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A new architecture of solidarity: The Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty in an age of weakened multilateralism

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Abstract

Motivation: The persistence of hunger and poverty amid deepening global inequality and declining multilateral cooperation underscores the need for new models of international solidarity. The Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, launched during Brazil's presidency of the G20 in 2024, represents a significant innovation in global governance. It responds to widespread frustration with fragmented aid systems and the erosion of trust in traditional multilateral institutions. This analysis of its emergence offers insights into how middle-ranking powers can advance development agendas within a fractured international order, as well as the risks and limitations involved.

Purpose: This study seeks to explain the political, geopolitical, and institutional conditions that enabled the creation of the Global Alliance. It asks how Brazil's foreign policy activism, combined with systemic crises in multilateralism, produced a governance model that redefines collective action at the global level against hunger and poverty.

Approach and Methods: The article employs a qualitative and interpretative approach, combining literature review and document analysis of policy documents. It also draws on the authors' previous roles as part of the Global Alliance coordination group. This mixed analytical-empirical perspective allows for a grounded examination of Brazil's leadership strategy and the Alliance's architecture within the broader context of declining multilateralism.

Findings: The study finds that the Alliance's success lies in its pragmatic and flexible governance design. It mobilizes existing yet underused resources through a matchmaking mechanism linking national policy demands with international partners. By avoiding the creation of new bureaucracies or financial commitments, it has secured broad political support. However, its reliance on voluntary cooperation exposes it to geopolitical risks and potential co-optation.

Policy Implications: The Alliance exemplifies a "post-aid" approach to development cooperation, based on coordination, evidence-based

policy-making, and shared ownership. Policy-makers should support such adaptive, coalition-based mechanisms that improve effectiveness within the constraints of fragmented global governance. Its early performance will determine whether this experiment can serve as a template for revitalizing international solidarity in the post-multilateral era.

KEYWORDS
G20, global governance, hunger, multilateralism, poverty, South–South cooperation

1 | INTRODUCTION

The Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty emerged as the flagship initiative of Brazil's presidency of the G20 in 2024. This article aims to contribute to a better understanding of this new arrangement in global governance by addressing the following core question: what international political conditions enabled the emergence of the Alliance? This question is particularly relevant given that the Alliance was conceived and launched in an unpromising geopolitical and geoeconomic environment—one defined by rising international tensions, structural crises in multilateralism, fragmented approaches to global cooperation, and a major war in Europe.

The Alliance was launched in response to alarming figures: between 713 million and 757 million people—approximately 9.5% of the world's population—suffered from hunger in 2023, according to FAO statistics (FAO et al., 2024). This represented an increase of 152 million people compared to 2019, the year before the COVID-19 pandemic. This general setback occurred amid significant regional inequalities. For instance, over the same period, global food insecurity increased from 25% to 28.9% of the world's population, but in Africa it rose from 51.2% to 58%. In Asia, despite strong performances by China and some other countries, food insecurity rose from 21.4% to 24.8%. Even in North America and Europe, the share of food-insecure people grew from 6.9% to 8.7%. The only region to show a positive trend was Latin America and the Caribbean, with food insecurity decreasing from 28.9% to 28.2%, after peaking at 34.6% in 2020. The Latin American results were notably impacted by Brazil's good performance on its way to its second exit from the FAO's Hunger Map, as confirmed in 2025. Globally, some advances were registered in the rate of exclusive breastfeeding among infants under six months of age, as well as the decline in the prevalence of stunting among children under five years of age alongside a decline in the prevalence of wasting. However, progress has been uneven across regions and countries, and trends remain off track to meet the 2030 goals (FAO et al., 2024).

Progress on monetary poverty stalled, according to the World Bank (Alfani et al., 2025). In 2018, 11.2% of the world's population lived below the extreme poverty line. In 2020, this increased to 11.4%, something that had not happened for decades, and fell to 10.3% in 2024, affecting around 839 million people. Regional inequality is even more striking than is the case with hunger. In 2024, the share of population under that line was 46% in Africa, followed by the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (12%), South Asia (6%), Latin America and the Caribbean (4%), East Asia and the Pacific (2%), Europe and Central Asia (1%), and North America (1%) (Gammarano, 2025). In terms of both hunger and poverty, states under fragile, conflict, and violence-affected (FCV) situations faced the worst conditions.

