



## Security Challenges in Africa: India's Foreign Policy Response

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The new imperatives of globalization have intensified Africa's interface with India, which has been nurtured by mutuality of worldviews and interests through century-long linkages. India and Africa are, therefore, currently realizing the importance of greater security cooperation. The thrust areas of security cooperation include containment of conflict, strengthening conflict resolution mechanisms and fostering post-conflict reconstruction process. Keeping this in perspective, the *policy brief* will identify the sources and macro trends of African conflict, in terms of juridico-political dispute, ethno-electoral contestation, external competition for economic space, extremist mobilization and human security problem. It will also characterize the tri-leveled (country/regional/AU) internal response to the complex security crisis in Africa. The *policy brief* will try and explore the scope for India's security partnership with the continent at bilateral, regional and AU levels.

### **Security Challenges**

The current security crisis in Africa is predominantly characterized by the intertwined intra- and inter-state conflicts. The genesis of this crisis lies in many factors, including arbitrary territorial demarcation by the colonial powers, Cold War encampments of the super powers containing the functional interface between the political regimes and the citizenry, consequent restriction of the demographic cohesion in the post-colonial societies,

and increasingly selective unilateral post-Cold War interventions or threat of such interventions by the supra-state actors, assisted by the extra-regional powers, into the continent in the guise of 'international mandate.' These exogenous factors are compounded by the dereliction of the domestic ethno-political dispensation of the individual African countries.

There is also constant electoral contestation in Africa, where multi-party rule has been adopted by many of its countries after going for Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) since the early 1990s. While SAP became a catalyst for institutionalization of democratic governance across Africa, pre-existing ethnic tension has got its reflection in the electoral politics the continent. The competitive claims over electoral mandates have, many a time, led to ethno-political violent contestations in the African countries. This has constrained the consolidation of procedural democracy in the politically 'aspirational and polarized' countries in Africa, weakening their integrating institutional mechanisms.

The insecurity in Africa is linked to competition between dominant global powers and new challengers over the continent's economic space, notably its resource base. The rising significance of emerging powers in Africa has resulted in more securitization of commercial stakes by external powers. The political dissent has selectively been used by some of these actors as strategic opportunities in the specific African countries. In some cases, this has resulted in disproportionate military interventions, creating scope for further security unrest in the continent.

The complex security scenario has provided space for radical mobilisation along extremist/religious fault lines in Africa. This is evident from the steady rise in terror attacks in many parts of the continent in the recent years. The lethality of these attacks became a gradual reality in Africa, ever since the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces started providing arms and related logistical support to the Islamist groups in their campaign against Gaddafi in Libya in the year 2011. In this respect, a United Nations (UN) report published in April 2013 stated, "Illicit flows from [Libya] are fuelling existing

conflicts in Africa and the Levant and enriching the arsenals of a range of non-state actors, including terrorist groups.”

Above all, human security crisis is the top most concern in Africa. The continent's integration into world economy has unleashed unprecedented economic growth, bringing simultaneous problems concerning service distribution and opportunity access for its people. Under economic globalization process, the decade-long decline in poverty rate in much of Africa coincides with growing inequities at national and regional levels, and with respect to the rest of the world. Based on gender, rural/urban location and family income considerations, there is an increase in access disparity to basic services, such as food, water, health care, sanitation and education across the continent. Among these development challenges, emergency of public health caused by the spread of epidemics currently remains a major human security issue in Africa. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has, for instance, declared Ebola as a regional security threat, affecting so far nearly 20, 000 people and taking more than 7, 000 lives in West Africa.

### **African Response**

African countries have successfully contained some of their intra- and inter-state conflicts in their quest for political peace and stability. Under regional initiatives, coupled with international assistance, the political, social and commercial institutions have been rebuilt in some of the erstwhile conflict-affected countries. The ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) has emerged as a crucial peace enforcer in West African region. The African Union (AU) has also done substantial work in his regard. The AU charter has equipped the member states better in terms of handling conflict related problems through collective action. Consequently, the AU states legitimately and frequently deploy Pan-African force to intervene in the conflict theatres. The African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) has, indeed, played a decisive role in containing conflict in Africa.

The AU and the regional groupings like Southern African Development Community (SADC) have acted as effective moderators in competitive claims over electoral mandates

in the politically 'aspirational' and ethnically 'polarized' countries in Africa. The AU has accorded a prominent position to political democracy by recognizing its credibility as an 'enabling choice system' that fosters economic growth and stability in Africa. On human security front, the AU and ECOWAS are actively engaged in efforts towards combating the spread of Ebola epidemic in West Africa.

