources of ODA, Other Official Flows (OOF), SSC and Trilateral cooperation (TrC), and support international public goods and private resources mobilised by international interventions. The first comprehensive report of TOSSD data, based on the year 2019, was published in March, 2021. It is said that more than 90 providers reported their support to SDG to TOSSD

international task force. However, no information was given on the providers from the given data set, only the data based on pillars, sectors, and recipients was provided. So far, only partial data on SSC and TrC was provided and no data was available on support given to international public goods.⁴

There is no doubt that the major objective of TOSSD is to get SSC providers on board. But since the very beginning, the actors from the Global South voiced their concern that the framework will be governed by the OECD-DAC club and serve its own interests. In the past few years, we witnessed the effort made by OECD to address these concerns and many non-DAC providers including Asian and African beneficiaries as well as recipients of development assistance and international organizations joined the team to report the data to OECD. However, crucial providers such as Brazil and China are only observers and are therefore not proper members of the task force. India is not participating in the task force at all (Li, 2019). In order to get the major players like China, Brazil and India on board, the OECD-based taskforce seeks to transfer ownership of TOSSD to the UN. In March 2020, the UN Statistical Commission decided to create a working group to further refine the proposal by the International TOSSD Task Force to integrate TOSSD in the 2020 Comprehensive Review of the SDG indicators. But from the data released by TOSSD, we can see there is still a long way to go to make TOSSD accepted by the global community.

The convergence of the South to the North is also an obvious trend in the last decade. This is not only

reflected in the increase of the aid volume, their contribution to global governance and their willingness to take more global responsibility, but also in following the rules and norms. Taking climate change as an example, while major western countries were swinging their pendulum in climate leadership, BRICS countries have started to invest heavily in sustainable resources (Baker 2019), despite their dependence on energy sources that lead to a high rate of pollution. There were huge sums destined to the development of alternative energy sources out of the first loans provided by the NDB in 2016. Looking individually, China has committed to achieving carbon emissions peak in 2030 & carbon neutrality in 2060 at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly and has already integrated green development into its “14th five-year plan”. In April 2019, China and international partners officially launched the BRI International Green Development Coalition (BRIGC) at the Second Belt and Road Forums for International Cooperation. BRIGC aims to establish a policy dialogue and communication platform, an environmental knowledge and information platform, and a green technology exchange and transfer platform, so as to advance global consensus, understanding, cooperation, and action of a green Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In December 2020, the BRIGC published its first report, *Green Development Guidance for BRI Projects Baseline Study Report*. The report summarized best practices for addressing ecological, environmental and climate risks in overseas investment based on the analysis of environmental policies, safeguard measures and practices of

governments, financial institutions and NGOs around the world. It formulated a classification framework, produced positive & negative lists for BRI investments and put forward specific suggestions to promote green BRI projects.

As the convergence between the North and the South is growing, the concerns on the threat to the existing global governance caused by the rise of BRICS countries are also increasing from both the North and the South. On the one hand, the approaches that the major Southern countries (specifically the BRICS countries), use to establish equal partnership based on the principle of non-interference with the North and among Southern countries were considered a threat to the existing global governance structure which was previously dominated by the West (Bagchi 2012). For example, unlike the IMF and the World Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB) are not ‘interested’ in how projects are put into practice in each country, but only grant funds based on the validity of a project (Abdenur and Folly 2015; Peng and Tok 2016). Also, in the NDB, the five founding members (the BRICS countries) participate with equal economic capital which allows them to have an equal voting capacity different from the case with the IMF. On the other hand, the concern about the status of the BRICS countries among the South is also growing. The rise of these countries has demonstrated the heterogeneity of the Global South: not only in the difference between BRICS and the rest of the Southern countries

in terms of development stages, but also in the difference among BRICS countries in terms of ideology, geography and culture. Therefore, the questions like: Are these countries still willing to represent the Global South, or are they trying to develop new forms of colonialism or imperialism (Deepak 2016)? Can the BRICS still stick to the shared interests of opposition to the 'Euro-American club' which has dominated the world economy since the nineteenth century as the economic interests among themselves are widening?

Way Forward: Solidarity or Reciprocity?

After more than one and a half years since the first case of COVID-19 was reported in China, the entire world is still in the mist of uncertainty for recovery. The effective international cooperation is clearly essential for ending the pandemic and rebooting global sustainable growth and development. But how can global cooperation be achieved with a shattered multilateralism from the South-South Cooperation perspective? Here, we argue that global solidarity should be prioritized during global crises to maintain reciprocity for a more and equal world in the future.

First and foremost, the importance of ODA should be recognized by both SSC providers and recipient countries during the global crises. We all know that the impacts of global pandemic were not limited to health and economic sphere, but more severe on social development like exacerbated world hunger, rising poverty, halted or even reversed progress in education and shortened life expectancy. For many

developing countries, LDCs or LMICs in particular, these problems cannot be solved by themselves. The performance of ODA during the crisis has not been disappointing so far. According to the OECD report, foreign aid from official donors rose to an all-time high of US\$ 16.2 billion in 2020, up to 3.5 per cent in real terms from 2019. The data does not include the ODA from non-DAC countries. Turkey provided 1.12 per cent of its GNI for ODA last year. China has also contributed a lot to help other developing countries fight against COVID-19 pandemic as mentioned above. However, compared to ODA, all other major flows of income for developing countries—trade, foreign direct investment and remittances—declined due to the pandemic. Total external private finance to developing countries fell 13 per cent in 2020 and trade volumes declined by 8.5 per cent (OECD 2021).⁵ Government should play a pivotal role in tackling global crises and the role of ODA cannot be replaced by other types of development finance. This should remain to be the foundation of global consensus.

Second, the global crises have shown the urgent need to invest in global and regional public goods against global health crisis, disaster response, climate change and disruption of global value chains, etc. The outbreak of the pandemic also provides opportunities to broaden the international cooperation for global public goods production. Southern countries have huge potential and advantages in contributing to technical, financial and human resources for public goods provision in least developed countries. The manufacturing capacity

in China and India for PPEs, medical facilities and vaccine production has been playing a very important role in narrowing the supply and demand gap. Many other Southern countries also enjoy geographical and human resources potential for participating in global value chains. Governments from both the South and the North should encourage their enterprises to invest in these developing countries. A new development finance architecture to combine aid, trade and investment should be established to encourage global public goods provision through NSC as well as SSC. Moreover, China and G7 should work together to coordinate BRI and B3W to make them benefit the partner countries while maintaining the sustainability of this type of new development finance.

The international-level global crisis response mechanism to offer prompt, coordinated and effective solutions to global crisis could also be viewed as important global public goods. Unfortunately, during the crisis, we saw the collapse of this type of mechanism. The authoritative platform like the World Health Organization was either abandoned or politicised. We also witnessed the divide not only in international level, but also within national and local levels, which led to mistrust between the state and the society, the biggest obstacle for effective control of the pandemic. The dysfunction or lack of authoritative knowledge system to some extent thwarted the function of scientific measures to preventing the spread of the virus and provided opportunities for some politicians to use pandemic as a political tool to target their political enemies. The

Southern countries should work together to change and avoid the reoccurrence of this situation.

Third, the advancement of digital technology should be an important area for global cooperation rather than mutual coercion and suspicion. The wide application of digital technology in developing countries has become the most important instrument to narrow the gap between rich and poor, developed and developing in terms of education, knowledge transfer and even job opportunities. More global efforts are needed to promote digital technology in developing countries while the global rules under the United Nations for governing technology should be formulated to avoid weaponisation and politicisation of digital technology for their own benefits. The importance of investing in digital technology should be highlighted during the global pandemic and for achieving the SDGs world-wide.

All the targets mentioned above can only be achieved based on new global consensus reached by inclusive, multiple-level actors (governments from both developed and developing countries, multilateral organizations, regional organizations, enterprises and NGOs, etc.) under the leadership of the UN system. The largest scale of global solidarity is needed. To achieve this, the emerging economies like BRICS, could play a decisive role through providing more development cooperation based on solidarity rather than specific reciprocity to avoid the downside slide of the development finance during the global crises. The position of BRICS to represent the South should not be forgone as more international responsibility from

them can provide a benchmark for the developing countries to act according to their promises and rules they made, which will definitely bring benefits to the Southern countries. At the same time, with the enlarging economic gap between the emerging economies and the rest Southern countries, the expectation of more support from them has been increasing. More support from the emerging countries can strengthen the Southern solidarity which to some extent has been weakened in recent years but was needed to tackle the global crisis.

However, this does not mean the principle of reciprocity of South-South Cooperation should be abandoned. The fundamental goal of strengthening global solidarity during global crises is to achieve substantive equal partnerships between all countries in the future. Through sacrificing the specific reciprocity (mutual benefit in the short run) between Southern partners, the downward spiral of negative reciprocity (tit for tat) between the North and the South could be avoided, and a global community with a shared future for mankind can be achieved in the long run.

All in all, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented threat to the world, but it can also be turned into an opportunity “to propel changes that have often been postponed” and it “is too good a crisis to be allowed to go to waste” (Lopes 2020). With concerted global efforts and smart strategies, global challenges like pandemic and climate changes must be resolved and global sustainable development can be accomplished.

