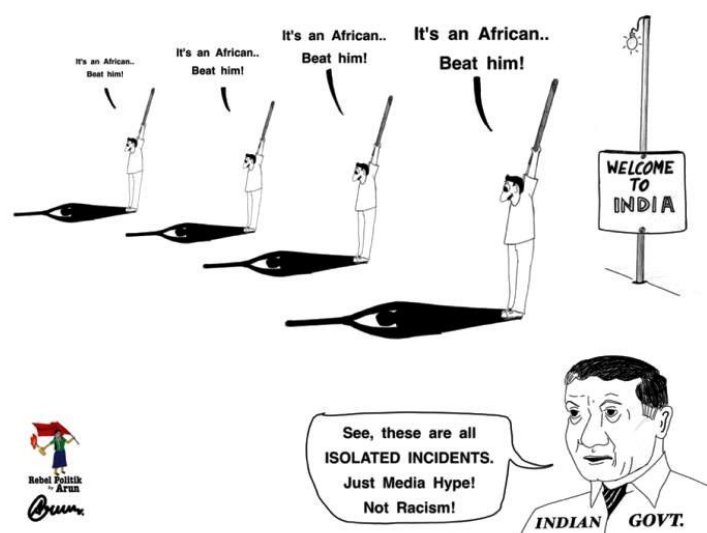


# African migrants plight in India: Afrophobia impedes India's race for Africa's resources and markets

Dirk Kohnert <sup>1</sup>



Racist attacks on African migrants in India <sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** Africa and India share a long history of trade, investment and slavery. The Portuguese alone brought up to 80,000 slaves from Mozambique to India since the 16th century. Unlike slaves in other parts of the world, African slaves, soldiers, and traders had a strong military and cultural influence on India's culture and society. Some of the slaves even held privileged positions. Today India competes with other global players, especially China, for African resources and markets. Growing racism and Afrophobia towards African migrants, however, could hamper the ambitions of the New-Delhi government. India's social networks and political leaders are increasingly looking for scapegoats and “strangers” to blame for their failures due to religious, racist and linguistic prejudice. Racism and Afrophobia did not appear first under Modi's administration, but they have become more daunting and contagious. The famous Indian writer and political activist, Arundhati Roy, rated Indian racism towards black people as almost worse than white peoples' racism. For example, Africans, who were often summarily disqualified as ‘Nigerians’, were generally accused of being drug dealers and even suspected of ‘cannibalism’. Yet, Indian authorities at all political levels did not effectively counter this. On the contrary, they not infrequently encouraged these prejudices. Modi, for example, compared breakaway Indian regions to ‘Somalia’.

**Keywords:** India, Africa, international migration, xenophobia, Afrophobia, racism, violence, Afro-Indian relations, informal sector, illegal migration, forced migration, slave-trade, minorities, remittances

**JEL-code:** F16, F22, F24, F51, F54, I24, I31, J46, J61, N15, N35, O15, O17, O53, Z13

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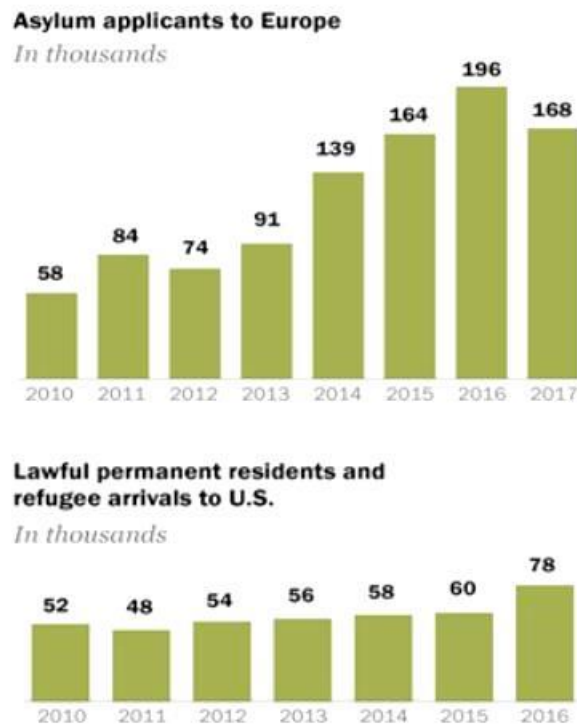
<sup>2</sup> Cartoon: [Racist Attack in India of Nationals From African Region](#), Illustration: V. Arun. Source: *Rebel-Politik*.

# 1. Introduction

Whereas modern African migration to Europe, the USA and even China has been well documented (Giese & Marfaing, 2019; Kohnert, 2007, 2011), research on the movement of Africans to India in recent times started only during the last decade and remains an underresearched area. This might not just be due to the different scale of the problem but also to the pronounced [Afrophobia](#) and [racism in India](#), notably against people of dark colour like North-East Indians.

To give an idea of the vast discrepancy between the numbers of African migrants and refugees on different continents, basic data on African migration to Europe and the USA will be given. Migration from Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) to Europe and the United States grew steadily over the past decade with more than a million Sub-Saharan Africans moving to Europe since 2010. The migrant stock of SSA migrants in Europe was 4.15 Mio and 1.55 Mio in the U.S. in 2017 (Connor, 2018).

