

The untapped potential of India-Africa security cooperation

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The strategic partnership between India and Africa has grown through bilateral relations and multilateral engagements among a number of African countries. Yet despite progress, key stakeholders have neither adequately recognised nor effectively leveraged the full potential of security cooperation in the partnership. This report reflects on existing collaboration on security matters and identifies areas of mutual benefit. It argues for a more comprehensive shared security agenda that could easily fit within existing frameworks.

Key findings

- ▶ The India-Africa partnership is growing in strategic significance. This is due to attempts by both India and various African states to hedge their respective security strategies and seek new forms of cooperation in order to fuel development.
- ▶ Security cooperation remains an under-exploited area of the India-Africa strategic partnership. It is not viewed as a primary driver of the partnership, especially when considered in relation to trade, investment and development.
- ▶ There is significant room to strengthen the partnership in light of numerous long-standing peace and security engagements between India and African states, including: peacekeeping, military training, joint maritime initiatives and humanitarian assistance.
- ▶ There currently exist various forms of cooperation on security between India and several African states. The evolution of these partnerships would benefit from more regular engagements and a more comprehensive shared security agenda aligned to broader developmental goals.

Recommendations

- ▶ Indian and African peace and security stakeholders need to establish more meaningful forms of security cooperation. The lynchpin of their shared interests on the world stage should be a collective sense of security.
- ▶ The creation of a formal monitoring mechanism (within the India-Africa Forum Summit framework) is vital. The mechanism would allow for commitments and progress on implementation to be tracked. This would aid in the continued strategic relevance of the partnership and lead to more goal-oriented interactions among key stakeholders.
- ▶ Considering the diverse and complex factors underpinning the African peace and security environment, greater attention should be paid to identifying areas of tangible benefit resulting from enhanced security cooperation.
- ▶ The evolution of the India-Africa strategic partnership on peace and security should situate the African Union as a primary beneficiary and facilitator, alongside individual African member states and stakeholders from sub-regional institutions.

Introduction

In recent years, there has been considerable momentum in strengthening relations between Africa and India, primarily on the back of increasing trade, investment and development assistance. Broader historical and political factors have also played a key role in leading Indian and African stakeholders to seek a reinvigorated strategic partnership which could offer mutual benefit within multilateral institutions. Against this backdrop, a strengthened strategic partnership is an essential element in the geopolitical calculus of India and African states to hedge their respective security strategies and diversify the options available to them in maintaining peace and security.

Moreover, strengthened cooperation on security will play a vital role in whether India remains a largely normative actor on these issues in Africa, or if it is capable of growing its profile through more active and direct bilateral security interventions on the ground. If the latter is to prevail, a fine balance will need to be achieved that centres African agency within new security cooperation mechanisms, and which is based on mutual understanding, respect and benefit.

Considerable challenges stand in the way of more robust and novel forms of security cooperation. They include the growing influence of violent non-state actors, the impact of extremist ideologies and the threat posed to the multilateral system by rising populism and nationalism. Thus, Indian and African peace and security stakeholders need to better situate a collective sense of security as a lynchpin of their shared long-term interests on the world stage.

The much more pronounced prioritisation of trade, investment and development assistance between India and African states highlights the relative under-development of security cooperation as a pillar of the strategic partnership. Accordingly, greater consideration of the potential utility of more meaningful forms of security cooperation by Indian and African stakeholders is needed.

Reassessing the India-Africa strategic partnership from a more security-oriented perspective would resonate with a considerable number of shared global interests. These include maintaining security in the Indian

Ocean, responding to the threat of radical non-state actors and reforming the global multilateral system. A more security-oriented partnership could also play an essential role in strengthening both India's and Africa's efforts to hedge their respective security strategies with other global actors.

The pursuit of common developmental goals further provides a basis for a more robust shared security agenda. Whereas the 2015 India-Africa Framework for Strategic Cooperation does indeed recognise the '... importance of peace, security and stability as a precondition for development',¹ much more needs to be done to give this acknowledgement meaning and content.

