
Egypt's Role in South-South Cooperation



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Introduction

It is widely agreed nowadays that a restructure in the global regime has to take place. Developing countries, as such called by the developed ones, play a more active role in the global arena. Today, China, India and other emerging economies, 'have sufficient strength and potential to pool their resources together and spearhead science and technology development in all regions and countries of the South' (Branislav Gosovic, 2016, p138). Initiatives such as the G-77, the non-alignment movement and the G-20 emerged in order to resolve global imbalances bringing together Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa, Saudi Arabia and other countries into the field (Nouriel Roubini & Stephen Mihm, 2011).

The unique position of Egypt as an African country with a significant geographical part on the Asian continent has always put on its shoulders the obligation to defend the interests of developing countries both in Africa and Asia. This is elaborated clearly in the Egyptian chairing of the G-77 in September 2018. Egypt took this opportunity to highlight the vision of the developing countries. The focus of the Chair was to assert the need for a renewed global economic system, pointing to the absence of justice in distribution of income and resources at the international level, a considerable problem for developing countries.

This paper aims to bring to light the various issues that not only concern Egypt but other sister developing countries. A case study of the Cairo- Cape Town highway is presented to highlight Egypt's role and commitment towards development and South-South Cooperation.

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Egypt and South-South Cooperation

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi, in his presidential address at the opening ceremony of the 42nd Annual Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77, New York, highlighted that the important global issues for developing countries are climate change, unemployment, technology transfer, capacity-building, trade and investment, poverty and terrorism. President Sisi pointed out the dire need to bridge the gap between the North and South, asserting the importance of uniting efforts of Southern countries especially in sectors such as health, education, nutrition, water and sanitation.

Concerning the issue of climate change, Egypt has explicitly called upon the developed countries to meet their financial commitments made at the Paris Convention. Egypt asserted that no developing country shall bear additional financial burden. At the regional level, Egyptian researchers conducted many studies focusing on the detrimental effects of climate change on Egypt and the African continent, pushing for the use of clean energy. Egypt has also provided technical assistance to African neighbours for the establishment of hydropower plants and other power supply projects. Moreover, Egypt is one of the founding members of the International Solar Alliance, an initiative of India and France, with the prime objective of tapping into solar energy and decreasing dependency on fossil fuels.

At the global level, Egypt adopts initiatives to increase awareness on climate change and related issues. Egypt hosted the 14th United Nations Biodiversity Conference, November 2018, with an aim

towards protecting ecosystems, providing food and water security, and protecting the health of populations. In line with this vision, Egypt hosted the African Ministerial Summit on Biodiversity in November 2018.

With respect to unemployment, it is imperative to make sure that modern technological applications such as Artificial Intelligence do not interfere with the employment market, reducing the number of jobs as the nature of work changes in developing countries. A considerable percentage of financial assistance provided to developing countries should be directed towards building human capacity along with the enhancement of existing work environment especially in small and medium enterprises. As Pong-Sul (2007) pointed out that ‘despite positive developments in many fields, the trends of globalisation have resulted in the downgrading of living and working standards of workers especially in the informal sector, generating low quality jobs, and jeopardising livelihoods’.

Given the need for effective technology transfer towards development, President Abdel Fattah el Sisi called for exchange of knowledge and experience through facilitating cooperation among South-South research centres. The importance of achieving a balance between technology transfer and IPR rules is critical, and needs to be expedited to continue the process of development in developing countries. Similarly, on the capacity-building front, efforts take place through the provision of technical training courses in African countries and support to the African Development Fund (ADF). In addition, the ADF is used to provide free medicine and health services to many African countries

and carry out joint projects such as “joint farms” and “power supply projects”.