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- ¹ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/non-dac-reporting.htm>
- ² <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/intergovernmental-coordination/south-south-cooperation-2019.html>
- ³ <https://www.effectivecooperation.org/system/files/2020-06/infographic-v10%20-%20Edited%20v2.pdf>
- ⁴ <https://www.tossd.org/what-is-tossd/>
- ⁵ OECD’s global Outlook on Financing for Sustainable Development 2021, <https://www.oecd.org/development/global-outlook-on-financing-for-sustainable-development-2021-e3c30a9a-en.htm>

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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION 2021

United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation (SSC) is celebrated globally on 12th September every year commemorating the adoption of Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries in 1978 on the same date. The UN says that the technical cooperation among nations of Global South started as a pioneering effort to strengthen their diplomatic and international negotiating power through political dialogue. The International day for SSC is an initiative for the economic, social and political developments of the countries in the Southern region. It also highlights the efforts of the United Nations for cooperation among developing countries. SSC helps developing nations to share knowledge, skills, expertise and resources to meet their development goals through concerted efforts. According to UNOSSC, this initiative is a manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South that contributes to their national well-being, their national and collective self-reliance and the attainment of internationally agreed development goals, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Source: Mirror Now Digital (2021, September 12). International Day for South-South Cooperation: A comprehensive initiative for development of Global South. Mirror Now News. Available at <https://www.timesnownews.com/mirror-now/in-focus/article/international-day-for-south-south-cooperation-a-comprehensive-initiative-for-development-of-global-south/810760>.

Rabindranath Tagore - A 19th Century Pioneer of Applied Cooperation in Development



Pinaki Chakraborti *

Applying the Rawlsian Lens

It was the early monsoon days in the *Zamindary*¹ estate Shelaidaha² belonging to *Maharshi* Debendranath Tagore in 1891. A phenomenal transformation was in the offing, in this deep rural and remote riverine area of Bengal (later to be called Bangladesh), in observing morning rituals and festivities of the particular day meant for initiating the sowing festival, through the reception of the '*Hujour*'³ and his crowning. The day was called '*Punyaha*'⁴ traditionally in the estates of the landlord's family. The *Hujour* designate this time was Rabindranath, the youngest son of *Maharshi*'s, at the former's thirtieth year of age. The first event to start with was the welcome showing in and reception of the *Hujour Babu* to the throne, accompanied by the office high ups and invited dignitaries, amidst a large number of the common *riyots*,⁵ of the estate.

As Rabindranath was being ushered in, he stops at the entrance seemingly shocked, and nearly backed out by a step or two. He frowns at the multiple bamboo fence partitions and hierarchical divides across the subjects along their socioeconomic status. Why are there so many uneven divides, was his explicit question. Why were the poor

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Muslims and low caste subjects pushed so far outward! In reply the highest estate officer, the *Naeb*, informed that this has been the tradition, the custom observed since time immemorial. 'But this is *Punyaha*,' said Rabindranath, 'a day to be united, a day of getting together for all, not meant for divides among people!' [(Chowdhury, 1976), p39 Amitava Chowdhury, Jamidar Rabindranath]

'*Punyaha*' for uniting, for coming together was visibly impossible among so many hierarchical separations over, designations, status, and religion and castes, staring as a mammoth inert establishment of inequality and deprivations. The 'King' refuses to enter and legitimise the injustice he perceived. He walks out, declaring 'distinct choice is yours -me or your oppressive tradition as your chief administrator'.

After about an hour, the *Naeb*, accompanied by the upper caste high-ups of the estate came to the Bungalow (the Kuthibari), informed that the divisions were reduced, and requested Rabindranath to join. He, in good faith, went back to find from the entrance, some minor reshuffling of the fences to have taken place only. Disgusted he reached out to the mass of his subjects making a loud call (he possessed quite strong baritone voice): 'I call you my *Prajas* (the subjects) sitting and standing separated by the fences! Break all the barriers and come close to me as near as you can. I will also take a seat amongst you'.

The effect was magical. At the loud heartiest call of the Hujour designate Rabindranath Tagore, there arose, a mass shattering of the fences, a massive

breakthrough of lock-gates, and a spontaneous crossing of the boundaries of century-old traditions (since the permanent settlement), by the people. Breaking all artificial barriers of false power and vested interest, the people reached their king [Chowdhury, *ibidpp* 39-41]. This was the beginning, starting with a bang, a massive blow to the plinth of inequalities and injustice when whimpers of a large mass of helpless people would usually fade out into silence. A real Rawlsian approach and Sen's Capability Approach started, nearly a century before John Rawls's and Amartya Sen's theories were born.⁶ A new morning of hope dawned for the people in the Tagore's estates in East Bengal.

Tagore saw rural reconstruction as his 'life's work'⁷ as reflected through the three main phases comprising a period of 1899-1940: first, innovations in managing the family estates in the 1890s; second the national programme of 'constructive swadeshi' he put forward in 1903-9; third rural reconstruction in Sriniketan, later made a department of Rural Reconstruction and Development at his Visva-Bharati university, in 1915 that exists even today (Roy, 1988, pp 8-9).⁸ This can be further subdivided into three sub-periods. The first started by his sole endeavours at own expenditure, through his attempts to introduce new agriculture in and in the neighbourhood of Seilaidaha, sowing American corn, nainital and aragachi varieties of potato, Patna peas, sugarcane and cauliflower. Later on as we see the details below while easier arrangements for financial facilities for the cultivators was made, weaving and handloom works and

modern agricultural technology innovated as his son Rathindranath returned learning it from America. The second phase was in 1908-1909 for total reconstruction of the derelict villages of Birahimpore and Seilaidaha through initiating villagers' own efforts forming cooperative institutions. And the third, centering in Patisar, the district headquarter of most of the Tagore's estates in East Bengal extending works to restart reconstruction works of pargana Kaligram and spreading the extensive rural rejuvenation drives in Shantiniketan and Shriniketan, West Bengal during 1915-40. These phases simply represent some distinctive features of his actions that essentially brought about the remarkable rural transformation through his journey which can otherwise be taken as a continuum of innovative rural reconstruction activities. Throughout this period, Rabindranath had been relentlessly exploring novel 'functionings' and institutions for enabling the people to organise towards increased capabilities.

Here we look into the first phase only as we focus on the pioneering actions and thoughts that characterise Rabindranath as a development cooperation activist. It was him who first demonstrated at that early period of formative India, the pivotal significance of cooperation in villages as micro units to start with, later to be spread by linking not only through trade and commerce but over a whole lot of self-respecting, self-strengthening indigenous way of village societies, to be resurrected *a' la* our olden days. We focus on the three remarkable innovations he made of applied cooperation in rural development in the first phase only because that is virtually the pioneering

period of Tagore's struggle for rural reconstruction in India.

In what follows, the next section narrates the development of Rabindranath as the cooperation activist of development sourcing from the biographical literature on him, the estates' administrative accounts of the period concerned and his own letters, lectures and literary works. This contextualises the revolutionary means and measures Rabindranath introduced in this country (and perhaps the world) for implementing development through cooperation. In Section III, we present the policy action and organisation that he brought about as an application of his philosophy of cooperation for development. The fourth section will place a brief secondary record of what was achieved by him way back in those days, occasionally mentioning his later continuations in Birbhum, (Shriniketan) in West Bengal. The concluding fifth section will derive the essential message that Tagore left for us, in his writings directly relevant to his philosophy of cooperation for development. Wend with the optimism he left in his last call for survival through the crisis of civilisation faced by humanity when the West was in War within, in the 1940's is quoted in the section four..

Creating Capabilities through Enhanced Functionings

It was not really the first time that Rabindranath, the *chhotojamidar* (Zamindar the junior) visited his estates in 1891. He used to visit since he was quite young in 1875, accompanying his favourite elder brother Jyotirindranath. But since Debendranath had decided for

some time in mid-1880s to assign Rabi the job of managing the estates, he put the youngest son into a few training and apprenticeship sessions of a few months duration each. He explicitly said to Rabi,⁹ 'Only if I get convinced that you are equal to the responsibilities I will send you to our East Bengal estates as the Zamindar'.¹⁰ He perhaps knew at the outset that Rabi was the man. Rabindranath's approach to his duties rather than being decided from above at some point of time, virtually emerged through these periods of his exposures to the stark social realities down to the earth, of their estates. From the very beginning he became prone to build up the strength of people, not by gracious mercy from the top but from within, building up the poor subjects' own strength and self-respect-capabilities through developing the power of mutual cooperation and people's cooperatives.

Before coming to the details of these socioeconomic breakthroughs of him, it will be useful to take a cursory glance at the size of the estates under focus and which were since long put under a legally constituted Trust by

Prince Dwarakanath, the celebrated grandfather of Rabindranath. As was traced by Maharshi Debendranath in his autobiography, by 1840 Dwarakanath purchased vast estates in the districts of Hooghly, Rajshahi, Pabna, Cuttack, Midnapore, Rangapore, Tripura etc. and commercial ventures in Indigo and Tea plantations, Sora (sodium chlorate), Sugar trade, and coal mines in Raniganj. However, by the time Rabindranath was included in the management plan, the estates under the Debendranath's possession was slightly smaller including Birahimpore, Dihi Sajadpur (centered at Selaidaha), and pargana Kaligram in East Bengal, and Cuttack in Orissa, which legally were transferred earlier by Dwarakanath through a trust deed to three trustees in view of convenience in estate administration in future. The size that Rabindranath would be administering can be contemplated from the table below:

This annual value was considerable in the late nineteenth century.