In fact, numerous international initiatives have been launched in recent years to combat hunger and poverty. A recent survey in the field of food and nutrition security alone identified 14 new initiatives between 2009 and 2024 (Instituto Fome Zero, 2025). On the one hand, this proliferation can be seen as a positive sign that hunger has gained prominence on the international agenda. On the other hand, it has fuelled perceptions that international cooperation mechanisms are failing to deliver coherent and robust responses, often resulting in overlap, inefficiencies, and political fatigue. These criticisms are well known in academic debates—for instance,

in those related to regime complexes (Margulis, 2013)—and are increasingly echoed by practitioners (Kofi Annan Commission, 2025). This is the scenario in which the Global Alliance emerges.

By situating the Alliance within these ongoing debates, this paper offers an initial analytical contribution to the literature on global governance. At the same time, it seeks to contribute to international practitioners by offering a reflection on the institutional design and scope of action of the Alliance. Our methodology combines analysis of the literature on multilateralism and governance crises with "participant observation" (Krohling Peruzzo, 2017). Both authors served as members of the Joint Task Force for the Establishment of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, under Brazil's G20 presidency in 2024, enabling direct participation and privileged observation of the negotiation process, internal debates, and institutional design decisions. As such, the methodology offers both empirical insights and analytical depth.

This article is structured as follows: in Section 2, we describe the institutional characteristics and operational dynamics of the Alliance. Section 3 analyses the current crisis of multilateralism and international governance, arguing that they are both barriers and opportunities for international cooperation. In Section 4, we turn to the role of Brazil's foreign policy and the influence of key individuals in shaping the initiative. By way of conclusion, Section 5 offers a reflection on the Alliance's strengths and limitations as a mechanism for collective action in a rapidly shifting global order.

2 | INSTITUTIONAL FEATURES AND OPERATIONAL DYNAMICS OF THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE

The Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty was proposed by the Brazilian presidency of the G20 and formally launched during the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro in November 2024. The conceptual foundations of the Alliance echo the thinking of Brazilian intellectual and politician Josué de Castro, who argued that hunger is not merely a biological phenomenon, but a social and political construct rooted in structural injustices (de Castro, 2008). In this spirit, the Alliance adopts a systemic approach: it seeks to tackle hunger by addressing its underlying causes: poverty, social exclusion, and the absence of social protection. Its goal is to go beyond emergency food and monetary aid and support large-scale public policies that promote social justice and guarantee the right to food.

The Alliance is not an international organization in a strict legal sense. Rather, it functions as a platform that facilitates international cooperation. Its membership, at the time of writing, includes 107 countries, 31 international organizations, 14 financial institutions and 53 foundations and civil organizations. Although private companies are not eligible for membership, philanthropic foundations linked to the private sector may participate. The institutional design was deliberately kept light and flexible to avoid replicating the bureaucratic complexities of existing multilateral institutions. Its operational costs are estimated at USD 18 million up to 2030, and Brazil has committed to contribute half of this amount.

The Alliance has two key bodies: the Support Mechanism (SM) and the Board of Champions (BC). The SM, hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), serves as the Alliance's secretariat. It is tasked with facilitating cooperation, primarily through "matchmaking," the process of identifying synergies between countries' demands for policy solutions and potential partners able to offer financial or technical support.

The SM has a core team of 15 salaried employees, including administrative staff and experts on hunger and poverty. Most of the staff are based at the FAO headquarters in Rome, with additional liaison offices in Brasília, hosted by the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), and in Washington D.C., at the World Bank, to liaise with other multilateral development banks and financial institutions.

The BC is made up of high-profile individuals nominated by Alliance members to provide strategic guidance, endorse key rules and procedures, and unlock stalled negotiations. These champions act in a personal capacity but represent the interests and credibility of the institutions that appointed them. The Core Group, a subset of the BC,

supports and advances its work. It comprises two Co-Chairs and up to six Vice-Chairs from among its members, with the Director of the SM serving as an ex officio Vice-Chair.

At the core of the Alliance's operational logic is the matchmaking service provided by the SM. When a member country requests support for the implementation of a specific national policy or programme, the SM identifies potential international partners—governments, multilateral institutions, or foundations—that have expressed interest in supporting such policies elsewhere.

