
INDIA - AFRICA MULTI-FACETED RELATIONS: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

People of India have always felt certain sympathy for Africa, for the dreams and aspirations of its peoples, respect for the often forgotten fact that Africa is a cradle of human civilization, a desire to participate in all of Africa's struggles against colonialism, *apartheid*, against poverty and disease. Both India and the countries of Africa have a shared historical experience, both have had common goals and visions, both have fought for noble common causes, have suffered for similar aims, and both have triumphed over similar odds. Both India and Africa have now embarked together upon a journey towards economic emancipation. In the international arena both India and Africa have common interest in building a new world order which will be more responsive to the aspirations of the developing countries. The continent of Africa, embracing one fifth of the world's land area, encompassing fifty-four independent nations and sustaining a population of about 510 million, has for many decades been a pre-eminent concern of India's foreign policy. Africa is also home to quite a few expatriate Indians. Africa, which accounts for nearly half the membership of the Non-Aligned Movement and one-third of the United Nations, with vast human and natural resources and enormous economic potential, occupies a prominent place in India's foreign policy and diplomacy, more particularly in the context of South-South cooperation. India-Africa cooperation at various levels dates back to centuries. Over the last few decades, India and Africa have been close allies in the struggle against colonialism and racial discrimination and have been privileged partners in the growth and evolution of the Non- Aligned Movement. The regions share a common commitment to the ideals of peace, non-alignment and economic justice. The present research paper highlighted India Africa multi faceted relations in various aspects

Keywords: Economic emancipation, Foreign policy, Diplomacy, Socio-political and Economic transformations.

1. Introduction:

India and Africa share historical, civilization and deep rooted relations based on trust, solidarity, and shared development priorities. These ties date back centuries through Indian Ocean trade, cultural exchanges, and enduring people-to-people contacts. The relationship was further strengthened during the 20th Century through our shared struggle against colonialism and apartheid. India's relations with South Africa date back several centuries. India was at the forefront of the international community in its support to the antiapartheid movement; it was the first country to sever trade relations with the apartheid Government (in 1946) and subsequently imposed a complete diplomatic, commercial, cultural and sports - embargo on South Africa. India worked consistently to put the issue of apartheid on the agenda of the United Nation (UN), Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and other multilateral organizations and for the imposition of comprehensive international sanctions against South Africa. The ANC maintained a representative office in New Delhi from the 1960s onwards. India actively worked for the AFRICA Fund to help sustain the struggle through support to the frontline states.

2. Research Problem:

India's relations with South Africa were restored after a gap of over four decades with the opening of a Cultural Centre in Johannesburg in May 1993. Diplomatic and consular relations with South Africa were restored in November 1993 during the visit of the then South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha to India. A Consulate General was thereafter established in Johannesburg. The Indian High Commission in Pretoria was opened in May 1994, followed by the opening of the Consulate General in Durban the same month. Since Parliament in South Africa meets in Cape Town, a permanent office of the High Commission was opened there in 1996, which has been re-designated as Consulate General of India with effect from January 2011. In addition to its High Commission in Delhi, South Africa has a Consulate General in Mumbai.

In contemporary times, India–Africa relations have evolved into a multi-faceted partnership encompassing political engagement, economic cooperation, development partnership, capacity building, cultural linkages and people to people ties. India's engagement with Africa is guided by the principles of mutual respect, equality, and a demand-driven development partnership aligned with African priorities, envisaged in the African Union's Agenda 2063.

3. Political Relations

Both countries established diplomatic relations after the end of apartheid in 1994. South African leader Nelson Mandela was awarded the Mahatma Gandhi Peace Prize and 'Bharat Ratna' by the Indian government. Both nations have also promoted sporting ties, with the Indian national cricket team and the South Africa national cricket team frequently exchanging visits and participating in cricket tournaments hosted by either country. Against the background of India's consistent support to the anti-apartheid struggle, there has been a steady consolidation of our close and friendly ties with South Africa, bilaterally and through BRICS, IBSA and other Forums. A number of bilateral agreements have been concluded between the two countries since the assumption of diplomatic relations in 1993 in diverse areas ranging from economic and commercial cooperation, defense, culture, health, human settlements, public administration, science and technology and education. India's Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC) has been a useful medium of promoting cooperation in development of human resources.

