

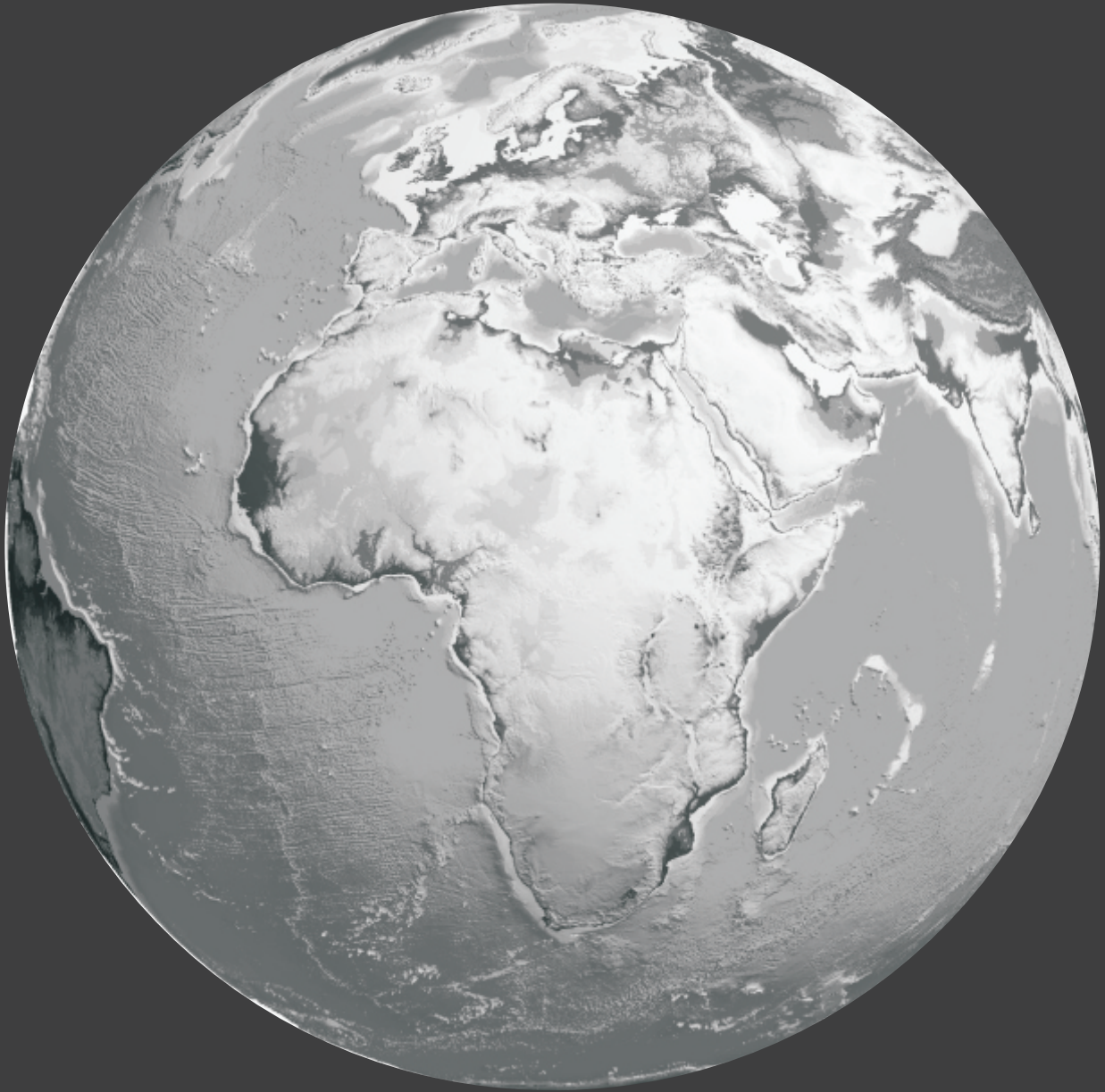
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Editor's Note

The year 2019 commenced on a high note for India- South Africa relations. President Ramaphosa of South Africa was the special guest at the Republic Day function held on January 26, 2019. Among the other important developments in Africa have been those relating to peacekeeping and digital infrastructure. The first issue of 2019 brings together perspectives on these issues.