This can only be achieved through actionable strategies that are aligned to the political and economic interests of Indian and African stakeholders. These efforts could, for example, be directed at greater policy-level coherence on shared priorities within key global multilateral bodies, including the United Nations Security Council, the UN Peacebuilding Commission, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), and the G20, among others.

India-Africa peace and security stakeholders need a collective sense of security as a lynchpin of their shared interests

This research report aims to explore the current scope and nature of India-Africa security cooperation and to reflect on the potential utility of more meaningful peace and security engagements, moving forward. This will be done by first reflecting on the rationale of security cooperation as a cornerstone of the India-Africa strategic partnership. The most recent developments and political dynamics that define the partnership will then be discussed. Thirdly, the paper will argue for a broadened shared security agenda between India and African states, based on areas of mutual benefit. Finally, the paper presents a set of potential opportunities and policy-oriented recommendations.

Cornerstone of the India-Africa strategic partnership

The historic relationship between India and various African states has been primarily understood within the

broad political context of the Non-Aligned Movement and a collective opposition to colonialism and imperialism. These shared historical experiences (along with much older trade and commercial relations) have often been referred to in official engagements that have explored the potential for a more comprehensive strategic partnership between India and Africa.

India's commitment to African peace and security is also often understood against the backdrop of the country's significant contributions to UN-mandated multilateral peace operations operating across the continent.² Based on various indicators (such as the relative number of troops serving in Africa and the associated number of casualties sustained), there is little doubt that its peacekeeping contributions are viewed as a mainstay of its peace and security engagements across the continent.³

Key thematic focus areas within the AU's Agenda 2063 align with integral Indian foreign policy priorities

Beyond these efforts, India's bilateral security engagements with several African states, such as Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar, Kenya and Mozambique, have largely signalled the growing importance of Africa in Indian foreign and security policy considerations.⁴ East African nations and island states have particularly featured as significant sites of Indian security cooperation in recent years.

This has come about as India attempts to solidify its role as a net security provider and preferred security partner to the region.⁵ Africa's Indian Ocean Island states are now an essential geopolitical consideration in India's foreign policy calculus, particularly in its efforts to hedge growing Chinese influence across the region.⁶ Accordingly, African Indian Ocean states have begun to recognise their increasing geostrategic value to major international powers. And this growing political capital can in turn be leveraged and directed towards more meaningful cooperation for the region as a whole.

While the impetus for these more recent engagements could be largely attributed to the economic interests

of both parties (against the backdrop of south-south cooperation development assistance initiatives), this is of course not the only driver. India, in particular, has increasingly sought the support of all 54 African states in order to champion the reformation of the global multilateral system. The country's ongoing support of the Ezulwini consensus (focused specifically on greater African representation on the UN Security Council), for example, highlights its prioritisation of this issue to support the development of a more credible global multilateral system.

Despite these developments, cooperation on security has remained an under-exploited element of the India-Africa strategic partnership. While the shared recognition of peace and security as a precondition for stability and development is often referenced, actionable strategies to give effect to such an understanding have often been overridden by more immediate economic imperatives. This is somewhat understandable given the greater political sensitivities surrounding security cooperation. Regardless, the untapped potential of a shared India-Africa peace and security agenda provides reasonable grounds for stakeholders to more greatly explore and incorporate this as a fundamental pillar in the evolution of the partnership.

Contours defining the India-Africa partnership

The international system has witnessed the emergence of new and complex security challenges, both within and among nation-states, over the past few decades. Accordingly, effective responses to emergent and non-traditional threats have become absolutely vital: from tackling climate change, to cross-border terrorism, transnational organised crime, the spread of infectious diseases and illegal immigration.

The nature of these emerging challenges makes it difficult, if not impossible, for any state to act alone in addressing them. Taken together, these threats all point to the need for strengthened cross-regional security cooperation.⁷ Against this backdrop, India and African states have worked towards cultivating close defence and security ties. While these relations are neither definitive nor well-entrenched, they are indeed progressing.

