

INDIA-AFRICA RELATIONS

Africa is emerging as a new growth pole of the world. It was earlier a victim of European and American colonialism. Presently the western world has alleged that India is in a race with China for influence in Africa. The reason for the interest of developing nations in Africa is on account of:

- a) Africa's position in Global scenario.
- b) It is a reservoir of energy resources.
- c) It is near virgin land suitable for economic and trade opportunities.
- d) It is a continent that can side with emerging economies to affect the long dominance of the rich countries.

Emerging economies like India and China are looking towards Africa for survival. Over the years African basket of exports has diversified to include mineral oil and products like copper, natural or cultured pearls, precious and semi precious stones, coffee, edible fruits etc. India is also largest importer of rough diamonds from Africa.

Chinese investment and trade presence in Africa is much larger but they excel in large infrastructure whereas India has an edge in InfoTech, capacity building and also emerging areas like agriculture & floriculture. India's democratic culture and consultative approach makes it an attractive partner for skill development and capacity building.

African nations in recent times have emerged to be a major geographical region having vast reserves of oil and gas. India facing energy scarcity decided to capitalize on oil blocks in African continent. Former president of India Mr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam proposed an idea to connect all the African countries through satellite channels in order to provide telemedicine and tele education facilities. This idea was accepted by the government and in the year 2009 Pan -African-e-network project was launched and for the implementation of the project Ministry of External Affairs was designated as the nodal agency.

In the second half of the 20th century when major countries of Asia and Africa emerged as independent nations, they emphasized on rural development. In order to promote rural development collectively several countries of Asia and Africa established an organization called Afro-Asian Rural Development Organization (AARDO) in 1962. However this organization proved to be ineffective due to lack of funds. In the year 2012 this organization completed its 50th year and 50th conference was organized in New Delhi where India arranged funds for the (AARDO) at low interest from Asian Development Bank.

From the beginning of the 21st century large oil blocks began to be explored in the eastern country of African continent Sudan. Indian companies started to make huge investments in this country. ONGC videsh limited signed an agreement with the largest company of Sudan (Greater Nile Corporation) whereby Sudan assured to supply oil to India. In 2011 serious ethnic conflict broke out in Sudan and the country was divided into two parts, this was bound to influence the interest of India as the major oil blocks were confined to the South Sudan and the main pipeline passed through the north. There was a dispute between the two parts and this dispute was resolved by the visit of then Vice President of India Hamid Ansari. He also become the first international person to recognize the independent status of South Sudan.

Former P M Manmohan Singh visited African states and strengthened ties with the continent in 2011. He offered African states expertise in education, healthcare, InfoTech in addition to hefty lines of credit of \$ 5 billion over the next years.

P M Narendra Modi's outreach to the continent in June, 2016 with his visit to Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya was another boost in the relationship with Africa. India and Kenya signed several pacts to deepen and expand cooperation in areas like defence and security and avoidance of double taxation. India also announced the extension of line of credit of \$ 44.95 million to the African nation for the development of small and medium enterprises. India will also build a cancer hospital in Kenya to provide quality and affordable healthcare. The two countries also agreed that terrorism and radicalism are the common challenges for the two countries, the region and the whole world. The two countries would also cooperate in the field of cyber security, combating drugs, narcotics and human trafficking. They also shared common interest in maritime security since they are connected by Indian Ocean. India is Kenya's largest trade partner and second largest investor there.

Mr. Modi's visit to Mozambique is significant as a bulk of India's Africa bound investment is in this country. The two countries signed 3 pacts including long term agreement under which India will buy pulses from this country to meet the shortfall and contain the prices of this commodity. Earlier the two sides signed an agreement a crucial MoU to cooperate in the field of new and renewable energy sector. Mozambique is expected to become a major energy exporter like Nigeria if it gets a proper legal framework to enable foreign firms to explore oil and gas in the country.

Mr. Modi thanked South Africa to support India's bid for NSG membership. Modi offered South Africa to invest in India as India is an Attractive destination for defence production. The focus area of his visit was energy ,food and maritime security. Mr. Modi signed an agreement to provide \$92 million line of credit to Tanzania for a key water supply project. Mr. Modi wanted to enhance maritime cooperation with South Africa as a part of the Indian Ocean Rim Association. The ties between India and Africa suffered due to attack on the African youths in India (2016). It triggered a diplomatic downturn with African diplomats announcing that they would not send their students to India and accused India of racial prejudice. Another irritant between the two sides was a campaign to remove Gandhi's statue from the University of Ghana and terming him as racist.

An agreement was signed between India and Japan on 25th May 2017 at African Development Bank Meet in Gujarat for the establishment of Asian Africa Growth Corridor. The objective is to develop Quality Infrastructure in Africa, digital connectivity by Indo-Japanese collaboration which would create free and open Indo Pacific region. Unlike Belt and Road Initiative of China which includes both land and sea route this corridor includes Sea route only.

Recently India decided to supply 10 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine to African nations. Earlier India was also responsible for sending Hydroxychloroquine, paracetamol and other drugs to 25 African nations. India's effort to improve ties with African nations is on account of many reasons –from sharing low cost technologies and pharmaceuticals, building up Solar Alliance and growing market for each other goods.

China is today the biggest trading partner of African Nations but India has its own strength to deal with Africa –like its democratic traditions and a million strong Indian Diaspora across Africa.