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Q8(c)

Identify the drivers of India's new interest in Africa

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · PSIR GS 2 · 15 marks · Comparative Politics

Comparative Politics: Nature and major approaches; political economy and political sociology perspectives; limitations of the comparative method.

Core demand of the question

- Identify the drivers of India's new interest in Africa
- Write at 15-mark length

Revision summary

Old ties were NAM, diaspora, and anti-apartheid.

New drivers are energy, pharma and IT markets, and credit lines.

China's African and Indian Ocean presence is a strategic prod.

UN General Assembly votes support India's order-reform bids.

Summits and vaccines are the diplomatic method; delivery is the constraint.

Introduction

- **India always had an Africa story:** Gandhi, NAM, and anti-apartheid. The new interest is thicker, more commercial, and more strategic. Drivers are energy, markets, China, the Indian Ocean, and votes.

Body**Historical base that is not "new"**

- Diaspora on the east coast and in southern Africa, and Nehru's anti-colonial line, are the old capital.
- **The new phase is scale:** lines of credit, summits, and defence visits.

Economic drivers

- **Energy and minerals:** oil, gas, and ores for a growing Indian economy.
- Markets for pharmaceuticals, IT, and consumer goods - the pharmacy-of-the-South brand.
- **Lines of credit** through EXIM Bank and concessional projects as a reply to slower Western aid and to Chinese packages.

Strategic drivers

- China's Belt and Road and base politics in the Indian Ocean make Africa a maritime and diplomatic field, not a charity map.
- Piracy, sea lanes around the Cape and the western IOR, and African partners in naval exercises.
- Peacekeeping history gives India a security familiarity few Asian peers match.

Institutional and status drivers

- African votes in the UN General Assembly matter for G4 Council reform and for many country-specific files.
- India-Africa Forum Summit process and a claim to speak as a Global South peer, not a donor overlord.

Soft drivers

- Education, ICT, and vaccine diplomacy, including during COVID, as presence-building.
- Shared democracy talk with some partners; with others, only interest.

What "new" means

- From solidarity speeches to a crowded market in which India must deliver or lose the room to Beijing and Gulf capitals.

Flow diagram

Energy markets -> New Africa interest
China IOR -> New Africa interest
UN votes G4 -> New Africa interest
Diaspora NAM memory -> New Africa interest

Conclusion

India's new Africa interest is driven by resources and markets, by China and the Indian Ocean, by UN arithmetic, and by a wish to convert old NAM goodwill into projects. Solidarity is the memory. Capability and delivery are the test.

Facts & figures

India-Africa Forum Summit

Periodic leaders' process that institutionalised the new diplomatic rhythm.

Lines of credit

Indian EXIM concessional finance for African infrastructure and procurement.

IOR / PLA presence

Maritime competition that pulls African littorals into India's security map.

UNGA arithmetic

Africa's large voting bloc as a standing reason to invest in the relationship.