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## The Big Picture – India's Africa Outreach

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi began a three-nation, five-day tour to Africa today (July 23, 2018). The visit to Africa comes ahead of the 10<sup>th</sup> BRICS summit in Johannesburg. First on the Prime Minister's itinerary is Rwanda, being referred to as the "**gateway to Africa**". PM Modi's visit to the nation, from July 23-24, will be the first by any Indian prime minister. PM Modi is being accompanied by a **high level business delegation in a bid to take forward strategic partnership with Rwanda**.

The PM will next visit Uganda, where he is slated to address the parliament of Uganda. **Two lines of credit worth \$164 million will be extended during the visit.** PM Modi's visit to Uganda too will be **the first by an Indian PM in 20 years**. In the final leg, PM Modi will head to South Africa on July 25 to attend the BRICS summit.

## Why Rwanda and Uganda are important for India?

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- According to the Ministry of External Affairs both the above mentioned countries are the Gateways to the larger blocs.
- **Rwanda will be the Chairman of the African Union** this year and consequently, would play a **major strategic role**. Besides, it is **also at the forefront of the East African Community**. In the past few years we have seen that India has developed a focused relationship with the continent and the visit to these countries would **strengthen and further consolidate the relationship especially on the economic front**.
- As for Rwanda, it is a small **country exerting a disproportionate influence in the region**. The regime of Paul Kagame has consolidated power and had built a strong military and a thriving economy. It is a great success story.
- Besides defense collaboration, Kagame wants to attract Indian investors.
- These two countries would play a **major role in south-south cooperation**. The **credit line of \$164 million is supposed to be extended**. This economic help would definitely increase India's soft power.

## India and Africa relations

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- India's focus of Africa is not new. For the past 3 to 4 decades India has engaged actively with the continent. However, since the past decade the focus has been intensified and in the last couple of years the engagement has developed by leaps and bounds.
- **The Third India-Africa Summit in Delhi was the jewel in the crown as for the first time India did not see Africa as a bloc but as individual countries comprising the African bloc**.
- **Strategically, politically and economically** Africa is very important to us. Hence, the Indian Prime Minister is accompanied by a business delegation.
- India is focusing on trilateral partnership like the **Asia-Africa corridor with Japan**. India has taken a **more bottom up, participatory approach**, whereby, it has looked into the aspirations that Africans have in their minds and not merely thrusting upon them from the top.
- In the last couple of years India has made it a **conversation and not a one way monologue**. India has brought in African people into confidence.
- India's engagement with the African countries has almost always been bilateral. Example, India-South Africa bilateral relations. Effort must be put in to engage with various trade blocs. Amongst them would be COMESA, ECOWAS, ECCAS, The African Free Trade Zone.

## Is Africa Big Enough to Accommodate both India and China?

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- Presently the phenomenon of anti-globalisation has seen the western countries retracting from the world stage. The US and the European countries are vacating their position of influence from the continent. Hence, it is an **opportunity for the Asian countries to fill up the shoes**.
- We should not see Africa as a competition ground for these two countries. Contrary to China, India is constrained by resources. Consequently, **we should focus on our strength like solarisation of the continent, human resource development, entrepreneurship development, etc.**
- Disillusionment with China—
  - Most of the Chinese financing to Africa is associated with securing the continent's natural resources. **Also called the Angola Model**, that is, providing low interest loans to nations who rely on commodities, such as oil or mineral resources, as collateral.
  - The Chinese construction companies bring in Chinese workers. Hence, employment generation which is one of the signs of healthy economic development remains stagnant.
  - Besides, the Chinese military footprint is ever increasing.
- In contrast to huge infrastructural loans sanctioned by Xi Jinping, the Indian Prime Minister will donate 200 cows in a rural part of Uganda as part of Paul Kagame's social mobility project. **India has used a bottom up approach which will be beneficial for the relationship.**
- The Chinese model enables the elites and the well-connected in Africa to make a lot of money and flourish. **However, India is trying to engage with the Africans on a face to face basis, that is, more on a personal level.** In the long run we should not face the backlash as much as the Chinese would.

## Issues

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- **The issue of delivery** has always been a problem. Like providing aids and grants have not been met in time. **The reason is mainly because of bureaucracy and red tapism.**
- However, gradually we have realised the harm it causes and we have tried to rectify it. And, the African countries have also acclimatised themselves with how India works. **There are no surprises or shocks in the relationship now.**
- India has limited herself to the eastern part of the continent. Like Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia. The effort should be to expand to other part of the continent, especially the western part of the continent and engage countries like Morocco, Togo, Benin, Congo, etc.

## The Way Forward

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- **India's cumulative trade with Africa is around \$100 billion.** Hence, there are ample opportunities here if we play to our strengths. Besides, the **change in the demographics and gradual democratisation** (like in Ethiopia) of Africa has opened up a window for India to further strengthen its relations democratically.
- We have to develop people-to-people relationship **like training doctors and teachers, and other professionals.**
- We have to make our presence felt in the West African countries. They are rich in natural resources particularly oil and raw materials. India can help countries like Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria fight the menace of Boko Haram.