India and China in Africa

What is the issue?

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- India and China are developing their engagements with Africa proactively.
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- But they've adopted very different approaches to further their ties.
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What are the recent trends in Africa's geo-political space?

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- Africa's global outreach was once mainly towards the western world, but recently India, Japan and China have entered the picture.
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- This is not only because African nations are reaching out to other partners, but also that the Asian countries are eagerly seeking opportunities in Africa.
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- The Indian PM and the Chinese Premier are both currently on individual trips to some African countries currently, ahead of the upcoming BRICS Summit.
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- Notably, the 1oth BRICS Summit (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) is slated to be held in South Africa.
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- **Indian Outreach -** This is Mr. Modi's second trip to mainland Africa after his visit to Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya in 2016.
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- In the last four years, there have been 23 outgoing visits to Africa by the President, the Vice President and the Prime Minister.
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- Mr. Modi current tour saw him go to Uganda and Rwanda, and his visit to Rwanda (a rapidly growing economy) is the first ever by an Indian PM.
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- Notably, during the visit of Rwandan president Paul Kgame to India last year, ties between the countries were elevated to the level of strategic partnership.
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- **Chinese Outreach -** It Mr. Xi's currently visit is his first to Africa after being re-elected for a second term in March this year.
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- Mr. Xi is scheduled to visit Senegal and Rwanda, and Mauritius.
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- Significantly, this comes in the backdrop of the 1st "China-Africa Defence and Security Forum" which was held in Beijing recently.
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- The forum was attended by many African defence ministers and army chiefs.
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What is the present economic context?

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- For India, bolstering economic ties with Africa is of paramount importance though trading patterns currently remains small overall.
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- Africa exports raw materials and imports manufactured goods and India-Africa trade grew from $11.9 billion (2006) to $62.66 billion (2018).
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- On the contrary, China is now Africa's largest trading partner with a $166 billion in 2011, although there is immense potential for further expansion.
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- Also, Indian private sector is yet to take full advantage of the investment climate in Africa, which could reap immense benefits.
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How is India's approach to Africa different from China's?

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- While trade and investments are only part of the story, Indian engagement

lays emphasis on the long term ties.
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- **People Centric -** Enhancing Africa's productive capacities, diversifying skills and knowledge, and investing in SMEs are on the cards.
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- India's cross-border connectivity initiatives with Eastern African countries are a natural extension of its policy to enhance people-to-people ties.
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- This, India feels, will increase investment-led trade and business opportunities, and strengthen bilateral partnerships.
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- 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.
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- The project seeks to revive lost linkages with the "Indian Ocean world" - East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia.
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- Contrarily, China's approach is more traditional — resource-extraction, infrastructure development and elite-level wealth creation.
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- **Connectivity -** India's African cross-border connectivity initiatives has three primary forms:
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- Maritime-port connectivity under the government's "Security and Growth for All in the Region" (SAGAR) and the SagarMala initiative
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- Digital connectivity under the Pan African e-Network project on tele-education and tele-medicine (launched in 2004)
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- Air connectivity through direct flights between Indian and African cities.
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- In contrast, China's focus is solely on big ticket investments that will provide strategic control to it for enhancing its economic might.
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- **Joint Initiatives -** India, Japan and many African nations have also launched a trilateral initiative, the Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC).
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- This is to develop ‘industrial corridors’, ‘institutional networks’ for the growth of Asia and Africa, and to promote development cooperation.
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- The AAGC is a consultative initiative between three equal partners (India, Japan and Africa), which contrasts it to China’s BRI.
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- Notably, BRI is structured more as a top-down, unilateral approach to secure and enhance China’s economic and strategic interests.
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- In China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), East Africa and the Indian Ocean Region are key focus areas.
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How are military ties in Africa shaping up?

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- Africa features significantly in the security and geo-strategic considerations of both India and China.
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- **India -** India’s security and defence cooperation with Africa is mainly limited to anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia.
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- Other aspects include - deployment of Indian forces to UN peacekeeping missions in Africa, and joint-naval patrolling of Western Indian Ocean.
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- These engagements are mainly with Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, and the island nations of “Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros”.
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- **China -** China supports Africa’s military transformation by providing equipment, advanced technology, and independent capacity-building.
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- The “China-Africa Defence and Security Forum” is an important development in this context as it is promises to be a major ideation forum.
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