An Analysis of the Achievements of the South South Co-operation in the 21st Century.

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Abstract

South–South Cooperation is a framework of collaboration among countries of the Global South, particularly in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Built on the principles of solidarity, equality, and mutual benefit, South - South Cooperation emphasizes the exchange of resources, knowledge, skills, and technology to promote sustainable development and collective self-reliance. Emerging from the 1955 Bandung Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Group of 77, South - South Cooperation has evolved into a vital mechanism for advancing the economic, social, and political interests of developing nation, through platforms such as BRICS, IBSA, and the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), South - South Cooperation fosters trade, investment, technological innovation, and capacity building, while enhancing the bargaining power of the Global South in international forums. Despite challenges such as unequal levels of development, financial constraints, and political instability, South–South Cooperation remains an essential instrument for reducing dependency on developed nations and achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) objectives.

Keywords: South–South Cooperation (SSC), Technological Achievements, Sustainable Development, Innovation and Knowledge Sharing, BRICS / IBSA / FOCAC

Introduction

South–South Cooperation (SSC) is the collaboration among countries of the Global South (Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean) in areas such as politics, economics, technology, culture, and knowledge sharing among developing countries in the Global South. It is a framework for collaboration and cooperation without relying solely on North–South relationships. The idea is that developing countries can support one another in achieving sustainable development and reducing reliance on developed nations. . By building solidarity, equality, and mutual benefit South - South nations will depend less on the Global North known as developed countries.

Historical Background of South - South Cooperation

The first major conference where Asian and African leaders emphasized unity and cooperation was held in Bandung, Indonesia (1955).

In 1961, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) advocated for independence from Cold War blocs and strengthened South–South solidarity. A framework for technical cooperation among developing counties was then provided by Buenos Aires Plan of Action in (1978).

The United Nations later established the UN Office for South–South Cooperation (UNOSSC) to coordinate and promote the affairs of South - South Cooperation.

The South -South Cooperation was established primarily to promote mutual, self-reliance among developing countries, Share knowledge, skills, technology, Increase trade and investment flows within the Global South, Strengthen collective bargaining power in international negotiations so as to Support sustainable development goals (SDGs)

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to analysis the achievements of the South - South Cooperation and the prospect of achieving mutual benefits among participating nations for sustainable developmental goals. This methodology consists of the following components:

Data Collection

Secondary Source of data was used; Academic journals, text books, and articles will be consulted to provide insights into the topic of discussion to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the functions of South - South Cooperation, achievements and potential reforms to address its challenges.

Conceptual Clarification

South - South cooperation is a broad framework for collaboration among countries in the global. It is founded on the principles of solidarity. Equity, mutual benefit and respect for national sovereignty, it is not a substitute for North South cooperation but a complementary approach to international development.

1. South-South Cooperation
   Refers to the collaboration among countries of the Global South (developing nations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Oceania) in areas such as trade, investment, technology transfer, knowledge sharing, and political solidarity. The United Nations (2018) defines SSC as a *"broad framework of collaboration among countries of the South in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains."*

2. Global South:
   This term is used to describe developing or less industrialized countries that share common experiences of colonialism, underdevelopment, and marginalization in the global order. It contrasts with the "Global North," which generally refers to highly industrialized and economically advanced countries.

3. Development Cooperation:
   Unlike traditional "aid" from the North to the South, development cooperation under SSC is based on partnerships of equality, mutual respect, and solidarity. It emphasizes shared benefits rather than donor-recipient hierarchies.

4. Solidarity:
   A core principle of SSC, meaning collective action and unity among

developing nations. It highlights the idea that countries of the South can advance together by pooling resources, sharing experiences, and supporting one another.

5. Mutual Benefits:
   The concept that SSC is not charity, but a cooperative arrangement where all parties involved gain economically, politically, and socially.

6. Self-Reliance
   SSC promotes reducing dependence on the Global North by strengthening internal capacities, enhancing regional integration, and building indigenous technological and economic capabilities.

Theoretical framework

South-South Cooperation (SSC) is rooted in international relations and development studies, and scholars have used several theories to explain why and how it works. The dependency theory is used here as a framework

Dependency theory argues that the Global South has historically been exploited by the North (developed countries), creating dependency.

South - South Cooperation is seen as an attempt to reduce dependency on the North by fostering mutual support, trade, and knowledge sharing among developing nations. An example of the BRICS cooperation and African Union trade agreements.

Forms of South–South Cooperation

1. Bilateral – between two countries (e.g., Nigeria–India trade partnerships).
2. Regional – within regions (e.g., ECOWAS).
3. Inter-Regional – across continents (e.g., Africa–Latin America collaboration), forum on China –Africa cooperation (FOCAC), to foster large scale infrastructure and investment programs.
4. Multilateral – through larger forums (e.g., G77, BRICS, IBSA); to promote financial and trade cooperation.
5. African & Latin American Agricultural Programs: Exchange of farming techniques and food security strategies.

Achievements of South–South Cooperation (SSC)

South – South Cooperation is a framework for collaboration and cooperation without relying solely on North–South relationships. The idea is for developing countries to support one another in achieving sustainable development and reducing reliance on developed nations. .

