

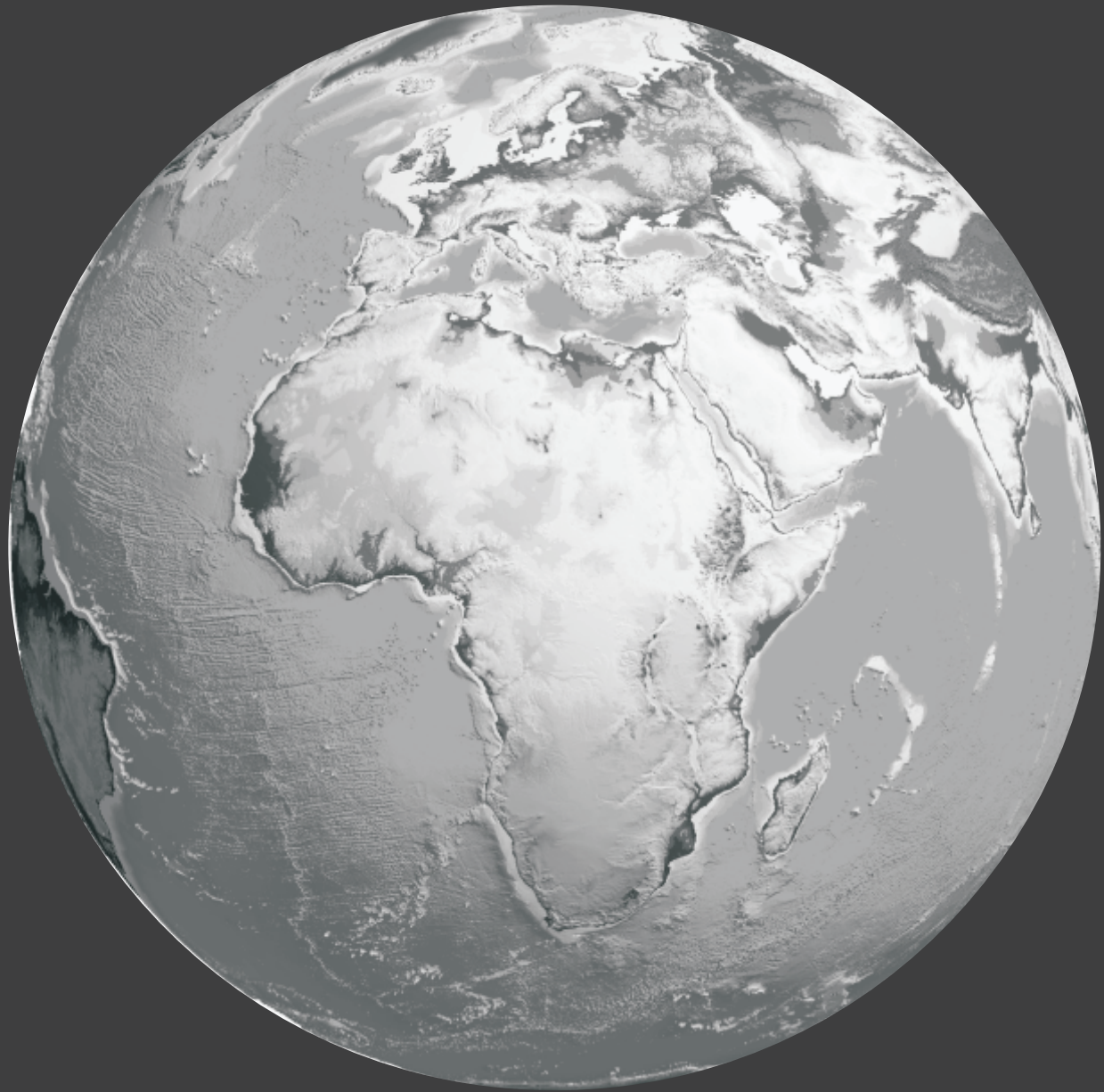
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Editor's Note

The year 2021 has been extremely challenging for the African continent as the impact of the pandemic on political, social and economic life became visible. The involvement of external players in the continent through summits and international missions has also grown. This issue of Africa Trends encapsulates these various currents.

In the cover story, Ms. Saman Ayesha Kidwai sheds light on the Al-Shabaab's strong foothold in Somalia, its impact on the region, challenges to the government and distills the terrorist trends in the pandemic years. In the first commentary, Dr. Sanjay Badri Maharaj chronicles the service trajectory of the BAE Hawk jet trainer/light-strike aircraft of the Air Force of Zimbabwe (AFZ) and examines the revival of AFZ. In the next, Ms. Ruchita Beri provides an insight into the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit held in November 2021 and its key takeaways. In the third commentary, Dr. Rajeesh Kumar explores in detail the dynamics underlying the exit of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and its implications for future hybrid peacekeeping missions. The following commentary by Ms. Sindhu Dinesh examines the spate of coups in Africa through the lens of internal factors that trigger a coup and, explores the external dynamics that influence the occurrence of coups. In the fifth commentary, Ms. Pooja Priya reflects on the impact of Indian initiatives in Africa especially in the health sector and elucidates on the future of India-Africa health cooperation.

In the first viewpoint, Dr. Md. Muddassir Quamar decodes the serious political turmoil in Tunisia amidst the socio-economic and security challenges it faces aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic. In the second viewpoint, Dr. Arpita Anant assesses the scope for India-Africa cooperation in countering terrorism by examining the areas identified by the African Union and United Nations where the capacities for counter-terrorism in Africa have been found wanting.

Mr. Samir Bhattacharya reviews Blanche Rocha D'Souza's "Harnessing the Trade Winds: The Story of the Centuries-Old Indian Trade with East Africa, Using the Monsoon Winds" which chronicles the hardships suffered by generations of Indians compelled to migrate to East Africa and persuasively establishes the contributions of little-known Indian traders to East Africa's development. Dr. R. Vignesh reviews Maj. Gen. Rajpal Punia and Damini Punia's "Operation Khukri: The True Story Behind Indian Army's Most Successful Mission as part of the United Nations" which is an enthralling first person account of the events that unfolded in Kailahun, Sierra Leone between May and July 2000 where the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was deployed. The book serves as primary literature on the contribution of the Indian Army (part of UNAMSIL) in establishing lasting peace in the war-ravaged West African nation.

We welcome your feedback!

Cover Story

AL-SHABAAB IN SOMALIA: TERRORIST TRENDS IN THE PANDEMIC YEARS

Challenges, such as weak infrastructure and ill-equipped armed forces, corruption, pandemic, and drought, have become intrinsic to Somalia, mutually reinforcing each other. Additionally, they have been exploited by terrorists to advance their Islamist cause. While re-evaluating counter-terrorism strategies to defeat al-Shabaab, the allied partners should carefully consider these factors' role in sustaining the insurgency and address the security crisis - state and human security - accordingly. The failure to do that will have catastrophic results for the Somali people and the internationally-recognised government.

Saman Ayesha Kidwai*

A Historical Context

Harakat Al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen (Mujahideen Youth Movement), infamously known as Al-Shabaab, formally came into existence in 2006. After Ahmed Abdi Godane's death by an American drone strike in 2014, Ahmed Umar "Abu Ubaidah" assumed the organisation's leadership. Nevertheless, the origin of its earliest leaders can be traced to jihadists who had travelled to Afghanistan in the 1980s to fight the Soviets. Regardless of fault lines cutting across each group member's individual objectives, their overall worldview remains centred around the creation of an Islamic state.

After returning home, those terrorists had remained active, especially throughout the civil war, ensuing after the collapse of President Barré's administration in 1991. Among the key groups that emerged amid this crisis was the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), a conglomeration of Sunni jihadist organisations, which seized control of Mogadishu, and Al-Shabaab emerged as a predominant faction. However, the Ethiopian-backed transitional government ousted the ICU in 2006 with minimal effort. Analysts like Rob Wise believe this external intervention was the fundamental reason for "transforming the group (Al-Shabaab) from a small, relatively

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unimportant part of a more moderate Islamic movement into the most powerful and radical armed faction in the country.”¹

The formation of an Islamic state governed by Sharia remains at the core of its demands, cutting across the fault lines. Car bombs, gun and suicide attacks, and high-profile assassinations are recurring means through which al-Shabaab fighters have waged their insurgency. On the other hand, it has governed areas in Central and Southern Somalia through a harsh interpretation of Sharia.²

The formation of an Islamic state governed by Sharia remains at the core of its demands...

Their draconian governance has resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people from territories under their control. This occurred after the group disallowed contact with humanitarian workers and aid from entering those areas after the 2017 famine.³

The Protracted Insurgency and Counter-Response

Reportedly, some of its earliest fatal attacks are traceable to 2009; however, its deadliest attack on Somali soil occurred on October 14, 2017. A truck bomb in Mogadishu detonated at a busy intersection; today referred to as the “October 14 junction,” killing at least 587 and wounding 1,000 individuals.⁴ As the “deadliest terror attack” in Somalia, it compelled the fragile government to contend with the horror that had engulfed the near-failed state. In one of its most recent attacks, a suicide bomber detonated a device inside a restaurant in Beledweyne, injuring 20 and killing 13 others on February 19, 2022, reportedly killing an electoral candidate and two deputy police commissioners.⁵

Its ability to wage a protracted insurgency is also visible in how it rapidly re-established control over the strategic town of Amara (Central Somalia) in August 2021, a town en-route to Harardhere, a coastal area and another Al-Shabaab bastion. The federal forces had ousted Al-Shabaab and seized control of Amara in July 2021.⁶ It has also entrenched itself in Somalia’s financial institutions. For example, it was reported in July 2021 that al-Shabaab controlled 85 per cent of the capital available in the International Bank of Somalia, an international bank with its headquarters in Mogadishu.⁷ Furthermore, according to the Hiraal Institute, a research group situated in Mogadishu, the group annually generates US \$180 million, out of which US\$ 24 million were allocated for procurement of weapons in 2021.⁸ Moreover, a humanitarian crisis, unfolding due to a rapidly worsening drought, provides Al-Shabaab a leverage against the state for intensified recruitment and indulgence in violence while setting up parallel power structures to undermine the government.⁹

Its ability to wage a protracted insurgency is also visible in how it rapidly re-established control over the strategic town of Amara...

