

# CSIR Newsletter

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## Opinion

### India and the AU in the G-20 for an Inclusive World

Sandipani Dash\*

The imperative for an inclusive world becomes evident in a profound reflection of African origin historian Paul Zeleza, who says, 'Universalization of the West and Provincialization of the Rest.' His lecture on "African Studies in the Postcolony" in 2007 has precisely conveyed how perceived reality suffers from the dominant Western stereotype. The disruptive forces, more prominently proselytization, consumerism, and mechanisation, have shaped imperial dominance, creating global binary spaces of prosperity and deprivation, as visible in the Global North-South and East-West fault lines. The ideational and material exchanges characterise ancient civilisational accomplishments. The subsequent time span ranging from the mediaeval age to the contemporary period has witnessed the expansive growth of subjugating tendencies, which have been manifested in imperialism, colonialism, settler-colonialism, and racism.

The quest to reverse this dehumanisation process has created various global groupings, offering moral critique and an empowerment vision. For effective pursuit of this rehumanizing mission, the G20 Forum represents the active energy of the global community, comprising emergent and emerged powers. India and Africa share a cultural space that provides a subtle yet sustaining milieu for the G20. The cultural meeting point between two regions is their nature worship tradition, which has spontaneously formed their ideational and material exchanges, bringing them ancient civilizational accomplishments. While culture is one's thought and action, civilisation is his or her achievements. The AU's aspiration for a collective self-reliant Africa and the Indian leadership's identification of *Vikashit Aur Adhyatmik* (developed and spiritual) Bharat define the cultural and civilizational milestones of the G20 Forum. India and the AU have made the G20 more representative. Moreover, they have the capacity to make it the people's grouping rather than a platform of mere markets and governments.

As the AU has chosen education as its theme for 2024, India can collaborate with Africa on research and teaching. On the conceptual front, concerned institutions from both sides can co-design and co-produce a fresh understanding of some fundamental issues: First, the right to self-determination and plebiscite (Arbitrary use of this inter-war period Wilsonian principle, originally meant for restraining the colonising process, has paradoxically created and sustained conflict theatres in post-independence India and Africa.) Second, idea of livelihood (production of the masses by the masses for the masses, rather than mass production, can ensure livelihood to all.); third, the ancient trade and knowledge linkages between two regions (early age spontaneous inter-flow of ideas and necessity have been ruptured by imperial exchange of profit and exploitation). Fourth, alternative multi-disciplinary pedagogy (teaching institutions in India and Africa have a common priority in having decolonised, creative, ethical, locally relevant, and globally sensitive syllabi for education and skill dissemination purposes).

When it comes to such collaboration in immediate and concrete spheres, India and Africa can encourage their research institutions to enhance collaborative research on renewable energy, including solar, wind, and water. Nature has blessed the two regions with these resources in abundance. Their creative and sustainable harnessing can energise the development endeavours of India and Africa and can help others as well. Significantly, direct media linkages between

India and Africa can reduce the existing information-knowledge gap and enhance the scope for their mutual cooperation on ideational and material lines. This will help India and the AU make the G20 a people's grouping.

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## **Bharat-Africa Civilisational Linkages under G-21 and BRICS**

Pragya Singh\*

The unprecedented success of the 18th G20 summit is indeed a strong statement for reformed multilateralism and, moreover, a watershed moment for Indian diplomacy. The 18th G20 under the Indian Presidency was essentially a tribute to the relationship between Bharat and Africa. The inclusion of the AU in the G20 is undoubtedly one of the most significant accomplishments in the history of the G20 among everything that has been accomplished. AU's addition to the G20 aligns clearly with one planet, one family, and one future, also known as Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which is a basic principle of Bharat. Similarly, BRICS has been actively pursuing a robust agenda of sector-wide collaboration. It should be appreciated that BRICS has evolved into a forum for talking about and debating problems that are important to the whole Global South, such as the need for development and multilateral system reform.

