

India in Africa

Is Narendra Modi's India-Africa Partnership Policy Working?

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "...Africa will be at the top of our priorities" in his address in the Ugandan Parliament on July 25, 2018. Four years into the present government's five-year term, New Delhi is adopting a laudably determined approach to deepening the partnership.

India's engagement with Africa, especially at a time when the partner region's geopolitical and geo-economic situation is changing, deserves serious consideration. Africa is increasingly being viewed as a land of opportunity and promise, not a region of conflict and poverty as before. Every major player – China, Japan, the US, Russia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), besides the former colonial nations is enhancing cooperation with it. India naturally has significant stakes in Africa's stability, security and development.

The China factor

Africa has welcomed India's overtures in enriching cooperation, oblivious to the element of India-China competition in the region that is keeping agog sections of the western and Indian media and experts. New Delhi has always held that India's relations with Africa – rooted in history and, therefore, unique – stand on their own: competition with other countries has no part in it though public perception may run to the contrary.



Key elements

India's President, Vice President and Prime Minister have made more than 25 visits to African capitals during the past four years. Reciprocal political-level visits contributed significantly to mutual understanding and cooperation. New Delhi's decision to open 18 new diplomatic missions in Africa in the following few years, which will take the total number to 47, reflects its new Afro-centric approach.

The economic and trade pillar, however, presents a mixed picture. Bilateral trade, which peaked at US\$72bn in 2014-15, declined to US\$52bn in 2016-17. It showed a 21 percent increase, touching US\$62bn in 2017-18.

Finally, people-to-people links continue to develop – but in a sub-optimal way. Inadequate growth in tourism, lack of direct flights by Indian carriers, underutilisation of public diplomacy as a tool, particularly by the African side, and below-par engagement with civil society, strategic, and academic communities, constrain the growth of dynamism and substance in exchanges between Indian and African Third Spaces.

The way forward

Narendra Modi recently spelt out the '10 principles' that will continue to guide India's engagement with Africa. The main facets of India's Africa strategy should be to: 1) motivate and enable India Inc. to step up its trade and investment exchanges; 2) impress upon stakeholders the need to make project management speedier and more effective; and 3) develop an ambitious plan to strengthen the people-to-people connect. Only then the India-Africa partnership will start moving towards harnessing its full potential.

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72nd Independence Day in Accra

Indians in Ghana gathered at the High Commissioner of India to Ghana to mark their 72nd Independence Day in Accra. The ceremony brought together all Indian national living in Ghana and their well-wishers to join the rest of the world in celebrating their sovereignty.

In a speech by the High Commissioner Birender Singh Yadav on behalf of the Indian President Ram Nath Kovind, urged Indians to be proud of their history and work towards building a nation they can feel proud of. Singh announced that India will commemorate the 150th birthday of the great leader Mahatma Gandhi taking some time to eulogise him and recount some of the values he stood for.

(Business & Financial Times, 20.08.18)

Boosting Zambian Economy

During Ram Nath Kovind's visit, on April 10, 2018 he held bilateral talks and signed a number of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two countries with Zambian President Edgar Lungu. Through strategic partnerships in the areas of information and communications technology (ICTs) and skills development, Zambia stands further to benefit from India's fast-growing ICT sector and human capital development through skills training.

A fast-growing economy like India provides a good opportunity to enhance cooperation with other developing countries, such as Zambia in sectors like education, research, science, technology and innovation to create employment and reduce poverty.

(Zambia Daily Mail, 04.07.18)

Modi's Uganda Goodies

A significant development package offered to Uganda by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit overshadowed business deals being pursued behind the scenes. The Prime Minister announced a US\$200mn loan facility targeted at the energy, agricultural

and infrastructure sectors during the visit in a move viewed as an 'ice breaker' for India's latest diplomatic charm offensive.

The energy sector was allocated the lion's share of this credit line, with US\$141mn provided for construction of new power lines and electricity substations. Other sectors anticipated to gain include pharmaceuticals, motor assembling, food processing and ICT.

(The East African, 28.07.18)

Training Doctors of Ghana

Thirteen medical doctors selected from the Greater Accra Regional Hospital, Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital, Sunyani Regional Hospital and Tamale Regional Teaching Hospital participated in a four-week medical training in India.

The areas of training are Critical Care Medicine, Urology, Gastroenterology, Pulmonology, Neurology, Cardiology, and Laparoscopic among others at the Apollo Hospitals in four cities of India (Delhi, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad) under the decision of India-Africa Forum Summit held at New Delhi, India by the Government of India in October 2015.

(Business & Financial Times, 17.09.18)

Digital Transformation in Africa

Delegates from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa are in Johannesburg this week for the 10th Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) Summit. The theme, 'BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the Fourth Industrial Revolution' – suggests a big focus on what these five countries can do to support digital transformation in Africa.

Among the BRICS economies, India ranks lowest on ICT development, with a score comparable to that of Africa on an average. However, India has successfully launched many unique digital initiatives in the last few years.

(Business & Financial Times, 21.08.18)

India Eyes Big Four

India has joined other global economies in their quest to cement trade ties with Kenya and is positioning itself for investment opportunities arising from President Uhuru Kenyatta's Big Four agenda, especially projects aimed at driving the manufacturing sector. Suresh Prabhu, Minister for Commerce and Industry and Civil Aviation led a high-powered delegation to scout for investment opportunities.



During the visit, he met President Kenyatta and pledged his country's commitment in helping Kenya achieve the Big Four agenda. He further urged Indian businesses in Kenya to position themselves to benefit from the planned US\$220mn (Sh22bn) power project funded by the Indian government. *(Standard Digital, 01.09.18)*

New Indian Missions in Africa

India will open 18 new embassies across Africa, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Uganda's Parliament. India is vying for influence in Africa with its regional competitor China which has aggressively developed trade, financial and diplomatic ties on the continent.

India currently has 29 full diplomatic missions in Africa, according to Delhi, compared to China, which has 50. It hopes to open its new missions within three years, according to an Indian official. Modi also praised Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni for welcoming back the Uganda Asians who were expelled by Ugandan politician and Military Officer Idi Amin Dada.

(The East African, 25.07.18)