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Destination Africa: China, India and Japan

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During 2008-9, as a happy coincidence, China's Chang'e 1, Japan's Kaguya and India's Chandrayaan 1 were all orbiting in outer space, heralding a new landmark.[1] The three Asian giants are also surging ahead in the economic sphere and together account for 30 per cent of the global GDP, when measured in terms of purchasing power parity.[2] Their consumption of raw materials and other natural resources has increased manifold and they are seeking newer pastures to meet this demand.

In the past two centuries the colonial countries plundered Africa's natural resources in what was termed as the "scramble for Africa". The three Asian giants' current engagement in Africa is, however, benign. "Soft power"[3] is being applied to ensure constant supply of raw materials and a market for their expanding economies.

China in Africa

During his visit to Africa in 2007, Hu Jintao said :

> … together with our African brothers, we are ready to do whatever is helpful to peace and development in Africa, to the friendship and cooperation between China and Africa, and to the maintenance of interests of the developing countries as a whole.[4]

He announced a three-point initiative on China-Africa relations, as follows:

1. to build on the traditional friendship and push for new progress in China-Africa relations;
2. to persist in mutual assistance and mutual benefit and promote the common prosperity of China and Africa; and

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3. to cooperate even more closely in an effort to safeguard the rights and interests of the developing countries.[5]

> China's association with Africa dates back to the 1960s, when China's intentions in Africa were primarily diplomatic, mainly to counter recognition of Taiwan and eventually to garner votes from the African bloc for outright rejection of Taiwan's Two China policy in the United Nations. Beginning in the 1990s, China's expansion in Africa is primarily characterized by its need for energy resources and access to African markets for its manufactured products.[6] In return, the Chinese have commenced infrastructure projects of building roads, railways, stadiums, power plants and the like, and are also investing heavily in oil exploration projects in Africa. Jennifer G. Cooke notes that :
>
> (China's) expansion in Africa is linked most directly to the requirements of China's rapidly growing economy, especially in energy resources, minerals, and other commodities. But that expansion is accompanied by a strong diplomatic push to build friendly partnerships with African governments, to gain support in international forums for China's ambitions and worldview, and in the long term to create markets for Chinese goods and services. …

Taiwan is less of an issue than previously because only four African countries ? Burkina Faso, Gambia, Swaziland and Sao Tome and Principe ? maintain ties and recognition. [7]

China at the 2006 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) pledged to more than double its trade with Africa from $40 billion in 2005 to $100 billion by the end of 2010. To achieve this feat, China increased the number of duty-free African exports from 190 to 440. In addition, China has pledged to establish a $5 billion China-Africa Development Fund to encourage Chinese companies to invest in Africa. As of May 2008 $1 billion had been committed to this fund.[8]

Tables 1 and 2 and Figure 1 highlight the trade figures between China and the top ten African countries for 2008. Oil constitutes Africa's major export to China. Africa accounts for 30 per cent of China's oil imports, and this is set to rise in the coming decade. In response to allegations that China is gobbling up Africa's oil resources, the Chinese point out that China's share of total African oil production is around 9 per cent as compared with the US share of 32 per cent and Europe's share of 33 per cent.[9]

China has also emphasized better diplomatic ties with the African countries to garner support for its worldview and reassure the Africans and the world of its friendly intentions. Chinese diplomacy emphasizes the notions of solidarity, respect and South-South Cooperation. "Respect" is embodied in China's policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign countries.[10] Shi Guangsheng, a Minister in China, said in the first FOCAC in 2000:

> China will also unswervingly side with African countries and peoples to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the vast number of developing countries and push for the establishment of an equitable and rational new international political and economic order. Here, let me take this opportunity to express my heart-felt thanks to African countries for your support for China's accession to WTO.[11]

Africa is the primary recipient of Chinese developmental assistance, which is mainly in the form of concessionary loans administered by the Chinese Export-Import Bank. The African countries are also beneficiaries of Chinese debt forgiveness, infrastructure development, food aid and medical assistance.[12] Accurate data on assistance flow are not available, however, maybe because of, as many have pointed out, the commercial nature of Chinese assistance.

