Contextualising China and India in Africa: History, Contemporary Relations and Future Possibilities

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Abstract

This paper covers three crucial issues that contextualize the presence of China and India in Africa. The first is the issue of historical relations of the two countries with the African continent. There is a tendency by both to justify their surge in trade, investments and loans to the African countries on the basis of economic ties that predate colonialism. There is a tendency to blame this historical era for the break in these multiple ties with Africa against the review of the irreversible global linear time line within which the world functions. Second is the flourishing diplomatic relations that is currently facilitating economic and political alliances with the purpose of closing the gap in the schematized relations that arose since the advent of colonialism in Africa and Asia. And third is the all-important question of sustainability of relations into the future among Africa, China and India as an emerging economic triad. Both China and India are active role players in the formation of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), and Brazil, India and South Africa are common denominators to IBSA, an earlier formation to BRICS. As two of the most populated countries with the fastest growing economies in the world both have to conduct their relations in Africa in ways that do not compromise their positions within IBSA and BRICS. The discussion in this paper illustrates how the liberalization of the Chinese economy since 1979 and the Indian economy since 1991 has not only integrated these countries into the global economy, but they have also rapidly produced sizeable surplus capitals that now provide each country with the means to profitably trade and invest in Africa. The sustainability of their

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future relations however, would lie in how China and India divert from the exploitative past of European colonialism in Africa by ensuring that Africans en-masse are treated as equal partners in mutually beneficial relationships.

Keywords: China in Africa, India in Africa, Contemporary relations, future possibilities, Africa's energy sector, history

Introduction

The increasing presence of China and India in Africa is an issue that is yet to be fully understood. As their roles in the continent begin to unfold there is a concomitant interest in understanding how different each country's engagement will be in comparison with their previous hegemonic forces such as European colonisers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the rise of American influence after World War Two. There are crucial questions that need to be answered as the entrenchment of China's and India's interests in Africa is consolidating. What are the conditions that turned each of these countries from being relatively poor agrarian societies to major world economic players in a relatively short space of time? What are the conditions that arose within each of these countries to instigate an outward drive towards Africa? And what is it that Africa has to offer China and India in this era of globalization?

There are at least two opposing views about the value of Africa's connection to the global economy. One is an optimistic and favourable one that points towards significant upward economic mobility across at least 10 of the 57 countries, while the other is a patronizing condescending one that still places the continent in the throes of sheer darkness. A 2012 KPMG report lists in order: Mauritius, South Africa, Rwanda, Botswana, Ghana, The Seychelles, Namibia, Zambia, Uganda and Kenya – as the 10 countries in which there is relative ease in which to do business. However, ease of doing business is not the same as the potential for investment in African countries. While some countries still in the list of the 10 African countries as viable investment options, the order is changed and half are excluded: South Africa, Nigeria, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Ghana, Botswana, Mauritius and Kenya. Those excluded from the first category above are Rwanda, The Seychelles, Namibia, Zambia and Uganda. Five factors have been identified by the team that identified these two categories viz. 'the availability of electricity, how easy it is to register property, what investor protection is available, what taxes are involved, how effectively contracts are enforced, how insolvency is resolved, whether construction permits are difficult to obtain, as well as the other intricacies involved in starting a business and employing workers' (KPMG 2014). Ten out of 57 countries in Africa constitutes less than 20 per cent of the number of countries that make up the continent. This is hardly an impressive figure. Energy issues are of such a dire need at present that the Africa Progress Report (APR: 2015) estimates that 2 out of every three Africans, totaling almost 600 million people, are without access to electricity. This deductive assumption emerges out of the estimation that this many people die from household pollution annually in Africa.