On the other hand, matters of jurisprudence prove to be another obstacle for the efficient functioning of government institutions. The Somali courts, bogged down by clan-based sectarianism, corruption, and in-fighting, cannot deliver swift justice, when compared with

Islamic courts governed by Al-Shabaab that rise above ethnic divisions to deliver a broadly incorruptible verdict rapidly. This however does not take away from the brutality and authoritarianism associated with their interpretation of Sharia. By weakening the apparatus from within, these terrorists could continue to sow seeds for continued socio-economic and political unrest in the country. For example, the federal government's slow vaccine rollout and challenges with vaccine availability even until August 2021, while Al-Shabaab continued to build on their existing social services network, presumably did not bode well for an administration facing mounting opposition to its political survival.¹⁰

Al Shabaab has also imported ammonium nitrate in vast quantities to make IEDs through licit and illicit channels, laying bare the inaptitude of the weak federal government to eliminate the rerouting of such materials in the hands of terrorist outfits.¹¹ On the other hand, *Amniyat*, its much-feared intelligence network, acts as its backbone, spearheading intelligence gathering, planning and executing attacks. It also takes the final call on all of al-Shabaab's finance and health-related matters, and retribution against defectors. Hussein Sheikh Ali, Somalia's former National Security Advisor, highlighted how "if the Amniyat was destroyed, there would be no Al-Shabaab."¹²

In the past, Al-Shabaab stood accused of colluding with pirates to generate revenue, more so when their funds began to dwindle.¹³ The terrorists received monetary proceeds, for example, bribes from pirates, presumably to halt raids launched from areas under their control. The Yemeni war has also benefitted the Somali insurgency. According to a report unveiled by The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime in 2021, "Over the course of eight months, @GI_TOC research documented over 400 illicit weapons in 13 locations across Somalia, the presence of which serves as a fingerprint of the spillover of the arms from the Yemen conflict into Somalia."¹⁴

Regional attempts to ward off the threat, including the deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), an African Union-led peacekeeping mission in Somalia, operating with the consent of the United Nations (UN), have achieved limited success in ousting the terrorists from several of their strongholds but have proved unable to eliminate the group. Since 2008, the UN has adopted numerous resolutions, including in December 2021, to renew the mandate of international anti-piracy ships operating off the coast of Somalia to combat all manifestations of armed robbery and piracy in the maritime domain. However, the renewal of the mandate will only last three months because the Somali federal government, whose approval the UN requires, claims that no piracy-related events have occurred over four years.¹⁵

However, AMISOM is due to transition to the African Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), gradually transferring the security reins to the Federal Government of Somalia by December 31, 2023, under the Somalia Transition Plan (STP).¹⁶ This announcement by the African Union (AU) in January 2022 came amid mounting and renewed violence by al-Shabaab. However,

one must remember that the contested and hurried withdrawal of the international coalition from Afghanistan served as one of the core precursors of the fall of Kabul in August 2021. The AU is therefore obligated to prevent a similar occurrence in Somalia or face the potential consequences of another civil war fuelled by arms trafficking, the emergence of competing centres of power, and a cataclysmic human security and refugee crises.

Pandemic and Current Challenges

The pandemic has strained the efforts of the AMISOM to conduct counter-terrorism operations.¹⁷ It has also made information sharing and intel gathering challenging for the deployed troops due to COVID restrictions. The surge in the pandemic has fomented opportune conditions for the terrorist group to use to its advantage. The socio-economic fallout, including costs of cooking gas in Mogadishu catapulting from \$18 to \$30, has threatened to undermine further the legitimacy of Somalia's federal government.¹⁸

The surge in the pandemic has fomented opportune conditions for the terrorist group to use to its advantage.

Continued violence underscores a stark reality – Al-Shabaab has no substantive plans to surrender arms and assimilate into mainstream society. Presumably, they remain convinced, more so after the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in August 2021, that the federal government could be defeated through jihadist principles and guerilla warfare. Moreover, continued low-intensity but fatal targeted attacks have "frustrated" armed forces undertaking counter-insurgency campaigns.¹⁹ For example, in one of its most recent attacks, Al-Shabaab killed 4 AMISOM officers during a patrol, using twin IED blasts in Southern Somalia.²⁰

On the other hand, in the eventuality of the AMISOM's withdrawal, the empowerment of national police and armed forces is crucial for avoiding an Afghan-type fallout. Currently, there is an overwhelming dependence on regional forces to keep a modicum of peace and a worrying reliance on local militias to prevent the reversal of gains. This creates a further potential for instability as power brokers, such as local warlords, could transfer their allegiance to Al-Shabaab, should there emerge benefits in the potential newfound alliance.

India and the Somali turmoil

India has a growing interest in the stability of the African continent. Somalia's geostrategic significance, being positioned near the Gulf of Aden – one of the most vital trading routes worldwide, and thereby having an overarching bearing on the global supply chains – makes it all the more crucial for India to improve and build on its existing logistical and financial support, thereby ensuring the stability of the country. Its primary trading routes run through the Gulf of Aden, with the Ministry of Shipping estimating cumulative exports at US\$ 60 billion and imports at US\$ 50 billion.²¹

India has a growing interest in the stability of the African continent.

India has contributed US\$1 million in 2021 to the AMISOM fund to enable it to continue its anti-terror activities further.²² The Indian Navy has also undertaken anti-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden and off the Somalian Coast.

In June 2021, India and the European Union conducted their first joint naval exercise in the Gulf of Aden to ensure their navies “hone their war-fighting skills and their ability as an integrated force to promote peace, security, and stability in the maritime domain.”²³

Conclusion

Challenges, such as weak infrastructure and ill-equipped armed forces, corruption, pandemic, and drought, have become intrinsic to Somalia, mutually reinforcing each other. Additionally, they have been exploited by terrorists to advance their Islamist cause. Nor has the country remained immune to arms trafficking fuelled by Yemen’s protracted war, which is responsible for exacerbating Somalia’s security crisis. Financial hardships, emanating from the pandemic, have also limited the federal government’s ability to pledge a hefty defence budget to eliminate terrorist threats as it attempts to balance its citizens’ socio-economic needs in an uncertain climate. On the other hand, AMISOM’s impending transition to ATMIS will introduce its own set of dilemmas. The AU’s announcement could embolden jihadists to intensify attacks, exploiting regional troops’ limited presence in the country. This would be the case as neighbouring countries seek to gradually sever ties with an insurgency of peripheral significance to focus on their domestic turbulence.

Therefore, while re-evaluating counter-terrorism strategies to defeat al-Shabaab, the allied partners should carefully consider these factors’ role in sustaining the insurgency and address the security crisis – state and human security – accordingly. The failure to do that will have catastrophic results for the Somali people and the internationally-recognised government. Democracy’s survival is contingent on continued international and regional support to empower the national army genuinely. Otherwise, there will remain little or no difference between the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan and an Islamist Somalia.

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Commentary

THE REVIVAL OF THE AIR FORCE OF ZIMBABWE

The Air Force of Zimbabwe (AFZ) has an enviable combat record among the air forces of Sub-Saharan Africa. It has a strong professional ethos and, until budgetary cuts and sanctions came into effect, was one of the most effective air forces in the region. It has gone through a period of decline and relative stagnation in strength. However, the last two years point to a revival in its fortunes though this is through the restoring of grounded equipment to service.

Sanjay Badri Maharaj*

On 29 April 2022, during a flypast at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF), one flight of four BAE Hawk jet trainer/ light-strike aircraft of the Air Force of Zimbabwe (AFZ), flew in a diamond formation to the delight of onlookers.¹ The appearance of combat aircraft at the ZITF flypast is nothing new but the sight of BAE Hawks was remarkable as the aircraft had long been thought grounded following the imposition of sanctions on Zimbabwe by the United Kingdom. Indeed, the Hawks became so symbolic of alleged British support for then President Robert Mugabe that the sanctions had widespread support in the British government, opposition and the press.

...the sight of BAE Hawks was remarkable as the aircraft had long been thought grounded...

The flight of four Hawks seemed to be emblematic of a revival in the fortunes of the Air Force of Zimbabwe which had suffered heavily from a combination of sanctions, budgetary neglect and a loss of skilled personnel. Indeed, for some years, it seemed as if the combat assets of the AFZ had been largely grounded, with only a few of its assets being considered flyable, much less operational. However, evidence from 2021, and now 2022, suggests that the AFZ has restored at least some of its combat aircraft to apparently flyable status and has resurrected some of its older platforms.

A Proud History

The AFZ traces its history to the Rhodesian Air Force (RhAF), previously the Royal Rhodesian Air Force before Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence. Initially equipped with ex-RhAF equipment, including such important types as Hawker Hunter fighters, Vampire fighter-bombers, Canberra bombers, Augusta Bell 205 and Alouette III helicopters, SIAI

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Marchetti SF.260 trainers and Reims Cessna FTB337G Forward Air Control aircraft plus a small number of transport aircraft. Moreover, the AFZ inherited a strong training system and a sound maintenance infrastructure. In addition, two well-equipped air bases at New Sarum and Thornhill were available to the AFZ and the RhAF squadrons based at the two bases were transferred to the new AFZ in 1980. These included:²

No. 1 Squadron – Thornhill (Hawker Hunter FGA.9)

No. 2 Squadron – Thornhill (Vampire FB.9; and Vampire T.55)

No. 3 Squadron – New Sarum (Douglas C-47; Cessna 402; BN-2A Islander; DC-7C; Baron)

No. 4 Squadron – Thornhill (AL-60F5 Trojan; Reims-Cessna FTB.337G; SF.260W)

No. 5 Squadron – New Sarum (English Electric Canberra B.2; and Canberra T.4)

No. 6 Squadron – Thornhill (Percival Provost T.52; SF.260C)

No. 7 Squadron – New Sarum (Alouette II; Alouette III)

No. 8 Squadron – New Sarum (AB.205)

The RhAF received much assistance from the apartheid regime in South Africa but also developed an impressive level of self-sufficiency in maintaining and overhauling its assets. In addition to its RhAF heritage, the AFZ was helped by the Pakistan Air Force which played an important role in aiding the new air force in maintaining training standards in its establishment.

Expansion and Challenges

After the new state of Zimbabwe came into being, there was a consolidation of the assets of the new AFZ and it was quickly realized that at least some assets were in dire need of replacement. The Vampires of No. 2 squadron, in particular, were obsolete and becoming

After the new state of Zimbabwe came into being, there was a consolidation of the assets of the new AFZ...

difficult to keep serviceable as the type had been phased out globally by 1980. A contract for eight BAE Hawk aircraft was duly signed and the aircraft were delivered by July 1982, replacing the Vampires in No. 2 squadron. However, shortly after delivery, a terrorist attack on Thornhill airbase damaged four Hawks, nine of the surviving Hawker Hunters and one of the FTB-337Gs.³ Of the Hawks, one was a complete write-off with three others needing various levels of repair.

A contract for five more Hawks was completed by September 1992, bringing the total number of available Hawks to 12. By 1992, however, the AFZ had another challenge as its primary combat aircraft, the Hawker Hunter, was becoming difficult to maintain or sustain and in dire need of replacement, with the aircraft struggling along until 2002 when No. 1 squadron was disbanded.⁴ In 1986, however, the AFZ obtained 12 Chinese made Chengdu F-7II fighters along with two FT-7BZ trainers to re-equip No. 5 squadron which phased out its few

remaining Canberra bombers. The transport and helicopter fleets remained largely unaffected by new acquisitions, though, in time, the AFZ would acquire a few Russian Mi-17 and Mi-24 helicopters.

The Second Congo War

The AFZ and the Zimbabwean army were heavily committed to combat operations in the Second Congo War which took place between 1998 and 2003 in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Zimbabwe's main period of action was between 1998 and 2001 with the AFZ sending detachments of Hawks, helicopters, FTB-337Gs and even armed CASA C-212 transports. The Hawks, armed with unguided rockets, 30mm guns and locally made (as well as captured ex-Zaire Air Force) bombs, were to prove themselves extremely effective in supporting ground forces and inflicted heavy damage on hostile forces whenever deployed. The Hawks were also deployed with PL-7 air-to-air missiles to serve as makeshift interceptors, hoping to interdict transport aircraft flying from Rwanda and Burundi to supply DRC rebels as well as Rwandan forces operating in support of these rebels.⁵ The AFZ suffered losses in the DRC, at least one Hawk was shot down and a number of aircraft were damaged. The Zimbabwe army, however, suffered over 400 dead and not insignificant equipment losses over three years of conflict.⁶ However, the professionalism, sound training and commitment of the AFZ and the Zimbabwe army were to prove vital to the ultimate success of the pro-government forces in the DRC, alongside, of course, a substantial commitment from Angola.