At one FOCAC session President Hu Jintao pledged that China would:

- deploy a hundred top Chinese agricultural experts to Africa by 2009;
- establish ten agricultural technology centres;
- build thirty hospitals;
- provide $40 million in grants for anti-malaria drugs, prevention, and model treatment centres;
- deploy three hundred Peace Corps-like volunteers;
- build a hundred rural schools;
- train 15,000 African professionals; and
- double the number of Chinese government scholarships for African students from 2000 to 4000 per year. [13]

India in Africa

For centuries, the Indians were in touch with Africa by means of traders who migrated there. In the nineteenth century, hundreds and thousands of Indians as British indentured labourers landed on the African soil, by means of which the Indians and the Africans came in closer cultural contact. In the latter half of the twentieth century, India and Africa were seen synchronously raising their voices against colonialism and apartheid and also presented a unified stance on the platforms of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM).

However, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, India's foreign policy stance witnessed a paradigm shift, as its attention turned more towards the countries in the West and towards a globalized world. Attention was also diverted towards the Middle East and South East Asia. However, taking the lead from China, India realized that it was time to revive its ties with the Africans. Whereas the Chinese approach relies extensively on dollar diplomacy, in view of its own financial constraints, India's approach to Africa has been more of capacity building rather than infrastructure building.[14] Among the numerous Indian initiatives undertaken in Africa in recent years are the Focus Africa Programme; Techno-Economic Approach for Africa and India Movement; the Pan- Africa e-Network Project; Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme; Special Commonwealth Africa Assistance Plan; India-Africa Forum Summit (2008), and 2nd India-Africa Forum Summit (2011).

Focus Africa Programme

The Focus Africa Programme was initiated in 2002, with a view to widen and deepen India's trade with Africa. Beginning initially with seven African countries, the programme now covers twenty-four countries. Under this programme, the Government of India extends assistance to exporters and traders to undertake visits in select African countries so as to organize and participate in trade-related events and meetings. The African trade delegations are also sponsored to visit India.[15]

Techno-Economic Approach for Africa and India Movement

The Techno-Economic Approach for Africa and India Movement is a regional cooperation mechanism, which was set up in Delhi in 2004. It involves India and eight of the West African countries and is called Team 9. This initiative was undertaken basically with the objective "to accelerate economic, social and cultural development of the member countries through transfer of technology, know-how and knowledge management involving governments, experts and entrepreneurs."[16] The Government of India extended a line of credit of $500 million to the member countries to invest in agriculture, industry, infrastructure, science and technology and training.[17]

Pan-Africa E-network Project

The Pan-Africa e-network Project, which is a joint initiative of the Government of India and the African Union, was formally inaugurated in 2009. Its bases were launched in the beginning of 2004. The project creates significant linkages for tele-education and tele-medicine, which makes Indian expertise available to the people of Africa. Additionally, the project supports e-governance, e-commerce, infotainment, resource mapping and meteorological and other services in the African countries.[18] The project aims at developing Africa's information and communication technologies, ultimately bridging the digital divide in that continent.

Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation

The Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme is essentially bilateral in nature. The programme was formally launched by the Government of India on 15 September 1964 and is currently the flagship programme of the Indian Government's technical cooperation effort. ITEC along with its corollary, the Special Commonwealth Assistance for Africa Programme (SCAAP), together has a membership of 158 countries from Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and East and Central Europe, and is basically centred on the programme of sharing of experiences, transfer of technology and capacity building.[19] African countries have been the main beneficiaries of this programme.

