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India in Africa: projection and imperative*India in Africa: projection and imperative***Abstract:**

India's ties with Africa are historical and can be seen in its diaspora to the continent, its business presence and its growing cultural influence in many African countries. Since current Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014, the Afro-Indian relationship has intensified, with India seeking to both maintain its influence while drawing on African resources and trade, and to curb fierce competition from China. Security has therefore become a key issue in the relationship and India, an already more than emerging global power, presents itself as a reliable partner for African countries and especially for those located along the eastern Indian seaboard, an area with vital maritime routes for the country. Another consequence of this centuries-old relationship is the Modi government's policy of presenting India as a representative of Africa's interests in international fora and a clear example of the 'Indian imperative', defined as the push for a multilateral third way for global governance, original and idiosyncratic to India.

Key words:

India, Africa, Indian Ocean, Modi, multilateralism, security.

***NOTE:** The ideas contained in the *Analysis Papers* are the responsibility of their authors. They do not necessarily reflect the thinking of the IEEE or the Ministry of Defence.

La India en África: proyección e imperativo

Resumen:

Los lazos de la India con África son históricos y se observan en la diáspora india hacia el continente, la presencia empresarial o la influencia cultural en claro aumento en muchos países africanos. Desde la llegada al poder en 2014 del actual primer ministro indio, Narendra Modi, la relación afro-india se ha intensificado, puesto que la India quiere mantener su influencia a la vez que se nutre de los recursos y el comercio africanos, pero también para frenar la feroz competencia de China. Por ello, la seguridad se ha conformado en tema clave de esta relación y la India, una potencia global ya más que emergente, se presenta como un socio fiable para los países africanos y más en concreto para los situados en el litoral oriental del Índico, zona de rutas marítimas vitales para la India. Otra consecuencia de esta relación secular es la política del gobierno de Modi para que el país se erija en representante de los intereses de África en foros internacionales y un claro ejemplo del «imperativo indio», definido como el impulso de una tercera vía multilateral para la gobernanza mundial, original e idiosincrática de la India.

Palabras clave:

India, África, Índico, Modi, multilateralismo, seguridad.

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Introduction

In the midst of the conflict that broke out in Sudan on 15 April, the different countries with resident nationals in the African country announced repatriation operations in view of the danger they faced. Then came some dramatic news reports, including that of an Indian citizen, Albert Augustine, dying in Khartoum after being hit by a stray bullet. Days later and given the inaction, the victim's family demanded that the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in office since 2014, repatriate the Indian community and Albert's remains. Meanwhile, groups of Indian nationals gathered to wait in Port Sudan with no news of any kind, and India beginning to appear in some media as a nation that may not have the capacity to successfully carry out such an operation¹.

It then emerged that there were in fact more than 3,500 Indian nationals in Sudan, including the Hakki Pikki, a nomadic tribe from the southern state of Karnataka, whose security became a priority for Prime Minister Modi². On 24 April, it was announced that an operation known as Kaveri would be launched to evacuate its nationals from Sudan and give them protection. Days later, images went viral of long queues of Indian citizens waiting to board either Indian Air Force planes or the INS Sumedha, a warship sent for the purpose³.

India's involvement in the Sudan crisis served to highlight the relationship between the African continent and the Asian country, which can no longer be described as an emerging or regional power, but rather as a global power that is struggling to define its strategy in today's multipolar world, and is seeking strategic autonomy from dependence on a third country or bloc. In the fields of economics, finance, culture, food security, health and the military, among others, the relationship between Africa and India goes back a long way, and has now become a strategic priority for the Modi government. Africa is both an opportunity for India and a site of confrontation with other competing powers, especially China.

¹ "Albert Augustine, Keralite killed in Sudan, laid to rest", *The Times of India*. 20 May 2023. Available at: [Albert Augustine, Keralite killed in Sudan, laid to rest | Kochi News - Times of India \(indiatimes.com\)](https://www.indiatimes.com/News/Albert-Augustine-Keralite-killed-in-Sudan-laid-to-rest-Kochi-News-2023-05-20) (accessed 20/6/2023).