The AFZ and the Zimbabwean army were heavily committed to combat operations in the Second Congo War...

Neglect and Sanctions

In the year 2000, even as the Second Congo War raged, the European Union imposed an arms embargo on Zimbabwe, in opposition to the Mugabe government. This had the immediate effect of hurting the serviceability of Hawk fleet despite some attempts at sanctions busting.⁷ Mugabe was unfazed and placed the Hawks in storage in 2011 and replaced them with a total of 12 Chinese made Karakorum K-8 trainer/ light strike aircraft which reequipped No.2 squadron.⁸ At least two of these aircraft have crashed and one other was damaged thanks to a burst tire in South Africa. The AFZ uses the K-8s as much as combat aircraft as trainers, equipped with rocket pods, bombs and guns and they proved to be a viable replacement for the Hawks.

The AFZ's more effective combat aircraft – the F-7s – were joined in 2003, by at least two ex-Libyan air force MiG-23MS.⁹ It is not clear if these aircraft remain in AFZ use as they have not been seen since 2003 and may have been sent on to the DRC to join similar aircraft gifted to that country. The AFZ's pilots were able to benefit from Pakistani instructors who taught them to exploit their F-7s as effectively as possible. Yet, despite China's close ties to Zimbabwe and Pakistani support, the collapsing Zimbabwean economy and the migration of many skilled pilots and ground crews, saw

The AFZ's pilots were able to benefit from Pakistani instructors who taught them to exploit their F-7s as effectively as possible.

the F-7s effectively grounded, with only seven being airworthy, and the AFZ being reduced to a few operational trainers, transports and helicopters and the K-8s.

Revival?

The first signs of revivals emerged in 2020 when video footage emerged of F-7s taking off from Thornhill.¹⁰ This continued into 2021 and 2022 when flights of up to four F-7s were seen during ZIFT flypasts in each of those respective years.¹¹ The biggest shock was delivered

...four Hawks are back in service and these aircraft will provide a significant increase in the combat capability of the AFZ.

in 2021, however, when for the first time since 2002, two Hawker Hunters staged a flypast in company with a BAE Hawk.¹² Has the AFZ sought to put their old Hunters back into service? That is a question that remains unanswered but what is undeniable is that, from the ZIFT flypast in 2022, at least four Hawks are back in service and these aircraft will provide a significant increase in the combat capability of the AFZ. How these Hawks were restored to service is also a mystery as it could be anything from sanctions busting to

indigenisation of parts to sourcing through a third party.¹³ In any case, the achievement is most impressive.

Conclusion

The AFZ has an enviable combat record among the air forces of Sub-Saharan Africa. It has a strong professional ethos and, until budgetary cuts and sanctions came into effect, was one of the most effective air forces in the region. It has gone through a period of decline and relative stagnation in strength. However, the last two years point to a revival in its fortunes though this is through the restoring of grounded equipment to service.

¹ "Zimbabwe Hawks back in the skies" *Bulawayo 24 News*, April 20, 2022, at <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-218527.html> (Accessed June 1, 2022)

² T. Cooper, P. Weinert, F. Hinz and M. Lepko, *African Migs Volume 2: Madagascar to Zimbabwe*, Houston: Harpia, 2011, p.210.

³ A. Cowell, "Zimbabwe tries 6 officers as saboteurs", *New York Times*, May 24, 1983, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/05/24/world/zimbabwe-tries-6-officers-as-saboteurs.html> (Accessed June 1, 2022)

⁴ Cooper, Weinert, Hinz, Lepko, no.ii, p.208.

⁵ T. Cooper, P. Weinert, F. Hinz and M. Lepko, *African Migs Volume 1: Angola to Ivory Coast*

⁶ B. Mandizvidza, "Zim losses in DRC war amount to billions", *Independent Online*, November 4, 1999, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/zim-losses-in-drc-war-amount-to-billions-18478> (Accessed June 1, 2022)

⁷ David Pallister and Tania Branigan, "UK inquiry into jet parts for Mugabe", *The Guardian*, November 8, 2002, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/nov/08/zimbabwe.armstrade> (Accessed June 1, 2022)

⁸ Cooper, Weinert, Hinz, Lepko, no.ii, p.208-210.

⁹ Ibid, pp. 208-212

- ¹⁰ "AFZ F-7 taxing", *YouTube*, April 6, 2002, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nn9s7ZLg3yE> (Accessed June 1, 2022)
- ¹¹ "AFZ ZITF Flypast, Sept 23, 2021", *YouTube*, September 23, 2021, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wylI-7zrWgY> (Accessed June 1, 2022)
- ¹² "Air Force of Zimbabwe. 2 Hunters & 1 Hawk. September 2021", *YouTube*, September 22, 2021, at https://www.youtube.com/shorts/epDM9tGO__Y (Accessed June 1, 2022)
- ¹³ "Zimbabwe flies British fighter jets again despite sanctions", *Bulawayo 24 News*, May 1, 2022, at <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-218618.html> (Accessed June 1, 2022)

Commentary

FOCAC 2021: KEY TAKEAWAYS

The latest FOCAC displayed China's fresh efforts to enhance its soft power, as well as its engagement with the African countries. The meeting underlined some new areas of future cooperation and China's commitment towards a win-win partnership with Africa.

Ruchita Beri*

The 8th ministerial conference of the Forum for China –Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), was held on 29-30 November 2021 in Dakar, Senegal. China was represented by Foreign Minister Wang Yi. The meeting was held in the backdrop of COVID-19 pandemic, debt distress in some African countries and increasing contestation between major powers. The core theme of the meeting was to “Deepen China-Africa Partnership and Promote Sustainable Development to build a China –Africa Community with a Shared Future in the New Era”. The 8th FOCAC highlights health, green development and climate change and security as the key areas of cooperation between China and African countries in the foreseeable future.

What is FOCAC?

FOCAC, established in 2000, is a triennial high-level forum between China and the African countries (all except Eswatini, which continues to maintain relations with Taiwan). In the last 21 years, eight editions of the FOCAC have been held. Of these meetings, three, were elevated to summit level (2006, 2015 and 2018) and were attended by heads of state and government. Some of these meetings have been held in China (Beijing; 2000, 2006, 2012, 2018) others in Africa (Addis Ababa, 2003, Sharm el Sheikh, 2009 and Johannesburg, 2015). The 2021 FOCAC meeting was the first to be held in a West African country. Over the years FOCAC has paved the way towards a strong partnership between China and Africa. While in the initial years the relationship focused on enhancing trade with African countries, primarily imports of natural resources. From 2006 onwards, the

Over the years FOCAC has paved the way towards a strong partnership between China and Africa.

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relationship went beyond trade to investment, development finance and infrastructure. In terms of financial support, during 2015 FOCAC, China peaked its commitments with the pledge of US \$ 60 billion financial assistance to African countries and continued the same pledge in 2018 FOCAC.¹ While development finance and infrastructure development continued as priority areas, in 2012, issues of security have been added as an important agenda item of China- Africa partnership.

During the 8th FOCAC meeting, several important announcements were made and four important resolutions were adopted. They include, the Dakar Action Plan, the China- Africa Cooperation Vision 2035, the Sino-African Declaration on Climate Change and the Dakar Declaration of the 8th ministerial conference of the FOCAC. The most anticipated news was regarding the financial pledges. The total commitment turns out to be round \$40 billion, a dip compared to \$60 billion in 2018 FOCAC meeting. However, in opinion of some, this does not include the cost of vaccines and other pledges, so actual commitment may be much more than \$40 billion. More importantly, during the conference, President Xi announced nine focus areas for the first three years of the China Africa Vision 2035. They include health, poverty reduction and agriculture, trade, investment, digital innovation, green development, capacity building, people to people exchanges and peace and security. Amongst these a few priority areas stand out.

Health

President XI Jinping announced in a live video address that China will provide 1 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccine to African countries.² About 60 per cent of these will be delivered directly and rest will be produced jointly by China in select African countries. This signals China taking a step towards enhancing its health diplomacy in the region. Health has been an area of cooperation between China and Africa from the first FOCAC meeting, the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in this cooperation. Initially during the pandemic, China supplied African countries with masks, PPE kits and other medical equipment, sent medical teams to several countries and later supplied vaccines. However Chinese medical diplomacy in the region did not always generate a positive response in the continent. The Chinese discrimination against Africans based in Guangzhou province in China during the pandemic led to a strong response from some African diplomats.³ While China did step up its health diplomacy in the continent during the pandemic, its supply of masks and PPE kits was more effective than vaccine diplomacy.⁴ The 8th FOCAC pledges may go a long way in boosting China's image in the continent and bolstering African capacities in vaccine production.

Health has been an area of cooperation between China and Africa from the first FOCAC meeting, the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in this cooperation.

Green Development and Climate Change

Another major announcement made at the 8th FOCAC was on promoting green development. As the world grapples with climate change, China is advocating green and low carbon

As the world grapples with climate change, China is advocating green and low carbon development to the African countries.

development to the African countries. This was mentioned by President Xi in his address as well in the path breaking Sino- African Declaration on Climate Change adopted at the meeting.⁵ This declaration is path breaking as for the last three decades, China's development cooperation with African countries has focused on large infrastructure projects, such as, railways, roads, coal fired and hydro power plants, airports, ports, stadiums etc. under the rubric of Belt and Road initiative (BRI) with scant focus on sustainable development. At Dakar, China reiterated its promise to stop funding overseas coal fired power plants⁶ and also emphasised promotion of renewable energy development. Another significant pledge is regarding sharing low carbon technologies particularly space technology for agriculture growth, environmental monitoring, averting disasters, mitigation and climate adaptation with African countries.

Peace and Security

During the FOCAC, President Xi announced that China will undertake several security projects in Africa, continue, military assistance and training, peacekeeping cooperation, support regional efforts for security and countering terrorism in the next three years.⁷ Similarly the China – Africa Dakar Action plan identified military and police cooperation, counterterrorism and law enforcement as priorities. These plans suggest the increasing focus on peace and security issues under FOCAC.⁸ Initially, security issues were not part of FOCAC engagement. These issues found a mention for the first time in the 2012 FOCAC by the announcement of China- Africa

Partnership for Peace and Security.⁹ However it was in 2015 FOCAC that China started financial support to the Africa Peace and Security Architecture. Over the years China's growing economic engagement in the continent has led to increase in involvement in security sphere. This includes anti- piracy patrols, involvement in UN peace keeping, training and supply of arms to various African countries. Large Infrastructure projects particularly, oil and gas, and growing threats against Chinese workers deployed in these development projects has also led to presence of Chinese security firms in these countries. The announcements at the 8th FOCAC indicate that peace and security will remain an important priority for China in the years to come.

In conclusion, the latest FOCAC displayed China's fresh efforts to enhance its soft power, as well as its engagement with the African countries. The meeting underlined some new areas of future cooperation and China's commitment towards a win-win partnership with Africa.

