

AFRICA AND ASIA: CULTURAL SISTERS, COOPERATION STRANGERS UP TO THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Studies have shown strong cultural links and similarities between the African and Asian continents, ranging from historical links, religious beliefs, linguistic affinities, to music and dance, among others. Even in more conspicuous indicators like dressing mode and 'melaninated' skin, one can easily see the link and similarities between the Africans and the Asians. However, it is quite disheartening to realise that despite the strong historical, linguistic and cultural inter-connectivity between the two continents, there have been no strong relations and cooperation between them (Africa and Asia) when compared to the relations and cooperation that each of these two continents has with other continents of the world, especially Europe and America. Hence, this study examines the cultural and historical affinity as well as the similarities between Africa and Asia, and assesses their level of relations and cooperation in the present capitalist and West-dominated world. Data from primary and secondary sources were utilised for the study and historical methods of data gathering and interpretation were adopted. The paper holds that the continued activities of Asian countries in Africa, driven by their quest for natural and mineral resources could turn out to be 'another scramble for Africa', hence, proper management through more mutually beneficial cooperative arrangements becomes imperative. The paper concludes that nations cannot cooperate unless they first relate. Therefore, the paper recommends that Afro-Asian relationships should be geared towards sustaining and promoting the shared historical values and potentials of both continents in the areas of tourism, education, trade, and culture.

Keywords: Africa, Asia, Cooperation, Cultural affinity.

Introduction

Africa and Asia, aside from being the two largest continents on the Earth's surface, share many things in common, culturally and historically. Though, there is a long historical connectivity between the continents as though their fates were tied to each other. One of these, is their shared experience of European incursion, colonialism and European dominance of their lands between the 15th and the 20th centuries—an act of imperialism which eventually initiated the two continents into the global

system dominated by capitalist Western ideologies. The greedy hands of the Europeans have exploited both continents, and they have fought and sought freedom and independence the hard and soft ways. Also, both have survived the ebb and tide of the course of history, and have, in one way or the other, influenced each other with their course of actions and events both in ancient and modern times. For instance, in ancient time, there had been cross migration between the two continents (evidence of Arabs migrating to North Africa, and across the Sahara for trade with the Black Africans, abound), in modern time, the struggle for independence in Asia inspired similar events in Africa. However, one would have expected that after colonialism, Africa and Asia, because of their cultural affinity and shared historical experiences, would cooperate and partner firmly with each other for mutual benefits, even more than they do with other parts of the world, not neglecting their geographical contiguity. But at present, what exists between the two continents in the name of cooperation seems like a shadow of a 'casual handshake' between two strangers. Hence, where cooperation or partnership seems to exist, it is not different from the predatory arrangement between the West and its 'prey'.

Although, the history of cooperation between Africa and Asia appears to be a long-standing one, records reveal that the Bandung conference of 1955 was the first Africa-Asia meeting (Aneja, 2018), Africa was of no significant relevance to Asian countries prior to 1955. However, from 1955 onwards, China which is Asia's giant began to look for allies and recognition at the international scene, in the hope to consolidate her power through friendship and cooperation with several countries as leverage to oppose the western powers and the eastern bloc headed by Russia who were hitherto revisionist communist (Kanza, 1975). The 1955 summit at Bandung, Indonesia witnessed 29 Asian and African countries which came together to deliberate on the promotion of economic and cultural relations between their continents. Issues of concern and interest during the conference included the vices of colonialism, and the imperialistic tendency of the Western countries globally (Looy, 2006). Hence, with their shared colonial experiences and their struggle for national liberation, African and Asian countries sought to achieve a boost of the unity and cooperation between and among them through the conference. The conference thus became pivotal in the campaign against colonialism and imperialism vis-à-vis Africa and Asia (Wright, 1956). However, at this point, the question that is likely to cross one's mind is: after independence, have Asia and Africa been able

to unite and cooperate deeply and strongly for their mutual developmental benefits against the workings of the imperialist and capitalist West?

The thrust of this paper is therefore to examine the cultural and historical affinity as well as the similarities between Africa and Asia, and to assess their level of relations and cooperation in the present capitalistic and West-dominated world.

