

DISCUSSION ON THE GLOBAL SOUTH

by Alvaro Mendez ([co-founder London School of Economics](#) and [Political Science's Global South Unit](#))

The Global South has embarked on an unprecedented upward trajectory. Already, the output of the developing world's three leading economies (Brazil, China and India) is close to equaling the combined output of the longstanding industrial powers of the North – Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Even smaller countries like Bangladesh, Chile, Ghana, Mauritius, Rwanda and Tunisia are experiencing rapid economic development. According to the [2013 UNDP Human Development Report](#), it is estimated that 80% of the world's middle-class population will be living in developing countries by 2030.

This surge of the emerging economies is now in process of reconfiguring the political and economic geometry of the international system. New modalities of engagement in international development, from the state-led capitalism of Asian economies to the world-bestrident operations of global market-savvy Southern multinationals, are replacing the once-dominant North-South aid and investment paradigm.

The dynamic global actors driving this process are pressing for a greater voice in the international system, and introducing norms and practices that are reshaping – or that aim to reshape – both the formal and the informal institutions of global governance. The world is being flipped on its axis – a redress that promises huge opportunities for potential development, whilst also posing major challenges, and indeed dangers. With material progress comes huge responsibility for effective human and social development.

At the heart of this ongoing global transformation is a phenomenon known as “South-South cooperation”. Once consigned to the margins, South-South cooperation is coming to occupy an important place in the changing theory and discourse of development. Originally bound up in the response of the developing countries to the destabilising politics of the Cold War, South-South cooperation gave voice to aspirations for a development path untainted by ideological conflict, and to an acknowledgment that relations between developing countries should be a crucial means of achieving these aspirations.

Against the backdrop of continuing growth in Southern economies – in the teeth of the concurrent economic travails afflicting the donor countries of the North – South-South cooperation has finally come to the fore. It has been formally recognized by the OECD-DAC in late 2011, at the Busan High Level Summit on Aid Effectiveness, as a dynamic form of engagement contributing to a rapid transformation of the developing world. Its patterns are far from homogenous, and each emerging economy – be it a potentially great-power BRIC country [Brazil, Russia, India and China] or a smaller CIVETS country [Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey, and South Africa] – functions in a variety of ways.

Alvaro Mendez is a senior lecturer in international relations at Regent's University London. More on the Global South Unit can be found here: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/internationalRelations/centresandunits/globalsouth/GShome.aspx>