Rabindranath's grasp of the problems was developed through his repeated

Income:		
Pargana Birahimpore	Taka ¹¹	52,858/-
Dihi Sajadpore	"	78,338/- +
Pargana Kaligram	"	50,420/- +
Taluk Pandua	"	15,845/-
Taluk Balia	"	5,550/-
Kismat Sadui	"	431/-
Mouja Biratgram	"	235/-
Total (Rounded up)	"	2,32,950/-
Carry Over from last year	"	1325/-
Total income	"	2,34,275/-
Total Expenditure	"	2,29,965/-

Source: Account of income and expenditure of Rabindranath Tagore's estate in the 1880s (adapted).

exposures to his people since his early years. Later at a relatively mature phase, he observed that so-called leaders in India, most of whom were either the British well wishers in Congress (the party itself was initially made up of Britishers in 1885), or their Indian associates. These cultured, learned and wise people were inclined to ignore the villages. In an article in Bengali, entitled 'Samajbhed' (Society Divided, if translated in English) he wrote, "The old Panchayat system of village societies with the heavy by-laws of the government ('chaaprash' in contemporary Bengali) strangulating around the throat, has been committing suicide and the ghosts there from have been suffocating the villagers loading on the chest; own food now insufficient to feed the traditional village schools; they have to beg for the doles from the government because of famines while the rich and the dignified from the countryside after putting out the lamps in their birthplaces moving out to reside in Kolkata and enjoy joyrides in motorcars."¹²

Remarkably, Tagore's rural rejuvenation programme started with the proposal to reduce the need to go to the district or sub-divisional judges court to ask for justice in all cases of complaints.¹³ Being invited to speak in Pabna Provincial Conference of Congress in 1897, though himself being a Zamindar, he addressed the country Zamindars who were reluctant to bring about developments in their own estates in the following sentences (Author's translation):

In his opinion it was possible to resurrect villages' own judiciary that was indigenous and more capable to

enforce justice in villages than ghosts of cases lodged in the courts of British rulers. This approach was quite evident in a few of his contemporary articles on the problems of the villages. He wrote, (translation by the author), ["T]he matter of our worries is whether there will survive any remainder of the original system we had in our country earlier that would meet all its own wants through its own simple rules In our country the king carried out functions of wars, protection of the kingdom and executing justice. But from imparting teaching and providing enough water to subjects were so easily performed by the indigenous society that so many sweeping invasions of new external kings was not able to reduce us to animals destroying our organizational equilibrium (dharma), did not spoil the society to destitution (lakshnichhara-void of affluence). There was no end to wars between kings but the society underneath continued with its building of airy spaces for worship or guest houses under the serene peaceful groves, digging of ponds, teachings of *shubhonkori*, our own a mathematical excellence by the village tutors while olden village schools did not have to stop imparting of wisdom, own epic the Ramayana was being recited in the domestic worship platforms called *chandimandaps*, and chanting of hymns and folk balads (*kirtana*) would enchant the village courtyards. The society (*samaj*) did not wait for the help from outside and did not lose its opulent beauty to the outsides'.¹⁴ Similar view and path was reflected in the novels written at about the same time, though published a little later -*Gora* (1904), or *Ghare Baire* (1916), for example. Among other things, Tagore's practical reading

of the deceptive judicial system with its extortive tentacles and elusive tangles of the court officials, police and Zamindars has been somewhat reflected in these novels.

Tagore had a clear vision and deep trust on the strength to be built from within the people and comprehension of the inability of external superimposition of rules to development preached by the Western concepts of nationalistic patriotism. "I therefore speaking to the landlords would claim that unless the riyots are gotten enough educated, healthy and strong against others' or own extortionary hands, no effective law whatsoever from a favourable ruling power can protect them from evils. Everyone's mouth will be watering at the first sight of these weak deprived people. If the landlord, moneylenders, police, Kanungos, court officials or any such person can hit and kill them at freewill, how can these people be taught to become the rulers before they are taught to become capable human beings?"¹⁵ He himself already started his counteracting programme of rural reconstruction, as mentioned above, and kept hammering on the societal inertia stubbornly standing on the way.

He clearly found in his young age the falsehood out of contradictions in the Westerners Nationalistic drives as were depicted in his contemporary writings. His disapproval of so-called nationalistic patriotism was repeatedly resounded over time. As for an example, he wrote:

"I am not against one nation in particular, but against the general idea of nations. What is the Nation?

"It is the aspect of a whole people as

an organised power. This organisation incessantly keeps up the insistence of the population on becoming strong and efficient. But this strenuous effort after strength and efficiency drains man's energy from his higher nature where he is self-sacrificing and creative. For thereby, man's power of sacrifice is diverted from his ultimate object, which is moral, to the maintenance of this organisation, which is mechanical. Yet this he feels all the satisfaction of moral exaltation and therefore becomes supremely dangerous to humanity. He feels relieved of the urging of his conscience when he can transfer his responsibility to this machine which is the creation of his intellect and not of his complete moral personality. By this device the people which loves freedom perpetuates slavery in a large portion of the world with the comfortable feeling of pride having done its duty; men who are naturally just can be cruelly unjust both in their act and thought, accompanied by a feeling that they are helping the world to receive its deserts; men who are honest can blindly go on robbing others of their human rights for self-aggrandisement, all the while abusing the deprived for not deserving better treatment."

Tagore said this in support of his distrust in the Western Industrial Revolution in the name of Civilisation, he expressed a few paragraphs earlier: "...I am willing to accept it (the West, England in particular) with all humility. I have great faith in human nature, and I think the West will find its true mission. I speak bitterly of Western civilisation when I am conscious that it is betraying its trust and thwarting its own purpose." Realisation like this was not a

consequence of thorough reading of the western history and philosophy only. Tagore acquired this from his practical experiences from his formative days of the late nineteenth century. He was able to locate the caveats and loopholes from his everyday experiences with people coming to him reporting the injustice they had to bear with in the courts and officials, in the landlords' office or even past experiences with the torturous indigo planters. His exposure to district courts was not to be ignored.

Rabindranath's own words on his exposure, which was expressed in many of his literary creations, was considerable. Quite some time later, in 1938 while he was implementing similar plans and development cooperation gained momentum: "In performing my managerial duties I had opportunities to get close contacts and experiences of rural Bengal. I saw with my own eyes the scarcity of drinking water in rural homes, saw the frail weak bodies reflecting the rampancy of diseases, and deprivations from food, shelter and basic needs. Ample proofs I found that illustrate the illiterate inert mind-sets that shoved them deceived and distressed time and again into incapacities".

Even earlier in 1930 when his rural reconstruction at Shriniketan adjacent to Shantiniketan was advancing fast he used to recollect his East Bengal experiences: "Riyots would come to me with information of their complaints, pains and delights, or appeals. I experienced the villages through them" [Chowdhury (1976) p,20]. He narrated later among the workers who joined his cooperative movement for rural reconstruction, "I used to think at that

time that even if I can emancipate 2-3 villages from their illiteracy, ignorance and incapacities, that will make small ideals for the whole of India. Even now I think, we have to develop a few villages where everyone will receive education, mirthful feeling of fulfilment will be flowing all over, folk songs, music, folklores religious recitations and musicals will go on like olden days of centuries ago." [Chowdhury, *ibid* p .20]

The Innovative Rabindranath

In this section, we take up the innovative strikes that Rabindranath made as first steps to implement his ideals of rural socioeconomic development. He introduced new systems, rules and financial institutions all to be looked after by the cooperatives of the self-strengthening, poor villagers themselves finding gradually their recovered self-respect to be a very effective strength.

Most innovative initiative was to integrate the distressed people into an accessible system of justice to be run by the villagers themselves. Trying to resurrect our indigenous *sarpanch* system, he suggested them to mutually select three heads from the three main estates, Seilaidaha, Birahimpore and Kaligram respectively, who in turn will select three persons from their jurisdictions. The local petty cases will be resolved at these village courts (Bicharsabha) and more complicated ones would be resolved taking the Hujourbabu (the Jamidar) who is the head ex-officio in that case. Only the cases that render impossible to an accepted solution, will be taken to the government courts. [Rathindranath Tagore 1961, pp 250-254].

This was a masterstroke from two aspects. Firstly, it integrated the people of an estate into transparent, less confusing case proceedings especially free from the self-styled middlemen's exploitation. Secondly, by increasing intermingling of known villagers as parties, witnesses or simply onlookers, it would increase the scope of relationships becoming closer, initiating a dependable basis for trust to be used for other development activities through cooperation.

Another innovative opening was to convince the riyots and share croppers (the subjects of the landlord) that their freedom from sufferings lied in their own strength of unity and their possible endeavours to explore the means through cooperation instituting a village welfare society called the 'Hitaishi Sabha'. This society was entrusted with executing the activities for development and welfare (Kalyan).

Third, a direct attack on their continuous sufferings from debt traps. He instituted in due course in this early phase, a Cooperative Bank himself and persuaded the villagers to keep the 'Common Fund' in the Bank and repay all other loans using loans from this bank. As a result they were soon freed from the debt traps.

To make a long story short, Rabindranath's rural rejuvenation programme started with a proposal from him to stop or at least reduce going to the government courts, usually far off from the villages for justice, to a minimum. He was successful in convincing the riyots (his cultivators and other dependents) that this will not only reduce the efforts and time but also costs of receiving dubious justice, often going in favour of

the rich landed gentry and the money lenders. This was truly a masterstroke also for its contribution to fast reduce the debt burdens of the poor people. He introduced two kinds of contributions on the part of the members of Cooperatives. One was 'Hitaishi Britti' (development fund) and the other was Kalyan Britti (welfare fund), to be spent entirely by collective decision of the members. Every rupee of rent had to be supported by three paisa¹⁶ each by the rent payer, for development. The development fund will be matched with equal amount by the landlord (Rabindranath's estate). The allocation of expenditure was to be determined by the Hitaishi Sabha (the Development Committee), elected by the riyots themselves.¹⁷

Same arrangements were there for the welfare fund (kalian britti sanchay) with separate receipts being issued and equal matching total amount would be donated by the landlord. This would make about five to six thousand Rupees a year. Beside, from new sales or transfers of parts of the estates (Mohals), 2.5 per cent of the sales value to be paid by the releaser, and 5 per cent of the purchase value to be paid by the new lessee, to the Common Fund as the new financial bank was initially called. These funds were to be spent on roads, ferry ghats, renovations of temples, mosques, and establishing schools and *madradas*.