Africa-Asia Relations: Historical Connections

It is a common knowledge that sometimes when Africa is mentioned as a continent, some people, both Africans and non-Africans often referred it to the region south of the Sahara or what the West called “sub-Saharan” Africa—a region that is believed to be the “real Africa” because it is inhabited by the black and represents the “true African” cultures. Thus, the region northward (North Africa) is often separated or treated as different from the whole African continent. This notion or concept could be blamed on Eurocentric pseudo-academic Hamitic hypothesis, which tries to justify civilisation based on skin colouration. Thus, for the Eurocentric, North Africa is not part of Africa as it is believed to have been inhabited by the Hamites (light-skinned) who brought civilisation to the region. And as though by a strange twist of historical fate, the region is today inhabited by the Arabs and other groups who are of lighter skin than the Negroes dominantly occupying the region south of the Sahara. Hence, the region of North Africa is often contested by some people as being part of another zone different from Africa. However, for the purpose of this paper, Africa means Africa from Cairo in the North to Cape Town in the South.

It is important to note that cooperation is often used synonymously with integration, and the two inseparable concepts are always conceived at the levels of geographical contiguity or what is generally known as a region. Hence, the terms “regional integration”, “regional cooperation”. Regional integration as a concept has always been a challenging thing to define, especially as related to economic boundaries or geographical demarcations. While the argument about the meaning of integration rages on among scholars, the existence of the phenomenon of integration as either a process or state relation mainly on the basis of mutual socio-economic benefits between and among states remains undisputable (Ogwu & Alli, 2009). Thus, economic integration could be said to mean a proper arrangement among states that entails some political and socio-

economic costs built upon the elements of political will, commitment, concessions, and processes to review and adjust interaction, relationship and participation on the international stage, especially as it concerns economic advantages. From the above conceptualisation, it is evident that integration is a higher stage of cooperation, in other words, cooperation remains a phase of integration. Accordingly, one could deduce that integration (whether regional or inter-regional) has to do with all efforts aimed at facilitating cooperation between countries domiciled in the same region or within geographically proximate areas. And such arrangement could be necessitated or prompted by economic, historical, cultural and even global factors. Hence, the need for a stronger and more effective Africa-Asia cooperation, taking into consideration the above-mentioned factors.

Many historical studies have shown that Africa-Asia relations are not a new phenomenon. Indeed, these explain the basis of the current relations between the two continents, even though they (the relations) are deeply, strongly, and progressively expressed as they should. Going back to the beginning of human history, much work has been done pointing to Africa, particularly East Africa as the origin of human history; and the contribution of Africa to world civilisation could not be overlooked, either, particularly when taking into cognisance the history and civilisation of the Nile Valley. And it is in such early history of Africa and mankind, which is rife with the earliest human migrations, that Africa-Asia historical connections are made conspicuous.

Accordingly, Rashidi and Sertima (1995) argue that the first humans (*Homo Erectus*) migrated from Africa to Asia about 35000 years ago, and from when they moved to other parts of the world. Thus, the Perkin Man discovered in China and the Java Man have been argued to be varieties of the earliest African species (Rashidi & Sertima, 1995). More so, scientific studies (genetics) have proven this claim (Griffith, 2001). For instance, the first Chinese dynasty known as the Shang have been designated as one with black-skinned people, and Lao-Tze—the famous Chinese sage—was known in his black skin. Furthermore, the short, black men celebrated in a Chinese festival have been described as one of the earliest species of modern man on earth with the survival of their relatives across Asia. These ancient humans have been described as little *Africoids*, identified with different terms such as *Negritos*, *Pygmies*, and *Aeta*. They have been reported to be found in Northern Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Sumatra in Indonesia, among other places in Asia. Adams Bodomu, however, affirms that the choice of the earliest Africans

to migrate to Asia shows the first link and relationship between Africa and Asia. Thus, approximately one fifth of the population of China holds Africa as its origin in terms of genetic alignment (Hotz, 1998). More so, early Africans and Asians were invariably close relatives (Bodomo, 2001). Hence, historically, Africa and Asia could be said to be “closest sisters”.

Besides the ancient or genetic links between Africa and Asia, there are many communities of African origin in Asia, especially across South Asia, although these communities are isolated. These communities have often been reported to be underprivileged and with little or no connection with their ancestral land—Africa (Jayasuriya, 2008). The existence of an Afro-Sri Lankan community in Sirambiyadiya, some miles away from Puttalama on the Northwestern coast confirms the aforementioned assertion. And the people giving account of their history maintain that their forefathers came in from Madagascar, Mozambique, among others as slaves and soldiers directed by the European imperialists who conquered and controlled the Island about five hundred years (Jayasuriya, 2011). These people are today known as the *Kaffirs*.

