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Southern Multilateralism: India's engagement with Africa and the emergence of a multiplex world order

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Abstract

This paper delineates the characteristics of an emerging Southern multilateralism to argue against pessimistic narratives of anarchy and disorder as well as optimistic narratives that celebrate the resilience of the Liberal International Order (LIO). It does this by staging a conversation between a top-down International Relations literature that explores the contours of global order and a bottom-up international development literature that investigates the changing role of the Global South in world politics. By highlighting the continuities and discontinuities of Southern multilateralism with it, the paper illustrates the ways in which Southern Multilateralism both challenges the LIO and supports it. The perspective of Southern Multilateralism suggests that countries in the Global South insist on sharing global responsibility with prevailing institutions of liberal multilateralism, neither seeking to overthrow it nor to be co-opted within it. A subsidiary argument of the paper is that Southern Multilateralism is not homogenous: To that end, it attends to the richness of Southern Multilateralism by directing attention to variations within it. In line with the theme of the Special Issue, this paper focuses on two cases that involve India's presence on the African continent.

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1 | MULTIPLEXITY

Scholars are beginning to direct attention to formulations of world order that recognise the hybrid, pluralist and mixed orders that are emerging from recent global changes (Acharya, 2017; Mazarr, 2017; Roy, 2022; Sachs, 2020; Taggart, 2020; Wihtol, 2014). Writing in this vein, Amitava Acharya reflects on a multiplex global order in which no single nation, idea or institution can create rules and dominate the institutions of global governance and world order as the United States of America did for much of the period after the Second World War. In this reckoning, elements of the prevailing Liberal International Order (LIO) will survive, perhaps even thrive, but they 'will have to accommodate new actors and approaches that do not bend to' the commands and preferences of the existing powers (Acharya, 2017, p. 277). Within this multiplex global order, we can discern emerging contours of a Southern multilateralism or multilateralism innovated in and led by countries in the Global South.

This scholarship pushes back against pessimistic accounts that global governance as it exists today is 'gridlocked', 'unravelling' and 'unfit for purpose' (Hale et al., 2013; Pegram & Acuto, 2015). This scholarship recognises that we are entering a 'multipolar world' (Kupchan, 2012), a 'post-liberal order' (Chandler, 2010), an 'interregnum' between the collapse of the old but the emergence of the new (Stahl, 2019) and a 'retroliberal order' (Murray & Overton, 2016) but caution against the pessimism wrought by narratives that lament the onset of anarchy (Slaughter, 2017), great power conflict (Allison, 2017) and disorder (Schweller, 2011).

The scholarship on multiplexity also challenges optimistic accounts that the dominance of the Global North remains unchallenged (Fischer, 2019) and that the liberal international order (LIO) underpinning global governance is resilient enough to not only accommodate but also socialise the rising powers (Ikenberry, 2018). Defined as a cluster of interlocked economic, trade and security association based on the conviction that states will move progressively towards liberal democracy and strengthen liberal values such as civil liberties, human rights and the rule of law (Acharya, 2017; Bettiza, 2020; de Graaf et al., 2020; Ikenberry, 2018), the LIO is premised on both the economic benefits enabled by the emergence of liberal values and the inherent attractiveness of these values as compared to other forms of governance and social organisation. Accounts of multiplexity urge us to consider the ways in which the LIO may indeed have to accommodate alternative arrangements that may not be anchored in a liberal normativity.

Against both these accounts, the growing body of work on the emerging multiplex world order encourages attention to the nuanced ways in which emerging forms of multilateralism could complement, strengthen and reform existing multilateral arrangements. This paper delineates the characteristics of the emerging Southern multilateralism to argue against pessimistic narratives of anarchy and disorder as well as optimistic narratives that celebrate the resilience of the LIO. It does this by staging a conversation between a top-down International Relations literature (Acharya, 2017; Schweller, 2011), which explores the contours of global order and a bottom-up international development literature that investigates the changing role of the Global South in world politics (Haug, 2021; Mawdsley, 2018, 2019). By highlighting the continuities and discontinuities of Southern multilateralism with it, the paper illustrates the ways in which Southern Multilateralism *both* challenges the LIO and supports it. The perspective of Southern Multilateralism suggests that countries in the Global South insist on sharing global responsibility with prevailing institutions of liberal multilateralism, neither seeking to overthrow it nor to be co-opted within it. A subsidiary argument of the paper is that Southern Multilateralism is not homogenous: To that end, it attends to the richness of Southern Multilateralism by directing attention to variations within it. In line with the theme of the Special Issue, this paper focuses on two cases that involve India's presence on the African continent.

1.1 | Southern multilateralism: Polyphonous and convivial understandings

Multilateralism refers to an institutional arrangement between three or more countries aimed at solving collective problems (Keohane, 1990). These problems could be of mutual relevance, limited to the countries involved. Or they could be of general relevance- extending beyond the countries that are involved. The UN is perhaps the best example of a multilateral arrangement that includes most countries of the world. The World Trade Organisation is another. In both these cases, countries enter institutional arrangements to work together to resolve mutual or general problems.

Southern Multilateralism refers to such institutional arrangements led by countries in the Global South. The initiative for these arrangements comes from the Global South. Much of the resources are provided by the countries of the Global South. Analysed by Braveboy-Wagner (2009) under the rubric of 'global south institutionalism', these arrangements could mean money but also involve technical knowhow and exchange of ideas. Historically, especially in the aftermath of decolonisation, countries of the Global South have banded together at the UN and beyond to put forward their own views. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in the 1960s urged for decolonisation and called for the spirit of racial, national and economic equality to be respected across the world. In the 1970s, a group of 77 countries working together at the United Nations to push for what they called the New International Economic Order (NIEO). The Oil and Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC); regional visions such as Pan-Arabism and Pan-Africanism; and sub-regional communities in Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean illustrated the different forms of 'global south institutionalism'. The world has also been witness to a rich history of what has been called South-South cooperation (Mawdsley, 2012) that started with newly independent countries supporting one another during their anti-colonial struggles. But these were bilateral arrangements between movements or countries rather than institutional arrangements. Southern countries worked together in blocs within the UN or the WTO: India and Brazil famously breached what was called the WTO quad when they worked together to prevent the US and EU from imposing free market principles on developing countries while heavily subsidising their own farmers. So a history of alliances, cooperation and banding together among the Global South countries has not been uncommon. Building on this literature, Southern Multilateralism refers to formalised institutional arrangements between states of the Global South.

