



India's Africa Policy: Continuity, Change and Challenges

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India and African countries have nurtured mutuality of worldviews and interests through century-long engagements. The relationship, driven by new imperatives of globalisation, has witnessed steady expansion. It has, over the years, acquired momentum through a series of policy interventions such as 'Focus Africa' programme, 'Team-9' initiative and 'India Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)' process. Initiated in the year 2008, the IAFS process, in particular, has been the most defining policy initiative that has ushered in a qualitative transformation of India's relations with Africa. It has elevated the relationship to the summit level and has provided an institutional framework for cooperation at continental, regional and bilateral levels. As a consequence, political understanding, security cooperation, trade and investment collaboration, energy partnership, development partnership, and diaspora linkages between both regions have been enhanced. While preparing for the IAFS-III in 2014, New Delhi must recognise issues and concerns that are likely to affect the sustainability of its relationship with Africa, necessitating a calibrated, coherent and holistic policy approach.

Political Cooperation

The political solidarity, based on the common colonial experience, provides an anchor for strong relations between India and Africa. Both sides recognize the importance of democratic governance, human rights, decentralization, institutions of parliamentary democracy, elections

and justice system, as evident in their joint policy documents. The Africa-India Framework for Enhanced Cooperation declared under the IAFS-II in 2011 does articulate their commitment to partner on such political issues. The exchange of visits at the level of heads of state/government, ministers and officials has facilitated the political relationship between the two sides, which has witnessed a steady growth. There is, however, need for more frequency in exchanges of political visits to further boost this relations.

While India is trying to move from a 'structural' to a 'substantive' democratic process, a majority of African countries are engaged in a strong quest for their democratic entitlements. In Africa, competitive claims over electoral mandates have, many a time, led to ethno-political violent contestations, in which the AU and other regional groupings have played their roles as effective moderators. A member of the African Union (AU) Partners Group, India should constantly articulate its constructive position on these political developments, giving a boost to 'political globalization' in Africa. Furthermore, there is scope for both India and Africa to carry forward such process, by adding impetus to their ongoing common efforts towards reforms of the global security and governance institutions. Since these institutions have intense interface with the African states and societies, efforts should be made to ensure that India's solidarity on political issues and developments catches African people's imagination.

Security Cooperation

Sustainable development, peace and security are common goals for India and Africa. As the third largest contributor of personnel to the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO), India's significant participation in the conflict-containment and reconstruction process is acknowledged in Africa. India and Africa, indeed, continue their close cooperation, including through regular consultations at the UN, at the AU and in New Delhi/national capitals. Both remain committed towards operationalisation of the African Standby Force through special training programmes.

To further deepen this engagement, a holistic understanding of the current security situation in Africa, linked to competition between dominant global powers and new challengers over the continent's economic space, is required. The rising significance of emerging powers in

Africa has resulted in more securitization of commercial stakes by external powers. The Western actors, in particular, selectively use political dissent as strategic opportunities in the specific African countries. In some cases, this has resulted in irresponsible military interventions, creating scope for further security unrest in the continent. The complex security scenario has, indeed, provided space for radical mobilisation along extremist/religious fault lines. This is evident from the steady rise in terror attacks in Africa in the recent years, evoking an urge for the creation of an effective counter-terror response mechanism under the aegis of the AU and other regional groupings.

India's security cooperation with Africa, therefore, needs a greater thrust. As a victim of terrorism, India could partner in the proposed multilateral and regional counter-terror initiatives in Africa. Moreover, India's position in the case of politico-armed intra-state conflicts in Africa – i.e. protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the conflict afflicted country along with the sensitivity towards the legitimate aspirations of its people - needs to be articulated in a more proactive and pronounced fashion.

Economic Cooperation

The century-long economic linkage between India and Africa has evolved from an ancient people-led mercantile exchange to the current private sector-led industrial trade and production partnership, with the facilitating political support. While there is a steady increase in the volume of trade and equity cooperation between two sides, the issues concerning equilibrium and content of trade remain major challenges in the recent years. Another pertinent concern of this partnership under the process of 'economic globalization' is to synergise the collective interests of the people of India and Africa on the one hand and the sectoral corporate interests on the other.

The sustenance and consolidation of the rising India-Africa economic cooperation necessitates a multi-stakeholder approach. Emphasis should be on value addition and beneficiation in commodity trade, by supporting the expansion of manufacturing bases in Africa through Public Private Partnership (PPP) model. More significantly, a cooperative mechanism needs to be evolved for social auditing of the commercial engagement between India and Africa.

To this effect, it is time for New Delhi to take initiative in framing policy guidelines for Indian entrepreneurs venturing into Africa.

