# **How Fast Fashion Dumps Into the Global South**

The U.S. far outpaces other countries in sending used clothing to Africa and Asia – with adverse environmental consequences.

By [Zoya Wazir](https://www.usnews.com/topics/author/zoya-wazir)

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Nov. 11, 2021, at 6:00 a.m.

A man scavenges clothes from debris burnt down by the fire in the early morning at Gikomba market, East Africa's largest second hand clothing market, in Nairobi, Kenya, on Nov. 8, 2021.

The fast fashion industry has boomed tremendously in recent years – with Western countries leading the world in consumption and secondhand clothing exports, which are clogging developing countries and landfills with used clothing.

Fast fashion aims to provide consumers with cheap, fashionable garments that are produced quickly and up-to-date on high-fashion trends, often at the expense of laborers and the environment. While social media has certainly accelerated the trend cycle and given consumers increased access to low-priced, fleeting clothing, American overconsumption is not a new fad. It's been around for decades, and it's been inching the world closer to irreversible climate damage as Americans donate their clothing and buy more at increasing rates.

A major point of contention at the United Nations Climate Conference – which comes to an end this weekend in Glasgow, Scotland – is the divide between wealthy and developing countries. And just as there is an increasing divide between countries that became rich from fossil fuels powering their economies and poor countries being told those fuels are now too dangerous for the planet, the fast fashion industry is exposing a chasm between wealthy countries exporting used clothing and developing countries becoming textile dumping grounds – and facing the environmental consequences.

Currently, the [U.S.](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/united-states) leads the world in secondhand clothing exports. In 2018, the U.S. exported nearly 719 million kilograms (1.58 billion pounds) in secondhand clothing, over 200 million kg higher than its runner up, [Germany](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/germany). These exports end up in secondhand markets around the world, particularly in the Global South, and often at a rate and volume higher than its recipients can handle.

This problem is especially pronounced across Africa, which counts six of the top 20 countries for secondhand clothing imports – [Kenya](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/kenya), [Angola](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/angola), [Tunisia](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/tunisia), [Ghana](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/ghana), [Tanzania](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/tanzania)and [Uganda](https://www.usnews.com/topics/locations/uganda)– and South Asia, where [Pakistan](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/pakistan)and [India](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/india)receive the highest and second-highest volume of secondhand clothes worldwide.

Specifically in Africa, secondhand clothing from Western countries clogs local markets and landfills. The textiles travel from retail secondhand stores to private third parties and containers and are eventually sold to overseas entities, which upcycle – or revamp – the clothes before reselling them according to Sarah Bibbey, the co-founder and acting director of Make Fashion Clean, a non-profit organization working to make denim consumption more sustainable globally.

In Ghana, these clothes – which are called "Obroni Wawu" in the Akan language, or "Dead White Man's Clothes" — are purchased in bales by market traders who do not know what is in them for $25 to $500 each before being repaired and revamped as necessary and eventually making their way to Ghanian secondhand markets. However, the increasingly poor quality of fast fashion clothing makes it difficult for upcyclers (people who revamp and recycle used clothing) to give these clothes a new life, forcing them to be discarded at landfills which, in turn, has detrimental impacts on the local environment.

"Our landfills (in the U.S.) are equipped in such a way that they can process chemicals and they can kind of be contained whereas in other countries, including Ghana, it's not the same level of infrastructure around the landfill," Bibbey noted.

In terms of deciding where the clothes go after Americans discard them, power dynamics and colonial histories play a role in where secondhand clothes are diverted to.

"Any country that is [...] a formerly colonized country, or country that's not a global superpower, is going to be more vulnerable to clothing dumping in general," Bibbey said. "So any country that we know of is going to be more vulnerable to that just because the political power that they have in the global arena is not the same as the political power the U.S. has in the global arena – so that's the most important thing, I think."

**JACQUES NKINZINGABO|AFP via Getty Images**

Secondhand clothes are displayed to sell at Gisozi Market in Kigali, Rwanda, in 2018.

While resistance to Western clothing dumping has taken root in East Africa, the U.S. has leveraged its global influence and financial aid to ensure that it can still export secondhand clothes to African markets.

In 2017, the East African countries of Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan and Burundi tried to [phase out](https://agoa.info/news/article/15277-used-clothing-trade-causes-contention-between-us-and-east-african-nations.html) imports of secondhand clothing and shoes because of the way they undermined domestic efforts to develop their own textile industries. The countries sought to ban these imports entirely by 2019.

However, in March of 2017, the Office of the United States Trade Representative [threatened](https://agoa.info/news/article/15277-used-clothing-trade-causes-contention-between-us-and-east-african-nations.html) to remove four of these six East African countries from the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, a preferential trade deal intended to lift trade and economic growth across sub-Saharan Africa. Burundi and South Sudan had already been expelled from the trade deal under accusations of state violence.

A combination of factors make the U.S. a hotbed for fast fashion consumption above consumers in other wealthy countries. While Americans of all income levels contribute to the fast fashion crisis, Charlotte Tate – the Labor Justice Campaigns director for Green America, a U.S.-based nonprofit organization that promotes ethical consumption – points to America's model of capitalism and wage stagnation as some of the factors driving American overconsumption.

"I think one thing that's unique to American capitalism is how much we prioritize working to make more money and then you have more money to spend," she said. "And another factor to consider is fast fashion is much cheaper than higher quality goods. When you look at wages over the past few decades, they've really stagnated. And as Americans have become more productive, the wealth of productivity hasn't been distributed evenly. In that case, you know, it would be really challenging if you're not making enough money to make ends meet to then also buy higher quality clothes."

But consumers that don't have the means to buy higher quality goods are not the only group lining up at fast fashion stores. Americans of all income levels consume fast fashion, and higher priced clothes don't necessarily equate to more sustainably, ethically produced clothes.

**MORE:**

[How Climate Change May Increase Global Conflicts](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2021-10-29/how-climate-change-may-increase-global-conflicts)

Bibbey also highlights the culture around clothing donations as part of what fuels overconsumption and clothing dumping in the U.S., as consumers buy too much with the idea of being able to donate their clothes later.

