

The Global South's Assertion in Geopolitics

Why in news?

Several countries in the Global South are finding neutrality and strategic autonomy as a viable option in a changing world.

How about the current picture of geopolitics?

- **The USA's Wishlist-** The United States advocates for
 - Curbing China's rise
 - Weakening Russia's capabilities
 - Securing Europe behind U.S. leadership
 - Building satellite alliances with countries which conform to U.S. interests and values
- **Rise of China-** Given its phenomenal economic reach during globalisation, China began building institutions to counter the West.
- It looked for accommodation with the U.S. in its "**Peaceful Rise**" project.
- As the U.S. found this unacceptable, China turned from partner to competitor to threat.

What does Global South mean?

- The term "Global South" was first coined by a social activist **Carl Oglesby** in 1969.
- Global South is used to describe countries whose economies are not yet fully developed and which face challenges such as low per capita income, excessive unemployment, and a lack of valuable capital.
- Although the majority of Global South countries are indeed located in the tropics or Southern Hemisphere, the term itself is **strictly economic**.
- Hence, **Australia** is "down under" but not part of the Global South.

Who are the major players in the Global South?

- **Russia-** Russia, with its vast natural resources and military capability, has shown capacity to assert its will in global geopolitics.
- Russian aggression against Ukraine has been a geopolitical watershed.
- The developing Sino-Russian strategic partnership without limits is the clearly defined enemy other for the West.
- **China-** China's expanding military footprint and 'grey zone' policies of violation of maritime zones in the South China Seas have antagonised several countries.
- **India-** India has used its leverage to negotiate with multiple sides.
- India increased oil purchases from Russia, shrugging off western pressure.
- India has a military Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) with the

U.S.

- At the same time it has developed the International North South Transport Corridor connecting Russia and India via central Asia.
- It participates in military exercises such as the U.S.-led but also sends a military contingent for the Vostok exercises with Russia and China.

What about other countries in the Global South?

- **Russia-Ukraine War-** Most of the countries oppose the sanctions regime and advocate neutrality because
 - Many in the South are dependent on Russian energy, fuel, fertilizers, wheat, commodities and defence equipment.
- **Apprehensions on West-** Many countries of the South believe that they are unlikely to get western help when they need it the most.
 - It includes recent experience of refusal by the West to grant a one-time exception for patents for the COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Alliances-** Most of the Southern countries would not like to be a part of security or military alliances with either the West or the Russian or Chinese sides.
 - For example, the security pact that China in 2022 offered to 10 Pacific island nations was not favoured.
 - They neither agreed to China's 'Common Development Vision'.
- There has been an unprecedented pushback from the South that wants to make its own strategic choices.
 - For instance, the South Africa described the U.S.'s "Countering Malign Russian Activities in Africa Act" that punishes African states and leaders who engage with Russia as offensive.

What about the South's choice in geo-economics?

- The fear of the U.S. strategy of freezing dollar reserves has made the South cautious.
- The U.S. trade policies of 're-shoring' and 'friend-shoring' is leading the South to gradually find ways of bypassing the dollar in bilateral trade by using local currencies.
- Currency swap arrangements are used by China, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)+ 3 countries, etc.
- Multilateral institutions, ranging from BRICS and the African Union, to ASEAN, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, have given it new confidence.

References

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-global-souths-assertion-in-geopolitics/article65928035.ece?homepage=true>
2. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/global-south-countries>

Quick facts

China's "Peaceful Rise" Policy

- The policy states that China will develop economically by taking advantage of the peaceful international environment, and at the same time maintain and contribute to world peace by its development.
- The policy was articulated in 2003 to counter international fears about Beijing's growing economic and political might.

Reshoring

- Bringing production back home to reduce the potential for disruption of supply chains.

Friend-shoring

- Limiting the trade of key inputs to trusted countries in order to reduce risks to the supply chains on which the US and its partners rely.

