

India's new African horizons: an American perspective

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While the extensive network of economic, political, and military ties which the People's Republic of China has constructed across Africa has been the subject of considerable scrutiny – and, increasingly, not a little alarming – on the part of policy-makers and scholars in both the USA and Europe, the emergence of India as a major player on the continent has, until rather recently, gone largely unnoticed. That is changing, however, as Africa with its energy riches, agricultural potential, and other natural resources as well as its growing population finds itself courted by multiple suitors, both old partners and new. In this context, India's expanding commercial and strategic engagements across Africa represent a significant move in the global geopolitical order taking shape in the twenty-first century. This paper examines India's rapidly expanding network of relations, analysing the country's burgeoning public and private investments in the region as well as its policies vis-à-vis African regional organizations and individual states, especially in the security sector. After briefly reviewing the historic role that India has played in Africa, the study looks at the principal motivations for India's approach to Africa – including the former's quests for the resources, business opportunities, diplomatic influence, and security – and Africans' responses to it. In the context of the broader USA-India strategic partnership as well as American political and security interests in Africa-especially as outlined in the official U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa, promulgated by the Obama administration in June 2012-the paper argues that India's willingness to make significant contributions to African peacekeeping and to extend its maritime security cover to the continent's eastern littoral ought to be welcomed, not least because of the potential positive impact on regional stability and development. Consequently, the author advances the proposition that, while not perfectly aligned, the interests of India and those of USA in Africa are generally complementary and thus there are a number of openings for greater engagement and cooperation between the two countries, a unique opportunity which policy-makers in both should be encouraged to seize upon.

Keywords: Africa international relations; Africa-BRIC relations; India-Brazil-South Africa; India-Africa relations; India-US relations, US-Africa relations

Introduction

While the extensive network of economic, political, and military ties which the People's Republic of China has constructed across Africa has been the subject of considerable scrutiny and, increasingly on the part of some, not a little alarming on the part of policy-makers and scholars in both Europe and North America (Pham 2006; Alden 2007; Brautigam 2009; Shinn

and Eisenman 2012), the emergence of India as a major player on the continent has, until rather recently, gone largely unnoticed (Pham 2007, 2010, 2011b). That is changing, however, as Africa with its energy riches, agricultural potential, and other natural resources as well as its growing population finds itself courted by multiple suitors, both old partners and new. In this context, India's burgeoning public and private investments as well as its strategic engagements across Africa represent a significant move in the global geopolitical order taking shape in the twenty-first century.

Contacts between India and Africa date back two centuries to the period before the colonial era when Indian merchants took advantage of the seasonal monsoon winds blowing across the Indian Ocean to conduct brisk trade up and down the eastern littoral of the African continent, a zone that contemporary Indian strategists have come once again to regard as part of their 'near abroad' (Mohan 2006). While European expansion, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, disrupted this longstanding trade system, the establishment of colonial empires, especially the British, fostered the development of new links (Gregory 1971). No less a figure than Mohandas K. Gandhi was part of the vast emigration from India to Africa, going to work as a lawyer in Natal in 1893 and remaining in South Africa for almost 20 years, a period during which his leadership of the Indian community's struggle for civil rights saw the first flowering of what would become his hallmark non-violent resistance to injustice. In turn, the Mahatma's philosophy, which he successfully put into practice to achieve India's independence in 1947, was to inspire a generation of African leaders—including Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia—in their own national liberation struggles (Mazrui 1977, 117—118).

It was Jawaharlal Nehru, however, who gave political structure to the nascent Indo-African relationship during his long tenure as India's first prime minister (1947-1964). Declaring that Africa 'though separated by the Indian Ocean from us [is] in a sense our next door neighbour' and affirming, rather prophetically, that 'in historical perspective, Indian interests are likely to be bound up more and more with the growth of Africa' (Ramamurthi 1997, 30), Nehru laid out a policy of supporting African national struggles against European colonialism as well as against apartheid in South Africa. Nehru's policy was carried out by a number of newly independent India's first diplomats posted to Africa who not only looked after the interests of their country and its citizens, but also forged ties with emerging African leaders—figures like the first Indian commissioner in British East Africa, the Nairobi, Kenya-based Apasaheb Balasaheb Pant, was so supportive of the nationalist aspirations of the African population that the British colonial authorities demanded his recall.

