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Q8(c)

Discuss the major drivers of India's interests in Africa

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · 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

- Examine the drivers of India's interests in Africa
- Write at 15-mark length

Revision summary

Drivers are material (oil, minerals, markets), social (diaspora, students), diplomatic (UN and AU), and maritime.

NAM history is a resource of trust, not a full explanation.

China's capital presence is a competitive driver of Indian offers.

Peacekeeping and ITEC are tools as well as values.

A durable interest needs local jobs and sea-lane security, not only summit photographs.

Introduction

India's African interests are driven by energy and minerals, markets, Indian-origin communities, UN and Global South politics, maritime security in the western Indian Ocean, and competition with other extra-regional powers, especially China. History and NAM solidarity are real. They are not the only drivers.

Body**Material drivers**

- Hydrocarbons from West Africa and minerals, including those used in batteries and industry, matter to Indian growth.
- African markets buy Indian vehicles, pharmaceuticals, and telecom. Lines of credit and EXIM Bank finance try to lock that access.
- The western Indian Ocean is a sea line for energy to India. Piracy off Somalia in earlier years made navy visits and information sharing a security driver.

People and history

- Diaspora in East and Southern Africa, and students in Indian universities, create a social lobby and a soft-power channel, in Nye's sense.
- Anti-colonial cooperation, NAM, and Gandhi's South Africa years supply a political memory that African elites still recognise, if delivery follows.

Diplomatic drivers

- Fifty-plus African UN votes matter for Council reform, for country-specific files, and for climate and trade coalitions.
- Global South diplomacy, the African Union's G20 seat, and ITEC training are instruments of that vote-and-voice interest.
- Peacekeeping in several African UN missions is both contribution and presence.

Strategic competition

- China's infrastructure scale is the benchmark African governments compare. India's offer is people-centred projects, digital public goods talk, and a smaller capital envelope.
- Extra-regional bases and ports in the Horn and on islands pull India to keep naval friendships from Oman to Mauritius and further west.

What does not drive alone

- A civilising mission is not the official driver. Resource extraction without local industry would repeat a pattern India criticises in others.
- **The honest list is mixed:** resources, votes, diaspora, sea lanes, and status as a Southern partner.

Flow diagram

Energy minerals markets -> India Africa interests

Diaspora NAM memory -> India Africa interests

UN votes AU G20 -> India Africa interests

IOR security China -> India Africa interests

Conclusion

India's African interests are driven by resources and markets, diaspora and NAM memory, UN votes and AU diplomacy, and Indian Ocean security under China's shadow. Solidarity language works when it is tied to those drivers, not when it replaces them.

Facts & figures

Indian Ocean western flank

Sea lanes from West Asia and East Africa that carry a large share of India's energy.

EXIM lines of credit

Indian concessional credit used for African infrastructure and equipment exports.

ITEC in Africa

Training slots that build bureaucratic contact over decades.

African Union in G20

2023 seating that India presented as a South and Africa-facing diplomatic win.

UNPKO in Africa

Indian contingents in several African missions as a security and political presence.

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