The current aim in Africa is to skip a generation of conventional type power supplies that are characterized by green-house gas emissions and reliance upon fossil fuels for energy requirements. Their attempt is to embark on an ambitious goal of linking development carbon free energy supplies that take them directly in line with first world standards. But in order to achieve this the APR has highlighted a range of issues that are fundamental to ensuring the spread of wealth before policies and their implementation reach those for whom they are intended. A dire situation currently prevails in some of the listed countries that are considered to be promising investment areas in Africa. For instance, the cost of energy in a country such as Nigeria is astronomical even when compared to first conditions in the northern hemisphere:

> Energy-sector bottlenecks and power shortages cost the region 2-4 per cent of GDP annually, undermining sustainable economic growth, jobs and investment. They also reinforce poverty, especially for women and people in rural areas. It is indefensible that Africa's poorest people are paying among the world's highest prices for energy: a woman living in a village in northern Nigeria spends around 60 to 80 times per unit more for her energy than a resident of New York City or London. (Kofi Anan 2015: 12).

In these kinds of conditions there is unlikely to be much respect for a country that is generously endowed with fossil fuel deposits that annually earns for them billions of American dollars in foreign exchange. Similar conditions prevail in other oil rich states such as Gabon, Angola and the DRC. The failure to redistribute wealth and create conducive conditions for broad based upliftment of their populations has generated widespread negative perceptions about Africa's ability to rise above the extensive poverty and inequities that currently characterizes the continent.

Reliable, affordable energy and safe socio-economic environments for investments are crucial for the creation of conducive investment spaces. But in some of the most renowned of the 10 countries in Africa conditions are widely perceived by the international world as inhibitive at the least and almost prohibitive at worst. The abiding threats by Boko Haram in Nigeria and the endemic crime in South Africa, coupled by the lack of capacity to generate electricity uninterrupted in a 24-houir cycle even in the most developed of industrial and commercial areas in South Africa have become major hurdles to greater potential for investments in these countries. While the think-tank led by former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Anan is serious about tackling issues of poor political leadership, redistribution of wealth, attending to rural development and linking Africa's development agenda to safe energy provision, no report about a single country in the continent that serves as a true role model for democracy is actually conspicuous by its absence. Although the recent nearly violence free general election in Nigeria in 2015 and the replacement of Goodluck Jonathan by Muhammdu Buhari serves as a positive sign in Africa's biggest economy and most populous country. It was the time first that a President in Nigeria stood for re-election and not only lost, but willingly conceded defeat. The replacement of leadership in African countries when their terms of office run out is a perennial problem, often stifling input of fresh and stimulating ideas on how best to infuse their economies with more positive approaches towards enhancement of economic performances. The APR recognizes these issues, but for as long as governments in all African countries do not correct their internal relationships within their own parties and with opposition parties, Kofi Anan's dream of integrating Africa into the global economy in more meaningful ways will remain a wish list.

Yet the continent is endowed with significant mineral deposits, fossilized energy reserves in countries such as Nigeria, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and growing middle class segments with increasing purchasing power. While the United States is reeling back towards its own resources for fossilized fuels and depending less upon Africa, new clients through China and India are beginning to show an increasing interest in the continent. Their increasing interest in Africa is not a new phenomenon. Both in fact determine their contemporary interests on the basis of their historical connections, and both see sustainable relations emerging over time in ways that will gather even greater momentum over the next few years.

History

China's and India's current engagements in Africa often not only find justification in their historical connections to the continent, but to the fact that it predated European contact with it. Numerous archeological findings and documentary evidence points towards contact with Africa that began prior to the European age of discovery, colonization and mass exodus of people to other parts of the world. There is a growing detest among Chinese, Indians and Africans that the former two countries are 'mere' newcomers to the continent, exhibited through increasing publications that demonstrates otherwise.