**Graph 1: Influx of African refugees to Europe and the USA, 2010-2017**



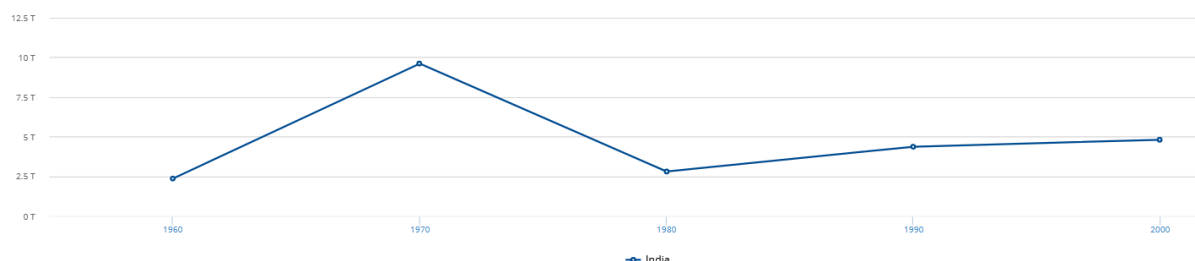
Source: Connor, 2018; PEW Research Center <sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, modern African migration to India, with a total of estimated 60.000 migrants, embodied only a small fraction of African refugees in the EU and USA (see Graph 1), and just little more than a tenth of the estimated 500.000 African migrants in China (Cissé, 2021). Yet, one has to bear in mind that all these figures are well-informed estimates at best. They reflect the actual situation only insufficiently because of the large share of irregular (illegal) migrants. Despite its relatively small number, African migrants' plight in India was outstanding because of racism and the prevailing Afrophobia in India.

<sup>3</sup> SSA migration to Europe includes the EU, Norway and Switzerland (asylum applications only; irregular migration not included). Database: Eurostat, March 14, 2018; U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security, U.S. State Dept., March 13, 2018

Indian racism towards black people still is almost worse than white peoples' racism, at least according to the judgement of the internationally renowned Indian writer and political activist, [Arundhati Roy](#). Even [Mahatma Gandhi](#) was an ardent racist who despised native Africans, whom he disqualified as 'savages' and '[Kaffirs](#)' (Suroor, 2015).

**Graph 2:** African migration (total of 45 countries) to India, 1960 – 2000 (in thousands)



Source: Global Bilateral Migration

Source: WB (2021): Databank - [Global Bilateral Migration](#)  
(Last updated: 06/28/2011, no more recent data available)

The total of African migrants in India increased from 34.204 (1960) to 107.746 (1970, Uganda crisis), 44.649 (1980), 57.936 1990, 62.086 (2000) (WB-2021: Global Bilateral Migration). The major countries of origin were [Uganda](#), [South Africa](#), [Kenya](#), [Nigeria](#), [Zambia](#), [Algeria](#), [Burkina Faso](#), [Morocco](#) and [Mali](#). They alone accounted for almost 51.000 migrants (see Tabel 1: Major countries of origin of African migration, 1960-2000).

**Tabel 1:** Major countries of origin of African migration to India, 1960-2000

African migrants to India, 1960-2000	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Uganda	5.254	28.793	9.866	1.999	11.575
South Africa	9.327	3.759	5.266	23.364	9.041
Kenya	3.083	3.819	8.518	7.937	6.801
Nigeria	2.608	14.050	4.185	1.249	6.095
Zambia	2.056	11.081	3.083	979	5.007
Algeria	2.351	9.606	2.795	4.359	4.799
Burkina Faso	1.508	6.161	1.793	2.796	3.078
Morocco	1.495	6.108	1.777	2.772	3.051
Mali	634	2.591	754	1.176	1.294
	<b>28.316</b>	<b>85.968</b>	<b>38.037</b>	<b>46.631</b>	<b>50.741</b>

Source: WB (2021): Databank - [Global Bilateral Migration](#)  
(Last updated: 06/28/2011, no more recent data available)

Nevertheless, Africans played a major role in India's history as imported slaves, loyal soldiers and traders. This will be demonstrated in the following, first, by delineating the history of Africans in India. The latter is quite remarkable because it diverges from the well-known general pattern of the history of the [Atlantic slave trade](#) and [African slavery in the Americas](#). Secondly, problems of current African migration to India will be analysed. Thirdly, the bearing of African migrants on the India-China rivalry for African resources and markets will be delineated. The conclusion provides an outlook on the future development of African-Indian relations.

## 2. Succinct history of Africans in India

First records of trade between Africa and India date back to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C. concerning the Egyptian queen [Hatshepsut's](#) expedition to the [Land of Punt](#) (a Red Sea coastal region up to modern Somalia)(Kuczkiewicz-Fraś & Czekalska, 2017). Most Africans, however, came to India by the Arab, later on, complemented by the colonial Portuguese slave trade, from Eastern Africa which has been documented already since the first century A.D. by Greco-Roman merchants. Yet the borderline between captives and traders was often blurred. From the sixteenth century, the famous invincible fort [Murud-Janjira](#) on an island just off the north-western Indian coast in the Raigad district of [Maharashtra](#) became the headquarters of Africans (*siddis*) who ruled the [Janjira](#)- and [Sachin](#) princely states up to India's independence (Silva, 2017). People of African descent, called *Siddis*, inhabit both contemporary [India](#) and [Pakistan](#). They originated mostly from [Bantu speaking peoples](#) of [Southeast Africa](#), along with [Habesha](#) immigrants from the highlands of Ethiopia and Eritrea. They included slaves, mercenaries, merchants, sailors, and [indentured servants](#). The Siddi population in both countries is currently estimated at around 850,000 persons. The Siddi in Indian are living mainly in [Karnataka](#), [Gujarat](#) and [Hyderabad](#). Siddis are primarily Muslims, although some are [Hindus](#) and Christians. Siddis in [North Karnataka](#) and [Saurashtra](#) (Gujarat) were even officially recognised as socially and economically disadvantaged and empowered with [Scheduled Tribe status](#) under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution (Silva, 2017). Thus, in former times the Siddi's slave status embodied also chances of social mobility (Jayasuriya, 2009). However, these opportunities got lost to India's modern Siddi population. Over the centuries African slaves transferred to India got different appellations, but now the general denomination used for the Afro Indians is [Siddi](#) (Kuczkiewicz-Fraś & Czekalska, 2017; Harris, 1971; Pinto, 2019; Basu, 2001; Obeng & Almeida, 2020).