It is also encouraging to note that many thematic focus areas within the African Union's (AU's) Agenda 2063 long-term strategic vision align to key Indian foreign policy priorities. These include issues such as counterterrorism, climate change, transnational crimes, peacekeeping, and the women, peace and security agenda. Moreover, Indian and African leaders clearly acknowledge that peace and security are intrinsically linked to socio-economic development and growth. Without a stable and secure environment, development cannot be achieved.

Africa and India have been victims of violent extremism from Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, Ahlu Sunnah Wa Ja'ma, Jaish e-Mohammad and al-Qaeda

India and African countries also recognise that the threats posed by terrorism and violent non-state actors pose a tremendous threat to their shared aspirations for greater economic development and social stability. Many African countries and India have been victims of terrorism and radical extremism from Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, Ahlu Sunnah Wa Ja'ma, Jaish e-Mohammad and al-Qaeda. Therefore, there have been significant efforts by Indian and African peace and security stakeholders to deal with the challenges posed by terrorism through disrupting terrorist networks, eliminating illicit financial flows and halting cross-border illegal movements.

India and African countries have also worked together in supporting the adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism proposed by India in 1996.⁸ It is intended to criminalise all forms of international terrorism and deny terrorists, their financiers and sympathisers access to funds, arms and safe havens.⁹ And these efforts have been accompanied by shared commitments and priorities by India and African states within multilateral bodies such as the UN Security Council.

More tangibly, India's contribution to peace and security in Africa has been three-fold:

- Providing training to African defence, military, naval and civilian personnel in Indian institutes;
- Ensuring maritime security predominantly through anti-piracy efforts and joint patrolling of the seas; and
- Contributing troops and police units to UN peacekeeping operations.

India has also been a long-standing supporter of the AU's Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). It has provided financial contributions (\$2 million in 2011 and \$1 million in 2021) to the United Nations Trust Fund in support of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM),¹⁰ and has also supported the operation of the African Standby Force.

INDIA HAS PROVIDED
FINANCIAL AID WORTH

\$3 million

TO AMISOM OVER THE PAST

10 years

Two important developments in recent years highlight the military and political dimensions of growing Indo-Africa security cooperation:

Africa-India Field Training Exercise 2019

(AFINDEX-19): The inaugural AFINDEX for India and African nations took place in March 2019 at the Aundh Military Station in Pune, India. Seventeen African nations participated in the 10-day exercise: Benin, Botswana, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.¹¹

The exercise was mainly aimed at planning and conducting humanitarian anti-mine assistance and peacekeeping operations through sharing best practices, team building and tactical level operations in the conduct of UN-mandated tasks.¹² It also showcased tactical drills such as convoy protection and the neutralisation of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). These exercises will be a regular feature and help fine-tune cooperation in operations between the militaries of India and African countries. The

ultimate aim is to strengthen cooperation in defence preparedness and security between India and Africa.

India-Africa Defence Ministers Conclave

(IADMC) and the Lucknow Declaration: The inaugural edition of the IADMC was held in February 2020 in Lucknow, India, which coincided with DefExpo-2020.¹³ Defence ministers and defence and service chiefs from 14 African countries participated in the conclave alongside members of parliament and delegates from 38 African countries. The event led to the adoption of the Lucknow Declaration,¹⁴ the first such document adapted by Indian and African leaders pertaining specifically to defence, security and military cooperation.

The IADMC provides a concrete platform for Indian and African leaders to conduct sustained discussions at the topmost level. This platform helps Indian and African leaders explore investment and joint ventures in defence equipment software, research and development, digital defence (cybersecurity) and the provisioning of defence equipment, spares and maintenance.

Beyond these developments, however, there are four broad areas in which progress has been made in recent years: i) the training of African military personnel, ii) maritime security, iii) humanitarian assistance, and iv) peacekeeping. In terms of military training, India has prioritised skills and knowledge transfer with its African partners by providing training to hundreds of African military officers and security personnel in Indian institutes such as the Indian Military Academy, the National Defence College, the Indian Naval Academy, and at the Centre for UN Peacekeeping in New Delhi, among others.