Simultaneous attention was paid to education and medical treatments. Though from the common fund, primary schools, three minor schools in the three parganas, and one high school at Patisar, the Sadar (central) collectorate were built up, the expenditure on students' hostels and school buildings

were separately given by Rabindranath himself. Maharshi Charitable clinic was established in Selaidaha, where Homeopathic, Ayurvedic and Allopathic treatments were made available. Free distribution of Quinins also took place as malaria was quite widespread in those days. Besides a spacious hospital was set up at Patisar and three physicians stayed in the three parganas. Rabindranath was the first pioneer of making health cooperatives in India.

Simultaneously, with building up of roads and availability of safe drinking water, he attended to building up cottage and small industry development activities. A local weaver was sent to Serampore to learn weaving technology and a local Muslim handloom weaver was sent to Shantipur to learn better handloom works and pottery works also were also introduced.

Evidences from Secondary Sources

In this section we place a few secondary works that would lend resounding support to what we argued through in the previous paragraphs.

There are authors who identified the self-reliance and strength from within, through cooperation among the incapable and deprived themselves as the major motif forces in Tagore's vision of rural reconstruction and human development. (Dasgupta, U. 1978, Chattopadhyay, 2018)

Anisur Rahman of the Action Research Movement, we come to know from Marsh,¹⁸ provides an impressive account of Tagore's 'experiments

of self-reliant village development' on the family estates in the 1890s: the formation of one or more village communities (*pallishamaj*) to take charge of co-operative-based collective self-development. Among other tasks, the co-operatives were to take charge of literacy for all; development of local industries; community health care and recreation; safe drinking water; model farming; collective paddy stores; domestic industry-based work for women; campaigns against drinking of liquor; developing fellow-feeling and solidarity among the villagers; and the collection of demographic, economic and social statistics for every village. The experiment with self-reliant village development was initiated in three places -Shilaidaha, Kaligram and Sriniketan.

Rahman explored resounding support in similarly impressive detail, the rural reconstruction initiatives carried out under the management of Leonard Elmhirst. In fact Elmhirst carried the ideas and actions to Dartington that was thoroughly welcome and generated highly effective rural development in England.¹⁹ The continuity of Rabindranath's development activism is well charted in this work.

In his biography of Tagore in the 'Builders of Modern India' series (1971) pp,149 Banerjee too had described Elmhirst's experiments, saying, it 'in many ways anticipated the Community Development Programme (CDP) introduced in [India] several years after the First Five Year Plan under the direct supervision of the Planning Commission'.²⁰ Quite akin but not

identical observations are also found in some relatively recent works.²¹

In the 1916 district Gazetteer of Rajshahi, L.S.S. O'Malley, I.C.S. reported: "It must not be imagined that a powerful landlord is always oppressive and uncharitable. A striking instance to the contrary is given in the Settlement Officer's Account of the estate of Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengali poet, whose fame is world-wide. It is clear that to poetical genius he adds practical and beneficial ideas of estate management, which should be an example to the local zamindars.

"A very favourable example of estate government is shown in the property of the poet Sir Rabindranath Tagore. The proprietors brook no rivals. Sub-infeudation within the estate is forbidden, raiyats are not allowed to sublet on pain of ejection. There are three divisions of the estate, each under a sub-manager with a staff of tahasildars, whose accounts are strictly supervised. Half of the dakhilas are checked by an officer of the head office. Employees are expected to deal fairly with the raiyats and unpopularity earns dismissal. Registration of transfer is granted on a fixed fee, but is refused in the case of an undesirable transferee. remissions of rent are granted when inability to pay is proved. In 1312 [that is 1906] it is said the amount remitted was Rs. 57595. There are lower primary schools in each division and at Patisar, the centre of management there is High English School with 250 students and a charitable dispensary. These are maintained out of a fund to which the estate contributes annually Rs. 1250 and the raiyats 6 paise to rupee in their rent. There is an annual

grant of Rs. 240 for the relief of cripples and the blind. An agricultural bank advances loans to raiyats at 12 per cent per annum.The bank has about Rs. 90,000 invested in loans".

Sudhi Ranjan Das, a former Vice Chancellor of Visva Bharati University, wrote in the preface of the collection entitled, *The Cooperative Principle* by Rabindranath Tagore (Sen, 1963) writes in his introduction in 1963,

"But over half a century ago when nobody bothered about the principles of co-operation or of their application to the rural problems, Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore thought about them and devotedly worked in this field of study as a pioneer for the uplift of the countless men and women residing in remote villages scattered all over Bengal and wallowing in the mire of poverty, ignorance and superstition."

These writings on such matters make it clear that Tagore worked with a clear understanding of cooperation for development as the only potential escape velocity-trajectory, capable of emancipating the distressed, suffering rural poor of this subcontinent. It will be useful to scan through a few excerpts:

IN EVERY COUNTRY, the poorer classes make a far larger sector than the well-to-do. Then, which countries in particular may be named as poor? It is where the means of livelihood are the fewest and even those are often blocked. Where the "have-nots" can aspire to a better life, hope itself is a real asset. [The first few sentences in *The Cooperative Principle* by Rabindranath Tagore]²²

Tagore's remedy for a broken society was to heal it from within. Cooperation was the key. People must get together in their local communities to help each other and themselves. To give them a start, they would need advice and expertise.

"He who is lacking in hope must perish. No one can save him by offering alms or some other help. He must be made to realize that what is not possible for a single individual will be possible when fifty unite in a group. The fifty who have hitherto cultivated their separate holdings, side by side, will have all the advantages of a large working-capital if they pool all their resources - land, labour, granaries. It will not be difficult then to get the machines. A farmer can hardly do good business with a small daily surplus of a seer of milk, but if a hundred men collect all their, spare milk, they can produce and sell ghee after they have bought a butter-churning machine".²³

"The villages in the country must be built up to be completely self-sufficient, and able to supply all their own needs. For this, village-groups should be formed - a few villages going to form each such group - and the headmen of each group should make it self-sufficient by providing work for all, and seeing that all their wants are met. Thus only can self-government become a reality all over the country. The villagers must be educated, assisted and encouraged to establish primary schools, centres for training in arts and crafts, centres for religious activities, cooperative stores and banks. Our salvation lies in thus making our villages self-reliant

and knit together by the ties of corporate life. Our main problem is how to build up model village communities.²⁴"

Tagore's call was virtually for sustainable human development. And intra-regional development cooperation among the countries of South can be traced out in the paragraph above simply replacing 'villages' by 'less developed countries'. But alas, his call was drowned amidst the war in 1941. The poet died with deep sigh of pain but undaunted with hopes sounded in his *Crisis of Civilisation* closely before his demise:

"We know what we have been deprived of. That which was truly best in their own civilization, the upholding of the dignity of human relationship, has no place in the British administration of this country. If in its place they have established, baton in hand, a reign of 'law and order', in other words a policeman's rule, such a mockery of civilization can claim no respect from us. It is the mission of civilization to bring unity among people and establish peace and harmony. ... As I look around I see the crumbling ruins of a proud civilization strewn like a vast heap of futility. And yet I shall not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in Man. I would rather look forward to the opening of a new chapter in his history after the cataclysm is over and the atmosphere rendered clean with the spirit of service and sacrifice. Perhaps

that dawn will come from this horizon, from the East where the sun rises. A day will come when unvanquished Man will retrace his path of conquest, despite all barriers to win back his lost human heritage.”

Concluding Remarks

Amartya Sen, while developing his theories of development, especially with a view to rigorous argument that would sufficiently be undeniable to the competition of philosophers of development, mainly of the West, was aware of one of his deepest sources of inspirations to be Tagore. He once wrote, “For Tagore it was of the highest importance that people be able to live, and reason in freedom” with endorsing reference to Tagore’s celebrated poem, in *Gitanjali* “Where mind is without fear and the head is held high”. The thematic presence of distributive justice questions (akin albeit differently routed, compared to Rawls) in Tagore also seemingly clear as his comments on Elmhirst’s activities in Dartington, England vindicate. Regarding development of countries, same philosophical underpinning can be done on Sen himself. While writing on Tagore in a different academic context he made similar observations (Sen, 2005, p 98. p.93, p 113; 2011). These writings also reveal what a glorious admirer Sen has been of Tagore.

Our point is not so much in arguing that Tagore was the predecessor in these lines of thinking (Basu, 2009, pp 56-61) but is definitely to emphasise the necessity of cooperation that Tagore as an activist assiduously pushed on taking it as a powerful vehicle for

human development in freedom. To prove his point to a leadership reluctant to understand the centrality of villages in India, society and cooperation, for meaningful upliftment of the poor, the poet bypassed the political interference and drove his passionate struggle for the people home in Bengal. His ideas and actions inspired a massive movement of rural reconstruction based on harmony and strength from within, being built up through cooperation. It has spread widely in the less developed areas of the world over the last few decades. Thus his premonition in the last call we mentioned above has been coming true. A sensitive, civilisation in which the poor lives also matter all the same, is rising through explorative development cooperation for freedom from the bonded predicaments of incapables.

