



Voice of the Global South: India's policy towards Africa

Ancy Davis V.¹

Abstract:

India -Africa relations have a long tradition. India and countries in Africa struggled against colonialism and apartheid. India stood for independence and the fostering of democracy in African countries. Both act as the cornerstones of the NAM. Bilateral and multilateral engagements made India and Africa closer. India is focusing on maritime security policy in the changing geopolitical environment. It reflects in India's policy towards Africa. The present study is qualitative and based on secondary sources. India's policy towards Africa focuses on the development of African nations and aims to achieve equal partnership status in global affairs. The Kampala Principles prioritise the needs of Africa. The major areas of cooperation include business, trade, economic, defence, maritime security, health, education, energy, culture, climate action, science and technology, and capacity building. India participates in the Voice of the Global South Summit and the India-Africa Forum Summit. India took the initiative to secure permanent membership for the African Union in the G20. This paper analyses India-Africa relations in the global south.

Keywords: African Union, Voice of Global South Summit, The Kampala Principles, G20, India-Africa Forum Summit.

Introduction

India maintains a significant position in the current evolving geopolitical environment through its bilateral and multilateral relations with other countries worldwide. From non-alignment to multi-alignment, India ensure cooperation with regional organisations such as BIMTEC, IBSA, BRICS, QUAD, I2U2 and SCO. The European Union and ASEAN strengthened relations with India. India, like other Third World countries, carries the remnants of the colonial past and always stands with developing nations to achieve economic and social development and establish democracy. At present, as the largest democracy and the fourth-largest economy, India is leading its mission to secure international peace and security, bound by the rule-based

¹ Assistant Professor Department of Political Science St.Xavier's College, Vaikom Kothavara P.O.PIN 686607.Kottayam District. Kerala



order. India's maritime security strategy aims national security and security of the seas. In this context, India's policy is focused on the progress of the global south.

Objectives

The present study aims:

1. To understand the construct of the Global South.
2. To know how India views the Global South.
3. To analyse India's relation with Africa through the lens of "Global South".

Significance

The present study is significant in the current changing geopolitical environment. India's engagement with the world across various domains reflects India's growing presence on the global stage. India aims to establish a rule-based order at the global level. It includes cooperation in defence, economics, climate action, disaster management, and HADR missions. In this context, India is seeking to upgrade its engagement with the Global South. The countries of Africa, South America, and Asia form the Global South. India focuses on strengthening relations with countries in Africa, Asia, and South America through bilateral and multilateral relations. India's ocean-centric foreign policy after 26/11 focused on Africa to secure the seas. India's energy and economic security also depend on maritime security, where the major choke points - the Mozambique Channel, Bab al Mandeb, Gulf of Aden and the Strait of Hormuz exist. India is seeking stable political development in Africa and is on a mission to build close allies in the region through cooperation in economic, defence, technology, capacity building, climate action, trade, and HADR missions.

Methodology

The research is qualitative and descriptive. Primary and secondary sources are used for analysis. Articles from newspapers and magazines, both print and digital form, speeches of experts in various forums and webinars, press releases of different embassies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of India, are used for analysis.



Review of literature

1. The article, Africa's Key Bilateral Relations in Asia: China, India, and Japan, stated that India is centred on development finance projects in countries like Tanzania, Mozambique and Kenya, with a focus on ensuring maritime security and strengthening India-Africa partnership focused on the Indian Ocean.[1]
2. Arif Dirlik, in the article, Global South: Predicament and Promise viewed that the construct of the Global South is rooted in the developing countries' vision of liberalisation, and those visions are relevant in restoring human ends to development.[2]
3. Amrita Narlikar, in the article India's rise to power: Where does East Africa Fit In stated that India's softer approach helps to ensure support from the developing world and India's political culture, shaped by the colonial experiences, contributed to shaping its East Africa policy.[3]

The Origin of the Construct "the Global South"

Carl Oglesby invented the term "Global South" in Commonweal in 1969.[4] The term "Global South" denotes a cluster of countries under the "domination" of the global north. Imperialism and capitalism led to global division. Du Bois has given a racial dimension to this view. Anti-colonial nationalists also supported this view. To Kwame Nkrumah, the newly formed sovereign states were under political and economic exploitation by wealthy states, and he advocated Pan-Africanism to overcome this exploitation. The dependency theory states that the countries in the periphery export raw materials and import manufactured goods. This compelled the countries in the periphery to depend on wealthy countries. The wealthy countries control the trade. The modernisation theory viewed that the developing nations can become developed countries through the adoption of suitable policies.

Initiatives are being taken to revive the global world with due importance to the developing nations. The multilateral groupings, such as the Non-Aligned Movement and the G77, are looking for a change in the global order. The Non -Aligned Movement was formed on the pillars of the Bandung Conference and the Belgrade Conference. It aimed at anti-colonial cooperation and the remake of the world order. G77 focused on the establishment of manufacturing facilities rather than the export of raw materials and the import of manufactured goods. Both NAM and G77 act as a venue for the joint action of the developing nations to develop solidarity and to overcome dependency. The New International Economic Order, adopted in 1974, aimed at the restructuring of the global economy. The Brandt Line demarcated the global North and Global South. The resolution entitled "Towards a New International Economic Order", adopted by the UNGA in

2022, centred on the restoration of the New International Economic Order of the 1970s. The G77 meeting 2023 and the Munich Security Conference 2024 demanded the revival of the New International Economic Order. BRICS and its expansion, BRICS+, also focus on the change in the world order.

