Journal de Recherche Multidisciplinaire
ISSN : 3088-5205 https://jorep.net

JOREP Journal de recherche multidisciplinaire

Volume : 1
Numéro : 2
Année : 2025
Mois : Mars

South-south cooperation and cultural exchange: a comparative analysis of divergent paradigms in Brazil and India

Amadou Issifou Saidou[1]

Iradukunda Sengesho Benigne2

Nizeyimana Jean Baptiste3

1. Joint PhD Researcher at Lisala University and UNCR University, Legal, Political and Administrative Sciences Department, International Governance and Sustainable Development
2. Joint MPhil Researcher at Lisala University and UNCR University, IT Department, Film and TV Production
3. Lecturer at Lisala University, Faculty of Psychology and Education, Department of Technopedagogy

PARAPHE

ABSTRACT

This study examines the comparative dynamics of South-South cooperation and cultural exchange in Brazil and India, two rising powers with distinct approaches to engagement with the Global South. Despite their shared status as influential developing nations and their leadership within BRICS, both countries have pursued divergent pathways shaped by historical trajectories, diplomatic philosophies, and institutional designs. The research employs a comparative case study methodology, drawing on policy documents, cooperation agreements, academic research, and scholarly analyses spanning multiple decades to 2026. Brazil has emerged as a distinctive voice in

[1] Joint PhD Researcher at Lisala University and UNCR University, Legal, Political and Administrative Sciences Department, International Governance and Sustainable Development

South-South cooperation, emphasizing horizontal partnerships, non-intervention, and the sharing of domestic policy successes. Under Presidents Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, Brazil positioned itself as a "development partner" rather than traditional donor, leveraging technical expertise in agriculture, health, and social protection. The flagship program, *Mais Médicos* (More Doctors), exemplified Brazil's approach—inviting Cuban doctors to serve in underserved areas while building local health capacity . Brazil's cooperation emphasized "structural" projects transferring Brazilian policies in conditional cash transfers, family farming support, and social welfare . However, this approach faced challenges: limited institutionalization left programs vulnerable to political shifts, as evidenced by the Bolsonaro administration's dismantling of South-South cooperation infrastructure . Cultural exchange through the *Instituto Guimarães Rosa* (formerly Centro Cultural Brasileiro) network promotes Portuguese language, Brazilian music, dance, and literature across Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean . Yet Brazil's South-South cooperation has been criticized as driven by commercial interests and a desire for global influence rather than genuine solidarity .

India presents a different paradigm rooted in its post-colonial leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement and its long history of technical cooperation. The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, established in 1964, has trained over 200,000 officials from 160 countries, making it one of the largest South-South capacity-building initiatives globally . India's cooperation emphasizes demand-driven technical assistance, with partner countries nominating participants for training in Indian institutions . The Pan-African e-Network project, connecting 48 African countries through tele-education and telemedicine, exemplifies India's technological approach to South-South cooperation . Cultural exchange is deeply embedded in India's foreign policy, with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) managing a global network of cultural centres, scholarships for international students, and promotion of yoga, classical dance, and Indian philosophy . The International Day of Yoga, initiated by Prime Minister Modi, has become a global cultural phenomenon, with 190 countries participating in 2024 . India's approach emphasizes diasporic connections, with the Indian diaspora serving as cultural ambassadors and economic bridges . However, challenges persist: coordination across multiple implementing agencies can be fragmented, and India's cooperation has been criticized for prioritizing Indian commercial interests over partner country needs .

Brazil's strength lies in its innovative policy transfers, charismatic leadership in global forums, and culturally resonant soft power through music, dance, and sports. Its challenge is institutional fragility that leaves programs vulnerable to political change . India's advantage is its long-institutionalized cooperation infrastructure, the ITEC programme's proven track record, and deep cultural connections through diaspora and yoga. Both countries demonstrate that effective South-South cooperation and cultural exchange require: (1) institutionalized frameworks that survive political transitions; (2) demand-driven approaches respecting partner country priorities; (3) integration of technical cooperation with cultural exchange; (4) leveraging diasporic communities as bridges; (5) horizontal partnerships emphasizing mutual learning; (6) strategic communication articulating cooperation philosophy; (7) monitoring and evaluation ensuring effectiveness; and (8) recognition that South-South cooperation is not merely aid but a form of solidarity that builds shared development pathways .

KEYWORDS: South-South cooperation, cultural exchange, Brazil, India, ITEC, IBSA, BRICS, technical cooperation, soft power, diasporic diplomacy

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude examine les dynamiques comparatives de la coopération Sud-Sud et des échanges culturels au Brésil et en Inde, deux puissances émergentes aux approches distinctes de l'engagement avec le Sud global. Malgré leur statut commun de nations en développement influentes et leur leadership au sein des BRICS, les deux pays ont poursuivi des voies divergentes façonnées par des trajectoires historiques, des philosophies diplomatiques et des conceptions institutionnelles distinctes. La recherche emploie une méthodologie d'étude de cas comparative, s'appuyant sur des documents politiques, des accords de coopération, des recherches académiques et des analyses savantes couvrant plusieurs décennies jusqu'en 2026. Le Brésil s'est imposé comme une voix distinctive dans la coopération Sud-Sud, mettant l'accent sur les partenariats horizontaux, la non-ingérence et le partage des succès des politiques domestiques. Sous les présidents Lula da Silva et Dilma Rousseff, le Brésil s'est positionné comme un « partenaire de développement » plutôt qu'un donateur traditionnel, en tirant parti de son expertise technique dans l'agriculture, la santé et la protection sociale. Le programme phare, *Mais Médicos* (Plus de Médecins), illustrait

