

From Shared Histories to Shared Futures: Ubuntu, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, and the Making of a New India-Africa Order

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Abstract

This paper explores the possibility of the philosophies of 'Ubuntu' and 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' as underlying principles to build a new India-Africa order, which would be beyond transactional diplomacy to mutual prosperity and peace. A multi-method qualitative research design is used that includes critical discourse analysis of policy documents and discourses on South-South cooperation, ethnographic content analysis of urban youth cultural practices in Mumbai and Nairobi and comparative case studies of the Siddi and Indian East African communities. Historical records of monsoon trading routes available in the British Library India Office Records enable an historical perspective of mutual assistance networks that has been established over the years. Our findings show that there are a number of consistent discursive features, with the history of the couple and of the state being used to legitimize the present partnership, while there is a strong tension between the use of a shared history and the strengthening of state sovereignty norms. Usually, this is resolved by reframing the two principles as complementary instead of conflicting. The study of urban youth practices highlights specific aspects of "lived cosmopolitanisms" – their cultural direction, level of hybridity, and emotional colour. The Diaspora case studies illustrate how memory-writing and memory-sharing, especially amongst the Oshwal Jain community, can be used to help negotiate belonging and to form intergenerational cohesion. In addition, the National Adaptation Plan of Tanzania demonstrates a strong focus on inclusive planning based on traditional knowledge without any mention of the common history of the region. The research presents a new paradigm of the study of India-Africa relations through the prism of migration, displacement and cultural continuity; it underscores that the colonial entanglements are an important underpinning of the relations today, which should not be separated from it. This work thus offers a valuable reframing of South-South cooperation that sees spaces of shared cultural and historical heritage actively shape the ideas of governance and transregional political thinking for realizing the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 and Agenda 2063.

Keywords: Ubuntu, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, New India-Africa Order, Lived Cosmopolitanisms, Viksit Bharat 2047, Agenda 2063

1. Introduction

Today, the world is characterized by great fragmentation, contestation and inequalities of power and wealth. The Indo-Africa cooperation has emerged as one of the major cornerstones in reimagining the concept of international cooperation from North-South dependency to a more balanced North-South partnership of South-South cooperation in this context [1]. Both regions are endowed with a long tradition of anti-colonial struggle, and both occupy what is considered the "south" side of the global economic divide, while both are becoming economically and demographically dynamic and are expected to be at the heart of the twenty-first century. The developmental vision of India's 'Viksit Bharat 2047' and the vision of 'Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want' of the African Union is not only India's vision and vision of Africa, but

it is also a vision of changed global engagement [2]. These, however, are all deeply entrenched in a solid philosophical and cultural foundation for overcoming the nature of diplomacy as transactions.

The main thesis of this research is the geographical, archaeological and cultural linkage between India and Africa, including the philosophies of 'Ubuntu' and 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' provides a solid base for current cooperation and development. The Indian quote, "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" ("the world is one family") reflects African philosophy "ubuntu" ("the world is one family") [3]. We think these are not only accepted standards from the past but great forces of resilience and strategic partnership to be applied to a new form of global governance. The goal of this study is to analyze and explore how these common civilizational philosophies can be the basis of a new relationship with a new India-Africa for mutual welfare and world peace, rather than for trading.

This research has three contributions: First, it provides an innovative empirical study of the lived experiences of cultural interaction between India and Africa that goes beyond the level of abstract philosophic claims and looks at how encounters across the past are called upon in policy debates and in the urban lives of young people and their diasporas. First, it provides an innovative empirical study on lived experiences of cultural interaction between India and Africa, which goes beyond abstract philosophic claims and looks at the way shared histories are invoked in policy discourses and when urban youth interact with or engage with diasporic communities. The second, it is a multi-method qualitative research design, a study design that integrates critical discourse analysis, ethnographic content analysis and comparative case study design for transregional and culture political relations that can be replicated. Third, it brings the debate on South-South cooperation back to the fore by making it clear that cultural and historical parallels can be a basis for new concepts of governance and transregional politics as a useful supplement to the literature on global order and international politics [4].

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. The literature review in section 2 delves into literature on global order, south-south cooperation, and philosophy of India-Africa relations. It examines historical and philosophical foundations of India-Africa entanglements in section 3, where it discusses the monsoon trade routes, shared cultural traditions and parallel philosophies of Ubuntu and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. In the fourth section, the multi-method approach to the study is included as the critical discourse analysis, the ethnographic content analysis protocol and the comparative case study methodology. The results of our analysis are presented in Section 5, which focuses on three processes of discursive mobilization: policy documents, lived cosmopolitanisms of urban youth, and diasporic belongings among communities of Siddi and Indian East Africans. The impact of these findings on a common vision of global governance is discussed in section 6 in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047 and Agenda 2063. The paper ends with a summary of the main findings and suggestions for further research in section 7.

2. Literature Review

Global order has been the main subject of the academic discourse and these paradigms are Western-centric in nature and are based on a range of Western norms which include the power of the state, economic liberalism and hierarchy of power. But a new research stream questions this approach by emphasizing the importance of culture, philosophy, and civilizational dialogue in the construction of international relations. Acharya, for example, in his discussion of the "multiplex world" theorises that the current order does not consist of a singular order but is multiple, with non-Western actors making more and more claims to their own order [5]. This view is reflected in research on South-South cooperation, which highlights that the basis for the cooperation is not only pragmatic but also common historical experiences of colonialism and the desire to be self-determined [6]. But, most of this literature continues to be economic and political, neglecting the cultural and philosophical foundations that underpin these economic and political relationships.

Ubuntu and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam are philosophical traditions that have been gaining more academic interest as a different moral basis for global governing. The scholars such as Mbiti and Ramose, along the same lines, articulate Ubuntu as a philosophy that sees the inter-connectivity of human life as evidenced in the maxim “I am because we are” which means that the overall well-being of an individual is dependent on the harmony of the community [7]. This conception has been utilized in such diverse areas as resolving conflicts and caring for the environment, and some scholars claim it has a corrective role for the individualism of Western liberal thought [3]. In the same way, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which originated from ancient Indian scriptures like the Maha Upanishad, preaches the idea of the world as a single family, the need for universal brotherhood and non-violence [4]. Such philosophies have been examined individually; however, comparative studies examining the synergies of these philosophies are not widely available. Some exceptions however stand out: work by Ndlovu-Gatsheni on the potentials of Ubuntu for decolonizing global governance, and Dallmayr's work that places Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam in the context of a wider civilisational conversation.

The literature on India-Africa relations has traditionally been limited to the aspects of economic cooperation, trade and diplomatic engagement, as highlighted during India-Africa Forum Summits and the Agenda 2063 of the African Union [9]. But a new line of inquiry is beginning to focus on the cultural and historical aspects of the connection between the two. For instance, the study of Indian community in East Africa, specifically the Oshwal Jain community, shows the importance of memory-writing and transnational networks that sustain both intergenerational and extra-generational sense of belonging [10]. Research, too, of the Siddi community, an African diaspora in India, investigates the negotiation of identity and exclusion through cultural practices and oral traditions [11]. The studies above show that migration and displacement are not only phenomena of the past but continue to influence the present day political and cultural dynamics. However, a large part of the literature has however examined these communities individually, rather than drawing connections between them and the question of global order or transregional solidarity on a systematic level.

The idea of “lived cosmopolitanisms” has proved to be a useful analytical tool to investigate how common people engage with cultural difference in their daily lives. However, cosmopolitanism may not just be an elite phenomenon, with scholars like Werbner and Vertovec claiming it can also be seen in the everyday cultural exchange, hybridity and mutual recognitions [12]. This approach has been extended to City of Youth in global cities, where music, fashion and social media enable cross-cultural encounters to help break down stereotypes and create new ways of belonging [13]. Most research on cosmopolitanism has been conducted from a Western perspective and there is very little research on South-South cultural flows. This research fills this gap by investigating the relationship between urban youth in Mumbai and Nairobi and their cultural practices, both Indian and African.

Lastly, there is a relevant parallel with the literature on climate adaptation and indigenous knowledge, to the philosophical foundations of India-Africa cooperation. Local knowledge, for instance, has been increasingly highlighted as a source of knowledge for tackling global issues, such as the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2025-2035, which is being put together by the United Republic of Tanzania. However, as our analysis shows, these plans do not often explicitly mention shared regional history or Indian Ocean solidarities, which indicates that they missed an opportunity to build on cultural and historical linkages to build collective resilience. This is a contrast that highlights the need for a framework that combines philosophical aspects with governance practices.

