



## EDITORIAL

Opportunities for engagement between African and Chinese civil society have increased over recent years. Through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), a structured platform for communication was provided for African non-governmental organisations to meet with Chinese organisations to further discuss topics of mutual interest with the view to deepen and expand 'people-to-people' engagement between both sides and parallel to increasing political ties between China and the Continent. Other initiatives have included China-Africa NGO seminars and programmes organised by the China NGO Network for International Exchanges (CNIE) and The Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) held in China, and the South Africa-China NGO Dialogue co-hosted by the Emerging Powers in Africa Initiative in Cape Town in 2010.

A further development of people-to-people exchange was concluded recently in Nairobi, Kenya. The first China-Africa People's Forum took place from 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> August 2011, bringing together 200 representatives of civil society organisations from China and Africa. At the conclusion of the event the Nairobi Declaration was adopted, stating that the Forum had "provided an important platform for multi-lateral engagements between NGOs from both sides and has established tangible cooperation". Ms Sanusha Naidu participated in Forum's proceedings and provides commentary

on the nature of the event, its outcomes and possible future role in the development of civil society engagement between Africa and China.

A meeting in Hainan, China provided dialogue for a different framework for possible engagement, namely trilateral cooperation between India, China and Africa. Experts met recently to discuss the potential for trilateral engagement including dialogues at academic and policy levels between the three sides. The meeting explored the prospects for a dialogue in areas of common interest as a result of seemingly mutual developmental, political and economic challenges. Prof K Mathews provides an overview of bilateral ties between India and China in light of this potential cooperation and concludes that a trilateral dialogue could provide an opportunity for the two emerging powers to "forge partnerships for facing common challenges". This is followed by a number of useful links and publications that have become available over the past month.

We hope you will find this edition of the newsletter an interesting read,

Hayley Herman

*Programme Officer  
Emerging Powers in Africa Initiative*

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For further information on the Emerging Powers in Africa Initiative, or submission of commentaries for the newsletter please email Ms Hayley Herman.



More analysis and commentary from Fahamu's Emerging Powers in Africa Programme can be found online in Pambazuka News: [www.pambazuka.org/en/category/africa\\_china/](http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/africa_china/)

## COMMENTARY

# Expanding the Going Out Strategy: The China-Africa People's Forum

By Sanusha Naidu

## Introduction

I RECENTLY ATTENDED the inaugural China-Africa People's Forum hosted by the China NGO Network for International Exchanges (CNIE) and the Kenya NGOs Coordination Board (KNCB) from the 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> August 2011 in Nairobi.

Designed to serve as a platform for interactions and exchanges between Chinese and African NGOs from English speaking countries, the Forum was identified as expanding on the 2009 FOCAC measure of enhancing people to people engagements. This view was aligned to the sub-theme of the Forum entitled: *Enhance Partnership and Promote Friendship between China and Africa*.

Despite all the pomp and ceremony that accompanied the Forum, I was struck by the enormity of the event and the intention to facilitate greater exchanges between Chinese and African civil society actors.

Yet in reflecting on the Forum, there were several issues that needed to be interrogated around the conceptualisation of a China-Africa People's Forum, which I had identified as challenges and difficulties in my closing remarks to the Forum.

These are as follows.

## The Historical Platform

It has become a self-fulfilling prophecy at every China-Africa event to be told that both sides share a common history. Or put more succinctly ties that bind.

The recognition of the historical foundation is seen as non-negotiable in the relations between Africa and China. Yet these platitudes reinforce an imagery of China's engagements with the continent which only serves to reflect on a particular era in history.

Surely the sustainability of this historical platform must be examined against the fluidity of a rapidly evolving international system.

With this said the Forum must guard against metaphoric interpretations of and grand standing related to the historical ties and commons bonds. This is because the world today is very different from the one of yesteryear.

What do I mean?

The challenges that currently confront the international system does not always mean that historical

ties can strengthen strategic partnerships. With the contemporary financial crises spreading like wild fire, no country is immune to its impact. Not only are we witnessing a return to conservatism in parts of Europe, but there is a greater need for the protection of jobs and social well-being.