India-Africa Forum Summit

In the India-Africa Forum Summit, 2008, held in New Delhi, opportunities were created to boost India-Africa cooperation. This was done by framing a concrete plan of action between the two sides. In this summit, attempts were made to strengthen cooperation especially in economics, politics, science, technology, research and development, social development and capacity building; tourism; infrastructure; energy and environment; education and media and communication.[20] India offered a line of credit amounting to $5.4 billion and also pledged to expand its budget for many technical and other forms of assistance to Africa. The 2nd India-Africa Forum Summit, May 2011, was an attempt to bolster these initiatives. This summit envisioned a common future of both India and Africa in which both sides put emphasis on peace and a just world order and in ushering self-reliant and mutually beneficial initiatives. The 26 May 2011 Addis Ababa Declaration and the Framework for Enhanced Cooperation emphasized the broad convergence of views between India and Africa on a wide range of issues such as UN institutional and structural reforms, climate change and global warming, capacity building and infrastructure development, trade and commerce, duty-free tariff regime, countering international terrorism, the Doha Round and South-South cooperation.

Until 1996-97, India exhibited a case-hardened attitude towards Outbound Foreign Direct Investment (OFDI), and invested minimal amounts in foreign countries. However, around the beginning of the current century, OFDI from India has multiplied (see Figure 2). If present trends are sustained, it is estimated that the volume of trade and cooperative activities between India and Africa would amount to $70 billion by 2012.[21] These investments by India are minimal amounts that are required to sustain India's goal of capacity building in the developing and underdeveloped countries.

Additionally, India is expanding its sphere of influence in Africa by means of various other initiatives. India has been providing training to the Africans both in Africa and in India. It is estimated that every year, over 1000 Africans get administrative and technical training in India. Furthermore, over 15,000 students from Africa have been receiving education in India, with many of them receiving scholarships from the Government of India.[22]

The Indian private and public sector companies are also spearheading the Indian cause. Some of the successful Indian companies in Africa are the Tata group, Essar, Reliance India, Reliance Communications, ONGC, NTPC, Infosys Technologies, Cipla and Ranbaxy. Giving strength to the Government of India and its private companies in Africa are the People of Indian Origin (PIO) and Indian diaspora, who have a robust presence in Africa.

Japan in Africa

Japan has traditionally been one of Africa's most important trade partners. According to Morikawa, who has provided a critical account of Japan's relations with Africa prior to World War II,[23] Japan's African diplomacy was shaped and influenced by the four pillars of its foreign policy during this era, namely, (1) maintaining friendly and cooperative relations with the United States, (2) showing full solidarity with the industrialized countries of the non-Communist world, including South Africa, (3) promoting friendly relations with the anti-Communist bloc and Non-Aligned nations of the Third World, and (4) engaging in both confrontation and cooperation with countries aligned with the Communist camp.

In more contemporary times, between 2001 and 2008, Japan-Africa trade volume has increased dramatically, from $8.8 billion to $34.3 billion.[24] This growth has been generated largely by African exports to Japan, which grew by 366 per cent, compared to the growth of African imports from Japan by 200 per cent.

However, the global economic recession has exerted a severe strain on Japan-Africa trade. After the 2008 peak, the trade figure nearly halved to $18.5 billion in 2009. African exports to Japan fell by 56 per cent from $21 billion to $9.1 billion and the volume of African imports from Japan went down by 29 per cent from $13.3 billion to $9.4 billion. As such, in 2009 Japan ran a rare trade surplus with Africa. While Japan-Africa trade relations have displayed growth momentum, they have been unable to keep pace with the frenetic rise in Africa's trade relations with the emerging world, particularly China and India.

As such, while Japan-Africa trade roughly doubled between 2001 and 2009, by comparison, China-Africa trade expanded by almost 1000 per cent, India-Africa trade swelled by 525 per cent, Brazil-Africa trade by 224 per cent and Russia-Africa trade by 262 per cent. Whereas in 2001 China-Africa trade was on parity with Japan-Africa trade, by 2009 the volume of China's trade with Africa became five times that of Japan-Africa trade.