Over two millennia have passed since the first contact between the two civilisations occurred. Our ties have become stronger in recent years as a result of our shared commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and pluralism. The two regions have been collaborating in a variety of fields, including trade and investment, defence, culture, and people-to-people contacts. The collaboration between Bharat and Africa is exemplified by its equitable, consultative, and cooperative nature under G-21 and BRICS. Some of the adages that are frequently used to celebrate and define the past, present, and future of the partnership between Bharat and the African continent include cultural and historical ties, political and emotional anti-colonial solidarity, diasporic goodwill, and an ingrained sense of true "South-South" collaboration. According to the current Indian dispensation, "Bharat and Africa under G-21 and BRICS will act as a catalytic agent for the new global order" and "help shape policies that shape the future of humanity" while "reflecting the voice and concerns of the Global South."

Most crucially, both Bharat and Africa have emphasised the significance of a development- and human-centric agenda by supporting policies that make economic growth and poverty eradication the top priorities of emerging nations. As the "voice of the global south, both have reaffirmed that equitable benefit distribution should go hand in hand with global economic stability, emphasising social justice. Bharat and Africa's attitudes have placed a special emphasis on sustainable development. Both are vocal supporters of incorporating environmental concerns and social equity into G-20 and BRICS discussions. They have worked to advance the idea of a just transition to cleaner energy sources and emphasise the importance of climate finance for developing countries in their fight against climate change. Both have promoted inclusivity and a more balanced economic order as part of their commitment to representing the interests of the Global South by calling for fair trade and investment practices, addressing trade barriers and protectionism that impede the economic development of Global

South nations, better financial inclusion, healthcare, education, and bridging the digital divide. They have sought to utilise its presidency to open the way for a new, more open, and inclusive global order rather than seeing it as an image-building exercise.

Finally, both Bharat and African philosophical traditions emphasise the notion of unity or oneness in the cosmos. The universe is interrelated and harmonious, despite its diversity. The idea of interconnectedness is now universally accepted. The concept of global commons highlights the interconnectedness of natural systems and the relationship between nature and humans. Because it is a concept that brings people together rather than dividing them, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* and *Ubuntu* can be taken as the basis for the continuing conversation about international collaboration for tackling global challenges. It might be the cornerstone of the new multilateralism that is sorely required. In order to build a more peaceful and sustainable global society, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* and *Ubuntu* with their historical origins, philosophical foundations and contemporary relevance can inspire us to address current global issues. It is with this intention that Bharat and Africa seek to collaborate under the G-21 and BRICS to deepen, broaden, and intensify cooperation within the grouping and among the individual countries for more sustainable, equitable, and mutually beneficial development.

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## **India's Maritime Consciousness: Influence of Maritime Identity on National Character**

Dr. Raghvendra Kumar\*

*“Shano Varuna” (Be auspicious unto us, O Varuna)—Rig Veda*

India's maritime identity serves as a fundamental catalyst in shaping the nation's core values, deeply rooted in its rich cultural heritage and historical legacy. As a civilizational power, India's connection to maritime identity traces back to ancient times, with a profound oceanic heritage and legacy. This heritage is evident in the maritime tradition deeply ingrained within India's coastal communities, profoundly influencing their customs and practices. From ancient hymns venerating *Varuna*, the Lord of the Oceans, to the invocation of blessings from *Aditi* for safe sea voyages, India's spiritual connection to the seas dates back millennia, solidifying the maritime consciousness in the lives of its people. India maintains strong cultural connections with the sea, seamlessly integrating it into daily life, cuisine, and culture. The Indian Ocean monsoon's influence on lifestyle further underscores the indelible impact of maritime factors on India's national character.

Within Indian tradition, the ocean holds symbolic importance as the primordial source of the universe's creation, emphasising the sacred relationship between India and the seas. Additionally, sophisticated shipbuilding techniques outlined in ancient texts like the *Yuktiukalpataru* highlight India's maritime expertise and innovation in antiquity. Throughout history, the Indian coastline has been a bustling centre of peaceful maritime endeavours, primarily driven by trade. References in ancient Indian texts, Buddhist Jatakas, and folklore consistently highlight the pivotal role of oceanic activity in the prosperity of ancient civilisations such as the Indus Valley Civilisation, with sites like Mohenjo-Daro, Lothal, and

Harappa serving as testaments to this legacy. These interactions extended to various regions, including Africa, Arabia, Mesopotamia, and the Mediterranean, showcasing the enduring significance of India's maritime heritage on a global scale.

