

COLONIALITY OF POWER AND RISE OF AGENCIES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

“The world cannot be transformed without ‘the ideas, energy, and tremendous ingenuity of the countries of the South.’”

— António Guterres

One of the primordial changes witnessed in the history of modern international relations became the emergence of the global south. Countries planned to reshape the global order according to their vision after decolonisation in the mid-twentieth century post-Cold War era.

This essay discusses the rise of the Global South within the context of the **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)**, the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**, the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**, and **BRICS**. Organisations created the notion of solidarity and autonomy in global politics within the framework of the coloniality of power. Their rise is a manifestation of the continued colonial logic of power in a postcolonial nation.

CONCEPT OF DECOLONIALTY

Academics scholars like Walter Mignolo (2011) and Aníbal Quijano (2000) states that, despite the formal end of colonialism, the deep-seated systems of domination that make up the present world have not disappeared.

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Aníbal Quijano's concept of "coloniality of power" transcends the mere coloniality of history. It denotes the enduring structures of hierarchy, knowledge, and global order that benefited the West and marginalised the Global South long after formal decolonisation. The power was not merely exercised through political dominance but through epistemic dominance – that is, who determines what is knowledge, progress and civilisation.



Walter Mignolo feels that coloniality is the hidden reason for Western modernity; it is the darker side of it. Modernity brings you the story of progress, whereas coloniality adds the means of oppression, exploitation and the imposition of racial and epistemic hierarchies that have struggled since the Renaissance and are part of the Western global power spectrum. Decoloniality means the essential “delinking” from that power matrix in order to decenter Western epistemologies and build pluriversal futures.

THE GLOBAL SOUTH AND THE POSTCOLONIAL WORLD ORDER

The term “Global South” is more than just a geographical label; it carries significant political resonance. It is designed to represent a cohesiveness that formed when former colonial states participated in political programmes of decolonisation and moved toward the creation of a postcolonial international order. As it appears today, the Global South has its origins in the twentieth century. Although the term 'Global South' gathered popularity with the outbreak of the Cold War, when the phrase 'Third World' seemed to fall in disfavour, the move does not mean a renunciation of the 'Third World'. It merely reflects a change in ideological and political positioning to reflect the novel types of contentions around the legacies of colonialism.

Additionally, the Global South is distinguished by internally consistent, contingent, and changing agendas.

These ideas trail the pursuit of new social, cultural, and economic orders as well as norms of universality, international morality, law, and ethics that markedly differ from those emerging from colonial rule. Historians consider that the Bandung Asian-African Movement is the most immediate antecedent to the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement, where both Asian and African leaders decided not to support both Western imperialism and Soviet dominance. This conference was held in Bandung on April 18-24, 1955, and gathered 29 heads of state belonging to the first post-colonial generation of leaders from the two continents with the aim of identifying and assessing world issues at the time and pursuing joint policies in international relations. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was created and founded during the collapse of the colonial system and the independence struggles of the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America and other regions of the world and at the height of the Cold War. During the early days of the Movement, its actions were a key factor in the decolonisation process, which led later to the attainment of freedom and independence by many countries and peoples and to the founding of tens of new sovereign states. In history, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had played a fundamental role in the preservation of world peace and security. Out of this environment arose the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961; it was followed by other regional institutions like ASEAN in 1967, SAARC in 1985, and BRICS in 2006. These regional groups had promoted independence and cooperation in an effort to

break dependency on the West. They did, however, function within a global system whose institutions, beliefs, and hierarchies remained firmly Eurocentric, as the coloniality framework suggests. Their attempts for autonomy demonstrate the complicated conflict between aspiration and restriction in postcolonial world-making.

THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT: POLITICAL ASSERTION UNDER COLONIAL CONSTRAINTS

One of the first group initiatives in the worldwide South to oppose colonial power on a worldwide scale was the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Emerging during the Cold War, NAM's leaders—among them Nehru, Tito, Nasser, and Sukarno—sought to create a “third force” independent of U.S. and Soviet blocs. It directly challenged the lingering colonial structures that kept undermining emerging countries in international politics with its tenets of sovereignty, non-interference, and anti-imperialism.