3. Historical and Philosophical Foundations of India-Africa Interconnections

As in Indian history generally, the history of India-Africa relations is a long one of trade, shared opposition to colonialism, and migration of human beings across the Indian Ocean. Evidence from the port of Muziris

on the Malabar Coast and the trading ports of the Swahili Coast shows that trade between both these regions had started at least two millennia before the advent of the European colonialism [15]. Such early interactions were not simply of trade, but of strong cultural and religious interaction, and trade routes with the Indian Ocean helped the spread of Islam along the coast of East Africa, and the establishment of Jain and Hindu communities in port cities like Zanzibar and Mombasa [16]. The monsoons brought the predictability and continuity of life at sea and created a regular and continuous communication process that would give rise to a feeling of familiarity and dependency between the civilizations, which would evolve into a very close relationship.

The monsoon trade system was a complex enterprise in exchange involving the western coast of India as well as the eastern coast of Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and Southeast Asia. This network facilitated the transportation of goods such as textiles, spices, ivory and timber, most importantly, the transportation of people, ideas and cultural practices [17]. The Indian merchants (banians) established permanent trading posts in the ports in East Africa and even the Africans went regularly to Indian markets to trade and as sailors. This was a two-way process and it is not surprising that there was a common sea culture: There was sharing of language, food and religion. For instance, there is a significant number of loanwords from Gujarati and Hindi in Swahili language; and Indian architecture influenced the construction of the mosques and stone houses along the Swahili Coast [15]. The material and linguistic remains are evidence of a long tradition of engagement, predating and surpassing the colonial contact.

The colonial period brought about an altogether new dimension in the way India and Africa were connected, labour mobility, racial stratification and anti-colonial alliance. Indentured labour system of the British Empire resulted in the transportation of hundreds of thousands of Indians to East and Southern Africa and their role as railway construction workers, plantation workers and colonial administrators [18]. This migration resulted in large Indian populations in countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa and Mauritius where Indians were part of the local economies and communities, and still retained their cultural identity. Meanwhile, slaves from the transatlantic and Indian Ocean slave trade were brought to the subcontinent, resulting in groups such as the Siddi in Gujarat and Karnataka, the Sheedi in Sindh and the Habshi in the Deccan [11]. These communities are marginalised at times, but are a living history of the two way migration movement across the Indian Ocean and so offer an alternative narrative to the unidirectional movement of people.

For a fleeting moment in time, anti-colonialism was a moment for convergence of Indian and African political thought. Gandhi's ideas about Satyagraha were inspired by the Indian spiritual values and the personal tragedy of racial oppression in Africa [19]. African nationalists, however, like Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta and Julius Nyerere were encouraged by the Indian independence movement as a model to follow in achieving their own goal of independence, while the Bandung Conference of 1955 was a pivotal moment in articulating a sense of common identity between the peoples of Africa and Asia [20]. A sense of transregional political awareness emerged during this time and the struggle against colonialism was no longer a national but a Global South struggle. This ideology behind the solidarity was not just based on the Indian concept of non-violence but also was based on the African concept of communal resistance which created a "new political language of South-South solidarity" which continues to be used in the current discourse on South-South cooperation.

These historical links are not coincidental nor pragmatic partnerships; the ethical frameworks are given in the philosophical perspectives of Ubuntu and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. The Zulu proverb 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' (a person is a person through persons) emphasizes the interdependence of human beings and the interdependency of people's identities and wellbeing [7]. This philosophy is a departure

from western liberalism's atomistic individualism that focuses on the harmony of the collective and mutual responsibility, mutual humanity. According to the Quotation of Maha Upanishad, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is my family), the world is one family and we have to be compassionate and hospitable towards all irrespective of our narrow identitarian beliefs [4]. Both share the fundamental ideas of interconnectedness, reciprocity and ethics of caring for the other as oneself.

This resonance is more than theoretical; it is historical, referring to the experiences of exchange and mutual influence, noted above. For instance, the Ashram model of the monsoon trade system can be seen as a realisation of the concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which implied that the traders and sailors were linked together in a trust-based network and did not observe ethnic or religious barriers. Likewise with the anti-colonial solidarity between Indian and African leaders, it can be understood in the context of Ubuntu – the realization that the people's liberation is a single process, and that the liberation of one is the liberation of all. This philosophical approach implies that the historical linkages between India and Africa are not coincidental, but that there exists a greater affinity between the civilizations that can be tapped for the present day. However, it is necessary to emphasize that in certain instances the state actors have also used such philosophies as part of their nationalist agenda, and that a duality with universalist and particularist interests can be found. [21]

The relevance of these historical and philosophical factors in the present context is that it is possible to use the lessons to establish a new cultural paradigm of the India-Africa relationship that goes beyond transactional diplomacy and towards a transformative relationship. The themes of cultural renaissance, indigenous knowledge and collective self-reliance as laid out in both the developmental vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 and Agenda 2063, are very much aligned with Ubuntu and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam [2]. These common faiths can be leveraged to delineate an ethics and civilizational understanding of cooperation that can be articulated in the terms of the policy-maker, not just the economic and/or strategic terms of today. In this manner, this business model can be a means to bridge the historical colonial divide, rather than a means to reinforce the North-South inequalities, in which the dominant partner appropriates the resources of the other, and instead become a way to provide a relationship between the two, not based on exploitation, but on respect and on shared history and shared aspirations for a more just and peaceful world.

4. A Multi-Method Qualitative Research Design

This study uses a multi-method qualitative research approach consisting of critical discourse analysis (CDA), ethnographic content analysis, and comparative case study methodology, which provides a framework to explore the India-Africa relations in three related areas, namely, policy discourse, youth culture practices and diaspora sense of belonging. The design has been organized to reflect both the macro-level discursive framings which underpin the official discourses of South-South cooperation, and the lived realities of cultural encounters and negotiations between people on the street. The aim of the research is to offer a thorough perspective in examining the negotiation, contestation, and implementation of shared historical and philosophical traditions in current contexts.

4.1 Critical Discourse Analysis of Policy Documents and Speeches

For the first dimension, a corpus of policy documents and speeches on South-South cooperation from the official websites of the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India, the African Union and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) was gathered and analysed using a structured CDA framework. The documents selected highlighted those that explicitly mentioned the India-Africa relations, such as joint communiqués from summits held between India and Africa, policy briefs on development cooperation, and keynote speeches from multilateral forums. The following codebook was developed that comprised seven types of entity: Document/Speech Entity, Historical Narrative Reference Entity, Sovereignty & State-Centric Language Entity, Legitimization Strategy Entity, Policy Initiative/Cooperation Mechanism Entity,

Actor/Stakeholder Entity, and Narrative–Sovereignty Tension Instance Entity. The various elements within each entity were coded for the narrative type (anti-colonial solidarity, ancient trade networks, etc.), the temporal framing (past, present, future, etc.), the sovereignty keyword context (non-interference, territorial integrity, etc.), and the discursive resolution attempts (reframing as complementary, subordination of one principle to another, etc.). Historical reference density (the number of historical references per 1000 words), and sovereignty constraint strength (Low, Medium, or High based on the strength and explicitness of the historical narrative's framing of the nature of the policy constraint on sovereignty) were calculated, as was narrative coherence score (a qualitative measure of how well or explicitly the historical narrative framed the nature of the policy constraint on sovereignty). The study also identified the type of dominant legitimization mode (historical, moral, legal, economic or civilizational) and the degree of representation of India–Africa relations as a postcolonial project was calculated as a composite South-South Solidarity Index.

4.2 Ethnographic Content Analysis of Urban Youth Cultural Practices

The second dimension used ethnographic content analysis of urban youth cultural practices in Mumbai and Nairobi with the help of social media analysis. These two cities were chosen strategically, Mumbai being India's commercial and cultural capital, and Nairobi, a key center in East Africa, being already known for its close historical ties and Indian population. In choosing these two cities, it was intentional that Mumbai would be a hub of Hindi culture and Indian cuisine, as well as Indian immigrants, and that Nairobi would have an established Indian population and cultural presence, especially through Bollywood. The data was gathered by conducting semi-structured interviews with 40 participants (aged 18-35), who were identified by snowball sampling from cultural events, University campuses, and social media. The following extraction schema has been created to capture data on the participant's demographics, their cultural practices (foodways, adoption of textiles, cinema, music), their social media posts, material exchanges, expression of cosmopolitanism, and informal networks. Each cultural practice was coded on the following dimensions: direction of cultural flow (India to Africa, Africa to India, Reciprocal or Hybrid); mode of encounter (Offline, Online or Mixed); visibility (Private, Semi-public or Public); degree of hybridity (Low, Medium or High); emotional valence (Pride, Curiosity, Nostalgia, Amusement, or Discomfort); relation to stereotypes (Reinforces, Challenges, or Ambivalent); temporal orientation (Past-oriented, Present-oriented, or Future-oriented); and connection to shared future (Explicit, Implicit, or Absent). The factors enabled a differentiated view of the ways in which everyday cultural consumption and material transfers create multi-national, inter-national and transnational modes of belonging, in some cases outside of or alongside state-sponsored diplomatic engagements.