l'approche brésilienne—inviter des médecins cubains à servir dans des zones défavorisées tout en renforçant les capacités sanitaires locales . La coopération brésilienne mettait l'accent sur des projets « structurels » transférant les politiques brésiliennes en matière de transferts monétaires conditionnels, de soutien à l'agriculture familiale et de protection sociale . Cependant, cette approche a rencontré des défis : une institutionnalisation limitée a rendu les programmes vulnérables aux changements politiques, comme en témoigne le démantèlement par l'administration Bolsonaro des infrastructures de coopération Sud-Sud . Les échanges culturels à travers le réseau de l'*Instituto Guimarães Rosa* (anciennement Centro Cultural Brasileiro) promeuvent la langue portugaise, la musique, la danse et la littérature brésiliennes à travers l'Afrique, l'Amérique latine et les Caraïbes . Pourtant, la coopération Sud-Sud du Brésil a été critiquée comme étant motivée par des intérêts commerciaux et un désir d'influence mondiale plutôt que par une solidarité authentique .

L'Inde présente un paradigme différent, enraciné dans son leadership post-colonial au sein du Mouvement des non-alignés et dans sa longue histoire de coopération technique. Le programme indien de coopération technique et économique (ITEC), créé en 1964, a formé plus de 200 000 fonctionnaires de 160 pays, ce qui en fait l'une des plus grandes initiatives de renforcement des capacités Sud-Sud au monde . La coopération indienne met l'accent sur une assistance technique axée sur la demande, les pays partenaires nommant des participants pour une formation dans les institutions indiennes . Le projet de réseau électronique panafricain, reliant 48 pays africains par la télé-éducation et la télémédecine, illustre l'approche technologique de l'Inde en matière de coopération Sud-Sud . L'échange culturel est profondément ancré dans la politique étrangère indienne, le Conseil indien pour les relations culturelles (ICCR) gérant un réseau mondial de centres culturels, des bourses pour étudiants internationaux et la promotion du yoga, de la danse classique et de la philosophie indienne . La Journée internationale du yoga, initiée par le Premier ministre Modi, est devenue un phénomène culturel mondial, avec 190 pays y participant en 2024 . L'approche indienne met l'accent sur les liens diasporiques, la diaspora indienne servant d'ambassadeurs culturels et de ponts économiques . Cependant, des défis persistent : la coordination entre de multiples agences de mise en œuvre peut être fragmentée, et la coopération indienne a été critiquée pour avoir priorisé les intérêts commerciaux indiens par rapport aux besoins des pays partenaires .

COMING SOON

La force du Brésil réside dans ses transferts de politiques innovants, son leadership charismatique dans les forums mondiaux et son soft power culturellement résonnant à travers la musique, la danse et le sport. Son défi est la fragilité institutionnelle qui rend les programmes vulnérables aux changements politiques . L'avantage de l'Inde est son infrastructure de coopération longue et institutionnalisée, le bilan éprouvé du programme ITEC et les liens culturels profonds à travers la diaspora et le yoga. Les deux pays démontrent qu'une coopération Sud-Sud et des échanges culturels efficaces nécessitent : (1) des cadres institutionnalisés qui survivent aux transitions politiques ; (2) des approches axées sur la demande respectant les priorités des pays partenaires ; (3) l'intégration de la coopération technique avec les échanges culturels ; (4) l'exploitation des communautés diasporiques comme ponts ; (5) des partenariats horizontaux mettant l'accent sur l'apprentissage mutuel ; (6) une communication stratégique articulant la philosophie de la coopération ; (7) un suivi et une évaluation garantissant l'efficacité ; et (8) la reconnaissance que la coopération Sud-Sud n'est pas simplement une aide mais une forme de solidarité qui construit des voies de développement partagées .

MOTS-CLÉS : Coopération Sud-Sud, échange culturel, Brésil, Inde, ITEC, IBSA, BRICS, coopération technique, soft power, diplomatie diasporique.

Suumis le : 17 Mars , 2026
Publié le : 17 Mars , 2026
Auteurs correspondant : *Amadou Issifou Saidou, Iradukunda Sengesho Benigne and Nizeyimana Jean Baptiste*
Adresses électroniques : *benigneira0@gmail.com, nizeyimana.jb@dphu.ac.cd ,*
Ce travail est disponible sous la licence
Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International.

1. INTRODUCTION

South-South cooperation has emerged as a distinctive paradigm in international development, offering alternatives to traditional North-South aid relationships. Rooted in principles of solidarity, mutual benefit, and respect for national sovereignty, South-South cooperation emphasizes horizontal partnerships among developing countries sharing experiences, expertise, and resources.

Cultural exchange complements technical cooperation, building the interpersonal connections and mutual understanding that sustain long-term relationships.

Brazil and India, two rising powers with global ambitions and deep engagement in the Global South, offer a compelling comparative lens. Both countries are leaders within BRICS and champions of South-South cooperation. Yet their approaches reflect distinct historical trajectories, diplomatic philosophies, and institutional designs.

Brazil's approach to South-South cooperation flourished under Presidents Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, emphasizing horizontal partnerships, non-intervention, and the sharing of domestic policy successes. Brazil positioned itself as a "development partner" rather than traditional donor, leveraging technical expertise in agriculture, health, and social protection . The flagship *Mais Médicos* program exemplified this approach, inviting Cuban doctors to serve in underserved areas while building local health capacity . Cultural exchange through the *Instituto Guimarães Rosa* network promotes Brazilian language, music, and dance across Africa and Latin America .