In the cover story, Dr. Ali Ahmed analyses three crises that occurred in South Sudan despite the presence of a UN peacekeeping mission and makes a case for greater political mandates for the missions to diffuse such crises. In the first commentary Ms. Ruchita Beri argues that the defence and security cooperation is likely to re-emerge as an important component of the India-South Africa relationship. In the second commentary, Ms. Aarushi Vikram lays out the challenges confronting the AMISOM, Africa's own peacekeeping force in Somalia as it approaches its drawdown in 2020. In the view point, Ms. Kritika Roy suggests that the increasing digitisation of Africa that is occurring as part of the Belt and Road Initiative raises with several concerning portends for the future of Africa. Finally, reviewing an edited book entitled *Recentering Africa in International Relations: Beyond Lack, Peripherality, and Failure*, Ms. Maitreyee Shilpa Kishor explains how the book deconstructs and then reconstructs the discourse on Africa in International Relations.

We look forward to your feedback!

Covery Story

A LESSON FROM CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH SUDAN

The work for the Department of Peace Operations is thus amply clear. It must privilege the substantive side in its thinking as it approaches mandate making. This would ease the work of peacekeepers and contain the thrust in recent years towards a militarisation of peacekeeping under the cover of robust peacekeeping.

Ali Ahmed*

Introduction

South Sudan appears to be on finally be on the mend, following the revitalisation of the peace agreement that addressed its first bout of civil war that began in December 2013. This positive development is an appropriate juncture to revisit the crises in the country from a lessons-learnt point of view. Robust mandates by the Security Council authorise missions to “use all necessary means” to deter forceful attempts to disrupt the political process, protect civilians under imminent threat of physical attack, and/or assist the national authorities in maintaining law and order.”¹ This use of force would willy-nilly be the order of the day in case the political capacities of the mission are not up to the mark in terms of prevention and tackling of political impetus to instability. This lack would leave the mission with little else to cope with than robust response by its military component. This implies that robust

...the drift in UN peacekeeping towards 'robust' peacekeeping can be contained and reversed by upgrading the political capacities of UN missions...

mandates need to be implemented by providing strong political divisions in the substantive side of the missions at headquarters level. The article below relies on personal experience of the author to make the case that the lack of political capacities in the UNMISS led in some measure to its inability to cope with the succession of crises that beset South Sudan, with an eminently avoidable premium then being placed on robust peacekeeping by its force component.

* Dr. Ali Ahmed is visiting professor at the Nelson Mandela Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. The author draws on his service with the UNMISS and UNISFA as political affairs officer for first hand observations in the article. He would like thank IDSA's ALACUN Centre for its input at a talk on the subject at IDSA on April 10, 2019.

Three crises are covered here to argue that the drift in UN peacekeeping towards 'robust' peacekeeping² can be contained and reversed by upgrading the political capacities of UN missions and mandating peacemaking assistance for parties to conflicts impacting the mandate in the host nation. The first was the localised crisis of rebellion by the David Yau Yau led Murle in Jonglei province in 2012-13.³ The second was the national crisis of mid-December 2013 which eventuated in a recently stabilised civil war between the majority Dinka and the largest minority the Nuer.⁴ The third was a spike in the civil war that occurred in July 2016 triggered by the return of the former vice president Riek Machar to Juba leading up to a renewed outbreak of ethnic fighting.⁵ The recommendation, stemming from the experience of crises as part of the UNMISS, is for enhanced political mediation capacities in the substantive side of missions. This would enable missions to discern, prevent, cope with and end conflicts that potentially impact, retard and set back mandate delivery by missions, thereby avoiding an undue premium being placed on the use of force by the force components under the questionable tenets of the doctrine of robust peacekeeping.

The Murle crisis

This was a mini-crisis that nevertheless tested the crisis management structures of the UNMISS, in particular, posing a challenge for its protection of civilians (POC) capacities. The David Yau Yau rebellion had as a backdrop the repair of relations between Sudan and South Sudan following the signing of the nine agreements in September 2012 following their border war earlier in the year. The security aspect of the agreement was on discontinuation of the support for proxies by both sides. The Murle tribe had aligned with the Sudanese in the civil war prior to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005. Juba decided the time was ripe to demilitarise the Murle as also assert its new-found sovereignty over Murle inhabited areas in Jonglei.

