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“HUMANITAS V : RETROUVER NOTRE HUMANITÉ COMMUNE”

ZARAMUN

STUDY GUIDE

ECOSOC
The multiplication of poles in international trade: transformations of the global economic order

Alfonso Núñez and Diego Simón

COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION

COMMITTEE BACKGROUND

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the six main organs of the United Nations. Its mission is to promote international economic cooperation, social development, and respect for human dignity. ECOSOC coordinates the work of UN agencies, commissions, and programs related to development, trade, education, health, and labor.

UN ECOSOC IN SESSION
(MULTILATERAL DIALOGUE)

ECOSOC plays a central role in helping countries work together to reduce poverty, inequality, and economic instability. It acts as a forum where developed countries, emerging economies, and developing states can discuss global challenges and propose collective solutions.

GOAL OF THE COMMITTEE

The goal of this committee is to analyze the multiplication of economic poles in international trade and its impact on the global economic order. Delegates must design strategies that ensure economic stability, fair competition, and inclusive development. The committee should focus on placing human well-being at the center of economic policies, ensuring that globalization benefits all societies and not only a few powerful actors.

KEY TERMS

#1 GLOBAL TRADE

The exchange of goods and services between countries across the world.

#2 MULTIPOLARITY

An international system where several major powers exist and no single state dominates the global system.

#3 ECONOMIC ORDER

The set of rules, institutions, and power relations that organize the global economy.

#4 EMERGING ECONOMIES
Countries experiencing rapid growth and increasing influence in global trade and investment.

#5 SUPPLY CHAINS
The full process of producing and delivering a product, from raw materials to final consumers.

#6 GLOBALIZATION
The growing connection between countries through trade, investment, technology, and movement of people.

#7 REGULATION
Rules created by governments or international bodies to guide economic activity.

#8 COMPETITION
A situation where companies or countries seek to improve quality, innovation, or prices to be the best option.

#9 DEVELOPMENT
Economic and social progress that improves living standards and opportunities.

#10 TRADE POLICIES
Government actions that influence imports, exports, and trade relations.

#11 INVESTMENT
The use of capital to support economic growth and innovation.

#12 BRICS
A group of major emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

#13 ASEAN
The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a regional political and economic organization.

#14 HEGEMON
A country or group of countries with enough power to strongly influence others.

#15 GLOBAL ECONOMIC ORDER

The global economic order refers to the interconnected system of economic practices, institutions, and policies that shape how countries interact through trade, finance, and development at the global level. It includes international agreements, financial institutions, multinational corporations, and the balance of power between states. This order evolves over time due to technological change, globalization, and shifts in economic power.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