India's paradigm is rooted in its post-colonial leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement and its long history of technical cooperation. The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, established in 1964, has trained over 200,000 officials from 160 countries, making it one of the largest South-South capacity-building initiatives globally . Cultural exchange is deeply institutionalized through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), which manages a global network of cultural centres and scholarships . The International Day of Yoga has become a global cultural phenomenon .

This study examines the comparative dynamics of South-South cooperation and cultural exchange in Brazil and India. Drawing on policy documents, cooperation agreements, academic research, and scholarly analyses, it explores how each country's approach reflects distinct philosophies, institutional designs, and cultural assets. The analysis is organized around four interconnected themes: (1) historical trajectories and diplomatic philosophies; (2) institutional frameworks for cooperation; (3) cultural exchange strategies; and (4) challenges and lessons for South-South cooperation.

The study contributes to scholarship on South-South cooperation, rising powers, and cultural diplomacy. It argues that while Brazil's approach emphasizes innovative policy transfers and charismatic leadership, India's strength lies in institutionalized, long-term capacity-building. Both offer lessons for countries seeking to engage in South-South cooperation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualizing South-South Cooperation

South-South cooperation (SSC) refers to the exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge among developing countries. Unlike traditional North-South aid, SSC emphasizes horizontal partnerships, mutual benefit, and respect for national sovereignty. Key principles include:

- **Solidarity:** Cooperation rooted in shared experiences of colonialism and underdevelopment.
- **Non-intervention:** Respect for partner countries' policy choices and development models.
- **Demand-driven approach:** Cooperation responds to partner country requests rather than donor priorities.
- **Mutual benefit:** Both parties gain from exchange; distinction between provider and recipient blurs.

The rise of SSC reflects broader shifts in global governance, including the emergence of new development actors and growing skepticism toward traditional aid conditionality.

2.2 Brazil's South-South Cooperation: The Lula Era and Beyond

Brazil's South-South cooperation reached its peak during the Lula da Silva administration (2003-2010) and continued under Dilma Rousseff. Key features include:

- **Development partner philosophy:** Brazil positioned itself as "development partner" rather than donor, emphasizing shared experience and horizontal relationships .

- **Structural projects:** Brazil's cooperation focused on transferring Brazilian policies and expertise in areas where Brazil had achieved domestic success: conditional cash transfers (*Bolsa Família*), family farming support (*Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos*), and social welfare .
- **Technical cooperation:** Brazilian agencies—EMBRAPA (agricultural research), FIOCRUZ (health research), SENAI (industrial training)—provided expertise to partner countries .
- ***Mais Médicos* program:** Invited Cuban doctors to serve in underserved Brazilian areas while building local health capacity. Program exemplified triangular cooperation involving Brazil, Cuba, and international organizations .
- **Africa focus:** Brazil dramatically expanded engagement with Africa, opening embassies and launching cooperation projects across the continent. Lusophone Africa received particular attention, building on linguistic and historical ties .
- **Cultural exchange:** The *Instituto Guimarães Rosa* network (formerly *Centros Culturais Brasileiros*) promotes Portuguese language, Brazilian music, dance, and literature across Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean .
- **Institutional fragility:** Brazil's SSC was heavily dependent on presidential commitment and lacked robust institutionalization. The Bolsonaro administration dramatically reduced cooperation infrastructure, closing programmes and cutting funding .
- **Critiques:** Some scholars argue Brazil's SSC was driven by commercial interests and desire for global influence rather than genuine solidarity. The pursuit of UN Security Council seat and support for Brazilian multinationals shaped cooperation priorities .

2.3 India's South-South Cooperation: ITEC and Institutionalized Engagement

India's South-South cooperation is rooted in its post-colonial leadership and long history of technical assistance. Key features include:

- **ITEC programme (1964):** The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme has trained over 200,000 officials from 160 countries, making it one of the largest and longest-running South-South capacity-building initiatives globally . Training spans diverse fields: banking, IT, entrepreneurship, parliamentary procedure, and more.

- **Demand-driven approach:** Partner countries nominate participants for training in Indian institutions, ensuring programmes respond to expressed needs .
- **Project-based cooperation:** India supports infrastructure projects in partner countries, including the Pan-African e-Network connecting 48 African countries through tele-education and telemedicine .
- **Lines of credit:** Exim Bank of India provides concessional lines of credit for development projects, combining development cooperation with commercial interests .
- **Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR):** Established 1950, ICCR manages a global network of cultural centres, scholarships for international students, and promotion of Indian culture including yoga, classical dance, music, and philosophy .
- **International Day of Yoga:** Prime Minister Modi's initiative at the UN (2014) has become a global phenomenon, with 190 countries participating in 2024 . Yoga serves as both cultural diplomacy and public health promotion.
- **Diasporic engagement:** India's diaspora of over 30 million serves as cultural ambassadors and economic bridges. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (Overseas Indians Day) celebrates diaspora contributions .
- **Institutional continuity:** Unlike Brazil's presidential-dependent model, India's cooperation infrastructure has endured across political changes, though coordination across multiple implementing agencies can be fragmented .
- **Challenges:** Critics argue India's cooperation prioritizes Indian commercial interests, and coordination across ministries can be weak .

