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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### INDIA AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH STRATEGY-FOCUSING ON DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH AFRICA

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#### Abstract

The Global South has been a burning topic of international diplomacy in recent years, and all emerging superpowers have been drawing up plans and policies centered around it, among one of them is India. Global South comprises African countries, Latin American countries and Asian countries. In this article, the focus area is on African countries and its bilateral relations with India. Additionally, it offers insights on how the African countries are an important support for India's international influence and its economic transformation and development. Over the decades, India's relations with African countries have strengthened and it can be noticed through making the permanent member of the African Union in the latest G20 summit hosted by India and its participation in various multi-forums and organisations where India is a major shareholder. Africa's special relationship with India provides a foundation for a mutually beneficial and sustainable partnership built on African agency and capacity building. Albeit, India faces an unprecedented challenge from another emerging power "China" as China is increasingly investing in African nations by building infrastructure projects and making its way into African diplomacy. This article overviews the Indo-African relations and how Chinese increasing influence is offering a challenge to India's relations and how India can maintain its diplomatic relations with African countries.

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#### Introduction:-

In the past, India was mostly seen as a developing country, but with the country's foreign policy changing, the picture has changed in the present. India is reshaping the political and economic scene in the region and beyond the world. India, the leader of the Global South, has positioned itself as a pioneer and innovator, with several accomplishments credited to it in a variety of fields.

#### What is Global South?

1. Following World War II, political activist Carl Oglesby introduced the term "Global South" in 1969.
2. Often referred to as developing, less developed, or underdeveloped, the Global South comprises up mainly of countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that have higher rates of poverty, income inequality, and difficult living conditions than the wealthier countries of the Global North.
3. The term Global South signifies a **combination of political, geopolitical, and economic similarities** among nations as they all had a history of colonialism and imperialism.

**What is Significance of Global South today?****1. Shifting Economic and Political Power**

- The World Bank (WB) has acknowledged a "shift in wealth" from the North Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific region, upending conventional wisdom about the distribution of economic power.
- The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—is already more than that of the G-7. Moreover, influential players in global politics are increasingly emerging from the Global South, including Saudi Arabia, Brazil, and China.

**2. Geopolitical Significance**

- It is expected that Asian countries would be major players in what scholars refer to as the "Asian Century."
- A "post-Western world" is also being discussed as the Global South's influence overtakes the Global North's historical domination.

**India's Global South Strategy****India- voice of Global South**

When India hosted the online Voice of the Global South Summit under the theme – ‘Unity of voice, Unity of purpose’ in January 2023, it officially started using the phrase "Global South" in diplomatic arenas. During the summit, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that the nations in the Global South, comprising 75% of the global population, hold the greatest potential for future development and declared that India would stand up for the Global South.

The developing world has been badly impacted by recent global occurrences, including the Covid epidemic, the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, growing debt, issues with food and energy security, etc. The developing world's issues frequently go unnoticed and unallocated on the international scene. Additionally, the pertinent platforms that are already established have frequently shown to be insufficient in resolving these issues and worries of the emerging nations.

Thus, India's endeavour to provide a common platform for debating the issues, interests, and priorities that affect developing countries, as well as for exchanging ideas and solutions, has been embodied in the Voice of Global South Summit initiative. This initiative has been motivated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of "Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas Sabka Vishwas aur Sabka Prayas" and is also based on India's philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. Most importantly, however, has been India's attempt to unite in voice and purpose in addressing the issues and priorities.

India's **Global South Strategy** encompasses three things: 1. India understands the dichotomy between Global North and South and being a victim of colonialism and imperialism, India tends to create a platform for these countries to discuss the various issues faced by countries in Southern Hemisphere in multilateral forums led by major countries, such as the G7 and G20; 2. After the Bandung Conference of 1955, both India and China began to vie for leadership of the Global South, with its Global South strategy China is positioned outside the framework implying India's standing as a representative of Global South; 3. India continues to take a position that purposefully leaves open-ended and imprecise the list of nations that fall under the umbrella of the Global South. This uncertainty suggests that all nations outside of developed ones could be included except China, and consequently, India appears to have been successful in presenting the Global South—a collection of developing and emerging nations—as a unified political entity.

**India's proposal for African Union to become Permanent Member**

India has endorsed new membership for the G-20 presidency and made a proposal to African Union. And the AU's formal accession was approved at the G20 summit held in New Delhi in September 2023. It was considered as a historic move. This is an actual instance of an aspect of India's Global South strategy that addresses the fact that, except from South Africa, the perspectives of Africa's 1.48 billion people are not sufficiently represented in international collaboration. Africa is one of the G20's permanent members. India supports expanding permanent memberships in the Security Council through UN reform and feels that the international political system needs to be reformed. Another factor behind India's policy is to secure stronger support from African Countries, which are biggest voting-bloc in international community, is its desire to gain support in the international community arena. Furthermore, India hopes to drive a wedge between China and Africa by implying that it is the representative of the developing world, even as China and African nations strengthen their ties via China's ambitious Belt and Road

Initiative. In order to do this, India has been working to establish an image of itself as a reliable partner for African nations.

### **Historical Background-India and African Relations**

Africa and India have a long history of relationship. A persistent goal of the late Jawaharlal Nehru was to gradually establish amicable, cooperative, and mutually beneficial ties between India and African nations. An attempt was made to formulate policies oriented toward the African nations.