India and the Global South

The construct “Global South” is not geographical; it's geopolitical.[5] Countries of the Asia, Africa and Latin America formed the Global South. These countries have a shared memory of historical experiences of colonialism and imperialism. India is a member of regional, national and multilateral forums such as the UNO, SAARC, IBSA, BIMSTEC, and IORA. Apart from these, India strengthens its bilateral relations with the countries in the Global South. India upholds the value of “Vasudaivakutumbakam” in its engagement with the Global South. The Vision SAGAR and MAHASAGAR aim at the progress of the global south. India ensures cooperation in capacity building, economic, defence, HADR mission, climate action, disaster management, education, green energy and science and technology. India also cooperates in counter terrorism activities, anti-piracy operations and the prevention of illegal and unregulated fishing in the oceans. In a nutshell, India ensures the cooperation of the global south in maritime governance. On this background, it is relevant to look for India's relation with Africa in the accomplishment of India's role as Voice of the Global South.

India's policy towards Africa

Historical accounts show that India had relations with Africa from the ancient period. The Periplus of the Eritrean Sea mentioned ancient India's commercial relations with Africa.[6] Colonialism led to labour migrations to the African continent. Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy influenced the African leaders -Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia in their anti-colonial movement. The vision of Jawaharlal Nehru -the policy of non-alignment- led to close relations with Africa. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was formed in 1961 under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru (India), Josip Broz Tito (Yugoslavia), Gamal Abdul Nasser (Egypt), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) and Sukarno (Indonesia). India supported the freedom movement and anti-apartheid movements in Africa. India's policy towards Africa is centred on Afro-Asian solidarity. India's emergence as a leading power in the international arena, the changing geopolitical environment, and its energy requirements have led India-Africa relations to a new dimension in the present century.



India-Africa relations are multidimensional in nature. It includes economic relations, trade relations, capacity building, defence cooperation, and cultural relations. Bilateral and Multilateral forums strengthened India's policy towards Africa. Development Partnership with Africa is based on 3Cs- Consultative, Capacity building and Collaborative.[7]

Capacity Building

The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme, including the Special Commonwealth Assistance for Africa Programme started as a bilateral programme in 1964.[8] It provides courses in Information Technology, textile design, foreign affairs, commerce, and science. TEC serves as an instrument to project India's soft power and strengthen cultural diplomacy by providing opportunities for education and training. It cooperates with the Southern African Development Community. The Pan African e-Network project (PANEP) [9] was launched in 2009 with the aim of creating significant connectivity for tele-education and telemedicine, the internet, and video conferencing, making available the expertise and facilities of universities and hospitals in India to the people of Africa. It supports e-governance, e-commerce, infotainment, and resource mapping in African countries.

India's Role in UN Peacekeeping Missions

India is a part of UN Peacekeeping Missions in Africa. The UN Peacekeeping Mission in Africa began in 1960 in Congo and was followed by missions in Mozambique, Somalia, Rwanda, Angola, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, Western Sahara and Democratic Republic of Congo.[10] India provides humanitarian assistance, promotes gender equality, reflects solidarity with African countries and boosts bilateral relations through peacekeeping missions. Indian peacekeepers provide humanitarian support in the following areas: infrastructure development, health, disaster management, assistance during a pandemic such as COVID-19, veterinary services, and evacuation during natural disasters. India upholds gender roles in peacekeeping missions by deploying an all-women police battalion in Liberia from 2007 to 2016. Women peacekeepers are deployed in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. India's representation in the peacekeeping mission strengthens cooperation between India and Africa.

India-Africa Forum Summit

The India -Africa Forum Summit was held in Delhi in 2008[11]. The platform focuses on the enhancement of economic cooperation, capacity building and multilateral engagement. It stands for the Developing India-Africa Partnership. The India-Africa partnership is based on the following pillars: development assistance,



economic cooperation, human resource development and south-south cooperation. The inaugural summit was held in New Delhi in 2008 with a theme “Partners in progress: Towards sustainable and inclusive development”. The two major outcomes of the summit were the Delhi Declaration and the Framework for India -Africa Cooperation. The areas of cooperation include Sovereignty and Pan-Africanism, Development through Enhanced Trade and Climate Action, and a strengthened global security landscape. The Framework for India-Africa Cooperation opens doors to new areas of cooperation, including economic cooperation, political cooperation, science, technology, research and development, cooperation in social development and capacity building, tourism, infrastructure, energy and environment, media and communication.[12]

The second summit was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with a theme “Enhanced partnership: Shared Vision” and adopted the Addis Ababa Declaration. It focused on collaboration in infrastructure, agriculture and institutional development. The third Summit was held in New Delhi in 2015, with the theme “Partners in Progress: Towards a Dynamic Transformative Development Agenda”. It centred on innovation and sustainability, with particular emphasis on renewable energy through the International Solar Alliance. It recognised the Tripartite Free Trade Agreement.

