



**THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES**



**CHANGING GLOBAL GEOGRAPHIES OF POWER AND DEVELOPMENT:  
CONTEMPORARY INDIAN – EAST AFRICA RELATIONS**

**BASIS project proposal**

**SSAS/BASAS  
and  
The British Institute in Eastern Africa**

**April 2007**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT SINCE THIS ORIGINAL APPLICATION, SOME DETAILS OF THE PROJECT  
HAVE CHANGED (ALTHOUGH THE UNDERLYING IDEAS AND GOALS REMAIN THE SAME).**

**EMMA MAWDSLEY, OCTOBER 2007**

## **Changing global geographies of power and development: contemporary Indian-East Africa relations**

### **Outline**

This proposal represents a joint bid by the Society for South Asian Studies and the British Institute in Eastern Africa. The focus is on the rapidly changing and increasingly significant economic, geopolitical and developmental relations between India and Africa, focussing on the case studies of Kenya and Tanzania. Through a combination of project workshops and coordinated research projects, the BASIS funding would support an important contribution to what is at present a relatively neglected issue. The larger context for the study is the emerging challenge from the big emerging economies – notably India, China and Brazil – to contemporary structures of economic and geopolitical power.

### **Background**

Perhaps somewhat belatedly, and notwithstanding earlier scholarship (e.g. Larkin 1971; Hutchinson 1975; Yu 1975; Brautigam 1998; Snow 1988, 1994; Taylor 1998; Payne and Veney 1998; Gillespie 2001), many western politicians, policy-makers, private sector interests, and academics have only rather recently woken up to the surge of investment, trade, aid and diplomatic interactions between China and different African countries. Even as recently as 2005, the *Commission for Africa Report* barely mentioned China, a surprising oversight then (Mephram and Lorge 2005; Wild 2006), unthinkable in 2007. This is being rapidly remedied, and in the last couple of years there has been an explosion of interest and analysis (e.g. Harris 2005; Kaplinsky 2005, 2006; Lyman 2005; Brookes and Shin 2006; Gaye 2006; Goldstein *et al* 2006; Humphrey and Messner 2006; IDS 2006; Taylor 2006; Tull 2006; Zoellick 2006; Mawdsley 2007). But rather overshadowed by all of this have been India's recent interactions with different African countries, despite the fact that they are significant, and show an upward trend (Beri 2003; IDS 2006; Broadman 2006; Goldstein *et al* 2006; Singh 2007). A number of analysts suggest that in the longer term, India may well achieve a more prosperous and stable economy than China (e.g. Hutton 2006), while in the shorter term, its democratic experiences and economic profile may result in a more productive relationship for much of Africa. Certainly it is clear that while there are very good reasons to develop a better understanding of Sino-African interactions, it is a mistake to do so at the expense of exploring Indian-African interactions (see Amoako 2000; African Union Commission 2006; Bava 2007; Jobelius 2007; Singh 2007). Western and African governments, foreign policy analysts, businesses, civil society organisations, and ordinary people - as consumers, workers and citizens - are having to accommodate to emerging shifts in global economic and diplomatic centres of gravity (Bourantonis and Magliveras 2002; Bradford and Linn 2004; Arrighi 2005a, 2005b; Langhammer 2005). India, as one of the two main

'Asian Drivers', is very much at the centre of these challenges and opportunities.

This project, which represents a joint initiative between the Society for South Asian Studies (SSAS) and the British Institute in Eastern Africa (BIEA), aims to contribute significantly to what is presently a rather limited knowledge base, by exploring recent developments and emerging trends in relations between India, Kenya and Tanzania. The historical context of colonial and postcolonial relations provide a critical basis within which the study is located, and provides an essential foundation to understanding the more recent flows and interactions which have followed India's increasingly confident emergence as a global political and economic actor (Abraham 2005). In particular, the historical and contemporary positioning, identities and roles of the Indian diasporas in Kenya and Tanzania, and their ties with India and their African home states, are obviously central to any analysis of these relationships.