Endnotes

1. Landlords who were given the responsibilities to collect rents from the subjects and handover to the British Government were called Zamindars in this part of the country.
2. Named after some Shelley, a British Indigo Planter; Daha is a Backwater from a confluence of two rivers which were Gorai and Padma in this case. The bungalow popularly known as Kuthibari, was an inherited Manager’s residence cum secretariat of an indigo plantation belonging to the Tagores, most likely to have been abandoned after the famous indigo rebellion in the region in 1860 (Chowdhury 1976., p 28. , Tagore 1961 ,p 42).
3. The Zamindar taken as the king
4. The sacred day
5. the subjects
6. Tagore’s essential understanding of the role of society in enhancing people’s wellbeing can be taken as the earliest precursors of the late twentieth century conceptualisation of development as freedom from bondage

- of deprivations, and improvements in distribution of income that affect the people's perception of their quality of life resulting in and from *capabilities* through *functioning* determined by *entitlements* (Sen, 1985,1987,1999) which has a qualified but direct link to *distributive justice* (Rawls, 1999) ; Their arguments are quite elaborate, made rather too condensed here as summarised from the literature. John Rawls, in his Theory of Justice, developed a complex account of distributive justice based on his Difference Principles. Rawls's Difference Principle logically advocates that just economic systems must be organized in such a way that the least advantaged members of society are better off than they would be in any alternative economic arrangement (Freeman, 2018); Amartya Sen also argues, "The most important thing is to consider what people are actually able to be and do. The commodities or wealth people have or their mental reactions (utility) are an inappropriate focus because they provide only limited or indirect information about how well a life is going. ...The Capability Approach focuses directly on the quality of life that individuals are actually able to achieve. This quality of life is analyzed in terms of the core concepts of 'functionings' and 'capability'" (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy on line).
7. Tagore, (1934) p 11
 8. Roy, 1988, pp 8-9 Bhumika (Introductory observations)
 9. Rabindranath Tagore
 10. Supported by autobiographical recollections reported by Chowdhury, 1976 p 14]
 11. Indian unit of currency prevailing during the time. The exchange rate between Indian Rupee and British Pound Sterling was £1= Rs. 18 + in 1891; it is likely that in 1890s it was India's exchange rate vis-a-vis British pound was rising slowly but steadily. Though in 1899, it was Rs.15. By this rate, the income of the estates were £15,618.33 annually, considerable given the international value of £ at that time. Source: Quora.com, 17 Jun, 2015.
 12. Tagore, (1904a) pp508-511(author's translation)
 13. According to frequently published reports in the Newspapers over the period such as Amrita Bazar Patrika (English version 1893-95), the period was one of the large number of litigation cases accumulated in all courts because of misappropriation of lands by the rural landed gentry from riyots by force or forging of documents misusing clauses of 'Permanent Settlement. Cases often led to unlawful grabbing and redistributions through grafts to court officials, *peshkars*, *kanungos* and even judges (Tagore's speech in contemporary Pabna Provincial Conference of Congress; Chatterjee 1886, pp 264-279).To fight the unequal and expensive legal battles, the poor victims had to pay repeated visits to the distant courts, its officials, or to coax the *Gomostas* and *Naeb*s by immoral gifts or with money taken from the moneylenders to be debt-trapped for ever, etc.
 14. Tagore, (1904b) pp625-641
 15. Please see footnote 14. Also in Tagore (1897) in Chowdhury p18; Chatterjee (1886) in Sahitya Sangsad (1995),pp 264-279
 16. One rupee comprised of 64 paise.
 17. This history can be found from different sources, with some slight differences here and there. For constructing an adequate bibliographical support, see Chawdhuri (1976) and Rathindranath Tagore (1961) apart, important references and material are found in Roy (2011) and Sinha (2010).
 18. **Marsh, The Once and Future Village: From Tagore's Rural Reconstruction to Transition Towns in Contemporarising Tagore and the World**, ed. by Imtiaz Ahmed, Muchkund Dubey & VeenaSikri (Dhaka: University Press, 2013) pp 407-22
 19. In Rahaman (2006), pp 231-45 Parallels are drawn between Tagore's programme for rural reconstruction and the idea of transition adopted in the 'Transition Initiative', which began with 'Transition Town Totnes' in 2005-06, and is spreading widely in Britain and in other countries.
 20. Banerjee (1971), p. 149; Implicit endorsement of this is available in Sen (2005) p. 93, and Marsh(2013)
 21. Basu (2009), O'Connell (2012), Roy (2015), Nath (2017), Chattopadhyay, (2018).

22. Sen ed. (1963) pp9.
23. *Senibd* p.13
24. *Sen ibd* p.19
25. It has to be noted that most of the research works on Rabindranath's rural reconstruction has been in Bengali with scant introspective literature in other languages, English being the dominating one, from which only the relevant few have been cited below. A few lines selectively from the Bengali ones have been translated in the text and identified as such in the citations.

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SSC in Statistics

Emerging Trends in Development Finance from Multilateral Development Banks to BRICS Countries



*Sushil Kumar**

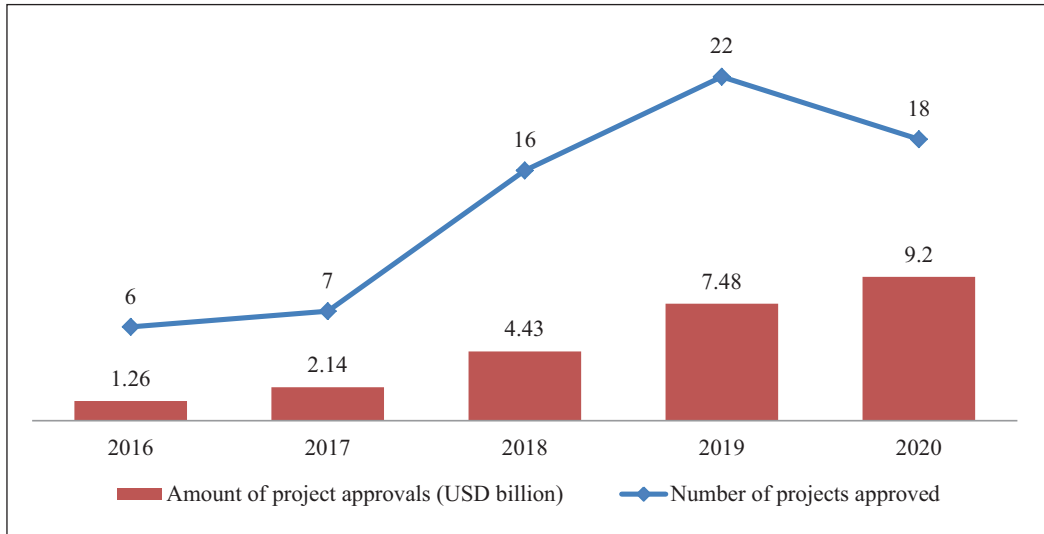
Multilateral development banks (MDBs) provide financial resources to developing countries in the form of loans and grants for promoting socio-economic development. This write-up analyses the commitments of development finance by the New Development Bank (NDB), World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), African Development Bank (AfDB) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to the BRICS nations, namely China, India, Russia¹, Brazil and South Africa between 2016 and 2020. The combined committed development finance provided by the MDBs to selected countries increased from USD 15.52 billion in 2016 to USD 27.42 billion in 2020 in nominal terms.

Development Finance Commitments by NDB

The NDB has been providing development finance to member countries since 2016. The objective to finance infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies, including other developing countries (NDB, 2020). However, the fund flow so far has been restricted to only the BRICS countries. Figure 1 shows the cumulative project approvals between 2016 and 2020 totalled USD 24.51 billion for 69 projects in the member countries. It is important to note that NDB also provides development finance to the member countries in their respective national currencies.²

* Assistant Professor, RIS. Views expressed are personal.

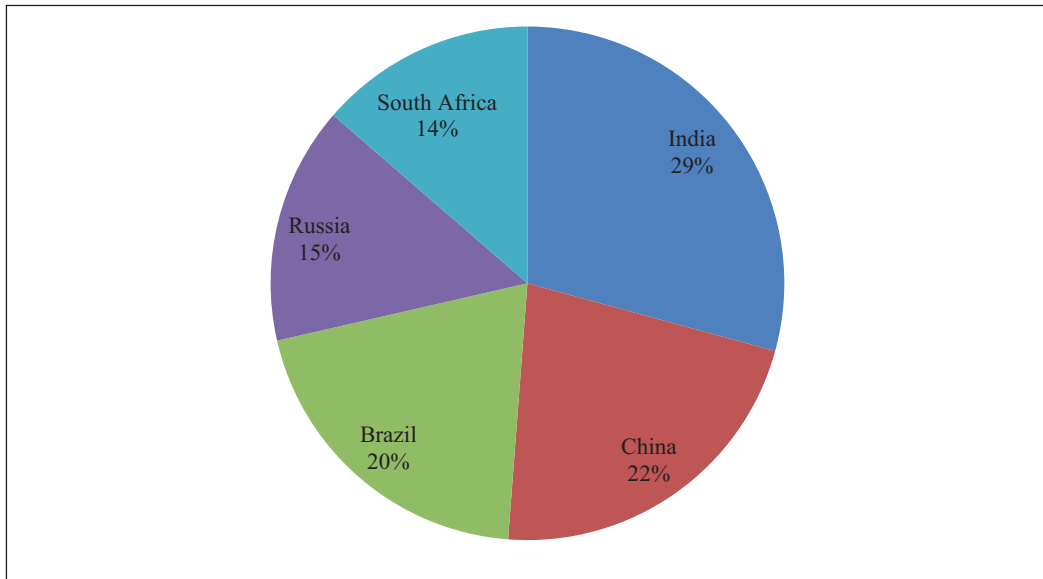
Figure 1: Value of Projects Financed by NDB (USD billion)



Source: Author's calculation, based on the data from NDB.

Figure 2 shows that India and China account for about 51 per cent share of total project approved by the banks over the period of 2016-20. In terms of values it was USD 12.6 billion.