The formulation of 'Global South' warrants further reflection, given its centrality to this paper. Braveboy-Wagner (2009) argues that, with the end of the Cold War, 'the South' became 'an acceptable overarching term for referencing former Third World countries and identifying the uniqueness of the many socioeconomic and environmental issues affecting them' see also Wagner (2017). Prashad (2012) conceives of the Global South as a transnational movement among postcolonial and/or developing countries, which formulates alternatives to the capitalist status quo. Other scholars have urged us to consider growing differentiation within the Global South between the power south vs. poor south (Acharya, 2017) first south vs. second south (Eyben & Savage, 2013) and the two poles of a two-track south (Alden et al., 2010). The fuzziness of the concept is vividly illustrated by contributors of a Special Issue of the journal *Global South* titled 'Global South and World Dis/order', edited by Levander and Mignolo (2011).

In its understanding of the 'Global South', this paper draws on Haug et al.'s (2021) insightful analysis of the term's disparate renditions. At least three understandings of the term Global South may be discerned in the literature in the broader literature: one, as a placeholder to refer to economically poorer regions of the world that have been marginalised by colonialism and/or capitalism (Berger, 2020); two, as a reference to emerging spaces of resistance against Northern dominance in multilateral settings as well as broader forms of global hegemonic power (Baumann, 2018); and three, as a descriptor of different sets of cross-regional alliances. It is with this last understanding of the Global South, as a space of cross-regional alliances, that the formulation advanced in this paper most closely resonates. While states such as Russia and Japan (and, increasingly, China) are not usually associated with the Global South in terms of the first understanding of the term, these countries could be situated within the Global South as spaces of opposition to Northern dominance and as champions of alliances that include states of the Global South.

As a descriptor of different sets of cross-regional alliances, the formulation of Global South may well encompass countries and territories not usually associated with that term (but see below for an important caveat). Such

countries as Russia and Japan, which do not share the structural or historical experience of poverty, inequality and colonialism may nevertheless form alliances with countries that do. Indeed, as Haug et al. (2021, p. 1928) note, the qualified 'Global' in the term 'Global South' underlines the 'increasing interconnectedness of social relations that place questions about "north" and "south," rich and poor, coloniser and colonised, developed and developing in a global (ised) context' (also see Rigg, 2007). The formulation adapts the North–South terminology prevalent in the 1970s to emphasise the growing influence of southern actors beyond their regional confines in Asia, Africa and Latin America (Gray & Gills, 2016). The formulation of 'Global South', especially in the context of cross-regional alliances, suggests a shift from a core focus on development towards emphasising geopolitics, which are nevertheless led by countries associated with the Global South.

Indeed, Haug's (2021) intervention opens the space for creatively thinking about such categories as the Global North and Global South beyond binary formulations. Deploying Soja's (1996) 'Thirdspace' perspective, Haug locates OECD countries such as Mexico and Turkey on the margins of the Global South while also reflecting on the shifting, and often contradictory, understandings of the term. In a similar vein, countries such as Japan (Ching, 2011) and Russia (Tlostanova, 2011) may not be unambiguously part of the Global South but— as self-consciously non-Western powers— find themselves on the margins of the Global North. Their marginalisation within the Global North places them adjacent to— but not firmly within— the category of the Global South.

Southern Multilateralism differs from the prevailing multilateralism in important ways. Multilateral institutions such as the UN, and for that matter the WTO, IMF and the World Bank, have open membership. North or South countries are free to join them if they can meet their basic obligations and fulfil specific criteria. But the impetus for their formation comes from the Global North. The UN is the product of the Atlantic Charter, the compact signed between Roosevelt and Churchill towards the end of the Second World War. Recent accounts that helpfully call for inclusive histories of that body (Weiss & Abdenur, 2016; and O'Malley & Thakur, 2022) appreciate the limited space for action within the UN that restricted the agency of Global South actors. While member countries can participate freely, the countries of the Global North have successfully outmanoeuvred the Global South whenever they have raised difficult concerns. The tussles over the New International Economic Order (NIEO), mentioned earlier, are a case in point. By contrast, Southern Multilateralism is about the Global South initiating multilateral arrangements that prioritise and benefit Southern interests and ideas, which is not something the prevailing multilateral frameworks do on their own. Southern Multilateralism, in this formulation, does not replace existing multilateralism. Rather, it could beneficially reform prevailing multilateralism.

The universe of cases that potentially comprise Southern Multilateralism include, of course, regional arrangements that comprise predominantly Global South countries. The Economic Community of West Africa, the East Africa Community and the Southern Common Market in Latin America (Mercosur) are useful examples, as is the India–Brazil–South Africa (IBSA Fund). Multilateral arrangements led by the Global South, which also include countries on the margins of the Global North, such as Japan and Russia. Unlike institutions such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation are not exemplars of Southern Multilateralism. The Southern Multilateralism analysed in this paper should also be distinguished from such initiatives such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue that involve India and Japan but also USA and Australia. While this last is an example of a cross-regional alliance, it is— like the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)— led by USA and Australia, countries typically considered part of the Global North.

The reference to Southern interests and ideas above are informed by the growing literature that recognises the Global South polyphonies (Waisbich et al., 2021). Unlike plurality, which merely acknowledges the existence of difference, polyphonies directs our attention to the ways in which difference contributes to a broader phenomenon. That Southern interests and ideas are far from homogenous or coherent are illustrated by the two examples offered in this paper. Indeed, not only in the formulation of 'Global South' polyphonous, it is—like any meta formulation—necessarily incomplete.