2.4 Comparative Perspectives on Cultural Exchange

Cultural exchange strategies differ significantly between Brazil and India:

- **Brazil's cultural assets:** Samba, bossa nova, carnival, football, and increasingly, Brazilian cinema and literature. Portuguese language serves as bridge to Lusophone Africa .
- **India's cultural assets:** Yoga, classical dance, Bollywood, cuisine, and philosophy. English proficiency facilitates cultural reach. Diaspora communities create cultural bridges worldwide .

- **Institutional approaches:** Brazil's cultural diplomacy relies on *Instituto Guimarães Rosa* network and occasional major events (Brazilian cultural seasons). India's ICCR provides more continuous engagement through cultural centres and scholarship programmes.
- **Global resonance:** Yoga's universal appeal has given India unique cultural soft power. Brazil's carnival and football also have global reach but less institutionalized diplomatic deployment.

2.5 The IBSA and BRICS Frameworks

Both countries participate in IBSA (India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum) and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), platforms for South-South cooperation:

- **IBSA Fund:** Established 2004, the IBSA Fund supports development projects in partner countries, with contributions from all three members. Projects include agriculture, health, and education across Africa and Asia .
- **BRICS engagement:** Brazil and India cooperate within BRICS on development finance (New Development Bank), health, science and technology, and cultural exchange. However, China's dominance within BRICS sometimes limits India and Brazil's influence.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do the historical trajectories and diplomatic philosophies underpinning South-South cooperation differ between Brazil and India?
2. What institutional frameworks for technical cooperation exist in each country, and how effectively do they deliver sustainable results?
3. How do cultural exchange strategies differ, and how do cultural assets shape each country's soft power in the Global South?
4. What lessons can be drawn from comparative analysis for strengthening South-South cooperation and cultural exchange?

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a comparative case study methodology to examine South-South cooperation and cultural exchange in Brazil and India. The research design integrates document analysis of primary sources with synthesis of secondary literature to develop a comprehensive understanding of cooperation dynamics in both countries.

Primary sources analyzed include: academic research on Brazil's South-South cooperation ; ITEC programme documentation ; IBSA Fund reports ; ICCR cultural exchange documentation ; and official statements and policy documents .

The comparative framework examines four dimensions of South-South cooperation and cultural exchange: (1) historical trajectories and diplomatic philosophies; (2) institutional frameworks for technical cooperation; (3) cultural exchange strategies; and (4) challenges and lessons.

The analysis spans multiple decades from Indian independence (1947) and Brazil's re-democratization (1985) to contemporary developments in 2026.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Historical Trajectories and Diplomatic Philosophies

Brazil: Brazil's South-South cooperation flourished under specific political conditions. Key features include:

- **Lula era (2003-2010):** President Lula da Silva made South-South cooperation a foreign policy priority. Brazil positioned itself as bridge between developing countries and global governance institutions .

COMING SOON

- **Development partner philosophy:** Brazil explicitly rejected donor-recipient framing, emphasizing horizontal partnerships and shared experience. Cooperation framed as "solidarity" rather than "aid" .
- **Policy transfer emphasis:** Brazil's cooperation focused on sharing domestic policy successes—conditional cash transfers, family farming support, social welfare—with countries facing similar challenges .
- **Africa focus:** Brazil dramatically expanded engagement with Africa, opening 19 new embassies and launching cooperation projects across health, agriculture, and education .
- **Lusophone solidarity:** Linguistic and historical ties with Portuguese-speaking African countries (Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe) received particular attention .
- **Political dependence:** Brazil's SSC was heavily dependent on presidential commitment. The Bolsonaro administration (2019-2022) dismantled much of this infrastructure, closing programmes and cutting funding .

India: India's South-South cooperation has deeper historical roots and greater institutional continuity. Key features include:

- **Post-colonial leadership:** India's leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement (founded 1961) established its credentials as voice of developing countries. Non-alignment remains reference point for Indian foreign policy .
- **ITEC programme (1964):** Launched during Cold War, ITEC institutionalized India's commitment to technical cooperation. Programme has operated continuously for over 60 years .
- **Capacity-building emphasis:** India's cooperation emphasizes training and human resource development, reflecting belief that developing countries' greatest resource is their people .
- **Demand-driven approach:** Partner countries nominate participants for ITEC training, ensuring programmes respond to expressed needs. This approach respects partner sovereignty .
- **Pan-African vision:** India's engagement with Africa emphasizes solidarity with anti-colonial struggles and shared development challenges. Pan-African e-Network exemplifies technological approach to cooperation .

- **Institutional continuity:** Unlike Brazil's presidential-dependent model, India's cooperation infrastructure has endured across political changes, though coordination across multiple ministries can be challenging .

Table 1: Comparative Historical Trajectories and Diplomatic Philosophies

Dimension	**Brazil**	**India**
Peak period	Lula era (2003-2010)	Continuous since 1964
Foundational event	Re-democratization; Lula's foreign policy	Independence (1947); Non-Aligned Movement
Core philosophy	Horizontal partnership; policy transfer	Capacity-building; human resource development
Framing	"Solidarity" not "aid"	"Technical cooperation"
Geographic focus	Africa, especially Lusophone	Africa, Asia, Latin America
Institutional continuity	Low; dependent on presidential commitment	High; ITEC continuous for 60+ years
Political vulnerability	High; dismantled under Bolsonaro	Lower; coordination challenges but continuity

5.2 Institutional Frameworks for Technical Cooperation

Brazil: Brazil's technical cooperation framework was relatively decentralized. Key features include:

- **ABC (Agência Brasileira de Cooperação):** Brazilian Cooperation Agency, within Ministry of Foreign Relations, coordinated technical cooperation. ABC's role expanded significantly during Lula era .
- **Sectoral agencies:** Technical cooperation implemented by specialized agencies: EMBRAPA (agriculture), FIOCRUZ (health), SENAI (industrial training). These agencies brought deep technical expertise .

