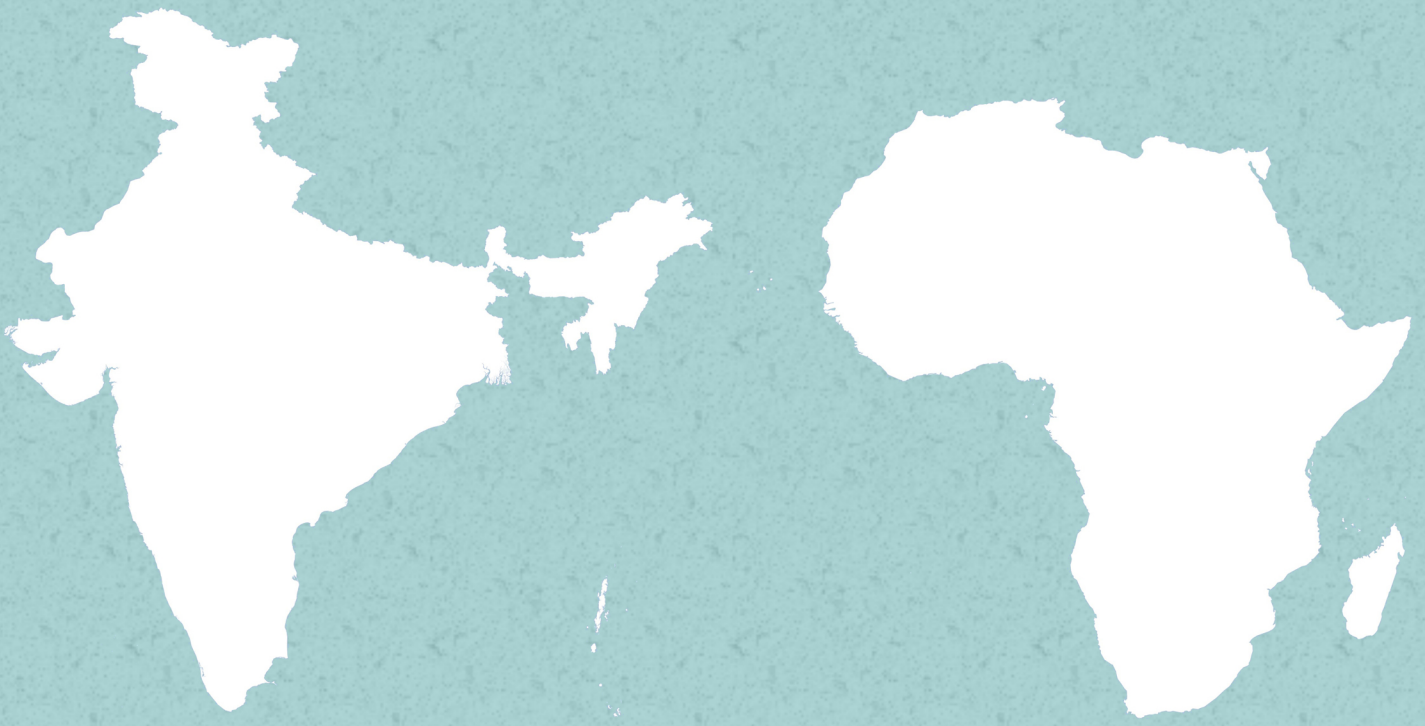




Vivekananda International Foundation

# India-Africa Partnership An Assessment

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## **About the Author**



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# **India-Africa Partnership : An Assessment**

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## **Synopsis**

The India-Africa partnership is one of the pillars of India's foreign policy. It is growing and has great potential. It is not a donor-recipient relationship. It is based on mutual periodic consultations at the summit level (India-Africa Forum Summit) and regular interaction at the bilateral level. It is a mutually beneficial partnership, based on Africa's priorities and India's strengths.

India is a large country, with an area of around 3.3 million sq.km, and Africa, a large continent sprawling over 30.2 million sq.km. India has a population of around 1.36 billion and Africa's population is estimated at 1.3 billion. The estimated GDP of Africa is US\$2.19 trillion and its average growth rate around 3.7 per cent. India's GDP is estimated at US\$2.79 trillion with the annual growth rate pegged at around 6 per cent. The average population growth of India is 1.2 per cent whereas Africa's population is growing at a much faster clip.

India and Africa share historical, trade and cultural links that date back to Indus Valley Civilisation. Africa is rich in natural resources and has a lot of diversity. Today, with a strength of 54 sovereign states (those recognised by India), Africa commands a major bloc in the UN General Assembly.

One unmistakable trend emerging from most parts of Africa is that more and more countries are coming out of the difficult phase of civil wars and are now looking to strengthen stability and develop their economies. Many countries have moved towards the democratic process. They have evolved certain guiding principles for their rulers. Nigeria is home to 182 million people and is the most populous country in Africa. Algeria leads in size with an area of 2.38 million sq. km. Nigeria again leads with a GDP of US\$ 376 billion. South Africa ranks as the most developed country in Africa. However, Africa is also home to some of most under-developed countries. Central African Republic, South Sudan, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Niger fall in the list of under-developed countries.

Africa has produced towering leaders. Nelson Mandela, perhaps the greatest among them, was a great anti-apartheid leader and a staunch freedom fighter. Africa has long been described as a dark continent because of lack of development. But more and more African countries are now uniting under the

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umbrella of African Union, which has drawn up an ambitious development agenda for economic development and integration of African economies. Post this the world's focus is fast shifting to Africa, with China leading the race.

In this scenario, the India-Africa partnership too has moved forward. India has played an important role in fight against colonialism and apartheid. After Independence, India gave it a concrete shape by extending not only political support to the cause of the African countries but also helping them in human resource development. There was collaboration at NAM-level with many African countries. After a relative lull for a couple of decades, the India-Africa relationship began to strengthen in nineties and gained momentum as the new century dawned. Cooperation between India and Africa crystallized into a formal engagement with the holding of India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) in Delhi in 2008. The Modi government upgraded the summit level cooperation by inviting all African heads of state and heads of governments to the third IAFS held in October 2015 in New Delhi. In 2015, it was also decided to hold an IAFS once every five years.

The moot point, at this stage, is whether India-Africa cooperation is progressing well. There is a need for an honest assessment and to make recommendations. This is the subject that the present paper deals with.

# Chapter I: Introduction

## Geographic Proximity

Many African countries are India's maritime neighbours, especially those that are on the eastern coast of Africa. Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa, Mauritius, Comoros and Reunion Islands, being India's maritime neighbours, have attracted India's attention. Maritime proximity is of immense importance, not only from viewpoint of trade and commerce but also from security point of view. This proximity creates a natural bonding.

## Historical Linkages and Colonial Experience

The India-Africa partnership is rooted in their shared historical and colonial experience. Apart from trading with Sudan during Indus Valley Civilization, there is well established evidence of Indian merchants selling their spices and silk in parts of Africa. India's maritime links with Madagascar are centuries old. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Dom Miguel, a great son of Munhumtapa kingdom of Zimbabwe, who was a priest, prince and professor, came to study in Goa, where an inscription on a pillar in a Chapel bears testimony to his prowess in learning. Akbar's Tomb at Sikandra is greatly influenced by Egyptian architecture. The presence of Indian diaspora in many countries of Africa is proof of the people-to-people interaction. The recent people-to-people interaction between India and Africa pre-dates India's independence. Indian indentured labour was taken by the British to work in English colonies in Africa. The great journey of Gandhi's passive resistance movement has its origin in South Africa.