² BHATTACHERJEE, Kallol. "Operation Kaveri: India completes risky evacuation of most of the Hakki Pikki tribe members from Sudan", *The Hindu*. 04 May 2023. Available at: [Operation Kaveri : India completes risky evacuation of most of the Hakki Pikki tribe members from Sudan - The Hindu](https://www.thehindu.com/news-international/operation-kaveri-india-completes-risky-evacuation-of-most-of-the-hakki-pikki-tribe-members-from-sudan/article67845473.ece) (accessed 21/6/2023).

³ SHAKSI. "Operation Kaveri in Sudan by Indian Government, Reason, Purpose", *Study IQ*. 2 May 2023. Available at: <https://www.studyiq.com/articles/operation-kaveri> (accessed 20/6/2023).

The Indian diaspora in Africa has a strong presence in countries like Kenya, South Africa and Mozambique. This is reflected, for example, in growing Indian cultural influence on the continent through music, the film industry and literature, with many Indian authors reflecting in their narratives about Africa on the adaptation of Indian communities in African societies, and the interdependence among them⁴. Maintaining a high status for this Indian diaspora in Africa is an objective for the current Modi government, as it is also the image of India's relevance in the world.

Behind a decades-long presence symbolised by India's multi-generational citizenship and making the country a security ally in Africa, there is another motive: the economy and its ability to influence the continent. India's need for resources, especially in the energy sector given the current changing global context, makes it want to position itself as a major investor in the African continent, using tools ranging from the promotion of a certain cultural affinity to aid to the diaspora and the visualisation of India as a reliable partner in trade, technology and security, not to forget India's more recent bid to be the voice of Africa in international forums⁵.

The Indian presence in Africa

The presence of the Indian subcontinent in Africa is centuries old, dating back to antiquity, especially with regard to the Indian coastal region of Africa, where communities of Indian origin have settled over the centuries, weaving intense commercial and cultural relationships between the two areas. However, what we are interested in is the new dimension of how this Indian presence in Africa has evolved in recent years, discernible in the economic and security spheres, and developing beyond the countries of the Indian littoral to other parts of the continent⁶. The Indian diaspora in Africa is estimated at three million people, 40,000 of which are in the eastern coastal countries, with South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, Kenya and Togo as its main markets⁷.

⁴ HAWLEY, J. C. *India in Africa, Africa in India: Indian Ocean Cosmopolitanisms*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2008.

⁵ MAJUMDAR, Roshni. "India woos Africa with trade, tech, investment", *Deutsche Welle*. 08 October 2022. Available at: [India woos Africa with trade, tech, investment - DW - 08/10/2022](#) (accessed 21/6/2023).

⁶ "India in Africa", *EsAfrica*. 6 September 2019. Available at: [India in Africa - It's Africa \(esafrica.co.uk\)](#) (accessed 20/6/2023).

⁷ "India and Africa relations", *IAS Abhiyan*, n. d. Available at: [India And Africa Relations | IAS Abhiyan](#) (accessed 22/6/2023).

Judging by the Indo-Pacific concept for Indian foreign policy and defence, Africa is a key region. The *2015 Maritime Security Strategy* defines as a priority area for Indian security the maritime space stretching from Southeast Asia to the eastern coasts of Africa, including the Indian Ocean island nations of Madagascar, Seychelles, Comoros and Mauritius, and also the countries falling within this ocean-bound geographical framework such as Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa. Indeed, we will see that India's security projection in this East African sub-region is growing⁸.

India's current interest is geo-economic because Cape Horn, the Horn of Africa coastline and the Strait of Hormuz are areas of transit for supplies of oil, minerals and other commodities that enable the country to sustain domestic needs and cater for the import and export of a growing industry in the technology sector and in the manufacture and marketing of pharmaceuticals, among others. A total of 50% of the world's containers and 70% of the world's oil products, among other things, transit through the Indian Ocean⁹.