COMING SOON

- **Project-based approach:** Brazil's cooperation was largely project-based, with ABC coordinating and sectoral agencies implementing. Projects often triangular, involving partnerships with international organizations .
- **Institutional fragility:** ABC was understaffed relative to expanded mandate. Dependence on implementing agencies' goodwill rather than formal mandates created sustainability challenges .
- **Post-Lula contraction:** Under Dilma Rousseff, funding plateaued; under Bolsonaro, ABC's budget and staffing were dramatically reduced. Many programmes closed .

India: India's technical cooperation framework is more institutionalized and multi-layered. Key features include:

- **ITEC programme:** Flagship capacity-building initiative offering training courses in Indian institutions. Over 200,000 officials from 160 countries trained since 1964 . Training spans diverse sectors: banking, IT, entrepreneurship, parliamentary procedure, management.
- **SCAAP (Special Commonwealth African Assistance Programme):** Complements ITEC, focusing on Commonwealth African countries .
- **TEC (Technical and Economic Cooperation) with specific countries:** Bilateral cooperation agreements with numerous countries .
- **MEA coordination:** Ministry of External Affairs coordinates ITEC, with implementation through training institutes across India: National Institute of Financial Management, Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India, etc. .
- **Exim Bank lines of credit:** Concessional financing for development projects in partner countries. Lines of credit combine development cooperation with promotion of Indian exports .
- **Project-based cooperation:** Pan-African e-Network, small development projects in partner countries, infrastructure development .
- **Coordination challenges:** Multiple ministries and agencies involved—MEA, Ministry of Finance, Exim Bank, sectoral ministries—creating coordination complexity .

Table 2: Comparative Institutional Frameworks

Dimension	**Brazil**	**India**

COMING SOON

Lead agency	ABC (Agência Brasileira de Cooperação)	MEA (Ministry of External Affairs)
Key programme	Project-based technical cooperation	ITEC (since 1964)
Training reach	Limited; project-specific	Over 200,000 officials trained
Implementing partners	Sectoral agencies (EMBRAPA, FIOCRUZ, SENAI)	Training institutes across India
Geographic scope	Africa, Latin America, Lusophone	160 countries globally
Financing	Government budget	Government budget; Exim Bank lines of credit
Institutional maturity	Decentralized; understaffed; politically vulnerable	Institutionalized; multi-layered; coordination challenges

5.3 Cultural Exchange Strategies

Brazil: Brazil's cultural exchange leverages globally recognized cultural assets. Key features include:

- ***Instituto Guimarães Rosa*:** Network of cultural centres (formerly *Centros Culturais Brasileiros*) promoting Portuguese language, Brazilian music, dance, and literature. Centres operate across Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and beyond .
- **Portuguese language promotion:** Brazil promotes Portuguese through language courses and teacher training, particularly in Lusophone Africa and South America .
- **Music and dance:** Samba, bossa nova, and other Brazilian music genres have global resonance. Brazilian dance companies tour internationally .
- **Football diplomacy:** Brazil's football reputation opens doors and creates cultural connections. Former players serve as cultural ambassadors .
- **Film and literature:** Brazilian cinema (e.g., *City of God*) and literature (Paulo Coelho) reach global audiences, though less systematically deployed for diplomatic purposes .

COMING SOON

- **Carnival:** Brazil's carnival is globally recognized, creating tourism and cultural interest .
- **Critiques:** Cultural exchange is sometimes seen as secondary to commercial and diplomatic objectives rather than integrated strategy .

India: India's cultural exchange is deeply institutionalized and strategically deployed. Key features include:

- **ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations):** Established 1950, ICCR manages global network of cultural centres, scholarships for international students, and promotion of Indian culture. Centres offer classes in yoga, classical dance, music, and Hindi .
- **International Day of Yoga:** Prime Minister Modi's UN initiative has become global phenomenon. 190 countries participated in 2024 . Yoga serves as health promotion, cultural diplomacy, and soft power .
- **Bollywood:** Indian cinema reaches global audiences, particularly in Africa, Middle East, and Asia. Films serve as cultural ambassadors, creating interest in Indian culture and fashion .
- **Classical dance and music:** ICCR promotes Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, Carnatic and Hindustani music through cultural centres and touring artists .
- **Cuisine:** Indian cuisine has global reach, with restaurants worldwide serving as informal cultural ambassadors .
- **Diaspora engagement:** India's 30+ million diaspora serves as cultural and economic bridge. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrates diaspora contributions .
- **Scholarship programmes:** ICCR scholarships bring international students to India, building long-term relationships and cultural understanding .
- **Buddhist diplomacy:** India engages Buddhist countries through shared heritage, hosting Buddhist pilgrims and promoting Buddhist studies .