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Commentary

EXIT OF THE AFRICAN UNION-UNITED NATIONS HYBRID OPERATION IN DARFUR (UNAMID)

UNAMID's exit did not emerge from a context of peace or progress towards conflict resolution in Darfur. Instead, the exit decision was essentially the outcome of the reflection that keeping the mission on the ground would not change the situation. Initially, the hybrid peacekeeping model was seen as a paradigm shift in peacekeeping operations, and many hailed it as the future of UN peace operations. However, the UNAMID has proven that cooperation between the UN and regional bodies is a complex issue. If the UN takes the lessons learned in Darfur seriously, UNAMID would probably be the first and last hybrid peacekeeping mission.

Rajeesh Kumar*

On 22 December 2020, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) decided to end its 13-year old peacekeeping mission in Darfur. Resolution 2559, unanimously adopted by the Council, terminated the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) mandate on 31 December 2020.¹ The resolution also authorized six months for the Mission to complete the withdrawal of personnel and proposed establishing the United Nations Country Team as part of the transition and drawdown process.

UNAMID's exit decision came after the landmark peace deal signed in October 2020 between the Sudanese transitional government and key rebel factions. The peace deal was a sequel to President Omar al-Bashir's ousting by a pro-democracy revolution in April 2019 and forming a transitional government four months later. However, while UNAMID leaves Darfur, neither violence has ended nor has the human rights situation improved. It is a significant setback for the UN that the hybrid mission, which was regarded as a paradigm shift and the future of UN peacekeeping, is leaving Darfur without achieving its mandates.

...while UNAMID leaves Darfur, neither violence has ended nor has the human rights situation improved.

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Darfur Conflict and the AU-UN Peacekeeping Mission

The conflict in Darfur between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudanese Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) started in 2003. However, its roots and causes can be traced back for decades. Since 2003, the region has witnessed horrific civil war, violence, death, and displacement. According to the UN, from 2003-2020, nearly 300,000 people had lost their lives in Darfur, and about 2.7 million people had fled their homes.²

This massive humanitarian catastrophe has brought international attention to Darfur. African Union (AU) was the lead regional player in mediating the conflict. Demonstrating its strong commitment, the AU took the initiative to establish political negotiations and brokered N'djamena Ceasefire Agreement between the initial two rebel groups and the government of Sudan. In July 2004, AU deployed a peacekeeping force, African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to monitor the ceasefire agreement.

On 5 May 2006, the continuous efforts of the AU with the support of the UN resulted in the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). However, it did not result in the normalisation of the security and political situation in Darfur. Often, challenges and expectations beyond its capabilities confronted AMIS. Its efforts have fallen far short of ending the violence and human rights violations in Darfur. As a result, on 31 July 2007, the UNSC adopted resolution 1769 authorizing a hybrid peacekeeping force in Darfur.³

UNAMID

The African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) was the world's largest peacekeeping mission for a long period, with its authorized force of 26,000 and nearly 23,500 troops at its peak deployment in 2011. It is also the only peacekeeping operation led jointly by the AU and UN. UNAMID has the mandates under chapter VII to support the effective implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement, prevent armed attacks and protect civilians.⁴ It was also tasked with contributing to security for humanitarian assistance, monitoring and verifying the implementation of agreements, assisting an inclusive political process, and promoting human rights and the rule of law.

The deployment of UNAMID in Darfur has played a positive role in creating relatively improved life conditions in areas of their presence. During its 13-year operation, UNAMID involved more than 100,000 military and police personnel from dozens of countries. According to the UN, the UNAMID helped reduce the number of armed clashes in the region, improve access to previously denied areas, and participated in and enabled several peace talks between the Government of Sudan and armed groups.⁵ The mission also worked to empower women, address sexual and gender-based violence, and help the locals fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. It also contributed immensely to bringing voices from Darfur, including those of women and civil society representatives, to political discussions.

The deployment of UNAMID in Darfur has played a positive role in creating relatively improved life conditions in areas of their presence.

However, UNAMID has encountered several intense challenges as well. First, the Sudanese government blocked and prevented UNAMID from accessing towns where attacks against civilians occurred. Second, its soldiers have been subject to frequent attacks and brutal killings since the beginning of their mission. UNAMID accounts for the second-highest fatalities in the history of UN peacekeeping, with 295 peacekeepers sacrificing their lives.⁶ Though it has been there for more than a decade, UNAMID has failed to achieve its benchmark targets such as comprehensive and inclusive peace, enhanced rule of law and improved humanitarian situation.

UNAMID has also shown that cooperation between the UN and regional organisations is a complex issue. During the mission, the UN and the AU often sought to redefine their relationship, particularly the hierarchy of their relations. The two organizations also increasingly claimed different and competing bases of legitimacy. The mission also faced interoperability problems such as incompatible procedures between the UN and the AU.⁷

UNAMID has also shown that cooperation between the UN and regional organisations is a complex issue.

Transition and Exit

UNAMID's transition and exit started as a "process to close the mission in the face of waning international support and overwhelming pressure from an autocratic regime that wanted it gone."⁸ On several occasions, the government of Sudan undertook public campaigns demanding the exit of UNAMID. The then President of Sudan, Omar Bashir, often stated that the UNAMID forces could not defend themselves and had become a security burden for his government. He also accused that the troops came to protect the rebellion and not the citizen and demanded its early exit.⁹ These developments undermined the UNAMID's effectiveness and relevance.

UN's decision to cut its peacekeeping budget after the US decided to slash its contributions disproportionately also affected UNAMID, significantly. In 2017, UNAMID was one of the most expensive missions, with an annual approved budget of nearly one billion US dollars. However, in 2018, the UN slashed the UNAMID budget by 58 per cent, from \$ 911,000,000 to \$525,300,000.¹⁰

In 2017, UNAMID was one of the most expensive missions,...

In July 2013, against the backdrop of lack of progress on the peace process, continuous attacks on UNAMID peacekeepers, and incessant resistance from the local authorities, the Security Council called for a joint AU-UN strategic review of UNAMID.¹¹ The strategic review held in March 2014, for the first time, discussed the idea of UNAMID's transition. Next year, a tripartite working group of the Sudanese government, AU and UN was set up to develop an exit strategy. In 2017, the UN voted to reduce the number of UNAMID troops by 44 per cent and the number of police by about 27 per cent.¹² In 2018, the Security Council resolution 2429 directed UNAMID to draw down its operations in Darfur and reduce its troop ceiling by 54 per cent.¹³ The resolution

also discussed potential exit of the UNAMID in June 2020. Since then, UNAMID has been working with United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Sudan to prepare for its eventual drawdown and exit.

However, while the UNAMID was preparing to exit Darfur, on the other side, a popular protest began against President al-Bashir, and he declared a state of emergency. In April 2019, al-Bashir was ousted by the military, and a Transitional Military Council (TMC) took over the power. In June 2020, the Security Council extended the mandate of UNAMID till 31 December 2020.¹⁴ Moreover, the UN also authorized a new mission, the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), to assist the political transition in Sudan.¹⁵

Conclusion

UNAMID's exit did not emerge from a context of peace or progress towards conflict resolution in Darfur. Instead, the exit decision was essentially the outcome of the reflection that keeping the mission on the ground would not change the situation. Whereas many past peacekeeping missions were able to exit with a marker of political stability, UNAMID left before the conclusion of an inclusive political settlement. Active fighting continued in the mission's zone of operations when the drawdown process started, and over 2 million people remained displaced.

Moreover, from the perspective of the UN and AU also, the UNAMID was disappointing. Initially, the hybrid peacekeeping model was seen as a paradigm shift in peacekeeping operations, and many hailed it as the future of UN peace operations. However, the UNAMID has proven that cooperation between the UN and regional bodies is a complex issue. The mission also highlighted the importance of the principle of host-state consent and cooperation in UN peacekeeping operations. If the UN takes the lessons learned in Darfur seriously, UNAMID would probably be the first and last hybrid peacekeeping mission.

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² 'Sudan: Intercommunal clashes displace tens of thousands in volatile Darfur region', *UN News*, January 7, 2020, at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/01/1054911> (Accessed April 15, 2022)

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⁵ 'UNAMID infographic', *United Nations Peacekeeping*, at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/unamid-infographic> (Accessed April 22, 2022)

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- ¹⁴ Security Council resolution 2525 (2020) on extension of the mandate of the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) until 31 December 2020.
- ¹⁵ Security Council resolution 2524 (2020) on establishment of the Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS).

Commentary

UNRAVELING THE STRING OF COUPS IN AFRICA

The surge in coups threatens democratic processes and political stability in Africa. The root causes triggering the coups need attention. Government and political architecture in the continent have to be enabled and empowered. Political will, reform of organisational response and international support will play a key role in addressing the issue.

Sindhu Dinesh*

“Africa is by no means the only part of the world where the prospect of democracy is in question. It is in question everywhere for democracy is in crisis all over the World.”

- Claude Ake, Nigerian Political Scientist.

In what was described as “an epidemic of coup d’états” by the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the year 2021 marked one of the highest numbers of successful coups in a year in Africa since 1999. Although the number of coups in the continent have comparatively reduced, they still pose significant challenges to political and democratic stability in the continent.

This article proposes to examine the spate of coups in Africa through the lens of internal factors that trigger a coup and explores the external dynamics that influence the occurrence of coups.

Overview of the Coups in 2021

In 2021, Africa witnessed several attempted as well as successful coups. In March 2021, there was an attempted coup in Niger which was thwarted by the country’s security forces.¹ Attempted coups were reported and later investigated in Madagascar in July 2021.² Besides

In 2021, Africa witnessed several attempted as well as successful coups.

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these, there were successful coup d'états in Chad, Mali, Guinea, and Sudan. They raised concerns about the political stability and democratic processes in the continent.

Chad: President Idriss Déby who led Chad for 30 years was killed during combat with the rebels in April 2021. Following his death, a military transitional council was immediately set up and his son Lt. Gen. Mahamat Idriss Deby was declared the head and transitional leader of the council. A charter released by the President's office repealed the existing constitution and stated that Lt. Gen. Deby would "occupy all functions of the President of the Republic as well as serve as the head of the armed forces".³ The council promised civilian elections in 18 months and tasked the transitional government to draft a new constitution.

Mali: In May 2021, nine months after overthrowing the elected civilian government in August 2020, the military led by transitional vice president Col. Assimi Goita detained President Bah Ndaw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane. In what has been referred to as a 'Coup within a Coup', Col. Goita justified his actions by stating that he was not consulted for a cabinet reshuffle and that the transitional government had acted outside of its prerogatives.⁴ Eventually, he was announced as the Interim President by Mali's Constitutional Court. The newly formed transitional government pushed the deadline for civilian elections from February 2022 to 2024.

Guinea: In September 2021, an elite group within the military arrested Alpha Condé, President of Guinea for 11 years, seized power, and promised political reform. Lt. Col. Mamady Doumbouya, Head of Guinea's military Special Forces stated that "government mismanagement" triggered the coup.⁵ He was later sworn in as the Interim President of the transitional government where he promised the drafting of a new constitution along with a transition toward a civilian-led government.

Sudan: In September 2021, an attempted coup was thwarted in Sudan. However, the following month, in a military coup led by Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the military chief and head of the Transitional Sovereignty Council, Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok and other leaders were arrested, a state of emergency was declared, the Sovereign Council was dissolved, and Lt. Gen. al-Burhan was proclaimed the new leader.⁶ He stated that conflict within the civilian political circles necessitated the coup to save the country from civil war and promised to appoint a transitional government until elections are held in July 2023 as set earlier.