In the 1970s, NAM made a clear effort to decolonise international economic relations by pushing for fair trade, technological transfer, and natural resource ownership through its support of the New International Economic Order (NIEO). But this failed due to the entrenched dominance of Western-led financial institutions and dependence on them. NAM was therefore both a product of anti-colonial unity and a reflection of the colonial matrix, which it battled at the same time.

CURRENT SCENARIO

UN Forums on Unilateral Coercive at odds with Azerbaijan The Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan gave a statement at a NAM Ministerial meeting where the negative impacts of UCMs had been highlighted and how they are against the human rights and right to development in emerging nations or developing countries.

NAM's stance, which is shared by other developing nations and UN human rights organisations, highlights how UCMs, when implemented outside of multilateral sanction regimes, worsen humanitarian crises, hamper access to necessities like food and medicine, and hamper social and economic advancement, particularly for people who are vulnerable. One of the main points of opposition by the Global South against Western unilateralism was that such policies were widely condemned for their geographic consequences on international collaboration and commerce as well as for damaging global supply chains.

NAM is redefining Western-led trade restrictions and sanctions as structural, rather than merely political, barriers to the advancement of the Global South by explicitly connecting UCMs to human rights and development.



OPPOSITION TO REVIVAL OF UN RESOLUTION

Iran, supported by 121 members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), vehemently opposed the US and European attempts to revive expired UN resolutions during the snapback sanctions issue, claiming that the acts had no legal basis. The NAM countries made it clear during the Kampala session that unilateral actions to reimpose sanctions were against both the spirit of multilateral diplomacy and the recognised principles of international law, demonstrating this unanimous stance. This was further supported by Russia and China, highlighting a growing trend of rejection of Western efforts to shape outcomes through unilateral pressure between Eurasian countries and NAM countries.

ASEAN

ASEAN was established on 8 August 1967 with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration in Bangkok, Thailand, with the founding fathers of ASEAN, namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. A regional group of 11 countries where there is collaboration to enhance regional autonomy and stability, but their strategies often continue to be linked to Western economic and security frameworks.

The ASEAN Way is a principle where ASEAN places value on non-interference in the affairs of its member states. Since its inception, the ASEAN member states have practised this

principle. It is to ensure that state sovereignty serves as an expression of respect and equal standing among countries' stability.

CURRENT STATUS

THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN) IS RESPONDING TO US/EU TRADE PRESSURES.

The disruption caused by US tariffs (10–49%) on six ASEAN economies was brought to the attention of ASEAN foreign ministers in Kuala Lumpur in May 2025. They called for more market diversity and integration in order to handle external trade shocks.

In response to U.S. tariff threats, ASEAN convened a conference with China and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) around that time to strengthen economic interconnection and resilience. By taking these actions, ASEAN is demonstrating that it has the power to change its foreign trade arrangements and not only follow Western economic theories in order to prevent great power competition over nuclear capabilities. ASEAN successfully signed a treaty with China for banning nuclear weapons in Southeast Asia. ASEAN aims for resolute demands of greater economic resilience, inclusion, and the peaceful settlement of maritime issues to depict a dedication to reducing outside intervention and defending its own interests against Western-led efforts. Instead of complete alignment with Western powers, this transposes ASEAN's desire for strategic hedging, pragmatic engagement, and regional unity in South Asia.

SAARC

SAARC was founded by signing the SAARC charter on 8 December 1985. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were the founding members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. It works for increasing economic and regional integration. First of all, it covers national and regional cooperation in such areas as scientific research, trade, technology, sports, culture, and much more. It also relies on the mutual benefits of co-operation, collaboration and adaptability. Additionally, it aims for the well-being and better living standards of the people of South Asia as it is important for developing economies to work in cooperation with multi-polar and multicultural priorities. Moreover, the SAARC charter has the aims as well as objectives for the betterment of the region. Further, it aims to collaborate in multiple sectors for greater development.



All countries are facing global challenges. The challenges faced by SAARC serve as an example of how postcolonial governments continue to be confined by the political logics, institutions, and borders established by the empire from a colonial standpoint. Inherited hierarchies of power and knowledge, both within South Asia and between the region and the global system, continuously moderate efforts to build regional unity. For South Asia, the challenges and difficulties it faces are particularly severe, like how it is a long way to reach the target of poverty alleviation. As one of the poorest regions in the world, it is a huge task. The living standard in South Asia is still low. The living conditions of numerous people there are still poor, with standards. Nutrition, drinking water, health services, and educational standards are very far away from national and global benchmarks and are below the normal line.

