

Global South at 50 and beyond?: The Voice from China for Establishing NIEO

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In a situation when a broad segment of the world community, propelled by the western media and intellectuals, is wary of ‘China Threat,’ it will be an exciting experience for the rest to pay heed to the arguments of Chinese intellectuals. In this context, going through the contribution of An Chen & Fan Yang in the recently published volume of the Journal of East Asia and International Law is a wonderful opportunity to have “a voice from China.”

In the absence of a much desired and explicit definition or meaning of the idea “Global South-South Coalition (“SSC”),” though which can be inferred, the paper intends to serve two purposes - to retrospect the SSC’s past accomplishments and difficulties in relation to participation in law-making, reform and overall performance in international economic order, and to clarify China’s position on the course of SSC.

At the very outset, a fascinating portrait on the creation of SSC, taking the establishment of Group 77 in 1964 as the foundation, was painted and compared it with that of the life course of Master Confucius. Prevailing limitations and challenges of the international economic law were scrutinized sharing the practices of the UN, GATT, international investment law, international financial practice. Some of the problems identified in the system include: enforcement of the UN General Assembly’s Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States; insertion of Generalized System of Preferences (“GSP”) by the GATT Contracting Parties and standard of “needs for competition”; inability of the South countries to bargain effectively in bilateral investment treaties (“BIT”) with a powerful opponent

triggering unfair competition between the North and the South; unequal/unfair distribution of voting powers among members within the IMF and World Bank; insertion of conditions of political requirements or preferences during aid or loan allocation in developing countries, etc.

Revealing these gaps and limitations, the visions, views, opinions and philosophical stand of five generation Chinese leaders, scholars or poets during the journey of global South were reiterated to share the stand of Chinese leaders as the major developing country to “do something actively.” These continuous feelings pressed China to initiate the move towards setting up of new economic forums as there exists “unfair and unreasonable old international economic order” and “monopolized international financial regime.”

Since the paper was written, as an obligation for the Chinese scholars to justify China’s position on the course of SSC, reference of some instances, other than China’s role in multi-lateral forums, where China has truly and actually represented the interest of the global South in BITs would be more enticing. This could also make the Chinese answers even stronger against ‘China Threat’ or ‘new colonialism.’

In reply to the view of some that the new financial orders like the BRICS Development Bank [New Development Bank (“NDB”)] and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (“AIIB”) would be a “tool for China to realize its self-interests,” the authors have claimed that this economic order will construct a fair and beneficial South leading international financial order, where decisions can be taken more equally, and financial aid can be acquired without strict political conditions, and ultimately, these activities will propel reforms in the traditional international financial order. The NDB has just incepted, and how successful it will ultimately be to realize the abovementioned objectives will be evaluated in due time. At that time of evaluation, this paper can serve as yardstick to assess the differences between the philosophies for which the new economic order was ignited with that of the reality.