As evident, the triggering factors and nature of each of these coups are similar and yet different. Based on the parameters of causes and nature, analysts have classified them into

...the triggering factors and nature of each of these coups are similar and yet different.

different types - military coups, dynastic coups, constitutional coups and soft coups. The various connotations given to the coups may help in the academic understanding of the nature of these coups but there is a need to decode the causes, challenges and speculate on a way forward to deal with unconstitutional changes of government in the continent.

Causes for the Coups

Factors triggering coups in these countries are largely internally driven like the political, socio-economic conditions and role of the military. Corruption, poor governance, populist leadership, inefficient administration, lack of political will and lack of resources continue to be the defining features of the political set up in many African countries. The conduct of free and fair elections, independence of judiciary, freedom of civil societies, efficient handling of security threats, improvement in social conditions have remained aspirational goals for several African countries despite having been democracies for decades. These issues hinder development and limit the democratic potential of the continent. Poor administration, corruption and inefficiency in addressing the escalating violence and deteriorating security situation has often been cited as the triggering causes by the coup leaders. They take over power promising to the people reform of the political system.

The prolonged security crisis and neglect from the government have disillusioned the people about democratic processes and they instead hope coups would help improve their conditions. The military too has been disappointed with the poor handling of security threats posed by terrorist groups, affiliates of Islamic State (IS) and Al Qaeda and local groups like the Boko Haram.

Additionally, despite increasing the defence budget, governments have failed to equip their armed forces with quality weapons/ammunition to execute anti-terrorist or anti-insurgent operations. These issues have in fact forced the military to consider coups as the only alternative to take administration into their own hands and thereby slowly improve the security situation, living conditions and political environment of the country. This is evident in the speeches and announcements made by the putsch regime in these countries.

...prolonged security crisis and neglect from the government have disillusioned the people about democratic processes...

External Dynamics that Influence the Occurrence of Coups and Challenges

Conditions within the region and the likely response of the neighbourhood play an important role in encouraging or discouraging coups. Particularly, the response of regional organisations in dealing with unconstitutional changes in the government of its members has a determining effect.

Organisations in the continent like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) seek to uphold democratic principles. The surge in coups raises questions about their ability to do so. The response measures of these organisations to the coups include statements condemning the unconstitutional takeover, expelling the country from the organisation's membership, freezing of financial assets, imposing travel bans on members of the military involved in the Coup, demand for a clear timeline of elections and so on. The recurrence of coups in countries despite these measures indicates their ineffectiveness. The response of a regional or

The response of a regional or intergovernmental organisation must be able to deter other countries from treading the path of coup...

intergovernmental organisation must be able to deter other countries from treading the path of coup as a way to address political grievances. However, considering the fact that these measures have been unable to do so, perhaps it is time to explore newer response measures to deal with unconstitutional change in government.

The ECOWAS attempted a new approach in the case of the coup in Burkina Faso in January 2022. Instead of falling hard on the government with difficult measures, ECOWAS sought to engage with them and understand their requirements. This perhaps was successful as it helped facilitate meaningful engagement. Harsh measures from regional organisations have also led to the population feeling alienated and oftentimes, the putsch regime has used these measures as a narrative against the organisations. A classic case in point is Mali, as mass protests erupted in the country demanding Mali to quit ECOWAS because the imposed sanctions were further deteriorating the living conditions of the people.⁷

The AU is mandated to promote good governance and take measures to prevent unconstitutional changes to the government. Although it recognises the unconstitutional change of government as a threat to peace and security in the African continent, the AU has not been able to effective due to lacunas in policy, difficulty in implementing frameworks like the '2000 Lomé Declaration for an OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government' at the national level and others.⁸ Additionally, inconsistency in the response to the coups adds to the ineffectiveness of its response. For instance, AU justified the coup in Chad since Chad has a strong military and plays a crucial role in the security of West Africa; while it strongly condemned the coup in Mali.⁹ Although these organisations have relatively fared well, the response to coups has been inadequate.

Other external dynamics that influence the occurrence of coups include the involvement of external players in the continent and the international reaction to coups. It has been alleged that foreign powers have been involved in the internal political dynamics and have been instrumental in facilitating the coups in some of these countries.¹⁰ In a study on coups, Jonathan M. Powell and Clayton L. Thyne assess that the lack of concrete and uniform strong condemnation of the coups by the international community encourages the militarization of politics as the military knows they will not face global isolation.¹¹ While some countries like US, France strongly condemn the coups and call for the restoration of the government; others like China do not involve in the political affairs and stay focused only on economic ties. This adds to the challenge.

Fallouts of the increase in Coups

The rise in coups indicates processes of democratisation in Africa are floundering. Although the phenomenon of coups cannot be generalised, similarities in the four successful coups in 2021 can be observed. Three of the four, Chad, Mali and Guinea face tremendous security challenges and have been dealing with jihadist insurgency since nearly a decade. The inability of the government to handle the security threats and protect the civilians triggered not only the civilians but also the military as they were not provided with upgraded equipment and they

The rise in coups indicates processes of democratisation in Africa are floundering.

instead kept losing security personnel to the violence. These issues ring true for several other countries in the continent.

The democratic roots and processes of many African countries are certainly under threat, especially with the growing presence of China on the continent. External players like China have a policy of non-interference in the administration and do not push for democratic values unlike the US and western counterparts.

Another trend is the emerging debate on political stability and democratic traditions in Francophone v/s Anglophone countries. Political reputation of Francophone and Anglophone countries in Africa has always been under scrutiny. Comparatively, Francophone countries have fared poorly. Although the merit of such distinction would surely need deeper probing, it is interesting to note that all of the four countries are former French colonies.

As discussed earlier, several African countries are reeling under the menace of terrorism, insurgency and jihadism. Largely the government apparatus in these countries is incapable of managing the threats due to lack of resources and inadequate training. Another factor is wide-spread corruption and government neglect of its duties towards all communities and sections in the society. The triggering factors for nearly all coups in Africa since the beginning in Togo in 1963 have remained the same. Coup leaders have justified their actions stating reasons like poor governance, failing economy, corruption, inability to quell growing violence and address security challenges. The problem evidently boils down to the need for an efficient and strong government. This would automatically negate any other factors that would necessitate a coup.

The surge in coups threatens democratic processes and political stability in Africa. The root causes triggering the coups need attention. Government and political architecture in the continent have to be enabled and empowered. Political will, reform of organisational response and international support will play a key role in addressing the issue.

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Commentary

THE IMPACT OF INDIAN INITIATIVES IN AFRICA: REFLECTIONS ON THE COOPERATION IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

Looking forward into the post-COVID era, it can be seen that India and Africa will further come together in collaboration with respect to the development of healthcare infrastructure and the reduction of emerging health issues. Other than providing regular medical checkups and post-covid care to patients, the Indian private sector has extended other initiatives. Health care will continue as an arena for India-Africa cooperation in times to come.

Pooja Priya*

Africa's health challenges

In recent years, Africa's health challenges have received a considerably higher level of attention in terms of research. The conventional focus on Africa's health issues has been on HIV, malaria and tuberculosis. HIV is said to have originated in the continent of Africa and this origin can be traced back to the 1960s during which studies have suggested that approximately 2000 people were infected with HIV in Africa. This was further proved by the stored blood samples from an American malaria research project which was carried out in Congo.¹ HIV in Africa grew rapidly till the 2000s, during which although there were advancements in treating the virus such as antiretroviral therapy (ART), there still is no cure or an effective vaccine for the same.² Further, it is also crucial to highlight how HIV and tuberculosis are correlated to one another within Africa. It has been stated that the increased rate of tuberculosis in Africa has led to a rise in antituberculosis chemotherapy, which involves using intramuscular injection for one or two months as part of the treatment. This has in turn resulted in an increase in the use of medical injections and malfunctioning of it leading to HIV infections and death.³ Another leading health issue that Africa has seen in recent years is mental health disorders due to deep-rooted beliefs in superstitions and witchcraft in African countries. In the African countries, a few of the leading reasons for the lack of focus on mental health are poor medical infrastructure and policymaking, along with the strong spiritual beliefs that individuals and communities hold regarding evil spirits and

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punishment from God among others. These beliefs further lead to a misunderstanding of the aetiology of mental disorders such as dementia in leading African countries being led by Nigeria, followed by Ghana and South Africa.

India -Africa nexus in the health sector

Having shed light on what were and still continue to be Africa's leading health issues, it then becomes imperative to look at how India has played a role in maintaining health diplomacy with Africa as a region and with specific African countries. This can be seen in two different eras or periods, i.e. colonial and postcolonial periods. The cooperation between

The cooperation between India and Africa in the health sector can be traced back to the colonial period...

India and Africa in the health sector can be traced back to the colonial period i.e. the 1890s during which Indian doctors were sent to the east coast of Africa and particularly, Kenya. This engagement in history becomes a pivotal event in the process of installation of western medicine in Kenya and gradually in other parts of Africa.⁴ Stating the scenario of how the nature of the partnership looks like post the independence of India and African countries, it can be seen that cooperation

in the form of lines of credit was extended by the Government of India in the areas of pharmaceuticals, ICT interventions in the health sector and medical tourism among others. The origin of India-Africa cooperation in medicine can be traced back to 2001. It was around this time period that pharmaceutical giants were suing the South African government because of their efforts in sourcing cheap forms of antiretroviral (ARV) drugs. It was then that the Indian generic drug manufacturer Cipla volunteered to sell the authentic drugs for less than one dollar a day approximately in Africa and paved the way for the development of a global action plan which focused on increasing access to medicines.⁵

Further, the partnership between India and Africa intensified in the year 2016 when Indian Prime Minister Modi visited four nations i.e. Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya. The goal of these visits was to develop mutual economic interests and developmental aspirations, which co-aligned with how India planned to export medicines to Africa along with creating manufacturing units within the region. This resulted in 80 per cent of African consumption of pharmaceuticals to be sourced from India.

...the partnership between India and Africa intensified in the year 2016 when Indian Prime Minister Modi visited four nations...

Further, this ARV has contributed to reducing the number of HIV/AIDS in the region. For instance, in 2017, 60 per cent of people living with HIV/AIDS in the African region were receiving ARV treatment, which reflected India's cooperation with the region in the health sector.⁶ Further, this has contributed as an achievement to the 90-90-90 targets of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, which focused on the reduction of 90 per cent of HIV-positive cases by the year 2020. Along with the intention to intercept AIDS

within the region, India has extended other health initiatives to Africa such as the use of telemedicine, mHealth, mobile neuroophthalmology services, e-pharmacy, NCG-Vishwam Cancer Care Connect, Electronic Resources in Medicine (ARMED) Consortium, National

Digital Wellbeing Platform, National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) and National Nutrition Mission. One of the recent additions is medical tourism.⁷

Medical Tourism: mobility from Africa to India

In addition to the other initiatives that have been discussed with respect to India's cooperation with Africa in terms of the health sector, there are other pathways through which India has provided support in the health sector to the latter, i.e. through medical tourism. Medical tourism can be defined as the process of travelling outside the country of residence for the purpose of receiving medical care.⁸ In its traditional sense, it was understood as the mobility of patients from underdeveloped countries to their developing counterparts. For instance, patients from the western and southern parts of Africa have been getting treatment; in hospitals across India.⁹ In recent years, patients from African countries have confided in the Indian health infrastructures due to the absence of strict healthcare policies in their country of origin, issues with accessing minimal healthcare and the unavailability of technologically advanced hospitals.¹⁰ Consequently, the Indian healthcare system provides for the lack of the above; in addition to that, it has large numbers of highly skilled doctors with various specializations, affordability of healthcare in terms of finances and varied options of the hospitals that are being offered to African patients across different Indian cities.¹¹

In recent years, patients from African countries have confided in the Indian health infrastructures...