Another economic aspect linking India to Africa is trade as a key internal link for the continent. African countries are increasingly seeing India as a strategic partner for their own development, making the Asian country one of Africa's main trading partners. For India, the issue implies competition with China, the aim being to lessen the importance the Chinese giant has acquired on the continent over the last decades and in areas such as finance, trade and infrastructure. Moreover, this Indo-Chinese competition in Africa brings to the region the interplay of alliances and suspicions of two opposing powers with shared borders and a history of conflict¹⁰.

India's presence in the region is also noticeable in the construction of infrastructure. In 2006, the country launched an aid initiative in Africa, building the Pan-African e-Network across 47 African countries, the continent's largest interconnected network, which includes schools and hospitals, and even Indian centres, connected via satellite and fibre

⁸ "Ensuring secure seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy", *Ministry of Defence (Navy)*. New Delhi, 2015. Available at: [Indian Maritime Security Strategy Document 25Jan16.pdf \(indiannavy.nic.in\)](#) (accessed 24/5/2023).

⁹ "Indian Ocean region: a pivot for India's growth", *Share me*. 02 October 2020. Available at: [Indian Ocean region: a pivot for India's growth | Share me \(share-danielfeau.com\)](#) (accessed 21/6/2023).

¹⁰ VEIGUELA MEIGNEN, Adrián. *India and China's geostrategic rivalry in the Indian Ocean*. IEEE Opinion Paper 62/2022. 23 June 2022. Available at: [India and China's geostrategic rivalry in the Indian Ocean \(ieee.es\)](#) (accessed 21/6/2023).

optics¹¹. And not to be forgotten is the ambitious Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), a project that began in 2017 to develop the continent through investment, in line with the converging interests of India and Japan in Africa¹².

The India-Africa trade and infrastructure investment relationship was strengthened in 2008 with the India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS), a high-level meeting to follow up on India-Africa relations, to be held once every three years. The first meeting took place in New Delhi in April 2008, attended by heads of state from fourteen African countries. At the second meeting, which took place in Ethiopia in 2011, the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced a \$700 million development aid programme for African nations and soft credit lines, which were ratified at IAFS summits in subsequent years. In 2015, 51 African countries met in New Delhi, under the presidency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi¹³.

India's interest in Africa, especially in investment in projects and infrastructure, has grown exponentially under the current Modi government, continuing the narrative that India is a strong partner for building capacity in African countries, either jointly in projects such as the Pan-African e-Network or through bilateral state-to-state agreements. 2018 was a key year in this regard, with Modi deciding to create 18 new diplomatic legations across the continent and personally touring a number of the countries. And most notably, in a March speech to the Ugandan Parliament, the prime minister outlined what would become known as the "Kampala Principles", a set of ten guidelines certifying India's commitment to Africa to promote African economic growth, fight terrorism and mitigate the effects of climate change¹⁴.

The vision for African countries, especially those on the Indian seaboard, of India's proximity as a friendly state intensified during the worst moments of the COVID-19

¹¹ MISHRA, Abhishek. "Pan Africa e-network: India's Africa outreach", *Observer Research Foundation ORF*. 4 May 2018. Available at: [Pan Africa e-network: India's Africa outreach | ORF \(orfonline.org\)](https://www.orfonline.org/pan-africa-e-network-india-africa-outreach) (accessed 21/6/2023).

¹² PANDA, Jagannath P. "Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC): An India-Japan Arch in the Making?", *Institute for Security & Development Policy*. August 2017. Available at: [Asia-Africa Growth Corridor \(AAGC\): An India-Japan Arch in the Making? - Institute for Security and Development Policy \(isdp.se\)](https://www.isdp.se/asia-africa-growth-corridor-aagc-an-india-japan-arch-in-the-making/) (accessed 22/6/2023).

¹³ "As it happened: India-Africa summit", *The Times of India*. 29 October 2015. Available at: [India-Africa summit : PM Narendra Modi closes his concluding speech by saying that Africa will remain at the centre of our attention - The Times of India \(indiatimes.com\)](https://www.indiatimes.com/india-africa-summit-pm-narendra-modi-closes-his-concluding-speech-by-saying-that-africa-will-remain-at-the-centre-of-our-attention) (accessed 21/6/2023).