The world we are currently battling with is facing systemic issues of exclusion and growth without development. Nations are becoming increasingly restless and frustrated about how their governments are going to ensure their social welfare while others have decided that it is time that 10% of the world's richest are held accountable for their reckless economic behaviour and greed.

In this tide of global economic uncertainty, future generations may not be satisfied with just historical platitudes. They may demand greater accountability in Africa's China relations while on the side there may be less enthusiasm about China's growing development footprint in Africa.

In short, the Forum's inception comes at a time when a new thinking has to take cognisance of a world where satisfying domestic interests may actually become a priority before partnerships and friendships.

How the Forum address such impulses and nuances will be the litmus test for shaping a new historical engagement with Africa.

## 1. The Fragmented Civil Society Voice

This brings me to the second issue on the fragmented civil society voice.

Civil Society is not a homogenous entity. Nor are the voices of civil society actors unitary. The premise is simple: there are different forms and avenues that constitute civil society and makes non state actors unique and differentiated in their behaviour.

In recognising this it must also be accepted that not all civil society voices can be represented or heard at any given time. But it should not be lost that the basic feature of a People's Forum does not mean excluding the real voices of grass-root organisations and community based movements who have important contributions to make in terms of the impact such a Forum will have on their daily lives and social justice struggles.

With this in mind, the Forum brought together a mix of African and Chinese actors who debated

how this platform can play a strategic role in strengthening engagement between civil society stakeholders from both sides.

But herein was the dilemma. Whose interests were being represented at the Forum?

*In the name of the people* has become another self-fulfilling prophecy for civil society organisations. And in the context of the Forum it became an all encompassing expression.

The fact that segments of civil society were present does not mean that the voice of the African people was heard. The simple truth is that civil society formations are in themselves also representative of elite networks.

Therefore a critical feature of the Forum is to guard against becoming over-confident that it represents the interests of all African people and hence speaks on their behalf. And likewise for the Chinese people.

## 2. What is the Agenda?

The third issue is really about how the Forum goes about defining its agenda and implementing it. Linked to this is whether the Forum's mandate will remain insulated from the politicised realities of China's footprint in Africa. The bottom line is that it is going to be difficult to separate the geo-political/strategic issues that currently underpin the China-Africa engagement, especially as those outside of the Forum begin to challenge the legitimacy of the network and question the intentions of the agenda.

The critical question for the Forum will be how it manages to remain politically neutral without being seen as compromising its founding principles of enhancing partnership and promoting friendship.

Or will critics identify the Forum has having its own political agenda?

## 3. Fitting in Africa's Diversity

Perhaps the biggest challenge that faces the Forum is how it will manage the diversity in Africa's political, social, economic and cultural landscape.

I am reminded of the famous Chinese motto 'harmony in diversity', which definitely holds true for the Forum's identity as it moves forward.

But in defining itself in this way the Forum has to also recognise that diversity in the continent reinforces post-colonial identities and cultural differentiations.

Reconciling these different impulses across the continent will be tough to manage as competing

interests and views may actually compel the Forum to become muted and caught in dichotomies that are beyond its control.

What comes to mind is how the Forum will format and extend itself into Francophone Africa, Lausophone Africa and North Africa.

One lesson for the leadership of the Forum to be aware of is that a one size fits all approach is not the way to go.

The platform that was set in Nairobi may have some relevance to the East Africa region but should not become the model to adopt elsewhere.

It is important to recognise and appreciate how state-society relations are structured and for the Forum to accommodate these nuances in its platform.

It does strike me that maybe the Forum cannot have a continental platform but rather should give consideration to a regional approach to the China-Africa Partnership Forum where each region has its own Secretariat. This is something that may actually provide more value in the outcomes and achievements of the Forum than striving for a continental body which may be more minimalist in its impact.

## Conclusion

The Forum concluded with an adoption of a declaration<sup>1</sup> that amongst other things noted that Chinese and African people will strive for a better and peaceful world.