### **India's Partnership**

India and Africa continue their close security cooperation, including through regular consultations at the UN, at the AU and in New Delhi/national capitals. New Delhi has security cooperation with several African countries, including South Africa, Mauritius, Seychelles, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and Nigeria. India has signed its first strategic partnership with South Africa. Both remain committed towards operationalisation of the African Standby Force through special training programmes. This cooperation has been appreciated in the UN, in the AU, in the regional entities like ECOWAS of India's contribution in peacekeeping, in providing security in the countries which are in the conflict zone in Africa.

India's contribution to the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) is acknowledged globally, especially in Africa. India has become part of the conflict-containment and reconstruction process of the affected region. As the third largest contributor of personnel to the UNPKO, India's significant participation in the conflict-containment and reconstruction process is recognized in Africa. India has more than 5,000 peacekeepers in Africa. In 2007, India's unparalleled contribution of a 125-member Female Formed Police Unit (FFPU) of its paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to the UN Mission in Liberia represents the first-ever women contingent in the history of UN peacekeeping. The Indian women police force deployment has emerged as a source of inspiration for the conflict-affected women in Liberia and wider West Africa.

In the context of issues relating to international peace and security, India has appreciated efforts made by the AUPSC in maintaining peace in Africa. New Delhi recognizes the role of African countries in maintaining peace and security in the continent

and their participation in peacekeeping missions in other parts of the world. India is supportive of the ongoing effort of developing an African Standby Force for enhancing the continent's capacity to maintain peace and security. Africa, on its part, also appreciates India's principled support to and continuing involvement with UN peacekeeping operations, especially in the African continent. Moreover, India has engaged with Africa as one of its crucial partners in the electoral process. New Delhi has approved US\$ 10 million to the UN fund, and has promised an additional amount of US\$ 2 million for the purchase of protective gear, to combat the Ebola epidemic.

India's security cooperation with Africa needs a greater thrust. As a victim of terrorism, India could partner in the proposed multilateral and regional counter-terror initiatives in Africa. Moreover, India's position in the case of politico-armed intra-state conflicts in Africa – i.e. protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the conflict afflicted country along with the sensitivity towards the legitimate aspirations of its people - needs to be articulated in a more proactive and pronounced fashion. While this policy articulation has to be undertaken through bilateral channel, at the AU and regional levels, logistical, personnel and capacity building support have to be provided.

### **Recommendation**

- a) A holistic conception of India-Africa security cooperation has to be developed.
- b) The exchange of defense ministerial visits requires greater thrust, with special focus on relatively smaller states.
- c) Similar exchange of visits at the level of National Security Advisors should be initiated.
- d) Commitment to cooperate in the strengthening of the African Court of Justice and Human Rights deserves serious attention.
- e) Efforts in partnering Africa Standby Force should be further strengthened.
- f) India could try and partner in the proposed multilateral and regional counter-terror initiatives in Africa, by contributing logistical support and capacity building assistance. Training of specialized counter-terrorism units could be explored.

- g) The defence production partnership should be promoted on a priority basis. Moreover, the illegal small arms imports need to be curbed on an urgent basis.
- h) A member of the AU Partners Group, India could deepen its partnership in the logistical and capacity building fronts of the electoral process in Africa.
- i) India should encourage multi-stakeholder dialogue on its resource production partnership in Africa.
- j) There is a need for calibrated synchronization between economic partnership and security cooperation.
- k) India could place its diplomatic personnel on the ground in Somaliland/Puntland, if not Somalia proper, to monitor refugee outflows, along with training in medicine, education, etc.
- l) India could assist the World Food Programme in its deliveries in and out of Mogadishu's sea ports, leveraging this humanitarian effort to build contacts and goodwill among local clan leaders.
- m) India could contribute to the AU and ECOWAS efforts in containing Ebola epidemic in West Africa. Different strands of Ebola could be researched and low cost medicine should be developed. In this regard, African countries would have to provide necessary data on virus strands.
- n) India's position on political and security crisis situations needs to be articulated in a more proactive and pronounced fashion. In this regard, an Africa strategy paper should be prepared through involvement of the various stakeholders.
- o) There should be greater push for reforms of global institutions of security and governance by mobilizing support among the African countries.

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