Vision SAGAR

India's foreign policy has given significant importance to maritime security. Vision SAGAR-Security and Growth for All in the Region was launched in Mauritius in 2015[13]. Its emphasis on India’s engagement in the Indian Ocean. It aims to enhance capacity to safeguard land and maritime territories and interests, deepen economic and security cooperation in the littorals, promote collective action to counter traditional and non-traditional security threats, strengthen collaboration for sustainable regional development, and ensure cooperation with foreign countries to uphold a rules-based order. The Indian Navy play an important role in the accomplishment of Vision SAGAR and MAHASAGR. The Indian Navy is positioned in the Gulf of Aden, the East Coast of Africa, and the West African waters. Port Calls and maritime exercises are organised with countries in Africa, such as the Africa India Field Training Exercise (AFINDEX) and India-Brazil-South Africa Maritime (IBSAMAR). The Indian Navy acts as the first responder in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief missions. (HADR)

The Kampala Principles-Vision Document for India-Africa Partnership

The year 2018 is remarkable in India-Africa relations. Vision Document for India-Africa Partnership was realised in 2018 with the announcement of 10 Guiding Principles for India-Africa engagement by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at the Parliament of Uganda.[14] It opened opportunities for multilateral cooperation. The Vision Document for India -Africa Partnership is also known as the “Kampala Principles”. The 10 guiding principles are the following: (1)Africa will be at the top of India’s foreign policy priorities, (2)African priorities will guide development partnerships,(3)Capacity-building will be central to all partnerships(4)Our efforts will focus on trade and investment, not aid(5)Agriculture and food security will be a key area of cooperation(6)We will partner to address the challenges of climate change(7)We will work together to combat terrorism and promote security(8)Oceans will remain open and free for the benefit of all(9)We will not exploit Africa’s resources—we will build value together(10)We will work with Africa for a just and democratic global order. The Information Fusion Centre -Indian Ocean Region, Gurugram, was launched in 2018 to facilitate real-time information sharing among 25 partner countries.

MAHASAGAR

MAHASAGAR-Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions 2025[15]. The upgradation of SAGAR to MAHASAGAR opened new areas of collaboration with Africa, with a special focus on littoral countries in the Western Indian Ocean Region. Africa India Key Maritime Engagement (AIKEYME)was co-hosted by the Indian Navy and the Tanzanian People's Defence Force. The Indian Navy provides training to its African counterparts -Tanzania, Mozambique, Kenya, South Africa, Mauritius, Seychelles, Comoros, Madagascar, Djibouti and Eritrea. The exercise focuses on ensuring maritime security in the region.16 African nations participated in the Exercise Milan in 2024.

Cooperation in Multilateral Forums

India and Africa cooperate in various multilateral forums - the United Nations Organisation, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiative, Indian Ocean Rim Association, BRICS and G20. Cooperation within the United Nations Organisation provides a platform for working together to achieve sustainable development goals, specifically those related to climate action and human rights protection. Africa is more vulnerable to climate change. The forums IPOI, IORA, and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium also provide opportunities to collaborate on the conservation of the marine ecosystem, climate action, the promotion of renewable energy, counter-terrorism, and anti-piracy operations. India and South



Africa are members of BRICS. Egypt and Ethiopia became members of BRICS in 2024. Uganda, Nigeria and Algeria became partner countries of BRICS. Zimbabwe is seeking to join the bloc. The expansion of BRICS provides an opportunity for African countries to cooperate with India. India played an important role in the African Union's entry into the G20.

Findings

1. Bilateral and multilateral relations with countries in Africa opened a new wave in India's Africa policy.
2. Africa's interest is the prime concern of India's policy.
3. Defence cooperation, specifically naval exercises and capacity building strengthened.
4. India and Africa organise joint operations in HADR missions and climate action.
5. Cooperation developed in the areas of energy security and renewable energy.
6. An urgent action is required to resume the India-Africa Forum Summit.
7. India-Africa ties led to the revival of the "Global South".

Conclusion

It is significant to ensure the representation of the Global South in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the present changing geopolitical environment. A major part of the world population belongs to the Global South. The Global South's geographical position is also relevant. The major choke points in the trade routes are in the oceans close to these continents. Most of the countries in the Global South shared memories of imperialism. India, as an emerging power, is looking to uplift the Global South and has taken several initiatives. On this background, India took several steps to strengthen India-Africa relations. The diplomatic missions strengthened bilateral relations in economic, defence, technology, trade and investment, climate action, culture, education and maritime security. Cooperation in HADR missions strengthened ties with countries in Africa. India plays the role of Net Security Provider, First Responder and Preferred Security Partner in the region. It is required to increase cooperation in climate action, specifically in technology transfer among the Global South, to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Diaspora is a determining factor in framing India's policy towards Africa and towards the Global South.

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