But perhaps the most profound outcome of the Forum was the adoption of the motto: *Solidarity is Power*. And indeed it is as history attests.

Yet for there to be solidarity we must be aspiring to the same dream and not as the Chinese quotation says: *dream different dreams while on the same bed*.

Therefore the future of the Forum depends as much on its ability to manage diversity as it is about finding its identity in a changing international environment for both African and Chinese civil society actors.

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<sup>1</sup> The declaration is available at: <http://www.trademarksa.org/news/nairobi-declaration-adopted-first-china-africa-people%E2%80%99s-forum>



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# India, China and Africa: A New Vision for Trilateral Cooperation

By Prof K. Mathews

## Introduction

TODAY, CHINA AND India are the world's fastest growing economies. They both have suddenly ascended the centre stage of the world. They have attracted immense global attention for their phenomenal growth stories and rising influence in international affairs. In 2010 China officially became the world's second biggest economy overtaking Japan. In the West this has prompted concerns about China overtaking the United States sooner than previously thought. Even though India's growth has been less rapid than China's, its potential impact on the rest of the world and Africa in particular should not be discounted.

Another striking development in the early 21st century is the resurgence of Africa and its return to global focus. Today Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the fastest-growing regions in the world. Many African countries such as Ghana, Ethiopia, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, among others, are now on the path of commendable economic growth. A number of African countries are richly endowed with precious commodities like oil, gas, copper, iron, coal, timber etc. thus enhancing their collective economic might.

Some analysts point out that in the 21st century a new scramble for Africa is taking place among the world's big powers for Africa's natural resources. Also, the new scramble is placed in the historical context of imperialism and analysts show important continuities with the original 19th century rush for colonies. While the previous scramble was among the major European powers, today the continent provides a battleground for competition between the US, EU, China and other emerging powers such as India, and South America.

China's and India's involvement in Africa has provoked much debate and discussion. Many questions are asked. Are they just the latest in the line of exploiters of Africa's rich natural resources who put their own economic interests above humanitarian, environmental or human rights concerns? Or is their engagement an extension of South-South Cooperation? Do China's and India's engagement enable African countries to free themselves from the tyranny of debt and conditionality, that through two decades of structural adjustment programmes have reversed most of the gains of independence? Is Africa swapping one set of tyranny for another? What are the problems and prospects for India, China-Africa trilateral cooperation? These are some of the questions examined in this paper. The paper particularly looks at the challenges and

prospects for possible China, India-Africa trilateral cooperation for African development. An attempt is made to emphasize how the continent can build a healthy relationship with India and China that can promote mutual economic and strategic benefits and genuine development in the spirit of South-South cooperation.

## India and China in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

Over the past decade and more, China and India have established themselves as increasingly influential players across Africa. This development poses both threats and provides opportunities for African countries. China has been depicted as a shrewd winner of a neo-colonial scramble for resources, offering development assistance mainly in the form of infrastructure investment, low priced manufactured goods and soft loans all proffered with no Western style demands to respect democracy and human rights. In exchange China gets access to raw materials to fuel its economic boom.

Compared to China, India is only a junior partner in Africa. The Chinese approach as distinguished from that of the West, is founded on two principles- bilateral engagements organized through political elites ignoring the domestic record of governments as a matter for their internal affairs. This could have adverse consequences for democracy and development in Africa. However, ultimately it would be prudent for advocates of African development to recognize that all external powers involved in Africa are there basically to advance their own national interests, and harboring of contrary illusions can only result in future disappointment. While analysts emphasize the gap between China and India in terms of their actual capacity to invest in Africa, to reach for resources and play a major role at the developmental level, many think that in the long run India will have the comparative advantage over China. India clearly tries to find its own way to do business in Africa, mixing its development strategy with broader economic and geopolitical ambitions while underlining its will to emphasize capacity- building expertise in areas such as ICT, health and education over a mere quest for natural resources. It may be noted that the relationship between two major powers like India and China is controlled and directed first, by their bilateral equations and, second, by the international context in which they operate. Therefore a brief survey of the evolution of India-China bilateral relations may provide a useful backdrop for understanding prospects for India, China-Africa trilateral cooperation.



