



Research Proposal for Ph.D.

Title: “Reimagining International Politics: The Institutionalisation of The Global South”

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Title: "Reimagining International Politics: The Institutionalisation of The Global South"

Introduction:

Ali Mazrui, the renowned Kenyan Political Scientist, noted, "The fate of the planet may well rest in the hands of the developing world. For too long, the North has dominated; only when the South rises can there be a balance for sustainable development." This statement highlights the asymmetrical nature of the contemporary world order and the critical role of the Global South in achieving inclusive and sustainable global progress. Numerous studies have examined the pronounced disparities in power dynamics between the Global North and South, consistently emphasizing the role of institutional frameworks in perpetuating these imbalances. The Global North, long institutionalized, has developed robust mechanisms (G7, EU, NATO, OECD, etc.) that amplify its collective voice and secure benefits for its members, whereas the Global South lacks such robust institutional cohesion.

The proposed research aims to holistically review the existing institutional structures in the Global South and explore strategies to strengthen them, with a focus on evaluating the prospects of forming a new entity, "Organisation for the Global South," akin to the United Nations/OIC. This entity would serve as a unified platform to collaborate and represent the collective voice of the Global South. The research will employ a robust mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative insights with quantitative analysis. Conversational interviews, surveys, case studies, and an in-depth analysis of existing literature will provide nuanced conclusions. The ultimate goal is to propose measures for strong institutionalization of the Global South to exert more influence on the international stage and achieve greater developmental outcomes. This study also aims to fill crucial gaps in the literature and offer actionable insights for policymakers, diplomats, research bodies, and global institutions to recalibrate their policy outlook.

Review of the Literature and Identification of Literature Gaps:

The contemporary world order, particularly since WWII, is characterized by a clear asymmetry of power between the Global North and South. This divide was notably highlighted in the Brandt Report (1980) and theorized by scholars such as Wallerstein (1974) through World Systems Theory, which frames the Global South as peripheral to the core industrialized nations of the North. Fanon (1961) explored colonialism and imperialism, arguing that these left a lasting legacy of political and economic subordination in the South. Furthermore, theories like Dependency Theory (Prebisch, 1950; Dos Santos, 1970) and Postcolonial Theory (Said, 1978) emphasized the historical structural inequalities between the North and the South. However, this literature review will explore how institutional frameworks have perpetuated this asymmetry, the present state of institutionalization in the Global South, and surrounding issues while revisiting innovative ideas suggested by scholars for empowerment.

A. On Role of Institutions in Global Governance

Institutions have historically been tools of global governance, reinforcing norms and power structures. Powell and DiMaggio (1991) argue that institutions perpetuate norms, while Keohane (1984) in *After Hegemony*, highlights that institutions facilitate cooperation, although often reflecting the interests of dominant powers. The importance of institutions is also highlighted by liberal institutionalism, one of the most influential contemporary approaches to international relations.

B. Institutions of the Global North

The Global North operates through two distinct types of institutions. The first are direct entities, such as the G7, EU, and NATO, which overtly advance their strategic interests. The second are influenced and indirect institutions, like the IMF and World Bank, WTO, etc., which, while presenting themselves as global bodies, often serve to perpetuate the priorities of the North. Together, they exert a commanding influence over the international landscape. Scholars like Woods (2006) in *The Globalizers* suggest that these institutions continue to reflect the interests of the Global North, frequently marginalizing the Global South in matters of economic and political importance.

C. Existing Institutions in the Global South

Efforts in the Global South to institutionalize cooperation are evident through regional organizations like the African Union (AU), UNASUR, and CARICOM, as explored by Adebajo and Landsberg (2003). There are other regional institutions such as SAARC, Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and the Arab League, etc. However, critiques by Acharya (2016) point to fragmentation, lack of resources, and limited political cohesion as factors that hinder these institutions' effectiveness in fostering South-South cooperation.

D. Challenges in Institutionalizing the Global South

Despite various efforts, the Global South encounters substantial obstacles in establishing itself as a cohesive force on the global stage. Scholars like Escobar (2012) argue that despite progress, the Global South still grapples with internal divisions and external pressures.