While India's humiliation in the Sino-Indian War of 1962 led Indian policymakers to adopt a less ambitious national policy, focusing instead on building their country's defence sector and securing its immediate neighbourhood, they nonetheless continued to generously support national liberation movements in Africa, both financially and politically. New Delhi even accorded formal diplomatic recognition to South Africa's African National Congress in 1967 and the future Namibia's South West African People's Organization in 1985 during the premierships,

respectively, of Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi and his grandson Rajiv (Dubey 1997). As it turns out, this consistent commitment garnered India considerable good will on the continent and puts it in good position to advance its current interests.

The Quest for Resources

The Indian economy is projected to grow a rate of somewhere between 8% and 10% annually over the next two decades. Even amid the worldwide downturn of the most recent years, the International Monetary Fund estimates that India's GDP is still growing at a respectable 5.9% in 2013 compared with the global growth rate of 3.5% and a higher growth rate of 6.4% is projected for the country next year. Overall, the Indian economy is currently the tenth largest in the world (the third-largest if GDP is adjusted for purchasing power parity). The country's population of more than 1.2 billion accounts for one-sixth of humanity, with more than half of that number under the age of 24.9, a rather youthful figure compared to rapidly aging population in other major countries, including China. Despite the dynamism that these data imply, India faces a potentially serious obstacle to continued growth in its lack of energy resources (its proven petroleum reserves account for less than 0.5% of the world total). Currently the country is the fifth largest consumer of energy in the world and is expected to double its energy consumption and overtake Japan and Russia within the decade to become the third-largest user of energy. One-third of India's energy needs, however, are presently met by traditional sources of fuel, including wood, dung, crop residue, and waste. With increased development, the future needs can hardly be expected to be met by these traditional sources. In fact, India currently imports between 70% and 80% of its oil, making it the fourth largest oil importer in the world. Moreover its dependence on petroleum imports is projected to rise even higher to over 90% by 2020 (Ahn and Graczyk 2012).

Not surprisingly Indian companies have moved aggressively to secure access to Africa's hydrocarbon reserves. The overseas division of India's state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL), has invested equity in exploration and development across the continent, including Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Gabon, Libya, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sudan, and South Sudan. A private-sector firm, Essar, holds a majority stake in a 1250-square kilometre shallow-water offshore block in Nigeria as well as 100% control of several exploration blocks off Madagascar. In contrast to China and a number of other countries with which it is in competition for access to Africa's petroleum resources, India has stressed that it is interested not just in buying oil, but also in participating in all phases of production, refining, storage, and transport. This is a message that has found resonance with a number of new African producers like Uganda, which is beginning to exploit an estimated two billion barrel petroleum reserve in the Albertine Rift region and is eager to develop its capabilities along the entire hydrocarbon value chain.

Hydrocarbons are not the only natural resources being sought by Indian firms. Mumbai-based metals conglomerate Vedanta Resources has invested over \$750 million in Zambian copper mines, while London-based Indian billionaire Lakshmi Mittal's Arcelor Mittal, the world's

largest steelmaker, has entered into a 25-year deal with Liberia for a \$1 billion iron ore mining project that will eventually employ 20,000. In Senegal, a joint public-private Indian group has invested \$250 million in exchange for a stake in Industries Chimiques du Sénégal, which vertically integrates the mining of rock phosphate, the produce phosphoric acid, and the manufacture of fertilizers and pesticides. Indian firms and, indeed, individual Indian states like Punjab, have also taken a keen interest in Africa's agricultural potential. Bangalore-based Karuturi Global, for example, leased some 100,000 hectares in Ethiopia's underdeveloped southern Gambela region in 2009 to grow maize and palm oil; earlier this year, the firm announced additional plans to invest \$500 million in food production and processing in Tanzania where, according to government data, only one-quarter of the 44 million hectares of arable land is currently being cultivated.