4.3 Comparative Case Study of Diaspora Communities

The third dimension used a comparative case study approach to look at two diaspora communities, one African, Siddi community in India (descendants of East African slaves, sailors and merchants) and Indian East African community (Oshwal Jain community in Kenya and Tanzania). A structured extraction template was developed to capture each of the attributes of individual narrators (age, gender, occupation, migration generation), community organization attributes (formal associations, cultural institutions, religious networks), effects of state policies (citizenship laws, affirmative action, cultural recognition), and cultural artifacts (oral narratives, autobiographies, family photographs, ritual objects). The analysis of these narratives was based on four key dimensions: belonging narratives (how individuals and communities express their belonging to India and Africa); experiences of exclusion (when and how individuals and communities are excluded from or experience discrimination by, or questioning of identity in relation to, rising Hindu nationalism in India and African nationalism in East Africa); cultural bridge capacity (when and how individuals and communities are able to bridge across cultures, and understand and exchange with them); and responses to majoritarian nationalism (how individuals and communities respond to exclusion and discrimination by, and questioning of identity in relation to, rising majoritarian nationalism). The comparative design helped to identify similarities and differences between the two communities, including in their experiences of migration or displacement, and their current identity politics.

4.4 Archival Analysis of Historical Monsoon Trade Route Records

Archival analysis was used to find out the long-standing mutual assistance networks by using historical monsoon trade route records from the IOR/L/MAR (Marine Records) and IOR/G/34 (Gujarat Factory Records) files of the British Library, India Office Records. These records include ship logs, port records and letters from Indian ports (Surat, Calicut) and African ports (Mombasa, Zanzibar) and extend from 1700 to 1900. A detailed data collection process was developed to collect data on seasonal mobility, commercial exchanges and mutual aid. The operationalisation of the seasonal patterns is done through the Monsoon Phase Coding scheme that classifies voyages by the typical monsoon phase in which they are likely to occur; North East monsoon (November–March), Transitional inter-monsoon (April–May), Southwest monsoon (June–September), and Transitional inter-monsoon (October). The Assistance Narrative Coding Scheme was a systematic classification of historical accounts of mutual aid into eight broad categories: Shared Provisions (AP) (food, water, grain, and emergency stores); Rescue by Local Dhows (AR) (towing and conveying stranded crew, etc.); Shelter and Harbor Refuge (AS) (safe anchorage, port entry, etc.); Material Aid (AM) (repairs, etc., ropes, sails, and grain, and emergency stores); Labor Assistance (AL) (lascars, porters, pilots, and temporary transfers of crew); Commercial and Credit Assistance (AC) (loans, advances, and deferred payment, etc.); Humanitarian Care (AH) (treatment for illness, burial, and recovery of the sick); and No Assistance or Conflict (AN) (refusal, theft, violence, and abandonment, etc.). The coding scheme was developed in order to make direct comparisons with prior studies about mutual assistance networks in the field of climate induced migration and to enable a diachronic comparison of solidarity practices across time.

4.5 Integration and Analytical Strategy

The four methodological components were used in a sequential manner. The archival study provided a historical baseline, creating a reference point for the baseline of mobility and solidarity in India-Africa relations which made a *longue durée* approach possible. Second, through the critical discourse analysis, the current policy discourse was analysed, revealing the tensions and solutions that can be identified in the official frames of South-South cooperation. Thirdly, ethnographic content analysis of urban youth practices provided a contemporary, bottom-up perspective on cultural exchange, in addition to the top down policy analysis. Fourth, the comparative case study of diaspora communities served as a link that connected macro-level discourse and micro-level practice of diaspora and historical migration movements and contemporary identity politics. The results of each of the components were triangulated to identify convergences, differences and emerging themes on India-Africa relations for a comprehensive multi-dimensional analysis. This collaborative effort breaks away from the one-dimensional picture of cultural affinity or strategic partnerships to uncover the multifaceted, complicated and sometimes contradictory nature of transregional relations in the Indian Ocean world.

5. Discursive Mobilization, Lived Cosmopolitanisms, and Diasporic Belonging

In this section, which builds on the historical and philosophical groundwork laid earlier, we present the empirical results of our multi-method analysis, illustrating how shared narratives are strategically used, challenged and experienced at various scales of India-Africa interaction. The findings show a complex relationship between official discourse, common practice, and diasporic identity construction, and offer evidence of the potential as well as the conflict that exists in mobilizing a shared sense of civilizational identity.

5.1 Shared Belonging, Identity, and Civilizational Linkages

Historical discourses of shared belonging, identity and linkages between civilizations show a complex landscape of inter-India and Africa history at various scales of interactions, where associated narratives of common heritage are called forth and opposed at the same time. This subsection explores claims of “civilization” as they are articulated, negotiated, and even utilized in the current political and cultural agendas, using the comparative study of diaspora communities and the critical discourse analysis of policy documents.

The book by Loimeier on the Indian community in East Africa gives some basic background of the communitarian organization and feelings of belongingness in the history of the community in the subcontinent and East Africa [10]. The research has suggested that belonging is a process, not a given, and subject to negotiation, especially in the case of African national states under very dynamic citizenship, economic opportunity and cultural recognition regimes in which the Indian diaspora had to maneuver. This finding highlights another continuity that persists in African contexts: that subcontinental identities remain important even at the same time that people identify as Kenyan, Tanzanian, Ugandan, and so on. The study underscores the fact that the diaspora's sense of belonging is not just about preserving culture, but is also shaped by state policies and economic pressures, as well as the politics of recognition in both Africa and India.

A study on South Asia goes further in exploring the concept of “shared civilization” by taking the concept of a common past and shared civilizational foundations as a major basis for cultural association across South Asian societies [22]. This research highlights the continuities of the past from a colonial and precolonial perspective, and tries to find a common point of departure in the Indus Valley civilization for the articulation of a shared heritage. The analysis used in this study is directly relevant to the nature of how the same kind of arguments about shared civilization can be made use of in the India-Africa context. For example, the Indus Valley's links with East Africa via the monsoon trade system might be a potentially similar symbolic basis for a common Indian Ocean civilization. The study does, however, warn that it is possible for these civilizational narratives to become politicized, with the potential to validate certain national or regional projects and ignore other histories.

The conflict over cultural identity among Indians in South Africa, as explored in the story of Mrs. Takurine Mahesh Singh (1872–1959), is a moving case study of the dangers faced to their cultural identity when they were migrants and displaced under conditions of colonization and indentureship [23]. The study rests on the conclusion that cultural identity is an important and major source of belonging and security and that the conditions of indenture (forced migration, separation from one's family and social marginalization) constituted a particularly serious threat to the cultural identity. These accounts illustrate the ways in which people and communities have adapted, through the celebration of rituals, religious practices, and the memory of ancestors, to this threat, a cultural resilience that the study describes. The finding is important to the understanding of the India-Africa relations, not just of exchange and mutual influences, but also vulnerability and adaptation. Because of this experience of indenture, there was a particular expression of belonging that was both Indian and African; and in the process hybrid cultural forms continue to characterize diaspora communities to this day.

In contexts of contestation, there is a useful conceptual framework that can be drawn on for understanding symbolic and cultural claims to belonging, namely that provided by the Cambridge review of ‘Culture and Belonging in Divided Societies’ [24]. The book, despite its non-specificity to India-Africa relations, places an emphasis on the symbolic landscapes—monuments, religious sites, monuments and cultural festivals—in the articulation of claims to belonging and exclusion. In the context of India and Africa, this perspective can help to shed light on the role of shared cultural symbols like the Swahili language and its Gujarati loanwords or the architectural styles of the mosques of the Indian Ocean can be markers of a shared civilizational heritage. The review also points to the fact that such symbols can be objects of contestation, as they can be used by state actors to advance particularistic claims and/or to marginalise minority communities. Such conflicts are also seen in modern political debates on heritage in India and in Africa, in which the idea of ‘civilization’ could be invoked to validate a nationalist narrative or to counter prevailing discourses of national identity.

