

India Africa Partnership: RSTV – Big Picture

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Context:

- With 55 countries, Africa is the **second largest continent** in terms of both land area and population (around 15%).
- With a **combined population of around 33%** of the world, India and Africa has a long history of civilizational, cultural, economic and political linkages based on the principle of **south-south cooperation**.

What is the History of India-Africa Relations?

- Our historical linkages involves the **anticolonial, anti-imperial** struggles, post-colonial **nation building** and the influence of leaders like **Mahatma Gandhi, Mandela, Nkrumah**, etc. Mahatma Gandhi taught the lessons of peace and non-violence.
- Historical relationship has aided in building **confidence and trust** in the relationship.
 - But it is wrong to remain anchored on historical relations and we need to move further.
- Africa is not a unitary entity but has **huge diversity** just like India.
- There are a number of opportunities and potential in the relationship.

ICWA National Conference on India-Africa Partnership:

- Recently, the **Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA)** organised a **National Conference** on 'India-Africa Partnership in a Changing Global Order–Priorities, Prospects and Challenges'
- In the valedictory session of the conference, Vice President of India stated that India and Africa have **common interests** and vital stakes in each other's **progress, peace and prosperity**.
- Three main topics discussed in the conference were:
 - How to **remodel** India-Africa relationship with respect to the rapidly changing global matrix.
 - The specifics of India's **dynamic relationships** with individual African countries.
 - Assessing the status of **African studies** in India.

What are the Commonalities between India and Africa?

India and Africa has a lot of common issues in the sectors of **security, trade, climate change, sustainable development, people to people relations**, etc.

1. Security Interests:

- Indian PM's visit to Seychelles, Mozambique, Tanzania, etc. indicates India's interest in the **maritime security** in the South-West Indian Ocean region.
- The Indian Ocean framework of India has captured the imagination of **Djibouti**, etc.
- Two major **terror organizations** in Africa, Boko Haram (in Western Africa) and Al Shabab (in Eastern Africa) have links with Al Qaeda and **Pakistan** based organizations like Lashkar e Taiba and Jaish e Mohammad.
- Presence of Somalian **pirates** is a problem to the whole region.
- There is a growing sense of contest between different countries to enter into security equations with the African Countries. Therefore India needs to keep up to its security imperatives, ensure its

security needs are met, maintain its security interests without creating a sense of competition with other countries.

2. Economic Interests:

- Some of the African countries are among the fastest growing economies in the world.
 - The **Agenda 2063** of the African Union focuses on the ambition **of the African economies to develop further**.
 - They want to develop to the level of India in the next **10-15 years**.
 - They are looking for **partner countries** to help them in this aspect.
- Africa has huge natural resources such as **hydrocarbons, precious metals**, etc.
- India and Africa have an **asymmetric trade relation** where India has an edge.
 - India require raw materials such as **Uranium** (from South Africa), **gold, Plutonium, Copper** (from Zambia), etc.
 - Africa is a **market** for our finished products as well.
- Africa has Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone communities who speak **English, French and Portuguese** respectively.
 - India has good **trade and business relations** with the Anglophones only, but not with the Francophones or Lusophones.
- Now, **multinational firms** are not the monopoly of the western countries and Japan.
 - India's business attitude is changing. **Private enterprises** now thinks that investing outside India is also part of **nation building**.
 - This was a change from Nehruvian model to post reform model.
 - Indian private firms like Maruti, Mahindra, Tata, Kirloskar, etc. have investments in Africa.
 - Such companies also gain **good image** to India by doing good business.

3. Cultural interests:

- Indian **movies** released after the economic reforms have earned foreign exchange to the country.
- However, India Africa cultural partnership is not sufficient.
- Indians have a tendency to think that we are a **cultural superpower** and we are proud of our concepts like **Vasudaiva Kutumpakam**. But we must recognise that even Africa has rich heritage, since the evolution of the human race.
- China already has a huge cultural presence in Africa in the form of Confucius institutions.

4. Agriculture Sector:

- Agriculture is an area of **perfect complementarity** between India and Africa.
- We have common issues such as **food security, arable land**, etc.
- Indians already have large areas of farmlands in Africa. But a much larger scale investment in the sector can't be managed by private corporations alone.

How Can We Collaborate and Take Care of Each Another's Interests?

Partnership between India and Africa has a strong traditional and historic base. It is time to build on the common grounds related to culture, security, trade, technology, agriculture, etc.

1. Security Interests:

- India's role should enable **mutual advantage** and build trust further without the perception of a conflict of interest.
- The relationship should be based on partnerships in specific areas like **anti-terrorism, anti-piracy**

etc. India has a history of freeing ships captured by pirates in the region.

- We need to work together on **cyber security** and **training of armies** of the African countries.
- We need to focus on economic cooperation which is vital for securing the Indian Ocean.
- India's investment in **trade, energy and infrastructure** sectors should be a part of security collaboration.

2. Economic Interests:

- Our **trade relations** have grown from negligible levels in the 1990s to around **\$65 billion** at present. India needs to further build upon the **edge** we have in trade relations.
- Earlier meetings have already formulated the modalities for finding synergies with respect to **economic growth and industrial partnership**. We need to implement and deliver those.
- India and Africa both have a high population of youth who have aspirations in the **IT sector**. India can drive the IT industry in Africa. Ex.: Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthi's visit.

3. Energy Interests:

- Growing instability in the West Asia is compelling India to look for new avenues in energy security. Hence, we need to enhance energy security by procuring **oil and gas** from Sudan, Nigeria, Angola, Gulf of Guinea etc.
- Many African countries are part of the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** too.

4. Cultural Interests:

- India should improve cultural and people to people linkages through **Bollywood, Sitar and other traditional music of India**.
- **Indian diaspora** in Africa including English teachers wants to connect with their roots in India. India need to exploit that for building strong linkages.
- **Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)** need to promote the cultural linkage between India and Africa.
- We should respect the **students of African origin** studying in India.
 - They should **become ambassadors** of India when they go back to their countries. That will improve the **good image** of India in their home countries.

5. Agriculture Sector:

- We have common opportunities in the agriculture sector like **skilled manpower** and **large market**.
- India need to form a **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)** to promote more investment by Indians in farmlands in Africa.

How can we go Forward?

India and Africa already have substantial relations. We need to build on that foundation.

- India need to **move quickly** to harness the potential, because **other major countries** also have renewed interest in Africa.
- India need to realise the **diversity in Africa** and look at each African country differently.
- We should learn from each other's experience. Ex.: India can learn from the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)** commission's work against **apartheid** in Africa. Larger countries like Nigeria, Zaire, Congo, etc. can learn from our **federal and democratic** form of governance.
- India needs to continue establishing **diplomatic and trade missions** in every African country.
- High level engagements need to be more frequent.
- Study of Africa need to be promoted in India. We can't embark upon strong bilateral relations without

building a strong intellectual and academic foundation.

- We must build collaborations on contemporary issues in economics, investment, infrastructure and human resources.