In taking seriously the polyphonous character of the Global South, I appreciate Nyamnjoh's (2017, p. 253) caution that 'incompleteness is the normal order of things'. With Mbembe (1997, p. 152), he invites us to challenge dualistic

assumptions that solidify 'the opposition between the affective and the cognitive, the subject and object, appearance and essence, reason and passion, the corporeal and the ideal, the human and the animal, reality and representation, and the one and the multiple'. Dualistic approaches further privilege the ability to reason (argumentation and deliberation) and the will to power, giving short shrift to the ability to feel, to remember and to imagine (Mbembe, 2003, p. 2, emphasis in original). Instead, we must acknowledge the incompleteness of facts and reality, including of the formulations advanced in this work.

In this vein, Nyamnjoh urges us to be convivial. Conviviality, he tells us, recognises and provides for the fact or being incomplete.

If incompleteness is the normal order of things, natural or otherwise, conviviality invites us to celebrate and preserve incompleteness and mitigate the delusions of grandeur that come with ambitions and claims of completeness. Not only does conviviality encourage us to recognise our own incompleteness, it challenges us to be open-minded and open-ended in our claims and articulations of identities, being and belonging. Conviviality encourages us to reach out, encounter and explore ways of enhancing or complementing ourselves with the added possibilities of potency brought our way by the incompleteness of others (human, natural, superhuman and supernatural alike), never as a ploy to becoming complete (an extravagant illusion ultimately), but to make us more efficacious in our relationships and sociality.

The formulation of Southern multilateralism proposed in this paper is informed by this spirit of conviviality.

2 | INDIA IN AFRICA

This section illustrates the key contours of Southern Multilateralism by reflecting on India's engagement with the African continent. The discussion will draw on these reflections to illustrate the emergence of a multiplex world order in which countries of the Global South share global responsibilities with the prevailing institutions of liberal multilateralism. These countries neither seek to overthrow the LIO nor can they be co-opted within it. This section also demonstrates the heterogeneity of Southern Multilateralism by attending to variations within it with a focus on key themes such as (i) strategies to address development challenges (including identification of problems); (ii) the politics of global development suggested by their respective strategies; and (iii) construction of collective self-identities vis-à-vis the LIO.

2.1 | India's engagement with the African continent

India's evolving engagement with the African continent reflects its dynamic appropriation of the myriad formulations associated with the Global South (Chakrabarty, 2016). Deftly combining realpolitik with solidaristic narratives, India has refused to abandon its identity as a member of the Global South, even under Prime Minister Narendra Modi who otherwise seeks to distance India from its Nehruvian legacy (Bajpae, 2016). Indeed, the narrative of 'non-alignment' associated with formulations of Global South was on full display¹ in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine as late as April 2022.

The country's engagement with Africa through development cooperation and concessional credit goes back to shared anti-colonial struggles and the post-Independence period. India's Mohandas Gandhi spent his formative years in South Africa. After independence, under the aegis of the Non-Aligned Movement, of which India alongside Ghana and Egypt (and Indonesia and the former Yugoslavia) was a founding member, the two regions sought to engage with one another based on mutually beneficial win-win collaborations (Modi, 2013; Saxena, 2016). However, much

¹indiatoday.in/news-analysis/story/india-russia-ukraine-war-west-narendra-modi-1933326-2022-04-04; <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-ukraine-war-india-and-a-stand-of-non-alignment/article65156505.ece> and timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/thedhirajkumar-com/ukraine-crisis-nehrus-non-aligned-movement-nam-doctrine-beckons-india/.

of this cooperation was ad hoc, and it was as late as 2003 when a structured scheme to channel India's assistance was initiated. A key feature of the scheme was to subsidise the interest rate demanded by Indian banks to expand concessional finance available to African partners, a feature it shared with other Southern lenders such as Brazil, China and the UAE (Dye, 2021).

Such bilateral relations were soon accompanied by multilateral forums such the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Fund.² The Fund pooled resources from the three countries to establish a mechanism that supported development assistance in other developing countries. Established in 2004 and operational since 2006, the Fund supports projects on a demand-driven basis through partnerships with local governments, national institutions and implementing partners. Initiatives are concrete expressions of solidarity and objectives range from promoting food security, to addressing HIV/AIDS, to extending access to safe drinking water—all with the aim of contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Over a decade later, the Asia-Africa Growth Centre (AAGC) was established as a megaregional programme for economic growth that aims to mobilise financial resources to provide high-quality infrastructure that aligns with the socio-economic priorities of the Asia-Africa region. It emerged as an agreement for economic cooperation between India and Japan in November 2016 to revitalise and create maritime corridors that would facilitate a 'free and open Indo-Pacific region'. The AAGC prioritises development projects in health and pharmaceuticals, agriculture and agro-processing, disaster management and skills-enhancement.

A consideration of both institutions helps explain Southern Multilateralism and to illustrate variations within it. The IBSA Fund is a trilateral arrangement between India, Brazil and South Africa to aid poverty-reduction and human development in other low and middle income countries. The AAGC is a recent multilateral arrangement initiated by India and Japan to improve infrastructural connectivity between Asia and Africa. While the IBSA Fund will complete two decades of its existence in 2023, the AAGC is nascent. Since its operationalisation in 2006, the IBSA Fund has implemented over 30 projects in at least 10 African countries (alongside others in Asia and Latin America). Although the AAGC is yet to deliver a single project, its vision document offers an insight into the proposed strategies and construction of collective self-identities vis-à-vis the LIO.

The two institutions have been selected for their usefulness in describing the phenomenon of Southern Multilateralism (rather than to make a causal inference). They both exemplify what Gerring and Cojacuru (2016) call a 'diverse' approach to descriptive case studies in which a small basket of diverse cases is selected from a large population of potential cases to capture the diversity within Southern Multilateralism. The AAGC and the IBSA Fund are very different from one another in terms of their organisation, strategy towards development, and financial outlays. The IBSA Fund exemplifies a modicum of success, and 46% of its financial resources have been directed towards projects on the African continent. The AAGC is yet to go beyond the grand claims outlined in the vision document: nevertheless, its discursive commitment towards securing a free and open Indo-Pacific coupled with its rhetorical attempt to counter the China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) make its inclusion in this study worthwhile. Taken together, the differences between the IBSA Fund and the AAGC offer insights into variations within Southern Multilateralism.