India herself having been under the British rule for years, understood the cause of many African countries, who were struggling for their independence. India played a key role in fight against colonialism and was the co-sponsor of the "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples" which the UN adopted it in 1960. India raised the issue of racial discrimination in South Africa in UN in 1946. India played a key role in the formation of the Special Committee against Apartheid set up by the UNGA in 1963. India was a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, when it was adopted in 1965. The Action for

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Resisting Invasion, Colonialism and Apartheid (AFRICA) Fund was set up at the 8<sup>th</sup> Non-Aligned Summit in Harare in 1986, at the initiative of the Indian Prime Minister. Among many iconic leaders that Africa has produced, Nelson Mandela is arguably, the leading figure. Many of them, including Mandela, were greatly influenced by the non-violent movement of Mahatma Gandhi. These multi-pronged linkages have generated a positive vibe in India-Africa partnership.

### **India - A Soft Rising Power**

India may not have the clout that USA or China, the two global powers, wield over the world. However, India has made steady progress and has been one of fastest growing large economies in the world for years now. The technological and economic progress made by India are appreciated the world over. Guided by ancient Indian scriptures, India believes in *Vasudeva Kutumbakam* - (world is one family). India has rarely in her history attacked any country. India has been the birth place of Buddha, Nanak and Mahatma Gandhi, who were apostles of peace and love. India is seen as a benign rising power. This image helps India to avoid the tag of a neo-colonial power that has come to be associated with China.

### **Human Resource Development**

Ever since inception of Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) in mid-sixties, India has extended liberal assistance to African countries for human resource development. While the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Special Commonwealth Assistance for Africa Programme (SCAAP) and TCS of Colombo Plan, all have contributed to honing the expertise of the African officials and others, it is ITEC which has led the way with its over 300 courses, 80 training institutions and nearly 12000 training slots every year. Short and medium term courses are offered under the ITEC in many diverse fields ranging from drinking water, poverty alleviation, women empowerment, rural development and democratic best practices to IT, telecommunication, renewable energy, disaster management, banking, finance, audit and so on. Many ITEC alumni have moved up the career ladder in their respective countries. Since the professional training courses invariably include visits to places of high interest, the trainees also get a first-hand idea of Indian culture and traditions. Longer courses under ICCR, SCAAP and TCS of Colombo Plan have empowered African nationals in the various educational streams, except medical courses. With the launch of IAFS in 2008, a new focus has been given to the training courses. For example, officials are trained in various aspects of food processing and acquainted with machines and processes, wherever food testing labs are set up. The overarching reach of these courses can be gauged from the fact that during IAFS-III, GOI announced the addition of around 27000 courses, over a period of five years.

### **Collaborated Approach**

One inherent strength of the partnership is that it is demand driven and is based on collaborated approach, wherein the priorities of the recipient countries are given weightage. At the same time,

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India's expertise in that particular area is also a determining factor. If the priority of the country is to set up a sugar factory, it is given due consideration. But before going ahead with the project, it is also carefully considered whether India has the ability to set up the factory in the conditions obtaining in the recipient country. Needless to say, a detailed project report is prepared in advance to assess the feasibility of the project. This makes the approach collaborative and mutually beneficial.

### **CII-EXIM Bank Conclave**

While GOI has taken several measures to boost India's engagement with Africa, the private sector too has chipped in with its own efforts, albeit, more often than not, with the support of GOI. One such substantive initiative was launched by CII in 2005 by hosting the first CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership, in New Delhi, in partnership with Export and Import Bank of India and the ministries of external affairs and commerce and industry. The annual gathering brings together government officials, umbrellas business bodies, captains of industry and entrepreneurs under one roof to explore opportunities for business partnership and cooperation. During the 14<sup>th</sup> Conclave in March 2019 deals worth billions of dollars were discussed and signed. The initiative has thus evolved into a concrete model of cooperation.

### **India-Africa Agribusiness Forum**

FICCI hosted the India-Africa Agri-business Forum in February 2016 in New Delhi in partnership with the ministries of agriculture and commerce and industry. The agro-food sector, which generates substantial employment and economic growth is central to the economic discourse between Africa and India. Although Africa and India are at different stages of development in this sector, there are ample opportunities for mutual learning. FICCI's initiative aims to share the best practices, showcasing latest technologies, exchanging innovative models, and promoting business alliances. The objective is also to spur development of upstream products like fertilisers, seeds and pesticides as well as catalyse downstream activities like grain refining, food processing, etc. This in turn will generate employment and spur economic growth and food security, both in India and Africa.

### **Cooperation in Science and Technology**

The department of science and technology (DoS&T), GOI, is implementing a number of programmes under the India-Africa Science and Technology Initiative. The CV Raman Fellowship for African Researchers was started in 2010 with the objective of providing opportunities to African researchers to engage in collaborative research in S&T in Indian Universities and Institutions under eminent Indian scientists. So far, many African researchers have been given fellowships. Besides, India has also signed technology agreements with quite a few African countries, which include South Africa, Tunisia, Egypt and Mauritius. In addition, India-Africa technology cooperation in the field of agriculture, renewable energy and IT bears special mention. Together, they add positive energy to the partnership.



### Participation of India in UNPKO

India's peacekeepers have taken active part in most of the large UN Peace-Keeping Operations (UNPKO) in Africa. The landmark UNPKO in Congo was mandated to protect the national unity and territorial integrity of Congo when faced with secessionist movement. During the four year period from 1960 to 1964, India provided 12000 troops in the first multi-role peacekeeping operations. In Namibia, Lt. General Prem Chand was the UN Force Commander. Indian military observers were responsible for smooth withdrawal of foreign troops, election and transfer of power to duly elected governments (Source: *Task Force Report 2018* of VIF). Mozambique, Rwanda, Angola, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia-Eretria, DRC, Sudan, Ivory Coast and Liberia are the other countries where Indian troops have served. Besides, the Centre for UN Peace-Keeping Operation in New Delhi has successfully imparted quality training to peace-keepers from many African countries. Peacekeeping efforts have received a further boost, with the on-going trilateral cooperation between India, US and African countries.

### Africa Rich in Fossil Fuels

Africa is rich in fossil fuels while India is deficient. The bulk of India's requirement is imported, mostly from West Asia, Venezuela and USA. Of late, India has sought to also import substantive quantities of crude oil from Nigeria, Algeria, Angola, etc. There is determined bid by ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) for acquiring exploration rights in quite a few countries in Africa which include Gabon, Mozambique and Sudan. To underline this collaboration, the 4<sup>th</sup> India-Africa Hydrocarbon Conference, was held in Delhi in January 2016, resolved to strengthen the relations in the hydrocarbon sector. Considering that the relationship in this sector is mutually beneficial, this cooperation is poised to grow.

### International Solar Alliance (ISA)

The decision to launch International Solar Alliance (ISA) in Paris in 2015, was followed up by the setting up of an ISA secretariat in Gurugram in March 2018. The ISA, initiated by India, is an alliance of more than 120 countries, most of which are sunshine countries, that lie either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn; but now include all members of the UN. Its primary objective is the efficient exploitation of solar energy to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chad, DRC, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia are among the African countries, which have joined the alliance. During ISA-2018, specific projects in 15 countries worth US\$1.4 billion were announced. The bulk of these amounting to a billion dollars are for African countries. Under GOI lines of credit also, many solar projects worth millions of dollars have been completed. This sector has a great potential for cooperation.