The project will comprise three inter-related elements: (1) trade and investment; (2) geopolitics and diplomacy; and (3) development interactions. Needless to say, these elements of Indo-African relations are often closely intertwined - whether tacitly or explicitly dual purpose, although they may also be in tension with each other, or even contradictory. Jobelius (2007) reminds us that the various elements of India's economic and political foreign policy must be understood as closely connected. Unlike most OECD countries, which make some normative claim (if often unsuccessfully) to semi-autonomous arenas of, for example, development aid, or trade relations, for India they are openly coordinated. A critical feature of this project is the case study approach, which allows these connections to be discerned in a manner that may be more difficult for issue-based approaches.

### *1. Trade and investment*

This section can be structured around three interconnected points. First, trade between India and many Africa countries is growing rapidly, as is foreign direct investment (although dominantly one-way from India). Economic interactions are, of course, by no means new, but over the 1990s and new millennium they have accelerated sharply, and as we shall see, they are changing 'shape'. Thus, to cite a few figures - India's bilateral trade with Africa overall rose from \$967 million in 1990-91 to \$9.14 billion in 2004-5 (Singh 2005). In 2004-5, Indian exports to Africa were worth \$5.4 billion, and constituted 6.8% of India's total exports. They include textiles and apparel, manufactured goods, machinery and equipment, and processed foods and beverages. African exports to India have also been growing, although more slowly. However, while Indian exports tend to be higher value commodities, Africa's exports to India remain dominated by extractive goods, such as oil, ores, precious stones, cotton, coffee, cocoa, raw hides and timber (Jenkins and Edwards 2006; Broadman 2007).

Second, India's African relations are geographically and sectorally very uneven. This is partly due to historical alliances and flows (including indentured labourers during the colonial period, English language connections, and Commonwealth ties); and partly because of the unevenness in trade and investment interests noted above. Thus, at present, West Africa – traditionally not a close strategic or economic regional partner for India – is being particularly targeted by the private sector and Indian government primarily because of its energy reserves (Singh 2007). Non-oil exports from Africa to India are strongly dominated by South Africa. However, there is recent evidence of a trend towards greater geographical and sectoral diversification, with trade and investment moving into clothing, food processing, retail, fisheries, real estate, telecommunications, tourism, and financial and business services, amongst other sectors. The 'tag' that has caught on is the capacity of Indian firms to provide 'Triple A technology', that is, appropriate, affordable and adaptable – all characteristics that distinguish India from the West (think, for example, of anti-retrovirals and ICTs).

The third point concerns the substance of the relationships. Here, we see a trend away from more straightforward imports-exports, to a more embedded set of interactions – government support, joint ventures, official lines of credit, and export guarantees (Federation of Indian Commerce and Industry 2005). These relationships must be explored not just with regard to bilateral interactions between governments and transnational business communities, but also in terms of regional players, such as NEPAD, the UN's Economic Commission for Africa, and the African Development Bank. Indian and African governments, banks and private sector interests, are coming together to discuss and facilitate deepening Indian-African partnerships and putting them on a more strategic footing. For example, in 2005 the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, together with the Confederation of Indian Industry and EXIM bank organised an Indian-African Conclave which was attended by 160 delegates from 32 African countries, and at which some 70 projects estimated at \$5 billion were discussed. The 2007 Conclave discussed business worth up to \$17 billion. Kenya and Tanzania are amongst the more important trade and investment partners, and have been specifically targeted within various programmes (such cooperation for the development of Small Scale Industries), and EXIM's Focus Africa programme, launched in 2002-3 (see above).