"People might hear that their clothes ended up somewhere and they might think that that's always 100% a good thing, just because there's that mindset of American saviorism that we have here," Bibbey said. "We get the idea that that's a good thing, even when we see in reality it's putting local artisans and local clothing makers out of business because they're competing in a sense with this influx of secondhand clothes."

But Tate says that American consumers are not the principal blame for the fast fashion dumping crisis.

"I think that corporations know that they're producing cheap clothing that won't last long and that often can't be reused – and they've known it for a while," she said. "So I would say a bulk of the responsibility falls on corporations and our practices, and then also to some extent it would fall on our government that has the power to regulate, that maybe hasn't."

Because of the unique intensity at which Americans consume and dump clothes – with [news reports](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ghana-fast-fashion-environmental-disaster/) citing a fivefold increase in the amount of clothing Americans have purchased over the past three decades and an average of only seven uses per item – the U.S. requires unique solutions to the global fast fashion crisis.

With the U.N. Climate Conference coming to a close, coming up with solutions to these pressing environmental problems is a top priority, advocates say. And, just as the blame for this crisis cannot fall solely on consumers, environmental activists say solutions need to be sought beyond the consumer level, too.

On a smaller scale, Bibbey points to upcycling both in the U.S. and in developing countries as a way to mitigate the impacts of fast fashion on the environment, highlighting Make Fashion Clean's partnership with the Ghana-based MFI Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to upcycling clothes in partnership with local artisans in Ghana, as an example of this. But they say the more global, overarching solutions still need to be "studied" and "examined."

"Consumers have a lot of power, so while they're not directly responsible for some of the problems facing society today, they do have a lot of power to change market demands and to change their shopping habits," Tate said. "We have found that when consumers speak and reach directly to corporations, they do change their practices. Collective action is very powerful. So, if we all act and change our practices, we do have the power to reform."

# **China Pledges to Encourage Investment in Nigeria**

By [Reuters](https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2024-09-03/nigeria-and-china-sign-economic-nuclear-energy-pact)

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Sept. 3, 2024, at 12:57 p.m.

**Reuters**

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi arrives at the ministerial conference during the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, China Sep. 3, 2024. Ken Ishii/Pool via REUTERS

By Felix Onuah and Liz Lee

BEIJING/LAGOS (Reuters) -China vowed to encourage its more "powerful" companies to invest in Nigeria, which in turn said it was open to Chinese companies building factories and developing its energy and mineral resources, after the two nations' leaders met in Beijing.

China welcomed Nigeria to its e-commerce and logistics sector and said it wanted to help the West African nation's economy "diversify and flourish", according to a joint statement released after President Xi Jinping and his Nigerian counterpart Bola Tinubu met on Tuesday.

They held talks ahead of a summit of 50 African nations in Beijing this week which the Chinese leader called an opportunity to consolidate China-Africa relations.

"China and Nigeria, as major developing countries, strengthening strategic coordination, will inject fresh impetus to China-Africa relations in the new era and spearhead common progress among Global South countries," Xi said.

The two countries agreed to encourage "flexible and diverse" regional monetary and financial cooperation, such as local currency swaps, to promote bilateral trade, the statement published by China's official news agency Xinhua said.

China supports Nigeria in improving its military technology, equipment, intelligence and other capabilities, it said, adding they agreed to work to maintain peace, security and stability in the Sahel region, the Gulf of Guinea and other regions.

They also agreed to cooperate on intelligence to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

The two sides plan to strengthen ties in China's Belt and Road Initiative, human resources development and nuclear energy, a Nigeria government spokesperson said.

The Belt and Road Initiative has already delivered massive infrastructure projects in Nigeria, from a deep sea port to rail lines.

"This comprehensive strategic partnership should result in robust development, stability, and security in the West African sub-region," Nigeria's Tinubu said.

China is Nigeria's biggest bilateral lender, with loans amounting to $5 billion at the end of March, according to figures from Nigeria's Debt Management office.

Tinubu toured the Huawei Research lab and secured a commitment from Huawei to establish a joint solar PV test lab in Nigeria.

Another Chinese firm also pledged to establish an assembly plant for electric tricycles and train Nigerians in technology and renewable energy development.

(Reporting by Felix Onuah in Lagos and Liz Lee in Beijing; Writing by Isaac Anyaogu; editing by David Evans and Sonali Paul)

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# **China Calls for Elderly Volunteers to Boost Economy, Development**

By [Reuters](https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2024-09-25/china-calls-for-elderly-volunteers-to-boost-economy-development)

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Sept. 25, 2024, at 2:35 a.m.

FILE PHOTO: A teacher coaches an elderly person during a yoga class at Mama Sunset, a learning centre for middle-aged and senior people in Beijing, China January 15, 2024. REUTERS/Tingshu Wang/File Photo

HONG KONG (Reuters) - China is urging its rapidly ageing population to volunteer for community services, help development efforts in some regions and contribute in areas from education to sports as authorities try to bolster a shrinking workforce.

The effort comes as China adopts measures such as delayed retirement to tackle fewer births, after two straight years of population decline that is expected to continue for decades, piling pressure on the dwindling workforce.

Last week a national panel on ageing said it was revamping its 'Silver Age' scheme, first launched more than two decades ago, to extend it to more areas of economic and social development.

The broader initiative will enable all elderly people to engage in grassroots activity, from dispute mediation to health and fitness, the civil affairs ministry said.

"Attach importance to the positive role of the elderly in participating in grassroots governance," it exhorted in a statement on its website.

By 2028, the ministry aims for the scheme to have a key role in social participation and contributions by the elderly, the ministry added.

Such activities can range from patrols and childcare to senior care and assistance for the disabled, while another key area is looking after rural children, while their parents are away working in big cities, it said.

It also called for positions to be reserved for elderly workers at major sport facilities, events and key meetings that need to recruit volunteers.

Last year, the number of births in China dropped to 9 million and is projected to drop further, reducing the working population.