Commodities form the core of the continent's exports to Japan. In 2008, $10.3 billion of Africa's exports to Japan were in the form of mineral fuels, $4.7 billion in precious metals, $1.2 billion in ores and $958 million in iron and steel. Together, these four commodities accounted for 82 per cent of African exports to Japan for the year. The majority of African imports from Japan comprised vehicles and transport equipment, heavy machinery and mechanical equipment. Given the large range of commodities in Africa's exports to Japan, it is no surprise that commodity-rich nations account for the majority of Africa's export items to Japan.

South Africa's abundant reserves of precious metals, ores, iron and steel, aluminium and other base metals are reflected in that country's trade relations with Japan. Sudan is virtually Japan's only African source of crude petroleum. The growth in natural gas exports from Equatorial Guinea since 2003 has also propelled the nation into Japan's economic agenda. African exports to Japan will continue to benefit from preferential treatment from the Japanese government. As part of Japan's overall development assistance agenda for Africa under the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) process, all least-developed African countries are guaranteed duty-free access for all exports to the Japanese market.

Investment in Africa

Despite efforts at TICAD IV to inspire deeper Japanese private investment in Africa, volumes to the continent remain proportionately small. As such, in 2008, Africa soaked up only 1.1 per cent of Japan's total OFDI flows of $130.8 billion. Furthermore, Africa accounted for only 0.7 per cent of Japan's overall FDI stock in 2009, marginally higher only than the Middle East (0.6 per cent) and Eastern Europe (0.5 per cent). The global economic downturn has exerted substantial pressure on Japan's OFDI flows. Whereas in 2008 Japan's FDI flows to Africa totalled $2.1 billion, they slumped to $158 million in 2009.

The Other Side of Japanese Investment in Africa

It is also a fact that Africa is underinvested in the Japanese economy. In 2009, Africa invested only $61 million in Japan, 0.5 per cent of the total of Japan's inward FDI flows for the year. In that year, Africa held 0.17 per cent ($342 million) of Japan's overall FDI stock. But despite these marginal investment figures, select Japanese companies do have a viable market presence in Africa. Japanese automotive companies are perhaps the most integrated in African markets. Firms such as Toyota, Nissan, Honda and Komatsu have established businesses on the continent, eager to tap into core markets north of South Africa. Moreover, Africa provides a huge market for Japanese used vehicles. In 2007, 18 per cent of the top fifty importers of Japanese used vehicles globally were African countries.

Beyond the automotive and construction sectors, Japanese electronics firms are equally competitive. Yet perhaps the sector most indicative of Africa's industrial revolution has been telecommunications. Japan's biggest telecommunications operator, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation (NTT), agreed in July 2010 to purchase South Africa's London-listed information technology group, Dimension Data, in an all-cash deal that valued the company at $3.2 billion. This acquisition provides a tangible indication of Japanese corporates in engaging in emerging markets to offset stagnant domestic demand. Dimension Data has a sizeable presence in Africa, South America and the Middle East. Analysts expect NTT's overseas sales to almost double following the purchase of Dimension Data.

Several large Japanese trading companies, such as Sumitomo and Sojitz, and construction firms such as Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Mitsui, and Hitachi Construction Machinery are adopting a soft approach to engagement with Africa, emphasizing social corporate responsibility intended to lead to indigenous solutions for African development. For example, Mitsubishi began supplying electricity through photovoltaic power generation to a village in Ethiopia free of charge in November 2009. The project is intended to augment the company's marketing efforts in the country, including automobile sales, by enhancing its corporate profile. Similarly, Mitsui had plans to begin supplying water for irrigation projects in Mozambique in 2010 through the use of solar power generation. Mitsui has already been involved in oilfield exploration projects in Mozambique. In Angola, Sojitz plans to complete, by 2011, the construction of a cement plant which will meet 25 per cent of Angola's domestic demand. Sojitz also hopes to construct a gas power generation plant in Nigeria. Sumitomo is set to launch work on improving roads, harbours and power plants in Africa as part of its launch of integrated production of nickel and cobalt.