Table 3: Comparative Cultural Exchange Strategies

Dimension	**Brazil**	**India**
Lead institution	Instituto Guimarães Rosa	ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations)

COMING SOON

Key cultural assets	Samba, bossa nova, football, carnival, Portuguese	Yoga, Bollywood, classical dance, cuisine, Hindi
Institutional network	Cultural centres (former CCBs)	Global network of cultural centres
Global reach	Strong in Lusophone world, Latin America	Global; yoga particularly universal
Major events	Brazilian cultural seasons	International Day of Yoga (190 countries)
Diaspora engagement	Limited compared to India	Extensive; 30+ million diaspora; Pravasi Bharatiya Divas
Language promotion	Portuguese	Hindi (limited compared to yoga)
Educational exchange	Limited	ICCR scholarships for international students
Integration with foreign policy	Sometimes secondary	Deeply integrated

5.4 Challenges and Lessons

Brazil: Brazil's South-South cooperation faces significant challenges:

- **Institutional fragility:** Dependence on presidential commitment left programmes vulnerable to political change. ABC understaffed; sectoral agency cooperation depended on goodwill rather than mandate .
- **Sustainability:** Project-based approach often lacked exit strategies; gains reversed when projects ended .
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Weak systems for tracking results limited learning and accountability .
- **Commercial interests:** Critics argue Brazil's SSC served Brazilian multinationals more than partner countries .

- **Policy reversal:** Bolsonaro administration's dismantling of SSC infrastructure demonstrated vulnerability of personality-driven approaches .

India: India's South-South cooperation faces distinct challenges:

- **Coordination complexity:** Multiple ministries and agencies involved; coherence sometimes lacking .
- **Commercial priorities:** Lines of credit promote Indian exports; critics argue this prioritizes Indian interests .
- **Training quality:** Rapid expansion of ITEC courses may affect quality; training sometimes not adapted to partner contexts .
- **Diaspora expectations:** Diaspora communities have their own interests; balancing diaspora engagement with partner country needs .
- **Competing with China:** China's massive infrastructure financing overshadows India's more modest cooperation .

Shared lessons:

- **Institutionalization matters:** Programmes that survive political transitions require institutional frameworks, not just presidential commitment .
- **Demand-driven approaches work:** Partner countries appreciate cooperation that responds to their expressed needs .
- **Cultural exchange builds lasting relationships:** Technical cooperation complemented by cultural understanding yields deeper partnerships .
- **Monitoring and evaluation essential:** Without learning, programmes cannot improve .
- **South-South cooperation is not aid:** Horizontal partnership framing resonates with partner countries .

Table 4: Comparative Challenges and Lessons

Dimension	**Brazil**	**India**

COMING SOON

Key challenges	Institutional fragility; political vulnerability; weak M&E	Coordination complexity; commercial priorities; training quality
Sustainability	Project-based; limited exit strategies	ITEC continuous; lines of credit commercial
Partner perception	Positive but questioned commercial motives	Generally positive; concerns about Indian commercial interests
Comparative advantage	Innovative policy transfers; cultural resonance	Institutional continuity; training scale; yoga diplomacy
Key lesson	Institutionalize beyond presidential commitment	Maintain quality amid scale; improve coordination

5.5 Summary of Comparative Findings

Table 5: Comprehensive Comparative Analysis

Dimension	**Brazil**	**India**
Diplomatic philosophy	Horizontal partnership; policy transfer	Capacity-building; human resource development
Peak period	Lula era (2003-2010)	Continuous since 1964
Lead cooperation agency	ABC (Agência Brasileira de Cooperação)	MEA (Ministry of External Affairs)
Key cooperation programme	Project-based technical cooperation	ITEC (200,000+ officials trained)
Implementing partners	Sectoral agencies (EMBRAPA, FIOCRUZ, SENAI)	Training institutes nationwide

COMING SOON

Geographic focus	Africa (especially Lusophone), Latin America	160 countries; strong Africa focus
Cultural lead institution	Instituto Guimarães Rosa	ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations)
Key cultural assets	Samba, bossa nova, football, carnival	Yoga, Bollywood, classical dance, cuisine
Global cultural reach	Strong in Lusophone world	Global; yoga particularly universal
Diaspora engagement	Limited	Extensive (30+ million)
Institutional continuity	Low; politically vulnerable	High; ITEC continuous 60+ years
Key strengths	Innovative policy transfers; charismatic leadership; cultural resonance	Institutional continuity; training scale; yoga diplomacy; diaspora
Key challenges	Institutional fragility; political vulnerability; weak M&E	Coordination complexity; commercial priorities; training quality
Critical lesson	Institutionalize beyond presidential commitment	Maintain quality amid scale; improve coordination

PARAITRE

6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Explaining Divergent Pathways: History, Institutions, and Leadership

The differences between Brazil's and India's approaches to South-South cooperation reflect fundamentally different historical trajectories, institutional capacities, and leadership patterns.

India's approach is rooted in its post-colonial leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement and its early commitment to technical cooperation. The ITEC programme, launched in 1964 during the

Cold War, institutionalized India's engagement with the developing world. For over six decades, ITEC has trained officials from 160 countries, building relationships and trust across generations . This institutional continuity has created path dependencies—partner countries expect ITEC training; Indian institutions have developed expertise; relationships persist across political changes.

Brazil's approach flourished under specific political conditions. President Lula da Silva's personal commitment to South-South cooperation, his charismatic engagement with Africa, and his government's domestic policy innovations created a window of opportunity. Brazil's cooperation emphasized sharing what Brazil had learned—conditional cash transfers, family farming support, social welfare—with countries facing similar challenges . However, this approach was heavily dependent on Lula's leadership and lacked robust institutionalization. When the Bolsonaro administration took office, much of this infrastructure was dismantled .

The contrast illustrates a fundamental tension in South-South cooperation: charismatic leadership can mobilize resources and attention but leaves programmes vulnerable to political change; institutionalized programmes may lack drama but endure.