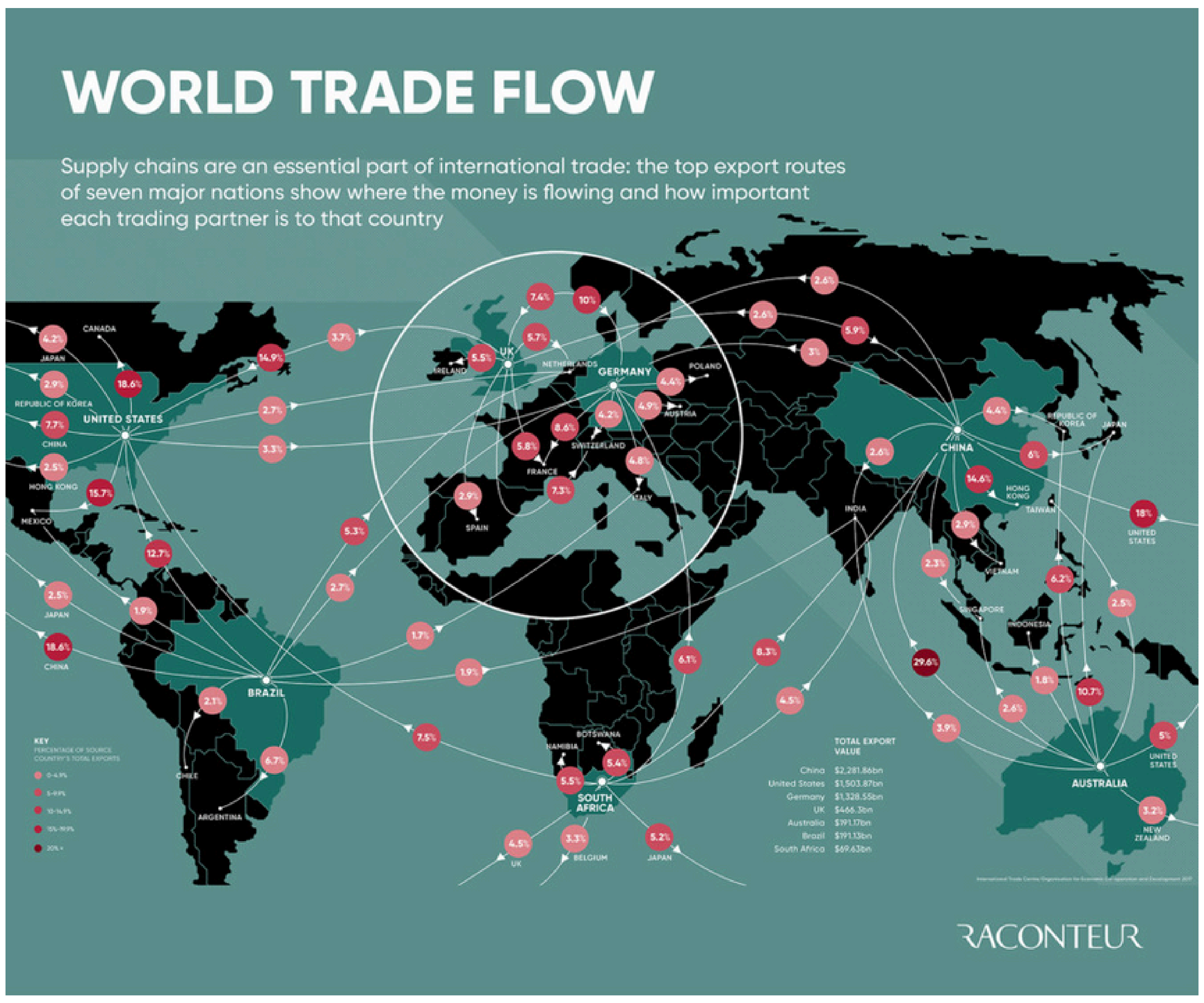
Since the end of the Cold War, the global economy has undergone deep transformation. The liberal order created after World War II, especially through the Bretton Woods system, was led mainly by the United States. Institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization promoted free trade, open markets, and economic integration as paths to growth.

This unipolar system generated global economic expansion, but it also created structural inequalities. Many developing countries remained dependent on exporting raw materials, while developed economies controlled finance, technology, and high-value production.

In the 21st century, new economic poles have emerged. China became a global manufacturing and technological power. India expanded in services and digital innovation. Brazil strengthened its role in agriculture and energy. The European Union developed a strong internal market. Regional blocs such as BRICS+ and ASEAN gained influence.

As a result, the global economy is now multipolar. Different models of globalization coexist: liberal market economies, state-capitalist systems, and hybrid models. This diversity increases competition but also creates tensions, trade disputes, and new forms of dependency.

The key challenge for ECOSOC is to ensure that this transformation serves humanity. Economic growth must translate into better education, health, employment, and environmental protection for all.



WORLD MAP OF GLOBAL TRADE FLOWS (MULTIPOLAR TRADE)

KEY ISSUES

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND EMERGING POLES

The rise of new economic powers challenges existing global institutions. Many emerging economies argue that organizations like the IMF and World Bank do not reflect today's balance of power. Reforming global governance can increase fairness, but it may also create resistance from established powers.

Without cooperation, competition between poles can lead to trade wars and economic instability.

ETHICAL STANDARDS AND EQUITY

Emerging countries often face pressure to grow quickly and become competitive. This can lead to weak labor protection, environmental damage, and social inequality.