There are also African communities in India and Pakistan. The Afro-Indians are called the *Siddis*, and they speak Gujarati, while the Afro-Pakistan’s are known as the *Sheedi* community, most of whom speak Baluchi. Although the African consciousness among the aforementioned communities might not be explicitly portrayed, much of, their dance, music, and many other indigenous speech forms reveal a strong “Africanness”. And they all share a common history of migration during the period of the slave trade and colonialism. More so, there exist several other aboriginal communities in Malaysia, the Philippines, Iran, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, among many others—all of which trace their origin to Africa. Hence, they are “African Asians” (Bodomo, 2001).

In contemporary times, new communities of African origin have been reported to be emerging in some big cities in Asia as a result of globalisation, multi-national corporations, travel, migration, and international trade. These cities include: Hong Kong, Delhi, Singapore, Shanghai, Beijing, Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Manila, etc. (Bodomo, 2001). Currently, Guangzhou in China is said to be “Little Africa” because it is the largest African community in Asia. The Africans in this community are said to have begun their arrival in the 1990s which marked the period of the fast-growing economy of China, and informed their foresight into the opportunities thereof, hence, they chose to stay in Guangzhou owing to its nearness to Chinese factories and relative ease of

shipping goods from there. However, it is difficult to estimate the African population in this community due to the fact that the Africans are very mobile, thus making their population constantly fluctuating. Hence, available statistics shows that about 20,000 were reported to be domicile for about six months at a time and even more. In addition, more than 200,000 Africans were reported as visitors annually (Atanasov, 2015).

On the other hand, there are also indigenous communities in Africa which have Asian links. For instance, in 1860, South Africa began to witness an influx of Indian migrants who arrived in search of job opportunities in the plantations owned by the European community in Natal. Most of these migrant Indians were Tamils. After serving for five years which was the normally acceptable duration, the Indians were given a plot of land, and sometimes some of them were well rewarded to return to India. Many of them stayed back in South Africa and ventured into other fields of endeavours such as shop keeping, independent farming on small scale, and domestic jobs, and abandoned the plantation work. However, other Asians arrived in South Africa subsequently, hence, a clear classification of Indians into two social group areas: The higher status Muslim traders and the lower-class Hindu (Zaidi, 1967). By 1960, South Africa recorded a total of 477,414 Asians in the country (Fair & Shaffer, 1964). The largest Indian community was in Durban, where 49% of all the Indians domiciled in South Africa equaled 35% of the population of Durban and simply outnumbered the local European population (Zaidi, 1967).

Although in East Africa determining the precise date as related to the first contact with Asians has been challenging, ancient records show that Indian and Arab traders had carried out businesses in around 60 A.D and 80 A.D. Accordingly, Hollingsworth asserts that Asia's contact with East Africa had begun long before the Christian era (Hollingsworth, 1960). Thus, Arab and Indian settlements later emerged and grew in East Africa (Zaidi, 1967).

Again, in contemporary times, there are vibrant Asian communities taking shape in many African cities like Cairo, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Lagos, Accra, Johannesburg, Cape Town, among others. In all, one could see a shared long and deep historical antecedent between Africa and Asia, and from earliest times through the periods of slavery/slave trade and colonisation, till present—all of which are accountable for the migrations and re-migrations and settlements of the peoples across the two continents, particularly owing to their geographical contiguity.

Africa-Asia Relations: Cultural/Linguistic Connections

Regarding cultural/linguistic connections, the Africans and the Chinese exhibit strong resemblance in their traditional religious practices, especially as related to the worshipping of their ancestors. Ancestors are worshipped like deities in traditional religious beliefs and practices of most African and Chinese societies. While some African families have the tradition of marking out certain dates in each year for the ancestor worship, the Chinese carry out their ancestor worship each year through the *Ching Ming* festival. Families in Hong Kong are often seen going to the mountains in April during the festival to partake in the ancestor worship by burning various artefacts of worship. Several other communities in Southeastern Asia as well as those in other parts of Asia also practice ancestor worship in one way or the other (Bodomo, 2001).