2.2 | Identification of development challenges

The development challenges identified by the AAGC and the IBSA Fund warrant critical commentary. Both explicitly align their investments with the global goals mandated by the United Nations. The AAGC explicitly commits to further the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Likewise, the IBSA Fund aligns its investments to the contributions these make to the SDGs and, prior to that, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Key differences include divergent

²It has sometimes been assumed that IBSA was formed to counterbalance China in the broader BRICS grouping. However, the first summit of the IBSA countries was held in 2006. This was 3 years before the first BRICS summit in 2011. Thus, although the term BRIC (without South Africa) was coined in 2001 by Jim O'Neill at Goldman Sachs, as an organic grouping IBSA predates the BRICS by years.

identifications of the pathways to global development and the sites for intervention that make the most meaningful leverage to attain UN-mandated goals. Although some tensions between their agendas are discernible, neither intends to subvert the ways in which existing multilateral institutions identify development challenges.

The *Vision Document* of the AAGC identifies its purpose as 'creating new production channels, expanding and deepening the existing value chains, ensure economic and technical cooperation for enhancing capacities, facilitate a greater flow of peoples between the two continents, and achieve sustainable growth over the longer term' (AAGC, 2017, p. 4). The AAGC commits to the establishment of an industrial corridor and industrial network between sub-regions of Asia and Africa and seeks to strengthen this through growing people-to-people partnerships between the two continents. While the AAGC is yet to be operationalised, it proposes to aid economic growth through quality infrastructure that connects people, towns, regions and countries.

The press release that attended to the establishment of the IBSA Fund (IBSA, 2006) identified its purpose as contributing to the efforts by the international community towards combating poverty and hunger. It made a case for the reduction of poverty and hunger to reducing social and economic inequality in society. The Fund was established on the sidelines of the 58th Session of the United National General Assembly (UNGA) in 2003. The following year, a Technical Monitoring Committee was instituted to provide for a closer partnership between the Fund and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The leaders of the three countries agreed to contribute US\$ 1 million towards the IBSA Fund: the UN Office of South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) at the UNDP was established as the official secretariat of the Fund as well as the fund manager.

Projects supported by the IBSA Fund are explicitly vetted on the basis of their ability to contribute to achieve the MDGs, and lately the SDGs, of reducing the number of people living in extreme poverty (RIS, 2016, p. 18). This commitment is borne out by the sectoral priorities of the IBSA fund (UNDP, 2015). Between 2004 and 2015, 30% of the budget Fund's budget was allocated to agricultural development. A further 27% supported health care interventions. 21% was invested in the promotion and protection of livelihoods. The Fund recognises that reducing poverty and hunger are the first two goals of the SDGs and continues to orient its support towards these challenges.

Although both the AAGC and the IBSA Fund orient their purpose and financial investment towards the global development challenges mandated by the UN, the pathways identified by them to address those challenges vary. The AAGC identifies sustainable infrastructures and economic growth as crucial to addressing global challenges and achieving these goals. Its Vision Statement make this connection explicit. The IBSA Fund, by contrast, identifies eliminating poverty and reducing hunger to the achievement of the SDGs (and the MDGs) prior to that only 2.2% of its cumulative budget between 2004 and 2015 was allocated to projects aimed at renewable energy (UNDP, 2015). Arguably, this divergence in focus is complementary and potentially helps to address the spectrum of SDGs. It also highlights, for us, the variation within Southern multilateralism.

2.3 | The politics of global development challenges

The divergences in the identification of global development challenges between the AAGC and the IBSA Fund reveal important differences in their respective understandings of the underlying political processes. While the IBSA Fund stresses such values as pluralism, democracy and social inclusion, the AAGC's emphasis on alternative values such as economic growth and sustainable development is noteworthy.

In his address to the plenary session of the very first IBSA summit, India's then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh made explicit this value-based understanding of the politics of global development explicit.

All three of us belong to the developing world. We are pluralistic and multi-cultural societies. We are the largest democracies respectively on each of our continents and these values bind us in a unique way. Our three countries are committed to economic growth, with social equity and inclusion.

IBSA (2006)

Democracy is understood as a political mechanism to harness the strengths of pluralistic and multi-cultural societies and address the problems posed by them. Such values-based understanding of global development politics continues to be staple fare in public statements issued by the IBSA grouping. The preamble of the IBSA Declaration of 2018 stated:

IBSA brings together India, Brazil and South Africa, three large democracies and major developing economies from three continents.

IBSA (2018)

The second IBSA Summit 'highlighted the importance of social inclusion, gender equality and women empowerment and on poverty alleviation' (IBSA, 2007). It committed to signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that identified social inclusion as a key priority for the IBSA Fund.

The shared commitments of the IBSA members to the values of democracy and social inclusion have continued to be reiterated (even if, in practice, they are increasingly violated across the three countries). At the 9th IBSA Trilateral Ministerial Commission, the following statement welcomed the delegates:

Values of democracy, pluralism, multiculturalism, tolerance, social-inclusion, rule-based international order, UN reforms, and shared commitment to 2030 agenda are enshrined deeply in IBSA cooperation. I want to emphasise here that we three share a lot more in common than other groupings and we should seek to strengthen these shared bonds.

IBSA (2018)

The projects supported by the IBSA Fund demonstrate its commitment to promoting democratic citizenship and social inclusion among local communities in recipient countries. While the IBSA countries distanced themselves from the US-led agenda of democracy-promotion, they insist that they are

bound together by a shared conviction in the universal values of democracy, plurality, diversity, human rights, rule of law and commitment to sustainable development, inclusivity of all communities and gender, and respect for international law.

IBSA (2018)

The values espoused by the AAGC are somewhat different: As its *Vision Document* states:

The AAGC is to be undertaken to improve growth and interconnectedness between and within Asia and Africa, through realising a free and open Indo-Pacific region for the comprehensive development of the region ... Increased ties between Asia and Africa will contribute to economic growth and sustainable development.

