

# CHINA'S BIG 'BELT AND ROAD' PUSH IN AFRICA

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Africa

In another era, White colonisers had landed on Africa's coast in search of resources and slaves. The traumatic epoch of slave trade and European colonisation, with its horrific human consequences, formally ended in the 1960s and 1970s. But arguably, the basic equation of Africa's resource-rich periphery serving the metropolitan industrial centres in Europe and North America remained fundamentally unchanged.

It is not that Africa has not progressed. The African Union (AU) — the culmination of the pan-African dreams of an earlier generation of leaders such as Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah and Algeria's radical ideologue Frantz Fanon — is a dynamic reality. South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Egypt, among others, are regional powerhouses. Rwanda has made a courageous comeback after an inter-ethnic genocide in the early 1990s. Yet, industrialisation has been patchy. Civil war, terror attacks and disease outbreaks have all undermined the efforts. While the threat of terror was epitomised by the mass abduction of schoolgirls by Boko Haram in Nigeria, repeated outbreaks of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo have only added to the instability of the Central African region.

In this matrix, China has emerged as a game-changer in the 21st century. This is despite acerbic criticism from its detractors that Beijing is spearheading a second wave of colonisation through financial enslavement and other tools present in its well-stocked armoury. The Chinese establishment is dismissive of these accusations.

## The connectivity angle

It argues that China has launched a destiny-changing phase of industrialisation in Africa, led by massive infrastructure development. Officials say Africa will draw unprecedented benefits from China's next phase of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) — Beijing's giant transcontinental connectivity flagship.

In tune with the BRI, Chinese President Xi Jinping is set to host scores of African leaders in Beijing. In early September, they will assemble under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation — a platform that Beijing created three years ago. Ahead of the Beijing summit, Wang Yi, China's State Councilor and Foreign Minister, sought to demolish the perception that China was Africa's post-colonial hegemon. "... China will engage with Africa in equal consultation, plan together, work together and benefit together", to draw benefits from the "new era" of the BRI, he stressed during a media conference.

It is as part of the BRI that Beijing has funded a 470 km railway line. Last year, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta green-lighted the train from Nairobi to the coastal city of Mombasa. Once networked fully, the line will provide a viable linkage to the landlocked states of South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, giving them access to the Indian Ocean. Besides, Ethiopia is building a 756 km track from Addis Ababa to Djibouti. Once the \$4 billion project is complete, it will link the Ethiopian capital with the Red Sea.

Following the arrival of the train in Mombasa, Mr. Kenyatta contrasted China's intent to the motivation of former European colonisers. "A history that was first started 122 years ago when the British, who had colonised this nation, kicked off the train to nowhere... it was then dubbed the 'Lunatic Express'."

“Today... despite a lot of criticism, we celebrate not the ‘Lunatic Express’ but the Madaraka [named after the day Kenya attained internal self-rule] Express that would begin to reshape the story of Kenya for the next 100 years.”

***Beijing has rubbished claims of some critics that it is playing the role of a post-colonial hegemon in Africa. It says its aim is to engage with countries there as equal partners, bringing in a new epoch***

Sign up to receive our newsletter in your inbox every day!

Please enter a valid email address.

Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.

**END**

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com