Another area of similarity between Africa and Asia is the belief in ghosts, which may be dismissed or termed as superstitious by other cultures. Both Africans and Asians believe so much in the concept of ghosts and that a dead person must be given a befitting funeral to enable a smooth departure of their souls from the physical world to the afterlife, otherwise, they would wander in the physical world as ghosts with the tendency of haunting humans. One interesting part of shared cultural tenets between Africa and Asia is in the area of anthropomorphism, in which humans are sometimes given animal characteristics and vice versa. This is as a result of their inclination to the philosophy of the dual existence of man and animal. For instance, some groups in Africa, such as the Dagaare group, the Igbo group, the Ibibio group, among others found in West Africa, hold a totem for every individual born in their society (Oral interview with Chief Ezekiel Akwaowo, March 18, 2024). This implies that every person born is believed to have shared destiny and soul with an animal somewhere in the wilds. Thus, the animal becomes the person's totem, and whatever happens to the totem, whether good or bad, happens to the human. For instance, if the totem meets any misfortune, misfortune befalls the person, if the totem is diseased, the person becomes diseased, and happiness for the totem means happiness for the person, and so on. Hence, the personality and the fate of totems become those of their human, and death for one means death for the other. In some groups, family members have a common animal type like their totem. That is to say, for instance, each member of a particular family has a particular python as his totem, different from others' pythons (Bodomo, 2001). While in other groups, each person may have a different kind of animal from the rest of the family members as his

totem. For instance, Mr X's totem may be a lion, while Mr Y, his brother, may have a dove as his totem. Among the Ibibio of Southern Nigeria, totem is called *ukpong*—a word which also means soul or spirit (Etuk, oral interview, May 10, 2018). This explains the belief in the shared soul and destiny between animal and human.

The Chinese, on the other hand, also hold on to their own totemism just like the aforementioned African groups. The Chinese totems have been displayed in their architecture, fashion, cuisine/utensils, among others (Gao and Yezhova, 2023). Every Chinese identifies with one of twelve animals as their totem. However, the Chinese belief in totem is not based on family line, but on the month of birth. Thus, each animal or totem represents a month. Rat, dog, sheep horse, among others represent months in traditional Chinese calendar (Bodomo, 2001). Hence, Just like the Chinese and the West African groups mentioned above, many Asian and African societies adhere to the belief and practice of totemism.

Furthermore, in those indigenous communities in Asia identified as Afro-Asian communities, there are very strong African cultural elements in their songs, dance, etc. In terms of dressing, one would not argue against the fact that traditional Asian dressing styles are similar to African one. For instance, Indian and Arabic dressings are very close to Hausa dressing. Also, one cannot deny the fact the almost every part of Asia has a family institution similar to the African family system. Africans and Asians believe so much in family bond and collectivism which is opposed to individualism—a rather alien or western value. Hence, Asians, just like Africans cannot be separated from their families, and there strict family values and tradition (such as respect for elders) to adhere to. There are many cultural similarities and links between Africa and Asia, but only a few can be mentioned in this paper.

On linguistic links between the two continents, evidences are abound. Suffice it to say that a good number of Asian languages have African roots, while some languages are clearly related to Africa. For instance, study shows the relatedness and similarity between Chinese and Yoruba languages (Ifeoluwa, 2023). More so, Hausa, Hebrew, Arabic and many other languages have been classified as Afro-Asiatic languages which reveals the linguistic relatedness between Africa and Asia. And several other Asian languages have been studied and labeled 'derivatives of African languages' The belief that the progenitors of the Chinese dynasties of Shang and Xia were black Africans who migrated to East Asia and got replaced by the Han-zhou Chinese is strongly upheld, accordingly, traces of the black progenitors still remain significant in

Chinese language. This element of the black progenitors was reported to have spread over East Asia based on the migration and dispersal of the group known as the Han across the region. In Japan, Korea, Vietnam, among others. And traces of this element remain significant (Bodomo, 2001). Nevertheless, the people with linguistic relatedness are unarguably related or have some form and level of relationship.

Using the genetic and typological classifications of languages, there are many evidences of connection and relationship between Africa and Asia, but few can only be discussed in this paper. There is no doubt that some African and Asian languages have genetic relationships especially based on the assessment of structure which entails syntax and vocabulary, hence, they have been classified as Afro-Asiatic and Dravidian languages. Some African languages and semitic languages of Asia fall into this category—examples are Berber, Oromo, Hausa, Tigrinya, Hebrew, Arabic, Assyrian, among others (Watson, 2001, Bodomo, 2001, Bodomo 2006). On the other hand, Malayalam, Tamil, and Kannada, spoken in South Asia and Southeast Asia are also spoken with variants in South Africa and Mauritius, hence, they have been classified under Dravidian group. It is therefore clear that similar or relate languages spoken in Africa and Asia remains a proof of long-standing relationships between the two continents.

