

India's New Developmentalism and Its Discontents

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This workshop explores India's new developmental agenda and its contestations by adopting a comparative and interdisciplinary approach. The G20 2023 Summit held under Indian Presidency has extended and reframed India's global claims. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) cadres and public and private policy-making organisations such as the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) and Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), assert an ambitious transformation in India's role in global political economy whereby the conventional emphasis on self-reliance and non-alignment is fading away and India is emerging as the bridge between the Global South and the Global North and the voice of the Global South. As evidence, they point to India's new international partnerships, its rapid digitisation, trade agreements and infrastructural projects which go beyond its regional or South-South cooperation, as crystallised in the Indian-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). It is claimed that India's capacity to take such a leading global role is underpinned by notions of a civilizational ethos grounded in democracy, diversity, inclusivity, and pluralism as well as their compatibility with today's environmental, social and corporate governance targets.

These claims are highly contested. On the one hand, India's economic targets are constantly challenged by its structural inadequacies, Indian conglomerates' domination of the economic sphere, its difficulty in producing jobs and growing its manufacturing sector, inadequate public goods, and its growing concentration of wealth. Moreover, the India-centric view promoted by policy elites is open to question when the current partnerships and agreements are put in global context. On the other hand, despite its claims of inclusivity and diversity, the discourses and practices of India's civilizational ethos in national politics is overtly exclusionary, considering, for example, the social discontent around issues of the citizenship and agricultural policies in recent years. Increasingly, India resembles other countries like Turkey and Hungary with respect to its adoption of authoritarian populist politics and crony capitalism, belying its claims of exceptionalism.

With this context in mind, the workshop aims to discuss India's new developmental agenda and its future implications by placing India in a comparative and interdisciplinary context in the fields of international politics as well as international political economy. Thus, it tackles with the following interconnected topics:

- How does India's new developmentalism relate to older forms?
- Do different conceptualisations of neoliberalism (e.g. national(ist), authoritarian, variegated, etc.) help us understand India's new developmentalism?
- What kind of similarities or differences could be observed between the India-centric and China-centric global developmental agendas (e.g. IMEC, BRI, etc.)?
- What are the future implications of India's new developmentalism in terms of global governance, considering India's significant place in the BRICS and QUAD?
- How does India's new developmentalism relate to its international image-building as well as national branding?
- To what extent India's new developmentalism is compatible with the ongoing environmental, social and corporate governance agendas distributed by the United Nations, International Finance Corporation and the World Bank?
- What is the role of digital technology in India's new developmentalism?