The United Nations forecasts current fertility rates will shrink the working age population by nearly 40% by 2050 from the 2010 figure.

Last week's proposal to raise the retirement age accelerates an overhaul of decades-old laws to tackle the economic pressure of a shrinking workforce.

(Reporting by Farah Master and the Beijing newsroom; Editing by Clarence Fernandez)

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# **China Touts Its Belt and Road Infrastructure Lending as an Alternative for International Development**

China is touting its 10-year-old Belt and Road Initiative as an alternative model for economic growth as it seeks to win friends and strengthen its leadership of the developing world

By [Associated Press](https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2023-10-10/china-touts-its-belt-and-road-infrastructure-lending-as-an-alternative-for-international-development)

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Oct. 10, 2023, at 5:21 a.m.

FILE - High-speed train is parked during the opening ceremony for launching Southeast Asia's first high-speed railway, a key project under China's Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, at Halim station in Jakarta, Indonesia on Oct. 2, 2023. China is touting its 10-year-old Belt and Road Initiative as an alternative model for economic development, releasing a government report that praises the program while glossing over criticism that it has saddled poor countries with too much debt. (AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim, File)

BEIJING (AP) — China is touting its 10-year-old Belt and Road Initiative as an alternative model for economic development, releasing a government report that praises the program while glossing over criticism that it has saddled poor countries with too much debt.

The program championed by Chinese leader Xi Jinping has financed construction of ports, power plants, railroads and other projects around the world.

“Over the past 10 years, the fruitful results of building the Belt and Road together and the growing circle of friends have fully proved that the Belt and Road does not engage in a closed and narrow circle, transcends the old mindset of geopolitical games and creates a new paradigm of international cooperation,” Li Kexin, the Foreign Ministry's director for international economics affairs, told reporters in Beijing.

Since it was launched, the Belt and Road Initiative, or BRI, has backed projects carried out mostly by Chinese construction companies, financed by loans from Chinese development banks.

Its official goal is to boost trade and investment by improving China's transport links with the rest of the world. Analysts credit the program with directing needed funding to poor countries but say that came at a cost.

A study released Monday by Boston University's Global Development Policy Center said the BRI had delivered more than $330 billion in loans to developing country governments through 2021, lending more than the World Bank in some years.

“On some level, China has added a World Bank to the developing world, and that is no small feat and very appreciated by developing countries,” said Kevin Gallagher, the center's director.

But the same study noted that many recipients of Chinese loans are now struggling with their overall debts. Also, Chinese-funded power plants are emitting about 245 million tons of carbon dioxide a year, adding to emissions of climate altering greenhouse gases.

The Chinese government report highlighted railway projects including a 590-kilometer (370-mile) route from Nairobi to the port of Mombasa in Kenya and the opening of a 1,035-kilometer (643-mile) railway in 2021 from the city of Kunming in southwestern China to the capital of Laos.

China filled a gap as the World Bank and other lenders pulled back from infrastructure projects because criticism of their impact on the environment and displaced local communities, Gallagher said.

But China in turn has come under similar criticism and is now shifting its initiative toward a new focus that includes smaller projects and renewable energy.

“We do not have these massive multimillion dollar infrastructure projects anymore, but rather smaller projects, the official term is ‘small and beautiful,’ ” said Christoph Nedopil, the director of the Asia Institute at Griffith University in Australia.

They include solar and wind farms, factories to make electric vehicle parts and batteries and mines for lithium and other minerals needed for electric vehicles, Nedopil said.

China's development lending has slumped in recent years, in part because China has learned from the debt crises in multiple countries and also because it has less money to lend as its own economy slows down.

Cong Liang, a senior official of China's main planning agency, said during the release of the BRI report that the country would adhere to “the principle of sustainable debt” and work with indebted countries toward “a sustainable and risk-controllable investment and financing system.”

The Belt and Road Initiative is part of China's efforts to raise its international stature and push back against U.S. criticism of Communist Party rule and Beijing's human rights record.

China’s leaders accuse the U.S. of trying to impose their principles on everyone else — including China. They say their system offers a different approach that accepts other countries as they are.

In contrast, a delegation of U.S. senators in China this week said they stressed to Chinese officials that they would promote "freedom and democratic principles and vigorously defend our values.”

The BRI report says the program transcends differences in ideologies and social systems, offering an alternative to the current path of globalization that Beijing says has just widened the gap between rich and poor countries.

"It is no longer acceptable that only a few countries dominate world economic development, control economic rules, and enjoy development fruits,” the report said.

Next week, China is expected to host a forum showcasing the BRI program.

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# **China is Hurting Innovation, Report Shows**

Unfair trade practices have made China an enemy of global innovation, new research shows.

By [Sintia Radu](https://www.usnews.com/topics/author/sintia-radu)

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Jan. 7, 2020, at 1:17 p.m.

A large number of domestic automobiles are ready to be exported overseas at Lianyungang port, Lianyungang City, Jiangsu Province, China, on Jan. 3, 2020.

[China](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/china)'s trade practices and strong support for its own businesses are slowing down global innovation and causing harm to technological progress, with North American and European countries being the most affected.

Those are the conclusions of a [report](https://itif.org/publications/2020/01/06/innovation-drag-chinas-economic-impact-developed-nations" \t "https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2020-01-07/_blank) published this week by the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation in Washington, D.C. The research is part of a yearlong project that will examine the impact of China's economic rise on global technological innovation.

Globalization and an overall strong level of cooperation between developed nations and low-wage economies has historically incentivized innovation. But China's growing role in the global economy has negatively affected research and development, ITIF says. That is due to China's government heavily subsidizing domestic companies, manipulating currency levels to obtain unfair price advantages in foreign economies, and making use of intellectual property that is doesn't pay for, the report argues.

"These and other policies have conferred an unfair advantage to Chinese companies – which on average are significantly less innovative than their foreign competitors, the very reason China embarked on its 'innovation mercantilist' efforts," says Robert Atkinson, president of ITIF, in the report.