Workers in global supply chains may face low wages and unsafe conditions.
Some states support strong international standards, while others fear these rules limit development. This creates a central ethical debate in global trade.

GARMENT FACTORY WORKERS IN BANGLADESH (HUMAN COST OF SUPPLY CHAINS)

TRADE REGULATION, MONOPOLIES, AND FAIR COMPETITION

Large multinational companies dominate key sectors such as technology, data, and digital services. This creates monopolies or oligopolies that limit competition and innovation.

One proposed solution is stronger international regulation to fight monopolies, ensure fair taxation, and protect smaller companies. Supporting local enterprises in emerging economies can help create a more balanced global market.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND ACCESS TO INNOVATION

Many innovations are protected by patents owned by companies or countries in developed regions. Emerging economies often lack access to these technologies.

Promoting fair patent systems and supporting innovation in developing countries can ensure that ideas benefit their places of origin and contribute to local development.

EDUCATION, RESEARCH, AND HUMAN CAPITAL

Access to education, research, and scientific cooperation is essential for economic development. Unequal access to universities, research funding, and technology limits opportunities for young people in many countries.

NATIONAL AUTONOMY AND ECONOMIC SOVEREIGNTY

Countries want to control their own economic decisions. This is called economic autonomy. States want to protect important sectors such as food, energy, health, and technology.

For example, a country may want to support local farmers or protect its digital data. However, strong external pressure, debt, or trade conditions can limit national autonomy.

Some countries become dependent on powerful partners for loans, technology, or markets. This can reduce their freedom to choose their own policies. The challenge is to protect autonomy while still cooperating in global trade.

All these issues show that global trade is not only about money. It is about power, fairness, and human dignity.

The main challenge is to build a global economic system that is multipolar, cooperative, and human-centered, where all countries can grow without losing their autonomy.

Investing in education and research helps create skilled labor markets and supports long-term, human-centered growth.

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS & EXISTING INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS

International trade agreements set the rules for how countries exchange goods and services. Their main goals are to reduce tariffs, simplify customs procedures, and increase cooperation between states.

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is one of the largest trade agreements in the world. It was signed by 15 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and many ASEAN countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam, and Thailand. RCEP reduces tariffs and creates common trade rules to make regional trade easier.

RCEP has helped increase trade and investment in Asia. However, it has limits. It includes weak labor and environmental protections, and smaller economies may struggle to compete with stronger industrial powers. Some critics say it benefits large companies more than workers.

Mercosur is a trade bloc in South America, including Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay. Its goal is to promote regional integration and protect local industries. Mercosur has strengthened regional trade, but political disagreements and economic differences between members often slow down decision-making.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR STANDARDS

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a UN agency that sets global labor standards. Its conventions protect workers rights, including fair wages, safe working conditions, freedom of association, and the prohibition of child labor.

Many countries around the world have signed ILO conventions. These legal texts aim to make global supply chains more ethical and human-centered. They remind states and companies that economic growth should not be based on exploitation.

However, enforcement is limited. Some countries sign the conventions but do not fully apply them. Others argue that strict labor standards increase costs and reduce competitiveness. This creates debate between economic efficiency and human dignity.

REGIONAL TRADE INITIATIVES

Regional trade initiatives help neighboring countries work together and reduce dependence on global powers.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) includes 54 African countries. Its goal is to boost intra-African trade, industrial development, and job creation. AfCFTA can help African countries gain stronger positions in global trade.

However, challenges remain. Infrastructure gaps, unequal development, and lack of skilled labor can limit its success. Without investment in education and research, some countries may not benefit equally.

The Pacific Alliance, formed by Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru, promotes open markets and trade with Asia-Pacific countries. It has increased investment and trade, but it also raises concerns about social inequality and dependence on exports.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) includes Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman. It supports economic integration and diversification beyond oil. While it increases regional cooperation, its benefits are not always shared equally among all populations.

In conclusion, all these legal frameworks show that trade rules can support cooperation and development. However, they also have limits and can increase inequality if social protections are weak.

This is why ECOSOC must consider how to improve these agreements so that global trade serves people, fairness, and long-term development, not only economic power.