¹⁴ PANT, Harsh V. "Is India the New China in Africa?", *Foreign Policy*. 17 June 2021. Featured in: [Promising Inclusive Development, India Looks to Displace China in Africa \(foreignpolicy.com\)](https://www.foreignpolicy.com/promising-inclusive-development-india-looks-to-displace-china-in-africa/) (accessed 21/6/2023).

pandemic. Beyond investment and trade, India was notably very present as a provider of humanitarian aid. In December 2021, the ship INS Kesari arrived in Mozambique, unloading five hundred tonnes of food for the disease- and drought-stricken country. Indian island countries such as the Maldives, Seychelles, Mauritius and Madagascar were already being provided with food, medical and pharmaceutical aid, starting the previous year¹⁵.

Indeed, the presence of Indian-origin communities in several East African countries has acted as a driver for Indian initiatives in the health sector, reflecting the private interest the country has in pushing itself into the African market. In this regard, there have been investments and in some cases transfers of medical technology from India, although African states are finding themselves dependent on the companies that export and produce medicines, build hospitals, improve hospital management and infrastructure and digitalise medical care but do not involve local populations, which could degenerate into a real lack of efficiency if these companies decide to leave certain countries or change their conditions¹⁶.

India security provider

In 2015 during a visit to Mauritius, Modi referred to an initiative called Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR). *Sagar* literally means "ocean" in various Indian dialects and refers primarily to the Indian Ocean¹⁷. The prime minister's speech was made on a Mauritian Coast Guard corvette, the first Indian-made warship sold to another country. In 2018, on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue meeting to address security issues in Asia, Modi equated SAGAR to a regional cooperation project in the Indo-Pacific that

¹⁵ "NS Kesari reaches Mozambique with 500 tonnes of food aid", *Further Africa*. 27 December 2021. Featured in: [INS Kesari reaches Mozambique with 500 tonnes of food aid - FurtherAfrica](#) (accessed 21/6/2023).

¹⁶ SAINT-MÉZARD, Isabelle & NICOLAS, Françoise. "India-East Africa: A Not So Healthy Relationship?", *Études de l'Ifri*. February 2022. Available at: [India-East Africa: A Not So Healthy Relationship? - CIAO \(ciaonet.org\)](#) (accessed 20/6/2023).

¹⁷ SARANGI, Subhasish. "Unpacking SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)", *United Service Institution of India (USI)*, No. 2. 2019. Available at: [USI-Occasional-Paper_2_19-Unpacking-SAGAR-Final-print-File-1.pdf \(usiofindia.org\)](#) (accessed 21/6/2023).

included Africa, stating as one of his priorities the maritime security of respecting the very specific Indian rules and international law for navigation and fishing¹⁸.

In recent times, the Indian Ocean has earned a regretful reputation for piracy against ships plying their routes and fishing vessels operating in its waters, a problem that India cannot ignore. The assaults and hijackings of ships on the eastern African coast undergo periodic resurgences, which is why the priority focus of the Indian Maritime Security Strategy is on security in the Indian Ocean from the Cape of Good Hope to the coastlines of African countries, island states and generally the entire southwest ocean, paying special attention to the bottlenecks leading to India through these sea lanes¹⁹.

While the Indian Navy has been involved in joint anti-piracy initiatives from the Arabian Sea to the Horn of Africa since 2008²⁰, there is also another major security issue of concern to Africa: the threat in the Indian Ocean sub-region posed by China and its strategy of establishing a network of commercial, maritime and military facilities in the Horn of Africa. The issue is that the security of Indian foreign trade and supplies also depends on control of this coastline so, as with piracy, maritime deterrence of China in Africa is of paramount importance to Indian interests²¹.

India is also present in UN peacekeeping missions on the continent. Involved in various missions since 1960, six thousand 'blue helmets' are currently deployed in some conflict zones, for example in Sudan, primarily to fight terrorism and provide food and health aid to the local populations where they are based. There are also annual education and training projects for the armed forces of various African countries at Indian institutions, as well as annual joint exercises under the Africa-India Field Training Exercise (AFINDEX), the first edition of which was held in 2019 with India and 17 African states, this number rising to 23 in March 2023²².