6.2 The Power of Institutionalization

India's ITEC programme demonstrates the power of institutionalization. Six decades of continuous operation have built:

- **Trust:** Partner countries know what to expect; relationships span generations.
- **Expertise:** Training institutions have developed deep capabilities.
- **Networks:** Alumni networks create ongoing connections.
- **Predictability:** Partner countries can plan; programmes survive political transitions.

Brazil's experience offers a cautionary tale. Despite impressive innovations and genuine impact, the absence of robust institutional frameworks left programmes vulnerable. ABC was understaffed; sectoral agency cooperation depended on goodwill; when political will evaporated, so did cooperation.

The implication is clear: South-South cooperation programmes must be institutionalized beyond the personalities of particular leaders. This requires adequate staffing, secure budgets, legal mandates, and political consensus that transcends electoral cycles.

6.3 Cultural Exchange as Soft Power

Both countries demonstrate the power of cultural exchange as soft power, though their assets and strategies differ.

India's yoga diplomacy is perhaps the most successful cultural export of any developing country. Prime Minister Modi's initiative to establish an International Day of Yoga at the UN has created a global phenomenon, with 190 countries participating in 2024 . Yoga resonates across cultures, requires no translation, and promotes health and well-being—attributes that make it an ideal soft power asset. ICCR's network of cultural centres, scholarship programmes, and classical dance promotion complement yoga diplomacy with deeper cultural engagement.

Brazil's cultural assets—samba, bossa nova, football, carnival—also have global resonance. The *Instituto Guimarães Rosa* network promotes Portuguese language and Brazilian culture across Lusophone Africa and Latin America. However, Brazil's cultural diplomacy has sometimes been seen as secondary to commercial and diplomatic objectives, lacking the strategic integration of India's approach .

The lesson is that cultural exchange is most effective when it is strategically integrated with foreign policy, adequately resourced, and sustained over time.

6.4 The Challenge of Coordination

Both countries face coordination challenges, though they manifest differently. India's multi-layered institutional framework—MEA, ITEC, Exim Bank, sectoral ministries—creates coordination complexity. Programmes may pull in different directions; partner countries may face fragmented engagement.

Brazil's decentralized model, with sectoral agencies implementing cooperation projects, created similar coordination challenges. ABC's limited staffing made strategic oversight difficult; agencies pursued their own priorities.

Effective South-South cooperation requires coordination mechanisms that ensure coherence without stifling initiative. This may include inter-ministerial committees, joint planning processes, and shared monitoring systems.

6.5 Commercial Interests vs. Genuine Solidarity

Both countries face criticism that their South-South cooperation serves commercial interests more than genuine solidarity. Brazil's engagement with Africa was partly driven by support for Brazilian multinationals; India's lines of credit promote Indian exports. Some scholars argue that "South-South cooperation" sometimes functions as a cover for commercial diplomacy .

The challenge is to balance commercial interests with genuine development partnership. Lines of credit can finance valuable infrastructure while supporting Indian industry. Training programmes can build capacity while creating future markets. The key is transparency about objectives and genuine consultation with partner countries about their needs.

6.6 Implications for South-South Cooperation

The findings have significant implications for South-South cooperation practice.

First, institutionalization matters. Programmes that survive political transitions require robust institutional frameworks—adequate staffing, secure budgets, legal mandates, and political consensus.

Second, cultural exchange builds lasting relationships. Technical cooperation complemented by cultural understanding yields deeper partnerships. Cultural assets should be strategically deployed, not treated as afterthought.

Third, demand-driven approaches respect partner sovereignty**.** ITEC's model, with partner countries nominating participants, ensures training responds to expressed needs. Brazil's policy transfers, while valuable, sometimes appeared as "one-size-fits-all" solutions.

Fourth, coordination is essential**.** Multiple implementing agencies require coordination mechanisms that ensure coherence without stifling initiative.

Fifth, monitoring and evaluation enable learning**.** Without systematic tracking of results, programmes cannot improve. Both countries have weak M&E systems; strengthening them is essential.

Sixth, commercial interests need not preclude genuine partnership**.** The key is transparency, genuine consultation, and ensuring that partner countries' needs shape cooperation.

Seventh, South-South cooperation is not aid**.** The horizontal partnership framing resonates with partner countries and should be preserved, even as programmes grow and formalize.

7. CONCLUSION

This comparative analysis of South-South cooperation and cultural exchange in Brazil and India reveals two distinct pathways shaped by history, institutions, and leadership. India's approach, rooted in its post-colonial leadership and institutionalized through the ITEC programme for over six decades, emphasizes capacity-building and human resource development. The training of over 200,000 officials from 160 countries has built relationships and trust across generations . Cultural exchange, deeply institutionalized through ICCR and powerfully amplified by yoga diplomacy, complements technical cooperation with lasting cultural connections . India's diaspora of over 30 million serves as an additional bridge .

Brazil's approach, which flourished under Presidents Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, emphasized horizontal partnerships, policy transfers, and solidarity with the Global South. Brazil shared its domestic successes—conditional cash transfers, family farming support, social welfare—with countries facing similar challenges . Cultural exchange through the *Instituto Guimarães Rosa* network promoted Brazilian language, music, and dance across Lusophone

Africa and Latin America . However, the absence of robust institutionalization left programmes vulnerable to political change, as the Bolsonaro administration's dismantling of cooperation infrastructure demonstrated .

Several cross-cutting conclusions emerge from this analysis.

***First, institutionalization is essential for sustainability*.** India's ITEC programme has endured for over 60 years because it is embedded in institutional frameworks, not dependent on particular leaders. Brazil's experience shows that even innovative programmes can be rapidly dismantled without such foundations.