Ban Ki-moon (Former UN Secretary – General)

"South-South cooperation is not an option; it is an essential part of the international cooperation architecture for development."

Antonio Guterres (Current UN Secretary – General)

"South-South cooperation is a powerful tool for developing countries to share knowledge, skills, expertise, and resources to meet their development goals."

Below are some major achievements of the Cooperation

- Economic Growth and Trade Expansion:

Trade among developing countries has grown rapidly, especially in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Example trade between China and Africa grew from just a few billion dollars in the 1990s to over $200 billion today. Also the formation of regional economic blocs such as ECOWAS (West Africa), ASEAN (Southeast Asia), MERCOSUR (Latin America), and SADC (Southern Africa) where established to encourage free trade, common markets, and regional development. FOCAC (Forum on China–Africa Cooperation) has financed thousands of development projects.

- Financial Cooperation

BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) was created to provide loans for development without dependence on the IMF/World Bank. This includes the Use of local currencies in trade among some Southern nations to reduce reliance on the US dollar.

Increased intra-South trade among developing countries has grown significantly, especially in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and the formation of economic blocs such as BRICS, MERCOSUR, ASEAN, and ECOWAS which has boosted regional trade and investment.

- Infrastructure Development

Major projects under China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) like roads, railways, ports, and energy plants where established.

- Technology and Knowledge Sharing:

The transfer of agricultural practices between Africa and Latin America (e.g., tropical farming techniques).

India's role in providing IT training, space technology, and pharmaceutical expertise to other developing countries and Cooperation in renewable energy (e.g., International Solar Alliance led by India). And the expansion of affordable mobile technology across Africa and Asia through partnerships with China and India.

- Space Technology:

India's ISRO sharing satellite data and launching satellites for countries like Nigeria, South Africa, and Brazil, and China's space cooperation with Africa e.g., NigeriaSat-2, Ethiopia's first satellite.

- Agricultural Technology:

The exchange of tropical farming techniques between Latin America and Africa in cassava, and soybean production. Adoption of irrigation, biotechnology, and mechanized farming shared by Asian countries like India and China.

- Renewable Energy & Green Technology

The establishment of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) led by India with African participation, Technology transfer in wind, solar, and bioenergy projects in Africa and Latin America. And Joint research on climate-smart agriculture and clean energy.

- Health and Medical Technology

South–South cooperation in the production of affordable generic medicines (India–Brazil collaboration). Joint vaccine research and distribution during COVID-19 and earlier HIV/AIDS treatment programs, and the use of telemedicine platforms connecting rural communities across Africa and Asia.

- Industrial & Digital Innovation

China's role in setting up industrial parks and technology zones in Africa (e.g., Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya). The Growth of fintech and mobile banking technology in Africa (e.g., M-Pesa in Kenya) supported by SSC knowledge exchange.

- Capacity Building and Education

The of centres of excellence in science and technology in Africa, Asia, and Latin America was established to provide scholarships and enchant programs among southern countries through trainings in health, governance and technical fields.

- Political and Diplomatic Solidarity

A unified voice of the Global South in international forums like the UN, WTO, and climate negotiations through the Group of 77 (G77) has strengthened the bargaining power on trade, climate change, and development issues.

- Support for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Joint projects in poverty reduction, food security, renewable energy, and climate change adaptation in other to promote self-reliance and sustainable growth models among developing nations.

- Political Achievements of South–South Cooperation

Formation of Political Alliances led to the creation of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (1961) to resist Cold War pressures and promote independence of developing nations. This also led to the establishment of the Group of 77 (G77) in 1964 to represent developing countries' political and economic interests at the UN by strengthened bargaining power of the Global South in the UN, WTO, COP (climate negotiations), and WHO. And the Support for decolonization movements in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean through Political solidarity against apartheid in South Africa and foreign domination in various regions.

Challenges of South - South Cooperation

- Unequal levels of development among Southern countries.
- Financial and infrastructural limitations.
- Over-reliance on a few strong economies (China, India, Brazil).
- Political instability and governance issues in some regions.

- inadequate leadership ideologies and corruption

Conclusion

South–South Cooperation is a vital framework for solidarity, development, and independence among developing countries. By pooling resources, sharing expertise, and building stronger alliances, SSC strengthens the Global South's role in international affairs and contributes significantly to global development goals. I consider it an essential and necessary tool for the sustainability and development of both developing and underdeveloped nations of the global south if political leaders of the region can firmly adhere to the objectives and principles of the cooperation with properly outline policies for sustainability that will contribute to the development of the region.

Recommendations

- Countries of the South – South should establish dedicated agencies that can manage its activities with clear mandate, technical capacity and coordination mechanisms.
- Harmonize national development plans with regional south – south cooperation strategies to ensure alignment and continuity.
- Establish regional centres for sharing best practices, indigenous innovations and appropriate technologies
- Simplify customs, harmonize standards, and invest in infrastructure to boost intra-South trade.
- Establish regional development banks or funds to support joint industrial projects

Start-ups.

- Organize regulate South - south summits to review progress, share updates and build partnership.
- Promote trade and investment using local currencies to reduce reliance on foreign exchange
- Involve NGO's, academia and grassroots organizations in south - south cooperation projects.

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