In recent years, there has been a growth in medical tourism within African countries. This can be seen in the following ways, i.e. growth of local healthcare in Africa, the region beginning to politically respond to developing countries' healthcare underdevelopment and further focus on advancing domestic health care. Additionally, due to the increase in the growth rate of the economies of the African countries, the image of "underdevelopment" has been slowly shifting towards the category of "developing".¹² This is exemplified through the construction of large hospitals by their Indian counterparts to be able to provide regular consultation, and postoperative care to African patients. Narayana is building a 130-bed specialist cardiac hospital in Nairobi in partnership with the International Finance Corporation and the Abraaj Group. On the other hand, Medanta, established Medanta Afri-care, an ultramodern medical centre in Nairobi in 2012.¹³

Health cooperation in the light of the Global Pandemic

The period of the global pandemic reflected the cooperation between India and African countries through health diplomacy. Due to the African countries' inability to be equipped for COVID-19 due to poor healthcare infrastructure, there was a need for medical attention from India. Although the African countries depend upon several regions and countries i.e. EU, Switzerland, China, USA and others, India was estimated to have the most economically feasible health care provisions for the former. Since the start of the global pandemic, the social acceptance and medical diagnosis both

The period of the global pandemic reflected the cooperation between India and African countries through health diplomacy.

seemed to have failed terribly, leading to the continent's inability to fight the pandemic. For instance, as of 12 August 2021, the confirmed cases and deaths were recorded to be as high as 7,111,780 and 179,801 respectively. South Africa seems to be hit hardest with a substantial number of confirmed cases and deaths amounting to 2,554,240 and 75,774 respectively.¹⁴

It is estimated that the Indian government has provided 270 tonnes of food aid to Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, and Eritrea to relieve the misery of people impacted by the pandemic. India has also launched a capacity-building program for healthcare workers in African countries, through which teams of doctors assisted African countries such as Mauritius and Comoros to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, India has also provided medical equipment and telemedicine support with top Indian institutions such as the India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), and Raipur and engaged the local African institutions to train the frontline healthcare workers to combat and control the ongoing health crisis. Additionally, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) organized an e-ITEC course, "COVID-19 pandemic: prevention and management guidelines for healthcare professionals" to bring forward the frontline healthcare workers of the African countries. For mapping COVID-19 in rural areas, technical assistance in terms of ArogyaSetu and the E-Gram Swaraj apps have been shared with African countries.¹⁵

Through this cooperation that was extended to the African countries by the Indian government during the COVID-19 pandemic, it can be said that the latter has maintained a cordial relationship with many African Nations in the health sector. This support has also further built Africa's capacities in terms of meeting the Goals for Sustainable Development in meeting target number three, i.e. good health and well-being. This cooperation has helped Africa look beyond the medical conditions that it was dealing with prior to the pandemic, for instance, the 10th Ebola outbreak in 2018, HIV and tuberculosis which according to the reports of the World Health Organisation (WHO) was already draining the medical capacities of the region.¹⁶

Future Prospects in the post-COVID era

Looking forward into the post-COVID era, it can be seen that India and Africa will further come together in collaboration with respect to the development of healthcare infrastructure and the reduction of emerging health issues. Other than providing regular medical checkups and post-covid care to patients, the Indian private sector has extended other initiatives. These include the setting up of Dr LalPath Labs, which is aimed to set up joint testing labs with local partners in African countries.¹⁷ Further, the Apollo group has set up hospitals and health centres within the African continent, which is educating people about the need to focus on health care and move beyond the local beliefs and notions of illness and disease. Health care will continue as an arena for India-Africa cooperation in times to come.

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Viewpoint

TURMOIL IN TUNISIA

Tunisia faces serious socio-economic, political and security challenges. There is a degree of political disarray on top of a serious economic problem aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. A decade after Arab Spring, Tunisia is once again at a crossroads, and its future depends on the ability of Tunisians to find a way out of the crisis, without compromising on the democratic gains made since 2011.

Md. Muddassir Quamar*

On 25 July 2022, Tunisia voted in favour of a new “controversial” Constitution the drafting process of which had kept the country divided since 2021.¹ Tunisia, the only relative success story of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings, has witnessed serious political churn over the year. In a series of decisions, described as “unconstitutional” by political parties across the spectrum, President Kais Saied, who was elected in October 2019 in a landslide victory, dissolved the elected parliament, dismissed the government, and disbanded the highest judicial body. The president, on the contrary, described these moves as mandated by the Constitution due to the “unprecedented” and “extraordinary crisis” faced by the country. Consequently, Saied has taken control of all branches of government, accumulating power in his hands, and has even partially suspended the Constitution, raising fears of democratic

...Saied has taken control of all branches of government, accumulating power in his hands...

backsliding.² In October 2021, the president appointed a new technocratic government led by Najla Bouden, a former university professor and an official in the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education, who became the first woman prime minister of not only Tunisia but of any Arab country.³

The challenges facing Tunisia are multifaceted. In the run-up to the 2019 parliamentary and presidential elections, Tunisia witnessed a series of street protests, reminiscent of the 2011 uprising, against rampant corruption, and for better services. Tunisians are also angry due to the monopolisation of power among the few political elites who emerged from the events of 2011. The Islamist Ennahda (Renaissance) Party has faced serious erosion in support and

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was reduced to 52 seats and 19.63 per cent votes in the 2019 parliamentary elections.⁴ The coalition governments formed since 2014, have failed to deliver on the primary demands of good governance and economic prosperity. It is because of these problems that the “power grab” by President Saied has evoked mixed reactions from the people, with protestors coming out both in support and opposition of the actions.⁵ The upheavals have opened up the question about the political and economic futures of Tunisia.

The upheavals have opened up the question about the political and economic futures of Tunisia.

End of Tunisian Exceptionalism?

The most important question is related to political instability and democratic backsliding. As the majority of the Arab countries affected by the 2011 uprisings devolved into political crises, civil wars, and conflicts, or reverted to authoritarian regimes, Tunisia continued on the path of democratisation despite facing serious political, economic, and security challenges. The early political transition in Tunisia was steered by an elected National Constituent Assembly (NCA) that adopted a new constitution on 26 January 2014.⁶ The democratic process was strengthened due to the regular free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections carving an inclusive political system.⁷

The commitment of the Tunisian leaders to stick to the electoral process, and uphold the sanctity of the Assembly of Representatives of the People (Parliament) and the Constitution contributed to the democratisation. This, in turn, gave credence to the idea of Tunisian ‘exceptionalism’ to the otherwise opposing trend of strengthening authoritarian regimes or outbreak of civil wars. Although voices from within Tunisia underlined the challenges facing the country,⁸ the moniker of Tunisian exceptionalism continued to be widely used among international observers and media.

...the idea of Tunisian 'exceptionalism' to the otherwise opposing trend of strengthening authoritarian regimes...

The political situation took a dramatic turn on 25 July 2021 when President Saied dismissed the government of Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi and suspended the parliament.⁹ President Saied invoked emergency provisions enshrined in Article 80 of the 2014 Constitution underlining the “exceptional circumstances” facing the Republic.¹⁰ The suspension of the parliament was extended indefinitely on 24 August, and on 13 December, the president announced that the Assembly will remain suspended until the next elections to be held in December 2022.¹¹ Eventually, the parliament was dissolved on 30 March 2022, after 124 of the 217 members of the suspended Assembly held an online meeting condemning the declaration of emergency by the president as an unconstitutional attempt at grabbing power.¹² In September 2021, President Saied had issued a decree overtaking executive and legislative powers from the elected Assembly, and also partly suspended the 2014 Constitution, arguing that the political process in Tunisia needs a course correction.¹³ In February 2022, the president issued a fresh decree replacing the Supreme Judicial Council with a provisional body appointed by him, leading to fears that the president has accumulated executive, legislative, and judicial powers in his hands.¹⁴

Economic Woes

The moves by President Saied, howsoever abrupt, were not entirely surprising as they came after months of widespread public unrest against mounting economic woes, and the inability of the elected representative to bring about the much-needed economic turnaround. Tunisia has been struggling with economic woes for a long; notably, the unrest in 2011, sparked by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, known in Tunisia as the Dignity Revolution (*Thawarat al-Karama*), was primarily caused by the precipitating economic crisis. Despite the country adhering to a democratic political process, the economic problems were far from resolved. If at all, in the subsequent years, the financial and economic troubles multiplied due to a variety of factors including financial mismanagement, rampant corruption, and a deteriorating security situation.¹⁵

The moves by President Saied, howsoever abrupt, were not entirely surprising...

In 2020, the economic problems in the picturesque North African country became graver due to the outbreak of COVID-19. The pandemic led to lockdowns and disruptions in economic activities, but most importantly it brought the tourism industry, one of the mainstays of the Tunisian economy, to a halt affecting millions of Tunisians who directly or indirectly depended on it for their livelihood. According to the World Bank, the Tunisian economy contracted by 8.8 percent in 2020, while the rate of unemployment increased to 17.8 percent, and was much higher among youth (15-25 age group) at 40.8 percent and women at 24.9 percent.¹⁶ Besides, the number of people forced to live in poverty and categorised as “poor and vulnerable” increased to 20.1 percent.¹⁷ The fiscal deficit also increased to 10 percent of the GDP. Tunisia has also been struggling with inflation (6.6 percent in December 2021), and rising food prices creating serious challenges for the poor and vulnerable people.¹⁸

A Political Outlier

Kais Saied, a former law professor, was a relatively unknown figure until 2019. He ran as an independent in the October 2019 presidential election and belying all expectations won with a landslide margin getting 72 percent of the popular vote. His upset win was seen as a sign of the mounting discontent, and waning patience, among the young Tunisian voters who want the government to deliver on its economic promises. Saied’s campaign was also carefully crafted projecting him as an outsider who represents the people, and whose only agenda is to work for their welfare.¹⁹ However, his lack of experience and harsh criticism of the ruling parties made him an outlier among the political class. This led to the president and the previous government being on a constant path of collision since October 2019. Saied’s proclivity for admonishing the elected lawmakers, and the political parties for their inability to take strong economic measures created serious churn within the government leading to frequent changes. Hence, Tunisia witnessed three prime ministers between October 2019 and July 2021.²⁰ But for Saied, the populist appeal and support from the deep state provided him the stage to grab power, promising far-reaching reforms and course correction.

Kais Saied, a former law professor, was a relatively unknown figure until 2019.

The Difficult Road Ahead?

Tunisia faces serious socio-economic, political and security challenges. There is a degree of political disarray on top of a serious economic problem aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. There are also concerns about security due to the growth of radical and terrorist Islamist groups in the Maghreb and Sahel regions. Despite some public support for the president's actions, there remain concerns about irreversible democratic backsliding, and continuing economic downward spiral. A decade after Arab Spring, Tunisia is once again at a crossroads, and its future depends on the ability of Tunisians to find a way out of the crisis, without compromising on the democratic gains made since 2011.