Figure 2: Share of BRICS in Total Development Finance from NDB (2016-2020)

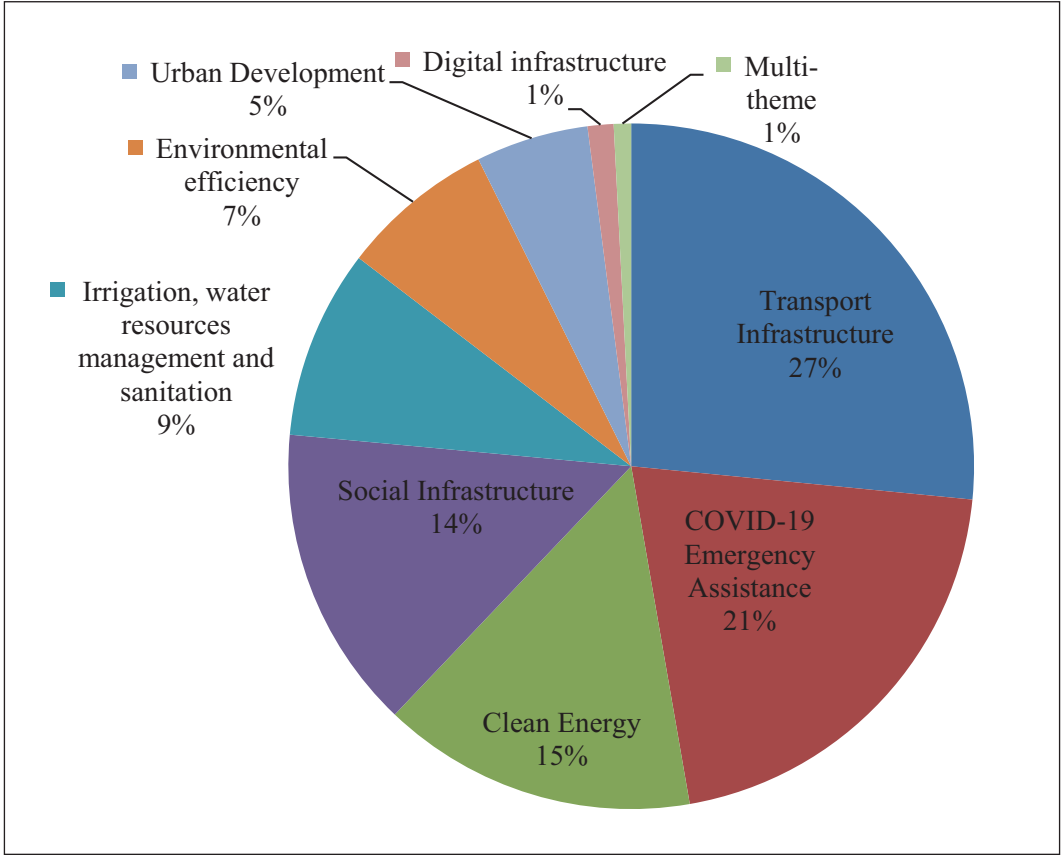


Source: Author's calculation, based on the data from NDB.

It is important to analysis the Bank's portfolio by sectors. As Figure 3 shows, the transport infrastructure represents 27 per cent (USD 6.51 billion) of total approvals,

followed by COVID-19 related emergency projects (21 per cent), clean energy (15 per cent), social infrastructure (14 per cent) and Irrigation, water resources management & sanitation (9 per cent). In 2020 the loan of RMB 7 billion (USD 1.08 billion) to China was the first loan of the NDB to help China in combating the immediate health impacts of COVID-19.

Figure 3: Key Sectors Provided with Development Finance by NDB to BRICS Countries (2016-2020)

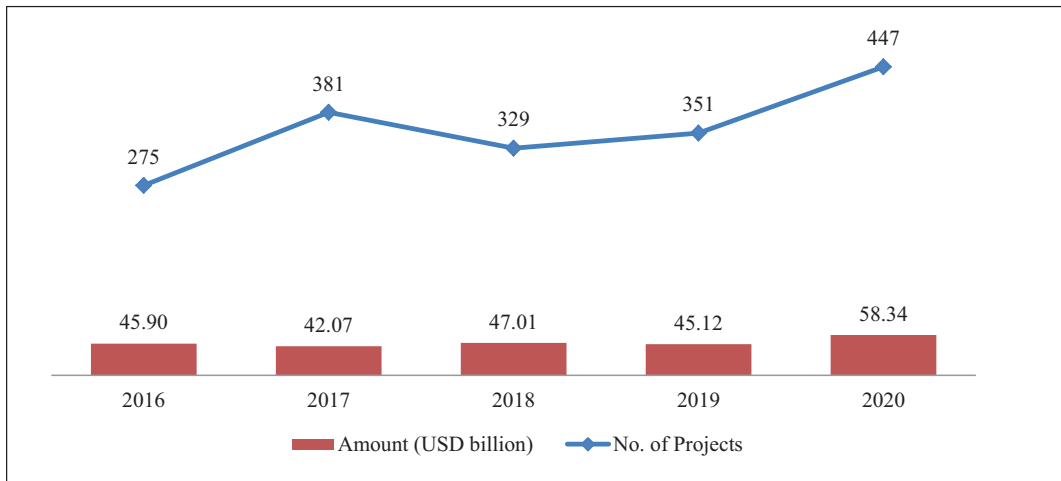


Source: Author’s calculation, based on the data from NDB.

Development Finance Commitments by World Bank

World Bank group commits to help the member countries to achieve better development outcomes. It also helped the member states addressing the health and economic impacts of COVID-19.³ Development finance rose to USD 58.34 billion in 2020, a little above 29 per cent higher than the previous year and the total projects approval also increased from 351 to 447 during the same time period (see Figure 4). Cumulative lending of the World Bank to member countries from 1945 to 2020 was USD 1.77 trillion (USD 0.75 trillion by IBRD and USD 0.42 trillion by IDA).

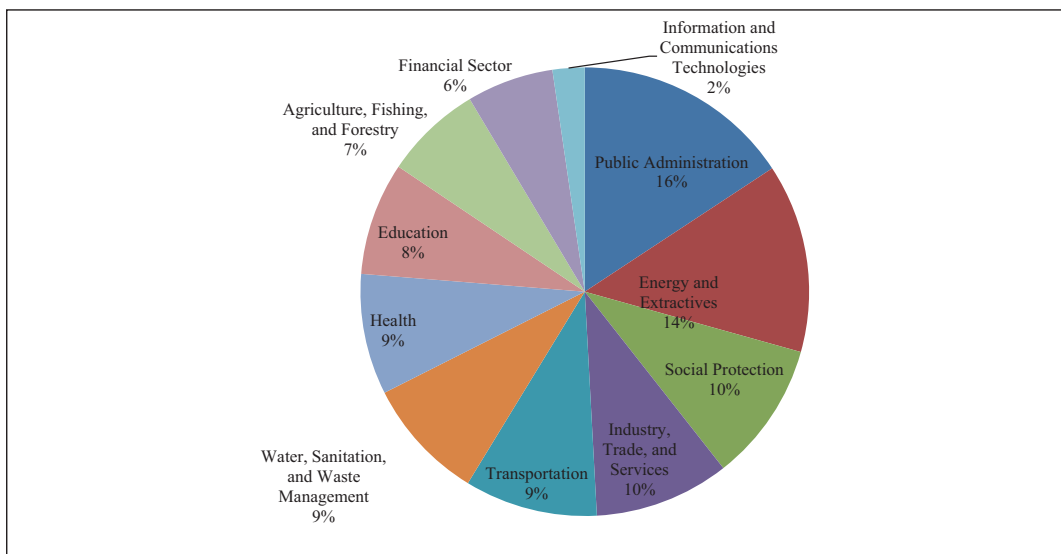
Figure 4: Development Finance Commitments by World Bank (IBRD & IDA) (USD billion) (Total)



Source: Author’s calculation, based on the data from World Bank. Note. Total amount is total amount of grant and loan commitment of IDA and IBRD.

The sector with the highest commitment of development finance by the World Bank over the time period 2016-2020 was public administration, which was USD 37.51 billion (16 per cent) followed by energy and extractives sector, which was USD 32.46 billion (14 per cent), social protection sector was given USD 24.01 billion (10 per cent), industry and trade services was provided USD 23.22 billion (10 per cent), transportation USD 22.85 billion, water, sanitation and waste management USD 21.08 billion and health USD 20.76 billion (see Figure 5).

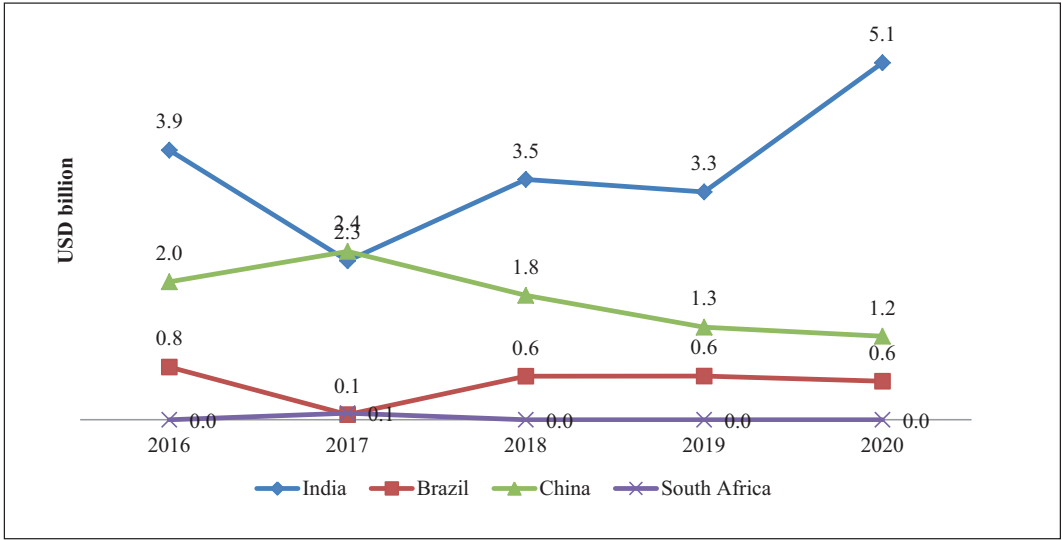
Figure 5: Key Sectors of Development Finance of World Bank (2016-2020)



Source: Author’s calculation based on the data from World Bank.