¹⁸ BHATTACHERJEE, Kallol & LAKSHMAN, Sriram. "PM Modi outlines five-point framework for maritime security debate at UNSC", *The Hindu*. 09 August 2021. Available at: [PM Modi outlines five-point framework for maritime security debate at UNSC - The Hindu](#) (accessed 25/5/2023).

¹⁹ "Ensuring secure seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy", *op. cit.* p. 57.

²⁰ THOMAS, K. V. "India's Maritime Security Architecture-Challenges & Threats", *Center for Public Policy Research*. 1 November 2022. Available at: [India's Maritime Security Architecture-Challenges & Threats - Centre for Public Policy Research \(CPPR\)](#) (accessed 21/6/2023).

²¹ BAQUÉS, Josep & ARRIETA, Andrea. "La vis expansiva de la geopolítica india", *Revista General de Marina*, 280. Mayo de 2021, p. 685-696. Available at: [Revista General de Marina, 280/4, May 2021 \(iugm.es\)](#) (accessed 21/6/2023).

²² REJ, Abhijnan. "India, Africa and the future of peacekeeping", *Africa Portal*. 28 May 2019. Available at: [India, Africa and the future of peacekeeping - Part I \(africaportal.org\)](#) (accessed 22/6/2023).

Regarding security in Africa, the Modi government also envisages India becoming an exporter of arms and equipment to the continent, something that today seems distant and limited to small transactions. Coast guard patrol boats, Dhruv helicopters, small transport aircraft, vehicles, ammunition and communications equipment are sold from India to some African countries, albeit in small quantities as opposed to major contracts. In this regard, the Indian government has outlined the goal of becoming a net exporter by 2025, thereby alleviating the current deficit balance, given that India is one of the world's leading arms importers. Several countries have been identified as being susceptible to agreements for this purpose, such as Egypt, Nigeria and Kenya²³.

A voice for Africa in the international community?

Prime Minister Modi visited the US in June this year. It was an event that the US Administration itself described as *historic*, not least because of India's interest in siding with US interests vis-à-vis China and the goodwill between the two countries, but also because it was a gesture of Modi's interest in the Indian diaspora in the US and in presenting himself as a mediator between the Western and China-Russia blocs, as well as a voice of the Global South²⁴. Some media criticised the Biden Administration for not seeming to care about news of democratic backsliding and India's refusal to condemn and sanction Russia, all in the name of achieving a longed-for cooperation that had recently seemed to be cooling, as evidenced, for example, by the different approaches to foreign policy taken by India and the US in shared fora, perhaps most notably in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)²⁵.

In organisations and summits with Western leaders, Modi also seems to want to play the role of an India as the representative of African countries, although neither is this new. The country has traditionally exerted considerable political and ideological influence in Africa as a role model for decolonisation and Non-Aligned leadership. Nonetheless, India

²³ "India: Section 2 - Market Overview", *Forecast International*. July 2022. Available at: [Rocket NXT \(forecastinternational.com\)](https://forecastinternational.com) (accessed 21/6/2023).

²⁴ POLI, Alexandra de: "Modi in the US USA: India as a point of convergence between East and West (and the global South)", *Asianews*. 16 June 2023. Available at: [INDIAN MANDALA Modi in the USA UU.: India as a point of convergence between East and West \(and the global South\) \(asianews.it\)](https://asianews.it) (accessed 20/6/2023).

²⁵ BAKER, Peter & MASHAL, Mujib. "In Hosting Modi, Biden Pushes Democracy Concerns to the Background", *The New York Times*. 21 June 2023. Available at: [In Hosting Modi, Biden Downsizes Democracy Concerns With India - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://nytimes.com) (accessed 22/6/2023).

has been reluctant to provide military assistance to African national liberation movements and even criticised how minorities of Indian origin were persecuted in some of them in cases of *Indophobia*, the most obvious being Idi Amin's repression in Uganda²⁶.

