

Editorial of the Day – 04.10.2025

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1. South – South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC)

TOPIC - GS2/International Relations

The South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) has emerged as a transformative force in global development in shifting geopolitical landscapes, widening inequalities, and dwindling development aid.

About the South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC)

Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA), 1978 enshrined principles of mutual respect, shared learning, and solidarity, far from being a transactional model among developing nations.

Nairobi Outcome Document (2009) – It was negotiated in the UN High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation in Nairobi, Kenya and adopted by the UNGA. It defined the principles guiding how cooperation among developing countries (South-South cooperation) operates, expanding beyond technical assistance to encompass political, institutional, and infrastructural cooperation.

The South-South Cooperation (SSC) is defined as a process where two or more developing countries pursue individual or shared capacity development objectives through knowledge exchange, skills, resources, and technical know-how. It involves governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia, and the private sector. It acts as a complement, not a substitute, to North-South cooperation. Triangular Cooperation is defined as 'Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries, supported by a developed country or multilateral organization'. It provides financial, technical, and experiential support to strengthen Southern partnerships and promote regional integration.

Key Principles of South-South Cooperation

1. Common endeavor based on shared experiences, solidarity, and objectives.
2. Respect for national sovereignty, ownership, and priorities.
3. Partnerships among equals, free from conditionalities.
4. Mutual accountability and transparency, aligned with development projects on the ground.
5. Multi-stakeholder engagement – NGOs, private sector, civil society, academia.
6. Theme (2025) – 'New Opportunities and Innovation through SSTC'

Contemporary Relevance of SSTC

A Response to Global Challenges – Over 800 million people still live in extreme poverty, and many developing nations spend more on debt servicing than on essential services like health and education. SSTC provides homegrown, scalable solutions tailored to local realities—from climate-smart agriculture to digital finance and health innovations.

Empowerment Through Solidarity – SSTC is built on mutual respect, shared learning, and sovereignty, unlike traditional aid models that often come with conditions. It fosters self-reliance and resilience, enabling countries to co-create solutions rather than depend on external prescriptions.

Catalyst for the SDGs – SSTC is a key engine for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, especially as traditional aid flows decline. It's transforming sectors like agriculture, health, education, and technology through locally owned, cost-effective innovations.

Key Concerns and Challenges in SSTC

Fragmentation and Lack of Coordination – Diverse political systems, economic priorities, and historical contexts often lead to fragmented efforts and difficulty in forming unified positions on global issues. It can dilute the impact of SSTC initiatives and hinder the creation of cohesive platforms for collaboration.

Limited Institutional Capacity – Many developing countries lack the technical, financial, and institutional capacity to implement and sustain SSTC projects. Fiscal constraints and evolving geopolitical dynamics pose serious challenges to collective action.

Funding and Resource Gaps – SSTC often relies on trust funds and voluntary contributions, such as the India-UN Development Partnership Fund or the IBSA Fund. These mechanisms are not always predictable or sufficient to meet growing development needs.

Political Will and Follow-Through – There are concerns about inconsistent follow-through on commitments, while countries like India have shown strong rhetorical support for SSTC. For example, the India-Africa Forum Summit has been overdue since 2015, raising questions about sustained engagement.

Triangular Cooperation Complexities – Involving developed countries or multilateral organizations adds value but introduces power asymmetries and bureaucratic hurdles.

Role of United Nations (UN) & UNDP

The United Nations commemorates SSTC on September 12, recognizing its role in fostering inclusive partnerships and sustainable development.

UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) – It supports coherence and coordination of SSC and TrC initiatives.

UNDP incorporated SSTC as a core working approach in its Strategic Plan (2014–2017).

1. It serves as an operational arm to support SSTC at global, regional, and country levels.
2. UNDP acts as Knowledge Broker, Capacity Development Supporter, and Partnership Facilitator.

India's Role and Philosophy

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family) – India's evolution from a food-deficit to a food-surplus economy – underpinned by one of the world's largest food safety nets – illustrates the power of indigenous solutions. Its philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family) aligns with SSTC's values of inclusion and cooperation. India has emerged as a hub for cost-effective, locally relevant innovations in digital transformation, climate resilience, health systems, and sustainable financing.

Key Contributions

1. Hosting the Voice of the Global South Summits;
2. Securing permanent membership for the African Union during its G20 presidency;
3. Establishing the Development Partnership Administration;
4. Scaling the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme in 160+ countries;
5. Launching the India-UN Development Partnership Fund and sharing digital innovations such as Aadhaar and UPI globally.

India-WFP Partnership – India and the World Food Programme (WFP) have co-created solutions with global relevance for more than six decades. It piloted innovations such as –

1. Annapurta (Grain ATMs);
2. Supply chain optimisation in food distribution;

3. Women-led Take-Home Ration programme;
4. National rice fortification project;

Source - <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/sstc-is-more-than-a-diplomatic-phrase/article70109816.ece>

2. Trump's 20 point Peace Proposal

Recently, US President Donald Trump unveiled a 20-point peace proposal, dubbed as 'Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict' aimed at ending the protracted war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

About Gaza Conflict - Gaza, a narrow coastal strip in West Asia, often referred to as the Middle East. It was once a thriving mosaic of Arab, Turkish, Persian, and Jewish cultures. The Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) and the Balfour Declaration by Britain (1917) laid the groundwork for territorial fragmentation and Zionist settlement in Palestine. Gaza became a focal point of resistance following Israel's establishment in 1948 and subsequent wars, and has witnessed multiple wars with thousands of casualties and widespread destruction. The current crisis escalated on October 7, 2023, when Hamas, the Palestinian militant group governing Gaza, launched a surprise attack on Israel, killing over 1,200 people and taking 250 hostages. It has drawn in actors like Hezbollah (Lebanon), Iran, and the US, turning Gaza into a geopolitical battleground.