The critical discourse analysis of policy documents shows a common structure whereby historical narratives of shared civilization are used strategically to legitimate contemporary partnerships, but there is an underlying tension between invoking shared histories and reinforcing state-centric sovereignty norms. We refer to this tension as the “Narrative–Sovereignty Tension” and it usually gets resolved by re-framing, making the two principles seem complementary instead of contradictory. For example, historical events of anti-colonial struggle are referred to in support of the cooperation in the present, while at the same time the principle of non-interference in internal affairs is emphasized. By this discursive approach, states can enjoy the moral benefits of common past while maintaining their sovereign prerogatives. The analysis, however, also shows that this resolution can also be a fragile one, as historical narratives evoke tensions in situations of challenge to the existing power asymmetries or calls for accountability in partnership arrangements.

The comparative case study of diaspora communities offers additional clues to the ways in which notions of common identity and civilizational ties are experienced and negotiated at the personal and communal level. A strong tradition of memory-writing and memory-sharing is a tool for the diasporic Indian community, especially the Oshwal Jain community, to deal with the question of belonging and to establish intergenerational and transnational solidarity. These are community histories, family genealogies and cultural festivals celebrating Indian and African cultures. The analysis shows that these forms of memory are not simply reminiscing about or looking back on, but are used to assert claims to belonging when the status of the community is subject to contestation. In East Africa, for example, post-independence policies of Africanization, which economically and politically disadvantaged Indian communities, offered the opportunity to memory-writing in order to claim a rightful space in the national story and to remain connected with India. The discovery emphasizes the need for cultural objects and rituals to help maintain transregional identities across time and place.

Although comparative material indicates a similar pattern of selective inclusion/exclusion, there was not sufficient evidence for a parallel analysis of memory-writing practices for the Siddi community in India. A race of people known as Siddis, who are descendants of East African slaves, sailors and merchants, have historically been the outcasts of Indian society, discriminated against for both race and caste. Siddi cultural pride is however gaining ground again in recent years and community organisations are striving to maintain African-influenced traditional forms of art and culture including the Goma dance and Siddi language. The cultural resurgence can be seen as an attempt to claim space in a setting of increasing Hindu nationalism, that sometimes brings communities with other cultures or backgrounds into marginalisation. Ultimately, the Siddi case illustrates how the concepts of culture, civilizations, and identity are inextricably bound up with state recognition and recognition politics, and how a discourse of shared civilization can be empowering yet also a place of contention and exclusion.

The policy analysis of National Adaptation Plans revealed that National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2025-2035 in the United Republic of Tanzania reflects robust commitment to an inclusive adaptation planning approach, in which there is a clear reference to indigenous knowledge, but no mention of shared regional history or Indian Ocean solidarities [14]. This omission is noteworthy and implies that, there is a lack of opportunity to draw on India's historical and cultural ties with Africa for building a united front against climate change. The NAP's commitment to indigenous knowledge, however, aligns with the philosophy of Ubuntu and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam which focus on communal wisdom and interconnectedness. The discovery has implications for the possibility of weaving shared civilizational narratives into climate adaptation plans as a way of strengthening the cultural aspects of cooperation between India and Africa and tackling a global crisis.

5.2 Colonialism, Empire, and Historical Mobility

The study of colonialism, empire and historical mobility suggests that the contemporary relationship between India and Africa is determined by the legacy of colonialism, labour migration and colonial formed diaspora communities. These historical dynamics left a lasting legacy of migratory, residential and cultural interaction which still underpins political and social relations between the two areas. As the raw research notes show, the insights from the critical discourse analysis, ethnographic content analysis and comparative case studies illustrate how colonial and imperial entanglements are an underlying context that can not be divorced from current political and cultural relationships.

An examination of the global governance and place-making of 1930s London demonstrates that Indians made meaningful space of place-making in the imperial and international arena. This study suggests that the Indian presence in London in the months of the Round Table Conference in 1930-32 led to the creation of a new space in London, where different visions of a global governance were expressed. The study shows that nationalists like Mahatma Gandhi, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and many others did not use London just as a place to petition the colonial power, but as an arena of trans-national networking and casting a vision of India as a global player. This is a crucial point to understand India-Africa relations because it shows how colonial mobility (people, ideas, political strategies) across imperial networks facilitated transregional solidarity. The networks that enabled Indian political action in London also brought Indian intellectuals and activists into contact with African political, social, and cultural figures and enabled the development of a common language of anti-colonial resistance and self-determination.

The use of global intellectual history to late colonial Indian international thought further complicates our understanding of how diaspora experiences and imperial structures political thought [26]. The findings of this study reveal that late colonial Indian thinkers did not work in binary terms of equality/hierarchy; they connected their international thinking with experiences like diaspora and structures like empire, which also involved Indian presence in East Africa. The research shows that the Indian intellectuals, like Benoy Kumar Sarkar, Radhakamal Mukerjee and K. M. Panikkar were well versed in the analysis of international relations which incorporated Indian philosophical viewpoints as well as Indian experiences in Africa. These thinkers did not just oppose imperial hierarchy in order to embrace a "naive" equality, but instead found themselves operating on a terrain of claims to equality alongside recognition of civilizational difference and imperial power. This discovery is a departure from the basic story of anti-colonial internationalism as a mere response to the empire and also shows the intellectual process of Indian thinkers who did not reject the empire but wanted to change it from within as well as create other systems of world order.

The chapter on the Indian diaspora in East Africa follows the growth of these communities in terms of belonging and state formation in Africa [10]. The research depicts the East African Indian communities as historically mobile and politically integrated into local politics, and demonstrates how the sense of belonging was reinforcing in the era of African nationalism and decolonisation. It describes the ways in which Indian traders, artisans and labourers carved out a niche in the ports of East Africa and their interiors, building temples, schools and credit associations that ensured community continuity over generations. The chapter also shows that the relations between Indian communities and African national states were not always smooth; post-independence governments adopted Africanization policies which reduced Indian economic and political influence. The historical trajectory resulted in a complex legacy of belonging, of Indian communities in East Africa being citizens of African countries, and at the same time having strong cultural and familial ties with India, which still influence their political positioning in today's world.

An ethnographic content analysis of the cultural practices of urban youth in Mumbai and Nairobi offers contemporary evidence of the continued influence of colonial legacies on cultural exchange and identity formation. The extraction schema for capturing “lived cosmopolitanisms” highlighted 8 salient features that were found to cross-cut the various discourses: the direction of cultural flow; the mode of encounter; its visibility; its degree of hybridity; its emotional valence; its relation to stereotypes; its temporal orientation; and its relation to shared future. The analysis shows that there are cultural infrastructures that have been established by colonial migration that continue to support cultural exchange, like Gujarati-language media in East Africa, Indian restaurants in Nairobi, or African music scenes in Mumbai. The popularity of Bollywood films in East Africa, for example, is an old story, dating back to the colonial era when Indian cinema was shown in imperial circuits, and is still an influence on youth culture today; participants indicated that Indian films provide them with fashion, language learning, and a sense of emotional connection to a shared Indian Ocean world. Likewise, Indian cities have become sites of cultural encounter with the presence of African students and professionals, where for example, African drumming, dancing and food is taken up and adapted by the Indian youth.

A comparative examination of diaspora communities shows how colonial and imperial entanglements have shaped differential mobilities and belonging in the present, leading to the formation of different identities and politics. The colonial era forged a pattern of circular migration for the Indian East African community, especially the Oshwal Jain community, who had homes and businesses in both India and East Africa. The pattern produced a transnationalized family structures and economic networks, which created what the study describes as “translocal” communities that are “entangled in a variety of geographical contexts.” The research reveals that this translocal orientation is still present in the modern times, as people in the community still have strong connection with their ancestral villages of Gujarat while they are also fully involved in the political and economic life of East Africa. But this translocal identity has also gained a level of contestation in an era of escalating nationalism in both countries, with diaspora communities having to make a choice between different nations.

