

Presidential diplomacy: an analysis of the Indo-African relationship and of Africa as a priority in Indian foreign policy

Diplomacia presidencial: uma análise da relação indo-africana e da África como prioridade na política externa indiana

Diplomacia presidencial: un análisis de la relación indoafricana y de África como prioridad en la política exterior india

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Abstract

Presidential diplomacy is usually a measure of the degree of a state's diplomatic activity, indicating which partner countries are preferred by it in the international arena. However, quantitative studies on presidential diplomacy from countries in the Global South are still scarce. The purpose of this article is to analyze Indian presidential diplomacy, focusing on its relationship with the African continent compared to other regions. For the development of the study, the RPDN – Rising Powers Diplomatic Network dataset was used to quantify the degree of presidential diplomacy performed by India and how Africa fits into this scenario in the period 1995 – 2019. Results indicate that, although Africa is an extremely relevant actor for India, other continents received a higher numerical value of Indian visits, demonstrating a greater degree of interest within the scope of India's foreign policy.

Keywords: India, Africa, presidential diplomacy, diplomatic network, foreign policy

Resumo

A diplomacia presidencial é geralmente uma medida do grau de atividade diplomática de um país, indicando quais interlocutores são preferidos por ele na arena internacional. No entanto, os estudos quantitativos sobre diplomacia presidencial de países do Sul Global ainda são escassos. O objetivo deste artigo é examinar a diplomacia presidencial indiana, focalizando sua relação com o continente africano em comparação com outras regiões. Para o desenvolvimento do estudo, foi utilizada a base de dados RPDN – Rising Powers Diplomatic Network para dimensionar o grau de diplomacia presidencial realizada pela Índia e como a África se insere neste panorama no período 1995-2019. Os resultados indicam que, embora a África seja um ator extre-

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mamente relevante para a Índia, outros continentes receberam um maior valor numérico de visitas indianas, demonstrando um grau superior de interesse no âmbito da política externa indiana.

Palavras-chave: Índia, África, diplomacia presidencial, rede diplomática, política externa

Resumen

La diplomacia presidencial es generalmente una medida del grado de actividad diplomática de un país, indicando qué interlocutores prefiere en la arena internacional. Sin embargo, los estudios cuantitativos sobre la diplomacia presidencial de países del Sur Global aún son escasos. El propósito de este artículo es examinar la diplomacia presidencial de India, centrándose en su relación con el continente

aficano en comparación con otras regiones. Para el desarrollo del estudio se utilizó la base de datos RPDN - Rising Powers Diplomatic Network para dimensionar el grado de diplomacia presidencial llevado a cabo por India y cómo África encaja en este panorama en el período 1995-2019. Los resultados indican que, si bien África es un actor de extrema relevancia para la India, otros continentes recibieron un valor numérico más alto de las visitas de la India, lo que demuestra un mayor grado de interés en relación a las relaciones en el ámbito de la política exterior india.

Palabras clave: Índia, África, diplomacia presidencial, red diplomática, política externa

Introduction

One of the fundamental aspects in the study of International Relations is the capacity of a State to influence international politics. During the colonizations promoted between the 19th and 20th centuries, several political, economic and social values were transported by the West to its colonies. Post-Independence India is an example of a nation that embraced the issue of economic liberalization, the model of democracy, and engagement with social equity. The position that the country has achieved on the global stage has gone through different stages, being its change from a country receiving aid to a country offering aid regionally and internationally one of the most striking ones (BAVA, 2010). The aim of this article is to investigate Indian commitment in offering assistance, focusing on the relationship between the country and the African continent, through a study of Indian presidential diplomacy in relation to the region during the period of 1995 - 2019.

First, we will briefly review the literature on post-Cold War Indian foreign policy in order to scrutinize the commitment of Indian policymakers to Western values carried over during its colonization. Then, we will expand on the historical context of the Indo-African relationship, emphasizing continuities and changes in this dialogue from the post-Cold War period into the 21st century. Then, we will present a quantitative analysis of presidential diplomacy promoted by India towards the continent, in order to under-

stand whether or not engagement with the region has increased, as well as to compare Africa with other regions around the globe.

The study will deepen the available knowledge about presidential diplomacy promoted by one of the great countries of the Global South by mapping its interactions. Presidential diplomacy is characterized as the personal conduct of foreign policy matters, outside of routine or *ex officio* attributions by the president or by the head of state and/or government. Presidential or top-level diplomacy, therefore, is not measured by some bureaucratic mechanism, but through the scope of action. There is a personal participation in the conduction and execution of foreign policy and the notion of leadership helps to understand the phenomenon of top diplomacy as a manifestation of political activity and not only as a fact of diplomacy. Some of the actions that fit with the idea of presidential or summit diplomacy are participation in international meetings, large conferences, leadership in the conduct of war and a leading role in the establishment of peace. Danese (2017) proposes a didactic classification of presidential diplomacy, dividing the practice into four degrees. The degrees, therefore, are only reference points, but they help to understand the dimension of the leader's presidential diplomacy. Grade zero would be *ex officio* diplomacy, representing a static performance of diplomacy. Grade one refers to diplomacy exercised in response to stimuli, the agent assumes some degree of leadership in the process, but above all responds to external situations. Grade two corresponds to an active posture, with the head of government and/or state as the transmitter of ideas, images and presence. Finally, grade three is about affirmative diplomacy, in which the agent takes the initiative and personally conducts foreign policy (DANESE, 2017). At the end of this article, we will try to identify the degree of presidential diplomacy by India in the international arena. For the quantitative analysis, the latest version of the RPDN (Rising Powers Diplomatic Network) database will be used. This database is part of the research project "The Global South in numbers: quantitative analysis of the foreign policy of emerging countries" and our contribution has been to update RPDN and to expand it to include Indian data.³ Through this work, we aim to cover the gap in quantitative data that exists in IR production in the Global South.

3. The "Rising Powers Diplomatic Network (RPDN)" research project was supported as an undergraduate research project (*Iniciação Científica*) in 2020-2021 by FACEPE (grant BIC-0273-7.09/20) and Propesqi-UFPE (voluntary research assistance ID:200715578)

Presidential diplomacy, post-independence India, and India-Africa relations

The study of foreign relations through the prism of presidential diplomacy allows us to analyze the preferences of heads of state and/or government in the global arena. External visits performed by the President or Prime Minister are interpreted as a manifestation of a country's preferences and interests internationally. Presidential diplomacy, therefore, becomes an indicator to measure how active is the President or the Prime Minister, as well as which partners and locations are most internationally valued (GOLDSTEIN, 2008).