ROLES OF MAJOR COUNTRIES AND STAKEHOLDERS

SOURCE COUNTRIES (EMERGING ECONOMIES)

Source countries are states that export capital, technology, goods, or infrastructure projects to other regions. Emerging economies such as China, India, and Brazil play an increasingly important role in global trade. These countries seek influence and economic growth. However, they face criticism about transparency, environmental damage, and unequal partnerships.

TRANSIT AND DESTINATION COUNTRIES

Transit and destination countries like the United States, Germany, and Japan are major importers, exporters, and logistics hubs. They shape global supply chains and trade standards. These countries influence rules, quality standards, and investment flows. However, their policies can also create pressure on weaker economies that depend on access to their markets.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND NGOS

Civil society includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, consumer groups, and chambers of commerce. They do not make trade rules, but they influence decisions by monitoring and reporting problems.

NGOs expose poor working conditions in factories in Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Ethiopia. Trade unions defend workers' rights in global supply chains. Environmental organizations warn about pollution and deforestation linked to trade in Brazil, Indonesia, and Congo Basin countries.

Civil society gives a voice to workers and communities. However, their influence is often limited compared to governments and multinational companies.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (IGOS)

Intergovernmental organizations help coordinate global economic rules and cooperation.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) manages trade rules and resolves disputes between countries.
The International Monetary Fund (IMF) provides financial support to countries in economic crisis, such as Argentina or Sri Lanka, but its conditions are often controversial.
The World Bank funds development projects in education, health, and infrastructure in developing countries.

While IGOs support stability and cooperation, many countries argue that they must be reformed to better represent emerging economies and protect social development.

So, each actor plays a different role in the global economic system. Their actions can support development, but they can also create dependency and inequality.
This is why cooperation, regulation, and human-centered policies are essential in a multipolar world where every country and every population matters.

CASE STUDIES

BRICS TRADE EXPANSION AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The expansion of trade among BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) has deeply changed global trade patterns. These countries are no longer only regional actors; they are global economic poles with strong influence over developing and emerging economies.

China invests in infrastructure, ports, railways, and energy projects in countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Peru, and Serbia.

India has strengthened trade relations in pharmaceuticals, digital services, and education with Bangladesh, Nepal, Kenya, Nigeria, and Vietnam.

Brazil plays a key role in global food security, exporting agricultural products to China, the European Union, the Middle East, and several African countries.

South Africa acts as a trade and financial hub for Southern Africa, connecting Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique to global markets.

Supporters argue that BRICS cooperation gives countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America more choices and reduces dependence on Western markets.

But, is this cooperation or new dependency ?

BRICS countries present themselves as alternatives to Western economic dominance. They offer infrastructure, loans, and trade opportunities to developing regions. However, these actions are not neutral.

- China finances ports, roads, and railways in countries such as Kenya, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Ethiopia, and Peru. While these projects improve infrastructure, they often create high levels of debt. When countries cannot repay, they may lose control over strategic assets or be forced to accept political and economic conditions.
- India expands digital and pharmaceutical trade with Bangladesh, Nepal, Kenya, and Nigeria, but smaller partners may become dependent on Indian technology and markets.
- Brazil exports agricultural products worldwide, but large-scale agribusiness can harm local farmers and ecosystems in partner countries.
- South Africa, as a regional hub, can strengthen neighboring economies, but it can also dominate regional markets, limiting competition.

This case raises a key question: Is South-South cooperation a path to equality, or a new form of dependency?

UNITED STATES–EUROPEAN UNION TRADE RELATIONS AND GLOBAL IMPACT

On the one hand, the United States and the European Union are two of the largest economic actors in the world. Their trade relations influence not only their own economies, but also many other countries connected to their markets.

Disputes over industrial subsidies, environmental standards, and technology policies affect global supply chains. For example:

Germany, France, Italy, and Spain depend on exports and global manufacturing chains. Mexico and Canada, through USMCA, are deeply linked to the US economy. Japan and South Korea rely on stable trade relations with both the US and the EU. Developing countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, Vietnam, and Bangladesh depend on access to US and EU markets for textiles, agriculture, and manufactured goods.