## India-China Relations: The Historical Context

India and China are two of the oldest living civilizations with over five thousand years of history. Their relationship in ancient times was marked by trade relations, through the famous "silk route" and cultural relations, particularly the impact of Buddhism on the Chinese people. One well known writer on India-China relations, Tan Chung, describes India-China relations as a three-part saga. In the first part, India and China were 'Buddhist twins' and had a mutually beneficial interaction for over two thousand years. In the second part, India and China were the 'colonial twins' sharing the pain of Western exploitation and repression as well as the White Man's Burden and supporting each others struggle for independence and liberation during the 19th and early 20th century. In the third part, India and China are becoming the 'geo-civilizational twins' from now on in their united effort to reshape the world order and marching towards the Indian ideal of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (the world be one family) and the Chinese ideal of *shijie datong* (a world in grand harmony).

In the modern period both India and China began their journey as independent sovereign entities almost simultaneously. India became independent in 1947 and in China Communist revolution suppressed the Chinese Nationalists in 1949. India saw China as a powerful ally who could further support the cause of the newly emerging Third World solidarity. India extended full support to China in the international arena. Also in 1954/55 the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (*Panchsheel*) were enunciated by agreement to which both countries pledged to abide by. Both India and China supported anti-colonial movements in Africa.

Unfortunately however, mutual distrust and border problems soon cropped up culminating in the short war between the two countries in October 1962 that disrupted diplomatic relations till 1976. The path-breaking visit of the then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to China in December 1988 broke the stalemate between the two countries and relations were normalized and enhanced. Famously, Rajiv Gandhi in his speech in Beijing stated:

*India and China have the responsibility to look ahead instead of looking back. We should seek new goals, explore new fields for friendly cooperation and open new ways for both sides and the world as a whole.*

However, ten years later, the May 1998 nuclear tests conducted by India greatly upset China, which saw a challenge in nuclear India that would weaken the Chinese position as an emerging global power. However, soon security dialogues that encompassed nuclear issue were resumed and both sides agreed to clarify their position and to enhance mutual exchange of visits at various levels and boost bilateral trade and economic cooperation. In April, 2000 India and China celebrated 50 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations and Presi-

dent K.R. Narayanan visited China in May 2000. In his speech in Beijing the Indian President famously asserted: *"Cooperation between India and China is a historical necessity"*.

In April 2005, when the Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao visited India, an agreement on Strategic Partnership to resolve long-standing border problem was signed. On that occasion Wen Jiabao noted: *"During the past 2,200 years, or about 99.9% of the time, we have devoted to friendly cooperation between our two countries"*. (Obviously 1962 accounts for the missing 0.1% in Wen Jiabao's historical arithmetic.)

The high profile visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao to India in 2006 was significant. Among others, the year 2006 was commemorated as the *"India-China Friendship Year"*. In July 2006, Nathu La Pass was opened as a trade route between the two countries that greatly helped to strengthen bilateral trade. In October 2007, India's ruling UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi's five-day visit to China further boosted relations between India and China. The Chinese President Hu Jintao said that China-India relations had developed in depth and enjoyed good momentum in recent years. Indian Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh's visit to China in January 2008, among others, greatly helped to further improve bilateral relations. The key outcome of this visit was a document entitled *"Shared Vision for the 21st Century"* which included the common positions that the two countries share on a range of issues including economy, polity, energy, nuclear disarmament, terrorism, trade, religion and climate change. Besides this, ten other agreements were concluded. An understanding was also reached for cooperation in civil nuclear energy. More significantly, during this visit, China for the first time showed its willingness to support India's candidature for the permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

Sino-Indian ties continue to develop at a smooth pace. The two countries have forged a strategic partnership for peace and prosperity, and established strategies to further deepen relations for mutual benefit. However, the two countries also face some problems despite focusing their efforts on promoting development, strengthening cooperation and deepening bilateral ties. The unresolved border problem continues to adversely affect the smooth progress of bilateral relations. However, as then Chinese President Jiang Zemin stated in 1997: *"Our common interests far outweigh our differences, neither of us poses any threat to others"*.