Almost coinciding with his visit to the US, Modi formally asked the leaders of the G20 countries to accept the African Union as a permanent member of the organisation, demonstrating the prime minister's commitment to strengthening Africa's representation and partnership in shaping global affairs²⁷. There has been speculation that, unlike in the past when the Indian National Congress was in power, Prime Minister Modi represents Hindu nationalism, there being no shortage of serious clashes with the Muslim population, and that there could be friction with some African countries with Islamic majorities, although this has not happened so far. India's leadership aspiration has African support in international fora, including advocating for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, an express request of IAFS 2015 as a way to make Africa feel that its interests are represented by India, like in the BRICS and the G20²⁸.

In the UN Security Council debate in May 2021 on "Peace and Security in Africa: Addressing the root cause of conflict while promoting post-pandemic recovery", the Indian Foreign Minister spoke up as the continent's voice calling to be better represented, echoing the African Union's demands made official in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, linking the request to prioritising multilateralism in the UN, and holding it as tangible proof of deep ties with the African continent²⁹.

Nowadays, it appears that India and Africa's engagement in international affairs is solid and based on economic growth and addressing common challenges. In this cooperation, India wants to be recognised not as an equal but as a power that echoes the interests of the African Global South, both in traditional international fora and in alternative multilateral institutions that are gaining relevance in today's liquid, bloc-fronting geopolitical situation.

²⁶ PATEL, Hasu H. "General Amin and the Indian Exodus from Uganda", *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, 2, 4. 1972, p. 12–22. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1166488> (accessed 21/6/2023).

²⁷ "India's Modi seeks African Union's full membership in G20", *Reuters*. 18 June 2023. Available at: [India's Modi Seeks African Union's Full Membership in G20 \(usnews.com\)](https://www.usnews.com/story/news/world/2023/06/18/india-modi-seeks-african-union-full-membership-in-g20) (accessed 21/6/2023).

²⁸ "Modi's diplomatic drive in Africa", *Africa Intelligence*. 19 May 2023. Available at: [AFRICA : Modi's diplomatic drive in Africa - 19/05/2023 - Africa Intelligence](https://www.africainelligence.com/news/modi-diplomatic-drive-in-africa-19-05-2023) (accessed 21/6/2023).

²⁹ "Voice of Africa not given its proper due in UN: S Jaishankar", *India News Network*. 19 May 2021. Available at: <https://www.indianewsnetwork.com/20210519/voice-of-africa-not-given-its-proper-due-in-un-s-jaishankar> (accessed 22/6/2023).

In short, India wants to play China's role on the continent but with different tools³⁰, which is where Africa and the "Indian imperative" come in.

Conclusions: the "Indian imperative" and Africa

In Indian policy circles, the "Indian imperative" is referred to as a form of foreign policy that is unique to India, and is original, detached and independent from third actors and blocs. To this effect, India would be a suitable nation for global leadership because of its Western democratic credentials based on a free market system, while at the same time representing the Global South and its aspirations. India is a pivotal country in terms of geography and demography, the heir to a millennia-long history that shapes it with a unique cultural character that is well suited to achieving global governance that advocates dialogue, peaceful conflict resolution and, ultimately, greater international equity³¹.

Of course, this *imperative* presupposes first and foremost the country's own interest. India is now Africa's third largest trading partner, one of its main threats in the continent being the influence of China, with which it can compete in two ways. First, by incentivising collaboration through increased aid and investment in exchange for support for its global interests; and second, by leveraging the Indian diaspora in Africa, a tool of influence that China, the US and the EU cannot count on. In the case of China, this is because it has had little presence on the continent for centuries, and in the cases of the Americans and Europeans precisely because their centuries-long presence and policies during decolonisation work against the historical and political narrative for many African societies, while India stands as a constant ally and point of reference.