Additionally, India helped establish several defence academies and colleges in Nigeria, Ethiopia and Tanzania. Given the compatibility between India and Africa's military traditions, strategic doctrines, command structures and training protocols, defence and security cooperation are essential components of cooperation among all participants. Training delegations have previously been deployed to Uganda,

Botswana, Lesotho, Zambia, Namibia, Seychelles, Tanzania and Mauritius. India also supported the establishment of a defence and naval war college in Nigeria, air force facilities in Ghana and a military war game centre in Uganda.¹⁵

India's bilateral engagements in Africa signal the importance of Africa in India's foreign and security policy

All of the efforts relating to military training and skills transfer are further bolstered by India's bilateral security partnerships with a host of African countries, including Nigeria, Zambia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Namibia, Botswana, Uganda, Mozambique and the four 'Vanilla Islands' of Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros.

Maritime security has emerged as a vital component of India and Africa's growing security partnership. A safe and secure maritime environment in the Indian Ocean

region (IOR) is an essential prerequisite for Indian and African Indian Ocean littorals to secure their respective shared interests and achieve sustained national development. India has a rich history of conducting maritime trade and commerce with countries in the region and has reached out to African states with military aid, capacity building and training assistance.

India acknowledges the Indian Ocean's 'Vanilla Islands' centrality and countries like Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania and South Africa within India's Indo-Pacific policy. The focus has been on increasing cooperation in securing key lanes of communications and preventing transnational maritime crimes such as illegal fishing, piracy and armed robbery. These are all common grounds for collaboration on the Indian¹⁶ and African maritime security agenda.¹⁷

In recent years, the Indian Navy has strived to position itself as a preferred security partner by strengthening relations with IOR littorals. Apart from regular goodwill port visits, efforts are also made for sharing best practices and building capacity through training, naval hardware transfer and intelligence-sharing. The Indian Navy's sustained mission-based deployments in African waters to secure its vital maritime chokepoints at the entrances to the Indian Ocean like Bab-el Mandeb, the Gulf of Aden, Strait of Hormuz and the Mozambique Channel are indicative of its operational aspirations.

India prioritises maritime domain awareness capabilities across the region, in concert with African Indian Ocean littorals, through information sharing and surveillance. This is partly attributed to Indian concerns about the growing Chinese influence and competition in the region.¹⁸ This is why India wants to integrate more African countries into its coastal radar chain network to monitor real-time threats on the high seas. Mauritius, Seychelles and Madagascar have already been integrated into India's coastal radar chain network. India is also proactively inviting African countries to post their liaison officers at India's Information Fusion Center, jointly administered by the Indian Navy and its Coast Guard.

Many African Indian Ocean littoral nations are also members of regional inter-governmental organisations like IORA and participate in forums such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).¹⁹ Interactions between India and African countries at such forums

have facilitated greater and more regular cooperation in maritime security by providing a platform to better understand member states' particular maritime needs and priorities.

However, such engagement has not just been initiated by African countries. On its part, India has worked in recent years to increase the ambit of its role as a security provider in the IOR and its stakes within African regional organisations. In March 2020, for example, India joined the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) as its fifth observer. The organisation facilitates collective engagement with island nations like Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar, Comoros and Reunion.²⁰

To supplement such efforts, India joined the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC) and its 2017 Jeddah Amendment as an observer in 2020.²¹ The DCoC provides a framework for capacity building in the Gulf of Aden and the more expansive western Indian Ocean to combat the threat of piracy.

Africa's Indian Ocean Island states are now an essential geopolitical consideration in India's foreign policy

Additionally, addressing non-traditional threats in the IOR has emerged as one of the Indian Navy's most prominent roles. The Indian Navy has been regularly deployed to undertake humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations, non-combatant evacuations and search and rescue operations. African countries are among the foremost beneficiaries of India's HADR missions, as evidenced by the Indian Navy's proactive role in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to Mozambique after cyclone Idai (2019) and cyclone Diane (2020), and the MV Wakashio oil spill (2020) off the coast of Mauritius.