According to the ITIF research, China's low-wage economy has motivated developed countries such as [Canada](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/canada), the [United States](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/united-states) and in Europe to look at relocating production instead of focusing on developing technologies that would allow them to produce more efficiently and at a lower cost in-house. As a consequence, companies have also redesigned production processes and adapted them to manual labor instead of machines, making them less efficient and less innovative overall, the report argues.

"Low-cost production options can affect product design decisions, thereby boosting short-term consumer welfare at the cost of dynamic efficiency (innovation) and long-term consumer welfare," Atkinson writes. That is particularly concerning in areas where governments can manipulate the cost of production and keep the cost of labor low, such as in China, he adds in the report.

In addition, companies operating in industries exposed to more import competition from China have seen a reduction in investment in research and development due to concerns regarding unfair trade practices.

"The nature of Chinese economic and trade policy is so distortive, it ends up harming more innovative companies in many foreign countries," Atkinson says.

Trade barriers can also limit gains for most efficient companies if foreign firms struggle to access economies where domestic players are favored. Experts have [complained](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2018-07-27/china-has-too-much-money-for-its-tech-startups-investors-warn) that unconditional support for Chinese companies facing lower risks has hurt innovation, as well as fair competition and the entrepreneurial spirit altogether. The global cost of innovation also rises when too many firms more firms than necessary, the ITIF warns.

"Unfair, innovation mercantilist-based trade can have the effect of reducing profits by leading to more market overcapacity and lower prices for competitive products than what market forces would produce," Atkinson says.

Solutions for tackling the upcoming challenges in innovation and fair competition should include policies that would make China play by the global set rules, he says.

"If policymakers want to ensure robust rates of global innovation going forward, working to ensure China plays by the rules they agreed to when they joined WTO (World Trade Organization) is a critical task," Atkinson concludes in the report.

# **Xi Offers African Leaders More Aid as China Challenges US-Led Global Order**

Dozens of African leaders have gathered in Beijing for a summit that signals China’s influence in a continent that it hopes will be a key ally in pushing back against a U.S.-led global order

By [Associated Press](https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2024-09-05/chinese-and-african-leaders-hold-a-summit-on-deepening-cooperation-in-a-divided-world)

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Sept. 4, 2024, at 11:32 p.m.

In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, real from left, Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Zambia President Hakainde Hichilema applaud as they witness the signing of a memorandum of understanding on the revitalisation project of the Tanzania-Zambia Authority railway, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Wednesday, Sept. 4, 2024, ahead of the China Africa Forum. (Zhai Jianlan/Xinhua via AP)

BEIJING (AP) — Dozens of [African](https://apnews.com/hub/africa) leaders gathered Thursday in Beijing for a summit that signals China's influence in a continent that it hopes will be a key ally in pushing back against a U.S.-led global order.

Chinese President Xi Jinping promised the leaders billions of dollars in loans and private investment over the next three years, and proposed that relations with all African countries that have diplomatic ties with [China](https://apnews.com/hub/china) be elevated to the “strategic” level.

“We stand shoulder to shoulder with each other to firmly defend our legitimate rights and interests," he said at the opening ceremony of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.

China has become a major player in Africa since the forum was founded in 2000. Its companies have invested heavily in mining for the resources Chinese industry needs, and its development banks have made loans to build railways, roads and other infrastructure under Xi's [Belt and Road program](https://apnews.com/article/china-belt-road-initiative-a4b08290cf94e4f2dffe368a013c5129).

African leaders have welcomed China's assistance but are pushing for a closer alignment of aid with the continent's development goals. They are seeking to industrialize their economies and expand agricultural exports to reduce a trade deficit with China, which has become sub-Saharan Africa’s [largest bilateral trading partner](https://apnews.com/article/kamala-harris-africa-china-tanzania-zambia-a17d6d9a4c409d79e429d2a6494fe23c).

“In the context of our industrialization effort, the portfolio of private investments in Africa should be sufficiently diversified to extend beyond the traditional field of mining and energy resources,” Moussa Faki Mahamat, the chair of the African Union Commission, said, addressing the forum in French.

In a reflection of China's broadening relationship with Africa, Xi outlined 10 “partnership actions” that included training for African politicians and future leaders, further opening of Chinese markets, agriculture demonstration areas, vocational and technical training, green energy projects and 1 billion yuan ($140 million) in military assistance grants.

Xi said China would eliminate tariffs on products from most of the world’s poorest countries, including 33 in Africa, in an expansion of existing exemptions.

“While commending the overall progress so far achieved, we also appreciate the announcement of further areas of partnership actions,” said [Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan](https://apnews.com/article/international-womens-day-tanzania-samia-suluhu-hassan-africa-democracy-a4215c9574269a0832612d264e667aaf), speaking on behalf of eastern Africa. “We salute a new characterization of China-Africa relations.”

China is training more military professionals in Africa than anyone else, and its widespread leadership and governance training gives the country an extra layer of influence by putting it in touch with consecutive generations of politicians, said Paul Nantulya, who specializes in relations with China at the African Center for Strategic Studies in Washington.

The relationship has moved beyond trade and investment to take on political overtones.

“Modernization is an inalienable right of all countries,” Xi said. “But the Western approach to it has inflicted immense sufferings on developing countries. Since the end of World War II, Third World nations, represented by China and African countries, have achieved independence … and have been endeavoring to redress the historical injustices of the modernization process.”

China has tried to position itself as a leader of [the Global South](https://apnews.com/article/what-is-global-south-19fa68cf8c60061e88d69f6f2270d98b), a catchphrase for the developing world. While others don't necessarily see China as the leader, its message of rewriting the international order resonates with African nations that feel frustrated and abandoned by their traditional Western partners.

Many African nations have been openly critical of the U.S. role in the war in Ukraine and refused to condemn Russia’s invasion, taking a non-aligned stance that has led to [political frictions with the U.S.](https://apnews.com/article/united-states-south-africa-weapons-russia-ukraine-17e8a32a592e9372463c9e037496da0e)

“As our history demands, South Africa will continue to pursue progressive internationalism,” South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa said during talks with Xi earlier this week. “Building on the firm foundation of solidarity, we continue to provide support in promoting our interests, those of the African continent and the Global South.”