AAGC (2017, p. 14)

The AAGC's reference to a 'free and open Indo-Pacific' underscores the normative political commitment of this partnership. It resonates with emerging visions of the Indo-Pacific maritime region, an idea first conceived in 2006–2007³ to displace older notions of the Asia-Pacific to which China was central. The term is credited to Dr. Gurpreet Khurana, executive director of the National Maritime Foundation and a captain of the Indian Navy who coined it as an expression of shared anxieties between India and Japan over China's rising assertiveness in Asia and beyond.⁴ With the

³swp-berlin.org/en/publication/from-asia-pacific-to-indo-pacific/

⁴thediplomat.com/2018/01/the-origin-of-indo-pacific-as-geopolitical-construct/

United States becoming interested in exploring alliances in the context of its own competition with China, the term has now gained geopolitical significance.⁵ Despite varying interpretations, most considerations of the Indo-Pacific are based on the imagination of the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean as one contiguous area through which the majority's goods and energy supplies are transported.⁶ Many observers perceive the Indo-Pacific as an alternative to the multi-trillion dollar Belt and Road Initiative that criss-crosses Eurasia.⁷ Barack Obama had outlined plans for an Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor during his second presidency. Donald Trump extended this vision when he declared his support for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific at the 2017 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation.⁸ Building on those early initiatives, US President Joe Biden recently committed to a free, open, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region in a rare op-ed in the Washington Post penned together with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga.⁹ Interestingly, despite the reference to a "free and open Indo-Pacific", there is no reference whatsoever to democracy in the Vision Statement.

The AAGC's commitment to economic growth and sustainable infrastructures in the context of a free and open Indo-Pacific distinguishes its politics of global development from the IBSA Fund's espousal of democracy, inclusion and human development. While the IBSA collective explicitly values democracy because it enables decision-making and problem-solving in diverse societies, the AAGC values economic growth and sustainable infrastructures to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific. While IBSA's commitment to democracy targets domestic priorities, the AAGC's espousal of economic growth is aimed to integrate the Asian and African continents within a seamless Indo-Pacific.

2.4 | Construction of identities: South–South Cooperation 2.0 and 3.0

The identification of global challenges and the politics of global development expressed by the AAGC and the IBSA Fund offers us glimpses into their collective self-identities. At first glance, there is much in common between the identity of south–south cooperation (SSC) constructed by the AAGC and IBSA Fund. The AAGC notes that '(a)s developing regions, both continents are expected to place commitment to promoting strong, balanced, sustainable and inclusive growth'. Likewise, the IBSA Fund describes itself as the product of a 'dynamic inter-regional mechanism amongst three emerging countries ... committed to strengthening the role of developing countries in international policy and decision-making processes that place multilateralism at the centre'.¹⁰ It goes on to reiterate its 'resolve to enhance the voice and representation of emerging and developing countries in the international arena'. The shared identity of 'developing' regions helping one another is central to both formations (despite the obvious fact that Japan is neither a developing country nor typically associated with the Global South). They both illustrate what Emma Mawdsley (2018) has called the 'southernisation of development'.

However, important differences between the SSC espoused by the two formations may be noted. In a prescient contribution to the literature on SSC, Mawdsley (2019) distinguishes between what she calls SSC1.0, SSC2.0 and SSC3.0.¹¹ Couched in Third Worldist claims, SSC1.0 'was relatively less powerful as a geostrategic tool, and was largely neglected by mainstream and critical theorists of international development'. SSC2.0 by contrast refers to the booming in cooperation across the Global South 'in resource, visibility, ideational legitimacy'. SSC3.0 draws on the successes of SSC2.0 towards a more pragmatic and less affective framing, greater attentiveness to challenges and difficulties of working with partner countries, and 'an unprecedented rupture in the North–South axis that has dominated post-1945 international development norms and structures' (Mawdsley, 2018, p. 108).

⁵henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Global-Britain-in-the-Indo-Pacific-WEB.pdf

⁶www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/from-asia-pacific-to-indo-pacific/#fn-d24663e199

⁷risingpowersproject.com/the-indo-pacific-in-us-strategy-responding-to-power-shifts/

⁸asean.usmission.gov/remarks-president-trump-apec-ceo-summit-da-nang-vietnam/

⁹washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/03/13/biden-modi-morrison-suga-quad-nations-indo-pacific/

¹⁰<https://unsouthsouth.org/ibsa/annualreport2019/>

¹¹These framings are analytical rather than chronological. As Mawdsley (2019: 261) categorically notes, 'To be absolutely clear and to reiterate: I do not suggest that this periodisation provides a chronology of SSC, whether in general or in relation to specific Southern partners. Rather, it is one very particular analytical framework that centres on visibility and influence, based within changing global geoeconomic structures'.

The SSC advanced by the IBSA Fund reflects SSC2.0 with its assertion an affective identity of postcolonial democracies with experience of managing social diversity. The IBSA Dialogue Forum, from which the Fund emerges, describes itself as an 'inter-regional mechanism amongst three emerging countries, three multi-ethnic and multi-cultural democracies which are determined to contribute to a new international architecture, bringing their voice together on global issues, and inter alia, advance South-South Cooperation'. Every single project supported by the Fund is located outside the three member-states, with over 60% funds allocated to projects in least developed countries. The IBSA Fund is perceived by member-states as an instrument to promote South-South Cooperation.

The South-South Cooperation implicit in the AAGC resonates with SSC3.0, given its pragmatic framing of economic growth and sustainable infrastructure. Assessments of the lines of credit (LoCs) offered by India find that, contrasted with previous collaborations, 'India seems to be adopting a more interventionist, stringent, and one could even say conditions-laden, export-credit process' (Dye, 2016, p. 2). The AAGC eschews any reference to the binary between Global North and Global South: indeed Japan's close involvement in it exposes a polycentric terrain that makes it difficult to sustain a North-South dichotomy. The AAGC exemplifies Mawdsley's (2019, p. 264) assessment of 'eroding "North" and "South" identities and agendas'. However, such erosion does not necessarily entail an abandonment of the narrative of South-South Cooperation: the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), the Delhi-based thinktank involved in preparing the Vision Document of the AAGC, remains committed to promoting South-South Cooperation.¹²

The two arrangements thus inhere quite different modes of South-South Cooperation. The IBSA Fund has supported projects to promote human development. Projects in Africa have included supporting soya bean production and processing Zambia (US\$ 1.7 million for 3 years); offering scholarships to survivors of child marriage in Malawi (almost US\$ 1 million for 20 months); and strengthening infrastructure and capacity to combat HIV/AIDS in Burundi (US\$ 1.1 million for 3 years). IBSA Funds have also been used towards building capacities of civil servants in Sierra Leone and to impart skills-based employment training in Sudan. By contrast, the AAGC promises to spur economic growth. Although no projects have yet been identified for implementation (Ministry of External Affairs, 2022),¹³ the vision espoused by the AAGC suggests a return to more infrastructural practices of development.

