

BOOK REVIEW

Nagalaxmi M. Raman and Neha Sinha, eds. *Synergising India-Africa Relations: Contemporary Realities and Emerging Prospects*. New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2024. 276 pp. ₹995.00 (\$11.97). Cloth. ISBN: 978-8195189434.

It is widely accepted that the emergence of Homo sapiens is inextricably associated with the African continent, and subsequent migrations of humans have resulted in the spread of populations across diverse regions. India, in particular, has a rich and lasting history of engagements with the African continent, involving multiple areas such as trade, cultural exchanges, and demographic interconnections. The enduring connection between the two regions remains of considerable strategic significance, given the abundant natural resources in the Indian Ocean region. These resources, which encompass essential commodities such as food and minerals, constitute a potential source of wealth for both sides involved.

Synergising India-Africa Relations: Contemporary Realities and Emerging Prospects, edited by Nagalaxmi M. Raman and Neha Sinha, explores the current complexities of this multifaceted association, demonstrating the enduring bonds between India and Africa as well as the evolving opportunities for collaboration. It also discusses the historical and contemporary links between Africa and India, which have evolved over a long time. Africa and India are mutually dependent in the context of the developing and shifting global order, beyond their mere role as partners. The volume is especially significant due to the increase in diplomatic relations between India and Africa in numerous areas. The book's publication coincides with a period when the global powers are actively seeking deeper relations with Africa, reinforcing its present-day significance.

The inclusion of India's determined attempts to enhance its relations with Africa coordinates naturally with the present global circumstances. The book not only clearly documents the shifting dynamics of this strategic partnership but also makes a major intellectual contribution to the ongoing academic discussion regarding global geopolitical shifts, especially with regard to Africa's vital position in the global context. The chapters in the book cover a broad range of topics, including the India-Africa development partnership; diaspora engagements; the food crisis; global engagement and diplomacy between India and Africa; geographical and geopolitical shifts; cooperation in the health, nuclear, horticultural, security, and maritime sectors; counterterrorism; the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA); issues with a regional focus; and bilateral and multilateral relations between African countries and India.

The book offers an in-depth look at the current and evolving India-Africa relationship, covering historical ties, economic partnerships, cultural exchanges,

and complex geopolitical issues. It highlights their shared past in overcoming colonialism and promoting cultural connections. Many of the diverse chapters emphasize economic interactions, focusing on trade, investment, and development aid. One such example is the African Continental Free Trade Area, a paradigm-shifting initiative that has demonstrated its capacity for reducing poverty and encouraging economic integration. The chapters also explore the vital role of the Indian diaspora in nurturing economic, diplomatic, and personal links.

The volume also explores the role that India plays in the Indo-Pacific, its attempts to counter China's influence, and the way it contributes to global problems from a geopolitical perspective. A frequent topic of discussion is the significance of the Indian diaspora as a diplomatic tool and cultural asset, noting how important it is in fostering stronger relations. The chapters highlight a diplomatic approach that focuses on the establishment of socioeconomic alliances, the execution of humanitarian initiatives, and the use of cultural diplomacy.

Despite the volume's broad coverage of topics and specific research, certain sections have a tendency to elevate the role of India or just touch briefly on the challenges, thereby demanding a more perceptive assessment. The editors make a remarkable effort to provide a balanced and positive outlook on the complex dynamics between India and Africa. However, they may fall short in offering an in-depth review, as the individual contributions appear to accentuate only the positive aspects of India-Africa relations. The book effectively explores the contemporary relationship between India and Africa, providing various significant perspectives. However, the interconnection of the two countries regarding climate change, which is an urgent global issue, demands a careful look, along with a focus on the capacity of digital connectivity and innovation to facilitate socio-economic advancement and extend the scope of security cooperation beyond maritime security.

The book does an excellent job of exploring the significant contributions made by the Indian diaspora in Africa. However, this discussion could be enhanced by incorporating the African diaspora residing in India. India is home to a substantial number of Afro-Indians residing in the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Karnataka. Diasporic connections frequently serve as a mutual approach, promoting relationships between the two regions and incorporating all aspects of people-to-people interactions and cross-cultural dynamics between these two regions.

This book joins the valued ranks of a series spanning the last decade, focusing on India-Africa relations and featuring contributions from eminent scholars. The main advantage of the book is the sizable scope of its subject matter, which makes it a significant resource for students studying the relationship between India and Africa, as well as for policymakers and scholars in need of a comprehensive review.

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[doi:10.1017/asr.2024.6](https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2024.6)