4. Recent High Level visits from India

Honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi paid an official visit to South Africa from 7-9 July 2016, and held bilateral talks with the President of South Africa Jacob Zuma. Prime Minister visited Pretoria, Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg and Durban.

- President Zuma, accompanied by Mrs Nompumelelo Ntuli-Zuma, paid a State Visit to India in June 2010. A 200 -member strong business delegation as well as senior officials accompanied President Zuma on his visit. President Zuma met the then President, Vice President and Prime Minister; the then MOS for External Affairs, Chairperson of UPA and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha called on him. Discussions reflected the fraternal warmth and affection as well as the strategic partnership that characterize bilateral relations. President Zuma and his delegation also met Indian business leaders in Mumbai in June 2010.
- President Jacob Zuma paid a visit to India in October 2016 to attend the BRICS Summit in Goa. Earlier, President Jacob Zuma led a South African delegation to India for third India-Africa Forum Summit and was accompanied by Foreign Minister Ms. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane; and paid a visit to India in March 2012 to attend 4th BRICS

Summit.

- On June 6, 2003, the Foreign Ministers of India, Brazil and South Africa met in Brasilia and agreed to set up a Dialogue Forum for regular consultations. Subsequently, in 2006, this was upgraded to Summit level; five Summits have been held so far, the last in Pretoria in October 2011. IBSA Trilateral Ministerial meeting was held in New Delhi in March 2011. 16 Sectoral Working Groups have been established in areas such as health, agriculture, education, human settlements, S&T and defence. More recently, the 8th Trilateral Commission Meeting was held in Durban on 17 October 2017. Minister of State for External Affairs General (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Retd) attended the meeting.
- South Africa was also admitted as a member of the BRICS grouping and attended the BRICS meeting held in April 2011 at Sanya, attended the BRICS Summit held in March 2012 in New Delhi and South Africa hosted the 5th Summit at Durban in March 2013. Thereafter, BRICS Summit was held in Fortaleza, Brazil in July 2014 and 7th BRICS Summit was held in the Russian city of Ufa in July 2015. India was the Chair of BRICS in 2016 and hosted the BRICS Summit in Goa in October 2016.
- India's approach to Africa is guided by the "Guiding principles for India's Engagement with Africa," articulated by Humble Prime Minister Narendra Modi in July 2018 in Kampala. These principles emphasize partnership based on African priorities which include cooperation in areas such as development partnership, capacity building, defence and maritime, trade and investment, and strong people-to-people ties.
- At the multilateral level, India actively supports Africa's enhanced representation in global governance. During its G20 Presidency, India played a key role in securing permanent membership of the African Union in the G20. India worked closely with fellow BRICS members, to include two African countries namely Egypt and Ethiopia in BRICS in the XV BRICS Summit held in Johannesburg in 2023. India has consistently advocated for Africa's representation in a reformed United Nations Security Council as per 'Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration'.

5. Methodology

The research paper adopts a historical, descriptive and analytical pattern. The study goes

through the historical documents, and government reports. Mainly, the secondary data are used for the study. Secondary data includes books, journals, articles, newspapers, internet etc. to complete the research in a successful manner.

6. Trades and Commerce

(i) India is currently Africa's fourth-largest trading partner and among its top five investors. For the FY 2024-25, trade between India and Africa amounted to USD 81.99 billion (with India's export amounting to USD 42.6 billion and India's import amounting to USD 39.2 billion).

(ii) India's exports to Africa include petroleum products, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, engineering goods, food grains, chemicals, and textiles. Imports from Africa primarily consist of crude oil, natural gas, coal, fertilizers, pulses, and precious stones. Major trading partners include Nigeria, South Africa, Angola, Egypt, Algeria, Kenya, Morocco, and Mozambique.