Internal Fragmentation: Ideological differences, conflicts, and power imbalances within Global South institutions undermine collective action and consensus-building. Fawcett (2015) highlights that ideological differences among Southern states are difficult to reconcile. Furthermore, scholars like Taylor (2014) and Shaw (2011) caution that emerging power rivalries, particularly with the rise of China and India, could replicate hegemonic behaviors within the Global South itself, complicating efforts at unified institutionalization.

External Constraints: The North exploits existing fault lines within the South. Their dominance in global governance also restricts the South's amplification of voice.

E. Revamping Global South Institutions

The rise of BRICS represents a significant attempt to counter neoliberal structures, with scholars such as Gallagher (2016) and Desai (2013) noting the establishment of alternative institutions like the New Development Bank. Also, various efforts are being undertaken to reform regional institutions such as AU's Agenda 2063, ASEAN Vision 2025, Quito Declaration 2014 of UNASUR, etc., which calls for respective regional institution's reforms.

F. Proposals for a Unified Global South Institution

The idea of a unified institution for the Global South is gaining momentum. Scholars like Prashad (2012) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) are optimistic about the potential for collective action on issues like climate change and global inequality. Pasha (2020) calls for a reimagined institutional structure that can more effectively challenge the dominance of the Global North.

Since, there lies a wide literature gap that comprehensively provides a detailed framework for a Unified Global South Organization. Therefore, this proposed research aims to fill this crucial gap.

Research Question and Hypothesis:

Central Research Question:

How can the institutionalization of the Global South contribute to reimagining international politics and addressing global power imbalances, and what are the prospects for forming a unified institution akin to the United Nations/OIC for the Global South?

Related Research Questions:

1. How do the institutions of the Global North help in securing interests for their members while marginalizing the South?
2. What are the institutional gaps and key factors that hinder the effectiveness of existing institutional frameworks in the Global South?
3. What are the potential geopolitical, economic, and diplomatic benefits of a unified Global South organization?
4. What lessons can be learned from existing institutions (e.g., UN, G7, EU, AU, BRICS) to inform the creation of a unified Global South organization?
5. How do recent developments (e.g., African Union's entry into the G20, India's Voice of the Global South Summits) impact the trajectory of Global South institutionalization?
6. What is the feasibility of institutionalizing the Global South?
7. What strategies can be employed to overcome constraints that hinder the institutionalization of the Global South?

Hypothesis

Main Hypothesis:

The creation of a unified institution for the Global South, similar to the United Nations or Organisation of Islamic cooperation, will significantly enhance the Global South's ability to challenge existing global power structures, foster sustainable development, and promote equitable global governance.

Supporting Hypotheses:

H1: Existing Southern institutions (AU, BRICS, SAARC, etc.) have failed to achieve their full potential due to fragmentation, lack of political cohesion, and limited resources, necessitating a more cohesive and robust institutional framework.

H2: The establishment of a new institutional entity for the Global South will improve the region's capacity to address global challenges such as climate change and economic inequality by providing a collective voice in international platforms.

H3: Recent geopolitical developments (e.g., India's Voice of the Global South Summits, 2023 & 2024) provide new opportunities for the Global South to leverage its collective influence, signaling the potential for a broader institutionalized framework.

Research Methodology:

The research methodology for this study will employ a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a comprehensive analysis of the institutionalization of the Global South. This approach is essential to explore the complexities of global governance, the feasibility of creating a unified Global South organization, and the internal and external factors that influence institutionalization efforts.

1. Research Design

The research will be divided into three main phases:

Phase 1: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework Development

A systematic review of existing literature on the Global South's institutional frameworks, North-South power asymmetries, and relevant international relations theories (e.g., World Systems Theory, Dependency Theory, Liberal Institutionalism) will be conducted. This will help identify key concepts, historical trends, and gaps in the current understanding of Global South institutionalization.

Phase 2: Qualitative Research

The qualitative phase will focus on gathering in-depth insights through interviews, case studies, and content analysis of institutional frameworks. This will help capture the subjective and nuanced aspects of institutional challenges, internal diversity, and regional cooperation mechanisms.