Malik Ambari (1548 –1626)



African prime minister of [Ahmadnagar Sultanate](#), India  
Source: [Malik Ambar](#), Wikipedia

Ikhlas Khan c. 1650



African prime minister of [Bijapur](#)  
Source: [Ikhlas Kahn](#), wikimedia

Outstanding personalities of African descent, as well as Afro-Asian Communities, have been known for centuries not just in India, but also in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Iran and Iraq. Some of them were renowned military leaders, administrators, politicians and concubines. Malik Ambar (1548 –1626), for example, was a [Siddi](#) military leader and prime minister who later became a kingmaker and de facto ruler of the [Ahmadnagar Sultanate](#), in the Deccan region of India ([Malik Ambar](#), Wikipedia). He was sold into slavery by his parents from the [Harari Region](#) of Ethiopia because of their extreme poverty. The death of his master freed him, and he subsequently set out to try his luck by gathering an army of locals and other Africans as mercenaries. Later on, he became vassal of Chingiz Khan, the prime minister of the Deccan state of Ahmednagar, an Ethiopian like him (Gupta, 2021). Another well-known example is Ikhlas Khan (around 1650), a renowned general of the [Bijapur Sultanate](#) who became the African prime minister of [Bijapur](#) ([Ikhlas Kahn](#), Wikimedia).

Most Africans, however, were integrated into their host community as ordinary people (Pinto, 2019; Basu, 2001). According to Pinto, who quotes correspondent Karuna Madan's article in the Indian daily *Gulf News*, correspondent Karuna Madan writes, nowadays there are approximately 60,000 Africans of different nationalities residing in India (Pinto, 2019; Madan, 2019). According to the Association of African Students in India (AASI-Pune), an umbrella to all African students in India, founded by late Malawian President, Prof. [Bingu Wa Mutharika](#), who was a student at the [Shri Ram College of Commerce](#), University of Delhi, about 25,000 Africans study in Indian universities. They have been attracted by India's high academic standards, low fees, and the use of the English language as the medium of instruction (Pinto, 2019).

Their straightforward assimilation of Africans into the pronounced cultural diversity of the new socio-cultural setting in India's history in pre-colonial times may have contributed to their acceptance and relative invisibility. Assimilation and social mobility were mainly due to the slaves' conversion to the Islamic world of their rulers (Silva, 2017). Moreover, their African physiognomy and skin colour were blurred by similarities with other domestic ethnic groups. Last, but not least, identity has always been a dynamic concept, based on common heritage and social belonging. Thus, the internationally renowned Indian economist, philosopher, and Nobel Laureate, [Amartya Sen](#), voiced his concern that the commonly held assumption, somebody would belong to just one ethnic group or community, was misleading, because, for example, 'Africans' and 'Asians' were competing identities. Yet, Afro-Indians had been able to reconcile the two ethnic groups with a hybrid identity and otherness. This self-identification would be a precondition of the diaspora beginning to learn from its history and traditional culture (Silva, 2017).



### 3. Problems of modern African migrants in India



Cartoon: '[Africans Attacked in Delhi](#)'.

Source: Mika, *Clarion-India*, accessed: 29 Dec. 2021

It is common knowledge, well documented by the scholarly international discussion, that the Indian society, in general, is racist, and 'average' Indians often entertain massive prejudices against 'strangers' (Chakrabarty, 2016; Bora, 2019; Chavers, 2009; Pulla et al 2020).). The latter may be citizens from other Indian states, persons with a particular physiognomy, individuals that speak a different language or show different food preferences. Also, the importance of skin colour, more precisely whiteness, has been a major determinant of social relations and status. According to Virmani-Boutier, the obsession of Indian society with coloured complexion increased in recent times. Indian society became more and more colour conscious during the past two or three decades (Virmani-Boutier, 2020). This is all the more surprising since India's most popular God, [Krishna](#), a major deity in [Hinduism](#), according to the most sacred of the religion's scriptures ([Bhagavat Gita](#)), was of a dark colour (Viswanathan, 2016). The same was said to apply to [Draupadi](#), the heroine of the [Hindu epic, Mahabharata](#) (Virmani-Boutier, 2020).

God [Krishna](#), imagined as a baby on a swing



Source: unknown Indian painter, Râgmâlâ series, c. 1755-1760, [Krishna](#), Wikipedia

Thus, since colonial times, especially people from northeast India frequently face racial discrimination and have also been violently attacked just because of their ‘otherness’. They were often called ‘*chinky*’ and blatantly associated with a ‘tainted character violence, savagery and insurgency because of their ‘mongoloid’ (Chinese) appearance (Samson, 2017). Insulting people because of their skin colour is still considered to be a socially accepted behaviour in India. Politicians, media and even mainstream cinema contribute to legitimising racist behaviour by reproducing the same stereotypes (Chakrabarty, 2016). Moreover, racism is aggravated and complemented by the rigid [Indian caste system](#). Yet, since colonial times most Indians, notably the political and economic elites, prefer to evade this problem by pretending racism to be just the reflection of cultural differences, whereby culture is a mere substitute for race (Bora, 2019).