Security aspects are very important in India's relationship with the African continent because it involves projecting an image of reliability that convinces the different countries and the international community that India plays a relevant role in this area in Africa, as evidenced by the mediatic military operation Kaveri to repatriate Indian nationals from Sudan. Security vis-à-vis Africa is also influenced by the position of China, which in turn triggers growing interest in implementing military infrastructures in the eastern region,

³⁰ MULLEN, Rani & ARORA, Ashish. "India's Reinvigorated Relationship with Africa", *Centre for Policy Research*. 16 December 2016. Available at: [India's Reinvigorated Relationship with Africa - CIAO \(ciaonet.org\)](http://ciaonet.org) (accessed 22/6/2021).

³¹ THAROOR, Shashi & SARAN, Samir. *The new world disorder and the Indian imperative*. Aleph, New Delhi, 2020.

precisely the area of greatest interest to India because of its coastline, as exemplified by the Chinese naval base in Djibouti. One response to its existence is the possibility of Indo-Russian joint use of a naval base in Sudan, thereby multiplying its strategic importance for the Indian Ocean region and a palpable example of India's multilateralism, not caring about the misgivings that a collaboration of this kind with Russia would raise in the West³².

India is also concerned about other Chinese initiatives, such as the country's plan to set up private security companies to operate in some African countries, especially the most unstable ones, similar to the Wagners' presence in Russia but with the possible threat of blocking India's access to African resources, endangering Indian minorities in some countries, and hindering New Delhi's implementation of cultural, infrastructure, health and technology projects³³.

There is a conviction that the deep historical, commercial and cultural ties between India and Africa will enable the social and business ecosystems to continue to develop significantly beyond threats, accelerating Indian trade and business investment in the continent via initiatives such as the IAFS summits and meetings as part of the upcoming India-Africa Entrepreneurship Forum (IAEF) to take place in July 2023 in Mauritius. It is hoped that this Afro-Indian business summit will boost Indian private interest in Africa based on the growth of the economies of some countries and the financing of African companies with Indian capital³⁴.

In conclusion, India offers Africa an alternative economic, security and international relevance in the tradition of non-alignment, multilateralism and rejection of bloc politics. From the 'Indian imperative' approach, Africa can be seen as the most visible and successful geopolitical option for implementing an Indian-owned model of common benefit, balance and counterbalance in today's polarised global situation. On a visit to Rwanda by then Vice President Mohammad Hamid Ansari in 2017, he spoke of the imperatives of this Afro-Indian cooperation, grounded undoubtedly in shared history and

³² SINHA, Rajesh. "Indian Naval Base In Africa Next To China's Djibouti Could Be Possible With Russian Partnership?", *The Eurasian Times*. 05 December 2020. Available at: [Indian Naval Base In Africa Next To China's Djibouti Could Be Possible With Russian Partnership? \(eurasantimes.com\)](https://www.eurasiantimes.com/indian-naval-base-in-africa-next-to-china-s-djibouti-could-be-possible-with-russian-partnership/) (accessed 22/6/2023).

³³ "India needs to be wary of Chinese private security companies in Africa: Report", *The Economic Times*. 19 June 2023. Available at: [Africa: India needs to be wary of Chinese private security companies in Africa: Report - The Economic Times \(indiatimes.com\)](https://www.economictimes.com/india-needs-to-be-wary-of-chinese-private-security-companies-in-africa-report-report-the-economic-times/indiatimes.com) (accessed 22/6/2023).

³⁴ "India-Africa Entrepreneurship Forum. Available at: [India Africa Entrepreneurship Forum \(africa-india.org\)](https://africa-india.org/) (accessed 22/6/2023).

cultural ties, but also in capacity building as economic partners and from a shared perspective on security matters³⁵.

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³⁵ "Imperatives that drive African-Indian engagement are based on our shared challenges, common interests, and perceptions of mutual benefit: Vice President Delivers Lecture at the University of Rwanda on 'Rwanda, India and Africa: Imperatives for Cooperation'", *Business Standard*. 21 February 2017. Available at: [Imperatives that drive African Indian engagement are based on our shared \(business-standard.com\)](https://www.business-standard.com) (accessed 22/6/2023).