During a visit to Angola organized by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) at the end of July 2010, Toyota confirmed plans to invest $1 billion in building a fertilizer and chemicals factory in Angola, in order to import natural gas for sale on the Japanese and European markets. In August 2010, Japan's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Osamu Fujimura, led a delegation of over fifty Japanese executives to Angola, Namibia and South Africa to deepen bilateral commercial ties, particularly in the form of Japanese FDI in selected markets. Much like Russia's official visit in July 2009 (to Egypt, Nigeria, Angola and Namibia), the Japanese group targeted resources (consistent with trade flows) and transport and power infrastructure (consistent with Japan's competitive advantage). In South Africa, Japan's largest and most sophisticated trade partner in Africa, the intention was to market civilian nuclear expertise and capabilities as well as promoting expertise in rail technology, including the introduction of high-speed Bullet Train.

Angola has been courted ambitiously by all BRICS economies as well as a host of advanced nations, primarily the US, since its integration into the global economy following the end of the civil war in 2002. Not to be left behind, Japan selected Angola as one of its priority countries in the recent visit, during which the Japanese government extended a $10 million grant for upgrading the Professional Civil Construction Training Centre of Viana. It was also agreed that Japan will begin granting credits at concessional rates to Angola in light of broader bilateral economic cooperation programmes in place.

Technical commissions from both countries will collaborate heavily in select priority projects for funding. The Angolan government requested financial and technological aid from the Japanese government in order to build a 20 km-long bridge between the provinces of Zaire and Cabinda for enhanced connectivity, which is part of a larger project named the Cabinda Link, which has an estimated cost of $2.55 billion. Japan is also providing funding for Angola to refurbish the ports of Lobito and Namibe, as well as water infrastructure and the textile industry in order to provide a more diversified economic base.

As Tokyo's economic policy reorients its strategic depth to incorporate a wider berth of emerging markets (increasingly the locales for global growth) new opportunities are likely to emerge on both sides. Unlike the approach of BRICS, Japan's contemporary position in Africa is a product of a more predictable line. Whereas the BRICS is building partnerships and networks on the continent, Japan is nurturing the existing mechanism. The key aspect of Japan's role in Africa has been, and largely remains, its support for African development through its liberal and extensive aid contributions to the continent. Increasingly, this assistance is taking on a regional perspective, with Japanese support for integration within the broad East African Community. This shows Japan's new developmental priorities in the current century.

Japanese firms, particularly in the automotive industry, have established important linkages in Africa. Increasingly, Japanese investors are looking towards African consumer markets apart from Japan's emphasis on emerging Asia-Pacific, the Middle East and Latin America as the roadmap for future expansion.

Concluding Observations

The three Asian giants, as illustrated above, have different approaches in their engagement with Africa. China does not interfere in the internal affairs of the African countries, nor does it shy away from assisting or making contacts with authoritarian governments. It has particularly involved itself in extensive infrastructure building and in having huge investment.[25] India, which possesses the tag of being the largest democracy in the world, has emerged as one of the dominant capacity builders in the region. India is viewed "more as an inspiration than a way to fill coffers”[26]. Japan on the other hand is viewed as the land of entrepreneurs and high-tech know-how that can be counted upon to advance and accelerate the industrial growth rate and economic pace across the African region.

While engaging with Africa, the means applied by the three countries have largely been the use of soft power. China considers its economic strength to be its major soft power tool; India is making use of its cultural, diasporic influence and technical know-how to assist its counterparts in Africa. Japan exerts its enormous influence in the African continent through its name brand, high-profile industrial and business houses and through its generous development assistance.