China

Most literature about China's early contact with Africa dates back to the 14th century, although there is inconsistency in how far back we can reliably go back. The Moroccan scholar Ibn Battuta's travels to China have been commented on by Keat Gin Ooi (2004) as one of the early middle-easterner's to travel there. There is some evidence to suggest that the contact between China and Africa can be back-dated to between 202BC to 202 AD, although the discussion flounders here on possibilities rather than uncontestable and convincing evidence. It was mainly the Chinese coins and some archeological evidence that were found in parts of east African countries that provide an inkling about pre-Christian trade links between the two parts of the world. Li Anshan's (2012) seminal work on early Chinese contact with the African continent dates the earliest Chinese contact with Africa to the 7th century. His presentation is given a tag of remarkable resourcefulness that draws from various academic backgrounds that include economic history, social history, international relations and migration studies. Kurtis Abraham's (2015) account of 'China's Long History in Africa' pointedly remarks about their historical ties: 'Despite the current frenetic media salvo unrelentingly declaring China's 'new inroads' into Africa, nothing could be further from the truth. China's presence in Africa dates back centuries and spanned a number of ancient dynasties'. Referring to Zheng He, a eunuch administrator during the Ming Dynasty in China (1368-1644) in the fifteenth century, Abraham locates Zheng He's travel to Africa in 1405, which is 93 years prior to Vasco da Gama's first contact with countries outside Europe. His contact with Africa spanned over a 28-year period, ending in 1433. One of Zheng He's documented highlights was in 1418 when he led a fleet of 62 ships carrying 37 000 soldiers across the Indian Ocean. Drawing from the work of the late Dutch sinologist Jan Julius Lodiwijk Duyvendak (China's Discovery of Africa), Abraham noted that the fleet was especially motivated by the Yongle Emperor's: 'real need of overseas products felt particularly at Court, and the desire to increase his own prestige, and to re-establish the overseas renown of the Chinese Empire' (Abraham 2015: 2).

Trade in those early days was not based on established reciprocal principles that tied Africa and China together in binding ways that ensured regularity of visits and ongoing examination of policy issues. At best it was ad hoc based long distance trade visits that can be put down to early informal methods of laying the foundations for what is emerging justifications and now as just established patterns of international relations.

India

India's contemporary presence in the African continent is rooted in its history of trade links and interest in Africa on global level. The current trend among Indian writers who are working on Indo-African relations is to raise the issue of India's historical linkages with the African continent. Over the last decade Indian scholars interests in this part of the world have developed a body of literature that describes Indo-African interactions in reasonable detail. Even when the issue is not about history per se, mention in made of the historical links. For instance, Nandan Nilekani's (2008) rapid rise in fame through the Information Technology (IT) industry from Bangalore, for which he is viewed as almost singularly consolidating it throughout India, mentions India's relationship with Africa in passing in his seminal publication about

India's IT industry and its contribution towards changing conditions in India over time. He begins from an historical perspective and in his mention of Africa he emphasised the fact Indo-African relations predates European colonialism in Africa. For Nilekani, India's multinational companies in Africa must be viewed against its centuries old trade relations and the new wave of interests that are being awakened through the changing global order in international trade relations. For him, India's thrust towards re-establishing its lost glory must begin from the admission that the entire is on a mission towards 'renwewal'. It is a renewal that must be located in the rapidly changing IT industry but which consolidates in its age-old value systems of family, community and nationhood.

A similar trend has been by successive interests among Indian scholars. In a book edited by Kenyan scholar Mwagiru and Indian scholar Biswas (2012) on India's growing trade relations with East African countries, all of the Indian contributors began their papers with an historical perspective that locates Indo-African relations in an historical context. Biswas (2012: 140) for instance locates India's commercial links with East African countries to several thousand years before Christ. She provides an elaborate description of their historical links through reference to archeological and documentary evidence. Citing the works of Robert Gregory (1971) and R.K. Mookherjee (1957), Biswas draws attention to Indian trade with Babylon that began as far back as 3000 B.C., supported by the findings of Indian archaeologists in the 'Ruins of Ur'. Evidence suggests that Indian maritime activities with Babylon and Egypt acquired greater heights by the era of the first millennium B.C., for which maritime records are convincingly clear.

Four other papers in the same book provided complimentary perspectives on Indian historical engagements with East African nations. The contributions by Ray (2012), Pathak (2012), Sahu (2012) and Sudhakaran (2012) provide insight into a complex and established partnership of a somewhat enduring relationship, entrenched in mutually beneficial ways over centuries of friendly contact. Each of the four papers attempts to articulate historical engagements to contemporary developments in relations between Indian and East African nations. Countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda and South Sudan prevail as a strong economic bloc to India whose increasing relations are essentially a manifestation of post-colonial re-establishment. It was colonialism that severed these century old ties between India and East Africa, but which is now beginning to re-emerge in ways that are presently viewed as altering the West European and North American grip in Africa per se, and in the global economy more broadly. As politicians, journalists researchers and academics increasingly talk about a catharsis in the world order, the engagements by China and India demonstrates a concomitant rise in their presence in Africa.