To facilitate this process, the Alliance has developed a registry structured around three pillars:

- **National Pillar**: composed exclusively of countries that request and/or offer support for domestic implementation.
- **Knowledge Pillar**: includes actors that offer technical cooperation, research, or policy design assistance.
- **Financial Pillar**: includes actors willing to offer financial resources.

All members are required to submit information on the sectors and policy instruments they are interested in implementing or supporting. While the National Pillar is dedicated to states and regional organizations such as the African Union and the European Union, the other pillars are open to both state and non-state actors. This information is publicly accessible on the Alliance's website (https://globalallianceagainsthungerandpoverty.org).

The Alliance's credibility hinges on the **Policy Basket**, a curated repository of evidence-based policies and programmes. Only policies that have been successfully implemented and evaluated can be listed in the Basket. For example, Brazil and China have submitted models of microcredit programmes for low-income populations. Member countries can only request support for policies listed in the Basket, reducing risk and uncertainty for potential partners and ensuring alignment with established best practices.

From the G20 Ministerial Meeting held in July 2024 in Rio de Janeiro, when the Alliance's governance structure was unanimously endorsed by G20 members and invitees and therefore opened for membership, until the inauguration of the Alliance's SM at the FAO headquarters in Rome in October 2025, the Policy Basket was curated by Brazil's IPEA, which validated submissions based on their effectiveness and replicability. Now, this work is the responsibility of the Alliance. This process avoids duplication of effort and helps countries, especially the most vulnerable, avoid "reinventing the wheel." The Policy Basket also provides a concrete focal point around which international cooperation can be organized, based on shared interests and tangible policy tools.

The Alliance helps developing countries by providing a service that prevents them from knocking on multiple doors to find donors or technical partners—a resource-intensive process with low success rates. The matchmaking function now streamlines this process by providing free support from multilingual professionals who act as impartial brokers. Aspirant countries are presented with a menu of cooperation options and are supported in negotiating the most suitable agreements with potential partners. This reduces information asymmetries and lowers entry barriers to international cooperation, especially for the poorest and non-English-speaking countries.

But why would donor countries or organizations participate in this arrangement, especially considering that the G20 does not include low-income countries? The answer lies not only in improved information flows, but also in the crises of multilateralism and governance, combined with Brazil's decision to use the G20 presidency as an opportunity window to advance one of its core agendas. In Section 3, we explore the crises and in Section 4 we consider Brazilian foreign policy, highlighting the role of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Overall, it can be affirmed that the institutional features and operational dynamics of the Global Alliance proved attractive to countries and institutions beyond the G20, since it was officially inaugurated with 148 founding members, including 82 countries and the major multilateral development banks (Presidency of the Republic of Brazil, 2024). This is significant because the Alliance originated within a club of major economies and there were expectations as to whether developing and least developed countries, those most in need of such an initiative, would view it as promising and choose to join.

2.1 | The first set of matchmakings

Before delving into the analysis of international governance, it is important to note the Alliance's first round of matchmakings, announced in November 2025 at the First Leaders' Meeting of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty in Doha (Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, 2025). The origins of this process date back to March 2024, when the Task Force decided to establish six engagement groups to explore areas of potential common interest, namely: cash transfers and social protection; school meals; maternal and early childhood health; socioeconomic inclusion; support for family farming; and access to water. The outcomes of the Sprint process were announced at the G20 Social Summit in November 2024 (Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, 2024). Following this, the interim SM continued to facilitate dialogue among members and structured a matchmaking process that began with the implementing country identifying which policy instruments from the Policy Basket it wished to use to develop or strengthen its own policies and programmes. Then, at the First Leaders' Meeting, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya, and Zambia announced their implementation plans, supported by coordinated financing and technical assistance from members of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty. Benin, Indonesia, Palestine, and other countries also indicated that they were preparing their implementation plans (Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, 2025).

The cases of Haiti and Palestine highlight one of the main challenges of the Global Alliance: engaging with FCV states. As the Alliance's purpose is to support the implementation of public policies, the effectiveness of this model is necessarily uneven. Poverty and hunger tend to be more severe when the state capacity is weak, political authority is contested, and development gains are easily reversed. In such contexts, the Alliance's emphasis on government-led implementation faced significant constraints. In FCV contexts, the success of public policies could also depend on complementary peacebuilding efforts, humanitarian action, and flexible financing instruments.