The fact that Indian naval ships deployed overseas are now mandated to carry additional HADR kits and are deployed in mission-based patterns gives it the speed and flexibility to provide quick assistance in its area of operations. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, India launched 'Mission Sagar' to deliver humanitarian assistance, including food and essential

medical supplies, to some African island nations in the IOR.²² By attempting to position itself as a ‘first responder’ in the region, India has increasingly sought to demonstrate its commitment as a peace and security partner to the region.

Finally, peacekeeping and conflict prevention have for long been a hallmark of India’s engagement in Africa. India has deployed troops and equipment in various African countries to maintain peace and security. Historically, India has participated in almost all UN peacekeeping missions implemented on the African continent. From the UN-mandated operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Mozambique, Somalia, Angola, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire, to the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, India has a long and rich history as a top troop- and police-contributing country.

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The Indian contingents in these missions have consisted of infantry and logistics battalions, engineers, signal and quick reaction companies, hospitals, formed police units, attack helicopter units and large numbers of staff officers and military observers.

India’s extensive and ongoing contributions as a troop contributing country can be viewed as a clear opportunity to strengthen cooperation with African state actors. This has served to validate the credibility of India as a committed stakeholder, not just in terms of African peace and security, but dually in terms of its broader political commitment to the global multilateral system. Today, ‘over 6 000 Indians currently serve in peacekeeping missions in Africa wearing blue helmets working to ensure a future of peace for Africans’.²³

India’s rationale behind these UN-mandated peacekeeping operations in Africa has been threefold. First, India has sought to express solidarity with African countries and encourage the greater involvement of regional actors in peacekeeping efforts. India strongly advocates for these peacekeeping missions to be

conducted according to fundamental bedrock principles relating to consent, impartiality and non-use of force.²⁴

Second, India seeks to consolidate its image as a responsible global power and leverage this recognition and contribution as one of the largest troop contributing countries to claim a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Thirdly, India intends to demonstrate its commitment to peacekeeping despite the hazardous nature of operations in Africa, build strong community relations through humanitarian activities and promote gender equality and sensitivity. Additionally, India has prioritised peace and stability across the continent in order to secure and strengthen its bilateral relations on the continent regarding trade, investment and market access.

Broadening the security cooperation scope

A broadened understanding of India-Africa security cooperation would have to explore the full gamut of responses to conflict and instability based on existing institutional peace and security frameworks. Relatively recent reviews of the UN’s approaches towards peace operations,²⁵ as well as its peacebuilding architecture,²⁶ could be especially useful in defining new innovative models of India-Africa security cooperation to this effect. These reviews have stressed the importance of more flexibly employing the full spectrum of tools and resources aimed at addressing the root causes and structural drivers of conflict.

Other key takeaways from these reviews point to:

- Emphasising the need for effective conflict prevention as opposed to reactive, post-conflict interventions;
- The better design and delivery of peace and security interventions based on more informed analysis and improved planning and coordination; and
- Facilitating a paradigmatic shift whereby peace and security cooperation becomes increasingly people-centred (through the greater inclusion of civil society and community-based organisations).

Alternative models for cooperation could also draw inspiration from the efforts of other state actors to define broad security frameworks with the continent. These arrangements have either involved the AU, with

specific regional groupings (through the continent's regional economic communities (RECs) and regional mechanisms (RMs); or have focused directly on member states, in support of short-term ad hoc security initiatives that have become increasingly prominent in recent years.

A broadened scope for India-Africa security cooperation could further emphasise practicable conflict prevention, stabilisation and peacebuilding strategies that are integrated into the standing peace and security engagements discussed previously. The greater institutionalisation of such strategies should be tied to broader multilateral processes associated with, for example, the UN's Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace agenda, and the AU's ongoing Silencing the Guns initiative.²⁷

Exploring this broadened scope for security cooperation could also entail a more targeted role for Indian and African stakeholders with respect to skills and knowledge transfer in mediation, dialogue, preventive diplomacy and peace education. These efforts would ideally operate at a local or community level and could use and leverage new technologies.