### India-Africa Cooperation in Trade

Without trade and commerce, the substance of India-Africa partnership gets diluted. It was with this in view that days ahead of the 3<sup>rd</sup> IAFS, a meeting of Trade Ministers of India and Africa was convened in New Delhi to discuss ways to bolster trade ties between the two and fast-track regional agreements. It is no surprise that bilateral trade has gone up many times in last decade or so and is now around US\$ 62.66 billion (2017-18). Graph 1 in Annexure clearly shows that the trade balance between the two countries, has always favoured Africa, endorsing India's liberal trade approach towards Africa. There is certainly scope for India and Africa to realize the full potential in their bilateral trade.

Moreover, India was the first country to extend Duty Free Tariff Preference to LDCs in 2008, in accordance with the decision taken at the Hong Kong WTO Ministerial Meeting in December 2005. The market access under the 2008 scheme covered 92.5 per cent tariff lines, covering global exports of 34 LDCs, which included 26 African countries. The scope of the scheme was expanded in 2014 and the scheme was further simplified in March 2015. (Source: *Task Force Report 2018* of VIF).

### Indian Investments in Africa

Indian companies are slowly but surely increasing their footprint in Africa. OVL, Airtel BHEL, Tata Chemical, WIPRO Technologies, Vedanta and Mahindra & Mahindra are among the companies which have invested in Africa. India has become the fifth largest investor in Africa, with cumulative investment of US\$ 54 billion as of 2018. GOI's decision to build convention centres in around 20 countries in Africa as signature infrastructure projects is a bold step. India has recently embarked on building - on war-footing - the Mahatma Gandhi International Convention Centre in Niamey, to enable Niger to host African Summit there in July 2019. This was part of a package of US\$ 50 million grant extended for the AU Summit.

### Diaspora

One advantage that India has in Africa is the Indian diaspora, which is estimated at around three million, with South Africa leading the count. As much as 70 per cent of the population in Mauritius is of Indian origin. At least in 14 countries, there are at least 10,000 persons of Indian origin. These include South Africa (12,00,000), Mauritius ( 8,82,220), Reunion Island (2,75,200), Kenya (75,000), Tanzania (54,700), Nigeria (30,000), Madagascar (23,000), Mozambique (21,500), Zambia(20,500) and Uganda (20,000). There are around 15 countries where the number of Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) living there is below 500. Nonetheless, the presence of Indian diaspora in almost all countries builds bridges with the African countries and enhances cultural interaction.

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### **English Language**

As English is spoken in many parts of Africa, it is advantage India, in terms of imparting training in ITEC institutes, education in colleges and universities and conducting familiarization tours. This may, or may not be case, when the African brothers visit, for example, China for similar purposes. Although more and more Chinese are, of late, trying to learn the English language, the advantage still rests with India. Besides, India has also started English learning and familiarization courses for trainees from non-English-speaking countries. This has led to better results.

### **Similar Aspirations**

India and many African countries have a shared experience of colonial rule. India and Africa share identical aspiration in the UN. Both would like UNSC and other organs of UN to be reformed and to be more representative of current realities. The overall aims of India and Africa again converge, whether on Climate Change, WTO or Sustainable Development Goals. They would like the developed countries to chip in with more resources to mitigate the adverse impact of pursuing new more stringent development conditions, outlined in the global treaties. Both support a multi-polar world where collective wisdom, and not the whims of a single power, prevail.

### **Opening of New Missions**

With the recent decision of GOI to open around a dozen new missions in Africa, a major lacuna in conducting relation with many African countries is being taken care of. This reinforces the importance that India attaches to African countries.

### **Indian Ocean Rim Association**

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) comprises 21 countries. Many of these are from Africa and include Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa and Tanzania. The IORA is looking to raise its profile as it held its first conference in March 2017 in Jakarta with many countries from Africa also in the attendance. Focusing on the theme “Strengthening Maritime Cooperation for Peaceful, Stable and Prosperous Indian Ocean”, the conference drew attention to issues such as maritime security, fisheries management, disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, people-to-people exchanges, trade and investment and tourism. They issued a vision document dubbed Jakarta Concord that ‘sets out a vision for a revitalised and sustainable regional architecture’. With this summit, IORA looks poised to raise its profile as a deliberative regional forum.

## **Chapter II: Challenges**

### **India Lacks Big Resources**

The India-Africa partnership is between a country and a continent. Africa faces huge challenges in the form of poor agriculture, droughts, fragile infrastructure, poor education and health, high birth rates, environment hazards, civil strife and terrorism, to name just a few. Billions of dollar are required for infrastructure alone. India has assiduously tried to raise its profile in Africa through human resource and infrastructure development as well as a push in telecom, IT and renewable energy sectors. But given the gigantic challenges, the resources committed by India are meagre. The resources that USA, China, EU or Japan can make available, are far larger. For example, compared to India's commitment of US\$10 billion in soft loans over a period of five years, announced during IAFS-III in October 2015, China, a few months later, announced US\$60 billion in similar package to African countries during FOCAC-II (FOCAC: Forum on China-Africa Cooperation) in South Africa, that too, over a period of three years. A similar amount was committed by China during FOCAC-III held in Beijing in 2018. Japan is reported to have deployed US\$ 30 billion in Africa during three years of TICAD VI. Given India's own needs and ever growing population, a sizeable chunk of which lives below the poverty line, it is not easy for India to commit large sums for infrastructure development, etc., in Africa. Graph 4 in the Annexure reinforces the conclusion. This is a real challenge, a weak point.

### **Implementation of Projects Poor**

India's growth partnership with Africa is not only limited by the lack of resources. It is also marred by poor implementation. Often the gestation period of projects is long. Because of various problems in implementation, the actual time-lags are even longer. There are two examples that would more than justify the point being made. Thus, there was a proposal to set up a 'Centre for Geo-Informatics Applications for Rural Development' in Niger. The project lay buried for years and even the foreign office, till 2015, did not realise that the clearance for the project had been given years ago. The project in question started moving when the writer as India's HOM, discovered it in the briefs and followed it up vigorously with the foreign office. In this instant, the project had already been delayed for many years.

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Another example pertains to setting up of a Food Testing Laboratory (FTL) in Harare under IAFS. The implementing agency in this case was ICRISAT and the nodal ministry, was the ministry of food processing, GOI. The project made a head start and proceeded well for nearly a year when one realised that suddenly it had slowed down. Many attempts were made to get the project going. Ironically, the local authorities had completed most of the formalities and renovations on their part. The Indian side too had completed detailed project reports and even provided training to the Zimbabwean officials for maintaining the FTL. However, the project got stuck in India and to the best of the writer's knowledge, did not proceed further till at least 2017. The fate of a Rural Technology Park too was not much different.

### **Follow Up Lacking in Projects**

The other equally disturbing aspect is that the follow-up on the running projects, after these are completed and handed over to the local authorities, is often poor. In some cases, local officials trained for the jobs, could not be made available for various reasons. At another time, local authorities lacked the resources to run the project. One such example was that of a very innovative project, dubbed "Hole in the Wall", a project meant for the education of underprivileged children in quite a few countries in Africa. But it was found, for example, in Zimbabwe that the project started slowing down months after it was handed over to the local authorities, due to lack of resources. Without proper follow-up, projects will have a shorter life span.