This does not, however, render the model irrelevant. Rather, its contribution is likely to be indirect and incremental: supporting pockets of institutional capacity, facilitating regional or cross-border learning on food security and social protection, and helping to maintain policy continuity during periods of political volatility. Expectations of rapid impact must therefore be tempered, and concrete experiences in these settings will offer valuable learning opportunities.

3 | CRISES OF MULTILATERALISM AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The intensification of food crises—driven by climate change, armed conflicts, and global economic shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic—has brought hunger and poverty back to the forefront of the global agenda. A 2023 report by the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General highlighted severe setbacks across several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In some ways, the Global Alliance has benefited from this unfortunate circumstance as it addressed issues with broad global legitimacy and political resonance. However, setbacks in addressing hunger and poverty alone do not fully explain the emergence of the Alliance, nor its distinctive features.

Paradoxically, we argue that the broader crises of multilateralism and international governance have created fertile ground for the emergence of new governance arrangements like the Alliance. For decades, scholars and practitioners have debated the declining effectiveness, legitimacy, and cohesion of international regimes and organizations, as well as reform initiatives to cope with these problems (de Lima & Albuquerque, 2020; Duncan, 2015; Graham, 2023). In the agri-food domain, criticism of the FAO dates back to the 1950s—notably by Josué de Castro, the eminent Brazilian academic and politician who initially championed the FAO but later concluded that powerful countries lacked genuine interest in addressing world hunger due to conflicts with their commercial priorities and geopolitical interests (Graziano da Silva, 2023).

At the 1955 Bandung Conference, developing countries criticized the inadequacy of international cooperation for development and called for alternative governance models, laying the groundwork for the principles of

South–South cooperation. In the 21st century, the World Trade Organization (WTO)—once the flagship institution of post-Cold War neoliberal order—has operated in a state of near inertia, unable to adapt to the very economic dynamics it helped unleash, amid a new wave of criticism against global governance. The second Trump administration intensified the pessimism.

More broadly, the UN system increasingly fails in its core function: to provide coordinated, legitimate, and effective collective action. If we understand multilateralism as a diffuse commitment on the part of member states of the international community to act collectively in pursuit of shared goals—even when short-term gains and losses are unequally distributed (Keohane, 1986; Ruggie, 1992)—then the UN's failures become evident. Instead of decision-making based on inclusive deliberation, multilateral institutions are being bypassed by ad hoc negotiations or unilateral initiatives from powerful states or small coalitions.

As Robert Cox (1981) warned, multilateral institutions are not neutral, but rather reflect and reinforce prevailing power structures. When these structures become unstable, the institutions themselves lose legitimacy and effectiveness. Today, more than ever, multilateralism is under siege from nationalism, short-termism, and a renewed emphasis on raw power. Meanwhile, as a new multipolar world emerges, the dynamics of multilateralism call for a profound rethinking of the institutional and political foundations of global cooperation.

One perspective for addressing the limitations of multilateralism is that of global governance, which gained prominence by the end of the Cold War amid growing demands for reform of the international order. While broadly criticized for its lack of conceptual precision, the concept was very much used in practice. In Offe's (2009) critical assessment of the term, it emerges from the perception that "the hierarchical instruments of state coercion have lost much of their effectiveness," with the result that "the success of public policies depend [sic] on voluntaristic networks of *governance*," composed also by non-state actors.

Governance, therefore, encompasses a broader scope than multilateralism, provided that the latter is understood as a state-centric domain. Indeed, since the 1990s, we have witnessed the increasing and uneven participation of non-state actors in international relations, with the prominence of power and influence of private corporations. But that, too, was insufficient to make international cooperation more effective in tackling global problems. After all, while increased non-state participation is an intrinsic feature of governance, the important question still remains as to how power is exercised within governance arrangements—and with what consequences.

Hale and Held (2018) argued that what they call "gridlocks" increasingly stymie international cooperation, thus jeopardizing international governance. These impasses stem from failures to address the inequalities and disruptions caused by globalization, which have in turn empowered populist, nationalist, and anti-globalization forces. Such forces tend to be sceptical of international cooperation, undermining the political will necessary for collective responses. The resulting vicious cycle is one of weak cooperation, growing disillusionment, and further paralysis.