(iii) India's cumulative investment in Africa has reached approximately USD 80 billion between 1996 and 2025. Indian companies have established a strong presence across sectors such as energy, mining, telecommunications, manufacturing, agriculture, and services. For instance, Indian companies are involved in mining and oil & gas sectors, notably in Mozambique; fertilizers in Morocco, Senegal, and Tunisia; and new exploration activities in Egypt. Several Indian companies are involved in building and maintaining transmission lines as also telecom services. Indian infrastructure companies have built roads, bridges, power plants, public buildings, metro, and rail networks in several African countries. India's imports from SA in 2012-13 and 2013-14 declined mainly due to restrictions on gold imports by GOI and hence, the target of US\$15 billion could not be achieved. Recent bilateral trade figures are as follows:

Table: 1 Shows Recent Bilateral Trade Figures are as follows:

In million US\$	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18 Apr-Aug
India's Exports	4731.17	5106.93	5074.29	5,301.99	3588.74	3545.95	1488.30
India's Imports	9973.11	8887.89	6075.26	6,496.52	5948.42	5833.75	2688.30
Total Trade	14704.29	13994.82	11149.55	11798.51	9537.15	9379.30	4176.60

Source: *Department of Commerce, GOI*

There is substantial potential for trade growth between the two countries. Exports from India to South Africa include vehicles and components thereof, transport equipment, drugs and pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, footwear, dyes and intermediates, chemicals, textiles, rice, gems and jewelers, etc. Import from South Africa to India include gold, steam coal, copper ores and concentrates, phosphoric acid, manganese ore, aluminum ingots & other minerals.

- A 16-member delegation led by Special Secretary, Ministry of Mines visited Cape Town in August-September 2016 to participate in the 35th International Geological Congress (IGC). A 42-member delegation led by Chairman, Apparel Export Promotion Council visited Cape Town in March 2013 for India Clothing and Textile Trade Show.
- Dr. S.K. Pattanayak, Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare accompanied by a delegation visited South Africa to attend the 2nd India - South Africa Sanitary & Phytosanitary Committee meeting in Cape Town from 28 August to 4 September 2017 and also discussed market access issues with the South African side.
- The 1st India-South Africa JWG meeting on ICT was held on November 27, 2017 at Electronics Niketan, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology. South African delegation attended the GCCS 2017 held in New Delhi.

7. Indian Foreign Aid to Africa:

India made further commitments to Africa at the third India-Africa Forum Summit in 2014.

India allocated \$43 million or 7 percent of its technical cooperation budget to African countries in 2012-13, a 4 percent increase over the previous fiscal India budgeted \$63 million in aid to African countries in 2014-15, less than 5% of its total foreign aid budget and slightly higher than the previous fiscal.

8. Development Partnership

The African continent is the second largest recipient of India's overseas development assistance. India has extended more than 190 Lines of Credit (LoCs) of amount over USD 10 billion to 41 African countries, supporting projects in sectors such as power, water supply, agriculture, transport, rural electrification, and digital connectivity. So far, 220 projects worth of USD 4.5 billion have been successfully completed. Since 2015, India has provided grant assistance exceeding USD 700 million for several development projects. Establishment of 8 vocational training centers, seven (7) IT centers, and various other capacity building institutions have been set up in Africa.

India has supported agricultural development through initiatives in mechanization, irrigation, seed development, and fertilizer production, particularly in countries such as Senegal, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Ghana, and Morocco. Technology parks have been established in Rwanda, Mozambique, Ivory Coast, and Lesotho, further strengthening industrial and digital capacity.