### **Lack of High Visibility Project**

There are many projects, which despite hiccups and miscellaneous issues, have been successfully implemented. These range from institutes of excellence, power stations, sugar factories, water holes for drinking water, solar electrification and so on. While these projects may be high on utility, they lack visibility. India is yet to make an iconic building or bridge or a mega power plant in Africa, which can catch the eyes. There are a few Parliament/Government buildings, etc., that India has constructed in Africa but these are relatively small and few. One cannot say this of China, which has been building iconic structures almost every year in one country or the other in Africa. A couple of examples would suffice to establish the point being made here:-

- Nigeria: Lagos-Kano railways (built by 11000 workers, with investment of US\$8.3 billion)
- Algeria: A 1000 km freeway built by Chinese workers

The recent decision of GOI to build around 20 convention centres in as many countries in Africa, may be the beginning of India creating signature infrastructure projects in Africa.

### **No Direct Shipping Line to Africa**

One is really surprised to learn that there is no direct shipping line between India and Africa. This means that a product going from India has either to go to Colombo or to some other intermediate

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destination, before it gets to a country in Africa. This adds to cost and time lags, which make the exports non-competitive. Besides, there are structural issues afflicting the Indian shipping. The percentage of Indian trade carried by Indian ships/Indian flagged ships has come down to less than 8 per cent from 42 per cent in the 1980s. The high share of Indian shipping in India's trade flowed from the official policy of imports on Free on Board (FOB) basis and exports on Cost, Insurance and Freight (CIF) basis. This ensured that decision to hire ships was in Indian hands. The erosion of this policy over a period has led to the aforementioned decline (Source: *Task Force Report 2018* of VIF)

### **High Premium Charged Under Export Credit Guarantee Scheme**

The GOI has an export credit guarantee scheme to promote exports in the potentially risky environment that obtains in parts of Africa. However, the high premium of .25 per cent charged under the scheme does not compare well with that charged by Japan (.12 per cent), South Korea (0.1 per cent), etc. This reduces the competitiveness of Indian exports. The main reason for the higher premium, though, is that the ECGC was brought under the ambit of Insurance Regulatory Authority (IRDA) in 2002. The ECGC when established was exempt from the Insurance ACT, which is designed to protect the consumer, not the export credit. This position needs to be reassessed and status quo ante restored.

### **Visa Issues**

Granting of visas, their duration, multiple or single entry, online or offline, on landing or before departure, are factors which affect flow of businessmen, students and commercial and economic activities. African students in India have to complete the registration process with Foreigners Registration Office within six months; otherwise there is technical lapse of the visa, which requires the student to return to his country for fresh endorsement of visa. Restrictive visa regimes are a dampener for business and other interaction.

### **Language Barrier**

One natural barrier that hampers interaction and conduct of human resource development activities and business interaction between India and citizens from 25 Francophone and quite a few Lusophone African countries, is language. In their case, interaction in English is often a problem.

### **Poor Infrastructure, Lack of Accessibility and Harsh Climate**

Poor infrastructure in a number of countries in Africa presents its own problems and impedes speedy implementation of the projects. Lack of uninterrupted power supply is a major irritant. Poor roads and connectivity make it difficult to access all areas, if a project like digging water holes in rural areas is being implemented. The supply of material and manpower to remote places is a challenge. Lack of railways is another drawback. The inaccessibility of many areas is a major road-block for private sector to participate in the development projects in Africa. For example, Air India, the official airline of India, hardly flies to any part of Africa, despite the large Indian diaspora there!

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The climate in certain countries and regions in Africa can also be a challenge. In some places, temperatures run very high and conditions can be quite dusty for days together in others. There were instances where workers hired by the implementing agency in India for the water hole projects in Niger were required to travel off-road and stay deep in the interior for days together in makeshift tents. Not all are willing to take that much pain.

### **Telecom, Digitisation and E-governance Issues**

Modern economies are fast moving towards digitisation and e-governance. The telecom sector is also growing at fast clip. Many countries in Africa are lagging in these areas. Transparency and modern tools are the hallmarks of modern economies. Without developing expertise in these it is difficult to ensure the fast economic development that African countries need and aspire for.

### **People to People Interaction is Poor**

In this globalised world, people-to-people interaction is one of the parameters of cooperation between countries. The presence of Indian diaspora in many countries should have acted as a catalyst in promoting this interaction. But it has fallen short of expectations. Apart from Egypt, South Africa, Mauritius, Seychelles, Tanzanian, Kenya, Nigeria and Morocco the movement of the people from India to other countries is limited. Very few visit other countries except for business purposes. France, China, USA, etc., have taken the lead in establishing many cultural institutes in Africa as Graph 6 in the Annexure depicts. India lags behind in this respect, with only around half a dozen cultural centres, though the recent setting up of yoga centres in many African countries, is a move in the right direction.

### **Land and Building Acquisition Issues**

In quite a few cases, where projects are undertaken under the grant, one problem that is encountered is that of identifying and acquiring suitable building for the project. Since under the present partnership model, it is the responsibility of the local authorities to provide the suitable building or land, it sometimes takes them some time to zero-in on the suitable building or land, leading to avoidable delays in the implementation of the project.

### **Lack of Coordination with Other Countries**

Lack of coordination, on the part of India, with other countries engaged in their development outreach to African countries can lead to duplication of projects or concentration of these in the same country or places.

### **Lack of Coordination with Regional Economic Bodies**

What is true of countries is also true of regional bodies in Africa. There are several regional economic bodies (AMU, COMESA, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD, SEN-SA and, SADC) which are duly

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recognised by the African Union. They play an important role in economic integration at the regional level and are considered to be the building blocks of African Union's Agenda. However, these bodies are hampered by certain issues. For one, there are many other regional bodies (Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa, West African Economic and Monetary Union, Indian Ocean Commission, Mano River Union and Southern African Custom Union) that are not formally recognised by AU. In the bodies that are recognised, there is overlapping of membership. For example, Kenya and Uganda are members of both EAC and COMESA whereas Tanzania, also a member of EAC, left COMESA and joined SADC in 2001. This creates confusion and unhealthy competition. Then, the internal capabilities of the regional bodies vary. Also, regional bodies lack the political will to overlook regional concerns for the overriding imperatives of AU. These bodies play a limited role in promoting the cause of India-Africa relationship.

### **General View of Africa Still Negative/Prejudiced**

There are quite a few countries and many places in Africa that are as developed as India. Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Port Louis, Cairo, Tunis, Rabat, etc., are well developed and attract tourists from all over the world. Besides, many cities such as Harare and Addis Ababa, to name just a few, have the best climate in the world. However, the popular view in India is still that the whole of Africa is still a dark continent, lagging in many respects.

### **Xenophobic View of African People in India**

Indians are quite a tolerant people. But a few ugly incidents of violence against African nationals, create the impression that Indians are perhaps prejudiced towards black people. This certainly does not augur well for India's outreach towards Africa. It gives an easy handle to foreign media, especially in rival countries, to run a campaign against India. Thousands of Indians and People of Indian Origin live in Africa. They rarely get that type of treatment and have even acquired citizenships there. Violence in any form against African nationals, whether students or those working in companies or having their own legitimate business, sullies India's image and should be eschewed. Indian visual media, which now has a footprint in many countries, can help in projecting an objective and balanced image of India abroad.

### **India Suffers in Comparison**

No doubt that the India-Africa partnership has made progress. Bilateral trade has increased many times. India has done exceedingly well in human resource development. India has also set up many institutions under its grant budget and implemented many projects by providing lines of credit. But whatever India does, China does on a much bigger scale. Be it trade, investment, creating iconic buildings and other infrastructure in Africa, China leaves India far behind. (Graphs 2 to 6 in Annexure reinforce the point being made here).



## Chapter III: Opportunities

The India-Africa partnership is not a one way street. It offers opportunities to both sides. This chapter highlights the broad parameters of engagement, aspirations and opportunities available.