Commercial Opportunities

Indian companies have also boosted non-oil trade with Africa tenfold in the course of the last decade to its current annual value of slightly more than \$50 billion and the continent as a whole has proven rather attractive to Indian investors. The telecommunications giant Bharti Airtel, for example, operates in no fewer than 17 African countries. Other private-sector Indian industrial conglomerates like the Tata Group and the Mahindra Group have also made considerable headway in Africa, as have firms specializing in the development of infrastructure like KEC International, the overseas arm of the Kamani Engineering Corporation in Mumbai, which has projects in Algeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Mozambique, South Africa, Tunisia, and Zambia. Government-owned concerns like the RITES consultancy of the Indian Ministry of Railways are also profiting from large-scale projects in Africa, especially where official Indian development assistance is involved. Another enterprise owned by the Ministry of Railways, Ircon International, has built railways in Algeria, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sudan, and Zambia.

Operating under the motto of 'first-world healthcare at third-world costs', Indian pharmaceutical firms like Cipla, Ranbaxy, Aurobindo Pharma, and others have prospered while helping millions of Africans access affordable generic antiretroviral medications for HIV/AIDS by reducing costs of treatment from \$11,000 per patient to just over \$400.

The Government of India has announced its goal of increasing trade between India and Africa to \$90 billion by 2015 and has moved to extend lines of credit through India's Export-Import Bank to Indian firms to grow their operations in Africa. As of the beginning of 2012, of the 138 operative lines of credit issued by the institution, 98 are in Africa. With this level of commitment, it is not surprising that a recent study by Standard Chartered Bank suggests that the \$90 billion mark may be surpassed as early as this year. Altogether, the same study reports that India accounts for 5.2% of Africa's global trade, about one-third of the figure for China (16.9%), but also notes that the rate of growth in Indo-African trade is roughly equal to that of Sino-African trade. Overall, India has emerged as Africa's fourth largest trading partner, after the European Union, China, and the USA.

Strategic Forays

Alongside the economic inroads in Africa, India has increasingly beefed up its diplomatic and security activities on the continent. Playing catch-up to Beijing with its successful triennial summits of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, New Delhi organized the India-Africa Forum summit in 2008 to strengthen its ties with leading African nations. This first meeting was followed by a second one in early 2011. India has also privileged an ambitious loose alliance, the 'India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum', with the goal of achieving common positions at the United Nations, the Doha Round of trade negotiations, and other multilateral settings for the three largest developing states of the 'Global South'. Across Africa, India is now served by a network of 28 embassies and 5 Consulates General as well as 17 honorary posts.

New Delhi has become adept at leveraging a full range of political and diplomatic assets to support its economic and commercial interests in Africa, as illustrated by its dealings with the continent's newest independent state, South Sudan. With an estimated \$3 billion invested by state-owned OVL in oil exploration and production blocks that, while straddling the border between Sudan and South Sudan, lie largely in the latter, as well as a long list of private Indian firms doing business in South Sudan, it is not surprising that India was the first Asian country to establish a diplomatic outpost in the southern capital of Juba, opening a consulate in 2007, a full year before China took the same step. A month before Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari led the official Indian delegation to South Sudan's independence ceremony on 9 July 2011, a high-level inter-ministerial team had opened the way, negotiating an aid package that included a \$5 million grant for economic and technological development, the construction of a vocational training centre, an agricultural demonstration project, links to tele-medicine and tele-education through 'Pan-African E-Network' links to Indian research centres, and courses to build capacity in agriculture, food processing, rural development, oil and natural gas management, and information technology. In addition, 75 coveted slots in the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme were reserved for promising South Sudanese candidates.