Contemporary Relations

Understanding Africa's emerging relations with China and India requires some insight into how these two Asian countries 'rose from the ashes' to suddenly become major world economic players. Both countries went through extremities in the nineteenth and major part of the twentieth centuries, almost to the point of virtual collapse. Much of this had to do with colonial abstractions that were ruining their economies, their social fabric and political stability. Both China and India, after the Second World War, adopted policies that forbade the presence of foreign capital, as well as restrict the flow of their resources to international destinations. In China, Communist Party leader Mao Zedong's leadership style is believed to have caused the deaths of at least 30 million citizens. Although Zedong allegedly started the process of annihilation of forces opposed to his 'Cultural Revolution', the escalation of deaths is now being blamed more on his wife and the corrupt communist radicals than himself (Perry 1999). The Cultural Revolution was indirectly responsible for widespread starvation in China during the 1950s and 1960s. In India starvation in Bengal was a direct result of Churchill's policy of redirecting food from that part of India to British soldiers fighting in the Second World War. Colonial policies in other parts of India such as Bihar were equally responsible for the famine that wreaked havoc with the local populations of those regions. A determination to rebuild India from within led to serious undermining of the country's economic policies as well as the leadership of Indira Gandhi in the 1970s – when she felt compelled to institute a state of emergency and contain rising opposition to the Congress Party. Gandhi's particularistic style of socialism led to the burgeoning of regionally based opposition parties, thereby loosening the hold that her Congress Party once had over Indian politics.

But from the beginning of the 1990s both China and India began liberalization programmes that were intended to integrate their economies into the global markets. While China remains a one party state with selective methods of encouraging ‘free market’ entrepreneurship, India continued to relax its already established but selective methods of free enterprise too. Economic liberalization generally refers to central governments adhering to neo-colonial measures of deregulation, apparently reducing the amount of government controls, permitting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), reduced taxation, and expanding privatization through reduced state intervention. There are strong and convincing arguments that deregulation is another form of ‘re-regulation’ in disguise, which in many instances could be demonstrated to be true. But this is a matter for another paper. The two sub-sections below provide a brief insight into their histories and how their changing policies propelled their appearances onto the world stage.

China

In 1978 the Chinese Central Committee reached a decision to rapidly increase market mechanisms into their economy and simultaneously reduce government planning and direct control. Their initial reform was a bold and innovative step towards merging the macro with micro – that was to open up trade with the outside world through the household responsibility system in agriculture. This was overseen by the establishment of the ‘Town-Village-Enterprises’ (TVE) which allowed farmers to sell their surplus crops in the open market. The emphasis here was to ensure that local needs and requirements were met first before surpluses could be declared for wider distribution, including international markets. This policy was supported by the Communist Party’s notruion of a ‘Duel Track System’ that introduced the *Yuan* as its foreign trade currency and the *Renmenbi* as the Chinese domestic currency. Neither of these however were allowed as ‘free floating’ currencies, because the Chinese state preferred to impose control over it as a regulatory and stabilizing mechanism to their economy. This reform had to be overseen by the Four Cardinal Principles upholding the Chinese version of the state viz. socialism, the people’s democratic dictatorship, the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Marxist-Leninist-Marxist Thought. Hoewever, state-owned enterprises (SOEs) enjoyed lower prices than goods produced through private enterprise. Barely a year later, in 1979, Deng Xiaoping introduced an essentially capitalistic law on Sino-Foreign Joint