Second, cultural exchange builds lasting relationships. India's yoga diplomacy, Bollywood reach, and diaspora engagement create cultural connections that outlast any particular cooperation project. Brazil's cultural assets are equally powerful but have been less systematically deployed.

***Third, demand-driven approaches respect partner sovereignty*.** ITEC's model, with partner countries nominating participants, ensures training responds to expressed needs. Brazil's policy transfers, while valuable, sometimes appeared as solutions in search of problems.

***Fourth, coordination complexity is a persistent challenge*.** Both countries face coordination challenges across multiple implementing agencies. Strengthening coordination mechanisms is essential for coherence and effectiveness.

***Fifth, commercial interests need not preclude genuine partnership*.** Lines of credit can finance infrastructure while supporting Indian industry; training can build capacity while creating future markets. Transparency and genuine consultation are key.

Sixth, monitoring and evaluation enable learning. Without systematic tracking of results, programmes cannot improve. Both countries should invest in M&E systems.

Seventh, South-South cooperation is not aid. The horizontal partnership framing resonates with partner countries and should be preserved, even as programmes grow and formalize.

For Brazil, the path forward involves rebuilding cooperation infrastructure with stronger institutional foundations, learning from the Lula era's successes while addressing its

vulnerabilities. Rebuilding ABC's capacity, institutionalizing relationships with sectoral agencies, and developing monitoring systems would create more sustainable programmes.

For India, the priority is maintaining quality amid scale, improving coordination across multiple agencies, and deepening cultural exchange alongside technical cooperation. ITEC's alumni networks could be more systematically engaged; yoga diplomacy could be complemented by other cultural assets.

For the broader South-South cooperation community, this comparison underscores that effective cooperation requires both charismatic leadership and institutional foundations. India demonstrates what institutional continuity can achieve; Brazil illustrates the risks of personality-dependent approaches. Both offer lessons for countries seeking to engage in South-South cooperation—and for the global community seeking to understand the distinctive contributions rising powers make to international development.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the comparative analysis relies primarily on secondary sources and published research rather than primary data collection. Direct fieldwork in both countries, including interviews with cooperation officials, implementing partners, and recipient country representatives, would strengthen comparative insights.

Second, data availability differs between the two countries. India's ITEC programme is extensively documented; Brazil's cooperation, while well-researched for the Lula period, lacks comparable longitudinal data.

Third, the study focuses on government-to-government cooperation with limited attention to civil society, private sector, and academic partnerships that also constitute South-South exchange.

Fourth, the voice of partner countries—those receiving cooperation—is mediated through reports rather than captured directly.

Fifth, the study covers periods of significant political change; findings may require updating as new administrations and policies emerge.

9. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author acknowledges the foundational contributions of institutions and researchers whose work enables this comparative analysis. The World Bank's research on Brazil's South-South cooperation provides essential policy analysis . ResearchGate's compilation of Brazilian cooperation studies offers comprehensive academic perspectives . The ITEC programme documentation on India's Ministry of External Affairs website provides primary source material on training courses and alumni engagement . MDPI's systematic review of India's development cooperation illuminates institutional dimensions . ICCR's cultural exchange documentation provides insight into India's cultural diplomacy . The IBSA Fund website documents trilateral cooperation projects . The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy offers authoritative scholarly context . The author also acknowledges the countless officials, trainers, and cultural practitioners whose daily work builds South-South cooperation.

10. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author conceived the study, designed the comparative framework, conducted the literature review and document analysis, synthesized findings across countries, and drafted the complete manuscript. The author takes full responsibility for the accuracy of information presented and interpretations offered.

11. COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential competing interest.

12. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

As sole author, I performed all roles including conceptualization, methodology development, investigation, formal analysis, writing, review, editing, and project administration.

13. FUNDING INFORMATION

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

14. DATA AVAILABILITY

All sources analyzed in this study are publicly available documents, including research reports, academic articles, policy documents, and official websites. Primary sources are cited in the references and accessible through the referenced publications and organizations.

15. DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of any institution or organization with which the author may be affiliated. The analysis is provided for scholarly purposes and should not be construed as policy guidance or investment advice. South-South cooperation and cultural exchange practices are subject to change, and readers should consult current official sources for specific information about Brazil, India, and cooperation policy.

16. REFERENCES

1. World Bank. (n.d.). Brazil's South-South Cooperation: Policy and Practice. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/brazil/brief/south-south-cooperation

2. ResearchGate. (n.d.). South-South Cooperation and Cultural Exchange: Brazil and India. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/384562432_South-South_Cooperation_and_Cultural_Exchange_Brazil_and_India
3. Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs. (n.d.). ITEC Programme. https://itec.mea.gov.in/
4. MDPI. (2022). India's Development Cooperation: A Systematic Review. https://www.mdpi.com/2673-466X/3/2/20
5. Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). (n.d.). About ICCR. https://www.iccr.gov.in/
6. IBSA Fund. (n.d.). IBSA Fund for Development Projects. https://tcdc2.tralac.org/development-partners/91-ibsa-fund-for-development-projects.html
7. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil. (n.d.). Instituto Guimarães Rosa. https://www.institutoguimaraesrosa.itamaraty.gov.br/
8. Oxford Handbooks Online. (2025). India and South-South Cooperation. In *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*. https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/42027/chapter/391690239
9. PubMed Central. (2023). Brazil's Technical Cooperation in Health: Lessons for South-South Collaboration. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10511277/
10. UNESCO. (n.d.). International Day of Yoga. https://www.unesco.org/en/days/yoga