The colonial and imperial situation in India produced other modes of moving and belonging for the Siddi community. The Siddi community's roots go back to East Africa, as they are a result of the trans-indian ocean slave trade that persisted until the late 1800s. Siddi community members had no direct knowledge of their ancestral origins and this compared to the Indian diaspora in East Africa which remained very connected to India through ongoing migration to and from India and economic exchanges. The comparative analysis shows that this rupture has resulted in a new mode of belonging: Siddi identities are negotiated mainly within the context of India, through cultural expressions like the Goma dance and the worshiping of African saints. The study reveals how the Siddi community has created the means to claim belonging in India and simultaneously to demonstrate their African origins in an ever-politicised environment of affirmative action policies and mobilisation around identity.

Another way to gain an understanding of the *longue durée* of mobility and mutual assistance in the Indian Ocean is through an archival analysis of historical records of monsoon trade routes from the British Library India Office Records. Assistance Narrative Coding Scheme (8 primary codes for mutual aid) was developed to be directly comparable to current information about mutual assistance networks in migration scenarios during crises of climate change. Colonial-era records show that there were wide-ranging networks of mutual aid among Indian and African maritime communities, including joint provision, providing rescue, dhow rescue, harbor and shelter refuge, material assistance, work assistance, credit and commercial assistance, and humanitarian assistance. Such historical records show that the dynamics of mobility and solidarity that define the India-Africa relations today are not only a part of modern times of globalization but have roots in centuries of maritime exchange between the two continents. The monsoon phase coding

scheme also indicates that there were seasonal patterns to these patterns of mobility, with vessels travelling when the monsoon winds were predictable, and the movements between the two zones were cyclical, ensuring regular contact.

The findings of the critical discourse analysis of policy documents indicate that the colonial and imperial histories of various countries are selectively invoked in the contemporary discourse on India-Africa relationship. The shared struggle of anti-colonialism is often used as an underpinning for partnership today and this includes the contribution of Indian support to African liberation movements as well as the solidarity of the African nations with the Indian struggle for independence. It does, however, show a tendency to gloss over the more problematic aspects of colonial-era relations, including the part played by Indian merchants in the colonial administrators in Africa, the economic exploitation of African labour by Indian merchants and the racial hierarchies that structure Indian-African relations under the colonial rule. It's a selective mobilization of history, and it's used to legitimize current partnerships without dealing with uncomfortable questions of power imbalances and historical injustices. The combination of Narrative and Sovereignty Tension found in the discourse analysis is especially prevalent in this context where documents have to find a balance between invoking a shared anti-colonial heritage and recognizing the complex and often hierarchical nature of the historical relations between Indians and Africans.

Policy analysis of NAPs, in particular the United Republic of Tanzania NAP 2025–2035, reveals a strong thrust towards inclusive NAP planning based on local knowledge, while no mention of shared regional history or solidarities about the Indian Ocean was found [14]. This lack is important in the context of the findings of the mobility and mutual aid patterns found in the archival research. Agricultural knowledge, water management techniques and climate adaptation strategies were also shared along monsoon trade routes that linked India with Africa for centuries. Not including this shared history in the current adaptation planning process is an opportunity that has been lost to use historical knowledge to inform the response to current challenges. The NAP, however, focuses on indigenous knowledge, which aligns with the philosophy of Ubuntu and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which underlines communal wisdom and interconnectedness, implying a possible ground for incorporating shared stories into climate adaptation measures.

The results of the following subsection confirm that colonialism, empire, and historical mobility are not only historical facts but are also forces in play in the present day relationship between India and Africa. Infrastructures of connection that have developed during the colonial era continue to support current interaction and exchange, but also bring about tensions and contradictions that need to be addressed in the present. Colonial entanglements are complex, evident in the selective mobilization of colonial history in policy discourse, lived cosmopolitanisms of urban youth, and identity negotiations of diaspora communities. The recognition of this heritage is crucial to a delicate and complex narrative of India-Africa relations that is aware of both synergies and hierarchies, of inclusion and contestation.

5.3 Cultural Exchange, Hybridity, and Material Culture

The India-Africa relation is not just political or economic, it is a relation that is constituted through the circulation of objects, practices and embodied knowledge in the Indian Ocean through cultural exchange, hybridity and material culture. The ethnographic content analysis of practices of urban youth from Mumbai and Nairobi, the comparative case analysis of diaspora communities, and the archival analysis of historical trading records for Mumbai and Nairobi, is used to motivate the analysis of material culture including dress, food, language and ritual objects as mediums of negotiating identities, expressions of belonging, and new hybrid forms that cross national boundaries.

A study of the formation of cultural identity through hybridization in the context of Portuguese intervention in Sri Lanka could be helpful in developing a framework which would be methodologically useful in understanding the cultural contact areas could be a hybrid cultural form that may be compared with India-Africa [27]. It looks at how a hybrid culture identity is formed, through the use of clothing in a Portuguese-influenced community, and how this possibility of being able to form one could be seen as an alternative to the idea of preserving one. They use visual observation and interviews to record the impact of Portuguese colonialism, and how the dress style became hybridised consisting of European and South Asian elements. The discovery has immediate relevance to the India-Africa context given the presence of hybrid culture forms over the centuries as a result of trade, migration and colonialism. Examples of such material products of Indian Ocean exchange include the kanga, a rectangular piece of cloth worn by women in East Africa, the use of which is also felt by Gujarati traders, or the Swahili proverbs woven into it. In a similar way Indian cooking has been influenced by the introduction of local ingredients and cooking styles into Indian dishes, resulting in dishes like biryani which are both Indian and African. It is particularly relevant that the emphasis is on dress as a locus of hybrid identity formation, as Indian and African fashion is often mixed together and new hybrid fashion styles emerge in the process, challenging old ethnic boundaries as created by urban youth in Mumbai and Nairobi.

The study of the linguistic aspects of cultural interaction examines the claims of contact with Dravidian influences in southern African societies from a linguistic point of view, and asks whether these claims can be linguistically sustained in the context of claims of historical-cultural contact. The research demonstrates that some parallels exist between the lexicon of Dravidian languages and the southern African languages, but the evidence of direct influence of Dravidian is not persuasive as many parallels are coincidental and/or the result of common contact with other language families. This finding is significant for the larger question of the cultural and historical connections between India and Africa and how these connections can be depicted in language and traces of culture. However, the study cautions that it is important to be careful in establishing a strong connection between linguistic evidence and direct cultural influence and common source, as this is not always the case. The study wonders, however, whether the Indian Ocean trade system afforded a continuity of contact in language, particularly in the Swahili region along the coast, where Gujarati, Hindi and Portuguese were introduced into the Swahili vocabulary. The methodological challenge in the study is important and relevant to this study because it highlights the importance of having strong evidence to claim an impact on culture and common heritage.

The study of cultural geography of India and current issues in cultural geography are used to have an overall conceptual framework to study Indian cultural relations with Africa [28]. The article presents the overview of the themes which have been in focus in the modern cultural geography of India. The article provides a survey of the themes like habitat, tradition, tribe, language differences, diaspora community, religious landscape, symbolism and media which have been in focus in the modern cultural geography of India. The article calls upon cultural geography as a useful tool to understand Indian society and identity at larger not only for the Indian diaspora, but also for the cross-cultural representation. It can be useful to grasp the nature of the material culture (religious symbolism, architecture and media representations) that creates common cultural spaces between India and Africa. For example, Hindu temples in East African cities, the serials on Indian TV in African households, and Indian spiritual practices (such as yoga) in African contexts are all mediated material objects and embodied practices. The cultural geography approach emphasizes the significance of the places, institutions and networks that unite people and things across the Indian Ocean.

The ethnographic content analysis of the cultural practices of urban youth in Mumbai and Nairobi provides plentiful empirical evidence for the mediation of cultural exchange and hybridity via material culture. The

extraction schema for capturing “lived cosmopolitanisms” highlighted the following key cross cutting features: direction of cultural flow, mode of encounter, visibility, degrees of hybridity, emotional valence, relation to stereotypes, temporal orientation and connection to shared future. The analysis indicates that the forms of culture, such as clothes, food, music, films, etc., are important actors in the exercise of culture, often in an active way and outside the boundaries of—or even at the margins of—the state-led culture. African fashion, for instance, has become popular among Indian youths, while use of kitenge fabrics and dashikis shirts are an example of an aesthetic and political appropriation of the culture. The participants expressed that African fashion was used to show solidarity with the struggle of Africans, to counteract the stereotype of African poverty, and to claim a cosmopolitan identity other than the nationalistic one. Likewise, eating Indian food in Nairobi, especially samosas, chai, and biryani, was seen by participants as a way to be attached to a heritage tradition even for those who had no close family relations with India. They illustrate how material culture is a place of negotiation of identity and belonging and thus create hybrid objects which are not simply Indian or African, but are instead composed of continuous exchange and adaptation.

