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## India-African Union: An asymmetric Quasi-interregional Sub-system

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### Abstract

Historical events had created warm relations between India and Africa. Even though both are in developing category and with structural similarities, India has achieved success in many areas. At the same time, beyond regionalism a new arrangement has emerged in international system called as interregionalism. India has also acknowledged the importance of interregionalism and started to use this arrangement in its external relations. Recently, India entered into a variant of such arrangement, Quasi-interregionalism, with African continent. In order to get success out of the schemes and programmes and to build strong Africa the nature of this arrangement is to be studied deeply. This paper will be arranged in two parts and studied by using qualitative methods and with the help of Systems Theory. The first part of paper will discuss about quasi-interregionalism and its nature and second part will discuss India-African Union capabilities within that framework.

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### 1. Interregionalism

The increasing complexity of international environment created a situation where the traditional frameworks are to be supplemented by new thinking. One such thinking is “interregionalism.” One scholar defines, ‘Inter-regionalism as an arrangement between two regionalisms, either contractual or *de facto* allowing regions to interact

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(Reiterer, 2008).’ For some others, interregionalism means the structured interactions between two regions of the world (Hänggi et al., 2006). Apart from these there is another variety of interregionalism. Summit level dialogue or partnership arrangement between the countries of different regions in which each country representing a region, minimum in number, but more than two, is another form of interregionalism and can be classified as a hybrid form of interregionalism (Gratius, 2008). Thus, the Scholars who are working on the concept ‘interregionalism’ have not yet arrived a precise definition about interregionalism. But the fact is that it became a new phenomenon in international relations and is gaining attention of the various scholars, and may become a ‘new layer’ in an increasingly differentiated global order (Hänggi et al., 2006).

Interregionalism is not a single coherent phenomenon, but, it covers a broad spectrum of arrangements. At the ‘lower’ end of the spectrum, we find relations between a regional organization and a third state in other region and the ‘upper’ end of the spectrum, we find relationships among states, group of states, and regional organization from two or more regions. The lower end of the spectrum is called Quasi-interregionalism like EU-India relations and the upper end is called Megaregionalism like APEC. Between these two extremes regional organizations external relations with counterparts in other regions like EU-ASEAN constitute the ‘ideal’ type of interregionalism or ‘pure interregionalism.’<sup>1</sup>The trilateral arrangements like IBSA (India, Brazil, and South Africa) and RIC (Russia, India and China) can be cited as examples of hybrid form of interregionalism (Gratius, 2008). Theoretically also a convincing argument about interregionalism is still outstanding. Roloff approached it by combining neorealist and interdependence theories. Gilson approached it with constructivist logic and Jürgen Rüdland used functionalist approach. It clearly shows interregionalism needs multiple theories or mix of theories for understanding the phenomenon (Hänggi et al., 2006).

## 2. International System and Quasi-interregionalism

A system is a combination of structures/units/entities working together with their capabilities, perception and influence which may be taken as inputs, to achieve some goals, which may called as functions or outputs. In the broadest sense, international system denotes a collection of independent states and non-state actors and their interactions. In general, the interactions between the states or group of states are systematic, structured and more in frequency, when comparing the interactions between non-state actors. Exceptions to this are also there as such United States recent War on Terror is largely against non-state actors. Systems approach had become fashionable in the international relations since Morton A. Kaplan published his work “*System and Process in International Politics*” in 1957. Taking clue from the work of Cantori and Spiegel, this work assigns international system in to three levels:<sup>2</sup>

Lower Level/ Unit Level: Individual States, INGOs, MNCs, and Terror/Criminal Groups and their internal and external interactions. Even though all the units are gaining importance, out of all the units, the most predominant in this level is States.

Middle Level/Sub-system Level: The structured interaction of the two or more units. Bilateral relations, Regional Organizations, Quasi-interregional arrangements and other Interregional arrangements are examples of this level.

Higher Level/International system Level: This is the complex level, where cobwebs of interactions, of both the lower and middle levels are seen in its entirety. Sometimes single state or two states or multiple states or regional organizations dominate this level. Accordingly, the system is called unipolar or bi-polar or multi-polar or multi-bloc respectively. However, this level is not a single system and at any one time the world is the scene of many distinctive and overlapping systems that differ from each other in terms of their structural properties and in terms of the purposes of the individuals and groups that constitute them (Lampert et al., 1978).

Quasi-interregionalism is one of the sub-systems of international system, formed by the arrangement of an interactions set up, in which a regional organization as an actor on one side and a country of another region on another side. In other words, a state, which is a lower level unit of international system, when it interacts with a comparatively higher level unit, regional organization, then this arrangement will produce a kind of sub-system in international system i.e. called Quasi-interregionalism (Hänggi et al., 2006). Thus it is an arrangement where two different levels of international system are coming into contact with one another. In order to reduce confusion, Quasi-interregional arrangement is placed in the sub-system level, rather than an intermediate between the middle level and high level.

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