Cason and Power (2009) draw on Waltz's theory (1959) to develop their work on changes in Brazilian foreign policy, that is, they used the model that discusses foreign policy from three levels: international level, national level and individual level. Accordingly, we will also address, in this work, elements corresponding to the mentioned levels.

On the international level, we will seek to understand how the relationship between India and the African continent took place over the years. In terms of leadership, we will look at the external visits of the Indian president and prime minister, in order to measure how active they were in foreign affairs. Another relevant aspect and, in fact, the main one, in Cason and Power's argument is the role that presidential diplomacy plays as a marker of a country's foreign policy profile. The authors argue that one of the most dramatic indicators of foreign policy, in the case of Brazil, was the growth of the president's direct role in matters of international relations, which until then had been carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The authors, then, characterize the performance of two presidents as the development of presidential diplomacy in the country: Cardoso and Lula. Accordingly, Byman and Pollack (2001) highlight the importance of individuals as central actors in the formation and development of a country's external relations. The authors expose thirteen hypotheses about the relevance of individuals in the scope of international relations. In summary, the idea is that individuals would not only be responsible for establishing the intentions of a State in the international arena, but also configure an important influence in diplomatic and military matters. Individual leaders would then be able to shape the strategies of

the states they represent. There is a great similarity with Danese's (2017) emphasis on the concept of presidential diplomacy, that is, the personal conduct of foreign policy matters, outside the routine or *ex officio* attributions of the head of government or state.

Our effort to study India makes sense insofar as, according to Geraldo (2015), actors considered to be middle-range states are those endowed with an intermediate capacity for international influence. In fact, the author argues that countries like Brazil, India and Israel have acted in gradually more relevant ways internationally, in addition to claiming their leadership position within the region of which they belong. Similarly, Hurrell (2006) had already developed this argument for why to study the BRIC. Brazil, Russia, India and China are countries with an important degree of economic, military and political resources. The author emphasizes the importance of India as it has demonstrated high levels of economic growth, as well as concerns the geopolitical and geoeconomic implications arising from such development. The author also argues that focusing on these countries makes sense when observing their growing contribution and influence in the international order. since they are one of the main contestants of the status quo, in addition to having been protagonists in important and complex processes of political and economic liberalization. However, such regional powers can and do prioritize other regions beyond their immediate neighborhoods as a way to develop a more global profile (Mesquita 2019).

According to India's Ministry of External Affairs and its Annual Reports on Foreign Policy, the country's diplomacy is led by both Prime Minister and President⁴ and follows what Sérgio Danese (2017) calls top diplomacy, in which these actors are institutionally responsible to conduct in person such diplomacy representing the country, accompanied only by a supporting team. Our efforts in this article include traversing India's post-independence period in the context of its external relations, as well as highlighting India-Africa relations. Through this analysis, it will be possible to understand how committed Indian Presidents and Prime Ministers are to diplomatic activity, as well as which are their priority continents and what degree of importance Africa has for India in the context of the global arena.

4. <https://mea.gov.in/>, Accessed 21/10/2021

The Indian struggles for independence served as a strong inspiration for the African peoples. As African countries gained their independence, India started formal diplomatic relations with them, establishing representations in the region and engaging in interactions based on cooperation and cordiality. As India attained its independence, Prime Minister Nehru turned the relations with African countries a priority. In fact, India was one of the main organizers of the Bandung Conference, in 1955, in which some of the fundamental outputs for the relationship between India-Africa were generated: the commitment to trade and economic development between regions, increased cultural contribution between regions and the expansion of human rights and self-determination to African countries. In addition, the conference expressed its importance as it laid the foundation for the Non-Alignment Movement - NAM (BANDA, 2020). Under Jawaharlal Nehru's government, India focused on values such as prioritizing domestic policy, economic development, national defense, and pacifism, as the country positioned itself demonstrating aversion to the use of strength in foreign policy. Issues such as justice and equity were central at the time and, in addition, India was a strong supporter of independence, specially of African nationalist political parties and movements to achieve their goals (BANDA, 2020).

In the 1970s, India was a helping agent towards long-lasting African issues. To overcome economic contraction and rising poverty, Indian and African governments interacted mainly in agriculture, chemical fertilizer production, transport sector, technical assistance and information technology, medicine production, and trade, which included foodstuff, spices, clothing, machines, paper, plastics and others.

India's engagement with African countries has sought to enhance the latter's economic growth and national security, for instance, through loans and grants given out by the Indian government via the Special Commonwealth Africa Assistance Program (SCAAP) (BANDA, 2020). In parallel with the Indian commitment to economic development, India is positioned as a strong supporter of national independence movements beyond Africa, for example in Latin America. That can be explained by India's foreign policy strategy, that focuses not only on the development of economic growth, but also sustaining growth, which means that, in the long term, political influence is required (BAVA, 2010).

In the post-Cold War period, India underwent major changes in relation to its set of priorities, putting older values on the past and investing in default liberalization (BETZ, 2010). With increasing exposure to Western capitalism, the country grew its confidence in economic development, which ended up shaping its political position, as well as its relationship with other countries.

Nowadays, India ranks as the third largest trading partner with the African continent, accounting for 6.4 percent of total African trade for a total value of \$62.6 billion in 2017-18.⁵ Africa is the largest overseas destination of Indian businesses, in which its lines are expanded to 41 countries in Africa.

Obviously, India is not the only country which envisages good relations with Africa. China stands out in that matter. The fastest-growing economy in Asia, it surpassed the United States in 2018 and became Africa's largest trade partner, registering \$185 billion dollars in trade flows. In 2020, \$147.66 billion dollars were invested⁶. Given the present scenario and the competition with other external powers for influence, Indian policymakers are presently faced with different alternatives through which could boost their clout in Africa. India may pursue its interests by enabling greater African agency and increasing its engagement with diaspora communities in Africa, hence charting a path through which India could draft a course between the United States, China and the European Union inside of the continent. India is a partner with which the United States and the European Union would be more comfortable with in Africa (KURZYDLOWSKY, 2020). Beyond that, India's diaspora in Africa is overall more assimilated than the Chinese, since the latter emigration is recent and, therefore, still not significant as India's.