China's development loans to Africa have fallen sharply from a 2016 peak, though they bounced back from COVID-era lows to $4.6 billion last year, according to the Global Development Policy Center at Boston University.

The drop-off came partly in response to government budget crises in several recipient countries that are unable to repay their loans from multiple lenders.

Many heavily indebted African countries cannot meet the basic needs of their populations, U.N. Secretary General António Guterres told the forum.

“This situation is unsustainable and a recipe for social unrest,” he said, highlighting the need for deep reform to what he called an “outdated, ineffective and unfair international financial system.”

Kenya is seeking financing to finish [a partially built rail project](https://apnews.com/article/kenya-china-beijing-loans-train-55dd517978a020b255a461f8ad372546) that was meant to connect the port city of Mombasa to neighboring Uganda, but it is unclear whether China would agree.

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Pronczuk reported from Dakar, Senegal. Associated Press writers Mogomotsi Magome in Johannesburg and Evelyne Musambi in Nairobi, Kenya, and video producers Olivia Zhang and Caroline Chen in Beijing contributed.

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# **After Xi's G20 Absence, China Says Willing to Play Role in APEC's Success**

By [Reuters](https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2023-09-25/china-says-willing-to-play-constructive-role-in-apecs-success)

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Sept. 25, 2023, at 11:41 p.m.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi attends a press conference on the white paper on "A Global Community of Shared Future: China's Proposals and Actions", in Beijing, China September 26, 2023. REUTERS/Shubing Wang

By Liz Lee

BEIJING (Reuters) -China is willing to play a "constructive" role in the success of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in San Francisco, its top diplomat said on Tuesday, after President Xi Jinping's absence at the annual Group of 20 summit in India.

"As the world's largest developing country and an important member of APEC, China is willing to comply with the expectations of the international community and play a constructive role in the success of APEC this year," said Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Xi, with no official explanation, did not go to the G20 summit in New Delhi this month, with the Chinese premier, Li Qiang, attending in his place. That prompted the United States to say China was "giving up" on the G20 and was building an alternative world order.

"Of course, we and all parties hope that the United States will recognise its responsibility as the host, demonstrate openness, fairness, inclusiveness, and responsibility, and create better conditions for the smooth holding of the meeting," Wang said at a news conference, when asked whether Xi would attend APEC.

China is in communication with the relevant parties, and will make an announcement in due time, Wang added.

Dialogue between China and the United States has been gradually resuming despite tensions between the two superpowers, especially over Taiwan. Expectations are building that Xi would meet with Biden on the sidelines of APEC, after missing a chance for a face-to-face meeting at G20 in India.

At the same news conference, Wang said, without naming any country, that China opposed "wanton" expansion of military alliances that squeeze the security space of other countries.

Beijing has been critical of Washington's continued attempts to deepen military alliances in the Asia-Pacific region. It has particularly disapproved of bases that the U.S. military is building in the north of the Philippines facing democratically governed Taiwan, which China claims as part of its territory.

China has long advocated partnerships rather than alliances, and is not part of any military bloc. Its sole remaining ally after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 is North Korea, to which China is bound by a 1961 treaty to come to its defence if it is attacked.

(Reporting by Liz Lee, Albee Zhang and Ryan Woo; Editing by Christopher Cushing and Gerry Doyle)

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# **China, at UN, Presents Itself as a Member of the Global South as Alternative to a Western Model**

China is telling assembled world leaders at the United Nations that it considers itself part of the Global South

By [Associated Press](https://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2023-09-21/china-at-un-presents-itself-as-a-member-of-the-global-south-as-alternative-to-a-western-model)

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Sept. 21, 2023, at 6:55 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — China told assembled world leaders Thursday that it considers itself part of the Global South, saying it identifies with the goals and challenges of less-developed nations and offering them an alternative to what it has long called “Western hegemony.” The message came from a second-tier official after the country's powerful president, Xi Jinping, skipped the annual U.N. meeting again.

Xi [sent Vice President Han Zheng](https://apnews.com/article/china-han-zheng-un-general-assembly-224f98578752d81fac6bc912c1939293) to deliver a policy statement at the General Assembly's leaders' meeting that covered the government's usual positions with familiar language but appeared to focus on building coalitions around its approach to development and international relations.

“As the largest developing country, China is a natural member of the Global South. It breathes the same breath with other developing countries and shares the same future with them,” Han said. He also said China supports those nations' development path “in keeping with their national conditions.”

The loosely defined term [“Global South,”](https://apnews.com/article/what-is-global-south-19fa68cf8c60061e88d69f6f2270d98b) which has come up frequently at the United Nations this year, identifies nations around the world that are less developed and less rich than what have typically been called “first-world nations.” They're not necessarily in the Southern Hemisphere; many, in fact, are not.

Leaders of a number of larger developing nations, including [Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva](https://apnews.com/article/brazil-lula-un-general-assembly-global-south-fafdca8216d5fe43e4be72ab85135501) and India's Narendra Modi, have of late pitched themselves as leaders around whom the Global South could coalesce. Just Tuesday, Lula told leaders at the U.N. meeting that “Brazil is back” in a speech widely received as Global South-focused maneuvering. And Modi in January hosted a “Voice of the Global South” virtual summit.

China, too, has loosely cast itself in a similar role for more than a decade — and more so since Xi launched the “Belt and Road Initiative” to drive Chinese development, infrastructure and [influence](https://apnews.com/article/kamala-harris-africa-china-tanzania-zambia-a17d6d9a4c409d79e429d2a6494fe23c) in other nations, particularly developing ones. The sprawling project has been widely touted but has encountered [bumps along the way.](https://apnews.com/article/0956dd7edd7344cfa42a1be4f62b1c6c)

“China,” Han promised, “will remain a member of the big family of developing countries.”

That statement is in keeping with Beijing’s attempts to balance — often adeptly — the benefits of continuing to be a developing nation with the advantages of being a major global economic and diplomatic power and counterbalance to the West.