Indian diplomats have coordinated closely with their African counterparts in multilateral forums, especially on agricultural trade issues and climate change. The 'Joint Declaration of the Africa-India Partnership' issued during the first India-Africa Forum summit in New Delhi, for example, emphasized historical emissions and a need for developed countries to share the burden of climate change with developing ones. The diplomatic attention has already paid a dividend in growing African support behind India's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, an effort that has received the formal backing of the Economic Community of West African States. More recently, senior Indian officials have linked their country's candidacy to South Africa's bid to represent Africa on the UN body.

India's leaders have also come to accept that as a rising power their country needs to also be able to engage in Africa on military and security terms commensurate with its economic and political ambitions. India has played an active role in United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa since the first mission to the former Belgian Congo in 1960. Overall, India is currently the third-largest contributor of manpower to UN peacekeeping. Moreover, as of the

end of 2012, more than 80% of the Indians assigned to UN missions are deployed in Africa: some 6280 military and police personnel serving in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the disputed Abyei region between Sudan and South Sudan (UNISFA), Liberia (UNMIL), South Sudan (UNMISS), and Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). India has also increasingly dedicated resources to bilateral missions to help build up the military capacity of its African partners, including South Africa, Botswana, Nigeria, and Gabon.

The Indian Navy is playing an increasingly important role in the country's outreach to Africa—a development to be anticipated considering that India's political and military elites regard their country's security perimeter as defined by the far shores of the Indian Ocean. The Indian Navy has gradually extended its maritime security cover to most of the island states off the eastern coast of Africa since a 2003 bilateral defence assistance accord first authorized it to patrol the exclusive economic zone of Mauritius. Similar deals subsequently led to patrols of the territorial waters of the Seychelles as well as a periodic presence off Mozambique. In 2007, India established its first listening post on foreign soil in northern Madagascar, setting up a radar surveillance station with sophisticated digital systems to track shipping in the western Indian Ocean.

Attacks on several Indian merchant vessels by Somali pirates in 2008 gave an added impetus to the naval missions, with the Indian Navy keeping at least one warship on station in the Gulf of Aden at all times since October of that year. During the ensuing triennium, some 26 Indian Navy ships deployed to the region, the vessels having intervened to stop 34 attempted hijackings and arrested more than 120 suspected pirates as well as escorted some 1731 commercial boats through the area. In just the first half of 2011, a total of 73 captured mariners were rescued by the Indian Navy in four separate operations against pirated vessels.

Geopolitical Implications

For Africans, at least, there is reason to welcome India's increased interest in their continent. First, Africa as a whole stands to gain from the addition of yet another country to the list of those seeking access to the continent's natural resources and markets as well as political and strategic partnerships with African states since it potentially strengthens its bargaining position. Second, in general it could be said that India's *modus operandi*, the willingness to transfer technology and create value-addition as well as extract primary commodities benefits Africans, as well as Indians. Third, the lessons that India learned while freeing itself in the 1990s from the oppressive 'Hindu rate of growth' as well as the country's generally successful record of post-independence nation-building amid the bewildering diversity of 22 different official languages (in addition to English) and an estimated 1652 other languages are precisely the sort of experiences African states would do well to consider as they chart the pathways for their own development.

While the Indian government takes great pains to emphasize that India is not trying to compete with China in Africa, what may possibly be true in the diplomatic arena is certainly not

the case in the markets. It is evident which country's state-owned oil companies are seeking many of the same lucrative deals that Indian firms are hoping to win for themselves. Moreover, there is no denying that Indian strategic planners are less than at ease with the growing Chinese presence on the African coast of the Indian Ocean (Pham 2013), a geopolitical space they have long considered their own backyard. Unspoken though it may be in the polite halls of international diplomacy, this concern undoubtedly adds fuel to the Indian drive to increase its security links in the same region.

