

G20 Presidencies of Emerging Countries Bodes Well for Global South

The global rise of India holds significant implications for the African continent. As India looks to broaden its horizons, Africa is emerging as an increasingly vital partner in this narrative. With its abundant natural resources, burgeoning markets, and youthful population, Africa presents a natural synergy with India's economic and strategic objectives. In an interview with Manish Chand, CEO, Centre for Global India Insights, Mehdi Jomaa, Tunisia's former prime minister, says India has leveraged its G20 Presidency to advocate the concerns of the Global South and Africa. **Excerpts from the interview:**

Q) India has placed the priorities and interests of the Global South on its G20 presidency agenda. In what ways can India advance the interests of the Global South?

A) It's common for developed and developing countries to hold opposing perspectives on critical issues such as the role of international institutions, global trade, economic sanctions, climate finance and regional conflicts.

There is a noticeable divide between the Global North and the Global South that is impacting global cooperation. The positioning regarding the war in Ukraine is a very good example, but the disconnect between these regions extends beyond this debate. This divide can also be observed in climate negotiations,

discussions about a pandemic treaty, and efforts to reform International Financial Institutions, among other topics.

The G20 Presidencies of India, Brazil, and South Africa, all of which are part of the Global South, offers a valuable opportunity to bridge gaps and share ideas with the United Nations. India has already indicated its intention to utilise its G20 Presidency to advocate for the concerns of the Global South, and Brazil has expressed similar intentions.

This presents a unique opportunity to address critical issues hindering progress in the Global South, but it is imperative that this be done in a manner that avoids exacerbating existing divisions. It is crucial to reach agreement on fundamental issues that impact all



individuals throughout the world.

Q) India has also projected interests of Africa in its G20 agenda and has been advocating permanent membership of the African Union in G20. How do you look at this initiative? Do you think there is sufficient support in the global community to achieve it?

A) For global governance to be effective, it is imperative that it becomes more inclusive. It is high time that we explore ways to establish a framework for global cooperation that takes into account the perspectives of Africa and the Global South in every discourse on global challenges.

India's G20 Presidency serves as a model for what can be achieved. Prime Minister Modi was resolute in his commitment to use his presidency to effectively represent the interests of the Global South, and supported the notion of granting the African Union permanent membership in the G20.

This is a positive development that warrants careful consideration and has the potential to inspire other forums to follow suit. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), for example, should consider broadening its Executive Board by adding seats for emerging and developing countries, specifically African nations. The

Security Council should also follow this lead, given the clear rationale for doing so.

Q) Reform of the global governance architecture is a key goal of India and Africa in their diplomatic outreach. In what ways do India and Africa cooperate to advance the reform and expansion of the UNSC?

A) If the multilateral system is to position itself to effectively deliver peace as a global public good, it is imperative that it be based on a definition of collective security that takes into account the current political, economic, social, environmental, and technological threats that we face.

Regrettably, the Security Council, which is the most prominent component of the multilateral system, has yet to live up to expectations. Controlled by a limited number of states and hindered by geopolitical polarisation, it is unable to respond to significant risks to international peace and security. Unless it undergoes meaningful reform, the Security Council is at risk of becoming irrelevant.

The time has come for a renewed effort to reform the Security Council. The upcoming Summit of the Future presents an opportunity to showcase our mutual commitment to the United Nations Charter and propose a conference aimed at reviewing the Charter, with a focus on reforming the Security Council. To ensure that the decision-making process of the Security Council is more representative, it is crucial that the Council be expanded in a fair manner. This would grant a greater voice to regions that are traditionally underrepresented, including those with young populations on the rise and areas affected by conflict.

It is important that the decisions of the Security Council are not solely influenced by one state with veto power. There needs to be an effort to democratise its actions. Building unity through effective and unified action is crucial for legitimacy. Therefore, reform should focus on achieving this unity.



The Security Council must be able to adapt to the contemporary geopolitical landscape by developing innovative approaches to address evolving risks. To achieve fairness and legitimacy, the Council must expand its membership and reform its decision-making processes. This expansion must prioritise representation from historically underrepresented regions, with the exploration of seat allocation options by region, rather than by individual country, being a viable consideration. Furthermore, extending non-permanent seat tenure can enhance diversity and ensure equitable representation. By enabling a more diverse range of voices to be heard during deliberations, the Council can fulfill its role as a just and legitimate body.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, there is a significant responsibility to uphold the interests of all nations and peoples. However, this responsibility is often disregarded when permanent members obstruct the essential work of the Council. In order to address this issue, a future-oriented reform process should prioritise reducing the use of veto power and investigating alternative methods to prevent individual states from blocking the actions favoured by the majority of members.