Remarkably, the typological linguistic relationships are seen also in distant countries or sub-regions of Africa and Asia. Thus, Akan, Ewe, Daagare, Ga, Yoruba, Igbo, among other languages of West Africa as well as Chinese, Thai, and Zhuang of East and Southeast Asia have been identified as tone languages. Besides In addition, another common among the aforementioned African and Asian is the existence of the construction of serial verb that allows the possibility of plurality of lexical verbs in the same clause as found in Cantonese and Dagaare languages (Luke & Bodomo, 1998). However, the similarities in the typology of the above languages have been reported to be glaring, hence, the Association for Languages of Far East, Southeast Asia and West Africa (LESEWA) was formed. (Bodomo, 2001). Notwithstanding, this could be argued to mean a different level of cultural cooperation through linguistic affinity.

So far, this paper has been able to show the relationships, connections, and links between Africa and Asia through historical, cultural/linguistic lenses. Naturally or normally, such strong affinities should form the basis of stronger and deeper relations and cooperation between the citizens of the two continents, on one hand, and their countries, on the other hand.

Even though there seems to be such a phenomenon as Africa-Asia relations or cooperation, it is only a shadow of what it should be compared to the kind of relations or cooperation each of the two continents has with other parts of the world. There are, however, factors responsible for this situation. Hence, at this point, it is pertinent to assess Africa and Asia relations and cooperation.

Africa-Asia Relations and Cooperation: An Assessment

Here, one might be tempted to ask: Why do nations or people relate or cooperate? Or what are the bases of relationships or factors that necessitate cooperation among nations? The simple answer to these questions is that people and/or nations relate for mutual and common benefits, which may be economical, social, political, or otherwise. These relationships do not exist in a vacuum; hence, some factors form their bases. These factors include geographical proximity, shared historical antecedents, cultural and linguistic affinities, etc, as discussed above. It then follows that relationship precedes cooperation. This could be said to be another version of the popular saying that “two cannot work together unless they agree”; hence, this paper proposes that nations cannot cooperate unless they first relate. Relationship in this context means relationship in every sense of it which include establishing closeness and interaction among one another socially, culturally, intellectually, commercially, economically, etc, and most importantly, having and holding a brotherly/sisterly perspective of one another in all things, thereby strengthening the mutual consciousness of the relational phenomenon or link between each other which in turn would form the bases for more formal relational arrangement in the form of cooperation (Efan, 1997).

In the light of the above proposition, it is pertinent to ask the question: what do the Asians think of Africa? The answer to this question ultimately lies in the average Asian’s perspective of the world. Bodomo (2001) argues that Asians see the world based on “East-West Dualism”, and for this reason, Africa is absent in Asia or the minds of the Asians.

Thus, the bipolarisation of the world by the Asians into East and West has been significantly responsible for deprivation of a space for Africa in their mind. This is so because the Eastern half largely represents Asia while the Western half largely represents Europe and North America--the attendant consequence of this kind of world-view is that non-Eastern and non-Western states have been sidelined and almost non-existing in the

Asian conceptualisation of the world system. As a result, Africa with its endowments and potentialities that would have translated into an economic force and cultural partner with Asia for considerable mutual benefits merely remains insignificant in the heart of Asia. In any case, the little Asians' knowledge of Africa is largely based on the influence of Western media, which mostly portrays Africa in a negative light.

Based on the aforementioned, it is not out of place to say that Asia's perspective of the world system, and the place of Africa therein has affected Asia-Africa relations, thus being responsible for the nature of cooperation between the two world's largest continents. No doubt, there are many works on Africa-Asia relations in terms of partnership in trade, education, and diplomatic relations etc, but a careful and critical study of these works is likely to reveal that, as big as Asia is, only a few Asian countries, mostly from the Southeastern part of the continent, feature in the Africa-Asia arrangements, with China, India, Korea, and Japan taking the lead. But the big question is: for whose gains or benefits?