The comparative case study of diaspora communities revealed that material culture is an important means of sustaining transregional identities across generations and distance. The memories of the Oshwal Jain community of villages in Gujarat are preserved and transmitted through material items such as photographs of families, sacred images and the Oshwal Jain heirloom textiles where they find their identity in East Africa. The analysis reveals that these objects are not only used for remembrance but in daily life as well, because with these participants noted that they wear traditional Indian clothes during religious festivals, they prepare Gujarati food for family occasions and put pictures of their ancestors in the house. These practices create a material context that can maintain a sense of “before” and “after”, and adapt practices to the context. The Oshwal community too have their own distinctive architectural style that is a blend of Gujarat architecture and Swahili architecture, making the houses Indian and African. The character of this hybrid material culture is a result of the community's dual identity and their longstanding presence in East Africa.

Material culture is something else for the Siddi, since it gives them a way to express the African heritage in a place where it has played a marginal role in the lives of others. Slaves brought the Siddi to the coast where they have lived with African cultural traditions such as drumming, singing and ritual dances such as the Goma dance the Siddi believe to be of East African origin. The study reveals that such practices not only are retained but are modified and resorted as part of Indian music and dances. For instance, sometimes Siddi Goma is done with a song in both of the African languages and with a song in the Gujarati language, while the drumming is a mix of Indian folk music. This hybridity is a product of the community's Indian experience and the community's on-going negotiation between African cultural practices and Indian cultural practices. The study also outlines how the material world (ritual drums, costumes, and musical instruments) still carries on these practices, and members of the community expressed that some of these objects are sacred and are passed down through the generations.

The historical background in terms of the *longue durée* of material exchange along the Indian Ocean trade routes is provided by archival analysis of historical records of trade routes. In the context of the assistance, the Assistance Narrative Coding Scheme has eight main codes that cover a rich matrix of material transfers and assistance between Indian and African maritime communities, from shared provisions to material aid to commercial credit. These records reveal that the exchange of goods – textiles, spices, timber, ivory – was not just a business transaction, but was also a part of trust, reciprocity and mutual obligation. The monsoon phase coding scheme also indicates that these transport of material were organised seasonally, enabling goods to be carried across regularised spatial sequences that ensured regular connections between the two

regions. The baseline provided by this historical information can be directly compared with the current information on material exchange and has shown some continuity and change in the patterns of cultural flow in the Indian Ocean.

Through critical discourse analysis of material culture, the study reveals a selective mobilization of material culture in official discourses of India-Africa cooperation in the policy field. According to the documents, there is a long civilizational relationship shared by the two, such as the textiles trade, the exchange of spices and cultural items. Also, the analysis romanticizes these historical exchanges, the power relations and exploitative relationships involving the commercial exchanges under colonial rule remain unmentioned. In this case, the Narrative – Sovereignty Tension that is apparent in the discourse analysis is particularly noteworthy as documents are required to balance both popular material heritage and the many-layered and often hierarchical aspects of historical trade relations. The selection of material culture legitimises the present day partnerships without the awkward issue of economic exploitation and cultural appropriation.

The policy analysis of the National Adaptation Plans (National Adaptation Plan 2025 – 2035 of the United Republic of Tanzania) shows that the plans are highly inclusive, based on indigenous knowledge, but no consideration was given to the shared regional history, or Indian Ocean solidarities. This is significant in the light of what was seen in relation to the exchange of materials during the archival study. Food seeds and farming techniques, water control and management, and adaptation strategies were also part of the ancient trade routes between India and Africa. Not acknowledging this common material history in adaptation planning in the present is also an opportunity lost to learn from a past knowledge base to address current issues. The emphasis on indigenous knowledge in the NAP, however, resonates with Ubuntu and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which highlight communal knowledge and interconnectedness, which may provide a foundation for integrating shared material heritage into climate adaptation measures.

The results of this subsection show that cultural exchange, hybridity and material culture are not just a consequence of political and economic relations, but also part of the India-Africa relations themselves. Objects, practices and embodied knowledge have travelled through the Indian Ocean and have created enduring infrastructures of interaction that have persisted to this day, as well as new hybrid forms which are disrupting the traditional distinctions between Indian and African cultural practices. The selective mobilization of material culture in policy discourse (1), lived cosmopolitanisms of urban youth (2), and diaspora community identity negotiations (3) all represent such complex heritage as the legacy of cultural exchange. To write a complex history of India-Africa relations, it is necessary to grasp the heritage that would allow for creative hybridity and power imbalance, cultural appropriation and contested meanings.

5.4 Comparative Civilization, Globalization, and Transregional Politics

Comparative civilization, globalization and transregional politics analyses shows the insertion of the India-Africa relationship in the wider perspective of debates on civilizational identities, global governance and the reframing of political space in the modern world. The critical discourse analysis of policy documents, ethnographic content analysis of urban youth practices and comparative case study of diaspora communities investigate the nature of the discourses of “civilization” in the context of “glocalization” processes and the transregional political entities that challenge the traditional state-centric view.

The shared civilizational framework of understanding, gained from the study of an enquiry into the possibility of a common understanding of South Asia in terms of a civilizational discourse, is used to analyze how civilizational discourses operate in the context of India-Africa. A shared civilizational framework of understanding is developed through an enquiry into the possible existence of a common understanding of South Asia in terms of a civilizational discourse, and is used to analyze how civilizational

discourses operate in the context of India-Africa. The study assumes that civilizational narratives can be used as an analytical prism for a common set of cultural values in states with similar historical trajectories and therefore for an analysis of a shared identity and regional cooperation under the notion of “common civilization”. The finding can have direct repercussions on the manner of the India's partnership with the African countries on the basis of historical-civilizational cooperation. Study reveals that the civilizational narratives are not only descriptive, but performative as well; they shape the political possibilities they claim to depict. The term 'civilisation of the Indian Ocean' in the context of the India-Africa partnership can be used to validate partnerships and to express a vision of transnational collaboration that goes beyond the limited scope of national interests, as it is based on the shared history of the Indian Ocean, its peoples, and history of monsoonic contacts that has formed the basis of cultural exchange and anti-colonial solidarity. The study also cautions, however, that civilizational narratives can place a political emphasis, providing a justification for a particular national or regional project, and omitting other narratives. This conflict is reflected in the critical discourse analysis, with documents using a range of arguments to claim policy missions and omitting the intricacies of the historical linkages between India and Africa, and of the contested and uneven nature of these linkages.

Lastly, through a study of socio-political encounters at the micro level in London during the 1930s, the dynamics of world order can be traced back to the global entanglements of these sites of encounter and negotiation, thus providing a foundation for thinking about India-Africa discussions of world-order in historically specific places. The results of the research suggest a picture of how Indians were involved in the London capital in the Round Table Conference sessions of 1930-32, and how local events were connected with larger processes of globalization and imperial change. The finding is relevant in the context of understanding India-Africa Relations as it demonstrates the manner in which building alliances and articulating alternative visions of global order happen in real and virtual places – the conference rooms, the social media – that are specific to the particularity of a place. The methodological approach to studying the interaction of local sites and global structures allows for an examination of how India-Africa cooperation is being constructed in specific practices of diplomacy, cultural exchange and knowledge production in the present. For example, the India-Africa Forum Summits, the work of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, the work of the Indian Ocean Rim Association and the expanding network of Indian cultural centres in the cities of Africa are all considered to be instances of place-making where transregional political formations are being articulated.

The study, which is an exploratory mapping of research collaboration between India and selected African countries in the past 3 decades, indicates that the India-Africa research partnership is moving towards a multi-dimensional aspect, and there is a thrust on knowledge production [29]. Based on the co-authorship patterns, the scientific collaboration status and research focus are mapped, revealing patterns of India-Africa research collaboration and the increasing academic connectivity between India and the key African countries, respectively, through country-level scientific collaboration and bibliometric trends. The findings reveal that over the past three decades the extent of cooperation between researchers from India and Africa has significantly grown, particularly in agriculture, medicine and information technology. This academic connectivity is not necessarily the basis for a wider political cooperation, but it is a form of “transregional politics” that is created not through traditional diplomatic channels, but through the production of knowledge, and creates networks of expertise and trust that can become the basis for facilitating cooperation. The main contribution of the study is the empirical evidence that the relationship has become more multi-dimensional than what is merely trade and diplomacy, but knowledge production as well. This discovery frees up the argument that India-Africa relations are not only the outcome of state-level activities, but are being created as well by the shaping and making of universities, research institutions and individual scholars through transregional networks of mutual cooperation.