### Ten Guiding Principles of PM Modi

Listed below are the ten guiding principles that PM Modi enunciated in 2018 regarding India's partnership with Africa:

- Africa will be at the top of India's priorities. The relationship with Africa will be regular and sustainable.
- The India-Africa partnership will be guided by African nations' needs.
- India will keep her market open for African countries. India will encourage Indian companies to invest in Africa.
- India will harness her experience in the digital arena to promote development in Africa—to improve the public delivery system, enhance education and health, spread digital literacy and expand financial inclusion as well as advance sustainable goals.
- Africa has 60 per cent of the global arable land, but Africa produces only 10 per cent of the global output. India will work with Africa to improve agriculture.
- India will work with Africa to address challenges of climate change.
- India will strengthen African capabilities to combat terrorism and extremism.
- India will work with Africa to keep oceans open and free, especially the Indian Ocean.
- India will endeavour to ensure that African does not become a theatre for rival ambitions.
- India will work with Africa for a just, representative and democratic world order to give a voice and a role, to the one third of the world's population that lives in India and Africa.

### **African Union- A Large Block in UNGA**

Africa is a large continent with 54 sovereign and independent countries that form the largest voting bloc in the UNGA. For any candidate or country aspiring to a high post in the UNGA and its other important UN organs, success cannot be guaranteed without the support of this large bloc. The importance of this is not lost on India, which aspires to be a member of the expanded UNSC.

### **Africa is Full of Resources**

Africa is rich in oil and natural resources with an estimated 30 per cent of world's remaining mineral resources. Countries like Algeria, Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eretria, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Nigeria, South Sudan, Sudan, Tunisia and Mozambique have vast oil and natural gas resources.

Angola, Botswana, Central African Republic and the DRC are rich in diamonds. South Africa, Zimbabwe, Benin, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Mali and Tanzania are rich in gold. The Sahara holds most strategic nuclear ore, gold and copper. Niger and Burundi have huge potential for uranium mining. Burundi is rich in nickel, Gambia in titanium, Madagascar in graphite, Mauritania and Zimbabwe in iron ore, Western Sahara and Morocco in phosphate, Guinea and Mozambique in aluminium and Uganda and Zambia in copper.

Africa has plenty of water resources as well. The Nile, the Congo, Niger, Zambezi and at least fifty other rivers with a combined length of over 450 kms, flow in various parts of Africa. There are forty odd lakes. There is adequate rainfall in many countries.

As per a World Bank Report, most of Africa's fertile land is lying idle. Sub-Saharan Africa has nearly half of the world's uncultivated land, but the continent has not been able to utilize the resources to achieve food security. According to another estimate, Africa has around 600 million hectares of uncultivated arable land, roughly 60 per cent of the global total. All these are some of the most fertile areas. All these resources offer tremendous opportunities for cooperation.

### **Huge Infrastructure Requirements**

Africa lacks modern infrastructure. In many countries, roads, railways, ports, airports and telecom are largely underdeveloped and in shabby condition. If Africa is to achieve development and realize its economic potential, it needs to develop infrastructure in all areas. According to one estimate, Africa needs roughly US\$ 150 billion every year for developing its infrastructure. On the other hand, Africa is short of an estimated US\$ 88 billion per annum. These sectors have immense potential for investment in Africa.

### Growing Strategic Importance of Africa

As many African countries are the maritime neighbours of India, the rising incidence of piracy, terrorism, radicalism, drug trafficking etc., in the region in West Asia and Eastern Africa are matters of grave concern for India and the world at large. If not checked, these can lead to disruption in flow of trade and cause multiple problems. Safety of sea lines cannot be ensured without cooperation with the littoral states. Besides, there is a growing Chinese presence in the region. China may be there for trade, commerce and economic reasons, but building of a string of ports by China and naval bases in the region, are worrisome signs for India. The geopolitical importance of Africa is also high because of the oil and natural gas reserves in many countries, which have enabled India to diversify its energy imports.

India's umbrella business bodies have also perhaps realised, that given the kind of technology that India has and the development levels that African countries have achieved, there is strong complementarity between India's technological strength and African needs. Africa's strategic location offers India and Africa the opportunity to join forces for mutual benefit.

### Growing African Aspirations

A question that begs an answer, relates to Africa's rising aspirations. The AU has launched many initiatives. Two important ones in the context of this chapter are: (i) Second Decade of Education for Africa and (ii) Agenda 2063—The Africa That We Want. Thus in cooperation with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), AU has identified a measurable set of goals to be achieved by 2063. AU's list of aspirations is as summarised below:

- A prosperous Africa, based on inclusive growth and sustainable development
- An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan Africanism
- An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and rule of the law
- A peaceful and secure Africa
- An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics
- An Africa where development is people-driven, unleashing the potential of its women and youth
- Africa as a strong, united and influential global player.

[Source: *African Union, Agenda 2063—the Africa We Want* (August 2014)]

## Chapter IV: Recommendations

The status of the India-Africa partnership and the opportunities and challenges it faces have been discussed and highlighted above. This chapter puts forward recommendations that can further bolster India-Africa partnership in areas where there is synergy. It may though be amply clear to the discerning reader that in a relationship that encompasses a whole continent, no single measure can prove to be a panacea; rather, a slew of measures, as given below, are required to achieve substantive and sustainable progress.

- **Avoid Neo-colonialism Tag:** India should avoid attracting any negative vibe in her partnership with Africa. China's outreach in Africa has created a buzz everywhere. China needs resources for its growing domestic consumption. Africa needs funds to develop its infrastructure. In that sense, it is a win-win situation for the both. China invests in infrastructure projects by giving soft loans in African countries, which are rich in natural resources. While China conducts relations generally through diplomacy and trade, there is also military support via provision of arms and other equipment. But, along with this approach, it has also given the undesirable impression of being a 'neo-colonialist'. Its 'mercantilist' approach has not gone down well with many, who accuse China of pursuing 'Debt Trap Diplomacy'. India must avoid this route.
- **Become A Stakeholder:** The best way to avoid a negative image is for India to become a stakeholder in this partnership, which goes much beyond economic engagement. By becoming a genuine partner, India's interests will be inter-twined with those of African countries and there will be little scope for a negative image. India should sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) or Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with African countries to enhance the economic relationship in a new global trading order. This has already been suggested by Suresh Prabhu, (former) minister of commerce and industry while speaking at the 14<sup>th</sup> CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership in New Delhi in March 2019, when he said, "We have a common future... We want you (Africa) to get into FTA (with India) that will benefit Africa first." India can become a stakeholder in fossil fuels and other areas as well.