CURRENT STATUS

A CONSOLIDATED POSITION ON CLIMATE FINANCE

At the 2025 World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS), the SAARC nations collectively emphasised the importance for the region to adapt to climate and pursue autonomous green finance, signalling the climate finance paradigms and rigid conditions imposed by the West in the ways of climate finance.

PROMOTION OF DIVERSE TRADE & INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORKS

According to SAARC nations, they will not accept any political or economic preconditions in return for investment or trade from the West. And they backed connectivity measures linked to the China-led BRI (CPEC, BRI). The collective support undermines the traditional Western objectives regarding open trade, regulatory alignment, and conditional aid.

PAKISTAN-INDIA OPPOSITION TO WESTERN MEDIATION

Western initiatives, primarily those of US President Donald Trump, to mediate India-Pakistan tensions (especially during fresh clashes in 2024-25) had limited South Asian participation. Most of the SAARC countries, especially the regional players not involved in the present conflict, would favour dispute settlement within South Asia or through some multilateral forum rather than the West.



BRICS

In 2006, the bloc of five BRICS was established with a view to fostering cooperation, growth and a more equitable international system. Initially, the members of the BRICS were Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. In 2024–2025, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia would join BRICS. Currently, there are eleven full-fledged members of the bloc. BRICS aims at reforms of international governance institutions such as the UN Security Council and IMF to enhance growth, lower dependence on Western currencies and increase the Global South's participation. In addition to advocating South-South solidarity and multipolarity, priority is given by the organisation to technology transfer, innovation, fair climate action and sustainable development.

BRICS members talk about regional political tensions like a peaceful resolution in Afghanistan, a long-term ceasefire in Gaza, the humanitarian crisis in Sudan and Haiti, the situation in and around Ukraine, and Syria's territorial integrity.



CURRENT STATUS

REFUSAL OF THE CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM AMONGST NATIONS

The EU's planned Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) had been opposed by many countries. The EU's CBAM aims to stop "carbon leakage" by imposing tariffs or requiring carbon-certificate payment on imports (like steel, cement, and aluminium) from countries where industry exhibits higher carbon emissions. The BRICS nations have come out against the mechanism, calling it "one-sided, harsh, and unfair protectionism measures" that limit development and are contrary to 'common but differentiated responsibilities because western nations had been developed earlier but south asian countries are still developing countries which makes them release more carbon.

FORMATION OF BRICS'S OWN CLIMATE AGENDAS

The BRICS nations at the summit in Rio de Janeiro declared their commitment to an assertive and independent climate agenda, going beyond the existing Western-dominated system. Among the outcomes of the summit were calls to strengthen climate financing and develop better carbon accounting systems, as well as set up a South-South platform for integrating trade and sustainability. Leaders praised technology transfer and resilience-building as important global climate action components. Further, the Tropical Forest Forever Fund was recognised as an innovative way to raise sustainable financing for tropical forest protection. According to the Climate Framework Declaration, BRICS has executed a five-year plan

aimed at enhancing resource mobilisation to address the climate catastrophe while following environmental sustainability and economic justice. At the conference, Brazil linked many issues while pushing for the integration of climate diplomacy into global governance.

They aim to reshape the balance of power and construct a fresh architecture of collaboration among Global South governments by forging their own frameworks instead of merely responding to CBAMs and other Northern initiatives. The BRICS group clearly demonstrates that the Global South is no longer merely a passive 'other' in the world but rather an active participant with its own views and norms. This is evident in their ability to disrupt coloniality, which in turn creates new power hubs.

CONCLUSION

The Global South in the 21st Century is becoming the protagonist of global concern. The 'Global South' has a strong economic strength and world influence; its political position cannot be ignored. The rise of the "Global South" makes the game of great powers present a new situation: The "Global South" participates in the global game with the attitude of independence, non-alignment and not taking sides; the United States and the West actively compete for the right to speak and cooperate in the "Global South", with strong anti-Russian and anti-Chinese ideology; their collective power is shifting global dynamics, with countries like India becoming major economic players.