Teasing out the facts and implications of deepening trade and investment relations between different parts of Africa and India confronts many challenges. It is critical to note the specificity of different sectors (e.g. manufacturing, agriculture, mining), interests (e.g. importers/exporters, elites and ordinary consumers, workers in different sectors), and of course countries (the problems and opportunities for India and Sudan or Nigeria are rather different from those for, say, India and Kenya). A number of economists have sought to analyse these relationships and their possible outcomes, although mostly at a meta-African scale (IDS 2006; Kaplinsky and Morris 2006; Broadman 2007). The focus on Kenya and Tanzania will allow a

more detailed and specific analysis, while drawing on the insights provided by these broader accounts. For many commentators, the critical issue is the extent to which Indian investment and Indian-African trade supports or undermines sustainable and equitable economic growth – a question that is multi-dimensional, complex and value-laden. Just a few of the ‘components’ of such a question include the impacts of rising commodity prices; technology transfer and the ability of African countries and entrepreneurs to break out of the extractive sector; and the effects of growing economic relations on competitiveness, structural contexts (tariff barriers, legal requirements etc), and on governance and corruption.

Research questions:

- 1) What are the current trade and investment relations between India-Kenya and India-Tanzania; how have they changed historically, and what future patterns and trends are emerging?
- 2) What problems and opportunities are presented by these emerging relations to different sectors (e.g. manufacturing, agriculture), and to different groups (e.g. consumers, producers)?
- 3) To what extent are these deepening ties being shaped by international trade and investment norms, with regard to governance, corruption, corporate social responsibility and environmental impacts?

## *2. Geopolitics and diplomacy*

Ever since Independence in 1947 India has supported nationalist struggles, and positioned itself as a leader of the formerly colonised nations, although not without differences and difficulties (Dubey 1990; Ramamurthi 1997; Rajan 1997; Beri 2003). It played a central role in the Non-Aligned Movement, and has consistently articulated a foreign policy principle of South-South solidarity and self-determination (Herring and Bharucha 1998). While India has always been a relatively significant ‘developing country’ player in international affairs, in recent years the end of the Cold War, India’s nuclear tests in 1998, and its post-1991 economic growth have all contributed to a growing confidence and assertiveness on the world stage (Ganguly 2003). At present, India is one of the key G77 nations mounting a number of challenges to the existing distribution of power within the institutions of ‘global’ governance - including the United Nations (notably the Security Council), the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund. The structures and processes of representation, decision-making and policy approaches are all being held up to scrutiny and found wanting by India and other low and middle income countries.

India’s new geopolitical assertiveness opens up a number of possibilities and problems in bilateral, regional and multilateral relations. Chief among these is the extent to which India’s interests and agendas do in fact coincide with those of other G77 countries – from the other big regional powers such as China, to smaller nations such as Kenya and Tanzania. Thus, relaxing tariff barriers in Europe and the United States has tended to favour India and China at the expense of the formerly (slightly) favoured/protected African

manufacturers. Despite assertions of solidarity and shared interests, we need to explore areas of tension as well as areas of mutual benefit in terms of shaping global governance.

Specifically in relation to Africa, China is, for the most part, outdoing India in terms of establishing closer diplomatic relations. The numerous high level tours by key Chinese leaders to Africa; the creation of the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation in 2000 (the 2006 meeting in Beijing attracted over 40 African heads of state); and the 2006 Africa White Paper all point to China's strategic efforts to support trade, investment and partnerships on the continent. However, India is not entirely being left behind, and the last few years have witnessed a concerted effort by different government departments, agencies, banks and business organisations to support a more strategic 'Africa policy'. The following extract from an article by Rao Inderjit Singh, then Minister of State for External Affairs, captures the shift from ideological rationales which, if not entirely disavowed, are now largely eclipsed by economic and geopolitical priorities:

"There is a new mood of buoyancy and optimism as modern India seeks to collaborate with a resurgent Africa to create a new world order ... This is not to discount the importance of a rich and shared past of high principles and idealism when the India-Africa solidarity was forged and cemented by a belief in the ideals of the non-aligned movement ... [but now the relationship requires] a refocusing of energies and efforts to meet emerging opportunities. The result is a series of Indian initiatives to enhance economic and political cooperation with Africa." (Singh 2005)