Phase 3: Quantitative Research and Empirical Analysis

Quantitative data collection will involve surveys, institutional performance metrics, and statistical analysis of international cooperation outcomes. This phase will assess the impact of existing institutions and potential scenarios for the establishment of a unified Global South organization.

2. Data Collection Methods

A. Primary Data Collection

i. Semi-Structured Interviews:

Target Participants: Diplomats, policymakers, scholars, and key figures in international relations and institutional governance within Global South countries.

Purpose: To gain insights into the perspectives, challenges, and potential of institutionalizing the Global South, as well as to understand the political will and comfort level of nations regarding the idea of forming a unified body.

Sample Size: 50–60 participants across diverse regions (Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania) will be selected to ensure broad representation.

ii. Case Studies:

Focus: In-depth case studies of existing Northern and Southern institutions, such as the G7, EU, African Union (AU), BRICS, SAARC, CARICOM, UNASUR, and the New Development Bank (NDB).

Purpose: To analyze the strengths, weaknesses, and lessons learned from these institutions, and assess their impact on regional and global governance.

iii. Observation:

Focus: Observing relevant conferences, summits, and diplomatic events such as the Voice of the Global South Summits (2023, 2024), G7, and BRICS meetings.

B. Secondary Data Collection

i. Content and Document Analysis:

Sources: Institutional reports, policy documents, and agreements from global organizations like the United Nations, IMF, WTO, and regional bodies such as EU, AU, ASEAN, SAARC, and UNASUR.

Purpose: To assess the historical and contemporary impact of global and regional institutions on the Global South's political and economic standing.

ii. Archival Research:

Sources: Archival documents related to past summits, treaties, and institutional frameworks that have shaped the Global South's approach to global governance.

C. *Quantitative Data Collection*

i. Surveys:

Target Group: Representatives from government ministries, regional and global institutions, research institutions, and civil society organizations in the Global South.

Purpose: To quantitatively assess the attitudes, preferences, and perceived effectiveness of existing institutions, and explore the feasibility of a unified body.

Sample Size: 200–300 respondents from various sectors, ensuring diversity across regions and institution types.

ii. Institutional Performance Metrics:

Sources: Existing data from institutions like the African Union, BRICS, New Development Bank, and regional bodies such as CARICOM, Pacific Islands Forum, and CELAC.

Metrics: Economic cooperation indicators, political influence in global forums, developmental outcomes (e.g., poverty reduction, infrastructure development), and climate action initiatives.

3. Data Analysis Methods

A. Qualitative Analysis

i. Thematic Analysis:

Approach: Data from interviews and case studies will be transcribed and analyzed using thematic coding to identify recurring patterns, key themes, and emerging concepts related to the institutionalization of the Global South.

ii. Discourse Analysis:

Focus: Analyzing the language and narratives used in institutional reports, policy documents, and interview responses to understand how power dynamics, ideologies, and regionalism are framed within the Global South.

iii. Comparative Analysis:

Focus: Comparative analysis of different regional institutions in the Global South (e.g., AU vs. UNASUR) to identify variations in institutional effectiveness, resource allocation, and political cohesion.

B. Quantitative Analysis

i. Descriptive Statistics:

Purpose: To summarize and describe survey results, particularly focusing on respondents' attitudes toward existing institutions and the feasibility of a unified body.

ii. Regression Analysis:

Purpose: To determine the impact of institutional performance on various global governance outcomes (e.g., economic cooperation, developmental success) and assess how variables like regional unity and political will influence the potential success of a Global South institution.

iii. Scenario Modeling:

Purpose: Using existing institutional performance data to project different scenarios for the Global South's influence under varying levels of institutionalization (e.g., status quo vs. a new unified body).

4. Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent: All interview and survey participants will be informed of the study's objectives, their right to withdraw, and the confidentiality of their responses.

Confidentiality: Personal identifiers will be removed from all data, and information will be securely stored to ensure participants' privacy.

Cultural Sensitivity: The research will be conducted with an understanding of the diverse political, cultural, and economic contexts of Global South nations, ensuring respectful and context-appropriate engagement.