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the fragility of global cooperation. Rather than a coordinated and equitable response, the world witnessed vaccine hoarding, medical supply nationalism, and the systematic exclusion of low-income countries (Borges et al., 2022). Global governance, including multilateral institutions, failed to act with speed or legitimacy, deepening public scepticism about the international system and creating fertile ground for self-help attitudes, mercantilism, and geopolitical rivalry.

In the context of these challenges, the Brazilian-led G20 Task Force that designed the Alliance deliberately distanced itself from theoretical debates about the decline of multilateralism. Instead, it focused pragmatically on governance gaps. This mirrors Brazil's broader G20 strategy, which sought to isolate geopolitical tensions in order to advance concrete economic and development agendas. With the Alliance, the goal was similar: to work with what was still functional and promising in international cooperation, focusing on the implementation of evidence-based public policies.

Rather than straightforwardly resisting the broader trend, the Alliance opted to embrace what Graham (2023) describes as "minilateralism," the formation of subgroups within larger multilateral settings to pursue specific objectives. While this departs from the original spirit of multilateralism, it reflects the practical constraints of

today's international order. Similarly, Acharya (2016) has argued that fragmentation in global governance can be constructive when it reflects the weakening of traditional powers, allowing space for new actors and models of cooperation. In this case, the governance gap gave space to the Brazilian leadership within the G20.

For G20 negotiators, the focus on expanding and accelerating the implementation of national-level policies made practical sense. Many had first-hand experience of the limitations of current development cooperation models, which often result in small-scale fragmented projects with high transaction costs and limited impact. As Pessina (2017) and others have noted, frustration with bureaucratic burdens and underwhelming outcomes has long been a source of fatigue among both donors and implementers. Fundamental for strengthening consensus around this perspective was the report commissioned from the ODI during Brazil's G20 presidency (Watkins et al., 2024), which strongly argued the case for a new, more agile mechanism. One of the strongest conclusions of the report was that

> There is no shortage of financing vehicles to deliver support to governments seeking to accelerate progress on poverty and hunger. What is in short supply is strategic coordination and new and additional financing. If anything, there are too many vehicles delivering too little finance through a fragmented architecture that imposes high transaction costs on governments
>
> (Watkins et al., 2024, p. 15).

The G20 underlined this diagnosis of the deficiencies posed by fragmentation in the Global Alliance's inception document, *United against hunger and poverty*, which was unanimously adopted:

> Fragmentation can pose aid coordination challenges such as increased transaction costs, unsustained and sometimes conflicting policies, and could stretch recipient countries' capacity to manage diverse requirements and implement coordinated policies. This makes it vital to promote recipient countries' ownership and leadership by creating an enabling environment and a long-term framework for international financial flows, which will help streamline aid mechanisms. It will also facilitate coordination and continuity amongst diverse forms of development cooperation to ensure they are harmonized and maximize their contribution to long-term national development.
>
> (G20, 2024, p. 14)

Combined with a growing perception that traditional institutions like the UN and World Bank are increasingly slow and ineffective, these factors helped solidify support for the Alliance.

Crucially, the Alliance was not designed to demand large new financial commitments. In a time of declining official development assistance and fiscal tightening, its appeal lies in its pragmatism: mobilizing and coordinating existing, but scattered, resources. This efficiency-oriented model avoids the high costs of creating new institutions and appeals to both fiscal conservatives and politically cautious governments.

In addition, by working with existing tools and focusing on tangible, immediate results, the Alliance became especially attractive to G20 members and other stakeholders. It offers a lean, outcome-oriented model that complements, rather than replaces, existing structures. This approach fosters synergies, aligns with current political constraints, and facilitates broader buy-in across sectors. Civil society and philanthropies can be members of the Alliance in its knowledge and finance pillars, thus opening space for the participation of non-state actors.