Core Elements of the Gaza Peace Plan Announced By Trump

Hamas Disarmament and Amnesty - The Plan demands disarmament and surrender of Hamas and relinquish control of Gaza. Members pledging peaceful coexistence will be granted amnesty, while those wishing to leave Gaza will receive safe passage to countries such as Jordan, Egypt, Qatar, or Iran.

International Stabilization Force (ISF) - A temporary International Stabilization Force (ISF), supported by the US, Arab partners, Jordan, and Egypt, will replace Israeli troops in Gaza. The ISF aims to secure borders, prevent arms smuggling, and train vetted Palestinian police. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) will gradually withdraw, maintaining only a 'security perimeter presence' until full stability is ensured.

Transitional Governance - Governance of Gaza will shift to a technocratic, apolitical Palestinian committee, supervised by an international 'Board of Peace' led by Trump himself.

Humanitarian Relief and Reconstruction - The plan allows unrestricted humanitarian aid, focusing on infrastructure rehabilitation, hospitals, food supply chains, and road clearance. Aid will be delivered via the UN and Red Crescent without interference.

Hostage-Prisoner Exchange - All hostages must be returned within 72 hours of Israel's acceptance. In exchange, Israel will release 250 life-term prisoners and 1,700 Gazans detained post-October 7, including all women and children. Remains of hostages will be exchanged at a ratio of 1 Israeli to 15 Palestinians.

Regional and International Guarantees - Eight countries — Qatar, Jordan, UAE, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt — have welcomed the plan.

1. China and Russia expressed support.
2. Guarantees will be provided to ensure Gaza remains free from future militant threats.

Challenges to Implementing Trump's Gaza Peace Plan

Hamas's Reluctance to Disarm and Cede Power - Hamas's deep-rooted presence, ideological stance and role in armed resistance in the region are seen as the most formidable hurdle.

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

Regional Opposition to Forced Resettlement – Trump's suggestion that Palestinians could be relocated outside Gaza was swiftly rejected by key regional players like Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. These nations emphasized the right of Palestinians to remain in Gaza, opposing any form of displacement.

Security and Sovereignty Concerns – The proposed plan for International Stabilization Force (ISF) until Gaza is deemed safe could be interpreted as a de facto Israeli occupation, undermining Palestinian sovereignty and fueling distrust.

Clarity and Operational Details – The plan lacks timelines, maps, and enforcement mechanisms, raising doubts about its feasibility. Trump did not take questions during the announcement, leaving many aspects of the plan ambiguous.

Political Implications of Trump's Gaza Peace Plan

Israel's Political Calculus – The plan demands Hamas's complete disarmament and exclusion from Gaza's future governance, a stance that could deepen internal Israeli debates over long-term strategy.

Palestinian Governance Shift – Gaza would be governed by an apolitical Palestinian committee under international oversight, sidelining both Hamas and the Palestinian Authority until reforms are complete. The plan hints at a 'credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination', a politically sensitive proposition that could reignite debates over a two-state solution.

Regional Diplomacy and Realignment – Egypt, Jordan, and Qatar are expected to facilitate Hamas's safe exit and support reconstruction, signaling a shift toward more active Arab mediation. The plan implicitly sidelines Iran, which backs Hamas, potentially altering the balance of influence in West Asia.

For Trump – The plan could boost Trump's legacy and ambitions for a Nobel Peace Prize, reminiscent of the Oslo Accords, if successful. However, it carries a business dimension, with opportunities for large-scale reconstruction projects in Gaza.

Implications on India

Diplomatic Alignment and Global Standing – India welcomed the plan, calling it a 'viable pathway to long-term and sustainable peace' in West Asia. India's endorsement reflects its balanced diplomacy—maintaining ties with both Israel and Arab nations like Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt.

Strategic and Security Interests – The plan's emphasis on counterterrorism and deradicalization aligns with India's own security concerns, especially regarding cross-border extremism. Israel noted that the plan reflects shared values between India and Israel, including the fight against terrorism.

Economic and Infrastructure Opportunities – India's expertise in infrastructure development could play a key role in Gaza's reconstruction. Peace in West Asia would boost India's ambitions for the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, facilitating trade and connectivity.

Regional Stability and Diaspora Welfare – West Asia hosts over 9 million Indians, making regional stability crucial for their safety and economic well-being. The region supplies about 80% of India's oil, so peace could stabilize energy prices and ensure uninterrupted supply chains. However, Pakistan's prominent role in the Gaza plan raises concerns for India.

Source – <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-from-citizenship-check-fears-to-wider-voter-inclusion-how-ec-course-corrected-on-bihar-sir-10281095/?ref=infinite>