In examining the activities of India and China in Africa in relation to infrastructure, records hold it that through their companies, the two Asian countries have invested immensely in many African countries in the area of infrastructure which has been left moribund for decades. Hence, in the construction of several dams, roads, bridges, railways and the completion of telecommunication projects—all of which serve as bedrock for increased productivity and reduction of poverty in a nation—China's presence has been huge (Cheru & Obi, 2010). The role of Chinese construction companies in infrastructure development in Nigeria has been significant as they have handled the constructions of some major roads, railways and bridges in the country since 1995 when the Chinese Civil Engineering and Construction Company (CCECC) first took a construction project in the country which was to revamp the Nigerian railway system (Babatunde and Low 2013). No doubt, China and India have had long-standing political and economic relations with Africa hence, they are no new allies to the continent. However, what is new in the post-cold war period has been the interest of these two Asian powers in determining a definite relationship that is hinged on “win-win” strategy to ensure fair partnership, shared respect and mutual benefits with the aim of augmenting their status as powers to reckon with in the global configuration. Accordingly, Chinese government, 2006, came up with a policy paper named an “African Policy Paper”—a document with a proposed cooperation with Africa intending to cover several areas in subsequent years with pledging a new and long-standing relationship

with Africa premised upon the five principles of peaceful co-existence that encompasses respect for African states in terms of choice of development pathway, reciprocal gestures and mutual benefit, equality-based interaction; and consultation and cooperation in issues of global interest). Thus, plans, and bilateral and multi-lateral arrangements like the China-Africa Forum, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Asia-Africa Summit, and China-Africa Business Council were meant to enhance China-Africa cooperation. More so, China has been reported to have been involved in important role in Africa in the area of peacekeeping missions, and this gesture has been interpreted to mean part of China's effort to generate a level of power shift in her own favour in the global setting and also to gain the support of Africa as related to her 'One-China Policy' (Cheru & Obi, 2010).

In addition, it is important to mention that China allocated between five and six million Chinese Yuan (CNY) annually in her pursuit of cultural diplomacy with African states—a move highly criticised by the West as a 'charm offensive', employed by China for its imperialistic goals in Africa (Haifang, 2010, p 53). This criticism of the West is too bold to be ignored, and it is a clear case of 'setting a thief to catch a thief'. Thus, the West not only perceive the intent of the Asians, they know them as well. And this paper agrees with the position of the West. For instance, China, over the years has been sending their labour to handle works that Nigerian labour could not handle. Hence, it has been argued that Nigeria-China trade relation is based on the dynamics of power asymmetries where almost everything has been tilting to China's favour in their bi-lateral agreements (Uzonwanne and Nwokoye, 2025).

India, on her part, has also been reported and seen moving at an increased pace in her bid to make her presence felt in Africa, especially following the India-Africa Forum that was convened in Delhi, April 2008. This demonstrates "India's commitment to register her presence in Africa, arguably as a close rival to China as well as to other Asian countries, on the other hand, especially as the rivalry has witnessed other countries from Asia in the scene (Naidu, 2010). Of course, not ignoring her competition with the developed nations of the West, all in the pursuit of energy and raw materials acquisition to fast-track her evolving economy. Again, through different initiatives, India marked improved level of cooperation with Africa which be seen indices of enormous commitment to the continent. Focus Africa Programme (2002), the Techno-Economic Movement for Cooperation with nine African countries and India (TEAM 9), 2003, coupled with the training and technical assistance offered to some African

states through the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme are good examples of India's initiatives toward Africa in the 21st century. Also, important to mention is that Indians who are found across Africa have been integrated into the social, economic and cultural tapestry of their recipient African communities. This situation has reinforced, to some extent, the almost-lost social and cultural bonds between Africa and Asia.

Arguably, just like China, India's growing presence in Africa and her dealings with African states could be said to be propelled, to a large extent, by the perceived and expected benefits to her. Thus, Africa's interest seemed minimal or non-existent in the mind of Asian giants. Other issues to be considered regarding the activities of Asian countries in and with Africa include the deterioration of African ecosystem, the undermining of African labour force, the undermining of local industries and the attendant consequences on the already weak economies that lack the requisite trappings to vie favorably with the Asian giants. More so the support of India or any Asian power to African regimes that are anti-democracy remains a huge set-back and a suspicious gesture (Cheru & Obi, 2010). A good example is Sterling Global Limited, the Indian multinational company in the energy sector in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, has been reported involving in tax evasion, worker maltreatment, environmental pollution, communal crises, illegal exploration and exploitation, among others—all of which are inimical to socio-economic development of the host community in particular and Nigeria in general (Oral Interview with Otong Emmanuel, March 3, 2025). More so, report such as this depicts a discredit on Asia-Africa relations/cooperation (Oral Interview with Effiong Paul, July 14, 2025).