Keohane and Nye (1971) argue that relevant transnational actors and businesses have autonomy to influence or even define results in international politics. Finnemore (1996) argues that nations influence others through the 'Value and Norm' socialization strategy. Such strategies have been adopted by Western nations towards other regions' to influence post-colonial countries. A similar approach might be inaccessible or unnecessary to New Delhi,

5. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/06/what-can-india-offer-africa/> Accessed 02/07/2021

6. <http://www.sais-cari.org/data-china-africa-trade>, <https://www.aei.org/china-global-investment-tracker/>, Accessed 15/07/2021

since India and African countries have already run similar pathways. That said, India's cultural and historical background attached to its soft power⁷ and capacity-building position towards Africa in the post-Cold War period may allow the country to be perceived by African countries as a priority partner and vice-versa. This possibility may vary from one nation to another, depending on India's approaches, strategies, Indian businesses' expansiveness in Africa and also on the competing presence of external powers, such as China. In addition, India's interest in the energy sector and African crude oil also explain current Indian engagement in Africa. Africa is hence a potential opportunity for India to increase its leadership in the global arena.

After this brief overview of the literature on presidential diplomacy and Indo-African relations, we now turn to our empirical analysis of Indian presidential diplomacy.

Presidents and Prime Ministers: Analyzing Indian Presidential Diplomacy

Our empirical analysis will be presented in two parts: the first one will focus on presidential diplomacy carried out by the Indian Prime Minister, while the second part will focus on the President. The quantitative data on official visits originates from the RPDN dataset⁸, and it will be complemented with an analysis of the speeches given by the Indian leaders in order to clarify the character of the relationship between India and Africa.

For a better understanding of the time period under analysis, Table 1 details how the terms referring to the Prime Ministers of India were classified.

7. India's strengths are also in its soft power and humanitarian inclinations that promise promoting goodwill among African elites in the short and long terms. The e-Vidya Bharati and the e-Aarogya Bharati are good examples of Indian educational actions offering 15,000 scholarships to African students from 2019 to 2024.

8. <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/5FISNQ> Accessed 02/07/2021

Table 1 - Classification of terms for the Prime Ministers of India

Year	General Election	Prime Minister Before	Prime Minister After	Term
1996	27 April, 2 May and 7 May 1996	Rao (INC+)	Vajpayee (BJP)	Vajpayee was PM for only 13 days. He could not form a coalition. Gowda was nominated after, but resigned in April 1997 and Gujral assumed office. The years 1996-1997 were considered as terms of Prime Ministers Vajpayee, Gowda and Gujral
1998	16 February, 22 February and 28 February 1998	Gujral (JD)	Vajpayee (BJP)	The year 1998 was considered as Vajpayee's first term
1999	5 September and 3 October 1999	Vajpayee (BJP)	Vajpayee (BJP)	The period of 1999 - 2003 was considered as Vajpayee's second term
2004	20 April, 26 April, 5 and 10 May 2004	Vajpayee (BJP)	Singh (INC)	The period of 2004 - 2008 was considered as Singh's first term
2009	16 April and 13 May 2009	Singh (INC)	Singh (INC)	The period of 2009 - 2013 was considered as Singh's second term
2014	7 April and 12 May 2014	Singh (INC)	Modi (BJP)	The period of 2014 - 2018 was considered as Modi's first term
2019	11 April and 19 May 2019	Modi (BJP)	Modi (BJP)	The year 2019 was considered as Modi's second term

Source: elaborated by the authors. The political parties of the Prime Ministers are shown in parenthesis.

Table 2 sums the number of visits carried out by each Indian leader during their terms. It is possible to infer that there was an increase in the number of external visits with each passing term, with Modi being the Prime Minister with the highest percentage of

travels. However, taking into account the time span of each term, the volume of diplomatic activity performed during 1996 and 1997 is remarkably high, with a total of 15 visits in just two years.

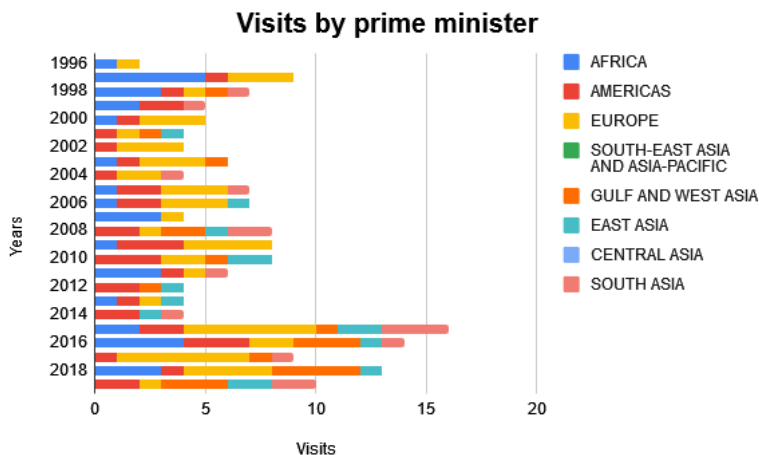
Table 2 - Prime Ministers of India's Diplomatic Activity

Prime Minister Term	Visits	Percentage
Vajpayee, Gowda and Gujral (1996 - 1997)	15	5,63%
Vajpayee's first and second terms (1998 - 2003)	50	18,79%
Singh's first and second terms (2004 - 2013)	94	35,33%
Modi's first and second terms (2014 - currently)	107	40,22%

Source: RPDN. See the Annexes for a full description of the methodology used for building the dataset.

Figure 1 represents the amount of external visits carried out by the Prime Minister during the years 1996 - 2019 to different continents. The names of the geographical regions, as well as the distribution of countries within those groups, were classified based on the nomenclature adopted in the most recent Annual Report (2019-2020) prepared by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).⁹

Figure 1 - Visits by prime minister of India 1996 - 2019



Source: RPDN.

9. See the Annexes for a complete list of countries and for full description of the methodological procedures utilized to build the regional classifications.