For decades, since the start of the “reform and opening up” launched by Deng Xiaoping after Mao Zedong's death in 1976, China has positioned its approach to both domestic and international affairs as an alternative to “Western hegemony.” That counternarrative is a frequent cornerstone of its international identity. Han's “Global South” statements Thursday match that longtime sensibility.

And China benefits from association with the Global South, which allows it to style statements as if it speaks for many nations — nations that may not be strong enough to object if such a powerful government mischaracterizes them.

Whether China and its $18 trillion GDP should actually be considered part of the Global South is a frequently debated matter. In January, at Modi's summit, 125 countries were included but China wasn't one of them. That may have had more to do with China's often-tense relations with India than with its attitude toward the concept in general.

Xi was one of four leaders of permanent U.N. Security Council members who did not show at the United Nations this week. France's Emmanuel Macron, Britain's Rishi Sunak and Russia's Vladimir Putin also skipped it; U.S. President Joe Biden, leader of the host nation, was the only permanent Security Council member to deliver a speech.

Han Zheng's presence at the United Nations came at a time when China's diplomatic operation appears to be in a bit of disarray.

Many expected Foreign Minister Wang Yi to come to the General Assembly and possibly pave the way for a Xi-Biden meeting. Wang attended and [delivered the speech last year.](https://apnews.com/article/united-nations-general-assembly-taiwan-nancy-pelosi-wang-yi-62b431b46ce000797c05141cc83cea77) In the months since, a newly appointed foreign minister [came and went with some mystery,](https://apnews.com/article/china-foreign-minister-wang-yi-e59c0621930e9b73fdb2570e86d2ec64) and Wang took the role on again.

Han, in his speech, covered China's usual topics in such meetings. Among them:

— He reiterated that Taiwan, the island off China's coast that has its own independent government, is historically a part of China and always will be — a frequent message to the United States and the world. The island and the mainland split in 1949 after a civil war.

— He said China supported human rights “suited to our national conditions in response to the needs of our people.” Beijing's repressive policies toward ethnic Uyghurs in the western region of Xinjiang and its policies toward dissent, including in the special administrative region of Hong Kong, come under frequent Western scrutiny.

— He said, as China has many times before, that a cease-fire and peace talks are the only path to ending war in Ukraine. China has tread a delicate line in the 18 months since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

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Ted Anthony, the director of new storytelling and newsroom innovation at The Associated Press, has been writing about China for three decades and was based in Beijing from 2001 to 2004. Find him at http://twitter.com/anthonyted

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# **China's Lending to Africa Rises for First Time in Seven Years, Study Shows**

By [Reuters](https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2024-08-28/chinas-lending-to-africa-rises-for-first-time-in-seven-years-study-shows)

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Aug. 28, 2024, at 8:13 p.m.

South Sudan President Salva Kiir, Beijing, Sunday, Sept. 1, 2024. Andy Wong/Pool via REUTERS

By Duncan Miriri

NAIROBI (Reuters) -Chinese lenders approved loans worth $4.61 billion to Africa last year, marking the first annual increase since 2016, an independent study showed on Thursday.

Africa secured more than $10 billion in loans a year from China between 2012-2018, thanks to President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), but the lending fell precipitously from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Last year's figure, a more than three-fold increase from 2022, shows China is keen to curb risks associated with highly indebted economies, the study by Boston University's Global Development Policy Centre found.

"Beijing appears to be looking for a more sustainable equilibrium level of lending and experimenting with a (new) strategy," said the university centre, which runs the Chinese Loans to Africa Database project.

The new data comes as Beijing prepares to host African leaders next week for the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, which takes place every three years.

There were 13 loan deals last year involving eight African countries and two African multilateral lenders, the study found.

Last year's biggest items include a nearly $1 billion loan from China Development Bank to Nigeria for the Kaduna-to-Kano Railway and similar size liquidity facility by the lender to Egypt's central bank.

China has vaulted to the top bilateral lender for many African nations like Ethiopia in recent years.

It has lent the continent a total of $182.28 billion between 2000-2023, the Boston University study found, with the bulk of the finances going to Africa's energy, transport and ICT sectors.

Africa featured prominently in the initial years of BRI, as China sought to recreate the ancient Silk Road and extend its geopolitical and economic influence through a global infrastructure development push.

China, however, started to turn off the cash spigot in 2019, a shift that was accelerated by the pandemic, leaving a series of incomplete projects around the region, including a modern railway meant to link Kenya with its neighbours.

The reduction in loans was caused by China's own domestic pressures and growing debt burdens among African economies. Zambia, Ghana and Ethiopia have gone into protracted debt overhauls since 2021.

More than half of the loans committed last year, or $2.59 billion, were to regional and national lenders, underscoring Beijing's new strategy, the study by Boston University found.

"Chinese lenders' focus on African financial institutions most likely represent a risk mitigation strategy that avoids exposure to African countries' debt challenges," it said.

Nearly a tenth of 2023 loans were for three solar and hydropower energy projects, the study found, illustrating a desire by China to move into funding renewable energy instead of coal-fired power plants.

Still, the discernible trends in last year's figures did not offer a clear direction of China's financial engagement with the continent, the study showed, since Chinese institutions also wrote loans to ailing economies like Nigeria and Angola.

"It remains to be seen whether China's partnerships in Africa will retain their quality," the Global Development Policy Centre said.

(Reporting by Duncan Miriri, editing by Karin Strohecker and Angus MacSwan)

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# **BRICS Expansion Faces Eleventh Hour Hurdle as Divisions Persist**

By [Reuters](https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2023-08-23/brics-leaders-weigh-expansion-criteria-with-blocs-future-in-balance)

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Aug. 23, 2023, at 5:48 a.m.