India today approaches Africa with a different perspective than it did in the glory days of the Non-Aligned Movement, although it will certainly exploit to its advantaged the good will engendered in that period. It has very concrete economic, political, and strategic interests on the African continent, not the least of which is acquiring the resources to maintain its dynamic growth. Furthermore, India is more and more a global power-one that is simultaneously cultivating an important strategic partnership with the USA, forging a new relationship with Europe, and trying to position itself with another rising power, China. Although what India does in Africa is unlikely to directly touch upon these other rapports, it would be a mistake to think that there will not be potentially significant impacts on the emerging international system.

If the opportunity is not seized and, consequently, this promise is not achieved, it will be due in no small measure to the failure to implement the agenda laid out by the two India-Africa Forum summits as well as follow through on other engagements. To cite just one example, the Indian government has not honoured the commitment made in 2011 by then Ministry of External Affairs Joint Secretary Gurjit Singh to share information in writing in a timely manner with African heads of mission in New Delhi so they might promote the rapid carrying out of the program of the India-Africa Forum. Of course, the African Union as a whole does not help itself when its secretariat, the AU Commission, has yet to produce an action plan in response to the 2008 'framework for cooperation' prepared by India. Moreover, the AU has not availed itself of mechanisms for institutionalizing its relationship with India by maintaining a diplomatic representation in New Delhi along the lines of its permanent missions to the European Union in Brussels and to the USA in Washington.

Implications for the United States of India's Africa Engagements

The 2006 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, issued by the administration of President George W. Bush declared that 'Africa holds growing geo-strategic importance and is a high priority of this Administration' (The White House 2006)-as well it should for a region which not only currently supplies the USA with more hydrocarbons than the Middle East, but also presents significant political, security, and humanitarian challenges. However, although America may well still be the most powerful external actor on the African continent, it certainly enjoys no monopoly. As the most recent iteration of the *National Security Strategy*, released by the administration of President Barack Obama in May 2010 acknowledged, 'China and India—the world's two most populous nations—are becoming more engaged globally'. And nowhere is this perhaps better illustrated than on the African continent

where 'these countries, along with traditional Western powers, are increasingly turning to Africa to meet their energy and other resource needs' to sustain their economic growth. Moreover, 'the shift to a strategic view of Africa underscores the continent's growing importance in the structures of global governance and the imperative for external powers to secure Africa's support in advancing the global agenda on terms that better serve their national interests' (The White House 2010).

In this optic, the burgeoning Indian—African relationship is good for the USA overall, especially given the strategic partnership which the two countries have forged in recent years. Among other things for which, as former US Ambassador to India Robert Blackwill has put it, India is 'an answer to some of our major geopolitical problems' (2005, 9), the USA can benefit in many of its security preoccupations in Africa from the tacit – and occasionally explicit – support of India since, as former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has pointed out, in an age of terrorism and potential 'clash of civilizations', both India and the USA pursue parallel objectives with respect to Islamist extremism (2006, A15). Hence, New Delhi potentially presents an ideal partner for advancing a positive agenda to counter extremism and terrorism in Africa. As no less a figure than just-retired Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton affirmed: 'Both India and the USA have seen our cities and our citizens targeted by violent extremists, and we share concerns about the continuing threat of terrorism and we share concerns about the dangers of nuclear proliferation. For our peoples, security is more than a priority; it is an imperative' (2010).