This is familiar territory for India. Some of its flagship development cooperation initiatives in Africa have been geared explicitly towards leveraging its comparative advantages in information and communications technology (ICT). In 2009, for example, India launched the pan-African e-network project, which facilitated the remote learning of 22 000 African students by the time it was officially handed over to the AU Commission in 2017.²⁸

More recently, India has sought to enable African students, patients and doctors to remotely access Indian educational facilities through the e-VidyaBharti (tele-education) and e-ArogyaBharti (telemedicine) projects.²⁹ Accordingly, initiatives that use similar methods and platforms for peace education, peacebuilding, mediation and civil society-led preventive diplomacy could well be considered to strengthen a shared peace and security agenda with African states.

Another viable option worth considering is the coupling of India's comparative ICT strengths with its deep reserve of skilled technical personnel who previously

served in peacekeeping operations across Africa. This should further enhance its military and defence training initiatives on the continent and foster closer working relations with crucial AU and REC/RM officials.

Conversely, India could greatly benefit from the sharing of experiences and technical expertise of African peace and security stakeholders that have worked, for example, in the design and delivery of innovative new forms of regional ad hoc security initiatives. These would include the Regional Cooperation Initiative – Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA), the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and the G5-Sahel.³⁰

The sharing of experiences and technical expertise relating specifically to the design and establishment of the Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) could similarly provide key opportunities to deepen India-African security cooperation.

Efforts aimed at regularising these interactions should also be explored by establishing new inter-governmental fora which could be carried out within existing frameworks and agreements. Particular regard should be paid to the IAFS and the establishment of a regularised formal monitoring mechanism noted in the 2015 Delhi Declaration.

India could greatly benefit from the sharing of African security stakeholders' experiences and technical expertise

Most importantly, identifying areas of tangible mutual benefit (especially over longer-term time frames) should be considered an essential element of more meaningful India-Africa security cooperation. This has largely remained absent in current peace and security debates concerning India-Africa relations due to the seemingly disparate security concerns of India and various African states (with the exception perhaps of safeguarding the Indian Ocean littoral and combating violent extremism).

By identifying areas of tangible mutual benefit, key stakeholders could develop a framework that contextualises and acknowledges the vital relationship between security and development related to the shared economic and political aspirations of both parties.

Benefits that accrue to India as a direct result of shared experiences and best practice with African stakeholders, and the provision of technical expertise from African peace and security actors, ought to be dually explored, defined and woven into a more holistic security cooperation framework.

Identifying areas of mutual benefit

Peace and security actors from India and Africa should, as a starting point, aim to identify such areas of tangible mutual benefit by considering the overarching foreign and security policy aims and aspirations of both parties. Given the inherent complexity of the African political landscape with 54 diverse sovereign nations, Indian and African stakeholders would be wise to directly situate the AU as the primary facilitator in advancing a more meaningful security cooperation framework.

To this effect, it would also be in the best interests of both parties to support the strengthening of the AU's institutional system, with particular regard to the responsiveness and effectiveness of preventive diplomacy, peace support operations and post-conflict reconstruction and development.

Indian and African stakeholders would be wise to situate the AU as the primary facilitator in advancing a more meaningful security cooperation framework

It is therefore fortuitous that the India-Africa Forum Summit already recognises the centrality of the AU.³² Further, it recognises the continent's RECs as active key participants – based on the Banjul Formula.³³ This is particularly significant in the refinement of more meaningful modes of security cooperation, given the critical roles that the continent's RECs and RMs play as the constituent building blocks of the APSA framework.

In light of this recognition, building the necessary inter-institutional linkages to identify areas of mutual benefit, and promote greater coordination and coherence, should be prioritised over and above bilateral arrangements with individual AU member states.