When the US and EU disagree, smaller economies often suffer from uncertainty, stricter rules, or reduced market access.

This case shows how competition between allies can still affect global equity and raises questions about responsibility toward weaker trade partners.

On the other hand, the United States and the European Union often promote themselves as defenders of fair trade, democracy, and human rights. However, their economic power also creates pressure on others.

Trade disputes over subsidies, technology, and environmental rules affect not only the US and EU, but also countries such as Mexico, Canada, Morocco, Tunisia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Turkey. Strict standards can improve labor and environmental protection, but they can also act as hidden trade barriers that poorer countries struggle to meet. Subsidies in the US and EU can damage farmers and industries in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia by making local products less competitive.

This case shows that even value-based trade can create inequality if power is not balanced.

AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (AFCFTA)

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) includes 54 African countries, making it one of the largest free trade areas in the world.

Countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Egypt, Morocco, and South Africa aim to boost regional trade, industrialization, and job creation.

For landlocked and least developed countries like Niger, Chad, Malawi, and Uganda, AfCFTA offers access to larger markets without relying only on external powers.

However, challenges remain and internal inequalities must be addressed :

-Poor infrastructure in countries such as South Sudan or the Central African Republic
-Stronger economies like Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, and Morocco may benefit more than smaller or poorer states such as Niger, Malawi, or Sierra Leone.
-Without investment in education, research, and infrastructure, some countries may remain exporters of raw materials.
-External actors (EU, China, Gulf States) may still dominate African markets through unequal investment and ownership.

This case highlights how regional cooperation can support human development, but only if investments in infrastructure, education, and research are included. Regional integration may be a risk since it can reproduce inequality if social policies are ignored.

ASEAN AND ASIA-PACIFIC INTEGRATION

ASEAN includes countries with very different levels of development:

- High-income economies like Singapore
- Middle-income countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines
- Developing countries like Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar

Through agreements such as RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a large trade agreement between countries in Asia and the Pacific that aims to make trade easier by reducing tariffs and rules, which helps member countries trade more with each other and strengthen their economic cooperation) ASEAN has become a major global manufacturing and trade hub. These countries are deeply connected to China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand.

ASEAN has benefited greatly from global supply chains and foreign investment : Countries like Vietnam, Cambodia, and Bangladesh attract factories because of low labor costs.

However, while this creates jobs, it often leads to poor working conditions, weak labor rights, and environmental damage and wealthier ASEAN members like Singapore and Malaysia benefit more from high-value services, increasing regional inequality. So, while economic growth has reduced poverty in many areas, inequality remains high, especially for rural workers and young people.

AFCFTA SIGNING CEREMONY – REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND AUTONOMY

This case shows how economic growth without social regulation can harm human dignity and allows debate on whether regional trade integration can balance growth with social justice.

SMALL STATES, EMERGING ECONOMIES, AND GLOBAL INCLUSION

Smaller and emerging economies also play an important role in global trade:

- Chile and Peru export minerals and agricultural products to Asia.
- Turkey acts as a bridge between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.
- The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia invest globally in energy, logistics, and technology.
- Norway and Switzerland influence global finance and trade rules despite small populations.
- Island states such as Fiji, Maldives, and Jamaica depend heavily on trade and are vulnerable to global shocks. They also suffer from climate change and global crises they did not cause.
- Landlocked countries like Bolivia, Laos, and Chad face high transport costs and limited market access.
- Gulf countries invest abroad to diversify their economies, but their investments can increase dependency in recipient countries.

These countries show that size does not determine importance and underlines the need for global rules that protect the weakest actors. Global trade decisions affect everyone, and every country has a legitimate voice in shaping the economic order.

WHY THESE CASE STUDIES MATTER

Together, these case studies show that:

The global economy is truly multipolar. Power shifts affect all regions: air competition, regulation of monopolies, protection of innovation, and access to education and research.

This debate is not about choosing winners, but about ensuring that every country and every population matters in the global economic system.