Of course, policy-makers in the USA would be mistaken to expect a proud and democratic nation like India to be simply its messenger boy, much less its lackey. As one scholar told a congressional hearing, the country's large size, ancient history, and great ambitions ensure that 'India will likely march to the beat of its own drummer' (Tellis 2005). Nevertheless, with respect to India's burgeoning profile in Africa, political and other opinion leaders ought to take care to avoid the temptation to give rein to the alarmism that has characterized many policy discussions about China's political and commercial investments in the continent. India is not likely to present a direct challenge to the core interests of the USA and its allies in what is now recognized to be the geo-strategically vital region of Sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, as India plays commercial catch-up to its Asian neighbour, the sub-continental country's economic interests are more likely than not to clash with those of the Middle Kingdom – a development that some might be excused for greeting with undiplomatic enthusiasm, given the serious challenge that China's expansion in Africa has posed not just to Western companies and aid agencies, but the entire reform agenda for the continent. One analyst has aptly noted that the US—Indian relationship 'should not be judged in terms of immediate deliverables, but the gradual convergence of national interests' (Griffin 2006, 16). And many of India's national interests, like maintaining peace and security along the Indian Ocean littoral, including the eastern coast of Africa, align quite well with America's broader military and strategic interests in the same area.

Consequently, from an American perspective, what steps might be taken to enhance the US—Indian relationship overall and foster cooperation in Africa that advances both countries' interests in promoting good governance, supporting economic growth and development, increasing access to health and educational resources, and helping to prevent, mitigate, and resolve conflicts on the continent?

First, the US leaders need to reaffirm the commitment made under former President Bush to 'help make India a major world power in the twenty-first century' (Rice 2006, 4). The articulation of this goal helped achieve a strategic breakthrough in US—India relations, overcoming chasms of Cold War era political and non-proliferation disagreements. In general, the new foundations laid for US ties with India beginning with the Clinton administration are still fresh enough to not have entirely settled. Hence 'there is a need for a more proactive policy towards India that helps secure its national objectives and, in so doing, makes it easier to attain broader US goals' (Gupta 2005, 45). While the development of a strong India is a long-term objective, US policy-makers and analysts need to be more aware in the short term that the achievement of that goal is closely linked to India's current efforts to secure access to African resources, markets, and partners. Moreover, in pursuit of these, India plays a constructive role in both ensuring stability as well as promoting the democratic values it shares with the USA.

Second, especially in Africa, US interests are more than partially served by India's involvement in bilateral and multilateral security initiatives with its African partners (Pham 2011c). The willingness of New Delhi to commit to peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and nation-building efforts that Washington has largely lacked either the political will or the resources to engage in on the continent have complemented other American activities aimed at promoting greater stability. The readiness of the Indian Navy to help create a maritime security framework in the western Indian Ocean is also a valuable contribution. Hence cooperation between the US and Indian security engagements in Africa is highly desirable and opportunities for regular exchanges between the regional military forces of the two countries ought to be increased at all levels. While the Indian military is eager to gain access to US technology and other capabilities, US forces would also benefit from the operational experience of their Indian counterparts in Africa as well as the entrée which they enjoy in many countries. The hosting of an Indian liaison officer at the Stuttgart, Germany, headquarters of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) – the American regional command responsible for military relations with African nations, the African Union, and African regional security organizations, as well as all US Department of Defense operations, exercises, and security cooperation on the African continent, its island nations, and surrounding waters (Pham 2011a, 2011d) – and at the Djibouti-based Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (HOA), the AFRICOM subordinate organization that conducts operations in the region to enhance partner nation capacity, promote regional security and stability, dissuade conflict, and protect USA and coalition interests in the HOA, would be important steps forward. The leadership of US Naval Forces Africa and US Naval Forces Central Command should develop ways to partner with their Indian Navy counterparts to implement the Indo-US Framework for Maritime Security Cooperation

signed in 2006 by President Bush and Prime Minister Singh, which committed the two countries to work together to address, among other threats, piracy and armed robbery at sea, as well as to conduct bilateral maritime exercises, cooperate in search and rescue at sea, and exchange information (Indo-U.S. Framework for Maritime Security Cooperation, March 2, 2006).

In short, while one should not gloss over potential differences or overstate what is achievable in the short term, there is nonetheless a significant set of complementary interests that the two sides would find mutually beneficial to secure.