In this sense, the Alliance chimes with recent debates around a growing body of scholarship led by the Global South around a "post-aid world." These debates observe that there is a gradual erosion of the centrality of aid in development finance and governance, along with a shift toward coordination, policy ownership, and diversified sources of support. Post-aid refers to a context in which official development assistance (ODA) is no longer the dominant lever shaping national development strategies, and where recipient governments increasingly seek cooperation models that emphasize mutual accountability, policy alignment, and domestic institutional capacity

(Gulrajani, 2022). This perspective is analytically distinct from earlier critiques of aid dependency associated with "Dutch disease" (whereby aid money harms the recipient country's economy) or weakened accountability (Moyo, 2009), which often rested on contested empirical claims and/or normatively anti-aid positions. Instead, recent post-aid analyses focus more on political economy transformations: declining aid volumes relative to needs, tighter donor conditionalities, and the growing importance of domestic resources, South–South cooperation, remittances, climate finance, and philanthropic actors in shaping development trajectories.

Seen through this lens, the Global Alliance can be interpreted as an early institutional response to post-aid conditions rather than a rejection of aid per se. Its design reflects the constraints facing many Global South governments: limited access to concessional finance, high transaction costs associated with fragmented aid architectures, and diminished bargaining power in a fiscally constrained global environment. Although it is plausible that some governments engage with the Alliance partly to secure external support, the form of that engagement is revealing. The Alliance's design does not revolve around donor pledges, conditional transfers, or new financial instruments. Instead, it prioritizes matchmaking around nationally defined policy demands, coordination of existing resources, and the diffusion of evidence-based public policies. This reflects a shift from "aid effectiveness" to "development effectiveness without aid centrality," and with the argument that many African and Latin American states are actively seeking to escape the political and epistemic asymmetries embedded in traditional aid relationships (Lopes, 2024). In this sense, the Alliance's emphasis on co-ownership, voluntary participation, and policy implementation suggests not simply adaptation to a harsher aid environment, but experimentation with a governance model shaped by post-aid realities.

An additional feature that supports a post-aid interpretation of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty is the absence of clear Global North dominance in its governance and agenda setting. While Global North governments and institutions are present, they do not occupy the traditional donor role of defining priorities, imposing conditionalities, or exercising financial leverage over participation. Instead, the Alliance emphasizes nationally articulated policy demands, peer learning, and coordination among diverse actors, reflecting a more horizontal model of cooperation. This distinction is analytically important because post-aid dynamics are not defined by the exclusion of actors from the Global North, but by the weakening of their unilateral agenda-setting power and epistemic authority. As several scholars have argued, contemporary development cooperation increasingly reflects a strategic reassertion of policy ownership by states within the Global South in a context of constrained aid flows and fragmented global governance (Bhattacharya et al., 2025; Gulrajani, 2022; Ghosh, 2025). Emerging multilateral initiatives often signal not a rejection of external support, but an effort to escape donor–recipient hierarchies by privileging coordination, sovereignty, and political visibility over financial transfers.

4 | FOREIGN POLICY AND THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS

International relations are shaped not only by structural factors but also by the influence of individuals, including leaders from the Global South who, while operating within structural constraints, exert meaningful influence over the international agenda (Ayoob, 1995). In addition to the structural elements already discussed, the role of President Lula as a policy ambassador (Porto de Oliveira, 2019) in reviving the agenda of eradicating hunger and poverty must therefore be acknowledged. Brazil has strong and widely recognized credentials in the fight against hunger and poverty, particularly during President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's previous terms in office (2003–2010). Under his leadership, the country implemented innovative and effective public policies, such as the *Bolsa Família* programme, which became an international benchmark for conditional cash transfers. By combining economic growth, minimum wage increases, and the expansion of social policies, Brazil succeeded in lifting millions out of extreme poverty and drastically reducing hunger rates—earning recognition from multilateral organizations such as the FAO and UNDP. The success of these policies inspired other countries and strengthened Brazil's standing as a key global development actor (Costa Leite et al., 2014).

Lula's return to the presidency on January 1, 2023, reaffirmed this legacy of commitment to social justice and hunger eradication, once again placing poverty reduction and the human right to food at the centre of Brazil's domestic policies and international diplomacy. In global forums, Lula has positioned himself as a spokesperson for the Global South, advocating for solidarity among nations and the construction of more equitable and less dependency-based models of cooperation. Brazil's leadership in creating and promoting the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty exemplifies this renewed activism, grounded not only in rhetoric, but in proven experience and international political mobilization capacity.