It is important for Security Council members to take responsibility for their use of the veto and explain their actions to the General

Assembly. It is also necessary to establish a clear plan for action in case the Security Council fails to act in the face of international security threats. If this happens, the General Assembly should take immediate action. We need to increase the power of the General Assembly to respond more effectively to security threats. Additionally, while Article 53 of the United Nations Charter limits the ability of regional organisations to enforce peace without the Security Council's authorisation, we should work towards empowering regional organisations to play a more active role in conflict prevention based on the principle of subsidiarity. Our aim is to improve the prevention mandates of regional bodies and provide them with the resources they need to strengthen the implementation of subsidiarity within the global/regional framework.

Q) How do you look at Africa's role in the international arena? How can Africa partner with India in shaping a constructive human-centric global agenda?

A) By 2050, Africa will be home to a quarter of the world's population, two-fifths of its newborn children and half of its labour force. This presents a unique opportunity to foster innovation, entrepreneurship and economic growth. The entrepreneurial spirit and ingenuity of the African Union and the Global South have

sparked groundbreaking initiatives in areas ranging from renewable energy and agriculture to technology and infrastructure development.

The African region is already showing increasing leadership on global issues such as climate and the war in Ukraine. Africa is the future because of its potential for growth, development, and global influence. Of course, it has to overcome challenges but with some strategic support, it can become a key international player.

Africa's role in the international arena is evolving, and its partnership with India can play a crucial role in shaping a more human-centric global agenda. By leveraging their respective strengths and collaborating in various areas, both regions can contribute to economic growth, sustainable development, and the well-being of their populations while promoting global harmony.

To shape a constructive human-centric global agenda, India and Africa should focus on inclusivity, sustainable development, and respect for human rights. We can work together to advocate for policies that prioritise the well-being of people, address inequalities, and contribute to a more just and equitable world order.

Q) How can G20 address global crises such as rising food and energy prices and climate change more effectively?

A) As we gather to engage in fruitful discussions on shaping the global future, it is important to acknowledge the challenges that Africa and the Global South face in the context of the G20, despite their strategic and economic potential and demographic dividend.

It is clear that developing countries are currently experiencing deep frustration due to the uneven recovery from the pandemic. While wealthy countries were able to recover from the economic impact through expansionary monetary and fiscal policies, many developing countries, which are heavily indebted and have less fiscal space, were not able to do the same. The number of countries that are in

technical default, at high risk of default, or facing extremely expensive market financing is worrying.

Developing nations, particularly those in Africa, are experiencing financial strains that are not sustainable. This is attributed to the failure of the current debt management framework as well as inflation and increasing interest rates. It is shocking to note that Africa now allocates more resources to servicing debts than it does to healthcare. This necessitates urgent action to ease the burden on these countries, with a structural response being a vital step. To accomplish this goal, the international financial system must be reformed to make it more resilient, equitable, and inclusive. An overhaul of our financial systems is essential to envisioning a future of growth and development in Africa.

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On climate, Africa and the Global South should be supported financially and technically to help our economies accelerate decarbonisation. The Loss and Damage Fund agreed in Sharm el-Sheikh must be made operational. The work of the G20 is essential, but how can we expect to tackle these crises without African voices at the table? Joining the

G20 will of course pose political, cultural and technical challenges for the African Union, but it is time to rise to these challenges.

Q) How do you look at India's emergence as a global power and the ramifications of the rise of India for the world order and the rise of Africa?

A) The ascent of India as a global power has brought significant changes to the international landscape, with far-reaching implications for the world order and Africa's development. The emergence of India has provided a compelling narrative for the global community, driven by its robust economy, advanced technology, and skilled diplomacy, which have all contributed to the evolution of a more diverse and balanced world. This shift away from a unipolar system has led to a redistribution of power and a rebalancing of geopolitical forces, resulting in a recalibration of international relations to accommodate the diverse perspectives and interests that a multipolar system entails.

The expansion of India's global presence holds significant implications for the African continent. As India looks to broaden its horizons,

Africa is the future because of its potential for growth, development, and global influence. Of course, it has to overcome challenges but with some strategic support, it can become a key international player.

Africa is emerging as an increasingly vital partner in this narrative. With its abundant natural resources, burgeoning markets, and youthful population, Africa presents a natural synergy with India's economic and strategic objectives. Through collaboration, the two can foster a mutually beneficial relationship that promotes sustainable growth and development for both India and Africa. ■

Mehdi Jomaa served as the Prime Minister of Tunisia from January 29, 2014 to February 6, 2015. Mr. Jomaa was also the Minister of Industry in the Ali Laarayedh government in 2013.