## India and China in Africa: Competition or Collaboration?

The debate on China and India's growing involvement in Africa has led to competing conclusions. Broadly two competing schools of thought have emerged, both of them rigid and oversimplified. The first takes a rather narrow view that China and India's engagement in Africa is purely exploitative, extractive, and destructive. Their conclusion is that China and India are the 'new imperial' pow-



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ers with a 'colonialist project' that will perpetuate Africa's underdevelopment. The second approach asserts that the engagement is benign and that China and India do not threaten Africa's development. Instead, proponents of this view believe that Africa's engagement with these Asian giants will assist African states in achieving their development objectives. Indeed, the polarization of the debate has served only to mask the nuances inherent in both China and India's engagement with economies on the African continent. Undoubtedly, China and India are challenging the presence of traditional actors in Africa. While the developed world continues to argue about what is right and good for Africa, African academics and opinion leaders are developing their analyses as regards the Asian giants. It is the reactions of Africa's policy-makers that will determine whether China and India's engagement is a threat or an asset.

### New Vision for India-China-Africa Trilateral Cooperation

As China and India both have emerged as major players on the global stage today, their relations are not limited to the bilateral sphere alone; they have regional and global significance also. From the global perspective, the peaceful development of their ties has helped promote a multipolar world and the globalization process. The peaceful Sino-Indian development has not only helped push Asia's growth and prosperity, but also given a greater voice to the continents in the international community resulting in the gradual shift of global economic and political power from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Obviously, peaceful coexistence has been the precondition for the rise of China and India and created the hope of the arrival of the "Asian Century". It should also be noted that China and India have more interests than differences in common.

India and China need not and should not be competing hegemons in Africa. The exponential growth of the Chinese and Indian presence and influence in Africa in recent years is having a

positive impact on Africa because it offers African countries the counterweight offered by traditional Western development partners. In November 2010 the World Bank concluded that "...Africa could be on the brink of an economic take-off, much like China was 30 years ago and India 20 years ago". The continent is emerging as a strategic player on the world stage.

India, China and Africa together accounts for more than half of the world population and world geography. Together they constitute a major force in the world and have the capacity to form a separate power bloc strong enough to thwart any challenge from other quarters. India and China need not be in a race with each other or with any other power in the African continent. The Western inspired theory of India-China power games in Africa is baseless. As noted earlier, one can find a world of difference in the way India and China deal with the African continent. In the future world order destined to be dominated by China, India and other emerging powers, Africa should not be a mere market or a source of natural resources where China and India appear like old colonial powers of Europe. Africa is a continent with the largest number of developing countries with much poverty and underdevelopment, and China and India as the largest developing countries in the world should forge partnerships for facing common challenges. That should be the new vision for India-China, Africa trilateral cooperation for the 21st century and beyond.

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## RESOURCES, LINKS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Phandulwazi nge China****Scholarship Programme for visiting scholars from Africa****Centre for Chinese Studies, Stellenbosch University, South Africa**

Phandulwazi nge China (Xhosa for Understanding China) scholarships offer opportunities for African researchers to spend research time at the Centre for Chinese Studies (CCS) in order to advance mutual learning and a better exchange on interpretations of political, economic or environmental impact of Chinese engagement in Africa.

The Phandulwazi nge China scholarship targets citizens of African states from Academia or the broader civil society with a proven research interest in China-Africa relations. The programme particularly addresses African scholars who are preparing for a stay in China or are returning from a longer stay in China. With the scholarship, African citizens are expected to continue working on China and China-Africa relations and to deepen their analytical work.

