

Reviving the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor: A Strategic Imperative for India and Japan

The Asia - Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) is an economic initiative jointly proposed by India and Japan in 2017 with the aim to enhance connectivity and sustainable development between Asia and Africa. This initiative is basically shaped to focus on sectors like health and pharmaceutical, agriculture and agro- processing means value addition to the agricultural raw materials, disaster management and skill development and the production of human resource, quality infrastructure and institutional connectivity and people to people connect to promote the cultural and academic exchange to strengthen the ties between the two regions. A distinctive feature of the AAGC is maritime connectivity and security but when we analyse all these things with the ground realities then we find that most of these remained on paper and very few developments came in the ground reality.

This project was created to make new opportunities, connect markets and to support sustainable growth across Africa but political shifts, changing priorities and logistical challenges left the project stuck in limbo but looking at today's changing African scenario and the race for global influence that is taking place on the African continent, keeping all these things in mind it can be said that now is the time to rejuvenate AAGC.

Resurgence of AAGC is necessary for India and Japan to remain relevant in Africa

Africa's importance in this world scenario is growing at a very high pace and many global giants like China, Russia and Turkey are engaging with this continent with a very warm diplomatic gesture.

According to many media reports, China has influxed more than 200 billion U.S. dollars into this continent under its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project and this economic gesture of China has made Beijing a dominant player in the African continent. At the same time Russia and Turkey are engaging with the African continent by using their soft power and military assistance tactics by supplying weapons and by doing security agreements with the African countries.

In this changing scenario if we are going to talk about India then Africa has a long and trusted partnership with it and all thanks to our historical connections and shared economic interests and India is helping the African continent in the sector of pharmacy, telecommunication etc and fostering peace by providing peacekeeping initiatives as well and Japan needs a free and open Indo - Pacific for its own continuous development and in it Africa is going to play a very important role. For both India and Japan, Africa is going to be very important from their geo-economic as well as geo-political perspective. If these two countries want to remain relevant in Africa then they have to make AAGC a reality.

Reasons behind AAGC not being implemented in that way

AAGC was formed with a noble cause but its development got a halt and with the passing of time this developmental initiative became outdated because none of the parties involved showed the kind of enthusiasm that should have been shown or as was the demand of the time.

Following things became the potential barriers in the development of AAGC initiative

Firstly, political change in Japan led to a dip in enthusiasm for the project. Second barrier became the new trade corridors like Europe's Global Gateway and India - Middle East - European Corridor which got its initiation in the G-20 summit held in India in 2023 and this development was treated as a major outcome of the summit with the permanent membership of African Union (A.U.) in the G-20 grouping.

Delay in funding from both India and Japan became another reason behind the slow propagation of this initiative. Along with all these barriers, African local politics and internal issues among the African countries became one of the major barriers in the development of this initiative.

How to make AAGC operational again

First of all India and Japan both need a fresh strategy to get AAGC on the track.

First of all this initiative or project needs investors and as we all know that the UAE is now Africa's biggest investor by surpassing China and along with UAE, Saudi Arabia and other GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries are seeing Africa with hope because these Gulf countries are trying to diversify their economic ventures and trying to reduce their whole and sole dependence on their oil exports so, they are investing in different economic sectors that's why Africa has become very prominent for them and India shares a very good relations with the following countries and by using this relation India can attract the investments of these countries through the channel of AAGC and this step will give a good boom to the AAGC.

Involvement of QUAD nations, as we all know that QUAD group was formed for the maintenance of peaceful Indo pacific order, maritime security and smooth trade and we can not imagine a peaceful Indo - pacific without a peaceful Africa. So, QUAD members means India, Japan, U.S.A, and Australia can play the role of mediator in the process of peaceful conflict resolution among the African countries which is very essential for the success of AAGC as well as a peaceful Indo - Pacific region.

India and Japan both need to focus on sectors like Digital public infrastructure, green energy, telecommunication etc because it won't be easy to surpass the dominance of China in the field of traditional infrastructure projects like Roads and Railways, instead of competing in this sector both India and Japan should focus on other sectors where china is not in a very dominant position.

There is a need for the interconnection of African countries with this AAGC project. Right now, the AAGC only connects to Tanzania and expansion of it to Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique etc means those African countries who share their coasts with the Indian Ocean would create more trade opportunities and this will strengthen Africa's involvement in this project as well.

This is the time to act

India and Japan both are already a part of multiple global routes but none of them can deny the position of Africa and the need of Africa as a whole continent

in the global trade route sphere. Both countries means India and Japan need a project like AAGC for the maintenance of their relevance in the African continent and a good propagation of this project needs new investors and focus should be on high growth sectors and strengthening partnerships with the African nations. With all these things the AAGC will be a game changer and this is the demand of time because the world is shifting fast, India and Japan need to make sure that they are moving with it.

***Views are personal**

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About SoAf:

The Department of African Studies has launched an initiative called "Scholars on Africa" with the primary objective of promoting the research ideas of scholars and faculty members on current happenings and contemporary issues related to the African continent. This initiative serves a dual purpose, as it not only facilitates academic exploration but also provides valuable insights to the policymakers of India on matters concerning Africa. By actively engaging with scholars and faculty members, the initiative aims to foster a better understanding and relationship between India and Africa, bridging the gap between the two worlds.

Under the "Scholars on Africa" initiative, Scholars of the Department of African Studies are encouraged to contribute write-ups on various African issues, not exceeding 300 words in length. It is noteworthy that these write-ups will be forwarded by any faculty members of the Department. These write-ups serve as a platform for scholars to express their personal views and insights on a diverse range of topics, including History, Politics, economics, culture, and social issues prevalent in Africa.

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