India's maritime heritage serves as a cornerstone in shaping its national character and historical trajectory. Etymologically, the origin of the word 'navigation' from the Sanskrit term '*Navagati*' underscores the deep-rooted connection between Indian culture and maritime activities. From the first migrations to Southeast Asia in the 1st century AD, evidenced by the discovery of a *Ganesha* statue in Java, Indonesia, to the flourishing of cultural and religious expressions fostered by Buddhist and Hindu philosophers, India's maritime identity has left an indelible mark on the region. Rooted in its longstanding maritime connections, this expansion represents a significant historical legacy.

Moving forward, India's efforts to rejuvenate its maritime consciousness are crucial for instilling a profound sense of maritime identity that transcends geographical boundaries and connects lives across the vast Indian Ocean region. Leveraging its unique geostrategic and cultural position, India has the opportunity to reaffirm its stature as a maritime power. Initiatives such as the "SAGARMALA" project and the "MAUSAM" initiative are indicative of renewed efforts to revive interest in India's maritime prowess. Integrating oceanic awareness into national development strategies will help harness India's maritime potential while steering towards a prosperous future rooted in its maritime prowess. Thus, as the nation strides into the twenty-first century, a comprehensive and targeted approach across various dimensions of the maritime domain is indispensable for reigniting and sustaining India's maritime consciousness, thereby bolstering national strength through a resilient maritime identity.

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## **News Brief**

### **India and the World**

#### **What India-UAE achieved in community and culture is model for the world: PM Modi**

Emphasising the relationship between India and the UAE in terms of talent and innovation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that what the two nation's achievements in terms of culture and community serve as an example for the rest of the world. He further said that the two countries share age-old ties and wish to strengthen them further

Addressing the 'Ahlan Modi' event at Abu Dhabi, PM Modi said, "Our relationship is that of talent, innovation and culture. In the past, we have re-energised our relations, in every direction. The two countries have walked together and have gone ahead together. Today, the UAE is India's third largest trade partner. Today, the UAE is the seventh largest investor. Both countries are cooperating a lot in Ease of Living and Ease of Doing Business."

Source: What India-UAE achieved in community and culture is model for the world: PM Modi, ANI, February 14, 2024, <https://www.awazthevoice.in/india-news/what-india-uae-achieved-in-community-and-culture-is-model-for-the-world-pm-modi-27100.html>

## **China, Maldives sign new military agreement amid strained relations with India**

According to Maldivian media, China and the Maldives have signed two military accords amidst changing circumstances in the Indian Ocean region. Particularly at a time when the Maldives' relations with India appear to be strained, these agreements represent a new chapter in the two countries' bilateral relations. The agreements were formalised during a ceremony in which Major General Zhang Baoqun, Deputy Director of the People's Republic of China's Office for International Military Cooperation, and Ghassan Maumoon, the Minister of Defence for the Maldives, exchanged documents.

Source: China, Maldives sign new military agreement amid strained relations with India, India Today, March 5, 2024, <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/china-maldives-sign-new-military-agreements-amid-strained-relations-with-india-2510591-2024-03-05>

## **Pakistan makes another U-turn, says no change in trade policy with India**

Days after Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar declared that Islamabad would give the restoration of trade relations with India careful consideration, the Foreign Office of that nation declared on March 24, 2024 that no such plan existed. In a possible change in diplomatic strategy towards its neighbour, Foreign Minister Dar stated at a press conference in London on March 23 that Pakistan's business community was keen to start up trade with India again.

The U-turn on trade ties with India by Islamabad has occurred twice now. The approval to import cotton and sugar from India was granted by Pakistan's Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) in April 2021. The move was thwarted, though, a day later by Prime Minister Imran Khan, who declared that trade with India was not feasible "under present circumstances."

Source: Pakistan makes another U-turn, says no change in trade policy with India, Business Today, March 28, 2024, <https://www.businesstoday.in/india/story/pakistan-makes-another-u-turn-says-no-change-in-trade-policy-with-india-423320-2024-03-28>

## **Goa Tourism hosts roadshows across Europe spotlighting Heritage & Culture**

Road shows in Spain, Austria, and Portugal were arranged by Goa Tourism to highlight Goa and its history and culture. Through the events, Goa and Goan culture were presented in a way that would pique travellers' curiosity and interest in a variety of areas. 'Goa - the beautiful destination' was an informative presentation that highlighted the warmth of Goa and Goan hospitality. The Ekadasha Teertha Yatra concept was clearly explained throughout the events, and the programmes covered the subtleties of regenerative tourism in detail.