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- **Avoid Comparison Trap:** Though many other countries have their own engagement with Africa and there is much jostling for space, but because India and China are Asian neighbours, the world usually ends up comparing only the two with respect to their outreach to Africa. India however comes off poorly in this comparison. India, therefore, must not fall into this narrow comparison trap and continue to chart its own course.
- **Enhance Coordination With Like-Minded Countries:** USA, the only super power, is keen to reset its relations with African countries. During his second tenure, President Barack Obama tried to dispel the negative impression about his Presidency and visited quite a few countries in Africa in 2013. He however was careful to avoid 'rogue' countries such as Zimbabwe and Sudan. Later, he hosted a Summit of African leaders in the US. Likewise, Japan, France, Germany, EU, Turkey and UAE are also bolstering cooperation with the African countries. Many of these countries have expressed an interest in collaborating with India in their outreach to Africa. Enhanced coordination with like-minded countries is strongly recommended; to begin with, on case to case basis (as different countries have different priorities). As mutual confidence grows, the cooperation may be extended to more areas. However, India must resist taking any aggressive stance on human rights, etc.
- **Asia-Africa Growth Corridor:** The idea for an Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) initiative emerged at the end of PM Narendra Modi's visit to Japan in 2016. India for the first time attended the 6th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) in August 2017. Through its Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), Japan has been engaged in various assistance projects in Africa, the most pre-eminent being TICAD. During TICAD VII, held in Yokohama in August 2019, Japan's focus seemed to have shifted from aid to growth through SMMEs and good governance. The schemes that India and Japan have for Africa have some similarities and are in line with Agenda 2063 of AU. Key areas of focus within the AAGC framework are: agriculture, education, health, human resource development & skill enhancement, information technology and infrastructure. The AAGC can also be an alternative to the Chinese connectivity drive in Africa under Belt and Road Initiative. However, for this to happen, concerted efforts are required by the both countries. Otherwise, it will only remain hollow talk. During their meeting in Vladivostok in September 2019, PM Modi and Japanese PM Abe reiterated their resolved to partner in Africa. One hopes for concrete steps to follow.
- **Building Democratic Institutions:** India is world's largest democracy. It is vibrant and progressive. If there is one area where India has an edge over its bigger northern neighbour in the African domain, it is India's credentials as a democratic country. Without being unduly intrusive, India is collaborating with African countries for strengthening democratic institutions and practices. India has built a Parliament Building in Gambia and a few other such institutions. There is interaction at the level of parliamentarians with quite a few countries. India needs to build on this, as more and more African countries embrace transparency and democratic processes.

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- **Respect Africa's Diversity:** Africa is a vast and diverse continent, with five distinct physical or geographic regions, six climatic regions, four main groups of languages and eight or nine regional blocks. There are many ethnic groups, sub-dialects, lakes, rivers, rain forests and so on. There are English speaking countries, Lusophone as well as Francophone countries. Africa's diversity needs to be respected for a cohesive partnership. One size will not fit all. India, with her own diversity, has the wherewithal to understand this and nurture its partnership with care and respect for Africa's diversity.
- **Rope in Indian Diaspora:** India needs to rope in the Indian diaspora in its outreach to Africa which can work to India's advantage provided it is harnessed in a judicious manner, mindful of the local sensitivities. One good thing about the Modi government has been its outreach to Indian diaspora. From Madison Square (USA) to Australia, France, UK, Germany, Singapore, UAE and Africa, wherever Modi has visited, he has made it a point to interact with the Indian diaspora. The response too has been tremendous. India needs to build on this.
- **UNPKOs Must Continue:** India must continue to participate in UNPKOs operations in Africa and persist with its efforts to train more and more African troops in UN peace keeping operations and enhance their capacity to deal with these issues on their own. Apart from ensuring stability and peace, so essential for progress, these endeavours will earn India goodwill and stand it in good stead.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Africa lacks modern infrastructure. India has the technology, which, coupled with optimum use of its limited resources, can make a difference, especially in railways, seaports and airports.
- **Smart Cities and Housing:** Government of India has launched mega schemes to promote smart cities and urban as well as rural housing in India. These initiatives have started making a real difference. India can share its experience with African countries which face identical challenges in these areas.
- **Agriculture and Food Security:** With a population of 1.3 billion, and growing at a fast clip, the challenge is to produce enough food and achieve food security in many African countries. Africa has large chunks of global arable land. It has in many places suitable weather, with plenty of rain and sunshine. Technology, fertilisers, irrigation, mechanisation, pesticides, etc., have given India the tools which enable it to produce enough food for its teeming millions. India-Africa partnership must embrace this sector for their mutual benefit. Any surplus in pulses and lentils can be exported to India to meet its growing needs.
- **Health and Pharmaceutical Sectors:** Malnutrition, AIDS, HIV and malaria are prevalent in many African countries. These countries are at the lowest rung of the human development index for health reasons as well. India has a flourishing medical tourism industry. Many Africans

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travel to India for medical care. India may go a step further and try to set up a few hospitals and diagnostic centres in suitable regions in Africa. This is a call that private sector has to take. Already Apollo and a few other reputed hospitals are on lookout for opportunities in Africa. There is an element of local resistance. But once there is mutual confidence, the relationship will go far. Indian pharmaceutical companies too are meeting world standards and receiving regulatory approvals from USFDA. Indian pharma cos have a presence in many parts of Africa. There is potential to outsource raw materials from Africa. India and Africa can expand this cooperation to mutual benefit, especially in the areas under the charge of Ministry of AYUSH.

- **Human Resource and Skill Development:** As many African countries embark on their development journey, they need more and more human resources and skill development. There is a strong case for India to further expand the scope of training under ITEC as well as other sister programmes.
- **Solar Energy:** Solar projects have relatively short gestation period. Moreover, they are in line with the sustainable development goals of the UN. With the ISA also now in place, the initiative needs to be followed up with an infusion of more capital and technology.
- **Energy Collaboration:** As more and more countries in Africa accelerate their march towards economic development, they will require more and more energy. Indian companies have already acquired stake in fossil fuels which has led to infusion of capital in many African countries. India too has benefited by importing a sizable amount of gas and oil from African countries. There is a need to further enhance this collaboration. Quite a few countries in Africa have substantial reserves of strategic nuclear ores. Burundi and Niger are known for their uranium ore which is used in nuclear power generation. France has been the beneficiary of uranium from Niger. Niger has shown its willingness to supply uranium to India. There is need to harness this ore for mutual benefit.
- **Collaboration in SMEs:** Cottage, small and medium industries have long been the backbone of Indian economy. India has done well to keep focus on this sector, which generates huge employment as well as wealth and leads in exports. It is also less capital intensive. It has, therefore, all the ingredients to become a sector of cooperation between India and Africa. African countries do not have the luxury of extra capital or highly trained man-power. The SME sector may work to their advantage by creating wealth, jobs, equitable distribution and regional balances. India has set up a few vocational training centres in some of the African countries and also provides training in many SMEs areas. This sector, like the capacity building programme, has the potential to become a success story.
- **Maritime Collaboration:** The need for enhanced maritime collaboration has already been highlighted in the chapter on “Opportunities”. In the last one year or so, 18 African countries have had defence interaction with India. The IDSA conference on “India and Africa: Deepening

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the Security Engagement” in March 2018 was a step in the right direction. India must enhance its naval engagement with African countries, especially those which abut the Indian Ocean.

- **IT, Telecom, Digitisation and E-governance:** India needs to expand its footprint in IT, Telecom, digitisation and e-governance in Africa. This will improve transparency and add to efficiency in the system. The Pan Africa e-Networking Project, which is the GOI's flagship programme in Africa, has done well, though its success varies from country to country and node to node (Health, Education and VVIP connectivity are three nodes of the flagship programme). GOI has extended the programme in its new incarnation as e-VidyaBharati and e-AarogyaBharti. There is lot of focus on digitisation in its new incarnation and should serve African countries well.
- **CII-Exim Bank Conclave:** This initiative needs to be carried forward with more vigour and focus on making further progress in the Project Partnership.
- **Enhanced High Level Interaction:** While a considerable buzz has been created by various event like IAFSs and CII-Exim Bank Conclaves and visits by African ministers and other dignitaries to India but these visits have been reciprocated in a half-hearted way by Indian government officials. But this is now changing. The top three office holders from India have visited a number of African countries in recent years to convey the message that India is ready to put its relations with African nations on an even keel. This is a move in the right direction and must be continued.
- **Strengthening Role of Exim Bank:** The Exim Bank plays crucial role in the success of the projects undertaken by GOI. Apart from exploring the routing of LOCs through the African Development Bank (ADB) and other reputed banks, Exim Bank's equity in ADB should also be enhanced so that it gets a seat on the board. This way it will be able to have greater say in the decision-making and protect Indian interests.
- **Direct Shipping Line:** A direct shipping line is needed between India and Africa.
- **Liberalised Visa Regime Needed:** In recent years, there have been laudable efforts by GOI to liberalise the visa regime. Continued efforts in this direction will further promote trade, commerce and people-to-people interaction between India and Africa.
- **Timely Implementation of Projects:** One important reason for the tardy implementation of projects is the slow process of identifying suitable land or building for the projects. To ensure speedy implementation, a strong view has emerged that GOI may include identification of suitable building as part of the obligations on its part and the meet the cost of acquiring it in the same way as GOI meets cost of feasibility study, detailed project report, equipment and training.
- **Proactive and Strategic Approach Required:** There is a lot of goodwill for India in Africa. African countries appreciate its non-intrusive policies and look towards it for lead and initiative.