Accordingly, the collective aspirations of African nations and their shared concerns and challenges in terms of peace and security should be identified through the existing multilateral channels provided by the AU. Identifying areas of mutual benefit in a more meaningful India-Africa security cooperation framework should primarily work on the basis provided, for example, in the AU's Agenda 2063 strategic framework, which broadly maps out the continent's shared socio-economic aspirations.³⁴

The agenda's 10-year implementation plan is equally important in providing a concrete basis for Indian peace and security actors to align and contextualise more meaningful forms of security cooperation with the continent. Specifically, opportunities and entry points of top priority vis-à-vis Agenda 2063 refer to

AN INDIA-AFRICA SECURITY
COOPERATION FRAMEWORK
SHOULD BE INTEGRATED
INTO THE AU'S

Agenda

2063

FRAMEWORK

the continent's need for the greater institutionalising of conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms that are functional and responsive to long-standing and emergent peace and security threats and challenges.³⁵

More broadly, the strengthening of good governance and democracy, while uprooting and addressing armed conflict, terrorism, extremism and transnational organised crime, are underscored in Agenda 2063. Therefore, direct security cooperation and support on these matters are vital opportunities, to the extent that African agency and ownership over managing its affairs are not unduly undermined.

The more immediate identification of priority areas for India-Africa policy convergence and mutual security cooperation benefits, however, should be found within the already defined strategic priorities contained in the current APSA implementation roadmap. Relevant are those priorities which refer to: i) conflict prevention; ii) crisis and conflict management; iii) post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding; iv) strategic security issues (dealing mainly with the illicit flow and proliferation of small arms and light weapons as well as transnational organised crime); and v) coordination and partnerships (which largely focuses on the interface between the AU and sub-regional actors).

India is hedging its security bets across the greater Indian Ocean region while protecting its traditional interests

Similarly, through the structures and institutional bounds of the AU, African peace and security stakeholders should critically assess Indian foreign and security policy to identify areas of significant mutual benefit through more meaningful security cooperation. From the aspirations of a more dominant India, to the country's immediate security concerns, African peace and security stakeholders would be wise to identify areas of convergence in which the continent features more prominently within Indian foreign policy.

By clearly defining and leveraging areas of geostrategic relevance vis-à-vis Indian foreign policy, peace and security stakeholders from both sides could act much more decisively in giving greater meaning to a security

cooperation framework that serves as the basis for the India-Africa strategic partnership moving forward.

Already, it is evident that closer security cooperation between India and Africa in the maritime domain is of critical importance in securing the Indian Ocean littoral. Cooperation in the maritime domain has also helped to advance a greater sense of shared ownership and responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security across the region. Economic priorities, similarly, provide a clear area of policy convergence for securing sustainable markets for goods and services between India and African states.

Recommendations

There are numerous opportunities to advance the India-Africa strategic partnership, particularly in terms of closer peace and security cooperation. This is, however, largely dependent on a set of more practical, coherent and formalised interactions — of which the 2015 Delhi Declaration provides a firm basis. Accordingly, ahead of the next IAFS, establishing some form of regularised and formal monitoring mechanism should be understood as a critical indicator of the continued strategic relevance of this evolving and dynamic partnership. This monitoring mechanism could lay the basis for more concrete and goal-oriented interactions and serve as a critical pillar for formalising the strategic partnership.

The significance of this cannot be understated, given the increasing geostrategic value of certain African states in India's foreign policy calculus. India is attempting to hedge its security bets across the greater Indian Ocean region whilst safeguarding its traditional sphere of influence. Similarly, African peace and security stakeholders, particularly African Indian Ocean littoral and island states, will have to increasingly acknowledge India's foreign policy ambitions and aspirations in an increasingly congested geopolitical space. Working through formalised multilateral forums such as the IAFS provides a critical opportunity to constructively move towards shared international goals, pursue common norms and temper any instabilities that may arise due to unilateral actions that have not been thought through.

Indian and African peace and security stakeholders will also need to thoroughly interrogate specific areas of tangible mutual benefit. They should take into

account the inherent complexities of the African political environment and the seemingly disparate peace and security priorities between Indian and African actors. Beyond ensuring maritime security and countering violent extremism, both parties should explore common areas that could support and meaningfully advance broader multilateral peace and security processes stemming from the UN and the AU.

Peacekeeping and conflict prevention could serve as a concrete basis to further examine such areas of tangible mutual benefit — and, by extension, closer security cooperation. Innovative and novel forms of south-south security cooperation could be established which further affirm and lend support towards a strengthened global multilateralism and institutional order.