The Murle tribe had aligned with the Sudanese in the civil war...

It proceeded to do so in early 2013, with a view to wrapping up operations before the onset of rainy season by mid-year. The resulting fighting led to death of five Indian peacekeepers in a Murle ambush near Gumurukh in April. President Salva Kiir allowed for a window of opportunity for the David Yau faction of 'Cobra' Murle warriors to return to the mainstream by announcing amnesty in end-April. The Murle, for its part, rebelled, taking over the politically important Boma town, dealing a blow to the government in May. The Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) retook Boma, dispersing the Murle, who then posed a threat further north in the area of Pibor. This forced the march of the White Army, comprising of armed Nuer youth, who attacked the Murle - for a second time following their earlier attack the previous year at Likongule in 2012.⁶

Not only had the UNMISS to prove responsive to the fighting, but also provide protection to the Murle population. The population had disappeared into the proverbial African 'bush', making it difficult to do Tier II POC, i.e. the military protection leg of POC. The mission's Tier I POC response - the political leg of the three tiered

Not only had the UNMISS to prove responsive to the fighting, but also provide protection to the Murle population.

POC doctrine (the third being humanitarian access)⁷ - was in establishing a link between the government and the Murle forces in the bush. This was undertaken by the Force Headquarters, laying the foundation for talks between the government and the Murle under aegis of Bishop Paride Taban, the head of the famous Kuron peace village in neighbouring Torit. Eventually, the talks resulted in the Murle reconciliation with the government in early 2014,⁸ after the outbreak of the national Dinka-Nuer crisis of December 2013, with the agreement being signed in mid- 2014.

The December 2013 crisis

The second crisis was a national level crisis in which South Sudan spiraled downwards into a civil war. The early warnings of this were apparent, when Riek Machar⁹, the vice president, was stripped of his additional charge and later removed from the position by mid-2013. He

In the forenoon, UN camps in Juba were inundated with internally displaced Nuer from surrounding localities...

wished to contest for elections, which was not taken well by the president. The power play between the two culminated in the conduct of the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) convention in mid- December without Machar and supportive leaders attending the second day of the convention on 15 December.¹⁰ That evening fighting broke out in the barracks of the SPLA in Juba, which spread to civilian areas of the town by next morning. In the forenoon, UN camps in Juba were inundated with internally displaced Nuer from

surrounding localities, victims of a civil war outbreak that was to consume the rest of north and east South Sudan, areas of inhabitation of Nuer over the remainder of the year. The SPLA split along ethnic lines and the major cities - Bor, Bentiu and Malakal - changed hands several times, resulting in rounds of ethnic killings.

The UNMISS military was overwhelmed with its POC duties in camps in and adjacent to UNMISS bases, even as the rest of the mission went into crisis management mode, sending away to safety all but the minimum essential staff. At the outset of the crisis, the Indian peacekeepers lost two members protecting the Dinka who had taken refuge in their camp at Akobo from a Nuer mob. In the course of the event, the Nuer killed some of the 36 Dinkas who had taken shelter at the camp.¹¹ The Nuer White Army bestirred yet again and at the turn of the year posed a threat to the national capital, Juba.

The UNMISS mandate was redefined, removing from its purview the multi-dimensional aspects...

The political side of crisis management was taken over by the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which sent in foreign ministers in the first round of peacemaking prior to Christmas, followed by a higher presidential level delegation after Christmas. It appointed three interlocutors, who proceeded with shuttle diplomacy between belligerents over

January 2014, cobbling together a cessation of hostilities agreement signed off on 23 January. Thereafter, parleys covered a monitoring and verification mission. A final agreement - Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) - was signed in Addis

Ababa in August 2015,¹² even as ceasefire monitoring was undertaken by IGAD with assistance from UNMISS under a Joint Monitoring Evaluation Committee (JMEC).¹³ The UNMISS mandate was redefined, removing from its purview the multi-dimensional aspects and multi-sectoral support to the government, and limiting it to the core functions of POC, protection of human rights and humanitarian assistance.¹⁴