Trade and investment are central to Egypt given its geographical position amid trade and supply routes. Egypt has concluded a number of free trade agreements with neighbouring Asian and African countries, establishing a duty free and quota free trade system. The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) agreement binds almost twenty-two countries of Africa in a trade relationship. Egypt also has a pan-Arab Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with sixteen Arab countries from North Africa and Asia. Complementing these, Egypt also has FTAs with the Latin American MERCOSUR grouping with an aim to liberalise trade covering the African and South American continents. Egypt has also honoured its commitments by signing the Pan Africa Continental Free Trade Area “CFTA”, which is expected to bring together African countries to enhance trade and market access. These Agreements beside having a positive impact on trade in the region, stipulate on social development and poverty eradication. They allow for the opening of space for the sharing of experiences as trade acts as the first step towards enhanced cooperation. In line with the principles of South-South Cooperation, Egypt respects the sovereignty of its partners and adheres to the principles of demand-driven Cooperation and mutual gains.

In political and diplomatic cooperation, Egypt has been supporting its fellow developing countries in a manner that embodies the vision of solidarity. Under this view, Egypt made a call to review the issue of voting quotas in United Nations

institutions to better reflect the needs and demands of developing countries. Egypt also holds peace building conferences and hosts youth from around the world to enhance exchange of views and build capacity towards combating terrorism and poverty.

The Cairo-Cape Town Highway: A Practical Case Study

Due to high transport cost in Africa the idea of establishing a highway linking Cairo to Cape Town, running through the African continent, was first introduced at the end of the 19th century. However, no practical steps were taken until the 20th century. This was primarily due to the increasing importance of trade for development and employment generation in the region. Egypt took the lead to re-initiate the idea through supporting an infrastructure project aimed to connect the northern and southern part of the African continent with hopes to cover the journey in a matter of days. This resulted in the push for the Cairo-Cape Town Highway, a 10,228 km long road that passes from Egypt to South-Africa, through Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Sudan.

The Cairo-Cape Town highway is being developed with the collaboration between the African Union, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank. Egypt has built new ports and new infrastructure costing nearly USD 11 million to enhance pan African cooperation. The new road will increase access of Southern African countries to the European markets and access of Northern countries to Brazil, India and China, stimulating new trade and economic opportunities. In other

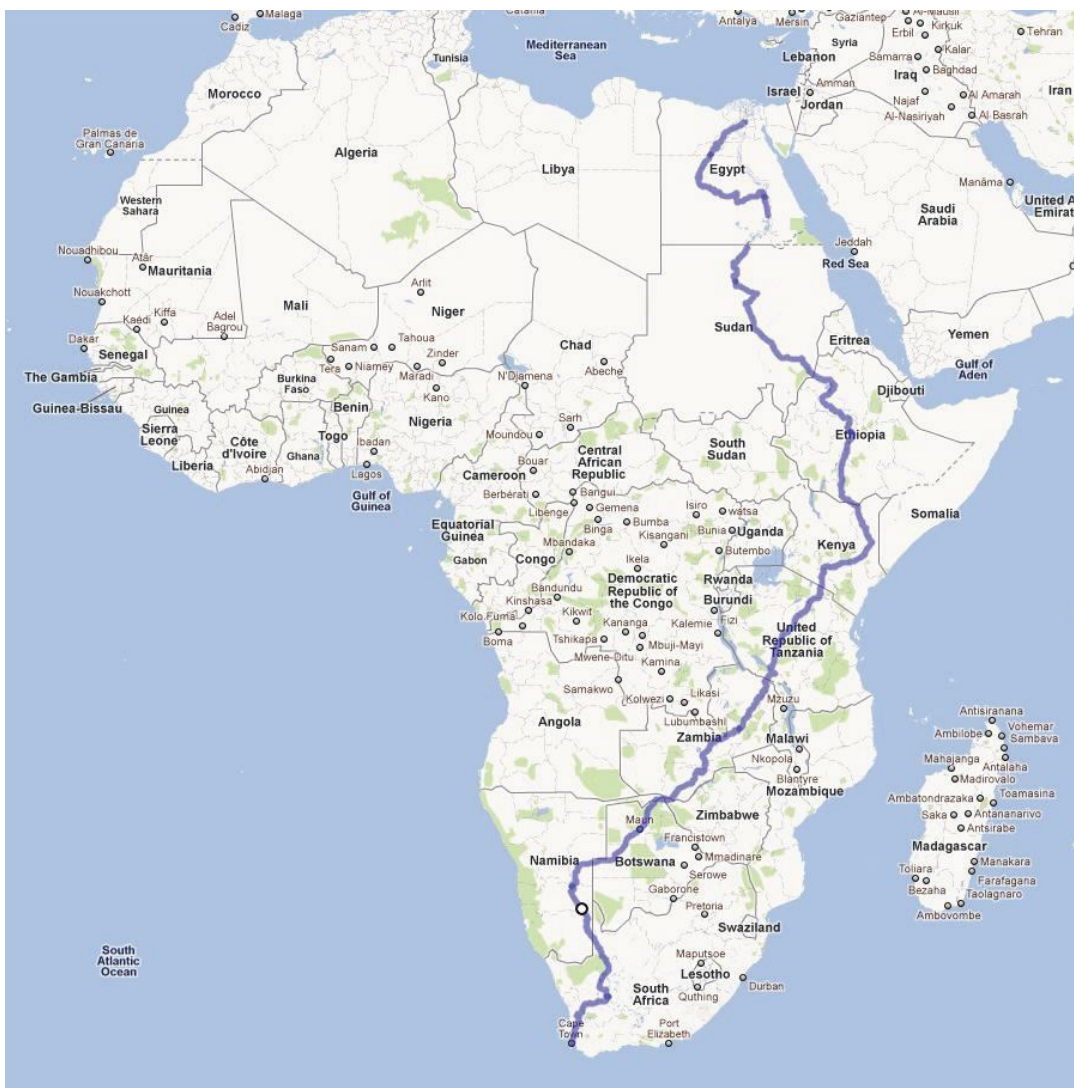
words, this road and its untapped potential would ensure a wide range of activities to boost inter-regional and intra-regional cooperation.