5. Significance

This research is crucial for several reasons:

1. Addressing Power Imbalances: The current global order disproportionately benefits the Global North through institutions like the IMF, World Bank, and G7. Institutionalizing the Global South can help address these power imbalances by strengthening Institutions capable of representing Southern interests on the world stage.
2. Policy Reformation: This research will offer actionable insights for policymakers in Global South nations to foster stronger diplomatic and economic ties through institutional cooperation. This will support reforms in global governance(e.g.,UNSC reforms) allowing for a more equitable distribution of resources and decision-making powers.
3. Filling Gaps in Literature: While there has been substantial discussion on the challenges faced by the Global South, the idea of forming a unified institution akin to the United Nations/OIC is underexplored. Only few Scholars such as Vijay Prashad(2012), Samir Amin(2004), Amitav Acharya(2014), Boaventura de Sousa Santos(2014), Ndlovu-Gatsheni Sabelo(2018), Pasha(2020) explored the possibility of such a unified Institution. This study will fill that gap by examining the feasibility and design of such an organization.
4. Impact on Sustainable Development: Strengthening Southern institutions will be critical for addressing global challenges such as climate change, poverty, and inequality. By institutionalizing their efforts, the Global South can collectively push for fairer international policies that promote sustainable development.

6. Limitations

Data Accessibility: Challenges in obtaining data from smaller or conflict-affected Global South countries may result in gaps in the empirical analysis.

Subjectivity in Qualitative Data: Personal biases of interviewees and the researcher's interpretation of qualitative data may influence the findings. Efforts will be made to triangulate qualitative insights with quantitative data to mitigate this.

Feasibility of Unified Institution: As the concept of a unified Global South institution remains hypothetical, the research may face limitations in drawing concrete conclusions about its formation, given the geopolitical complexities.

7. Timeline

The research will be conducted over 30 months, broken into the following stages:

1. Months 0-6: Literature review and theoretical framework development.
2. Months 7-8: Secondary data collection (institutional performance metrics, content analysis).
3. Months 19-14: Primary data collection (interviews, surveys, case studies).
4. Months 15-20: Data analysis (qualitative and quantitative).
5. Months 21-24: Synthesis of findings and drafting of conclusions.
6. Months 25-30: Finalization and submission of research report.

The comprehensive methodology will ensure a thorough investigation into the institutionalization of the Global South, providing both theoretical insights and actionable policy recommendations.

Tentative Chapterisation:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Provides background on Global North-South divisions, the role of institutional frameworks, and the study's rationale. It outlines the research problem, objectives, questions, and significance, along with the geographical and thematic scope of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Examines historical and theoretical contexts, the role of Northern institutions, and existing Southern institutions. It explores challenges, emerging Southern organizations, and literature gaps regarding institutional diversity and effectiveness.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Discusses World Systems Theory, Liberal Institutionalism, and Postcolonial/Dependency theories to explain global power dynamics. Proposes a conceptual framework for Global South institutionalization.

Chapter 4: *Research Methodology*

Details the mixed-methods approach, data collection strategies (interviews, surveys, case studies), sampling, data analysis, and ethical considerations. Identifies study limitations such as data access challenges.

Chapter 5: *Evolution of Institutional Frameworks in the Global South*

Traces the history of Southern institutional development, strengths, and weaknesses of existing institutions. Analyzes intra-South power dynamics, regional rivalries, and external constraints.

Chapter 6: *Towards a Unified Global South Institution*

Evaluates the feasibility of creating a unified Global South body, reviews proposals, and explores institutional design. Focuses on strategic priorities like climate change and inequality, assessing challenges and opportunities.

Chapter 7: *Empirical Analysis of Southern Institutions*

Analyzes performance metrics of existing institutions and survey results on institutional effectiveness. Includes scenario modeling to assess different frameworks and lessons from institutional successes and failures.

Chapter 8: *Conclusion and Policy Recommendations*

Summarizes key findings, proposes actionable policy recommendations for Global South institutionalization, and outlines areas for further research.

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