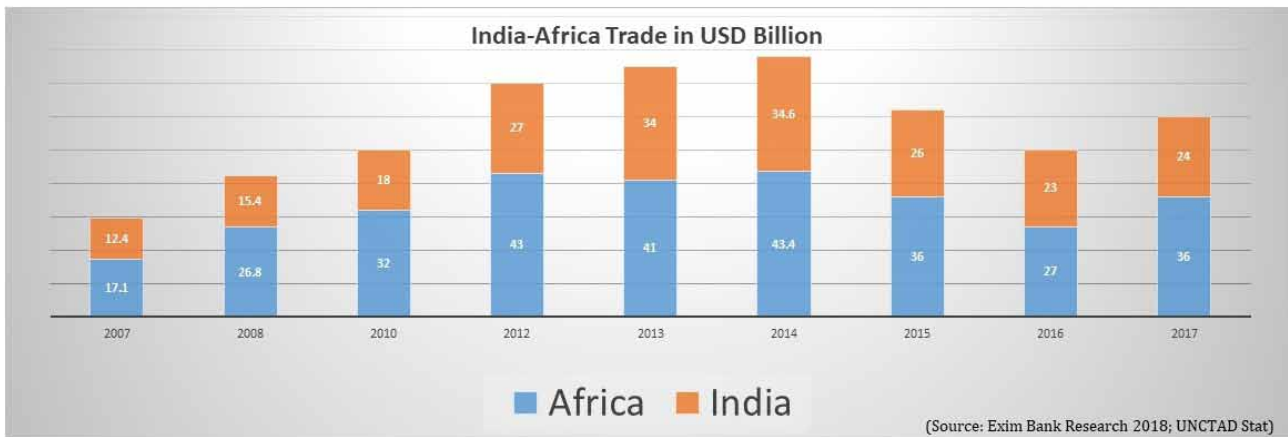


## **India-Africa Partnership - An Assessment**

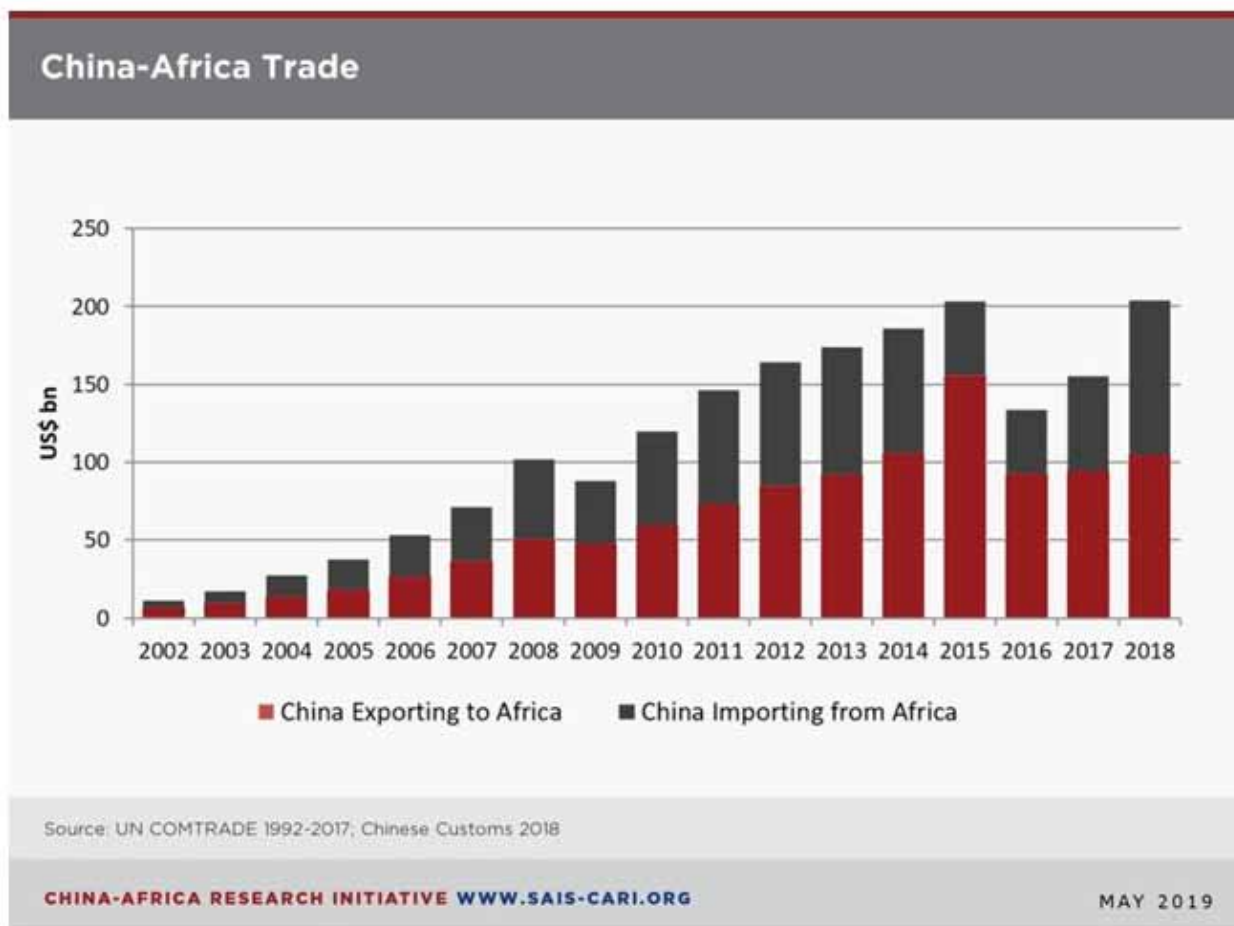
However, India has not been able to capitalise on this, largely because India's approach has been request-based and not initiative-based. Basically, India lacks a cohesive policy and strategic vision for its partnership with Africa. India must develop a strategic foreign policy and make it initiative-based. India already has strategic partnership with a few countries in Africa such as South Africa and Nigeria. India also has defence cooperation with many African countries. In recent years, India has entered into a military engagement with African countries, on the lines India of its engagement with ASEAN countries. Such measures are useful, not only for achieving better alignment and coordination, but also for dispelling any negative impression that India is not alive to the sensitivities of the African countries. There is need for India to focus on the strategic front for Africa-India partnership to blossom.