9. Capacity Building and Human Resource

Since 2015, India has offered more than 70,000 scholarships and skill development slots under various schemes, including ITEC (both civilian and defence), CV Raman Scholarships, ICCR Scholarships and e-VBAB. Under ITEC programme, in the last ten years, India has trained over 40,000 officials (despite 2 years of covid disruption). Additionally, 15,116 e-VBAB scholarships were offered to African students. Indian institutions and training centres are increasingly present across Africa, contributing to human resource development. Institutional initiatives include the establishment of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) campus in Zanzibar, Tanzania, and the National Forensic Sciences University campus in Uganda. India has also set up Centres for Excellence in Information Technology (CEIT) in several African countries, providing advanced IT training and digital skills development. ICCR Scholarships for African countries is another important facet of our relationship.

10. Health and Agriculture

India supplies nearly 50% of Africa's generic medicines and has been a reliable partner during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing medical assistance worth over USD 5 million to 32 African countries and supplying more than 50 percent. The agricultural partnership between India and Africa has evolved into a vital pillar of South-South cooperation, centered on enhancing food security through a multi-dimensional approach of financial support, infrastructure development, and technical exchange. India's engagement is largely driven by concessional loans and Lines of Credit, which have facilitated the establishment of critical facilities such as sugar mills in Ethiopia and Ghana, cassava plantations in Cameroon, and rice processing units across Central and West Africa. This relationship is further strengthened by the sharing of climate-resilient farming practices, which empower local farmers with sustainable R&D and modern mechanisation. Complemented by a growing presence of Indian companies in African farming, this synergy continues to transform the continent's agricultural landscape into a more self-reliant and technological advanced sector.

11. Defence and Maritime Cooperation

India and African countries are strengthening cooperation in defence and security. India has deployed over 5,000 peacekeepers in United Nations missions across Africa, contributing to peace and stability on the continent. Defence cooperation includes training, capacity building, and defence exports to countries such as Seychelles, Mauritius, Nigeria and Mozambique. India conducts joint exercises such as the Africa-India Field Training Exercise (AFFINDEX) and organizes India-Africa Defence Ministers' Conclaves. Maritime cooperation is guided by India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine which has now evolved into Vision MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth across Regions). AIKEYME (Africa India Key Maritime Engagement) 2025, a six-day multilateral naval exercise was held from April 13-18, 2025, in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. Cooperation in Maritime includes anti-piracy operations, hydrographic surveys, port development, and support for the blue economy across coastal African countries.

12. Energy and Sustainability

About 13 percent of the India's total energy requirement comes from Africa. Thirty-Nine (39) African countries have joined the International Solar Alliance (ISA) so far. Nine African

countries are members of Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), and eleven African countries are members of the Global Bio-fuels Alliance (GBA), further strengthening cooperation in climate resilience and clean energy. India and Africa are important partners in addressing climate change and promoting sustainable development. Nine African countries are members of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA). Our partnership in environmental conservation has extended to the restoration of lost ecosystems through the unique, innovative and successful experiment of translocation of cheetahs from several African countries to India.

13. Digital Cooperation

Digital cooperation is an emerging pillar of engagement. Indian IT companies are actively engaged in providing services in Fin-tech, e-governance, and cyber security across Africa. India has signed MoU on India Stack with 7 countries in Africa (Kenya, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Gambia, Ethiopia, Lesotho and Seychelles). Kenya has become the first country abroad to sign an Implementation Framework Agreement (IFA) with India to adopt the DigiLocker platform, enabling secure, paperless storage and real-time verification of documents. The Modular Open Source Identity Platform (MOSIP), developed by IIIT Bangalore is currently partnering with 19 countries in Africa to support the implementation of the India based Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).

14. People-to-People Ties

The Indian diaspora in Africa, estimated at around 3.5 million plays a vital role in strengthening economic, cultural, and social linkages. They are contributing mainly in sectors such as Power, Agriculture, Energy, business ventures, Minerals, hospitality and healthcare. India has extended e-visa facilities to 33 African countries to promote tourism, trade, and cultural exchanges.

15. Economic Diversification:

- Over-dependence on the US and EU markets, that is, 40% of India's exports.
- This makes India vulnerable to economic slowdowns and policy uncertainties in Western markets.
- Africa offers India an alternative market – strengthening India's trade resilience amid

global economic volatility.