A noteworthy characteristic of much of this speech, as indeed similar pronouncements from both China and India, is that Africa is located as a place of opportunity and of solidarity – something that stands in stark contrast to much western policy discourse (Vohra and Mathews 1997; Sheth 2000; Indian Ministry of External Affairs 2005). Beri (2003) argues that India's post-Cold War Africa policy is composed of five key areas: promoting economic cooperation; engaging people of Indian origin (PIOs); preventing and combating terrorism; preserving peace (see Bullion 2001); and assisting African defence forces.

Research questions:

- 1) What are the key areas of current diplomatic debate, solidarity and tensions between India, Kenya and Tanzania – bilateral, regional and global?
- 2) How are these expressed – publicly to domestic audiences, and in policy circles in multilateral fora (such as the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit; the WTO meeting at Cancun; or the Board meetings of the International Monetary Fund)?

- 3) How are these interactions being institutionalised? To what extent is India attempting to put its relations with Kenya and Tanzania, and with Africa more broadly, on a more strategic footing?
- 4) To what extent do these findings point to a coherent challenge to the current inequalities in the institutions of global governance; and to what extent is potential coherence under-mined by competing national interests?
- 5) How do these diplomatic and strategic relations inform theoretical understandings of geopolitical continuities and changes?

### *3. Development interactions*

India has had a small overseas aid programme since 1964, the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC), run by the Economic Division of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). Together with the Special Commonwealth African Assistance Programme (SCAAP) it covers 156 countries, and has disbursed an estimated \$2 billion since its inception. The MEA also runs the Indian Council of Cultural Relations, which provides assistance and programs to improve cultural ties, for instance through student and teacher exchange programs. More recently, the previous Bharatiya Janata Party-led Government of India implemented a number of economic and political policies aimed at bolstering India's regional and global status and strength, as well as the party's domestic image. Amongst other things, it decided that it could dispense with the contributions of smaller bilateral donors, and establish its own overseas development aid ties under the 'India Development Initiative' (DN 2003; Price 2004). For some commentators this was in part a response to Scandinavian and Dutch criticism of the BJP's record on religious (or 'communal') conflict; while others emphasise India's desire to shake off its image as a poor, recipient nation as it jostled for a seat on an expanded UN Security Council. Others note the material and strategic benefits from the 'development' relationship, and criticise the fact that India has chosen to 'tie' its aid so heavily (DN 2003; Jobelius 2007).

India has provided food aid, written off debt (e.g. to Mozambique), donated mosquito nets, contributed to peace-keeping missions, and opened Lines of Credit for dozens of projects across Africa (e.g. \$30 million for rural electrification Ghana, and \$15 million for potable water projects in Equatorial Guinea). While data on India's overseas development principles, policies and practices is relatively scarce (Singh 2007), what is presently entirely missing from these analyses are African perspectives on India's developmental discourses and practices (something also true of China – see Manji and Marks 2007). This element of the project will therefore explore the ways in which India is positioning itself as an agent of development in the two East African countries, and how this is being perceived and negotiated by different parts of government; by domestic development institutions (including civil society organisations); as well as by western donor institutions (see Manning 2006; Jobelius 2007). It is important to note, for example, that India denies the

language of donor and recipient, and instead talks of partnership, equality, mutual benefit and trust.

Research questions:

- 1) What are India's present development/donor principles, institutions and flows to different African countries; and what are their stated intentions/interests?
- 2) What is India's developmental presence (i.e. institution/s, policies and practices of donor activity) in Kenya and Tanzania?
- 3) How do different Kenyan and Tanzanian actors (central and local government; development institutes; civil society organisations; grassroots organisations) view, and how are they responding to, Indian development policies and practices?
- 4) How do other bilateral and multilateral donors in Kenya and Tanzania view, and how are they responding to Indian development policies and practices?
- 5) In the light of Delhi's membership of multilateral institutions like the Paris Club and its adoption of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, can India's developmental interactions be harnessed towards better governance practices and achieving the international benchmark on halving poverty by 2015 in African states?