Ventures, marking the official welcoming by the Chinese of foreign investment into their country. By 1980 this law paved the way for the People's Republic of China (PRC) becoming a member of the world's most profound capitalistic institution viz. The World Bank. While the system increasingly surged towards principles of free market economy, opposition to the generally strict control by the central state rose to the point of a mass demonstration against it in June 1989. The massacre of protesting students and pro-reform citizens became a blotch on China's restructuring process. While the country survived several internal and international upheavals it realized the need to play by international rules in the global economy. By 1994 China allowed their internal currency, the *Renminbi* to enter into a managed exchange-floating rate system. In the process of all of this, the Chinese state promoted the manufacture of cheap attractive goods for every conceivable use, but often of inferior quality. Their low prices serve as attractions in the global market, however short their life-spans, and have earned for the Chinese government massive amounts in foreign currencies. By the middle of the first decade of the 21st century China and the USA began talks on Sino-US Strategic Economic dialogue; and by 2008 the state made a commitment to invest US$586 billion in infrastructure and social welfare and to deliver by the end of 2010. To the credit of the Chinese authorities most of this had been accomplished.

This massive economic muscle that it built over the last twenty five years helped to increase the population's standard of living, literacy and level of personal freedom. Mao Zedong's successor, Deng Xiaoping brought about a radical shift away from the ideological 'correctness' in China to greater emphasis upon economic performance. His oft quoted phrase of: 'to catch mice' – became the driving force behind China's rapid development. (Weiss 2003: 39). The surpluses that China has been able to produce have found new niche markets in other parts of the world, including the African continent. More than 2000 Chinese companies have invested in Africa over the last two decades. Most of these investments are in four major sectors viz. energy, mining, constriction and manufacturing. In 2007, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China purchased 20 per cent of South Africa's Standard Bank for US$5.5 billion, after which it rolled on to increasing financial sectors of African countries. There is however still a lack of clarity among scholars and journalists about the nature of Chinese investments in the African continents. The turgidity in the understanding between what constitutes Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and loans given to African countries still requires some clarification. In mid-2012, Chen Deming, China's Minister of Commerce stated that between 2009 and 2012 China's FDI increased by 60 percent, exceeding US$14.7 billion. Around the same time China's ambassador to South Africa, Tian Xuejun stated that 'China's investment in Africa of various kinds exceeds US40 billion, among which US$14,7 billion if FDI. However, he stopped short of explaining what he meant by 'various kinds of investments'.

However turgid some of the issues might be, China's sudden rise in investments in Africa is phenomenal, although not without its problems. The recent global recession impacted upon China's economic performances too, slowing it down to a point of curbing more investments especially of political instability in regions is forcing China to slow down its investments in Africa. For instance, attacks on Chinese operations in Ethiopia's Ogaden region, in Sudan's southern Kordafan region and the imperative to evacuate 35 000 Chinese workers from Libya, has forced the Chinese state and their private companies to reassess the risks that they are willing to take in Africa (David Shinn 2012).

India

Since India's independence in 1947, there was an adoption of a Soviet based centralized planning model, with five-year plans that were intended to allow for measurements of progress over time. By its very nature centralized planning requires stringent control measures through an extensive bureaucracy and red tape, and a plethora of regulations that are often more inhibitive than progressive. In the situation of India, the reasons for this are understandable. After more than 700 years of Mughal exploitation and plundering of the country's resources, followed by a similar pattern of ruthlessness through British colonialism, the thinking by the first post-colonial government in India was to turn within and endorse the maximum number of protectionist policies that it possibly could. The purpose was to especially protect what was left in India from the new international forms of exploitation that were bound to emerge after colonialism, as well to alleviate the endemic poverty that was so rife across the country. India had the added burden of having to maintain, if not renew and build afresh a significant part of its infrastructure. Buildings, roads and railways required an enormous cost to be kept sustainable, without having to attract new forms of technology that were virtually unaffordable in the years soon after independence, exacerbated by the cost of partition of the country. But the protectionism of the Indian government's approach to consolidating an all-Indian programme towards economic independence was more counter-productive than beneficial.