Energy Cooperation

Energy partnership is a prime driver of India-Africa economic engagement, since energy security is the prerequisite of economic growth and stability. Africa is relatively a new energy space in the oil and gas map of the world. Indian economy is heavily dependent on the hydrocarbon energy import, with diversification of its overseas energy supply as a constant policy priority. In this context, energy/resource-rich Africa, therefore, assumes immense significance for India. Africa's quest for favourable capital investment and intermediate, cost-effective technology for industrial expansion coincides with India's requirement for hydrocarbon resources to sustain its rising economic growth. This creates a scope for trade and investment partnership in the energy sector, and further consolidation through a calibrated synchronization between hydrocarbon resource production linkage and capacity building cooperation.

Development Cooperation

Development cooperation, with special focus on capacity building, remains the cornerstone of India-Africa engagement under the framework of South-South cooperation. Since 1964, India has been pursuing various training and skill development schemes under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) and Special Commonwealth African Assistance Programme (SCAAP). But India's development cooperation with Africa has acquired greater salience under the process of economic globalization, which has brought economic growth along with increased social disparity in both regions. In response to these new socio-economic imperatives, IAFS-I in 2008 marked a milestone in India's development cooperation with Africa. Under the IAFS process, a number of policy initiatives, ranging from capacity building measures, including training, skill development, scholarships and institution building, to line of credits (LOC) and grants, are announced to partner with Africa in its developmental endeavours.

As an alternative development partner, India's capacity building initiatives have been appreciated by the African countries. The effectiveness of such measures is, however, questioned

on the counts of procedural hindrances, implementation gap, time and cost overrun, visibility deficit, and most importantly, their relevance to developmental needs and priorities of the target people. To ensure an effective management of these projects, constant monitoring and periodic evaluation is a timely requirement. Nevertheless, a more fundamental answer to this problem would be to address the structural deficiency of the IAFS process, which is premised on the Banjul formula, giving primacy to discretion and decision of the AU Commission, rather than considering the choice and judgement of the concerned country, where the development projects are being implemented.

Diaspora

The century-long diaspora linkages between India and Africa have regained significance under globalisation. Diaspora has, indeed, come to be recognised as a critical resource, both for the country of origin and their adopted homeland. Its crucial role in the exchange of capital, science and technology, knowledge innovation and human values is increasingly being realised, instead of the earlier perception as a parochial racist affiliation. In Africa, India's policy on the issue of its diaspora has witnessed a perceptible shift, from an 'active dissociation' to a 'proactive association' over the decades.

India's current engagement with its diaspora in Africa is, nonetheless, part of its larger global diaspora policy. New Delhi, however, needs to navigate its policy specifically towards its diaspora in Africa, keeping in view their increasing significance as well as their uniqueness underpinned by the heterogeneity, social positioning and complex identity. In the IAFS-I 2008 Declaration, it was emphatically mentioned that both sides would like to partner in harnessing diaspora resources for their mutual benefit, with the inspiration from Africa's engagement in similar efforts. The subsequent policy pursuit of diaspora factor in India-Africa partnership, for building links and strengthening bilateral relations, has yet to receive the adequate focus and required momentum.

Recommendations

Political/Security Cooperation

- a) The exchange of political visits requires greater thrust, with special focus on relatively smaller states.
- b) Commitment to cooperate in the strengthening of the African Court of Justice and Human Rights deserves serious attention.
- c) India's position on political and security crisis situations needs to be articulated in a more proactive and pronounced fashion.
- d) There should be greater push for reforms of global institutions of security and governance by mobilising support of the African countries.
- e) India could try and partner in the proposed multilateral and regional counter-terror initiatives in Africa.

Economic/Energy Cooperation

- f) There should be greater push for reforms of global economic institutions by mobilising support of the African countries.
- g) The sustenance and consolidation of the rising India-Africa economic cooperation necessitates a multi-stakeholder approach and social auditing.
- h) The imbalance in the content of bilateral trade needs to be rectified.
- i) Emphasis should be laid on value addition and beneficiation in commodity trade.
- j) There should be larger Indian investment in energy sector, with a focus on buy back option.
- k) There is a need for calibrated synchronization between energy resource production linkage and capacity building cooperation.

Development Cooperation

- l) For ensuring an effective implementation of development projects, regular monitoring and timely review are required.
- m) Relevance of Banjul formula adopted for organizing the IAFS process necessitates introspection and interrogation; but this has to be undertaken as an African initiative.

Diaspora

- n) Specific policy needs to be designed for engaging diaspora in Africa, keeping in view their uniqueness, by the heterogeneity, social positioning and complex identity.
- o) The policy announcement of partnership on harnessing diaspora for mutual benefits calls for priority attention.

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