The ongoing "adventure" of the three Asian giants in Africa is being perceived as presumptuous by the Western countries, especially the United States of America and the European Union. Nonetheless, the European Union is still the largest commercial partner of Africa and it additionally "presumes to know better than local authorities how to solve Africa's dramatic economic problems"[27]. The US too is taking notice, and is making every attempt to creatively use its diplomatic, economic, cultural and military power and leverage to maintain its predominance in the area. However, in the long term, the balance of power in Africa may slowly tilt towards Asia.

Table 1

China's Top 10 Export Destinations in Africa and the Value of Exports

Country	Value of exports (in US$ million)
South Africa	5768.79
Egypt	2976.32
Nigeria	2855.67
Algeria	1951.58
Morocco	1569.61
Benin	1452.37
Sudan	1416.87
Angola	894.37
Ghana	802.94
Togo	704.04
Total Chinese exports to Africa	26704.9

Source: Thulani Guliwe, *Chinese Investments in Africa: A Labour Perspective, African Labour Research network, May 2009, p. 20,* [Online: web] URL: http://www.bwint.org/pdfs/ChinaAfricaReport2009.pdf

Table 2

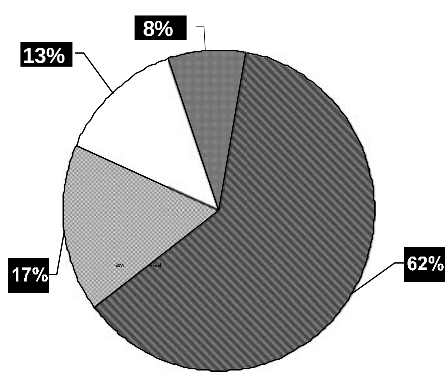
African Countries Exporting to China and the Value of Exports

Country	Value of exports (in US $ million)
Angola	10930.88
South Africa	4095.29
Congo	2784.61
Equatorial Guinea	2537.59
Sudan	1941.42
Libya	1694.29
Gabon	816.85
Mauritania	402.02
Democratic Republic of the Congo	368.46
Morocco	359.47
Total Chinese imports from Africa	28767.6

Source: Thulani Guliwe, *Chinese Investments in Africa: A Labour Perspective, African Labour Research network, May 2009, p. 20,* [Online: web] URL: http://www.bwint.org/pdfs/ChinaAfricaReport2009.pdf

Figure 1

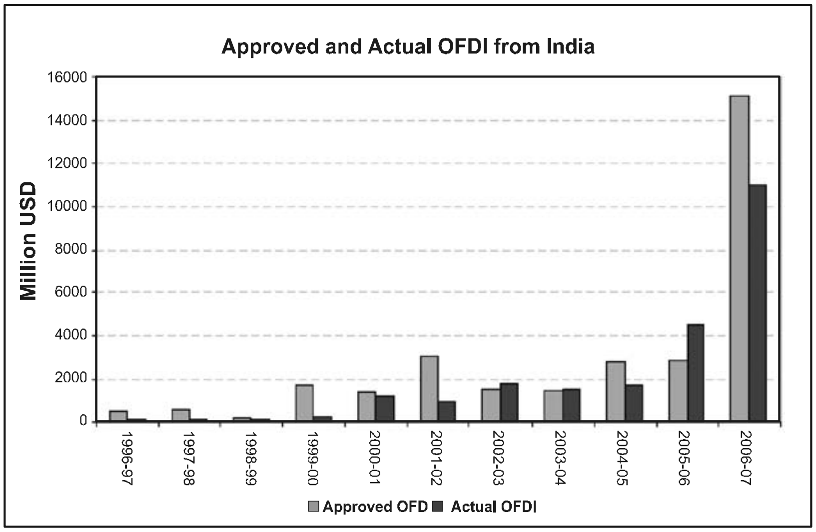
Africa's Exports to China



62% – Fuel
13% – Crude Materials (excl. fuel)
8% – Manufactured Goods
17% – Other

*Source***:** Same as Table 1, p. 21.

Figure 1



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Endnotes

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