The virtual monopoly of political power by the Congress Party constrained new and fresh ideas about how to proceed with economic policies that could produce more rewarding outcomes. Since the first election in 1951-2 the Congress Party won five successive elections with clear majorities nationally. But during their reign numerous incidents cost the country dearly, impacting severely upon the country's resources. Among them were the Sino-Indian war in 1962, and two wars against Pakistan in 1965 and 1971. These incidents rapidly escalated their defense budgets as well as alienated India from funding and new technology by countries such as the USA. By the decade of the 1970s the intra-insular approach to upward economic mobility was clearly failing. India's annual economic growth rate of 3 to 3.5 per cent and the capital growth rate of 1.3 per cent per annum was insufficient to meet the demands of the nation. India still faced widespread food shortages because they failed to meet their agricultural production needs and industrialists were constricted by the burden of licensing requirements, infamously known as the 'License Raj'. India's then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, allegedly lost her constituency election in 1975 and was subsequently charged with electoral fraud. But the charges were lowered and she was convicted on the trivial accusations of building a dais to talk to her supporters from a position that undermined her opposition. Ongoing agitation against Gandhi led to her declaring a state of emergency in June 1975, a decision that brought more criticism than praise to her. It was also a period that witnessed the gradual erosion of confidence in the Congress Party and the equally gradual rise of the Hindu nationalists Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

By the early 1980s India's balance of payments for both export and import of goods, services and capital, suffered severely. The country was unable to pay for essential imports, it ran a high deficit, and borrowed from external funders to finance the deficit, against a rising and damaging period of inflation. Then Prime Minister Chandra Sekhar went to the extreme of pawnding India's gold reserves airlifted to London as collateral for loans from the IMF. By 1990/1 this situation brought about a realization within the Congress Party that circumstances necessitated a change in the country's macro-economic policies, especially since the socialist worlds of the whole of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union met a sudden and rapid demise. The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi coupled with the persistence of a fixed exchange rate of the Indian rupee, brought about a worsened rate of economic deterioration. With just three weeks left for the withdrawal of the last part of the IMF loan, Narasimha Rao took over the reins as Prime Minister of India. At the time Manmohan Singh was an apolitical employee of the World Bank. Singh's expertise of neo-liberal economics and the benefits of a liberal economy brought Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to make a special appeal to him to take on the mantle of Minister of Finance, deliberately avoiding the appointment of a party based politician. Preliminary reconceptualization of the country's economic policies began entrenching from 24th July 1991, popularly referred to since then as the 'Economic Liberalisation of 1991'.

Thus began a series of relaxations that radically shifted India's pattern of centralized control towards de-regulation in numerous areas that were crucial to its future survival. Their goal was essentially five-fold viz. to obliterate constrictive bureaucratic controls, abolish industrial licensing, permit cities and towns with less than one million people to set up industries without the need of government permits, to attract foreign capital and technology through the removal of inhibitive regulations, and to make poor performing parastatals more accountable. However, these measures were not without the paradoxical emergence of legitimate fears of neo-liberal economics and political gerrymandering by opposition parties. The state had to embark on an exhausting drive to assure farmers that they would be protected, and that contrary to worker retrenchments there would guarantees for worker protection. These measures produced astounding results – the Indian economy frog-leaped by 7.5 per cent of the GDP, radically uplifting their performance from US$130 million in 1992 to US$5 billion in 1996. This accomplishment, although based on revolutionary ideas that were incrementally introduced, were classically visionary. They brought about an exponential growth in India's capital markets and the number of company listings in their stock exchange.