Between 1996 and 2019, India carried out 266 visits to States, 74 visits to International Organizations, 31 to Regional Organizations, 1 to a Region-Region Organization and 25 to State-Region Organizations. Within this total, India promoted 32 State visits to the African continent, which represents about 12% of the total amount of travels by the Prime Minister, considering the whole world. We consider State visits here, but some of them may have a multilateral nature, that is, to visit some of the types of international organizations mentioned previously.

During 1996 and 1997, under the term of Prime Ministers Vajpayee, Gowda and Gujral, 6 visits to the African continent were carried out, 2 of which were led by Gowda and 4 by Gujral. Of a total of 6 visits, only 1 was multilateral, ensuring presence at a G-15 summit. During the same period, 1 visit was made to the American continent, 4 to Europe, 3 to South-East Asia and Asia-Pacific and 1 to Central Asia so that visits to the African continent represent 40% of total visits performed.

Between 1998 and 2003, during Vajpayee's first and second terms, 7 visits were made to the African continent. Of the total visits during this period, 4 were bilateral and the others were due to attendance at summits of the NAM and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). During the same period, 3 visits were made to South Asia, 3 to Gulf and West Asia, 7 to the American continent, 11 to Europe, 13 to South-East Asia and Asia-Pacific, 5 to Central Asia and 1 to East Asia. Thus, the visits made by the Prime Minister to Africa represented 14% of the presidential diplomacy of the period.

Between 2005 and 2013, under Singh's first and second term, 10 State visits from India to Africa were carried out, among which 4 were carried out to South Africa, 1 for bilateral reasons, 2 for attendance at IBSA summits and 1 for a BRICS summit. During this period of visits to the African continent, there were 4 bilateral visits and the other 6 were aimed at participating in summits.

During the same period, Prime Minister Singh made 17 visits to the Americas, 6 to East Asia, 11 to Central Asia, 18 to Europe, 4 to Gulf and West Asia, 4 to South Asia and 24 to South-East Asia and Asia-Pacific. During Singh's two terms, therefore, Africa accounted for around 10% of the visits carried out.

The friendly relationship and the desire to deepen bilateral relations between India and the African continent are well illustrated

by the speech given by Prime Minister Singh on his departure for Mauritius “India and Mauritius enjoy traditional bonds of friendship and kinship founded on a historical and shared cultural heritage”. According to Singh, his visit was “intended to further strengthen the vast framework of our bilateral interactions with the objective of deepening and widening in every possible way our special and unique relationship with Mauritius”. The idea of socio-cultural burden-sharing is also evident in the Prime Minister’s speech.¹⁰

One of the aspects explored by Salma Bava, in her above-mentioned paper, is the idea that India’s development strategy has changed, so that its orientation as a recipient of aid has shifted to that of an aid provider (BAVA, 2010). The author mentions that Indian policy towards Africa emphasizes this point. The expression of India as a provider of help is also manifested in the speech of the Prime Minister. Still on his departure for Mauritius, he states that “India has provided support and assistance to Mauritius to emerge as a knowledge hub”. The multilateral visits were to participate in the summits of IBSA, CHOGM, NAM, and BRICS. It is important to underscore that, in addition to these international gatherings, a State-region encounter occurs, which emphasizes the importance of the relationship with the continent: the first India-Africa Forum Summit takes place in Ethiopia in 2011. In his speech before his departure for Ethiopia, the Prime Minister reinforces the nature of relations between the country and the African continent “The India-Africa partnership rests on three pillars of capacity building and skill transfer, trade and infrastructure development. It is designed to respond to the needs and priorities of Africa and for India to learn from Africa’s rich experience. It is based on equality, mutual trust and a consultative and transparent approach. It is a living embodiment of South-South cooperation”.¹¹ India, once again, stands as a nation willing to develop a relationship with the continent in order to achieve its main needs - which implies an India that is attentive to the details of the continent, in view of the plurality and even competition of ideas, values and priorities internal to Africa. The relationship between India and Africa, then, is underpinned by values such as solidarity, goodwill, democracy and pluralism.

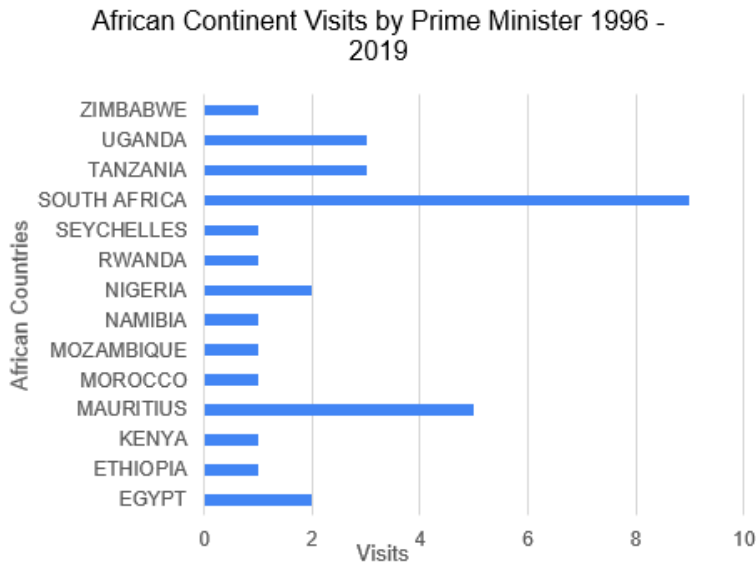
10. https://archivepmo.nic.in/drmanmohansingh/pmvisit_list.php?nodeid=131 Accessed 02/07/2021

11. <https://mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?349/PMs+statement+prior+to+his+departure+to+Ethiopia+and+Tanzania> Accessed 02/07/2021

Between 2014 and 2019, already under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, 9 visits to the African continent are carried out, of which only 1 is multilateral and concerns participation in the BRICS summit. The other visits are bilateral.

During Modi's term, 11 visits were made to the Americas, 7 to East Asia, 13 to Central Asia, 19 to Europe, 12 to Gulf and West Asia, 8 to South Asia and 28 to South-East Asia and Asia-Pacific. In this context, visits to the African continent represented 8.41% of the presidential diplomacy performed during the period. A noteworthy observation refers to the total amount that visits to Africa represent in relation to other continents. Gradually, the percentage that Africa occupies decreases from 40%, during the terms of Gowda, Gujral and Vajpayee, to 8.41% during the terms of Modi.