3 | SOUTHERN MULTILATERALISM

3.1 | Southern Multilateralism: Multiplexity against narratives of chaos, disorder and entropy

The relative decline of US hegemony in world politics, spurred by the emergence of a multiplex world order, has prompted a vast outpouring of anxiety over the future of the world, as analysts predict a return to great power conflict (Allison, 2017; Mearshmeimer, 2001; Nye, 2017) and anarchy (Slaughter, 2017). Narratives of chaos pervade much of this literature, as observers fear that the inability of the US to enforce order will lead to global disorder. Invoking the metaphor of 'entropy', Randall Schweller (2011) warns that order is relentlessly replaced by increasing disorder as the world is 'heading for a place akin to a perpetual state of purgatory—a chaotic, realm of unknowable complexity and increasing disorder' (p. 287). The metaphor of entropy, Schweller goes on to inform us, is apt 'because it captures the flattening and chaotic nature of the world as well as the rise of bounded power, similar to useless energy' (p. 287).

Why might multiplexity degenerate into chaos, disorder and entropy? Schweller suggests that a prime reason is that non-Western powers are unlikely to care about maintaining global order. As 'shirkers', they may simply neglect

¹²thehindu.com/news/national/india-will-do-its-best-to-promote-south-south-cooperation-united-nations-envoy-ruchira-kamboj/article65889473.ece. Indeed, recent scholarship suggests that, if anything, it is African countries who favour eschewing the rhetoric of South-South Cooperation (Haug & Kamwengo, 2017).

¹³mea.gov.in/rajya-sabha.htm?dtl/34796/QUESTION+NO233+STATUS+OF+ASIA+AFRICA+GROWTH+CORRIDOR

the prevailing order: Neither challenging it nor supporting it, they may be unwilling to shoulder any collective responsibilities and pay for these. Shouldering such responsibilities entail costs, which reduce resources necessary for domestic development: as states that seek to 'catch up' with the west, the rising powers have little time for the niceties of sustainability and democracy that have come to be the hallmark of liberal internationalism. Furthermore, not only do non-Western powers disagree with the liberal principles of the western-led international order, they disagree with one another on what an alternative might look like. Questions about who shoulders what responsibility, what constitutes a fair contribution to the collective good, and who decides whether a global initiative is a collective good will only generate an impasse. The rising powers will demand greater voice and representation but shirk their responsibilities for meeting global challenges. Frustrated by such shirking by challengers, the dominant power will also retrench from global commitments, leaving the international order in disarray. As the liberal principles of the international order are in disarray, entropy sets in.

Southern Multilateralism offers a corrective to the narrative of entropy advanced by neorealists such as Schweller. The inference that the relative decline of Northern influence in global affairs will be followed by chaos, disorder and anarchy is based on flawed assumptions that the US-led liberal order was universal and peaceful. As Acharya reminds us, 'despite the exalted claims about its power, legitimacy and public goods function, that order was little more than the US-UK-West Europe-Australasian configuration' (Acharya, 2014, p. 37). Joseph Nye, a staunch champion of the liberal order, admits that this order remained limited to a group of like-minded states on the north Atlantic littoral and 'did not include many large countries such as China, India, and the Soviet bloc states, and ... did not always have benign effects on non-members' (Nye, 2017). Conflicts and crisis generated by US-led policies wreaked havoc on countries and societies deemed as threats. The decline of its relative dominance may well pave the way for more inclusive global governance and international order. Far from images of entropy, the emergence of Southern Multilateralism suggests that Global South actors such as India as well as Brazil and South Africa (as well as their allies such as Japan) do not only hanker after representation but are—despite varying capabilities—willing to shoulder global responsibility.

Southern capabilities and willingness to shoulder global responsibility are neither targeted against the Global North nor intended to overthrow the broader liberal international order. Theoretically anchored in Acharya's (2017) formulation of 'multiplexity', Southern Multilateralism intimates a global order that allows for the coexistence of different orders. Although such coexistence is not always consensual and free of tensions, it does caution us against narratives of great power conflict and threats to the existence of the liberal international order that have come to pervade contemporary commentary on international affairs. Southern Multilateralism potentially complements existing multilateral arrangements while also competing with them. Rather than challenging, undermining or overthrowing liberal internationalism, the multiplexity signalled by Southern Multilateralism may well complement and even strengthen it.

3.2 | Southern Multilateralism and the LIO

How does Southern Multilateralism impact the LIO? Having outlined the chief features of Southern Multilateralism and its internal variations, I now turn to address the ways in which Southern Multilateralism's presence in Africa might shape the LIO. As the foregoing analysis shows, the variations within Southern Multilateralism suggest that there is no singular way in which the emerging multilateralism influences the LIO. The AAGC's influence on the LIO is likely quite distinct from the influence of the IBSA Fund. Nevertheless, both manifestations of Southern Multilateralism aim to share responsibility with the LIO in setting the agenda for the emerging world. Instead of rejecting it outright or accepting it in totality, Southern Multilateralism influences key elements of the LIO. In doing so, Southern Multilateralism illustrates the emerging multiplexity of our world.