Figure 6 shows that lending from the World Bank to Brazil, India, China and South Africa (BICS) together increased from USD 6.6 billion during 2016 to USD 6.9 billion in 2020, which was accounted for 11.82 per cent of total World Bank lending in 2020.⁴ Commitments of development finance by World Bank to India have been increased from USD 3.9 billion in 2016 to USD 5.1 billion in 2020. However, decline has been noted in development finance to China from USD 2.2 billion to USD 1.2 billion during the same period.

Figure 6: Development Finance Commitments by World Bank to BICS Countries (USD billion) (Country-wise)

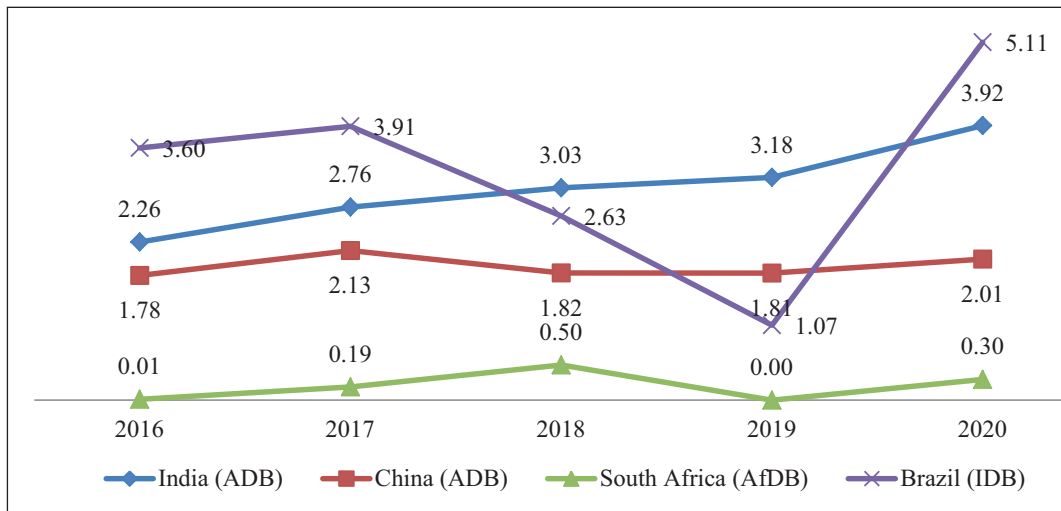


Source: Author’s calculation, based on the data from World Bank. Note. Total amount is total amount of grant and loan commitment of IDA and IBRD.

Development Finance Commitments by RDBs

Figure 7 shows the commitment of development finance by Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank and Inter American Development Bank to India, China, South Africa and Brazil over the period 2016-2020.⁵ The ADB assistance to India commenced in 1986 (MoF, 2020). In 2020, annual lending of ADB to India increased to USD 3.92 billion including a USD 1.5 billion support to COVID-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support (CARES) program to support the health sector and provide social protection for more than 800 million people (MoF, 2020). Since 1986, ADB has committed cumulative loan totalling USD 39.2 billion to China.⁶ In 2020, ADB committed more than USD 2 billion loan for development projects in China (see Figure 8).

Figure 7: Development Finance Commitments by Regional Development Banks to BICS Countries (USD billion)



Source: Author's calculation, based on the data from Regional Banks.

In 2020, IDB has committed USD 5.11 billion loan to Brazil including USD 0.75 billion loan for financial sustainability and promote the economic recovery of micro, small and medium sized enterprises to support employment and tackle the COVID-19 crisis.⁷

Figure 8: Share of MDBs in total Development Finance (2016-2020)

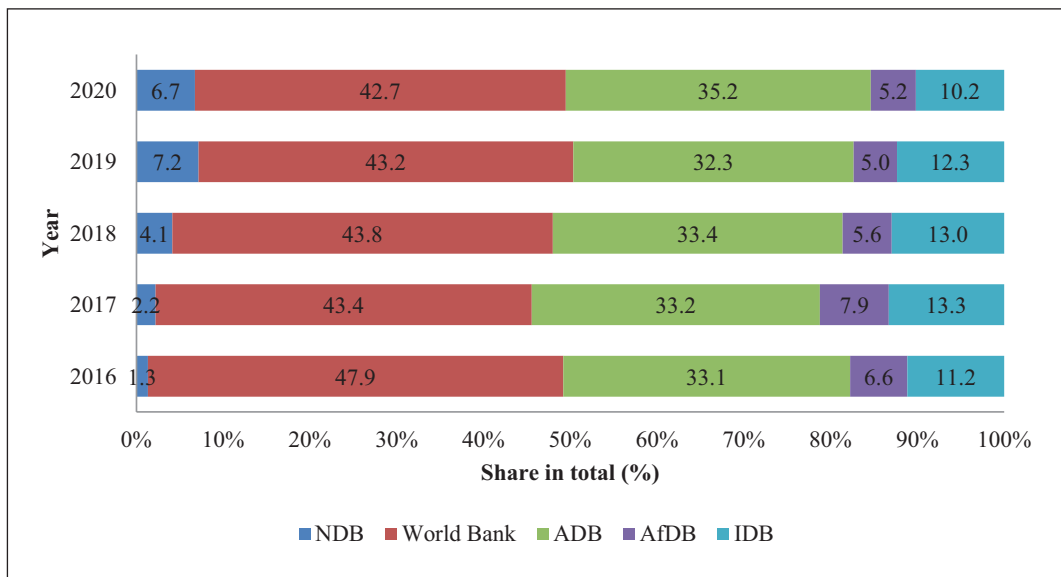
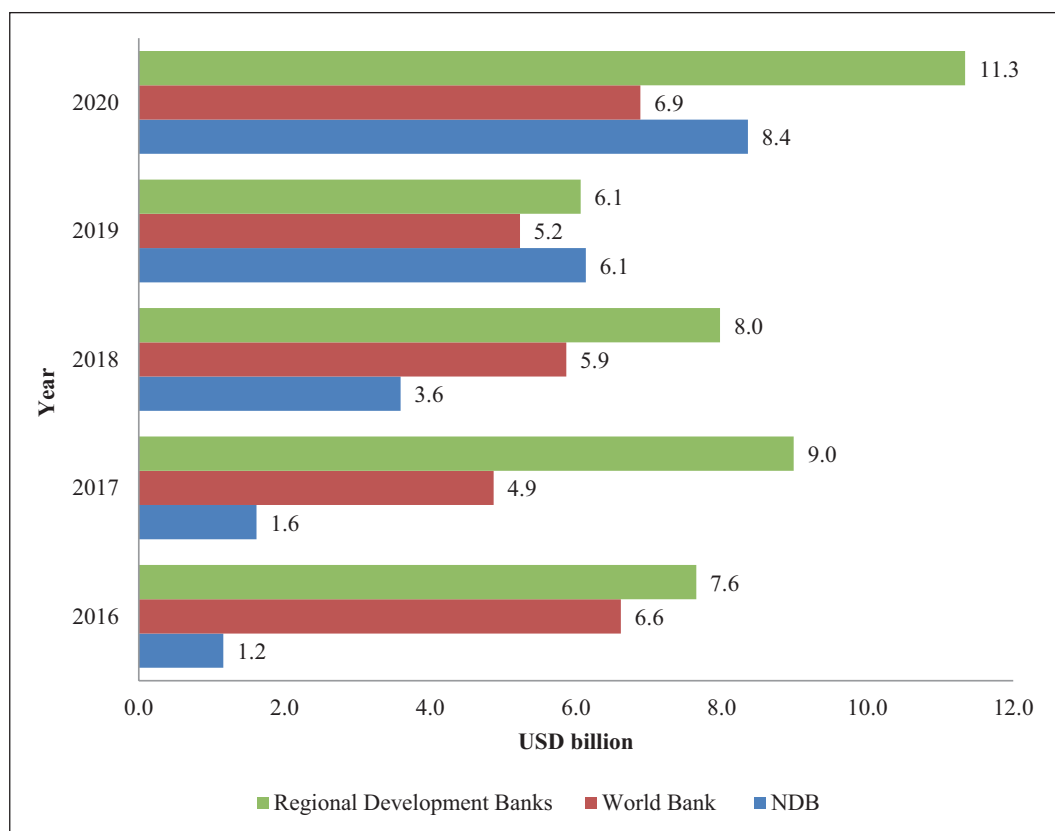


Figure 8 shows that share of NDB and ADB in total development finance increased from 1.3 per cent and 33.1 per cent in 2016 to 6.7 per cent and 35.2 per cent in 2020, respectively.