In multilateral forums, Brazil has played an active and constructive role in addressing hunger and poverty, advancing positions that reflect both its domestic experience and its solidarity with developing countries. Historically, Brazil has defended the centrality of food security in international agendas, contributing concrete proposals in spaces such as the FAO, the Committee on World Food Security and, more recently, during its presidency of the G20. Brazil was also instrumental in shaping and promoting the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, especially SDG 1 (no poverty) and SDG 2 (zero hunger, a name inspired by the Brazilian Zero Hunger Programme). Brazil has emphasized public policies for social protection, the strengthening of family farming, and South–South cooperation, promoting inclusive and sustainable models that value food sovereignty and the dignity of the most vulnerable populations.

However, this leadership was interrupted during the Temer (mid-2016–2018) and Bolsonaro (2019–2022) administrations, which marked a clear withdrawal from multilateral agendas and a discontinuation of key public policies aimed at food security, social protection, and international cooperation (Casarões & Farias, 2021; Lima et al., 2022). The Temer and Bolsonaro governments weakened essential anti-poverty programmes such as *Bolsa Família* and the Food Acquisition Programme. Temer imposed a 20-year freeze on social spending through Constitutional Amendment 95 and dismantled the Ministry of Agrarian Development. Bolsonaro exacerbated this situation by dismantling social programmes and participatory bodies such as the National Food and Nutrition Security Council (Consea), as well as by adopting a denialist stance during the pandemic, which increased food insecurity (Milhorance, 2022). Internationally, Brazil became isolated and lost prominence in multilateral efforts to combat hunger and poverty. However, it is important to recognize that bureaucratic activism and transnational networks showed the resilience and commitment of the Brazilian state in those times of retrenchment (Trajber Waisbich, 2024).

That resilience maintained networks and, following President Lula's return to power, Brazil quickly signalled its intention to reclaim a leadership role around these issues to the international community. Combating hunger and poverty was elevated to a top priority of the new administration, marked by the relaunch of flagship social programmes, the re-establishment of the Ministry of Agrarian Development and Family Farming, and a renewed assertiveness in global debates. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs re-established a Coordination for Food and Nutrition Security, which had been dismantled during the Temer administration. This reorientation was well received by other countries and international organizations, which once again began to view Brazil as a strategic partner in building inclusive and sustainable solutions to the challenges of poverty and food insecurity. As the Vice President of the World Bank stated to one of the authors during a meeting of the International Development Association in Nepal, in 2024, where Brazil's Ministry of Finance was gathering support for the Global Alliance among donor and least developed countries: "Lula's discourse has the ability to denaturalize hunger—and that pushes us to act."

Lula's individual stance, however, only gained the necessary traction to move the G20 because of Brazil's presidency of the Group. In this role, the country held significant agenda-setting power. This power was skilfully leveraged by the team that coordinated the Joint Task Force for the Establishment of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty. Within six months, the initial proposal evolved into four foundational documents endorsed by the G20 members (Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, n.d.). Agenda-setting power was exercised with restraint and flexibility, with strong efforts to incorporate contributions from negotiators and to avoid turning the red lines into collective vetoes. At the same time, a substantial part of Brazil's core vision was preserved, with a

focus on the most vulnerable populations. The links between hunger and poverty and the issues of climate change and loss of biodiversity resonated within the G20. This opened space for the Alliance's themes to be integrated into other forums, fostering cross-cutting action and coalition building, which are both essential to advancing Brazil's foreign policy interests, but also to reach more financing possibilities, as most of the funding for international cooperation now lies in the climate agenda.

5 | FINAL REMARKS

The emergence of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, spearheaded by Brazil during its G20 presidency in 2024, can be understood through the interplay of structural dynamics and political agency. One of the key structural drivers is the ongoing crisis of multilateralism, marked by the weakening of global institutions and a growing scepticism about their ability to respond to complex, transnational challenges such as hunger and poverty. Compounding this is the increasing fragmentation of global governance, which has generated a proliferation of overlapping mandates, institutional redundancies, and policy incoherence.

Amid the erosion of traditional multilateral structures, the Alliance represents an innovative response, promoting collective action without relying exclusively on formal intergovernmental mechanisms or on heavy bureaucracies, which are increasingly in decline. In this context, Brazil, a long-standing advocate for the Global South, seized a strategic opportunity to revitalize international solidarity and promote systemic transformation through pragmatic coalition-based leadership.