## Annexure

### Graph 1



### Graph 2



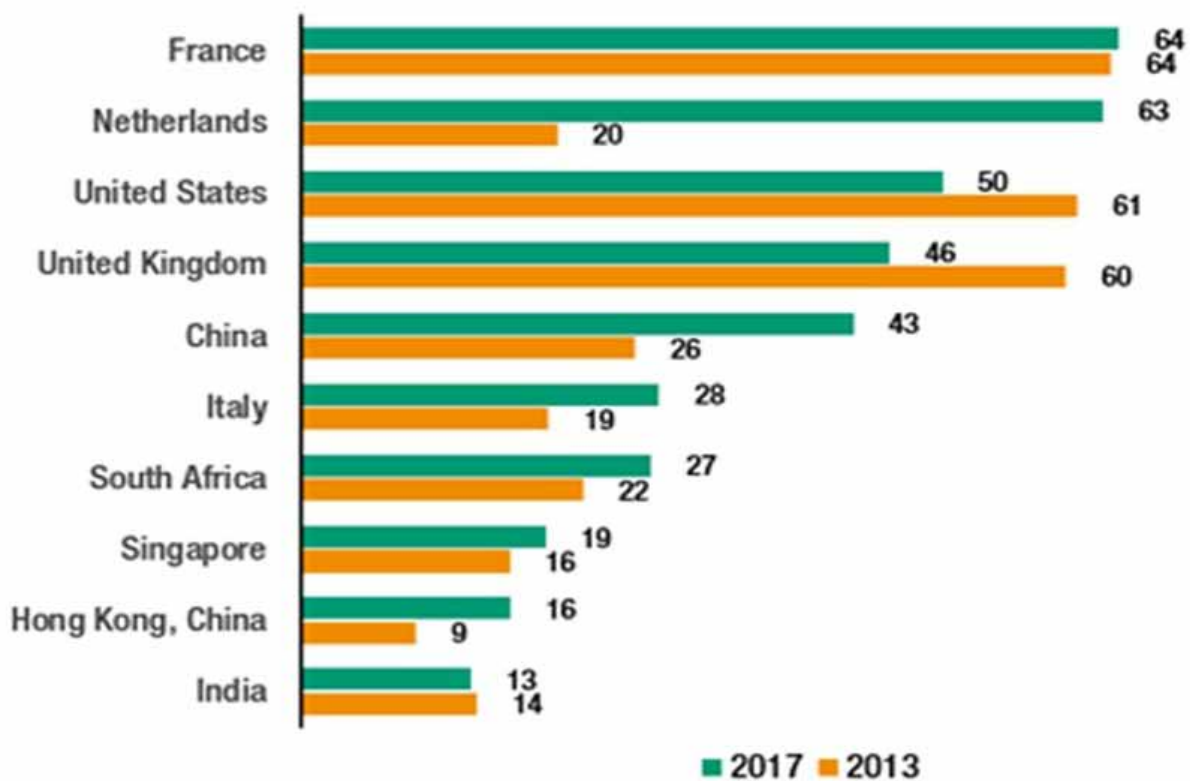
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### Graph 3



NB: China clearly widens the gap in its bilateral trade with Africa vis-à-vis that of India as well as USA with Africa.

### Graph 4

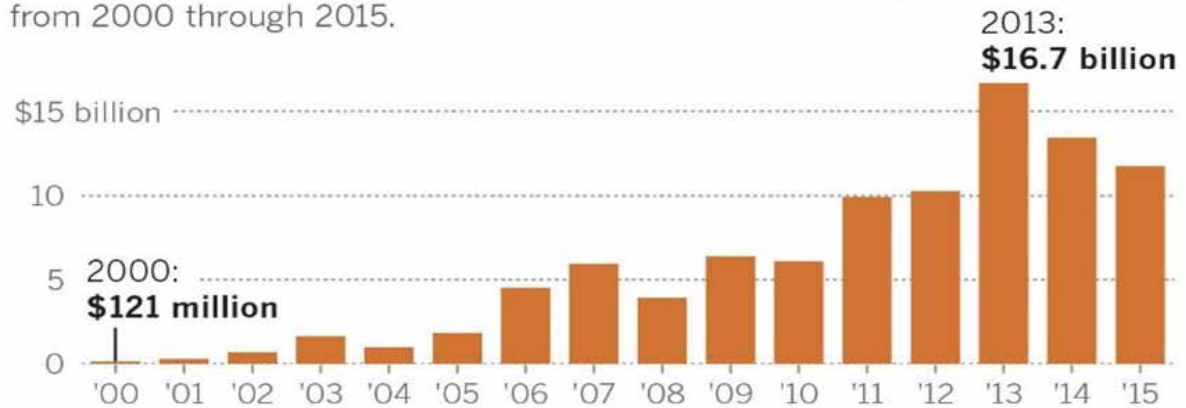


(Source: [https://unctad.org/en/NewsImages/2019-06-12\\_WIRafrica\\_fig2\\_400x307.png](https://unctad.org/en/NewsImages/2019-06-12_WIRafrica_fig2_400x307.png))

Graph 5

### Chinese lend billions to African nations

The Chinese government, banks and contractors lent more than \$94 billion to African governments and state-owned enterprises from 2000 through 2015.

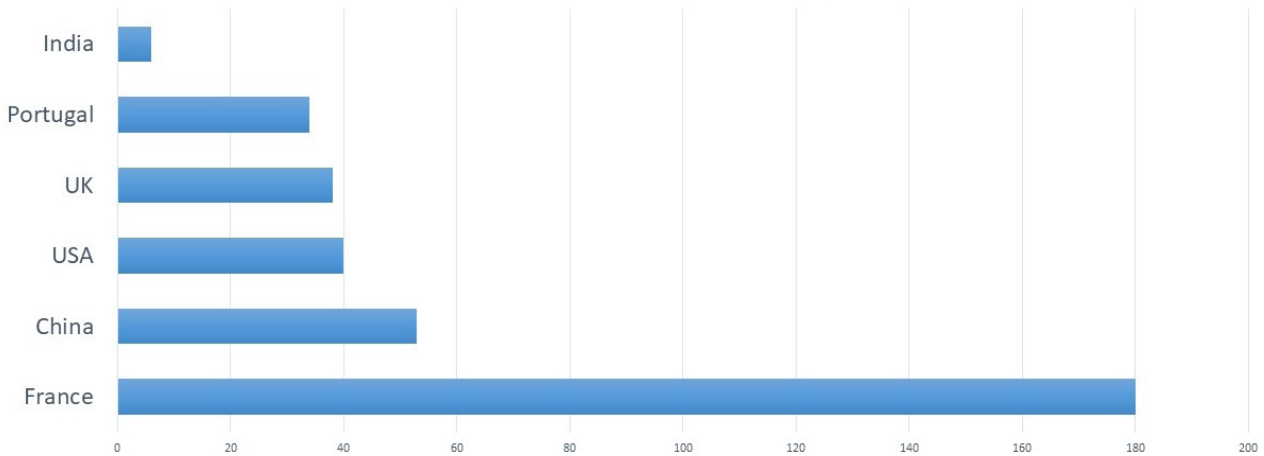


Source: Johns Hopkins SAIS China-Africa Research Initiative

@latimesgraphics

Graph 6

### Cultural Institutes in Africa(2018)



(Data Source: World Education Services, NB: India has only around half a dozen Cultural Centres in Africa (apart from quite a few Yoga Centres recently opened by GOI in African countries))

*(The paper is the author's individual scholastic articulation. The author certifies that the article/paper is original in content, unpublished and it has not been submitted for publication/web upload elsewhere, and that the facts and figures quoted are duly referenced, as needed, and are believed to be correct).*

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