Figure 9: Development Finance from Multilateral, Regional Development Banks and NDB to BICS Countries, (USD billion)

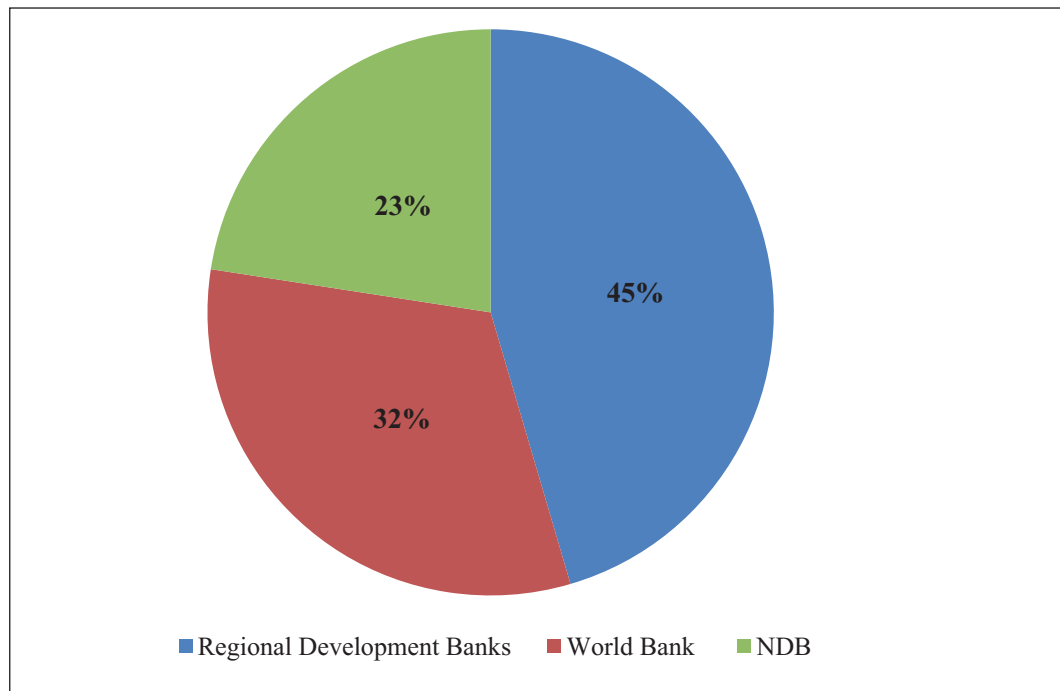


Source: Author’s calculation, based on the data from World Bank, Regional Development Banks and NDB. Regional Development Banks are ADB (India and China), AfDB (South Africa) and IDB (Brazil)

Collectively, the MDBs (World Bank, NDB, ADB, IDB and AfDB) committed USD 15.42 billion to India, Brazil, China and South Africa in 2016, which increased USD 26.58 billion in 2020. The share of development finance of regional banks (ADB, AfDB and IDB) in total MDBs commitment to selected countries has declined from 49.59 per cent in 2016 to about 43 per cent in 2020. On the other hand, the share of NDB in total lending of MDBs has increased from 8 per cent to more than 31 per cent during the same time period. In case of World Bank’s share in total MDBs commitment of development finance to BICS countries declined from 42.88 per cent in 2016 to 26 per cent in 2020. It is important to note that in absolute terms commitment of development finance by all MDBs has increased (see Figure 9).

Figure 10 show that regional development banks account the largest share in the total commitment of development finance to the member countries from 2016 to 2020.

Figure 10: Share of Multilateral, Regional Development Banks and NDB in total Development Finance (2016-2020) to BICS Countries



Source: Author’s calculation, based on the data from World Bank, Regional Development Banks and NDB. Regional Development Banks are ADB (India and China), AfDB (South Africa) and IDB (Brazil)

Endnotes

- ¹ Data available from NDB
- ² As NDB (2020) mentioned that 75 per cent of its cumulative approval’s project in China were made in RMB and 27 per cent cumulative approval’s projects in South Africa were made in ZAR.
- ³ Amount approved by board.
- ⁴ Russia did not receive any development finance from the World Bank group since 2013 (<https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/projects-list?os=0>). So flows to BICS countries refer to development finance committed to Brazil, India, China and South Africa.
- ⁵ India was a founding member of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1966.

- ⁶ ADB. (2021). ADB’s Work in the People’s Republic of China. *Asian Development Bank Fact Sheet*. Available at <https://www.adb.org/countries/prc/overview>
- ⁷ IDB. (2021). Brazil to boost digital transformation with IDB support. *Inter-American Development Bank News Releases*. Available at <https://www.iadb.org/en/news/brazil-boost-digital-transformation-idb-support>

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TRIANGULAR COOPERATION OF INDIA WITH UN WFP IN ZIMBABWE FOR CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRICULTURE

With the aim of strengthening resilience to climate change and to address the challenge to ensure the Agenda 2030 benefits all, India has contributed almost US\$ one million to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) for climate resilient agriculture in Zimbabwe through the India-UN Development Partnership Fund. Such a project of climate change mitigation will stand as an example of successful triangular cooperation. Zimbabwe relies primarily on agriculture for their livelihood with 70 percent of its population invested in agriculture. This contribution comes at a crucial time when the country has been struggling with consecutive years of drought, cyclones, and unpredictable weather patterns. The contribution is aimed towards 5200 smallholder farmers in Chiredzi and Mangwe districts and will help in ensuring social protection and resilience of smallholder farmers. The project led by WFP Zimbabwe will provide expertise through its Smallholder Agricultural Market Support (SAMS) programme to strengthen the resilience and capacity of selected smallholder farmers and will promote the cultivation of drought-tolerant small grains and legumes in an effort to reduce the negative effects of recurring droughts in Zimbabwe.

“This project is focused on increasing small grains production and market access. It will provide a good opportunity for successful Southern practices to be tested and scaled, improving the lives of rural Zimbabweans,” said Mr Adel Abdellatif, Director of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation. WFP will build on existing collaboration with partners to combine relevant expertise, alongside the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Resettlement, and the Department of Agricultural Technical and Extension Services (Agritex). Partners will procure small grain seeds and fertilizers from in-country producers and deliver these inputs to selected smallholder farmers in identified districts – along with providing technical support and training to enhance production.

WFP and partners have supported 60,000 smallholder farmers - female-headed households accounting for 70 percent of the total - across 30 rural districts through small grain production activities in Zimbabwe between the years 2020 and 2021.

Source: APO Group (WFP). (2021, August 24). India Extends up to a Million USD for Climate Resilient Agriculture in Zimbabwe. African News. Available at <https://www.africanews.com/2021/08/24/india-extends-up-to-a-million-usd-for-climate-resilient-agriculture-in-zimbabwe/>

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2. Manuscripts should be prepared using double spacing. The text of manuscripts should not ordinarily exceed 1500 words. Manuscripts sent for peer review section may be limited to 5000 words. Such submissions should contain a 200-word abstract, and key words up to six.

3. Use 's' in '-ise' '-isation' words; e.g., 'civilise', 'organisation'. Use British spellings rather than American spellings. Thus, 'labour' not 'labor'. (2 per cent, 3 km, 36 years old, etc.). In general descriptions, numbers below 10 should be spelt out in words. Use thousands, millions, billions, not lakh and crore. Use fuller forms for numbers and dates – for example 1980-88, pp. 200-202 and pp. 178-84, for example, 'the eighties', 'the twentieth century', etc.

Reference Style: References should be appended at the end of the paper. References must be in double space, and same author(s) should be cited, and then arranged chronologically by year of publication.

All references should be embedded in the text in the APA style. For details, please refer to Course and Subject Guides: <https://pitt.libguides.com/c.php?g=12108&p=64730>

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In keeping with suggestions, feedbacks and accumulated experience, we have decided to introduce a section, containing peer reviewed full length articles/essays. Interested scholars willing to contribute are requested to send in their manuscripts (preferably in not more than 5000 words) to the editorial office.

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Established at RIS, the Global Development Centre (GDC) aims to institutionalise knowledge on India's development initiatives and promote their replication as part of knowledge sharing in Asia and Africa with the help of its institutional partners, including civil society organisations. It attempts to explore and articulate global development processes within a micro framework and works as a unique platform to collate and assimilate learning processes of other countries towards promotion of equity, sustainability and inclusively based on multi-disciplinary and multi-functional approach.

About Network of Southern Think Tanks (NeST)

Knowledge generated endogenously among the Southern partners can help in consolidation of stronger common issues at different global policy fora. Consequent to the consensus reached on many of these issues at the High-Level Conference of Southern Providers in Delhi (March 2013) and establishment of the subsequent Core Group on the SSC within the UNDCF (June 2013), the Network of Southern Think-Tanks (NeST) was formally launched at the Conference on the South-South Cooperation, held at New Delhi during 10-11 March 2016. The purpose of the NeST is to provide a global platform for Southern Think-Tanks for collaboratively generating, systematising, consolidating and sharing knowledge on SSC approaches for international development. [@NeST_SSC](#)

About Forum for Indian Development Cooperation (FIDC)

FIDC aims to encourage detailed analysis of broad trends in South-South cooperation and contextualise Indian policies by facilitating discussions across various subject streams and stakeholders based on theoretical and empirical analysis, field work, perception surveys and capacity building needs. [@FIDC_NewDelhi](#)

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CONTENTS *(continued from outside front cover)*

Restoring and Transforming Multilateralism: Role of South-South Cooperation

Philani Mthembu

Strengthening Solidarity for Reciprocity: Rethinking the Role of SSC in Reinvigorating Multilateralism during Global Crises

Chuanhong Zhang and Xiaoyun Li

Spotlight

Rabindranath Tagore - A 19th Century Pioneer of Applied Cooperation in Development

Pinaki Chakraborti

SSC Statistics

Trends of Development Finance from Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) to BRICS Countries

Sushil Kumar