Solid India-Africa partnerships should tie into and complement the advances led by the UN and AU

Again, however, the challenge will be found in the specificities of any new forms of security cooperation. Stakeholders from both sides therefore need to arrive at regular interventions and interactions which can be sustained over longer-term frameworks and which enjoy the full buy-in of key political actors. Most importantly, these engagements need to effectively leverage the strategic value of all parties towards more robust cooperation on peace and security matters of mutual concern.

While this may seem daunting, Indian and African peace and security stakeholders would do well to directly situate the AU at the centre of all efforts towards advancing the strategic partnership. To avoid fragmented bilateral efforts, stakeholders from both sides should recognise the value, and largely untapped potential

utility, of robust multilateral security cooperation in an international system that is under increasing threat.

Conclusion

The need for greater India-Africa security cooperation is premised on the untapped utility of a strategic partnership that does not adequately recognise peace and security as a precondition for the full realisation of the economic and political aspirations of both parties. While such an acknowledgement exists on paper, the general lack of substantive action and follow-up to impact the peace and security dimension of the India-Africa Framework for Strategic Cooperation warrants much greater consideration by Indian and African stakeholders. To this effect, various opportunities and entry points for greater cooperation exist, with particular respect to the centrality of the AU.

The challenge primarily lies in identifying areas of tangible mutual benefit and incorporating these into a holistic security cooperation framework that is aligned to the broader regional and international aspirations of both parties. Additionally, innovative new forms of south-south security cooperation with respect to conflict prevention, peacebuilding, mediation, and skills and knowledge transfer could be spearheaded through the India-Africa strategic partnership.

A more security-oriented India-Africa strategic partnership should tie into, and complement, the advancement of multilateral initiatives led by the UN and AU, while noting the shortcomings of traditional peace and security responses vis-à-vis the changing nature of global conflicts. Therefore, an India-Africa strategic partnership, premised on a deeper and more meaningful form of security cooperation, could serve as a proving ground for innovative new ideas and approaches that better serve and work towards the full realisation of shared African and Indian aspirations.

Annex 1

Evolution of the India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) (2008 – present)

- Based on historical goodwill and political, economic and cultural affinity, India decided to formalise and institutionalise its relations with Africa under the framework of IAFS in April 2008.
- It was one of India's most significant acts of outreach to the African continent and represented one of India's biggest diplomatic successes since gaining independence.
- **The objective of the IAFS mechanism** – To lay the foundation of a new architecture for structured engagement, interaction, and cooperation between India and its African partners in the 21st century at three tiers: continentally through the AU, regionally through African RECs, and bilaterally with individual African nations.
- The first IAFS, held in April 2008 in New Delhi, was attended by 14 African heads of state and led to the declaration of the **Africa India Framework for Cooperation**.
- The second IAFS was held in 2011 in Addis Ababa, which produced the **Addis Ababa Declaration** and the **Africa India Framework for Enhanced Cooperation**.
- The third IAFS was held in October 2015 in New Delhi and was attended by 41 African heads of state and government. Two documents were adopted – the **Delhi Declaration 2015** and the **India-Africa Framework for Strategic Cooperation**.
- The third IAFS focused on enhancing development cooperation. India extended \$10 billion lines of credit (LOC) for a host of development projects over the next five years, and \$600 million grant assistance, which included an India-Africa Development Fund of \$100 million and an India-Africa Health Fund of \$10 million.
- The India-African Union's Mid-Term Review Meeting of the Strategic Cooperation Framework of IAFS-III was conducted in September 2019.
- A sum of \$6.4 billion under Indian LOCs was committed/ongoing out of the overall commitment of \$10 billion in IAFS-III. More than \$700 million from the committed \$600 million in grant assistance has already been committed. Over 42 000 out of the total commitment of 50 000 slots for training, scholarships and capacity building have already been used.
- The next edition of the IAFS-IV should have taken place in 2020. However, it was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A mutually convenient date for the next summit has yet to be determined as the time of writing.

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