The international community must fight monopolies and excessive market concentration, prevent debt-based dependency and economic coercion, protect intellectual property and innovation in emerging countries, guarantee access to education, research, and technology for all and ensure that trade serves people, not domination.

Economic cooperation is never neutral. When power is unequal, trade can become controlled.

The central question of this debate is not who invests more, but who benefits, who decides, and who depends. That is why every country matters in shaping a more human, fair, and truly multipolar global economic order.

CONCLUSION

The multiplication of poles in international trade shows that the global economic order is deeply changing. Economic power is no longer concentrated in a single country or region. Instead, many actors now influence global trade, including emerging economies, regional blocs, and smaller states. This transformation creates new opportunities for cooperation, innovation, and development, but it also brings serious challenges such as inequality, dependency, and economic pressure on weaker countries.

For the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the central challenge is to ensure that a multipolar economic system remains human-centered. Trade and investment should not only increase economic growth, but also improve living conditions, protect human dignity, and support sustainable development. A fair global economy must guarantee access to education, decent work, innovation, and social protection, while respecting the autonomy of each country. Economic policies must serve people, not only power or profit.

TIPS FOR THE DEBATE

Delegates should begin by clearly understanding their country's position in the global economic system. Some countries are major economic powers, others are emerging economies, and many are developing or vulnerable states. Each position brings different interests, challenges, and responsibilities. Delegates should reflect on how multipolar trade affects their country's development, autonomy, and population.

During the debate, it is essential to always connect economic policies to their human impact. Trade agreements, investment flows, and regulations affect workers, farmers, students, and small businesses. Linking economic decisions to education, employment, health, and environmental protection will strengthen arguments and keep the debate focused on humanity.

Delegates should also balance cooperation and national autonomy. Global trade requires cooperation, but it should not create dependency or reduce a country's freedom to choose its own policies. Asking who benefits from trade, who sets the rules, and who carries the risks will help reveal power imbalances and hidden forms of control.

Using concrete examples from the case studies is strongly encouraged. Referring to BRICS investments, AfCFTA integration, US–EU trade disputes, global supply chains, or the situation of small and vulnerable states will make arguments clearer and more convincing. Delegates should also consider solutions such as fighting monopolies, protecting innovation in emerging economies, expanding access to education and research, and strengthening fair regulation.

Finally, respect for all voices is essential. A multipolar world means that no country is insignificant. Listening to different perspectives and seeking inclusive compromises will lead to more realistic and effective solutions. A successful debate will aim to build a fair, cooperative, and human global economic order where every country and every population matters.

FURTHER RESSOURCES

OFFICIAL UNITED NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION DOCUMENTS

United Nations Charter : https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) : https://sdgs.un.org/goals

UNCTAD–World Investment Report: https://unctad.org/publication/world-investment-report-2025

WTO – World Trade Report:
https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/publications_e/wtr25_e.htm

ILO – Conventions on Labor Standards : https://www.ilo.org/international-labour-standards

World Bank–Global Economic Prospects:
https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects

ADDITIONAL UN AND INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

IMF – World Economic Outlook : https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO

OECD–Global Trade and Development : https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/trade.html

UNDP – Human Development Reports : https://hdr.undp.org

ARTICLES AND ANALYSIS

Council on Foreign Relations – Global Trade & Multipolarity : https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker

Brookings Institution – Global Economy : https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Brookings-Global-brochure-web.pdf

The Economist – Special Reports on Global Trade : https://www.economist.com/special-report

EDUCATIONAL YOUTUBE VIDEOS (CLEAR, ENGAGING, RELIABLE)

"The New Global Economic Order" – DW News : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Z_56-BOpcQ

"Is China Trapping Countries in Debt?" – Vox : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_-QDEWwSkP0

"Globalization Explained" – TED-Ed : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJ0nFD19eT8

FINAL NOTE FOR DELEGATES

Delegates are encouraged to use these resources to:

- Understand different economic perspectives
- Identify hidden power relations in trade
- Connect economic policies with human development
- Prepare strong, well-informed positions for debate

A multipolar world requires knowledge, responsibility, and cooperation.