



India-South Africa Relations: Post Mandela Era

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ABSTRACT

After the tenure of Nelson Mandela as President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki assumed charge in 1999. Mbeki has performed key role in foreign policy of the country during the President ship of Mandela. Both of them focused on substantial links of friendship between India and South Africa. So far as new leadership was concerned, high hopes were predicted for continuing the already existing relations between India and South Africa, ranging from economic concern to strategic partnership. One of major challenges faced by Mbeki was comparison with the image that was created on global canvas by Nelson Mandela. Mbeki was considered as main driving force in the foreign policy of South Africa. The new Indian government is devoted to continue the friendly relations with South Africa. The paper attempts to highlight the relationship between India and South Africa after Mandela. It also underscores different fields for the united future of two countries.

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Introduction

The thumping victory of Thabo Mbeki in 1999 elections brought high hopes for India and South Africa. The series of questions were raised regarding the leadership of Mbeki. It was thought whether he would be able to continue the former President's landmark policies and politics or not (landesberg &



Nieuwkerk, 1995). The former President has largely influenced the national and international view of South Africa.

One of major challenges faced by Mbeki was comparison with the image that has been created on big canvas by Nelson Mandela. He has taken many successful landmark steps for the cordial relations between India and South Africa. There was difference in the priorities of two leaders. The former leader put emphasis on unification and justice. It was the time of change at all levels from apartheid to post apartheid time. However, the emphasis of Mbeki government went step further with focus on solving the socio-economic problems. Therefore, key mission of Mbeki government was to address the imbalances at the gross root level (<https://time.com/archive/6951773/mbeki-africas-challenges/>, 2000).

India and South Africa: Concerns and priorities

While going through the foreign policy priorities of Mbeki government, one will realise the fact that as Deputy President since 1994, Mbeki was already ruling South Africa as de facto President during presidency of Nelson Mandela. Mbeki was considered as main driving force in the foreign policy of South Africa. Since his Deputy Presidential era, South Africa was following the policies of Mbeki. When Mbeki formally became President of South Africa, he declared that the basic goal of foreign policy of South Africa is to maintain the conditions required for “African Renaissance” through the “establishment of genuine and stable democracies in Africa from which systems of governance will flourish”. The term African Renaissance was nothing but creation of wealth and improvement of standards of life of all citizens (Adetunji, 2016).

The mission statement of foreign ministry was to enhance the country’s capability to ensure its sovereignty along with promotion of its policies, aimed at expanding African Renaissance. The framework of South Africa acting as bridge between North and South is still in existence. The agenda of foreign policy has been defined better than before. However, except renewed emphasis on Africa, the directions of foreign policy of present resembles with the former government (Beri, 2001).

During 12th NAM Summit in 1998 held in Durban, the then Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee said that India will fully cooperate with South Africa to make the agenda of NAM more active. He further said that the focused strategy should be implemented to articulate the concerns of developing countries to address forthcoming challenges of 21st century. Both India and South Africa



showed interest at uneven impact of globalisation on emerging economies and agreed to collaborate their efforts for the development of South-South Cooperation (archivepmo.nic.in, 1998).

The trade driven policy of South Africa under the leadership of Mbeki seemed increasingly pressing for South-South solidarity. The critics of Mbeki scolded at it as “rhetoric” and suggested more emphasis on the improvement of relations with North. It was argued that as key trade partners of South Africa located in North, so it would be beneficial for the country to work on such bonds. However, the views of Mbeki claimed difference;

“Those relations between the North of course continue to be very important and they will continue to be an area on which we must work. But the continued North-South interaction should not I believe, be then taken as discouraging and minimising or making irrelevant, South-South Cooperation among ourselves. Because indeed, I think that is where we are looking for growth. I think this interaction among ourselves in the context of South would probably offer greater possibilities” (Bongmba, 2004).

Thabo Mbeki seemed dedicated towards the formation of Southern Group of seven countries. It has witnessed the support of countries like, India, Brazil, Egypt and Nigeria in this regard. Furthermore, India can be seen as partner by South Africa in forwarding the issues and concerns of emerging countries particularly against Northern Trade Protectionism. The Indian leader’s right from Jawahar Lal Nehru played an important role in considering India as an important country in the international system. Similarly, Thabo Mbeki including his predecessor secured the equal status for South Africa. With the active role of India and South Africa in different international forums like, India, Brazil, South Africa (IBSA) and Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) blocs, it could be said that both countries gained appreciation and honour at the global level (Qobo, 2010).

Future of India and South Africa

The arrival of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister of India has stimulated a new hope for the position of India in the international politics. The new Indian government seems devoted to continue the friendly relations with South Africa. India has pursued an active introduction with global community for addressing basic concerns of economic transformation. One of new start-ups by contemporary Indian government for empowering the bonds with African countries encompasses different partnership programs like, India-Africa Forum Summits (Sidiropoulos, 2016).



It would not be an exaggeration to highlight that there exist a valuable relations between India and South Africa. Both countries would get benefit of available resources towards escalating the cooperation. India has been looked with interest by South Africa. The two countries witnessed series of exchange visits of state leaders and other ministers in the positive move. Such visits always remain focused on the growth and development of both countries. As both emerging countries aimed to strengthen their strategic partnership, few fields may present series of opportunities for their growth. It includes:

- **Information Technology:** The experts of information technology of India have potential to support South Africa in sectors of banking, healthcare and public infrastructure. Cooperation in fintech and cyber security is floating to drive economic inclusion and advancement.
- **Food and Beverages:** the food industry of India is in better condition to serve the expanding market of South Africa. It could offer processed foods, dairy and poultry products to the growing population of South Africa.
- **Green Infrastructure:** The efforts in collaboration could address the common goals and objectives for the prosperity of two countries. As global leader in renewable energy, India could play crucial role in making green infrastructure possible for South Africa (Sharma & Cyrill, 2024).
- **Pharmaceuticals:** The pharmaceutical industry of India would be benefited from health care reforms and introduction of National Health Insurance by South Africa that would offer affordable medicines along with health care solutions.
- **Automotive Industry:** In order to empower trade links between two countries, the manufacturing of cost effective vehicle by India will continue to fulfil the growing demands of automotive market of South Africa (Kisten & Shumba, 2018).

Conclusion:

The relationship between India-South Africa illustrate strategic cord constructed on historical solidarity and shared objectives. However, international economic framework demands planned mitigation to achieve the sustainable goals. The enhancements in the form of connectivity, trade opportunities with improved diplomatic engagement will remain significant. Different projects and trade agreement conciliations could play critical role in reducing trade barriers and developed market access that could foster greater trade volumes and investment between two countries.

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