Five elements of the LIO have been usually identified in the literature (Ikenberry, 2018), through the two centuries of its rise, fall and mutation. These are (i) openness in trade and exchange; (ii) rules-based relations between

states; (iii) collective security; (iv) the belief that international society is corrigible; and (v) internationalisation will nudge states towards liberal democracy: Liberal democracies will become more liberal, and authoritarian states will become democratic. Southern Multilateralism does not challenge the importance of rules-based relations between states or the belief that states can work together to achieve mutual gains rather than being embroiled in zero-sum power contests. Similarly, it does not envisage alternative arrangements of collective society to challenge the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). But it does impinge on two elements of the LIO: openness in trade and exchange; and the normative preference for liberal democracy. It is to Southern Multilateralism's influence on these two elements of the LIO that I now turn.

3.2.1 | Openness in trade and exchange

That trade and exchange are key constituents of contemporary society constitutes an important presumption of the LIO. An open international order results in states being enmeshed in the fortunes of one another. It facilitates economic growth, encourages the circulation of knowledge and technology, and fosters peace. Such circulations further strengthen the gains that states make from one another and result in ever deeper engagement. Does Southern Multilateralism, as illustrated by the AAGC and IBSA Fund, challenge this presumption of the LIO?

Neither the AAGC nor the IBSA Fund explicitly challenges or undermines liberal principles of openness in trade and exchange. However, the distinct discursive identities they espouse suggest that the AAGC might be more committed to strengthening the principles of openness in trade and exchange than the IBSA Fund. The narrative of 'a free and open Indo-Pacific', which underpins the origins and purpose of the AAGC suggest that it can be expected to be more committed to openness in trade and exchange than the IBSA Fund, whose identity is shaped by the narrative of South–South Cooperation. These divergent discursive histories are significant and warrant further comment.

The AAGC is a megaregional development cooperation pioneered by India and Japan to promote economic growth and sustainable infrastructure in Africa. As poster-children of 'economic reforms' and a testimony to policies of economic liberalisation that (supposedly) transformed stagnating economies into economic powerhouses, India and Japan are expected to further foster the openness in trade and exchange that benefitted them. It is widely believed, at least in official circles,¹⁴ that both India and Japan owe their rapid rates of economic growth to opening up their closed and regulated economies, and attempting to integrate with the global economy. Although the extent to which they have in fact integrated with the global economy is quite disparate (Japan is much more integrated than India is), the tendency towards such integration is discernible in both economies.¹⁵ Given these self-understandings, they can each be expected to further promote global integration, thereby buttressing the LIO. The AAGC's commitment to financing sustainable infrastructure by lending to private sector actors in Africa's emerging markets as a means of enhancing global economic growth further suggests an intention to deepen, rather than undermine, the foundations of the LIO.

By contrast, the IBSA Fund is pioneered by India, Brazil and South Africa as a champion of South–South Cooperation. South–South Cooperation emerged in the context of the decolonisation of Asia and Africa and coalesced through such multilateral arrangements as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), of which India was a founding member. NAM styled itself as an alternative force vis-à-vis the western bloc-led liberal internationalism as well the eastern bloc-led socialist internationalism. South–South Cooperation provided a platform for NAM-affiliated countries, including India and Brazil, to attempt an overthrow of the liberal underpinnings of the international order by demanding a New International Economic Order (NIEO) at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) of 1974: NIEO demands included, among others, to curtail the power of transnational corporations; establish and recognise

¹⁴This belief is of course hotly contested in the academic literature. See Wade (1992, 2001) for an example of the heated debates within and beyond the World Bank on the political drivers of economic growth in East Asia. Corbridge et al. (2013) offer a similar overview of the needlessly polarised debates between the relative role of states and markets in India's economic growth since the 1980s.

¹⁵Publicly available data presented by the Heritage Foundation, a US thinktank, suggests this to be the case.

state-managed resource cartels to stabilise (and raise) commodity prices; granting non-reciprocal trade preferences to the Global South countries; and debt forgivingness. Considering the IBSA Fund's commitment to 'advance South-South Cooperation', its stated determination to 'contribute to a new international architecture' places it at odds with such openness but its limited size makes it difficult for it to mount an effective challenge to the LIO.

Thus, the two institutions are likely to influence trade and openness in the LIO in quite contrasting ways. On the one hand, AAGC's commitment to financing sustainable infrastructure that seamlessly connects people, cities and regions is likely to bolster the LIO. On the other hand, the IBSA Fund's aim to contribute a new international architecture, seen through the prism of South-South Cooperation, which has historically sought to enhance the role of the state in the economy and to curtail the power of private sector actors, may contribute to undermining the commitment of the LIO to openness in trade and exchange.

3.2.2 | Internationalisation towards democracy

The expectation that all states will progress towards democracy is another key expectation of the LIO. This order offers institutions, relationships, and rights and protections that enable states to develop domestic political institutions that facilitate liberal democracy. It also promises to promote and protect fledgeling democracies, even if that promise is not always redeemed. Does Southern Multilateralism challenge this promise of the LIO?

Neither the AAGC nor the IBSA Fund explicitly challenges or undermines liberal visions of internationalisation towards liberal democracy. However, the distinct discursive identities they espouse suggest that the IBSA Fund might be more committed to strengthening internationalisation towards democracy than the AAGC. The identity of 'three multi-ethnic and multicultural democracies' espoused by the IBSA countries suggests that they can be expected to be more committed to internationalisation of democracy. The AAGC, by contrast, is silent on the question of democracy as a political regime.

The IBSA countries pioneering the IBSA Fund pride themselves as durable democracies in the Global South. All three countries achieved democratic government in the twentieth century on the back of popular struggles. As multi-ethnic and multi-cultural democracies of the Global South, the three countries are careful to distinguish their democratic identity from the relatively homogenous democracies of Europe and North America. Each of these countries achieved democracy despite widespread poverty, a feature that distinguished them from the prosperous democracies of northern Europe. As relatively stable democracies in the Global South, the three countries exemplify the universal appeal of democracy as a way of life. Recent erosions in democratic practices notwithstanding, each of the three countries continue to project themselves as democracies, despite a global tendency towards democratic backsliding.