The July 2016 crisis

The ARCSS implementation led up eventually to the return of Riek Machar, the leader of the SPLM-in-Opposition to Juba in July 2016. During his meeting with the president on his return, there was an outbreak of fighting between the security details of the two principals. The resulting escalation led to Machar fleeing Juba once again and a renewed bout of ethnic bloodletting. This was the second national level crisis, which though brief, resulted in several hundreds of thousands leaving South Sudan over the following months as refugees. This round of the crisis witnessed the infamous 'Terrain' hotel incident in which UNMISS was allegedly less than responsive to calls for assistance from the activists of the humanitarian workers against a violent attack including and sexual assault by an SPLA outfit on them. A fallout of the incident was the removal of the UNMISS force commander, a Kenyan, leading to the withdrawal of the Kenyan battalion by its national authorities in protest. The very fact that an entirely predictable crisis recurred on UNMISS watch a second time suggests a deficit in UNMISS political capacities. Early warning was very much there in the manner the ARCSS was signed, with the signing being spread over several days as Kiir procrastinated and the manner the SPLA delayed the arrival of Machar's security detail to Juba prior to his move.

...UNMISS was allegedly less than responsive to calls for assistance from the activists of the humanitarian workers...

The political side of the crisis management was once again with the IGAD and resulted over time with a revitalised agreement, the Revitalised ARCSS (RARCSS) in June 2018. This was made possible by better relations between major IGAD members, Sudan and Uganda, who were seen to be on opposite sides of the South Sudanese civil war. In the first round of the national crisis, Ugandan troops had intervened on the side of Kiir, at the invite of the national government. Sudan for its part had been restrained, as its erstwhile proxy forces had returned to South Sudan the previous year in wake of the September 2012 raft of agreements.

The revitalisation of the ARCSS was affected under threat of targeted UN sanctions. The UNMISS ground level input for the talks was through the Special Envoy of the Secretary General based at Addis Ababa. The improved relations all round, including better internal stability in the other major IGAD members and Ethiopia being under a new and reconciliatory administration, provided the backdrop to the return of Riek Machar to Juba for a second time; but this time without a problem. The RARCSS is, at the time of writing, under implementation, though behind schedule, with elections coming up three years on.

The revitalisation of the ARCSS was affected under threat of targeted UN sanctions.

Observations

The brief overview of the crises above reveals that the UNMISS was not an active participant in the political track of conflict management, left to cope with the outcome and consequences of the crisis. In view of the norm of impartiality, it did not mediate the talks in the localised Murle crisis. In the higher order crisis, the UN took a backseat, deferring to the regional organisation, IGAD, the control of the talks. This was perhaps to enable the regional states to sort out their differences and power equations that had provided the backdrop to the onset and continuation of the civil war. The African Union backed this arrangement, confining itself largely to addressing the human rights consequences. The five years that went into the peace process and the setback it received midway in the July 2016 crisis indicate the complexities confronting peace processes.

However, it is for consideration whether the availability of enhanced political capabilities in UNMISS could have prevented the turmoil in first place. The first special representative

The UNMISS therefore had the political heft, but its political affairs division,... was undersized.

of the secretary general (SRSG), Hilda Johnson, was an expert on the region, with strong ties with all political actors dating to her involvement with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) formulation and its implementation in her official capacity with the Norwegian government that had an intimate role in the peace process.¹⁵ The political affairs division head was from the region and a distinguished diplomat of an IGAD member state, Ethiopia. The UNMISS therefore had the political heft, but its political affairs division, that could have provided

the staff support for facilitation of the political process was undersized. The UNMISS civil affairs division had a country-wide presence but was engaged in reconciliation at the grass roots level. The UNMISS interpreted its mandate as supportive of the government and therefore precluding of a peacemaking role, unless asked for by the government. As a result UNMISS was on the sidelines of the resolution efforts in the Murle crisis, at best acting as a facilitator with a logistics backup. It was not quite up to taking on peacemaking in the national crises.

The upshot of the deficit in UNMISS' political capacities was the continuation internal instability in the country. The impact was on the military component's conduct of peacekeeping in that a more robust stance was required of it. UNMISS was a Chapter VII mission and therefore it was unexceptionable for use of force considerations to figure in the discussion on options for the UNMISS to address insecurity.