Therefore, it is no surprise that Indians also display a racist attitude towards African migrants. Nowadays, most African come to India in the pursuit of their post-graduate studies, last, but not least, because Indian universities count higher than the chronically defunct university system of [Sub-Saharan Africa](#) (excluding some outstanding South African universities). Moreover, former English speaking African colonies and India share not only the language but also the legacy of the [Oxbridge](#) university system (Assié-Lumumba, 2017). However, Indian media, social media and even most [Bollywood](#) movies mostly portray Africans as drug dealers, criminals and loose women. The academic achievements of African students and the general hardships faced by Africans in the country get limited coverage (Chakrabarty, 2016). Meanwhile, African migrants impact the social and cultural life in India’s major cities like [New Delhi](#). Thus, they raise ‘claims to the city’ through various actions, worship and leisure customs and practices (Gill, 2021; 2021a). This may have provoked additional resentments. Last, but not least, because of the racialised and legally precarious status of informality and ‘illegality’ of these migrants. Local Indian residents thus cultivated their prejudices vis à vis their African neighbours. These prejudgements articulated with the dynamics of urban change to produce precarity for the migrants, although the latter tried to minimize confrontations (Negi & Taraporevala, 2018). All this created novel entanglements between migrants and intermediaries, like property brokers, but occasionally also resourceful exit practices for unauthorised migrants (Gill, 2021).

However, there exists a notable exception to the general rule of Afrophobia which dates back to the early time of [independence of India](#). Then, African students had been welcomed to India's university to assist the [Kenyan](#) government to expand higher education courses independent of British colonial control. Thus, New Delhi, within the framework of the common anti-colonial struggle, tried to undermine the British colonial educational system in its African colonies by providing a valuable alternative to the British control system of the African elite (Charton, 1998).

Nevertheless, Afrophobia prevailed. Thus, on 28 March 2017, hundreds of Indians in [Greater Noida](#), a planned city in the neighbourhood of [Uttar Pradesh](#) near New Delhi, went on a mob rampage against Africans, instigated by online groups in [social media](#) (Bhattacharjee, 2017). The violence was sparked by allegations that five African students were involved in the overdose death of a young Indian boy. The attack took place in a shopping complex where some African nationals had gone for a meeting. They got arrested, but shortly afterwards released, because of lack of evidence. According to the local police ten people, mostly Nigerian students were wounded (Akela, 2017). The assault in Greater Noida was a reminder of similar confrontations with Africans on 21 May 2016 in New Delhi when a Congolese

teacher was lynched over a rickshaw hiring dispute (Vij, 2016). Another case happened on 3 February 2016, when a postgraduate student from Tanzania was brutally attacked, stripped naked and paraded by locals in the southern town of Bangalore. The attack had been triggered by a car accident when a person apparently of African origin hit a girl who died. Enraged locals caught hold of Tanzanian students who were passing by almost after 30 minutes of the accident and beat up the girl. They later stripped her and paraded her naked. A local guy who tried to help her was also beaten up (Arun, 2016).

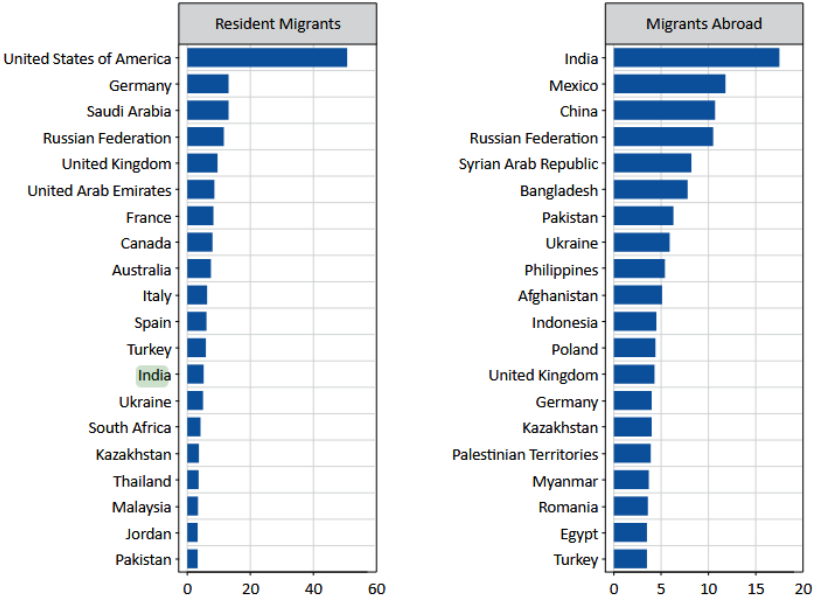
**Cartoon:** Racism in India: ‘Tanzanian girl brutally attacked’



Source: Arun, V. *rebelpolitikblog.com*, Tumblr (2016)

Regarding the protest of African diplomats to skip official celebrations of [Indian-African relations](#) following the Greater Noida incidence, India’s external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj was at pains to assure that there would be a fair and impartial investigation into this ‘unfortunate incident’ (Bhattacharjee, 2017).

**Graph 3:** India counts among the 15 top destinations of international migrants, but most international migrants worldwide are Indians (in millions, 2019)



Source: UN DESA, 2019a (accessed 18 September 2019).

