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Q6(c)

Discuss the potential role that India could play as the leader of the Global South in realising the goal of establishing a new international economic order in the 21st century.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · PSIR GS 2 · 15 marks · India and the Global South

India and the Global South: Relations with Africa and Latin America; leadership role in the demand for NIEO and WTO negotiations.

Core demand of the question

- **Recall NIEO (1974):** voice, commodities, technology, finance
- Show India's potential as Global South leader in the 2020s (G20, WTO, climate, digital)
- **State limits:** China, capacity, neighbourhood, not a paymaster

Revision summary

NIEO sought fairer trade, finance, technology and voice for developing countries; it stalled in the late 1970s.

India's potential is to convene the South (G20, **Voice of Global South**), defend WTO food space, and offer generics and digital public infrastructure.

Quad-plus-BRICS seating lets India translate between South and G7.

China is the capital competitor; India is not a global paymaster; neighbourhood gaps weaken the claim.

Realistic leadership is coalition and agenda-setting toward a less overcentralised order.

Introduction

The **New International Economic Order (NIEO)** of 1974 asked for fairer commodity prices, technology transfer, more voice in the IMF and World Bank, and policy space for development. It stalled against Northern power. The question is what **India** could do **as a leader of the Global South** to revive that goal in this century. The potential is as a **coalition builder**, not as a substitute for Chinese capital or a new Bretton Woods by itself.

Body

What a twenty-first-century NIEO would mean

It would mean reformed **IMF quotas**, a usable **WTO** for food and industrial policy (India's clout in 5(c)), **climate finance** that is not only a Northern sermon, digital public infrastructure that is not only Silicon Valley's, and South-South value chains. It would still face **Wallerstein's** hierarchy: core money and technology do not move by speech.

India's potential role

India can **convene**. The **Voice of Global South** summits and the **G20** presidency put African Union membership and development language on a high table. At the WTO India already

speaks a food-and-livelihood dialect many poor members share. Vaccine manufacturing and generic medicines are a material NIEO fragment: health goods at Southern prices. **Digital public infrastructure** can be offered as a public good rather than as a Chinese smart-city bundle or a purely American platform. ITEC training and peacekeeping remain people-to-people leadership. On climate, India can insist on equity and still run a large renewable programme, which is more credible than a pure rejectionist line.

- **India can also translate between the South and the G7:** it sits in the Quad and in BRICS, which is the multi-alignment of 8(c) used for economic order, not only for security.

Limits

China claims South leadership with actual banks and BRI contracts. Many African states want Indian trust and Chinese speed. India's own neighbourhood delivery is uneven, which weakens moral leadership. A new international economic order needs **finance**. India is not yet that paymaster. If leadership becomes anti-West theatre only, NIEO 2.0 will repeat 1974's communiqués. If it becomes only a brand for Indian exports, the South will notice.

The potential role is therefore **agenda-setting and coalition-making** toward a more Southern-sensitive globalisation, the same problem named in other papers as overcentralised globalisation. That is achievable. A full NIEO is not a one-state project.

Flow diagram

NIEO 1974 goals 1974 goals -> Voice finance technology
India -> Convene G20 WTO climate
India -> Generics DPI ITEC
China capital -.competes. -> India
Convene G20 WTO climate -> Coalition not paymaster

Conclusion

India can lead the Global South toward a twenty-first-century NIEO by convening, by defending food and digital policy space, and by offering affordable health and digital public goods. It cannot fund a new world-economy alone. Leadership here is a coalition, or it is a speech.

Facts & figures

UNGA 1974

Declaration on the New International Economic Order - the classic Southern reform programme.

Voice of Global South

Indian-hosted summits to feed Southern priorities into G20 and UN debates.

AU in G20

African Union membership of the G20, advanced in the Indian presidency period, as a voice reform.

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