

Editorial

Anand Singh

Nandini Chowdhury Sen

Understanding the inroads that are being made by China and India into Africa requires investigation at a level that goes far beyond the recent and contemporary realities. It is about understanding the emergence of a new world order where both these countries have to be taken more seriously than the other Asian success stories of the 1980s and the 1990s. Japan in the 1980s was experiencing such rapid levels of economic boom that it was being touted as an emergent super-power that was going to join the ranks of the then USSR and USA. Much of its boost came from their automobile industries, especially Toyota, Nissan and Suzuki. But super-power status was widely defined as having demonstrable nuclear and military capability as well, from which Japan had backtracked after the Atom-Bomb destruction in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. While this failed to materialise, by the 1990s it was countries such as South Korea and Taiwan that were creating ripples through the hegemonic position that Western Europe and the North Americas enjoyed. Bandied about as the ‘Tiger Economies of the East’, economic growth in South Korea and Taiwan unfolded new types of scenario building among the world’s topmost economic players. While Taiwan somewhat receded into the background after several years of incipient popularity, several South Korean companies catapulted into the international arena with a force that remains, for now, difficult to challenge. In the domestic appliances, wireless technology (mobile phones) and personal notebooks (laptops) industry, companies such as LG and Samsung have not only made their presence felt, but dominate in ways that have outdone numerous industries in the west with similar products. Canadian based Blackberry (mobile phones), and the Swedish Nokia for instance, have been outdone by Samsung to an extent that has virtually obliterated them from the international market. The

American I-Phone almost lost its market share too, save to say that some quick thinking by its engineers brought it back to a competitive international level. But the idea of South Korea possibly being touted as a future super-power did not arise, bearing in mind the constrictive situation with Japan in the 1980s.

With China and India however, the situation is different for at least three reasons. Firstly, unlike Japan, China and India have among the biggest militaries in the world, both have achieved nuclear capability, and both have acquired permanent seats in the United Nations Security Council. India is the most recent addition to this small group of nations. Secondly, as the two most populated countries in the world, with growing energy needs that cannot be met by their own reserves, both countries have to look outwards for sustainable supplies. Each of these countries' survival will be determined by the extent to which their respective governments meet their needs in uninterrupted ways. This can best be achieved by maintaining strong and capable military forces that will ensure sustainable supplies over time. The need to upgrade their military hardware and software will eventually bring them in line to the current most respected super-power in the world viz. the USA. Their sheer population sizes and economic needs will demand this of their governments. And thirdly, the economies of both countries have experienced growth rates over sustained periods that have been virtually unseen in the world before. Their failure to sustain these growth rates can be the catalyst for radical changes in governments, if not policy directions at the very least. Growing middle classes in China and India is tantamount to growing consciousness, a feature that will put both governments at severe risk of survival if social service delivery programmes are not carried out in uninterrupted ways. What they can eke out of the African continent will certainly impact upon the ways in which they meet the expectations of their commitments in office.

The first paper in this edition by Anand Singh, introduces China and India in Africa, contextualising each country's rise to prominence in the measures that they took to liberalise their policies and integrate into the global economy. Both countries view their historical ties to the African continent with a nostalgia that is applied to justify their re-ignition over the last three decades. The papers by Ashwin Desai and Nandini Chowdhury Sen provide perspectives of China in Africa that are consistent with issues that are of concern or interest with researchers throughout the world. While Desai

views China's role in the broader context of BRICS, which he sees as 'sub-imperialist' and somewhat functional to capitalism, Chowdhury Sen argues that China's engagement in Africa is mutually beneficial and challenging to the hegemony of the west. Such juxtaposing positions bode well for a healthy debate about China's role in Africa, although further discussion on the issue must be more evidence based. The next four papers by Goolam Vahed, Mohammed, Jamal Moosa, Adaora Osondu-Oti and Abhay Chawla bring India's engagements in Africa into the spotlight. Vahed's coverage of Jawaharlal Nehru's role in fighting colonialism and racism through international forums such as the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement demonstrates the appreciation and confidence that African countries have in the Indian leadership. His coverage is supported by Osondu-Oti's brief discussion of India's role in supporting Africa against colonialism and racism and appreciation that Nigeria showed in return when they supported India's sovereignty against China's invasion of their territory in the early 1960s. Chawla deals with India and China's engagement in Africa. He discusses the role of mobile phone companies and the investment of the two Asian giants in Nigeria. Interestingly, as the USA establishes greater reliance on their own sources of energy for their domestic requirements, India is beginning to take its place as the biggest purchaser of Nigeria's crude oil.

The last papers by Bobby Luthra-Sinha, Kalpana Hiralal, Sultan Khan, and Shanta Balgobind Singh bring different perspectives to the presence of India in Africa. Each of the papers is restricted to South Africa, but brings one common issue that is gaining increasing momentum in academia to the fore viz. social memory. Luthra-Sinha's paper captures patterns of illicit trade between India and South Africa since the 1970s, referring to it as the 'narcotics bilateral', in which Indians are the suppliers and South Africans of Indian descent are the middle and end users – women and male youth respectively.

Hiralal's paper shifts from this economic perspective to not just India's role in the political emancipation of Africa, but also the role that several important women played against twin enemies of colonialism and racism. While Sarojini Naidu and Pandita Ramabhai broke from patriarchal tradition in India where politics was viewed strictly as a 'man's game', their assertion over their rights to publicly challenge colonialism and racism indirectly entrenched an Indian influence into South Africa's polity. The last

two papers by Khan and Singh are about reflexive memories and histories of ancestral roots in India. Both papers bring to the fore how indentured labourers from India brought with them a work ethic, commitment and loyalty to colonial masters that have eventually translated into two significant lessons to South Africa's population at large. First, were the issues of endurance and perseverance that took them from nothing to well established upper-middle class statuses in the enabling environments in which they found themselves. And second, this very spirit of hard work now serves as instructive lessons to the working classes in South Africa, where opportunity and positive economic possibilities still prevail.

These papers will undoubtedly add value to the discourses about China and India in a changing and challenging global scenario.