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Viewpoint

SCOPE FOR INDIA-AFRICA COOPERATION IN COUNTERING TERRORISM

Both AU and the UN have identified clear areas where the capacities for counter-terrorism in Africa have been found wanting. India is in a position to share and build capacities in areas of its competence and comfort. Such help would be along the lines of the Indian policy of building state capacities. Having grappled with terrorism in a democratic set-up, India is also in a position to share its experience of making law enforcement systems respect the fundamental rights of human beings. Measures such as these will also help build the faith of the people of Africa in their own institutions and thus address one the root causes of terrorism in Africa.

Arpita Anant*

At the India Africa Defence Ministers Conclave held in 2020, India and Africa expressed their common desire to counter terrorism and to strengthen the United Nations (UN) mechanisms against terrorism.¹ They also expressed the wish to cooperate in combating terrorism. However, so far, India's support to Africa for this cause has been indirect at best. India has helped in the setting up of defence academies and colleges, deployment of training teams, provision of ammunition and equipment to some African countries and the hosting of Africa India Field Training Exercises (AFINDEX). All these, along with sharing of counterinsurgency and counter terrorism experiences, can be surmised to help build national capabilities in countering terrorism where the threat exists. While India recognises the growing threat of terrorism in Africa, it must contribute more concretely and visibly to counter-terrorism capacity building in Africa.

Trends in African Terrorism

The year 2021 was replete with reports about the menace of Islamist terrorist groups in Africa. According to the Global Terrorism Index (cited below), 10 of the top 20 incidents of terrorism that resulted in the highest number of casualties in 2021 were in Africa. As per a report for the UN Office for Drugs

The year 2021 was replete with reports about the menace of Islamist terrorist groups in Africa.

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and Crime², since 2016, North African countries have faced threats from the Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or Daesh and Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) from Iraq and Syria. Returning FTFs and small cells are additional sources of concern. In East Africa, the Al Shabaab continued to unleash terror with significantly increased attacks against the airfields and aircrafts in Somalia and targeting Kenya. In Southern Africa, the Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP), associated with the ISIL has indulged in acts of violence in northern Mozambique and the Mozambique-Tanzania border. In the West African region, terrorism has been at an all-time high with activities of the Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS).

The AQIM has spilled over from the North of Mali to Burkina Faso and Niger. The ISIL too is acting in the region.

Islamist terrorism in Africa mostly has origins in domestic dissatisfaction with governance...

Islamist terrorism in Africa mostly has origins in domestic dissatisfaction with governance including law and order and lack of development. It is in areas marred by violent conflict and political instability that terrorism has found its roots. Thus, this terrorism is politically motivated rather than being

religiously motivated.³ It is these that have led to the growth of local terrorist groups who have graduated to making links with global jihadist movements like the Al Qaeda and the Daesh.⁴ While they have done so in search of a global identity, their connections with these groupings and the military and financial support they receive from them is negligible.⁵ The terrorist groups however are lethal and have inflicted large civilian casualties.

Countering Terrorism in Africa

Several efforts are ongoing to combat terrorism all over the continent. Among them are national, regional, cross-regional measures as well as cooperation with external actors such as the US, EU and China. In addition, at the continental level, the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) and its successor the African Union (AU) have adopted several instruments to help with combating terrorism such as:

- OAU Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa (1977),
- Resolution on the Strengthening of Cooperation and Coordination among African States (1992)
- Declaration on the Code of Conduct for Inter-African Relations (1994)
- OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (1999)
- Constitutive Act of the African Union (2000)
- Plan of Action of the African Union High-Level Inter-Governmental Meeting on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in Africa (2002)

- African Union Protocol to the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (2004, not yet entered into force)
- Decision on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (2010)⁶

The UN too is an important player aiding in building state capacities to counter terrorism. Specifically, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime supports 23 projects in the Sahel, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, Benin, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Togo, Senegal, West Africa, North Africa, Algeria, Egypt and Morocco, East Africa, Somalia, Kenya, Southern Africa and Mozambique. These projects are aimed at strengthening the criminal justice system to improve prosecution in cases of terrorism and violent extremism, preventing spread of extremism in prisons, as well as in some places, rehabilitating erstwhile terrorists.⁷

Lags in Counter-Terrorism Measures

Despite all these efforts, much remains to be done in terms of strengthening the capacities of states to deal with terrorism. The Communiqué of the 1040th meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the AU on the Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Continental Efforts in Preventing and Combating of Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa held on 22 October 2021 identified some areas which state capacities ought to be built. These are:

...much remains to be done in terms of strengthening the capacities of states to deal with terrorism.

- to enact appropriate legislations and administrative procedures to effectively control the production, export, import, transit or retransfers of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in order to prevent illegal manufacture of, and illicit trafficking in, SALW or their diversion to terrorist and criminal groups, in line with the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)
- to enact and enforce appropriate legislation and traceability control measures that include importation, movement, storage, distribution and use of materials and components used for making improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and building counter IED capabilities
- to more effectively regulate the use of the internet and social media and to prevent the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by terrorist groups in their fundraising, narrative promotion, and recruitment, including developing and implementing effective counter-narrative strategies⁸

Further, in 2021, the Counter Terrorism Committee of the UN through its implementation surveys has identified areas that need to be strengthened in the implementation of various UN Security Council resolutions that specify the measures to be adopted by member states pursuant to those resolutions. It focussed on Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005). Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) criminalises the financing of terrorism, generation or distribution of funds for terrorism, freeze funds and assets of terrorist persons

and related entities, prevent the provision of any kind of support to terrorists on their respective territories, increase operational exchange of information that could deter acts of terrorism and help with administrative and judicial aspects of trial of terrorists. Security Council Resolution 1624 (2005), on the other hand, calls upon states to criminalise the incitement to terrorism, prevent acts of terrorism, deny safe haven to terrorists, increase security measures at international borders and airports to prevent entry of terrorists into their territory, promote a dialogue among civilisations and prevent the subversion of educational, cultural, and religious institutions, protect human rights, especially freedom of expression while in pursuit of enhanced security and counter violent extremism through appropriate counter narratives. Whereas significant progress has been achieved in the implementation of the latter resolution, it is in the case of the former that countries in Africa have been found wanting.⁹

Thus, in North Africa, the survey recommends that financial intelligence units need to be spruced up to repost suspicious transactions that might result in financing of terrorism; investigations and prosecution must be geared up to follow rule of law and respect for human rights; improve border controls and use of Interpol databases. In East Africa, the legislations on terrorism need to be drafted based on principles of legality; laws related to possession of weapons and ammunition need to be strengthened and firearms related offences criminalised; asset freezing regimes need to be operationalised; the capabilities of investigators and prosecutors of criminal investigation must be enhanced; intelligence and law enforcement agencies must be placed under an oversight mechanism; better border management techniques need to be put in place; due place must be given to the national human rights institutions. In Southern Africa, there is a need to develop integrated counter-terrorism strategies; conduct of threat assessments must be improved and shared at the national and regional levels; counter terrorism legislations must be made compatible with human rights; information sharing must be upgraded and Interpol databases must be used; international cooperation must be strengthened and regional protocols must be made operational. In West Africa, there is need to adopt and implement comprehensive national strategies including all stakeholders; improve the counter terrorist financing capabilities; criminalise terrorist acts and all actions that support them; have oversight mechanisms for law enforcement agencies; need for better use of Interpol data among border management services; upgrading border management infrastructure for collection of biometric and biographical information. In Central Africa, national legislation that defines terrorist acts must be brought in line with international counter-terrorism instruments; need to build in safeguards for defendants implicated in cases of terrorism; need to update and implement legislation on illicit weapons and ammunition; enhance oversight of law enforcement agencies by setting up human rights institutions; ensure better connections with Interpol for better coordination with border agencies and foreign counterparts.

Both AU and the UN have identified clear areas where the capacities for counter-terrorism in Africa have been found wanting.

Scope for Counter-Terrorism Cooperation

Both AU and the UN have identified clear areas where the capacities for counter-terrorism in Africa have been found

wanting. India, given its vast experience in institutionalising and operationalising many of these measures in compliance with the 1373 (2001) regime, is in a position to share and build capacities in areas of its competence and comfort. Such help would be along the lines of the Indian policy of building state capacities. Having grappled with terrorism in a democratic set-up, India is also in a position to share its experience of making law enforcement systems respect the fundamental rights of human beings. Measures such as these will also help build the faith of the people of Africa in their own institutions and thus address one the root causes of terrorism in Africa.

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Book Review

Blanche Rocha D'Souza, *Harnessing the Trade Winds: The Story of the Centuries-Old Indian Trade with East Africa, Using the Monsoon Winds*, First published in Kenya in 2008 by Zand Graphics Ltd, Reprinted in India 2021 by Pentagon Press LLP. Pp. 204. INR 995.

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Samir Bhattacharya*

Historiography is a fervently debated topic. Researchers differ on the best way to decipher recorded occasions. New proof could modify our impression of the past. Some contend that western students of history are biased towards the west. Others accept that history specialists from non-western nations are one-sided against them. This book is a phenomenal illustration of what is expected to reinvigorate enthusiasm among historians in questioning established knowledge and rewriting history free of ideological constraints.

By countering mainstream history, which is often biased and composed by the leaders of the time, the book aims to recognise and appreciate lesser-known actors who have been overlooked in history. Looking back at history, it appears that Indian traders played a relatively limited role in African civilization. However, some reports, papers, and even stories have taken the position that this Indian population made a significant contribution to the development of Eastern Africa, particularly the islands of South-Eastern Africa. Sadly, these reports, papers, and stories have largely been discounted by western and Asian historians. This book aims to fill that void in history. .

First published in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2008, this book is a non-academic essay intended for a broad audience. The hardships suffered by generations of Indians compelled to migrate to East Africa are chronicled in this book. It should be a source of great pride for them to have made significant contributions to the development of the countries where they have settled. The author persuasively establishes the contributions of little-known Indian traders to East Africa's development.

Unknown to many, people living in the Indus valley civilisation knew about monsoons and how to travel long distances. This was thousands of years ago, long before the Christian era, even before Hippalus, the Greek mariner famous for discovering the monsoon winds. This

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book brings to light the specifics of a particular period overlooked in history and makes a valuable contribution to the history of Indian traders on Africa's east coast. The book also fills a significant gap in the study of India's diaspora, as this period is still understudied.

An endeavour to capture three thousand years of history in 18 chapters, a not mainstreamed history, is a valiant attempt in itself. And taking on the discipline's hegemony could raise a ruckus among mainstream historians and others. Some may dismiss this as a naive approach to history writing. However, it is only because there is a scarcity of scholarly work in this field that the book's claims appear to be connecting large dots. On the bright side, the book's revelations are so many that they should prod a slew of new studies honouring some of history's forgotten figures.

The author's most significant issue in countering the narrative was a lack of written evidence. There are several possible explanations for the paucity of documents including those destroyed by colonisers, inadequate record-keeping and illiteracy of the Indian merchants. In the absence of adequate solid proof, written or archaeological, the author draws on a variety of sources, including non-scholarly books and reports, as well as British colonial documents. She cites evidence from ancient Sanskrit literature, the Bible and the Ramayana, and the remarks of several British government officials, like John Kirk and Sir Bartle Frere. The monsoons and marine currents are mentioned in the Rig Veda, and the author cites them. Although some of these sources are unscholarly, they reflect the realities of the time and cannot be overlooked.