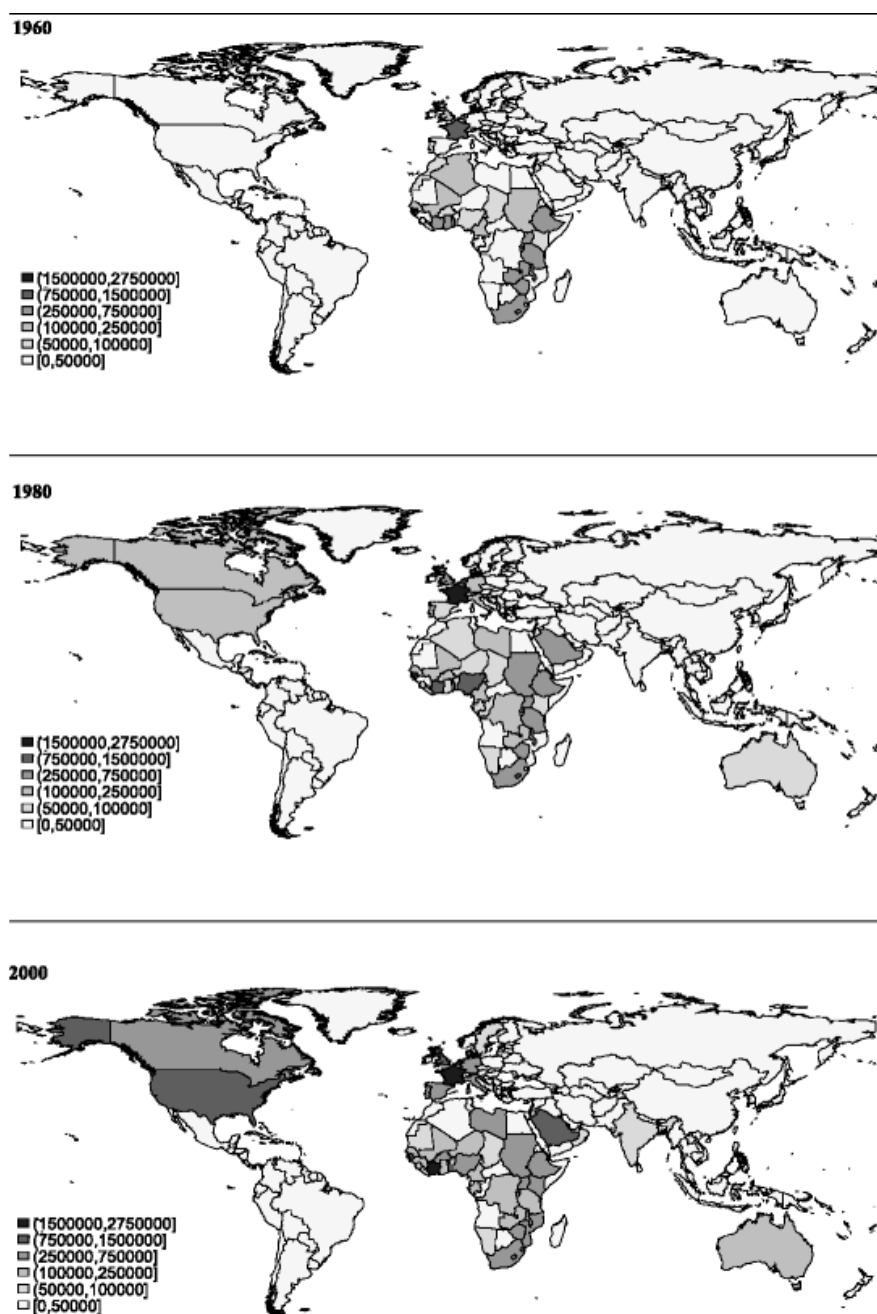
Source: UN-IOM, [World migration report, 2020](#), p. 26



### 3.1 African migration to India since 1960

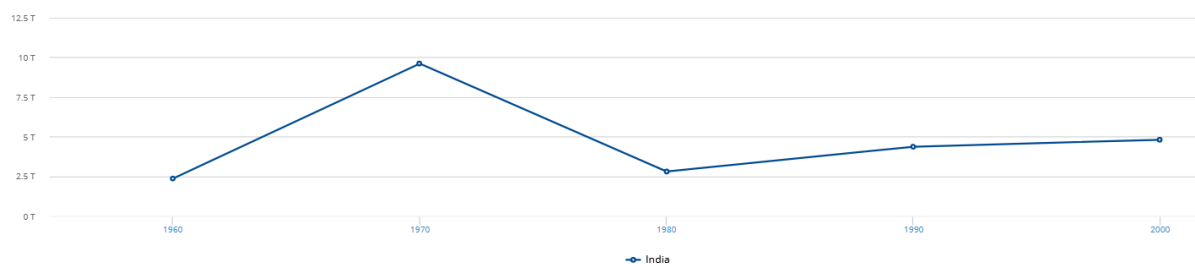
The growing Afrophobia is presumably also driven by the rising migration of Africans to India in recent decades. The total of African migrants in India increased from 34.204 (1960) to 107.746 (1970, Uganda crisis), 44.649 (1980), 57.936 1990, 62.086 (2000) (WB-2021: Global Bilateral Migration). Unfortunately, there are no more recent data available since the mammoth [2011 census](#).