Source: Goa Tourism hosts roadshows across Europe spotlighting Heritage & Culture, March 18, 2024, <https://www.eventfaqs.com/news/ef-20297/goa-tourism-hosts-roadshows-across-europe-spotlighting-heritage-culture->

## **India, Indonesia sign pact to trade in local currencies**

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed and exchanged by Bank Indonesia (BI) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on March 07, 2024 in order to create a framework for encouraging the use of local currencies, the Indian Rupee (INR) and Indonesian Rupiah (IDR). Governors Perry Warjiyo of Bank Indonesia and Shaktikanta Das of the RBI were present when

the Memorandum of Understanding was signed. "This framework would facilitate the invoicing and payment of exporters and importers in their respective home currencies, thereby fostering the growth of the INR-IDR foreign exchange market." The RBI stated that using local currencies would maximise transaction costs and settlement times.

Source: India, Indonesia sign pact to trade in local currencies, The New Indian Express, March 07, 2024, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/business/2024/Mar/07/india-indonesia-sign-pact-to-trade-in-local-currencies>

### **Tanzania as Surajkund fair partner highlights ties with African Union, says President Droupadi Murmu**

The 37th Surajkund International Crafts Fair opened in Faridabad on February 03, 2024, and India's President, Droupadi Murmu, gave a speech expressing gratitude for Tanzania and India's cultural exchange. As Tanzania is this year's partner country for the fair, President Murmu explained that cultural exchanges would give guests a chance to fully immerse themselves in the vivid and colourful arts and crafts of Tanzania, such as weaving, wood carving, and pottery. Thanks to centuries of people-to-people contact between India and the East African coast, "this is also a wonderful platform to showcase Tanzanian dance, music, and cuisine in which we can also glimpse some Indian influence," the speaker added.

Source: Tanzania as Surajkund fair partner highlights ties with African Union, says Murmu, Indian Express, February 04, 2024, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/tanzania-as-surajkund-fair-partner-highlights-ties-with-african-union-says-murmu-9141624/>

### **Young People from Central Asia Embark on Week-Long Journey Across India**

The Indian government invited a youth delegation comprising 100 members from all Central Asian countries, including the youth delegation from Kazakhstan, to attend the Central Asia – India Youth Forum in India from March 5–13. In a world where boundaries and ideologies frequently separate people, the delegation's March visit to India promoted understanding and cross-cultural exchange. The delegation met with senior Indian government representatives during their visit, including Ministers of Youth and Sports Anurag Thakur and External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar.

Source: Young People from Central Asia Embark on Week-Long Journey Across India, The Astana Times, March 27, 2024, <https://astanatimes.com/2024/03/young-people-from-central-asia-embark-on-week-long-journey-across-india/>

## **CSIR News**

### **CSIR Panel Discussion on Bharat-Africa Cultural and Civilisational Linkages**

A panel discussion on “Bharat-Africa Cultural and Civilisational Linkages” was held in the Centre for Studies in International Relations, New Delhi, on February 24, 2024. It was chaired by **Dr. Rajiv Nayan** of the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), New Delhi. **Dr. Sandipani Dash** and **Prof. Suresh Kumar** from the Department of African Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Delhi, were two panellists. Dr.



Sandipani Dash spoke about the investigation frame, trajectory, and social relevance of cultural and civilisational linkages between Bharat and Africa. Prof. Suresh Kumar explained the Bhartiya Knowledge Tradition (BKT) and the African Knowledge Tradition (AKT). He also discussed civilisational bonding and similitude in lives and visions between Bharat and Africa.



Panel Discussion on Bharat-Africa Cultural and Civilisational Linkages

### CSIR Round Table Discussion

On February 10, 2024, CSIR hosted a very engaging discussion on "Cultural Power of India: Setting a New Dimension in Global Politics. **Dr. Anshu Joshi**, Assistant Professor, Centre for Canadian, US & Latin American Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi and **Dr. Sandipani Dash**, Assistant Professor, Department of African Studies, New Delhi were the key speakers. **Dr. Smita Tiwary**, Fellow, Prime Ministers Museum & Library (PMML), moderated the Round Table Discussion.



RTD on Cultural Power of India: Setting a New Dimension in Global Politics