President of Brazil Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, President of China Xi Jinping, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov pose for a BRICS family photo during the 2023 BRICS Summit at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa, on August 23, 2023. GIANLUIGI GUERCIA/Pool via REUTERS

By Carien du Plessis and Krishn Kaushik

JOHANNESBURG (Reuters) -A deal to expand the BRICS group of leading developing countries appeared stuck in eleventh hour negotiations at a leaders summit on Wednesday, threatening to undermine the bloc's ambition to give the "Global South" more clout in world affairs.

Agreement to expand BRICS - currently Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - could allow dozens of interested nations to seek admission as Beijing and Moscow push to forge it into a viable counterweight to the West.

The debate over enlargement has topped the agenda at the three-day summit taking place in Johannesburg. And while all BRICS members have publicly expressed support for growing the bloc, there were divisions among the leaders over how much and how quickly.

Summit host South Africa's foreign minister Naledi Pandor speaking on Wednesday said BRICS leaders had agreed on mechanisms for considering new members.

"We have agreed on the matter of expansion," she told a radio station run by her ministry.

"We have a document that we've adopted which sets out guidelines and principles, processes for considering countries that wish to become members of BRICS...That's very positive."

However, a BRICS member country official with direct knowledge of the discussions told Reuters that the leaders had not yet signed a finalised admission framework.

An agreement had been meant to be adopted following a plenary session earlier on Wednesday, but the source said it had been delayed after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi introduced new admission criteria.

Asked about the delay, an Indian official aware of the details of the talks told Reuters late on Wednesday that the discussion were continuing.

"Yesterday ... India pushed for consensus on criteria as well as the issue of (candidate) names. There was a broad understanding," he said.

LAST-MINUTE SPOILER

BRICS countries have economies vastly different in scale and governments with often divergent foreign policy goals, a complicating factor for a bloc whose consensus decision-making model gives each member a de facto veto.

Bloc heavyweight China has long called for an expansion of BRICS as a means of fostering a multipolar world order to challenge Western dominance.

"The world ... has entered a new period of turbulence and transformation," China's President Xi Jinping said on Wednesday. "We, the BRICS countries, should always bear in mind our founding purpose of strengthening ourselves through unity."

Russia's President Vladimir Putin, who is wanted under an international arrest warrant for alleged war crimes in Ukraine and is attending the summit remotely, is keen to show Western powers he still has friends.

Brazil and India, in contrast, have both been forging closer ties with the West.

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Tuesday rejected the idea the bloc should seek to rival the U.S. and Group of Seven wealthy economies.

The BRICS country official said that admission criteria India's Modi proposed included requiring members not be the target of international sanctions, ruling out potential candidates Iran and Venezuela.

Modi was also pushing for a minimum per capital GDP requirement.

"These are the things Modi brought in today," the official said. "So they are becoming a little bit of a spoiler."

BRICS HOPEFULS

More than 40 countries have expressed interest in joining BRICS, say South African officials, and 22 have formally asked to be admitted.

They represent a disparate pool of potential candidates - from Iran to Argentina - motivated largely by a desire to level a global playing field many consider rigged against them and attracted by BRICS' promise to rebalance the global order.

A number of prospective candidates are sending delegations to Johannesburg for meetings on Thursday - the last day of the summit - with the bloc's leaders.

Though home to about 40% of the world's population and a quarter of global GDP, BRICS members' failure to settle on a coherent vision for the bloc has long left it punching below its weight as a global political and economic player.

White House national security advisor Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday that, due to the BRICS countries' divergence of views on critical issues, he did not see the bloc turning into a geopolitical rival of the United States.

But moves to expand the bloc and push its New Development Bank as an alternative to established multilateral lenders are raising concern among some in the West.

Werner Hoyer, the head of European Investment Bank, warned Western governments on Wednesday that they were in danger of losing the confidence of the "Global South", unless they urgently intensified their own support efforts for poorer countries.

(Reporting Carien du Plessis in Johanneburg and Krishn Kaushik in New Delhi; Additional reporting by Rachel Savage in Johannesburg and Anthony Boadle in Sao PaoloWriting by Joe Bavier; Editing by Emelia Sithole-Matarise and Josie Kao)

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# **UN Secretary-General Calls for Equality for Global South at Cuba G77 Summit**

By [Reuters](https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2023-09-15/un-secretary-general-calls-for-equality-for-global-south-at-cuba-g77-summit)

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Sept. 15, 2023, at 12:45 p.m.

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva speaks during the G77+ China summit in Havana, Cuba, September 16, 2023. REUTERS/Alexandre Meneghini

By Marc Frank and Nelson Acosta

HAVANA (Reuters) -United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday praised efforts to support the Global South in the international arena as he opened a summit of the G77 group of developing nations and China with host Cuba.

The focus is the scientific and technological divide between rich and poor countries and its impact on development.

Guterres said greater international equality was essential to building the consensus needed to tackle climate change and inequality.

"The world is failing developing nations," he said, expressing the hope that the meeting would strengthen participants' clout on a wide range of issues. He echoed climate advocates who have long urged developed nations, including top greenhouse gas polluters such as the United States, to pay to mitigate climate change and lessen the weight of foreign debt.

Battered by extreme weather, the pandemic, international tensions and economic difficulties, developing countries are pressing for fair treatment from developed nations regarding international finance to sharing technology.

This year Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel heads up the G77, the UN’s largest organization. He cited statistics showing 84 million children are at risk of being out of school by 2023 and over 660 million people are without electricity, adding these disparities now include the internet and advances in digital technology.

"Science, technology and innovation have reached the unimaginable," he said, "that in conditions of greater equality and justice could insure more dignified and comfortable lives for the population of almost the entire planet," Diaz-Canel said.

He added that science and technology "play a transcendental role in promoting productivity, efficiency, creating added value, humanizing working conditions, promoting well-being and guaranteeing development," he said.

In a marathon day of speeches, Colombia´s president Gustavo Petro told the forum "we are killing each other" in reference to the war in Ukraine.

"I would ask the G77 that we also address this issue of war, to overcome it, not because we have to take sides between Russia or Ukraine," said Petro, among the few representatives present who mentioned the Ukraine war.

"What is the difference between the war between Russia and Ukraine, and that between Israel and Palestine?" Colombia´s president said.