- Growing Consumer and Industrial Demand Africa has a young population with rising incomes and expanding consumer markets.
- This expanding demand offers Indian firm competitive advantage offering opportunities to integrate in to local value chains.
- Trade And Investment Potential India is Africa's 4th largest trading partner.
- Scope to move beyond petroleum to manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods and services.
- Provides an opportunity to India to set up production units within Africa to benefit from local incentives and preferential market access.
- Geopolitical Relevance
- Africa is central to India's aspiration for Global South leadership and multipolar world order.
Stronger economic ties complement India's political and developmental engagement on the continent.
- Also India's support for African representation in global institutions reinforces its diplomatic credibility eg: African Union's G20 membership Counter China's Dominance
China's trade with Africa far exceeds India's particularly in manufacturing and infrastructure.
India's strength in skill development, MSMEs, digital public infrastructure provides a credible alternative to China's approach.

16. Challenges in India – Africa Relations:

- Limited Trade Concentration India – Africa trade remains concentrated mainly in petroleum and primary commodities. Also weak manufacturing linkages reduce long-

term economic integration. Infrastructure Constraints Poor port infrastructure, storage facilities and internal connectivity in many African countries increase logistics costs.

- Limited Access to Trade Finance Indian firms face difficulties in accessing trade finance, credit lines and export insurance eg: MSMEs Regulatory and Institutional Barriers.

In some African countries, uncertainty and barriers persists. Eg: Complex regulations, bureaucratic delays, weak contract enforcement Strong Competition from Other Powers China's much larger trade and investment footprint in Africa creates stiff competition for Indian companies. Around 21% of imports to Africa in 2024 came from China. Also Africa-China bilateral trade exceeded \$200 billion.

- Million India made vaccine doses. India is also expanding cooperation in pharmaceutical manufacturing in countries such as Nigeria, Tanzania, Senegal, South Africa. India's first overseas Jan Aushadhi Kendra, aimed at facilitating affordable and accessible healthcare, has been set up in Mauritius in Africa.

17. Summary and Discussion

Trade

- Strategy Reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers for Indian exports. Preferential trade agreements with AFCFTA.
- Manufacturing Partnerships Shift from commodity trade to joint manufacturing and value addition in Africa. Encourage Indian firms to set up production units in Africa by leveraging Indian local incentive regimes and preferential market access.

MSME

- Engagement Improve MSMEs access to trade finance, credit lines and export insurance to help them enter African markets. Promote local-currency trade + Risk-mitigation mechanisms. Infrastructure And Logistics Invest in ports, freight corridors, storage and internal connectivity to reduce logistics costs. Services And Digital Cooperation

Expand cooperation in IT, digital public infrastructure, healthcare, education and skill development where India has comparative advantages.

- Public Sector Leadership Enabling Indian PSUs to lead investments in renewable energy, mining, agro-processing and infrastructure. This ensures public sector participation and long-term partnership credibility.

18. Conclusion

- India has offered a model of partnership that is consultative and hinges on human resource development and capacity, building in the African countries.
- There is no doubt that India's domestic experience and success in developing vibrant manufacturing and services sectors, while encouraging inclusiveness at the societal level has impressed several African countries that are keen to replicate this model on their own turf. India can therefore be viewed as a partner that is able to offer successful solutions to address the continent's various problems.
- India's relations with Africa are yet to peak and there is potential for both parties to benefit from this relationship. Africa is poised to benefit significantly from its engagement with India and the other BRICS states. Hopefully the partnership between India and Africa reflects the beginning of a new era for Africa- an era that will bring "Amandla Ngawethu" (power to the people).
- In a rapidly evolving global economic order, deepening long-term sustainable partnerships with Africa will be crucial for India's global economic ambitions.
- This makes it imperative for India to recalibrate its approach, innovate its engagement strategies and deepen its economic footprint across the African continent.

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