Figure 2 - Visits by prime minister to Africa 1996 - 2019



Source: RPDN

Considering the entire 1996 - 2019 period, 32 State visits to Africa by Prime Ministers were counted. The countries with the highest number of visits were South Africa, Mauritius, Tanzania and Uganda, with 9, 5, 3 and 3 visits respectively.

Of the visits made to South Africa, 6 aimed to attend multilateral events. In 1998, to the NAM Summit, in 1999, to the CHOGM,

in 2007 and 2011, to the IBSA Summits, in 2013 and 2018, to the BRICS summits. In a 2006 bilateral visit to South Africa by Prime Minister Singh, the inspirational aspect of shared values between the African continent and India are reaffirmed through the Prime Minister's speech on his departure for South Africa "the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi of resisting injustice and oppression by pursuing the path of truth and non-violence was born in South Africa and is a powerful legacy that is shared by the people of India and South Africa".¹²

The 5 visits realized to Mauritius were bilateral. The most recent visit, carried out by Prime Minister Modi, comes in response to an invitation to be Chief Guest of the National Dayre and reaffirms the partnership in terms of economic progress for both countries.

The 3 visits made to Tanzania were also bilateral. In the press statement made by Prime Minister Modi, in his most recent visit, in 2016, the content of shared values for independence is reaffirmed through the speech "together, our leaders and our people have fought colonialism and racial oppression".¹³ In addition, the economic partnership between the two countries is also confirmed and supported by Prime Minister Modi's ambition for an India with nation building, development and industrialization, which he states are also pillars of the current Tanzanian government.

Of the 3 visits to Uganda, 1 is multilateral and takes place in 2007 to attend the CHOGM. In the most recent visit to Uganda, in 2018, India's position as an aid provider for the African continent is evidenced by Prime Minister Modi's announcement of two lines of credit for construction of electricity lines and Substations worth \$141 million dollars and agriculture and dairy production worth \$64 million. In addition to the aforementioned investments, the Prime Minister also announced financial support for the East African Community (EAC) which is currently chaired by Uganda, donation of vehicles to the Ugandan military and civil defences, among other gestures.¹⁴

12. <https://mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?6837/Prime+Ministers+statement+prior+to+his+departure+for+South+Africa> Accessed 02/07/2021

13. <https://mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-info.htm?2/899/Visit+of+Prime+Minister+to+Tanzania+July+0910+2016> Accessed 02/07/2021

14. <https://mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?30151/Visit+of+Prime+Minister+to+Uganda+July+2425+2018> Accessed 02/07/2021

Turning now to the presidential diplomacy carried out by the Indian presidents, we begin by detailing in Table 3 how the governmental terms were classified.

Table 3 - Classification of terms for the Presidents of India

Year	President Term	President Before	President After
1997	25 July 1997 until 25 July 2002	Sharma	Narayanan
2002	25 July 2002 until 25 July 2007	Narayanan	Kalam
2007	25 July 2007 until 25 July 2012	Kalam	Patil
2012	25 July 2012 until 25 July 2017	Patil	Mukherjee
2017	25 July 2017 - Currently	Mukherjee	Kovind

Source: elaborated by the authors

The following table refers to the diplomatic activity in terms of visits by the presidents of India from 1992 to 2017, and aims to clarify the growth in diplomatic activity.

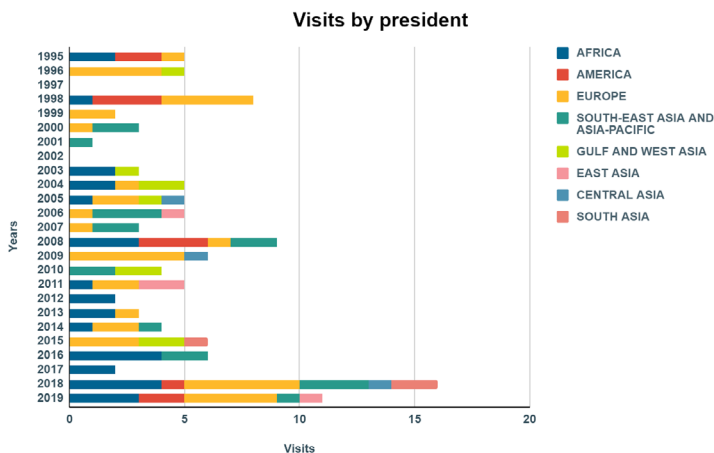
Table 4 - Diplomatic Activity by the Presidents of India

President Term	Visits	Percentage
Shankar Dayal Sharma (1992-1997)	10	8,2%
Kocheril Raman Narayanan (1997-2002)	14	11,5%
P. J. Abdul Kalam (2002-2007)	20	17,2%
Pratibha Patil (2007-2012)	27	22,1%
Pranab Mukherjee (2012-2017)	22	18%
Ram Nath Kovind (2017- Incumbent)	28	23%

Source: RPDN.

When it comes to the activity of the president of India, it is possible to perceive a growing diplomatic engagement around the world. Visits during Shankar Dayal Sharma's and Kocheril Raman Narayanan's terms of office, which occurred between 1992 and 2002, accounted for 8.2% and 11.5% of our entire sample. Abdul Kalam's term registered 20 foreign visits. In only two years (2017 to 2019), Kovind has already matched previous levels of diplomatic action. Figure 3 illustrates Indian presidential presence in regions around the world. It clarifies which region has attracted more dedication in terms of visits.

Figure 3 - Visits by presidents of India 1995 - 2019



Source: RPDN.

Kalam's (2002 - 2007) foreign policy illustrates the stability on the destinations of India's presidential visits and growth in its presence in Africa, compared to the two of the previous leaders who had prioritized Europe and African countries, summing 7 visits to Europe and 5 to Africa. Comparing previous leaders' presence in the continent, 2 out of the 10 visits during Sharma's activity were to African countries. This number may not only have been affected by the absence of registers before 1995, which limits the sample to only half of this mandate, but also, comparatively, by the growth of India's diplomatic activity after the Cold War period. President Narayanan, in turn, was only 2 times in Africa. Curiously, visits to the Americas are more significant in the 1990's than in the later years.