Hence, the growing concern is that the increasing presence and activities of the Asian powers in Africa, which is fuelled by their quest for energy and other natural materials, if not properly handled by more mutually benefitting cooperation arrangements, could turn out to be 'another scramble for Africa'—a scenario that led to the partition, subjugation and exploitation of the continent by the European powers from the 19th century up to the 20th century. This paper hereby argues strongly that what Africa needs now is not a re-colonisation from a sister continent (Asia) which, among other historical connections as well as cultural and linguistic links, also suffered the dehumanising fate of colonisation from the West, hence fully aware of the pains. What Africa needs now is a more mutually beneficial cooperation with the sister continent for balanced gains. It, therefore, becomes the concern of this paper arguing

that what have existed, over the years, as Africa-Asia relations in terms of economic and technical cooperation, political alliance, partnership, trade agreement, cultural diplomacy, aids to Africa, etc, have been a replica of western colonialism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism orchestrated by the Asian giants to gain their share of Africa's pound of flesh, even having suffered same or similar fate from the capitalist West and despite all their historical and cultural affinities with Africa.

Speaking of aid from Asian giants to Africa as a means to enhance development, it would be profitable to Africa to heed the warning of Tandon (2008) who stated clearly that Africa does not need aid but the proper wheels to drive Africa to the desired height of development (Tandon, 2008). Thus, if Asia is genuinely interested in the equal or equitable development of Africa and Asia, the horse of such development should be true balanced co-operative arrangements that put the citizens of both continents at par with one another through equal opportunities provided by such formal arrangements, it is only then that aid to Africa can make real sense.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has shown that Africa and Asia have long and strong historical, linguistic, and cultural connections and affinities, coupled with their geographical proximity. Archaeological and genetic studies have proven this fact, and Africa is being revealed to be the earliest home of Asians as well as all of humanity. However, Africa and Asia have not really and fully taken advantage of their shared identity to strengthen the bond between them by way of strong relationships based on the conscious awareness of the said shared identity or common ancestry or links. Thus, it becomes disheartening to realise that an average Asian knows little or next to nothing about Africa due to how they (Asians) see the world, which is from a dual perspective of East-West dichotomy. This view affects their relationships with Africa and Africans, thus making Africa a distant stranger in Asia's mind. And this, in turn, affects cooperation between the two continents. Hence, only a few Asian nations, known as Asian giants, feature in Africa-Asian relations in terms of cooperation, partnerships, alliances, etc. Besides, the cooperation that exists between African and Asian countries is not geared towards mutual benefits, as the Asians, just like the Europeans and Americans, are driven by imperialistic and exploitative desires; hence, they (Asian giants) seem to engage in 'another scramble for Africa' and a re-colonisation of

the continent. However, for better relationships and mutually beneficial cooperation between Africa and Asia:

- Asians and Africans must know and be conscious of their shared historical, linguistic and cultural background, which must be taught as the basis of better relationships and cooperation among them.
- Asians should drop their conceptual perspective of the world in a duality of East-West dichotomy and begin to see the world as it is, comprising other regions which belong to neither East nor West. Hence, Africa will occupy a conceptual space in their minds. This would encourage better relationships and cooperation between Africa and Asia.
- Africans in Asia should serve as ambassadors and marketers of Africa, selling Africa and her potential in the areas of tourism, education, trade, and culture to Asia.
- Asian companies should adjust to recruiting more of African labours within their host communities rather their bringing their own labours to Africa to compete or sideline the local labour.
- African and Asian countries should go into trade relations on equal benefits to each other.
- Africa and Asia should constantly be aware of the fact that they constitute the greatest percentage of the world in terms of landmass, natural resources, and population, which are the factors that attracted the West to their colonisation and exploitation. Thus, if they (Africa and Asia) come out strong together with tight and strong relationships and cooperation, they will rule the world as the world has ever ruled or wanted to rule them. Or create a more balanced world than the present one, orchestrated by the capitalist West.
- Africa on her own should sit up in her relationships with Asia, knowing that the current global mantra is that “the business of business is business” by ensuring that to go into cooperation that only guarantees the mutual benefits of both continents, thus avoiding a situation that would reinforce her image of being a global beggar.
- Finally, Asia, on her part, should be aware that Africa is her sister continent, hence should be treated as such in relationships and cooperation, and not like a distant stranger, especially in the more westernised and capitalist world of today.

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