## **Rationale**

The SSAS-BIEA bid offers a unique opportunity to draw together an interdisciplinary and inter-regional set of scholars from Africa, India and the UK to work on an issue of growing importance on which there is presently very little academic or policy analysis. The research will have relevance to current policy debates within the UK, Africa and India, and a number of inter-related theoretical debates, including:

- Realist, liberal and constructivist international political relations models of challenge and resistance to the rising Asian powers and contemporary South-South relations.
- Competing political economy models of Africa's positioning in the world economy, and the extent to which various countries are witnessing structural change or not in response to growing South-South interactions.
- Debates over alternative 'models' and 'discourses' of economic and political development, including liberal 'versus' more radical postcolonial models of African voices (governmental and civil society), and the capacity to set developmental and national agendas (Alden 2005; Gaye 2006).

## **Research team**

The project will bring together a range of British, Indian, Kenyan and Tanzanian researchers, as well as forge linkages with governments, civil

society organisations and the private sector. These networks would form the basis of a more substantial project planned for the future, which would expand its geographical scope and analytical depth. At present, the contributors to the application are:

- Dr Emma Mawdsley: Department of Geography, Cambridge University, UK.  
Council Member of the Society for South Asian Studies
- Ms Sanusha Naidu: Research Fellow, Centre for Chinese Studies, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa
- Dr Gina Porter, Department of Anthropology, Durham University, UK
- Mrs Sarojini Thakur, IAS; presently with The Commonwealth Secretariat, as of late 2007, returning to senior duties with the Indian Administrative Service, India
- Dr Elizabeth Watson: Department of Geography, Cambridge University, UK.  
Council Member of the British Institute in Eastern Africa
- Dr Justin Willis: Director, British Institute in Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

Other participants are likely to include the following (discussions currently in progress):

- Dr Ishmail Mahiri, Department of Geography, Kenyatta University, Kenya
- Ms Linet Misati, Chronic Poverty Research Centre, University of Nairobi Institute of Development Studies, Kenya
- Mary O'Neill, Concern Country Director, Kenya.

## **Methodology**

The project will call upon a wide range of methodological approaches appropriate to the different elements of this analysis, as each component (trade/investment; geopolitics/diplomacy; development) will demand specific teams, approaches and data sources..

## **Timetable**

The project will run from December 2007-June 2009 (18 months). Exact timetables in the three sites will depend on individual schedules. Writing up of research outputs (see below) and other research dissemination will extend beyond this final deadline, but will be timetabled to be completed by August 2009.

## **Outputs**

Given the relative paucity of information currently available, the research proposed in this application would lead to a number of important research and other outputs. In the longer term, it is hoped that the project would provide a unique platform for further and more detailed research and analysis within and between India, Kenya, Tanzania and the UK.

Academic: **Peer-reviewed papers** in international journals (international relations, politics, economics and geography), and regionally-based journals, such as India's *Economic and Political Weekly*. An **edited book** is also likely and desirable – there is a plethora of books emerging on China and Africa, and this would be a timely, fieldwork-based contribution to the very small number that have Indo-African relations as their topic. Initial discussions with Routledge suggest that this would have a market.

Policy: A **policy-oriented summary** will be written up and circulated to High Commissions, Kenyan and Tanzanian Governments; and international development agencies present in each country. The issues addressed by this project are of keen interest to a variety of government departments and agencies in each country, and we intend this work to have genuine applied value.

Civil Society: Outlets will include **articles** for national civil society umbrella organisations and publications (e.g. Pambauka). Civil society organisations, including business associations, development NGOs and advocacy networks have a strong interest on the possibilities and problems of the emerging Asian drivers. Accessible short articles can be written up in the main country languages and disseminated widely.

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