Conclusion

India has clearly demonstrated not only that it has extensive interests in Africa, but that it is willing to invest significant amounts of human, political, and material capital in order to advance those interests. While India's ties with Africa in the modern era predate its independence, in recent years, the nature of the engagement has changed through the expansion of the country's commercial and economic relations with Africa and its growing cooperation in the energy sector. New Delhi's geopolitical ambitions have likewise been a motivating factor in its involvement in Africa, especially its support for UN peacekeeping efforts and its expansion of its maritime security cover to the archipelagic and littoral nations of East Africa.

By and large, the goals for India of its engagements in Africa and the means by which it has pursued them are not opposed to the strategic objectives sought by US policy as laid out in the current *National Security Strategy* document:

Our economic, security, and political cooperation will be consultative and encompass global, regional, and national priorities including access to open markets, conflict prevention, global peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and the protection of vital carbon sinks. The Administration will refocus its priorities on strategic interventions that can promote job creation and economic growth; combat corruption while strengthening good governance and accountability; responsibly improve the capacity of African security and rule of law sectors; and work through diplomatic dialogue to mitigate local and regional tensions before they become crises...

When international forces are needed to respond to threats and keep the peace, we will work with international partners to ensure they are ready, able, and willing. We will continue to build support in other countries to contribute to sustaining global peace and stability operations, through U.N. peacekeeping and regional organizations, such as NATO and the African Union. We will continue to broaden the pool of troop and police contributors, working to ensure that they are properly trained and equipped, that their mandates are matched to means,

and that their missions are backed by the political action necessary to build and sustain peace. (The White House 2010)

More recently, the administration promulgated a *U.S. Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa* which articulated 'interdependent and mutually reinforcing objectives', the pursuit of which America would prioritize in its relations with African partners: 'strengthen democratic institutions; spur economic growth, trade, and investment; advance peace and security; and promote opportunity and development' (The White House 2012).

If this is America's foreign policy toward Africa, then, insofar as its mission is to 'support US Government foreign policy and do so primarily through military-to-military activities and assistance programmes' even as it is convinced that it 'most effectively advances US national security interests through focused, sustained engagement with partners in support of our shared security objectives' (US Africa Command Fact Sheet, 2012), AFRICOM in particular needs to not only develop greater awareness of India's activities on the continent, but also the appropriate mechanisms with which to engage and, where appropriate, to partner with Indian forces serving with UN peacekeeping missions and other Indian initiatives in Africa, especially those aimed at building the capacities of African governments and institutions. This would entail not only lending support where called upon, but also learning from the rather extensive experience of the Indian military in Africa. The scope for activities – from officer exchanges to senior visits, seminars and subject-matter expert exchanges to technical cooperation and joint exercises – is vast. In turn, this military-led cooperation in one specific theatre can support the overall fundamental shift in bilateral relations that has been indicated by the highest civilian authority. Other parts of the interagency should undertake similar efforts, for example, allowing Indian diplomatic assets to take the lead in multilateral forums where the interests of the two countries are complementary and India's voice may find greater resonance with the intended audience.

President Obama has described India as 'a rising and responsible global power' and stated that 'the relationship between the USA and India will be one of the defining partnerships of the twenty-first century' (2010). A former US ambassador to India has taken it even further and argued that

It is safe to say that the alignment between India and the USA is now an enduring part of the international landscape of the 21st century. The vital interests of both Washington and New Delhi are now so congruent that the two countries can and will find many ways in which to cooperate in the decades ahead. Over time, the U.S.-India relationship will come more and more to resemble the intimate U.S. interaction with Japan and our European treaty allies (Blackwill 2007, 16).

This type of strategic partnership, however, requires constant nurturing across multiple arenas. And places like Africa, where both the USA and India not only have important interests

but, as the world's most powerful democratic state and its most populous, respectively, share common ideals, are an excellent place to start cultivating that flexibility and mutual consideration. After all, as both an American president and an Indian prime minister have noted in recent years, the two countries are 'natural partners' (Vajpayee 2001; Bush 2006).

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