The AAGC, by contrast, studiously avoids any reference to democracy. Except for a general reference to a 'free and open Indo-Pacific' the institution makes no reference whatsoever to democracy as a system of government. India, which celebrates its democratic achievements at the IBSA Forum, remains silent on its democratic credentials at the AAGC. The two institutions are thus likely to influence the internationalisation towards democracy that constitutes a key principle of the LIO in quite contrasting ways. On the one hand, the continued projection of the countries leading the IBSA Fund as democracies is likely to bolster the LIO. On the other hand, India's neglect to project its democratic identity as a member of the AAGC may contribute to undermining the promise of the LIO that internationalisation promotes democracy.

It is important not to overstate this distinction. India, Brazil and South Africa have all witnessed recent erosion of democratic practices in their domestic politics, as global bodies such as Freedom House and the V-Dem research programme suggest. The IBSA countries' continued espousal of their democratic identities can no longer be taken for granted. Furthermore, even when democracy was deepening in the three countries through the three decades since 1990, none of the three countries took an active interest in promoting democracy abroad. Indeed, they each distanced themselves from being seen as complicit in any such agenda, fearing that they would be perceived as

lackeys of the USA. Third, the democratic practices fashioned in India, Brazil and South Africa are not derived from the liberal democracies of northern Europe and North America. The multi-ethnic multi-cultural settings of these countries, overlapping with categorical and durable, inequalities of caste, ethnicity, race and region, have necessitated an identity politics that would be anathema to proponents of liberal democracy: yet such 'identity politics' have been central to the democratic identity of the IBSA countries. This last point suggests that, even as the IBSA countries have signalled democracy as a universal value, the character of such democracy exceeds considerably the liberal normativity that limits democratic politics in its historic heartlands in the Global North. The IBSA countries strengthen the democratic principles of the LIO but depart from specifically *liberal* understandings of democracy.

The AAGC's potential to undermine democracy globally should not be exaggerated either. While democratic backsliding in India is a fact, that country's Prime Minister does not tire of referring to it as the 'mother of all democracies'.¹⁶ Whatever be the domestic fate of democracy in India, there is little evidence that the country seeks to export that model overseas. Furthermore, the resilience of democracies across Asia and Africa should not be underestimated. To assume that India could overwhelm the democratic identities of fellow-AAGC members against their will neglects the agency of those countries in defending their democracies should they want.

4 | CONCLUSION: SOUTHERN MULTILATERALISM AND THE MAKING OF MULTIPLEXITY

The emergence of a multiplex global order has prompted a vast outpouring of anxiety among realists over the future of the LIO (Allison, 2017; Mearshmeimer, 2001; Nye, 2017; Slaughter, 2017) and predictions of global anarchy. Against these worries, liberals have steadfastly believed that liberal institutions and ideas will prevail (Deudney & Ikenberry, 2009; Ikenberry, 2018). Departing from these polarised perspectives—one worrying about the imminent anarchy and the other complacent about the resilience of the prevailing order—Randall Schweller (2011) suggests that we are entering an 'age of disorder': 'world politics is being subsumed by the forces of randomness and enervation, wearing away its order, variety, and dynamism' (p. 287). Disorder is hastened not because new powers challenge the LIO or support it: Worse, as conflicted states with multiple identities, they are likely to shirk any responsibility to maintain international order, leading to entropy. While Schweller is surely right in his observation that no singular power will dominate the world order and direct the international order, and that non-Western powers like Japan and India have little love lost vis-à-vis the liberal principles underpinning the international order, his lament that their emergence will usher in an 'age of disorder' is both hasty and ethnocentric.

The Southern Multilateralism analysed in this paper suggests that powers such as Japan and India (as well as China, Brazil, Russia and South Africa) are not the 'shirkers' that Schweller predicts they will be. Rather, they illustrate the advent of multiplexity in which different, even contrasting, ideas, institutions and practices will jostle for space. Much like a multiplex cinema which offers its audience a choice of movies, actors, genres, sensory experiences all under the same roof, a multiplex world is characterised by 'a complex of crosscutting, if not competing, international orders and globalisms' (Acharya, 2017, p. 277). Such globalisms are anchored in South–South linkages (UNDP, 2013) rather than North–South ones, as evidenced by the rising share of world trade (UNCTAD, 2016), foreign direct investment (UNCTAD, 2015) and flows of people within the Global South (IOM, 20xx). Such a multiplex world is not steeped in liberal normativity but one which recognises the 'multiple modernities' (Eisenstadt, 2000) that have shaped the contemporary world, recognising the endogenous transitions to and manifestations of modernity in the Islamic world (Eickelman, 2000; Göle, 2000), India (Kaviraj, 2000) and China (Weiming, 2000). The Southern Multilateralism championed by the powers outside the West illustrates the possibilities of multiple modernities beyond the liberal internationalism that dominated the world order in the aftermath of the Second World War.

The Southern Multilateralism illustrated by the AAGC and the IBSA Fund does not seek to challenge existing multilateral arrangements constituted by the United Nations, the World Bank Group and disparate regional orders:

¹⁶theprint.in/india/modis-mother-of-democracy-comment-sparks-debate-but-hes-not-the-first-indian-pm-to-say-so/740682/

indeed the AAGC commits to complementing rather than competing with these arrangements and the IBSA Fund is housed within the United Nations Office of South-South Cooperation. The multiplex world heralded by such Southern Multilateralism suggests that we are not doomed to what Ian Bremmer and Nouriel Roubini have called a G-Zero World, 'in which no single country or bloc of countries has the political and economic leverage—or the will—to drive a truly international agenda' (Bremmer & Roubini, 2011) simply because US and/or western leadership is not available. Southern Multilateralism illustrates attempts at *sharing* leadership with the liberal institutions rather than overthrowing them or replacing them with something else. As a hallmark of multiplexity, Southern Multilateralism exemplifies a 'G-Plus world, featuring established and emerging powers, global and regional institutions and actors, states, social movements, corporations, private foundations, and various kinds of partnerships among them' (Acharya, 2017, p. 280).

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available in Regional Information System at <https://aagc.ris.org.in/en/about-aagc>. These data were derived from the following resources available in the public domain: RIS, <https://aagc.ris.org.in/en/about-aagc>.

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