India's presence in America returned in Pratibha Patil's (2007 - 2012) first year of mandate, going hand in hand with its frequency in Africa (23.1%). However, in the last years of her presidency, the Americas were again forgotten. Nevertheless, 2009 and 2010 present no diplomatic activity in Africa. Europe, in this context, accounted for 25% of India's presidential visits from 2008 to 2012, summing 7 travels. This occurrence started to grow in the second year of Patil's term.

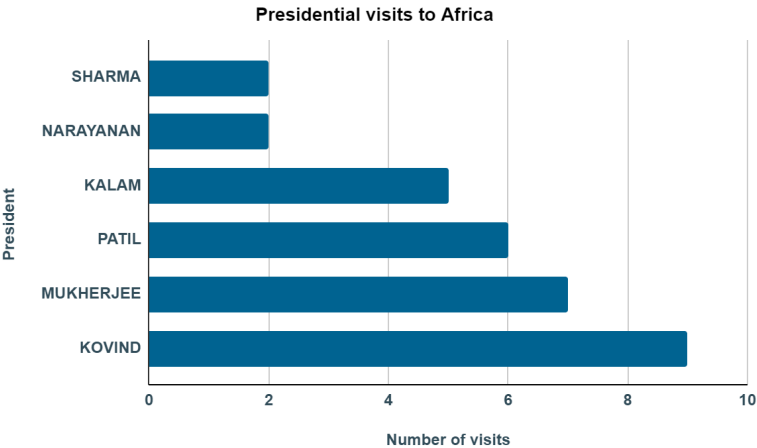
India's attendance to the African region in Pranab Mukherjee's term (2012 - 2017) reached the top of the ranking, registering 31.8% and followed by Europe, with 27, 3% and Asia, 18%. From

2017 on, African and European countries registered the same level of visits: 9 travels (32%) to each region.

There were in total 120 diplomatic visits by the presidents of India, of which 119 were bilateral. Europe occupies the top of India's destinations, summing 41 visits, including one made by Abdul Kalam to the European Union Parliament, which was designed to enhance India's relation to the European Union. Africa ranked second, accounting for 25.6% (31) of presidential visits. South-East Asia and Asia Pacific counted 20 visits (11,6%) made by the presidents of India in general, followed by America (12 visits), Gulf and West Asia (10), East Asia (4) and Central Asia (3).

It is possible to notice that 18 of the 24 years documented in the sample are marked by India's presence in Africa. However, the focus of India in Africa has taken place effectively in the 2000's. Figure 4 explores the presidential presence in Africa, so we can see its growth over the years.

Figure 4 - Visits by president to Africa



Source: RPDN.

As said, India's presence in Africa was not expressive in the 1990's. Previously, in contrast, the data show that Kalam's diplomacy towards Africa started in 2003 by the reaffirmation of the ties between India and Sudan in the establishment of economic agreements seeking to avoid double taxations, promote investment protections, increase technological cooperation and enhance cultural and civilizational heritage.

If we turn to the content of the speeches made by Indian presidents in the course of their visits, we detect a recurring emphasis on trade, development and cooperation. In 2003, Kalam portrayed India as a strong bilateral trade partner to South Africa, corresponding to \$6.5 billion dollars, with imports from India at \$3.12 billion dollars and exports to India at \$3.35 billion rands¹⁵. This has been accomplished via a Working Group that in 2002 discussed the Preferential Trade Agreement, aiming to solidify the relations between the countries at the bilateral level in economic, defense cooperation and culture.

In Tanzania, Kalam's goal of setting cooperation in diverse fields grew into the implementation of credit lines that intended to offer assistance to the African people and strengthen the ties with the country.¹⁶ Also, building health collaborations, educational exchanges, and defence personnel training were some of the actions within the NEPAD¹⁷ project. Beyond trade benefits, India has had the support of the Tanzanian president to a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. These kinds of cooperation towards health, agriculture, defense, credit lines, education and so on are India's features in Africa not only during Kalam's mandate, but sequentially.

Among Pratibha Patil's diplomatic activities is the visit to the coronation of the fifth king of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, in 2008. Visits like this, beyond the ceremony, aim to set bilateral ties between the parties, especially in Bhutan's case, that is an old partner of India. In 2011, Patil's visit to Mauritius did not result in the signature of any agreement, but served to confirm the partnership towards education, tourism, IT and other kinds of cooperation between them.

Before her retirement in 2012, Patil visited the Seychelles and South Africa in the end of April to discuss issues pertaining to India's position as an aid giver to Seychelles and South Africa. The president would also be attending the Special Session of the National Assembly in Seychelles. In May, Patil participated actively in the India-South Africa Business Forum meet, which represented a boost on the already growing ties in this relation.

15. President Abdul Kalam of India on State Visit to South Africa: 14-18 September 2004 (dirco.gov.za) Accessed 29/01/2021

16. India offers assistance to Tanzania in various fields (outlookindia.com) Accessed 02/02/2021

17. New Partnership for Africa Development

During Mukherjee's term, assistance to Mauritius in tourism and medicine in later presidencies as well were accorded. Bhutan has also become a bilateral partner in 2014, when the president visited the country intending to, after 26 years since the last bilateral visit were made, move forward with the ties between them.

Ghana, as a long term partner even before attaining independence, has nowadays (2015-16) crossed bilateral trade over \$3 billion dollars with India and shows a growing appreciation of India's posture as a capacity building agent.¹⁸ In Ivory Coast, different numbers pointed to the same destination. Expressive trade (India and Ivory Coast bilateral trade grew from \$344.99 million in 2010 to \$ 841.85 million in 2015¹⁹) and varied capacity building. In this case, public transportations projects and rural electrification are emphasized in the presidential speech.

Kovind's contribution to India's foreign policy is comprehended on the continuity of the consolidated relations India has already built by paying outgoing state visits aiming to reaffirm or renewing accords, as has happened to Mauritius²⁰ or Benin²¹ in 2018 and 2019.

Also, the president tries to extend India's actions to new countries. Since 2017, Kovind has reached out to new partners such as Madagascar and Djibouti, aiming respectively to cooperate on defence matters, trade and infrastructure projects.