India's rise in economic performances over the last 25 years has created added needs for outward investments as well as for resources that are crucial for their sustainability. The search for new investment arenas stems from the three issues viz. the amassing of need surplus capital by profitable Indian companies, the need for energy resources as their economy improves and their middle class requirements for sustainability, as well as sharing f development experiences emanating from the moral responsibility that India showed over the post-World War Two decades towards previously colonized countries. India's multinational corporations have excelled immensely over the last few years and have begun investing in Africa in relatively sizeable proportions. Africa's dire need for affordable generic medicines is often met by India's pharmaceutical companies cheaper but equally effective products that are produced by western companies. By 2011 India's trade in pharmaceuticals in Africa have reached 17.7 per cent, with Nigeria alone being the major purchaser to the value of US$384 million by the end of September 2014. While China's share too is growing it was substantially lower at 4.1 per cent of the pharmaceutical market (Ford 2014). India's share in the global generic market over the last 30 years began from virtually nothing to 20 percent of the world's share of high quality generic drugs – after it acquired World Health Organisation (WHO) certification by meeting its requirements for generic drugs. The pharmaceutical industry in India now carries the tag of being about the most respected in the developing world (Greene 2007). In the agricultural sector, petro-chemicals, rural infrastructural development and in fertilizers, interests in Indian products and expertise in Africa is growing at a rapid rate. The agreements that some African countries are entering into with India are of stark mutual benefit to each other. For instance, in Kenya there is a keen interest to learn from India's experiences in capacity building, development, knowledge transprogrammes, use of hybrid seeds and joint learning programmes (ScienceDev.Net 2014). Together with Uganda, Kenya is keen to attract Indian farmers to work their land as entrepreneurs and improve their annual agricultural outputs.

These are but two examples of the Indian thrust into the African continent. Since 2003 India's trade with Africa became increasingly visible. Within a decade the extent of their trade with Africa increased 15 fold, attributed to what the Indian state referred to as the 'adoption of organic measures'. There emerged a commitment by the Indian government to tap deeper into the African potential to trade with them, causing them to set a new benchmark of US$70 billion by the end of 2014. The potential for further trade, investments and 'soft-loans' for entrepreneurs to engage with Africa extends over several areas viz. Information technology, opening up of pharmaceutical production centres, hospitals, fertilizer plants, seed developments, oil and gas extractions, infrastructural development and agricultural entrepreneurs. This is by no means an exhaustive list.

Conclusion

The current trend of engagement by China and India in Africa is an indication that both countries see greater potential for deepening and more extensive relationships over time. There are several reasons why future possibilities with the continent will have to grow, more by virtue of need than by opportunistic design viz. the history of contact by China and India with Africa is more than mere nostalgia. It refers to a period of rich and rewarding exchanges and relationships that were believably based upon mutual respect. Rekindling historical relationships is an attempt to also break loose from the shackles of their colonial past, presently manifesting as neo-liberalism by colonial powers of the past. While this might be a justifiable position to take, there is also the possibility that such a position emerges out of sheer romanticism of history than realities that are brought about by economic deals between countries. Chinese companies tendencies to arrive with capital, technical expertise, and manual labour, and leave with untaxed profits back to China is already an issue that has become a source of concern to many recipient countries. The Economic Freedom Front (EFF) in South Africa is already on record chastising Chinese business practice in the country. Others in Ghana, Nigeria and Mauritius, to name a few, are beginning to raise questions about the same issues.

The second and perhaps more important issue stems from improved middle-class conditions in China and India. A greater demand for more energy resources such as fossilized fuels, Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) and coal are concomitant needs that arise out of improved living conditions. Neither country is self-sufficient in these resources, necessitating a consolidation of bilateral relationships that diverts from the exploitative tendencies of western countries.

Improved trade relations with Africa and improved living conditions within partner countries have the positive spin-off for improved trade relations. As middle class populations grow, so too does the purchasing power of such segments increase. Bilateral relations that are based on mutual respect and mutual gains can only help to consolidate the productivity and cordiality that emerges out of it.

At present both China and India are being welcomed into Africa because of shared experiences in their agrarian pasts as well as present efforts in agriculture. Their extent of poverty and changing conditions for their nascent middle-classes serve as promising examples to African countries that are on the mend and improving conditions for their populations. Food security in Africa is a nagging contemporary problem, but one which by their own admission can only be resolved through increased dialogues of shared experiences and capacity building exercises that will improve conditions over time. Uganda and Kenya have already made such a start with India and others are likely to follow. The improvements can only be consolidated if the roads and railways that the Chinese are building in Africa are going to facilitate agricultural developments. It is in these sentiments and actualities that future sustainable possibilities in Africa with China and India can grow.

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