The scholarship involves:

- A fully funded 3-month visit at the CCS at Stellenbosch University, in the first or
- second half of 2012,
- A fully funded short research trip to China during the stay at the CCS.
- Providing space for- and strengthening experience in evidence-based research that
- feeds into policy recommendation.
- Work and interaction with research within the CCS, with an opportunity for
- intellectual exchange and public engagement on a topic relevant for China-Africa relations.
- Publication of research results in a CCS publication format or similar formats.

Applicants must:

- Be a citizen of an African state;
- Have a strong social sciences or economics background, e.g. Economics, Political
- Sciences, Sociology, Law, Journalism, Anthropology, etc.,
- Be diligent and reliable in their work and have proven strong writing and research skills;
- Provide an outline of a project to be researched and written during their stay at the CCS. This can be based on an existing research/PhD proposal, but should fit the general evidence-based orientation of the scholarship.
- (Basic) Mandarin language skills are not prerequisite, but will be an asset in the application.

Application Notes:

1. The CCS offers one scholarship March-May 2012 and another September-November 2012.
2. Application deadline is:
  - 31 December 2011 for the scholarship in the first half of 2012,
  - 30 June 2012 for a scholarship in the second half of 2012.
3. Applications must include a full CV, a motivation letter of no more than 500 words, and a brief research outline (max. 750 words).
4. Applications should indicate institutional affiliation as well as the specific thematic strand in which they would position their work, i.e. the political-, economic- or environmental strands.

For more information, please consult our website at [www.sun.ac.za/ccs](http://www.sun.ac.za/ccs) under Scholarships or email CCS Director Dr. Sven Grimm: [sgrimm@sun.ac.za](mailto:sgrimm@sun.ac.za)

**Recent Publications and New Reports****The Sicomines Agreement: Change and Continuity in the Democratic Republic of Congo's International Relations**

Written by Johanna Jansson, SAIIA Occasional Paper No 97, October 2011

*Paper can be accessed at: [http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/occasional\\_papers/saia\\_sop\\_97\\_jansson\\_20111031.pdf](http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/occasional_papers/saia_sop_97_jansson_20111031.pdf)*

**Indian Mining Companies in the Democratic Republic of Congo**

Written by Gregory Mthembu-Salter, SAIIA Policy Briefing No 35, October 2011

*Briefing can be accessed at: [http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/briefings/saia\\_spb\\_35\\_mthembu\\_salter\\_20111031.pdf](http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/briefings/saia_spb_35_mthembu_salter_20111031.pdf)*

**China and Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Africa: The Case of Sudan**

Written by Daniel Large, SAIIA Policy Briefing No 36, October 2011

*Briefing can be accessed at: [http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/briefings/saia\\_spb\\_36\\_large\\_20111031.pdf](http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/briefings/saia_spb_36_large_20111031.pdf)*

**The Effects of the European Union's and China's Trade Agreements on Africa's Exports**

Written by Olayinka Idowu Kareem and Fatima Olanike Kareem, October 2011



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Report can be accessed at: <http://www.trademarksa.org/news/effects-eus-and-china-s-trade-agreements-africa-s-exports>

### **New development cycle through long-term investment? China and the Bélinga project in Gabon**

Written by Romain Dittgen, EchoGéo, Number 17, 2011

Report can be accessed at: <http://echogeo.revues.org/12547#toc>

### **Declaration of the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the China-Africa Think Tank Forum**

27<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup> October 2011, China

Declaration can be accessed at: <http://www.ccs.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Declaration-of-CATTF-1-final.pdf>

## **Programme Activities**

A meeting titled 'China in Africa: African Union and Civil Society Dialogue' was hosted by the Emerging Powers in Africa Initiative from 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> October 2011 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting brought together representatives from African civil society and the African Union to discuss Africa-China engagement and the role of the African Union in current Africa-China relations and FOCAC processes.

Ms Hayley Herman, Programme Officer, participated in the first Asian Forum on Global Governance, co-hosted by the Observer Research Foundation (India) and the Zeit-Stiftung und Gerd Bucerius Foundation (Germany) in New Delhi, India from 16<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> October 2011. The Forum brought together over 40 young professionals under theme of the meeting "Traditional & Non-Traditional Security Threats in Asia".



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