The G77, which was initially launched in 1964 with 77 nations, now has 134 members.

China maintains that it is not a G77 member, despite being listed as one by the bloc, but Beijing says it has supported the group's legitimate claims and maintained cooperative relations.

While more than 90 delegations are participating in the summit, which ends on Saturday, only a few dozen are led by heads of state.

(Reporting by Marc Frank and Nelson Acosta; Editing by Aurora Ellis and Grant McCool)

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# **Everyone's Talking About the Global South. but What Is It?**

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi says his country is “becoming the voice of the Global South."

By [Associated Press](https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2023-09-07/everyones-talking-about-the-global-south-but-what-is-it)

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Sept. 7, 2023, at 12:19 a.m.

FILE- From left, Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, China's President Xi Jinping, South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov pose for a BRICS group photo during the 2023 BRICS Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, Aug. 23, 2023. Modi says his country is “becoming the voice of the Global South,” and that at the upcoming Group of 20 meetings being held in New Delhi that voice will be heard. At the recent summit of the BRICS nations \_ current chair South Africa declared that the grouping's goal was to "seek is to advance the agenda of the Global South.”(Alet Pretorius/Pool Photo via AP, File)

NEW DELHI (AP) — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi says his country is “becoming the voice of the Global South,” and that at the upcoming [Group of 20](https://apnews.com/hub/g-20-summit) meetings being held in New Delhi, that voice will be heard.

At the [August summit of the BRICS nations](https://apnews.com/article/china-russia-brics-putin-xi-jinping-e8b815c5c2e5f0c6e6f018dcd70abb52) — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — current chair South Africa declared its goal was to "advance the agenda of the Global South.” And ahead of this May's summit of the Group of Seven wealthy democracies in Hiroshima, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida stressed that the guest nations he had invited [reflected the importance of the Global South](https://apnews.com/article/japan-g7-kishida-guest-nations-7f3dcc03b04557740ab0b6a92f4ebc32).

The United Nations, the World Bank, U.S. President Joe Biden — everyone seems to be talking about the Global South these days. But what, exactly, is it?

What constitutes the Global South?

Despite how it sounds, it's not really a geographical term. Many countries included in the Global South are in the northern hemisphere, such as India, China and all of those in the northern half of Africa. Australia and New Zealand, both in the southern hemisphere, are not in the Global South.

Most cite the so-called Brandt Line as the border; a squiggle across the globe running from the north of Mexico, across the top of Africa and the Middle East, looping around India and China before dropping down to encompass most of East Asia while avoiding Japan, Australia and New Zealand. The line was proposed by former German Chancellor Willy Brandt in the 1980s as a visual depiction of the north-south divide based upon per-capita GDP.

“The Global South is a geographical, geopolitical, historical and developmental concept, all at the same time — with exceptions,” says Happymon Jacob, founder of the New Delhi-based Council for Strategic and Defense Research.

Which countries make up the Global South?

It's complicated, and often depends upon who is using the phrase.

Most commonly the term refers to the countries belonging to the Group of 77 at the United Nations, which, confusingly, is today actually a coalition of 134 countries. They're primarily considered developing countries, but also include China — about which there is some debate — and several wealthy Gulf states.

Though the G77 is a group at the U.N., the U.N. itself does not use that as its own definition, according to Rolf Traeger, who is with the U.N.’s trade and development office.

For the U.N., Global South is something of a shortcut to refer to developing countries in general, Traeger said. The U.N. currently lists 181 jurisdictions as developing countries or territories, and 67 jurisdictions as developed, he said.

In January, India's Modi hosted a virtual “Voice of the Global South Summit.” It only included 125 countries, however, with India's regional rivals China and Pakistan among the notable absentees.

Some use different criteria, such as whether a country was previously colonized or whether a nation's per-capita GDP is above $15,000.

There is also a Global North, though the term is not regularly used. That is defined basically as not the Global South.

Should we use the term Global South?

The term Global South first appeared in the 1960s, but took time to gain traction.

Following the end of the Cold War, the terms First World, Second World and Third World started to fall out of favor, partly because with the fall of the Soviet Union the Second World ceased to exist, and also because the use of Third World came to be seen as derogatory.

No matter how you define it, the Global South accounts for such a vast majority of the world's population and broad swath of territory that some argue it's impossible and misleading to use the label.

How can countries like China and India, each with about 1.4 billion people and GDPs of about $18 trillion and $3.4 trillion respectively, be lumped together with the Pacific island nation of Vanuatu, with a population a little over 300,000 and a GDP of $984 million, or the southern African nation of Zambia with 19 million people and a GDP of $30 billion?

Some also fret that China, which is assertively seeking to [expand its global influence](https://apnews.com/article/kamala-harris-africa-china-tanzania-zambia-a17d6d9a4c409d79e429d2a6494fe23c), could misuse the grouping to push its own agenda while giving the impression that it speaks for the majority of the world.

It has been speculated that that was behind the decision in May of the G7 nations — all Global North countries — to refrain from using “Global South” in their final summit communique, even though Kishida himself favors it.

“There is every danger that the Global South will end up becoming a weapon in the hands of revisionist states, like China, who would want to use the voice of the Global South to promote their great power interests,” says Happymon Jacob.

For his part, Modi has stressed the commonality of many issues facing the Global South, such as emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, rising debt, and food and energy security.

Ian Lesser, vice president of the German Marshall Fund and director of its Brussels office, notes that most discomfort with the term comes from Global North countries, and that “Global South” is widely used by the countries that make it up.

Even though the Global South is not a group with a monolithic view or widespread uniformity, he says what's important is that it reflects how the group sees itself.

“There is embedded in it a notion that not all strategies need to be made in the West,” Lesser said.

"For some this is simply a way to assert a degree of historic independence and distance on key issues … and it is affecting the way Europe and the United States think about foreign policy, and the idea that we need to live in a world where not everyone will be on the same page with us on every issue."

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Krutika Pathi in New Delhi and Jamey Keaten in Geneva contributed to this story.

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