The initiative is a practical embodiment of South-South Cooperation, wherein connectivity acts as the first link towards enhanced partnership. Developing countries in Africa are expected to benefit from an enhanced trade environment, allowing for increase in job opportunities, technology transfer and exchange of knowledge. All these benefits are likely to contribute towards capacity building, resulting in reduction of poverty and political and economic stability.

According to Thabane Nhlengethwa (2018) in *Role of Benevolent Political Ideologies in Enhancing Development Compact*, 'The value proposition of the infrastructure project, amongst many other benefits, includes the improved feasibility of the Continental Free Trade Agreement (CFTA), increased intra-regional trade, potential GDP contribution to the tune of USD 16.1 billion annually and in excess of 500 million jobs that could be created by 2035'.

To conclude, South-South Cooperation is a means for developing countries to play a more active role in the global arena. At the same time, the developed countries

Cairo-Cape Town Highway Map



have to meet their commitments and open the way for developing countries to participate more effectively in decision-making processes. Egypt has taken several efforts towards South-South Cooperation and particularly taking the lead in climate change, unemployment, the need for technology transfer, capacity building trade for development, and combat terrorism. The Cairo-Cape Town road is introduced as a practical example of Egypt's role for South-South Cooperation. Egypt, as always, will continue to play an instrumental role in advocating for development issues in interests of developing countries.

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INDIA-BRAZIL-SOUTH AFRICA (IBSA) FUND TURNS 15: SSC IN ACTION

Representing three continents, three democracies and three emerging economies, the IBSA fund turns fifteen. The Fund has a cumulative contribution of USD 35 million and partners with 19 developing countries. The Fund has implemented 26 projects and two-third of the IBSA funding has been allocated to assist Least Developed Countries.

The initiative was launched fifteen years ago to emerge with innovative solutions to address common challenges. India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin noted that 37 per cent of the funding has been allocated to partners in Africa, 25 per cent in Latin America and 21 per cent in Asia and Pacific. 15 per cent of the Fund has also been allocated towards projects in Palestine. The Fund underlines the demand driven principle of South-South Cooperation as the project proposals originate from the partner countries themselves based on their own needs and priorities. The IBSA Fund reflects the common desire of the countries to achieve Agenda 2030 and incorporates the spirit of SDG 17 towards building partnerships for mutual development.

Source: PTI. (2018, November 29). IBSA Fund example of innovative solutions to overcome common problems: Syed Akbaruddin. *The Economic Times*.