The critical discourse analysis of policy documents shows that the narratives of the civilizational imagination are used in a consistent manner to legitimate new partnerships in the present, but there is still a tension between the use of common histories and a focus on state-centric sovereignty norms. This tension is what we refer to as the “Narrative–Sovereignty Tension” and typically is overcome by viewing it as complementary, not competing principles. For instance, the common anti-colonial experience is used to justify cooperation in the current situation, and the principle of non-interference in internal affairs is brought into play. In this discursive manner, the states can benefit from having a shared history without losing their sovereignty. The analysis also shows, however, that such a resolution is often superficial and subject to reemergence in situations where historical narratives are deployed to problematise existing power imbalances, or to call for increased accountability in forms of partnerships. The tension can be explained by comparative civilization, as the stories of civilisations counteract the thinking of the state-centred approach of studying civilizations and if they are shared are not limited to the nation-state but are often legitimated by the state for its geopolitical projects.

The ethnographic study of youth culture in Mumbai and Nairobi provides today's evidence of the formation of transregional political bodies in the everyday culture of youth and the youth's construction of their own identities through consumption. The following cross cutting features emerged as significant in the extraction schema for capturing “lived cosmopolitanisms”: direction of cultural flow, mode of encounter, visibility, degree of hybridity, emotional valence, relation to stereotypes, temporal orientation and relation to shared future. The analysis shows that urban youth are not only actively shaping transregional identities but, they are also using Indian and African cultural resources to develop new ways of feeling connected to the world. For instance, they follow Indian and African influencers, listen to Indian and African music, watch Indian and African movies and participate in discussions on the Internet that unite Indian Ocean youth. Virtual environments serve as non-government-led spaces for transregional identity construction and are what the study calls “digital cosmopolitanisms.” The analysis also uncovers the political aspects of these practices, as it is found that these practices have also influenced their political stance on topics like inequality, globalization and South-South solidarity.

The comparative case study of diaspora communities further indicates the construction of political transregional formations by diaspora organisations and networks. Transnational family structures and economic networks, especially for the Indian East African diaspora, and Oshwal Jain community, assist in sustaining transregional politics, but by means of kinship and commerce instead of official diplomatic processes. It is observed from the analysis that the community groups such as Oshwal Association and Jain International Trade Organization are responsible for economic transactions, cultural continuity and political lobbying in the Indian Ocean region and establish networks connecting Indian Ocean countries and the Jains around the world. Such networks are through which capital, information and political power are transferred and affect their economic and political outcome in India and Africa. For instance, diaspora remittances and investments are a significant component of the economies of both areas and diaspora political groups can influence decisions on citizenship rights, trade policy and cultural recognition made by the governments. The study shows that, far from being the instrument of state power, these transregional networks operate to a certain degree independently, providing alternative venues for political interaction and thus a counterpoint to state-centred methods.

This transregional dimension of identity is more diffuse with the Siddi community in India, because of the historical distancing from Africa. In recent years, however, the desire to connect with Africa has grown stronger, as has the interest of community groups in building relations with the African diasporas and in asserting a transregional identity to challenge their status as outsiders in Indian society, the study

demonstrates. The study documents the attempts by Siddi activists to participate in meetings of the African diaspora, to establish cultural exchange programmes with African countries and to seek special rights and protections as a diaspora community. These initiatives are a part of a transregional politics that aims at using African linkages to promote the interests of the Indian state and which contest the classification of the Siddi as a tribal community, and not as a diaspora. The comparative study reveals that the concept of transregional identity does not necessarily belong to the Siddi community, but rather it is a political mobilization, cultural revival and a strategic appropriation of African heritage.

Analysis of the policy documents of the NAPs revealed that there is a greater focus on inclusive adaptation planning grounded in indigenous knowledge, with no mention of shared regional history or Indian Ocean solidarities in the case of the United Republic of Tanzania (URT) NAP (2025–2035) [14]. The lack of this is significant because it is not obvious in the context of the transregional political structures of this subsection. A lack of recognition of shared regional history in climate adaptation planning is a missed opportunity to harness transregional networks and knowledge to help solve the global problem. The NAP's emphasis on the Indigenous knowledge, on the contrary, coheres with the abovementioned civilizational narratives, and offers a potential ground for transregional approaches to be introduced to the field of climate governance. The comparative civilization approach can also be useful in the question of how indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) have been produced in long histories of transregional engagements and by what means can they be drawn on to better inform the present manner of governance.

The results of this subsection prove that comparative civilization, globalization and transregional politics are not just theoretical constructs, but are in fact an active force in shaping today's India-Africa relations. Civilizational narratives in policy-making, digital cosmopolitanism in the articulation of the city by youth, and transregional networking among diasporas are three. These are all forms of political practice that are more focused on another conception of the state, such as its discourse in the policies, the new digital cosmopolitanisms of urban youth, and the creation of transregional networks by diaspora communities. These practices offer possibilities to work together and to be coherent and act in solidarity, but they also give rise to tensions and contradictions that need to be dealt with here and now. This knowledge is essential in developing a sophisticated narrative on India Africa relationship, a transregional narrative as well as one based on the enduring hegemony of state power, national interest and geopolitical rivalry.

5.5 Additional Relevant Contextual Studies

Several others studies provide context to the understanding of the multifaceted India-Africa relations along with the three key analytical frameworks that are discourse, youth practice and diaspora belonging. The studies are not directly related to the philosophical concepts of Ubuntu and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, however the studies provide an empirical evidence of the knowledge-based and cognitive concepts that underlie the cooperation between the two regions currently.

Exploratory study of the India's research collaborations with selected African countries has revealed that the India-Africa research collaboration is increasingly multidimensional and encompasses knowledge production over the last three decades [29]. It helps to trace the extent of collaboration and scientific interest between the two continents, based on their co-authorship, scientific cooperation at country level, and bibliometric trends, outlining the pattern of Indian scientific cooperation with African countries, and indicating the growing academic interactions between India and the key African countries. The study reveals that during the past 30 years, India has been actively involved in research endeavors across a wide range of sectors with Africa, and there are some successful relationships between the two in the fields of agriculture, medicine and information technology. The growing academic linkages are another example of 'transregional politics' that is not carried out by the diplomatic state, but by academic production, and that builds networks of expertise and trust that can lead to broader academic cooperation. The empirical evidence presented in the study is the most important finding that the relationship is turning more

multidimensional and not only one of trade and diplomacy but knowledge production as well. The discovery supports the idea that India-Africa relations are not just a byproduct of governmental initiatives, but are also being co-created by the involvement of universities, research institutes and scholars, who are forming transregional partnerships. The bibliometric analysis exposes that research cooperation among the African countries and India is confined in a few countries like South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia and research collaboration with the African countries is increasing at a higher rate as compared to the overall research collaboration with the world. The trend shows that academic dimension is becoming more important in the India Africa relationship, which might hold important ramifications for technology transfers, capacity-building and joint research directions.

Literary mind and thought and language studies are not directly related to India-Africa relation, but the study provides a broader cognitive framework to understand the concept of common cultural origin and the possible way for transregional cooperation in India-Africa relation [30]. This study is concerned with the origin of thought and language, and with the function of the story and metaphor in the thinking process of humans, proposing that the skill of narration is the ground for the intelligence and social organization of humans. This is a study that is tangentially related to the India-Africa theme, but which can provide an insight into how shared traditions of narration—the use of oral stories as a common practice of both Indian and African cultures—can be a basis for understanding and cooperation. This study's focus on shared cultural practices is in line with the research that indicates humans' capacity for narrative thinking opens up the possibility for shared meaning making across cultures. Though the study's scope of cognition and language is fairly wide, but, direct applicability is limited when compared to the other studies reviewed above, and the applicability of the study in India-Africa context is rather theoretical than empirical.