Conclusion

India's foreign policy has gone through significant changes in the post-Cold War period. It has led India to redo its diplomacy values and adopt economic strategies to survive in the international system. In the process of growing its external influence, India opened its economy and presented itself to the world as a supporter of independence movements, notably in Africa. This priority can be seen in India's foreign visits around the globe, which pre-

18. Joint Statement between India and Ghana during President's visit to Ghana (mea.gov.in) Accessed 13/12/2020

19. Joint Statement between India and Cote d' Ivoire during President's visit to Cote d'Ivoire (mea.gov.in) Accessed 12/12/2020

20. State Visit of President to Mauritius and Madagascar (March 11-15, 2018) (mea.gov.in) Accessed 11/12/2020

21. Press Statement by President during his State Visit to Benin (mea.gov.in) Accessed 10/12/2020

sents a strong presence in the black continent, though also quite high in Europe.

Theoretically, this can be clarified by two theoretical strands. In the first place, India's engagement towards European countries can be seen through the lenses of Peripheral Realism, that comprehends the engagement of relative or minor powers to greater powers in subordination politics (PECEQUILO, 2016, p.79), which in India's case, aims to reach out for economic growth through interdependence. According to Jaishakar (2010), this inclination in addition to the reconfiguration of India's priorities after the Cold War era posits that cooperating is better than adversity. To varying degrees, India's engagement with nominal adversaries in its region and its warming relationships with Europe, can all be attributed to this newfound emphasis on economic growth as a critical element in India's foreign policy calculus (JAISHANKAR, 2010). Nevertheless, in reality, for overseas observers and scholars, the substance of India's foreign policy has been extremely difficult to grasp because India deploys its policies depending upon circumstances and timings (HORIMOTO, 2017). The second way to understand India's engagement in Africa is to observe the incentives India has to prioritise extra-region partners.

China, as the fastest growing economy in Asia and a diplomatic active nation is expected to be Asian regional power. China's wealth and influence in Asia sets before India a few incentives to seek for other possibilities to act externally. According to Mesquita and Chien (2021), regional prioritization is a common practice in the foreign policies of regional powers, and the relationship of a power and its neighbours can vary and include coercive imperialism. China, still as an emerging power, summing to the current tensions from the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers by Chinese forces, does not impress the image of a good integrative leadership in the region. This does not mean that India's foreign policy in its region is not invested, but that the relations in other regions such as Africa might represent a safer place for New Delhi. Such conclusions, however, would need to be tested more thoroughly through a side by side comparison between the diplomatic attention devoted to Africa vs. Asian regions.

In this context, Africa and India's relation have found a good ground to grow and were fortified by India's support, firstly in independence matters to African countries and then as an aid giver

ready to cooperate and promote business partnership through bilateral accords and multilateral events. Top diplomacy helps also to reduce the democracy deficit by the personal conduct of the foreign policy, in which relevant transnational actors, interests groups, and societal groups have influence. That means that trade growth and business expansion in Africa helps India's domestic policy to increase its legitimacy among the voters and groups who identify with the government gestures in the foreign policy matters. This aspect can be supported by the idea of foreign policy as a field of validation of domestic policy (DANESE, 2017). That also clarifies the different engagement of India with multiple countries along the mandates. Since India's presence in Africa shows expressive numbers and over the different governmental administration (respectively, a total of 31-32 visits from the Presidents and the Prime Ministers), we can affirm that, independently of the leader of India and its beliefs, maintaining relations to Africa is a common ground to such foreign policy, even though the relative salience of this region oscillated over time. This can also be understood as a sign of the continuity of the political ties between the nations. Furthermore, the commitment of the Prime Minister with presidential diplomacy, evidenced in its increase over the terms from 1996 to 2019, demonstrates that multilateral events, both at the level of international and regional organizations, position India as a country with a strong presence globally. According to the quantitative data collected, as well as through the analysis of the speeches given by Indian leaders regarding the relationship with the African continent, it is possible to conclude that, in terms of the theoretical understanding of top diplomacy developed by Danese (2017), India falls under grade two of presidential diplomacy, as the heads of government and state have very active positions in relation to African countries and in relation to the multilateral events that took place on the continent. Such tools have become important for dialogue with the continent, transmitting ideas and images especially within the scope of sharing certain values with Africa, in addition to building a constant presence within the continent.

Annex 1 - Classification of countries by continent

Countries were classified into geographical regions according to the scheme proposed by the Indian MEA in their latest Annual

Report. We performed minor adaptations for certain labels that had inconsistent applications (e.g.: “Asia”, used irregularly in the reports), or had names which were too broad or counter to the intuitive association between name and place (e.g.: calling the more restricted set of Central Asian countries “Eurasia”). Hence, the 9 original MEA categories were adapted into 8 for this article.

Continent (Original Classification In The Mea Annual Report)	Continent (Adapted Classification For The Article)	Country
Africa	Africa	Egypt
Africa	Africa	Ethiopia
Africa	Africa	Kenya
Africa	Africa	Mauritius
Africa	Africa	Mozambique
Africa	Africa	Nigeria
Africa	Africa	Rwanda
Africa	Africa	Seychelles
Africa	Africa	South Africa
Africa	Africa	Tanzania
Africa	Africa	Uganda
Africa	Africa	Namibia
Africa	Africa	Zimbabwe
Africa	Africa	Sudan
Africa	Africa	Ghana
Africa	Africa	Ivory Coast
Africa	Africa	Djibouti
Africa	Africa	Madagascar
Africa	Africa	Equatorial Guinea
Africa	Africa	Swaziland
Africa	Africa	Zambia
Africa	Africa	Benin
Africa	Africa	Gambia
Africa	Africa	Guinea

Continent (Original Classification In The Mea Annual Report)	Continent (Adapted Classification For The Article)	Country
Americas	Americas	United States
Americas	Americas	Trinidad And Tobago
Americas	Americas	Jamaica
Americas	Americas	Brazil
Americas	Americas	Cuba
Americas	Americas	Canada
Americas	Americas	Mexico
Americas	Americas	Argentina
Americas	Americas	Chile
Americas	Americas	Peru
Americas	Americas	Suriname
Americas	Americas	Bolivia
Asia	Central Asia	Tajikistan
East Asia	East Asia	Japan
East Asia	East Asia	South Korea
East Asia	East Asia	Mongolia
Eurasia	Central Asia	Russia
Eurasia	Central Asia	Kazakhstan
Eurasia	Central Asia	Uzbekistan
Eurasia	Central Asia	Turkmenistan
Eurasia	Central Asia	Kyrgyzstan
Europe	Europe	Italy
Europe	Europe	Switzerland
Europe	Europe	United Kingdom
Europe	Europe	France
Europe	Europe	Portugal
Europe	Europe	Germany
Europe	Europe	Cyprus

