



# Different messages, different methods

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How India and China are developing their engagements with Africa

## Highlights

- While trade and investments are only part of the story, Indian engagement lays emphasis on the long term — enhancing Africa's productive capacities, diversifying skills and knowledge, and investing in small- and medium-sized enterprises.
- China's approach is more traditional — resource-extraction, infrastructure development and elite-level wealth creation.
- Both India and China are laying emphasis on infrastructure and connectivity projects in priority regions of the world as the next phase of economic globalisation. In China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), East Africa and the Indian Ocean Region are key focus areas.
- India's cross-border connectivity with Eastern African countries and Indian Ocean island countries is a natural extension of New Delhi's desire to foster more robust people-to-people connections, increase investment-led trade and business opportunities, and strengthen bilateral partnerships.
- India is also seeking to reinvigorate its cultural links with East Africa under the rubric of Project 'Mausam', an initiative of the Ministry of Culture, which seeks to revive lost linkages with the Indian Ocean 'world' (East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia).
- India's African cross-border connectivity has three primary forms: maritime-port connectivity under the government's Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) and the SagarMala initiative; digital connectivity under the Pan African e-Network project on tele-education and tele-medicine (launched in 2004), and air connectivity in the form of direct flights from Indian cities to African destinations.
- India, Japan and many African nations have also launched a trilateral initiative, the Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), to develop 'industrial corridors', 'institutional networks' for the growth of Asia and Africa, and to promote development cooperation.
- Where the AAGC is a consultative initiative between three equal partners (India, Japan and Africa), the BRI is more of a top-down, unilateral approach to secure Chinese interests, which would eventually traverse continental Asia to reach Europe.

## Military ties

- Africa features significantly in the security and geo-strategic considerations of both India and China. India's security and defence cooperation with Africa is mainly limited to maritime cooperation in the form of anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia, deployment of Indian forces to UN peacekeeping missions in Africa, regular shipping visits, and joint-naval patrolling in the Western Indian Ocean Region. These are mainly with Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, and the Indian Ocean island countries Mauritius, the Seychelles, Madagascar

and Comoros.

- China supports Africa's military transformation by providing equipment, advanced technology, and independent capacity-building in security — and the China-Africa Defence and Security Forum is an important development.

#### Future perspectives

It is inevitable that as the centre of gravity of global politics and economics shifts to the Indo-Pacific region, emerging powers like India and China will begin to play a larger role in Africa. There are significant differences in their approaches, and the challenge for them would be to develop partnerships with African nations in a way that makes Africa a part of their growth stories to.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