In policy analysis of National Adaptation Plans (NAP 2025-2035), there is a high level of attention to inclusive adaptation planning based on indigenous knowledge, but there are no references to regional history or solidarities over the Indian Ocean [14]. This lack is important, given the historical knowledge exchange patterns revealed by the archival analysis. The spread of knowledge of agriculture, water management and adaptation to climate change was also facilitated through trade between India and Africa along the monsoon roads. The lack of reference to this shared history in current adaptation planning is a missed opportunity to make use of the lessons learnt from that history in today's challenges. The NAPs, however, reflect indigenous knowledge, and are in line with the Ubuntu and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam philosophy, which emphasizes Indigenous communal wisdom and interconnectedness and presents a potential linking thread for community-based climate adaptation through Indigenous narratives. The emphasis of the plan on community-based adaptation, participatory planning and the integration of local knowledge systems is congruent with the emphasis shared cultural foundations in the overall India-Africa relationship though there is no direct reference to this.

Case studies of diaspora communities reveal that knowledge exchange does not only happen in formal academic settings, but also informally in the network of diaspora professionals, traders and cultural practitioners. The preservation of transnational family structures and economic networks provide opportunities for transnational knowledge about business practices, legal systems and cultural norms to flow amongst the Indian East African diaspora, including the Oshwal Jain community. Analysis of these informal knowledge networks shows that they can be more effective than formal institutional channels for promoting cross-cultural understanding and cooperation because they are a part of a relationship of trust and reciprocity that has developed over generations. The finding underscores the importance of the diaspora as a bridge between India and Africa, as a forum to share knowledge and skills, in addition to official diplomatic and academic engagements.

The outcomes of this additional contextual work reveal that the India-African relationship is sustained via a number of, intersecting, knowledge-exporting networks: formal (academic), informal (diasporic). These networks create the circumstances for trans-regional cooperation, for the circulation of culture, knowledge and ideas across the Indian Ocean. These knowledge-based aspects should also be understood to gain a complete picture of India-Africa relations, including both formal (institutionalised) and informal (social network) aspects of relations that sustain contemporary cooperation.

6. Implications for a Shared Ethos in Global Governance

The empirical findings presented in the paper have theoretical and practical implications on how one should think and act with respect to a common ethos of India and Africa in a global governance architecture. As a theoretical approach of our analysis, it questions the dominant realist and liberal institutionalist approaches to the nature of South-South cooperation that tend to frame the discussion within a strategic interest and/or institutional design lens. Instead, repeated presentations of civilizational stories, cosmopolitanisms of urban youths, and memory cultures of diaspora communities suggest a different kind of dynamic, more culturally specific. These are philosophically based on the relationship between Ubuntu and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, and are a relationality beyond and before the norm of sovereignty that is state-centric. This is not simply a discursive artifact; the Narrative–Sovereignty Tension is a real challenge to the Westphalian conception of international relations and calls for an ‘ethos’ to negotiate this tension between universalist notions of interconnection and particularist claims of national sovereignty. Through this research, we add to the growing literature about the “provincializing” of Western international relations theory, which aims to bring to the foreground the non-Western philosophical traditions as actors rather than passive recipients of Western thinking [31].

The findings offer a real-world action plan for policy and practitioner to create meaningful linkages between India and Africa beyond just transactions and trade. Official discourse, particularly in the use of historical narratives in policy documents, can be used to mediate the tension of sovereignty, and so strategic deployment of historical narratives can be used to legitimate partnerships. We also, however, find in our analysis that our understanding of shared history is romantic and that the term ‘colonial relations’ is used in a manner that hides the multiple and hierarchal nature of the relationship between the colonial powers and the colonised communities. In this context practitioners need to move beyond the sanitized jargon of anti-colonial solidarity, and acknowledge the complexities of overlapping histories with regard to indentures, Indian merchants in colonial economies and the ongoing marginalization of communities like the Siddi. A truthful and open history can promote more trust and trust building foundations for cooperation. Moreover, the cosmopolitanisms in everyday life among urban young in Mumbai and Nairobi reveal the ways in which cultural flows are creating transnational identities and feelings of belonging. Policymakers can help these grassroots dynamics by providing funding opportunities for cultural exchange programmes, encouraging the learning of Indian Ocean history in school curricula and providing space for youth-led initiatives which will draw on existing cultural ‘networks of flow’. The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) [14] of Tanzania does not explicitly mention the role of the regional history of the monsoon trade networks and mutual assistance, the incorporation of which could enhance the effectiveness of its adaptation strategies and make them culturally relevant.

The results from this study, however, are limited to certain aspects of the study that may limit the generalizability of the results. Though the multi-method qualitative design brings in rich and contextualized insights, it does not allow the researcher to draw inferences about causal relationships or quantify the occurrence of the patterns found across the large and varied Indian and African settings. It is worth noting that the critical discourse analysis was done with regard to a specific corpus of the policy documents and speeches, and may not reflect all official discourses, particularly from non-state actors and

African governments. The ethnographic content analysis of urban youth focused on two large cities – Mumbai and Nairobi – and might not capture the experiences of urban youth living in smaller towns or rural areas where cosmopolitan identities and cultural flows can be different. The comparative analysis of the diaspora communities was hampered by the absence of a study on the parallel diaspora community – the memory-writing practices of Siddis, which prevented the possibility of any strong conclusions about processes of belonging and exclusion between the different diaspora communities. The monsoon trade archive is very useful as a historical context, but has some drawbacks from colonial records as the testimony of the shipkeeper or colonial administrator is likely to be more abundant than that of the African or Indian maritime community. The methodological constraints of the present study does not mean that it could not be interpreted as an exhaustive account of the dynamics between India and Africa; it could only be said that it provides a suggestive glimpse into important dynamics which warrant further study.

Few areas need further investigation on the basis of this study. This study has paved the way for future study in several areas which are still under-researched. A comparative study of large-scale survey research would have been able to quantify the prevalence of cosmopolitan attitudes and hybrid identities we highlighted in the urban youth and could have been replicated in other Indian cities as well as other African cities, to see how generalizable it is. Initial reflections on 'cosmopolitanisms' of digital media and social networking spaces for transregional cultural flows and political mobilisation also point to a line of inquiry for further research. Such an ethnographic fieldwork, specifically with the Siddi community, dedicated to their memory work, cultural resurgence and political mobilisation practices amidst the growing Hindu nationalism would prove to be of enormous value for comparative study of diaspora communities. Such studies would be able to give a more detailed account of the Indian East African community and a more complex understanding of how identity politics have been influenced by the different historical experiences of migrants and/or diasporas. Furthermore, the policy analysis of National Adaptation Plans could be extended to increasingly more countries in Africa, to explore how and whether the region's history and Indian Ocean solidarities are being accommodated in climate governance. Last, research needs to be integrated with the Ubuntu and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam philosophical traditions, as living and evolving systems of ideas, instead of as a static historical entity. This would involve an inter-disciplinary discussion between philosophers, political theorists, and philosophers and practitioners from India and Africa about how these principles could be put into practice to address disputes within a region, to distribute resources fairly among the regions, or to provide guidelines for ethical technology transfer.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore if the common civilizational ideologies of Ubuntu and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam have the potential to be the basis of a new India–Africa order, one that does not stand on the principles of transactional diplomacy but rather mutual prosperity and global peace. These philosophical resonances have proved themselves not to be abstract ideals but have been mobilized, contested, and lived at several scales of interaction as we have shown in our multi-method qualitative analysis. In these visions of interconnectedness, however, there is a core tension that we can detect: universalist visions of interconnectedness within these philosophies always have had to deal with the particularist needs of state centric sovereignty. We advance the field by demonstrating that common cultural and historical roots are not only rhetorical tools but are dynamic in the creation of ideas for governance, diaspora identity and transregional political thinking. This book, therefore, challenges the traditional paradigm of South-South cooperation as a topic of strategic interest and institutionalization and highlights the culturally embedded logic of the existing India-Africa relations.

There are some suggestions for further research that could be undertaken based on the limitations of this study. Firstly, the study provided qualitative rather than quantitative analysis which in turn has the potential to be followed up with quantitative research. Secondly the ethnographic analysis of the study was

restricted to geographical area and can be extended to other countries and geographical area. A large-scale survey research in India and Africa comparing cities would enable us to quantify cosmopolitanism of the urban youth as observed, and specific ethnographic research with the Siddis community would enable us to make a more robust comparative analysis of their memory practices. Furthermore, by analysing more countries in Africa it would be possible to understand whether the opportunity for developing the plan in Tanzania is being lost in most countries or not. Finally, this study suggests that the institutional context that is ready to face and accept its shared history and the narrative of unity and harmony, but also the legacies of hierarchy, exclusion and contestation that have remained, is more likely to shape the drive towards the achievement of development goals in Viksit Bharat 2047 and Agenda 2063.

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