**Graph 4:** African migrants in destination countries in 1960, 1980 and 2000.



Source: Global Bilateral Migration Database, Flahaux, ML. & De Haas, H. (2016) : [African migration: trends, patterns, drivers](#). CMS 4, 1 (2016)

**Graph 5:** African migration (total of 45 countries) to India, 1960 – 2000 (in thousands)



Source: Global Bilateral Migration

Source: WB (2021): Databank - [Global Bilateral Migration](#)  
(Last updated: 06/28/2011, no more recent data available)

The major countries of origin were Uganda, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Zambia, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Morocco and Mali (Tabel 1: Major countries of origin of African migration, 1960-2000).

Probably, African migration to India increased again in the past twenty years. Unfortunately, more recent data are not available and under-reporting is likely because of the illegal status of many African migrants (Tumbe, 2019). A second-best indicator for rising immigration tendencies may be growing India-Africa trade and investment. Similar to the increasing migration of African petty traders to China since the early 2000s, accompanying mounting Chinese trade and investment in Africa (Giese & Marfaing, 2019; Kohnert, 2016), an increasing number of African petty traders may have tried its luck in India. Unfortunately, this has been a widely unexplored field of study up to now, although isolated case studies do exist (Gill, 2020).

### *3.2 Break-down of the flow of remittances during the Corona pandemic*

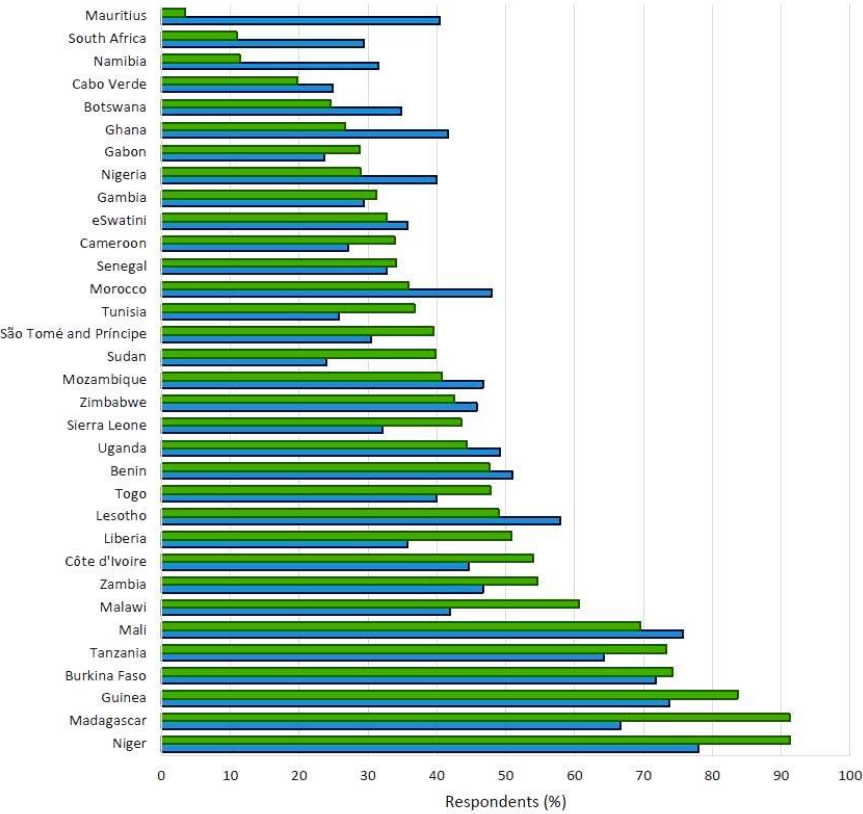
The [Covid pandemic](#) since January 2020 further increased the risk and precarity of African migrants' daily life, notably that of petty traders with irregular status. The lockdown increased their risk of interception by state authorities each time they left their home and visited market sites for their business. They often depended on services offered by trusted agents, habitually fellow migrants themselves, through whom they transferred and received their trades goods and funds (Gill, 2020). This impacted also their families back home.

The World Bank forecasted an unprecedented fall in [remittances](#) for 2020 and 2021 on a global scale. Global remittance could fall by 19.9 % and flows to Africa even by 23.1 % in 2020. This would have removed a major source of income for many African families back home and affected their capacity to respond to and recover from the crisis (Kalantaryan, & McMahon, 2020). In 2021 the World Bank adjusted its figures to a decline of remittances flow by 12.5 % for SSA in 2020 which had been almost entirely due to a 28 % decline in remittance flows to Nigeria. Excluding Nigeria, remittance flows to SSA even increased by 2.3 % on average. Remittance growth mounted especially for Zambia (37 %), Mozambique (16 %), Kenya (9 %) and Ghana (5 %). In 2021, remittance flows to the region had been projected by the WB to rise by 2.6 % on average, supported by improving prospects for growth in high-income countries (Kalantaryan & McMahon, 2020).

Closures of banks and offices of [Western Union](#), the latter used especially by poorer Africans who had no bank account for money transfers, as well as the termination of other transfer

operators in Africa and India, further aggravated the problem. In the last resort, a shift to digital remittance transfers would have been possible, but only for those who disposed of more sophisticated smartphones and internet access. Yet, according to a recent study of [Afrobarometer](#) in eight countries (Benin, Lesotho, Tanzania, Madagascar, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger) more than half of the people who depended on remittances had no access to the internet through a mobile phone (Kalantaryan, & McMahon, 2020).