The author's associations between ancient Hindu texts and current realities are astounding. She found out that the Red Sea was called Lohita Sagar in ancient India. She also found out that the Miir in Puranas was present-day Egypt. The Arabic name of Egypt was Misr and Egyptians referred to Egypt as Misr. The author also found out that the mythical place mentioned in Mahabharata was present-day Uganda. The same goes for Lake Victoria being Dev Sarovar and River Nile being Krishna. These connections need more work and more time to develop. Unfortunately, creating an ideal bibliography is difficult due to the type of documents the author had to review. As a result, the bibliography's structure remains a little weak, as several of the referred materials could not be accurately dated.

The book does have a few shortcomings; however, they are minor. While the author's treatment of Indian contributions are detailed and well-supported, her account of indigenous efforts to establish institutions fall short. It is irrefutably true that Africans never developed into maritime powers or explored the world as Europeans did. However, the absence of an adventurous spirit among Africans appears to be a little exaggerated. This flaw, most likely, arises since the author was forced to rely only on records from the colonial era as primary source material. Similarly, generalising Arabs as having a lower aptitude for finance is not accurate.

The book has a few captivating subtleties. It's intriguing to learn about the Indians who connected Zanzibar to Bombay and other western Indian ports and how this contributed to Zanzibar's emergence as a regional commerce powerhouse. A.M. Jeevanjee, Jairam Shewji,

and Tharya Topan are conspicuous Indians who had a critical impact on the region's development and the fight for Indian rights. The list of plants introduced by Indians throughout history is fascinating to peruse. A similar but different study of how the African agricultural system influenced Indian agriculture would be interesting. The politics played by the British over the abolition of slavery is fascinating.

The depiction of the construction of the Ugandan railway will give any reader shivers. Major Macdonald, Chief engineer of preliminary survey (Indian surveyors) or Lieutenant-colonel J.H.Patterson, The man-eating lions of Uganda, are real-life people who appear surreal and exciting historical trivia. It's a shame that the hardships Indian labourers had in building the railway line and the financial contributions of Indian merchants are lost to history. Unscrupulously, the British took credit for the entire project.

The contacts between Indian merchants and other merchants are also detailed in the book. There is a graphic description of how British merchants used every trick in the book to capture the trading network that Indians and Arabs had already established. They first came in as another mercantile class. They then seized power from the local rulers at the pretence of giving protection to their Indian colonial subjects. And most of the time, this was accomplished by unethical means. They employed divide and rule to involve Indians and Africans in brutal fights and exploited the situation once they were established. The link between the 1884 Berlin race for Africa and its significant impact on East African commercial networks is well explained.

History is an academic discipline that has always been a contentious field (as it should be) because there can be numerous interpretations of a previous event, depending on a historian's point of view or ideological position or the school to which they belong. However, these disparate historians agree on the importance of first establishing facts about the past using well-defined, internationally agreed-upon social science research principles rigorously followed. These facts aren't chosen based on predetermined and desired results.

From that standpoint, this book functions as a eulogy for Indian traders, and it is supposed to instil pride in their descendants. It's also a fascinating book for historiography students who would like to work inductively rather than deductively. In fact, the book consists of various significant events and individuals, with no room for the development of theories. The book should inspire Indian Diaspora and Indian Ocean Studies scholars to explore further, engage in academic debates, and uncover more interesting and essential details.

Book Review

Rajpal Punia & Damini Punia, *Operation Khukri: The True Story Behind Indian Army's Most Successful Mission as part of the United Nations*, Penguin Random House, India, 2021.

ISBN (hardcover): 9780143453369

R.Vignesh*

“Operation Khukri: The True Story Behind Indian Army's Most Successful Mission as part of the United Nations” jointly authored by Maj. Gen. Rajpal Punia and his daughter Damini Punia is an enthralling first person account of the events that unfolded in the rustic town of Kailahun situated in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone between May and July 2000. The book serves as a primary literature for the important contribution of the Indian Army as part of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) constituted for establishing lasting peace in the war-ravaged West African nation. The most distinct aspect of the book is how it combines the personal journey of its protagonist Maj. Gen. Rajpal Punia, then a battle-hardened Major who led 233 Indian troops in enduring a three month long siege laid by the ruthless Revolutionary United Front (RUF) that eventually ended with the successful breakout staged by the Indian Army with the historical narrative of the humanitarian and socio-economic effects of lasting conflict among the population of Sierra Leone. The book explores the emotional and psychological stress endured by the Indian troops and officers deployed on foreign soil confronting an enemy infamous for its ruthless tactics and barbaric practices. To the general reader, the book serves as a testament to the indomitable resolve and the professionalism of the Indian Army who played a significant role in inflicting a decisive blow to the RUF and forcing them back to the negotiating table that laid the foundation of lasting peace in Sierra Leone.

The book's contents are divided into eleven chapters that seamlessly capture the essence of the operation from its initial stages of deployment from New Delhi to the final breakout of hostilities between the besieged Indian Contingent and the RUF in Kailahun. The first chapter brings out the psychological dilemma that Maj. Punia went through before accepting the offer as a company commander in UN Peacekeeping Mission in Sierra Leone and the role of his family in persuading him to take up the offer. Having served three years in the high altitude terrain of Jammu and Kashmir combating infiltrators and insurgents from across the Line of Control (LOC) and enduring the pain of being away from the family, the author

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initially makes the obvious decision to decline the much-sought offer which is viewed as a lucrative opportunity within the Indian Army. Ultimately, it is at the insistence of Mrs. Punia that the author decides to accept the assignment. This particular aspect of the book draws the attention of the readers towards the duty-boundedness of not only the men and women donning the olive-green uniform but also of their families. Between Chapters two and three, the book chronicles the initial complexities and challenges that were encountered by the Indian peacekeeping contingent en route to their principal area of operation in Kailahun, which was considered to be the heartland of the RUF. Through these chapters, the reader is made aware of the operational modalities and the vetting procedures involved in a typical UN peacekeeping deployment and the important role of the commanders of the peacekeeping contingent in ensuring the troops under their command adhere to operational standards required for such deployment.

Chapters four and five narrate the journey of the Indian Contingent from Lungi to the heartland of the RUF in Kailahun. Tasked with facilitating the disarmament of the RUF under Lomé Peace Agreement, Maj. Punia and his men bear witness to the scourge of war inflicted across Sierra Leone by the brutalities of the RUF en route to Kailahun. It is also learned here that the RUF which was initially raised as a force to combat Sierra Leone Government that was perceived to be corrupt by the local populace gained mass support. But soon through the involvement of Liberia, the RUF indulged in the lucrative business of diamond smuggling, turning against the very people who once supported it. The Indian contingent shouldered the most important mandate of the UNAMSIL, a task that the contingents from other nations had declined, which is to disarm RUF in their own heartland through the establishment of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) camps. Chapter Six narrates the last leg of the Indian contingent's journey to Kailahun, where eventually they establish contact with the RUF and swiftly earn the goodwill of the local population. In Kailahun, the author meets and knits close friendships with three individuals amidst the most unlikely situation. These three individuals are Papa Geima, the village chieftain, Sister, a native of Kailahun and a RUF sympathizer and finally Colonel Martin, a RUF field commander. To the reader, these three individuals make for compelling characters as each of them represents a distinct aspect of the conflict. While Papa Geima represents the weariness of the people in the hinterland of Sierra Leone, Sister is a manifestation of human tragedy in conflicts having lost her entire family in the war and Colonel Martin represents the humane face of the RUF, who is otherwise bound by the ruthless and malevolent ways of his organisation. The author's personal bond with these three individuals plays a key role in shaping the developments in subsequent months of the Indian contingent's presence in Kailahun.

The bonhomie that quickly develops between Maj. Punia and Colonel Martin brings out the importance of cordial relations between the field level commanders of belligerent forces as a prerequisite for initiating Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) that are necessary for carrying out operations such as disarmament. Chapter Six narrates an incident where Maj. Punia along with his men had even risked carrying out a joint patrol with RUF near the Guinea border. Eventually, the Indian contingent is successful both in earning the local support from the people of Kailahun and initiating the disarmament of the RUF cadres.

Despite a good start and commencement of the planned disarmament process, a stray incident that unfolded in a DDR camp in the town of Makeni far away from Kailahun had quickly led to a swift deterioration of the situation in entire Sierra Leone. RUF which until then was cooperating on disarmament suddenly became hostile when some of its cadres were killed by the UN as they were protesting the delay in disbursement of funds deemed to be received by the cadres for laying down arms. Post this incident, the situation in Kailahun turns flip side as the region is the heartland of RUF. The situation turns RUF against the UN peacekeepers and as a result Maj. Punia along with some members of international UN observers are taken hostage while on a scheduled meeting. Finally, good sense prevails among the RUF leadership and Maj. Punia along with the other International observers are released to join the Indian Camp in Kailahun. Once back in the safety of the Indian camp, the book perfectly captures the psychological dilemma that Maj. Punia went through in deliberating between laying down arms and standing firm to keep up with the traditions of the Indian Army. Being a hardened soldier Maj. Punia chooses the latter by standing firm against the RUF despite the overwhelming odds of his contingent being cut off and the fast dwindling supplies necessary for sustaining their presence.

Between chapters eight and ten, the buildup of tensions between the besieged Indian Contingent and the RUF is captured in great detail. This includes Maj. Punia's operation of relocating his men based in an abandoned Kailahun hospital to tactical high ground overlooking the town right under the nose of RUF, presented through a captivating narration of events. This chapter also captures the field improvisation that the Indian contingent carried out for staging their breakout from the RUF siege. Once again it dwells deep into Maj. Punia's psychological dilemma between being a soldier and a moral human being. The final chapter narrates the climactic incident where the Indian contingent staged a successful predawn breakout on 15 July 2000 against an unsuspecting RUF to regroup with the Indian Contingent in Daru. The RUF being inflicted with heavy casualties by the Indian Army, suffered a major blow. This turns out to be a crucial factor that forced RUF back to the negotiating table that eventually reinstated lasting peace in Sierra Leone.

However, the book also has certain shortcomings. One such issue is the lack of details on the incident in the DDR camp in Makeni wherein peacefully protesting RUF cadres were killed by UN peacekeepers eventually resulting in the derailment of the otherwise smooth process of disarmament in entire Sierra Leone. This important incident has been mentioned by the author as a passing reference on page 96 and requires to be presented in greater detail for the reader to understand how such stray incidents can play a detrimental role in the peace process for resolving entrenched conflict scenarios. Also, the Indian contingent had gained immense local support from the town of Kailahun which later turns to be an instrumental factor in the release of both Maj. Punia and other Indian peacekeepers who were held as captives by the RUF. But these very people are put in harm's way during the breakout of the Indian contingent from Kailahun. Although the author expresses remorse for this hard decision, it generates inquisitiveness in the mind of the reader about the fate of the innocent Kailahun residents who were present on 15 July 2000 and what would have been their view about the Indian Army's action post the incident. Despite these issues, Operation Khukri is a seminal work that throws light on the Indian Army's lesser-known successes in UN peacekeeping.

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MP-IDSA invites articles, commentaries and book reviews for publication in *Africa Trends*, a biannual magazine on Africa. Submissions can focus on security, political and economic issues relating to African countries. Articles may focus on analysing bilateral, regional and multilateral developments of strategic significance to India's engagement with African countries.

Articles could be of approximately 2000 words. Commentaries can range between 1,000-1,500 words (excluding footnotes) and book reviews between 600-1,000 words. Guidelines for contributors may be found at: <http://www.idsa.in/africatrends>. Submissions may be emailed to the Editor at idsa.africatrends@gmail.com.

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