Continent (Original Classification In The Mea Annual Report)	Continent (Adapted Classification For The Article)	Country
Europe	Europe	Denmark
Europe	Europe	Turkey
Europe	Europe	Netherlands
Europe	Europe	Malta
Europe	Europe	Finland
Europe	Europe	Belgium
Europe	Europe	Ireland
Europe	Europe	Spain
Europe	Europe	Sweden
Europe	Europe	Oman
Europe	Europe	Poland
Europe	Europe	Slovakia
Europe	Europe	Czech Republic
Europe	Europe	Luxembourg
Europe	Europe	Austria
Europe	Europe	Bulgaria
Europe	Europe	Iceland
Europe	Europe	Ukraine
Europe	Europe	Greece
Europe	Europe	Norway
Europe	Europe	Belarus
Europe	Europe	Croatia
Europe	Europe	Slovenia
Gulf And West Asia	Gulf And West Asia	Iran
Gulf And West Asia	Gulf And West Asia	Syria
Gulf And West Asia	Gulf And West Asia	Qatar

Continent (Original Classification In The Mea Annual Report)	Continent (Adapted Classification For The Article)	Country
Gulf And West Asia	Gulf And West Asia	Saudi Arabia
Gulf And West Asia	Gulf And West Asia	United Arab Emirates
Gulf And West Asia	Gulf And West Asia	Israel
Gulf And West Asia	Gulf And West Asia	Jordan
Gulf And West Asia	Gulf And West Asia	Palestine
Gulf And West Asia	Gulf And West Asia	Bahrain
Gulf And West Asia	Gulf And West Asia	Sri Lanka
South Asia	South Asia	Pakistan
South Asia	South Asia	Afghanistan
South Asia	South Asia	Bhutan
South Asia	South Asia	Bangladesh
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	Maldives
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	Nepal
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	Vietnam
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	Indonesia
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	Malaysia
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	Singapore
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	Cambodia
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	Laos
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	China
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	Thailand

Continent (Original Classification In The Mea Annual Report)	Continent (Adapted Classification For The Article)	Country
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	Philippines
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	Myanmar
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	Brunei
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	Australia
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	Fiji
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	New Guinea
South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	South-East Asia And Asia Pacific	New Zealand

Annex 2 - Methodology: India's presidential diplomacy

The database used for the quantitative analysis of this article is the Rising Powers Diplomatic Network (RPDN), which observes presidential diplomacy and diplomatic presence of emerging powers from the Global South (Brazil, India, South Africa and Turkey) in terms of foreign visits. The data collected for presidential diplomacy in India aimed to cover information from 1995 - 2019, specifically external visits from both the President and Prime Minister of India. The sources used for these two representatives were the website of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) of India²², which contains diplomatic information from 2005 to 2021, as well as the MEA Library²³, with Annual Reports from 1949 to 2009. The information regarding the Prime Minister's external visits were supplemented by the website of the Prime Minister of India.²⁴ Other complementary sources used were the website of former Prime

22. https://mea.gov.in/outgoing-visits.htm?2/outgoing_visits Accessed 15/07/2021

23. <https://mealib.nic.in/> Accessed 15/07/2021

24. <https://www.pmindia.gov.in> Accessed 15/07/2021

Ministers of India²⁵, Office of The Historian²⁶ (a US Government website featuring visits by heads of state to the US), and the Indian news website Times of India.²⁷ Also as a complementary source for data on presidential diplomacy performed by the Prime Minister, PM Gujral's autobiography, "Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography" was used. Regarding travels carried out by the president, the complementary sources used were the Presidency's website²⁸, the websites of Presidents Narayanan²⁹ and Devisingh Patil³⁰, the news websites Zee News³¹ and Outlook India³², and the European Parliament's website.³³ To access some of the records unavailable in these sources, the Wayback Machine tool was used.³⁴

By collecting data as aforementioned, it was possible to feed the RPDN dataset with the most recent information on presidential diplomacy through the quantification of visits abroad carried out by the President and Prime Minister of India. It is important to note that bilateral and multilateral visits or events made by visiting countries that occurred in Indian territory were not taken into account. The data collected refer to the date of the visit (date), year of the visit (year), title of the representative (president or prime minister), name of the president/prime minister and the governmental/cabinet term. Because the codification for terms takes into account the date on which the ruling coalition changes according to the election year, in certain cases the same year had more than one representative or more than one term per representative. In addition, the data still show the destination type, that is, whether the state visit was to bilateral or multilateral events, the latter encompassing visits to international organizations. Also in the database are the name of the country or organization of destination and the length of the visit as measured in the number of days. Notes with supplementary information about the visits and, finally, the consulted sources were also recorded.

25. <https://archivepmo.nic.in/> Accessed 16/07/2021

26. <https://history.state.gov/departments/history/visits/india> Accessed 16/07/2021

27. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com> Accessed 16/07/2021

28. <https://dpl.presidentofindia.nic.in> Accessed 16/07/2021

29. <http://www.krnnarayanan.in/> Accessed 10/07/2021

30. pratihapatil.nic.in Accessed 10/07/2021

31. <https://zeenews.india.com> Accessed 16/07/2021

32. <https://www.outlookindia.com/> Accessed 16/07/2021

33. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu> Accessed 16/07/2021

34. <https://archive.org/web/> Accessed 10/07/2021

The data were tabulated using the Google Spreadsheets software and its validation occurred by complementing the sources just exposed. The full dataset is available at Dataverse (<https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/5FISNQ>). In addition to recording all sources consulted in the database, PDFs were saved in order to ensure good information management for the project.

In this article, we focus on the issue of presidential diplomacy performed between 1995 and 2019, measuring the number of visits carried out on the African continent, identifying whether or not there was an increase in the number of visits, in addition to comparing the total number of visits to the African continent with the other continents.

To complement the quantitative analysis, an exploration of the speeches of the President and Prime Minister was carried out before, during or after the visit to countries on the African continent, in order to understand their motivations and objectives.

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