**Graph 6:** No internet access, no bank account, among those Africans depending on remittances



Source: Kalantaryan, S & McMahon, S (2020)

*3.3 Evolution of Indian – African trade since 2010*

Regarding the lack of data on African migration to India since 2010, the evolution of trade since 2010 will be used in the following as a rough indicator or 'dummy' for the immigration of Africans in India, under the assumption that African petty traders followed bilateral trade just like in the case of China’s bilateral trade with Africa (Giese & Marfaing, 2019; Kohnert, 2016). But to be clear about it, this is a quite heroic assumption for want of better.

Furthermore, unlike the Chinese case, India's attractiveness to Africa was less based upon the flooding of African’s markets with cheap consumer goods, but on its ability to produce soft infrastructure, including IT goods and pharmaceutical products. The growing presence of big international corporations, like the [TATA Group](#), [Mahindra & Mahindra](#) and [Arcelor Mittal](#), as well as India’s increasing investment and foreign aid to Africa should be mentioned as well. This led among others to the creation of [Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation \(ITEC\)](#) that was launched already in 1964 but grew in scope and size only since the 2000s driven by India's rapid economic growth. India’s Africa exports in the early 2000s consisted

mainly of manufactured items (49%), chemical products (11%) and machinery and transport equipment (10%). Its main export partners were South Africa exporting goods totalling US\$ 2bn in 2006, Kenya (US\$ 1.3bn), Nigeria (US\$ 936m), Egypt (US\$ 739m and Mauritius (US\$ 539m) (Naidu, 2008). Certainly, New Delhi's Africa strategy was also driven by its quest for resources, business opportunities, and strategic partnerships to counter the growing political influence of [Beijing](#) (Naidu, 2008). Thus, the scope and margin of potential gains of African petty traders as intermediaries in India might have been less promising than in China.

**Graph 7: India-Africa trade and its share in total trade of India and Africa, 2001-2017**



Source: Afreximbank research (2018); Exim India research (2018); ITC Trade Map, UNCTADstat.

Source: Afreximbank (2018)

**Graph 8: Trends in India-Africa Trade (US\$ billion), 2001-2017**



Source: Afreximbank (2018)

#### 4. Implications of African migration on India's standing in the global competition for African resources and markets

According to the UNCTAD [World Investment Report for 2020](#), Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to Africa was to fall by 25 % to 40 % in 2020, the first year of the Corona pandemic. The negative trend would be worsened by low commodity prices. Already before the pandemic, in 2019, FDI flows to Africa had already declined by 10 % to US\$ 45 bn (UNCTAD, 2020).

Since the 2010s, a shift in the main investors of FDI in Africa, away from the traditional highly industrialised Western countries to the [BRIC](#) nations has been observed. India and China became significant global players in Africa, competing for strategic space (Chakrabarti, & Ghosh, 2014). As for India's foreign investment strategy in Africa, a new phase of economic relations started in 2008. FDI now was headed by [state-owned enterprises](#) (SOEs). They used [joint ventures](#) as an entry-level model, complemented by private sector FDI of entirely owned subsidiaries, targeting African markets. By 2018, India counted among the top 10 investing countries in Africa, with about 22 % of the Office of Foreign Direct Investment (OFDI), valued at US\$ 5.5 (2018) (Varma, 2020).

However, these overall figures are difficult to compare, because the tax haven [Mauritius](#) accounted for 98 % of India's total investment flows, obviously attracted by the double taxation avoidance agreement between the two countries. Most of this money came back to India in various forms (Ramachandaran, 2018). Thus, nearly 40 % of FDI to India came back over Mauritius between 2001 and 2011. According to Indian media reports, the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs) with Mauritius aroused suspicion that FDI had been misused by investors to avoid tax paying by routing investments through various countries, in particular Mauritius and [Singapore](#), which account for 48 % of FDI inflow to India ([Mauritius route](#), Wikipedia). Excluding Mauritius for our purposes, the top five African countries for Indian OFDI (2012 to 2016) were [Mozambique](#), [South Africa](#), [Tunisia](#), [Zambia](#) and [Egypt](#). Nowadays, Africa accounts for a strategic partner of India's foreign trade and investment, driven by programs such as '*Focus Africa*' with a focus on seven SSA countries, South Africa, Nigeria, Mauritius, Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana and Ethiopia (since 31st March 2002), but also attached to African initiatives such as the New Partnership for African Development ([NEPAD](#)) (Varma, 2020). Yet, even when Mauritius would be included, India's investments would be less than a third or even just a fifth, of China's investments. On the other hand, India shares many aspects of the colonial legacy with Africa, including the English language, and the subsequent anti-colonial struggle. Moreover, the US and EU would rather back India in international politics as a counterbalance against mighty China (Ramachandaran, 2018).

Contrary to widespread belief, the major motive for India's FDI in Africa was rather the quest for new international markets than the run for Africa's resources (Varma, 2020). Moreover, another major motive of strengthening its foreign trade and investment relations with Africa, both for China and India, was to get support for its international political agenda. Whereas [Beijing's](#) ambition was mainly linked to the pursuit of the '[One China](#)' foreign policy, New Delhi aimed to counterbalance the dominant Chinese influence in Africa and to get support for its political agenda concerning agricultural trade, climate change, and permanent membership in the [UN Security Council](#) (Chakrabarti, & Ghosh, 2014).