### **Creation of Non-Aligned Movement**

India chose to forge its own path after the Second World War by founding the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which was the outcome of the **Asian-African Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia**. The world was then divided into two blocs: the United States and the Soviet Union. During this conference, participants pledged to do the following: The primary goal is to encourage commerce, economic growth, and collaboration within the Asia-African region. Second, to strengthen the progress made in the cultural cooperation between the African and Asian nations, some of which had been impeded by decades of European colonial control. Last but not least, to encourage the expansion of human rights and African nations' right to self-determination. The Indian government did not think twice to open formal diplomatic ties and offices in the African countries after 1956, when they earned their independence.

### **Policy framework for India-Africa collaboration**

The close relations that exist presently between Africa and India predate the creation of the Global South concept. Through the **India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)**, a summit-level gathering that has been conducted on a regular basis since 2008, and the CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership, a working-level meeting that was first held in 2005, the nations of Africa and India have gradually deepened their ties. The IAFS collaborates in many different and extensive fields. Intangible support is emphasized, as exemplified by India's International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) providing agricultural support to smallholder farmers in Kenya and Ethiopia, and capacity building assistance to establish food processing enterprises in Uganda and Ghana.

IIT Madras plans to open its overseas branch campus in Zanzibar, Tanzania, in October 2023. Indian External Affairs Minister Subramanian Jaishankar visited Tanzania in the summer to discuss increased cooperation on a variety of industries and to inaugurate a university. The Indian government's concerted attempts to directly support the development of human resources in African nations amply demonstrate India's inclination towards the Global South.

### **India- more reliable partner**

With increasing interest and investments of China in the African nations, India faces a potential threat from the China. How India is more reliable power than any other nation because

1. **People Centric-** Investment in SMEs, broadening knowledge and skill sets, and boosting Africa's productive potential are all envisioned. India's objective to strengthen people-to-people ties naturally extends to its cross-border connectivity activities with Eastern African nations.
2. As part of the Ministry of Culture's "**Mausam**" project, India is also looking to strengthen its cultural ties to East Africa. Restoring lost connections to the "Indian Ocean world"—East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian subcontinent, and Southeast Asia—is the goal of the initiative.
3. Joint Initiatives: The **Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC)** is a trilateral effort that has been initiated by India, Japan, and numerous African countries. The goal of this is to foster development cooperation and create "**industrial corridors**" and "**institutional networks**" for the expansion of Asia and Africa.
4. Security and Defence Cooperation: The main focus of India and Africa's security and defence cooperation is on **counter-piracy efforts near the Somali coast**. This involves the deployment of Indian personnel along with joint naval patrols of the Western Indian Ocean.

### **Economic ties with India and Africa**

Trade agreements between India and Africa are growing concurrently with the Indian government's initiative to provide loans and technical support to the continent. India is set to invest \$150 billion in Africa by 2030, up from a total of US\$74 billion between 1996 and 2021, according to the Confederation of Indian Industry. The growth drivers are probably going to be investments in industry, infrastructure development, agribusiness and food

processing, and construction<sup>15</sup>. It should be mentioned that the Chinese government waived interest on loans issued to 17 African countries during the 2022 FOCAC coordinators' meeting. However, the overall amount of debt forgiveness amounted to less than 1.1% of all loans made by China to Africa. Though, India's emphasis on Human Resource Development, may become a factor that will help India to be a reliable and trustworthy partner in the eyes of African nations.

### **Providing foreign Aid to Africa**

Our diplomatic and economic policy has made Africa a top priority, and the administration has been implementing a number of initiatives to strengthen ties with the continent's countries. The government has been providing aid to African nations through our development partnership assistance schemes, including as grant-in aid projects, training and capacity building programs, Lines of Credit support, Humanitarian & Disaster Relief Assistance, and familiarization visits. Much has been achieved under development cooperation through multi-sectoral programs in information technology, health, education, infrastructure, and agriculture.

The first phase of the **Pan Africa e-Network project (PANeP)**, which concentrated on telemedicine and tele education, involved 48 African countries. 44 countries have received 152 lines of credit totalling around **\$8 billion** for the development of infrastructure, sustainable energy, public transportation, irrigation, and other projects across Africa.

### **China and India battle for leadership of Global South**

When it comes to influencing the Global South, China seems to hold the top position. Since the 2010s, China has increased its influence by giving Africa enormous financial support for the building of infrastructure as part of Xi's signature initiative, the Belt and Road Initiative. But China is facing headwind as China's corporations' indifferent behaviour towards African people on one hand and African nations sliding in the debt trap of China on the other make way for India's favourable position for African nations over China.

But the question arises how India is taking one step ahead to lead the Global South:

1. The **Raisina Dialogue**, a conference of dignitaries and experts from Asia and Western nations that examines international issues, was held in New Delhi which discussed how developing nations are struggling with excessive debt, food and energy crises, and poverty and urged Western nations to support these developing nations economically.
2. The **Indo-Japan Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC)** document launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe and India's non-interfering policy towards Global South especially African nations helped India to lead.

### **How African nations are favouring India over China**

African countries now favour India's non-interventionist development approach over China's. Chinese companies are allegedly treating African labourers like slaves and abusing local resources, including agricultural, mineral, and marine resources, according to accusations made in recent media reports. Nonetheless, the experts who have already been highlighted state that India views Africa as a collaborator and an equal partner. Examples consist of: China-funded projects are also perceived as forcing African nations into a debt trap because of the 6-8% interest rates on loans that are neither long-term nor soft, while India has completed 20 significant projects through its line of credit supporting development and capacity-building initiatives in Africa.

### **Conclusion:-**

By enabling African countries to join the G-20, India has gained the backing of these nations and is now seen as a more trustworthy partner on the international scene. In summary, South-South Cooperation, empowerment, capacity building, human resource development, access to the Indian market, and support for Indian investments in Africa are the main drivers of India's strategy to collaboration with Africa.

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