Another key rationale for the creation of the Alliance has been the mounting criticism of international aid dependence, a recurring concern in development debates. Several countries from the Global South, particularly in Latin America, have long challenged the asymmetrical logic of traditional cooperation frameworks, which tend to subordinate recipient countries to donor agendas. Brazil's leadership reflects a paradigmatic shift: the pursuit of more equitable partnerships rooted in national ownership, capacity building, and shared responsibility. This approach resonates with calls for a more horizontal model of international cooperation, one grounded in mutual benefit rather than unilateral transfers. In this sense, the Global Alliance's governance structure and mode of engagement indicate a departure from traditional aid logics in favour of interpreting it as an early manifestation of post-aid cooperation. The growing influence of emerging economies, especially through forums like BRICS+ and the G20, also contributed to the momentum for new approaches outside the tutelage of traditional donor institutions, while not rejecting them as valuable partners.

It is particularly noteworthy that the United States, while formally a member of the Alliance, has not played a driving role in the initiative, either under the Biden or the Trump administrations. It is also remarkable that Western countries accepted being part of an Alliance of which Russia is a founding member, and vice versa. However, by emerging within the G20 framework, the Alliance benefits from the political legitimacy of the world's largest economies, with the important exception of the United States. On the other hand, the very fast signing up of developing countries to the Alliance—which now counts more than 100 state members—is a sign that its institutional design, mission, and modus operandi are promising.

The cutting of development finance has also been a critical factor behind Brazil's proactive stance. With declining financial commitments from traditional donors, the need for alternative mechanisms to support vulnerable populations has become increasingly evident. The Global Alliance aims to fill this gap by mobilizing resources not only from traditional donor countries but also from emerging economies and philanthropic foundations. This approach broadens the landscape of development financing while reinforcing a more diverse, resilient, and inclusive vision of poverty and hunger eradication.

Yet, critical reflection and assessment of the Global Alliance is fundamental, especially given its innovative character, and will involve some well-informed "learning by doing." In this spirit, it is worth bringing up some points requiring attention. First, because it does not require significant new financial contributions, the Alliance does not

impose binding obligations on its members. Its effectiveness will thus depend heavily on political will and voluntary coordination, both of which are notoriously fragile in the current international climate. Second, the Alliance could be instrumentalized as a tool for Brazil's or other states' global projection, without necessarily producing structural change in the fight against hunger and poverty, in the sense of there being a danger that it could function more as a diplomatic showcase than as a transformative governance mechanism. Third, while the Alliance has been welcomed in its initial phase, it is important to emphasize the unfavourable global environment in which it operates. The collapse of multilateralism, the resurgence of major warfare, and the rise of nationalist and protectionist agendas have all undermined the foundations of international cooperation. As countries prioritize domestic interests and retreat from collective solutions, the prospects for coordinated responses to global challenges diminish significantly. Geopolitical tensions further erode trust and divert political attention and financial resources away from pressing development needs.

In such a context, the Alliance's ability to sustain coordinated action may be severely constrained unless it can withstand external pressures and reaffirm its commitment to international solidarity, not merely in terms of rhetoric, but also through the effective implementation and scaling-up of proven, evidence-based public policies. This, in turn, could generate a virtuous feedback loop, helping to unlock the persistent "gridlocks" of international cooperation (Hale & Held, 2018)—initially as a strategy to move "through the gridlock" via incremental innovation, and potentially as a pathway to go "beyond the gridlock," enabling more fundamental transformations in the governance of global cooperation.

However, it is worth recalling Offe's (2009) critical insight on governance: "This cooperative and consensual mode of 'getting things done' does of course not exclude, but positively implies, that behind the voluntaristic façade, actual power relations and dependencies have all the more impact" (Offe, 2009, p. 554). This caution reinforces the need for sustained high-level political commitment, a very motivated and passionate Support Mechanism, a consistent focus on the Alliance's core mission, and robust safeguards against co-optation by powerful states or corporate interests. Strengthening meaningful civil society participation is also essential to building both national and transnational legitimacy. Ultimately, the Alliance must evolve and mature to stand on its own, beyond the leadership of President Lula. Achieving these outcomes will depend largely on the Alliance's ability to deliver tangible results over the course of its initial years.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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