## 5. Conclusion

According to western media, India is praised as a beacon of democracy in Asia compared to China. Notably during the [Cold War](#) that propagated a "clash of systems" or even a '[clash of civilizations](#)' (S.P. Huntington), was supported as the "largest democracy in the world" (EP, 2014). It stood for individual freedom, decentralization and competition, the People's Republic of China on the contrary, for oppression, centralization and a central government economy. Yet, since the government of Prime Minister [Narendra Modi's](#), elected in 2014, India's democracy rankings fell 26 places (from 27 to 53), for example on the [EIU Democracy Index](#). Also, according to [Freedom House](#) India was downgraded from "free" to "partly free," thus being ranked on the same level as Ecuador, Mozambique, and Serbia (Dhume, 2021).

Moreover, the Western model of [multiparty democracy](#) may not be as impartial as it is sold to international public opinion. For example, one could legitimately wonder whether disregard for basic [human rights](#) counts less than democracy. If the population concerned would be asked to give their opinion, the picture would probably be different. One could ask for example, whether the rigid [Indian caste system](#), gross inequality, poverty and racism are less important violations of basic human rights.

At least when it comes to poverty reduction, China, which meanwhile counts among the [upper-middle-income countries](#), does better than India, still belonging to the [lower-middle-income countries](#) according to [World Bank ranking](#). This may be due to the more pronounced policy of [Beijing](#) to counteract poverty but also to the general effects of China's more export-oriented development strategy, resulting in faster industrialization and urbanization than India. To reduce poverty, a prime task of governments in developing countries, the administration should prioritize employment generation in secondary and tertiary industries through industrialization and globalization to absorb surplus agricultural labour, helping reduce poverty in the rural areas (Zhang, et al., 2020). Thus, in the first year of the Corona pandemic in India, about 75 million people fell into poverty, accounting for 60 % of the global rise in poverty, whereas China had to admit only 1 million additional poor. The total number of Indian poor now stands at 134 million (Kapur, 2021).

But India did not only perform badly in reducing poverty, it also cultivated a more pronounced racism, including mounting Afrophobia. Thus, all other things being equal, China may have in future a competitive edge in the global quest for Africa's resources and markets, because African governments react quite touchy to racism in international foreign relations and international trade.

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**Résumé :** L'Afrique et l'Inde partagent une longue histoire de commerce, d'investissement et d'esclavage. Les Portugais à eux seuls ont amené jusqu'à 80 000 esclaves du Mozambique en Inde depuis le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Contrairement aux esclaves d'autres parties du monde, les esclaves, les soldats et les commerçants africains ont eu une forte influence militaire et culturelle sur la culture et la société indiennes. Certains d'entre eux occupaient même des postes privilégiés. Aujourd'hui, l'Inde est en concurrence avec d'autres acteurs mondiaux, en particulier la Chine, pour les ressources et les marchés africains. La montée du racisme et de l'Afrophobie envers les migrants africains pourrait cependant freiner les ambitions du gouvernement de New-Delhi. Les réseaux sociaux et les dirigeants politiques indiens recherchent de plus en plus des boucs émissaires et des « étrangers » à blâmer pour leurs échecs dus à des préjugés religieux, racistes et linguistiques. Le racisme et l'Afrophobie ne sont pas apparus en premier sous l'administration Modi, mais ils sont devenus plus intimidants et contagieux. Le célèbre écrivain et militant politique indien, Arundhati Roy, a qualifié le racisme indien envers les Noirs de presque pire que le racisme des Blancs. Par exemple, les Africains, qui étaient souvent sommairement disqualifiés de « Nigériens », étaient généralement accusés d'être des trafiquants de drogue, et même soupçonnés de « cannibalisme ». Pourtant, les autorités indiennes à tous les niveaux politiques n'ont pas réussi à contrer efficacement cela. Au contraire, ils ont souvent encouragé ces préjugés. Modi, par exemple, a comparé les régions indiennes dissidentes à la « Somalie ».

**Zusammenfassung :** Afrika und Indien teilen sich eine lange Geschichte von Handel, Investitionen und Sklaverei. Allein die Portugiesen brachten seit dem 16. Jahrhundert bis zu 80.000 Sklaven aus Mocambique nach Indien. Im Gegensatz zu Sklaven in anderen Teilen der Welt hatten afrikanische Sklaven, Soldaten und Händler einen starken militärischen und kulturellen Einfluss auf Indiens Kultur und Gesellschaft. Einige von ihnen besetzten sogar privilegierte Positionen. Heute konkurriert Indien mit anderen Global Playern, insbesondere China, um afrikanische Ressourcen und Märkte. Wachsender Rassismus und Afrophobie gegenüber afrikanischen Migranten könnten jedoch Indiens Ambitionen behindern. Indiens soziale Netzwerke und politische Führer suchen aufgrund religiöser, rassistischer und sprachlicher Vorurteile zunehmend nach Sündenböcken und „Fremden“, die sie für ihr Versagen verantwortlich machen könnten. Rassismus und Afrophobie traten unter Modis Regierung zwar nicht zuerst auf, aber sie wurden abschreckender und ansteckender. Die berühmte indische Schriftstellerin und politische Aktivistin Arundhati Roy bewertete den indischen Rassismus gegenüber Schwarzen fast noch schlimmer als den Rassismus der Weißen. So wurden Afrikaner, die oft summarisch als „Nigerianer“ disqualifiziert wurden, im Allgemeinen als Drogendealer beschuldigt und sogar des „Kannibalismus“ verdächtigt. Doch die indischen Behörden auf allen politischen Ebenen traten dem nicht effektiv entgegen. Im Gegenteil, sie förderten nicht selten diese Vorurteile. Modi, zum Beispiel, verglich abtrünnige indische Regionen mit „Somalia“.