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However, in case UNMISS was to undertake peacekeeping robustly, deploying the force at its command, this would have vitiated its operating environment. It was already under considerable strain with the government restricting its access and coverage of areas at will. If the UNMISS military component had adopted a robust peacekeeping mode, it could have ended up at cross purposes with the non-state actors

challenging the government, i.e. the Murle in the 2013 crisis and the Nuer in the larger crises. Even so, there were calls for more robust peacekeeping. An Indian deputy force commander was able to bring moderation into the responses. But the attitude and preference of the military staff officers from western countries, who had done tenures in Afghanistan and Iraq, was for more robustness.

Conclusion

The lack of political capacity in the mission to address challenges as they emerged resulted in a vitiated security environment calling for robustness in the use of force. The corollary is that had the political capacities been up to the mark in the UNMISS ab-initio, there would have been a greater preventive and peacemaking effort on the part of the UNMISS. Hilde Johnson in her book on the crisis prelude and aftermath¹⁶ recalls the inquiry by Riek Machar prior to leaving Juba at the crisis outbreak if he could seek shelter in a UNMISS compound. If the UNMISS had had some political role, it could have considered the request favourably, taking it up with the government. As a counter-factual it can be hazarded that it could, through such action, have nipped the crisis in the bud. This could have been subsumed under its Tier I POC responsibility. However, during these instances, UNMISS was handicapped; thereby making insecurity more likely and making robust peacekeeping as the default response option for the UNMISS. The gravamen of the argument here is that to the lack of UNMISS political capacities can be attributed – inter-alia - the deterioration in the security environment in South Sudan.

Therefore, it is imperative that the political capacities in UN missions be commensurate with the likely political tasks the mission is to perform, alongside allowing for a capacity to undertake Tier I POC at a minimum and peacemaking in case of higher order political disruption involving the national elite. It is worth recalling that the Independent High-level Panel on Peace Operations in its land report, colloquially called the HIPPO report, has said as much:

...it is imperative that the political capacities in UN missions be commensurate with the likely political tasks the mission is to perform...

Lasting peace is not achieved nor sustained by military and technical engagements, but through political solutions. The primacy of politics should be the hallmark of the approach of the United Nations to the resolution of conflict, during mediation, the monitoring of ceasefires, assistance to the implementation of peace accords, the management of violent conflicts and longer-term efforts at sustaining peace.....Whenever the United Nations has a peace operation on the ground, it should lead or play a leading role in political efforts prior to and during peace processes and after agreements are reached. Absent a major role in supporting a peace process, the success of a United Nations mission may be undermined.¹⁷

The work for the Department of Peace Operations is thus amply clear. It must privilege the substantive side in its thinking as it approaches mandate making. This would ease the work of peacekeepers and contain the thrust in recent years towards a militarisation of peacekeeping under the cover of robust peacekeeping. That this is in hand is evident from UN missions such as in Somalia having a mediation role and capacity.¹⁸ The implication for

India as a leading troop contributing nation, that is skeptical about the direction peacekeeping is taking while moving away from traditional peacekeeping and the increased propensity for use of force in peacekeeping, is to urge the UN to strengthen the mandate of the missions to undertake some political roles. This would help India repay the sacrifice of seven Indian peacekeepers in South Sudan.

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Commentary

SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO INDIA ENHANCES RELATIONS

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa's visit to India provided an opportunity to honour the contribution of Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi and reinvigorate India's relations with South Africa, a strategic partner and a leading economic power in Africa.

Ruchita Beri *

The South African President Cyril Ramaphosa was the chief guest for India's 70th Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi. His visit was in the backdrop of India and South Africa commemorating 25 years of diplomatic relations, the birth centenary of former South African President and Nobel Laureate Nelson Mandela and the 150 birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, whose learning ground was South Africa. India's relations with South Africa are longstanding and the two countries have been strategic partners since 1997. During the current visit India and South Africa decided to deepen the partnership further by signing a three year strategic programme of cooperation. President Ramaphosa's visit will enhance India's relations with South Africa in several areas including trade, blue economy, defence and security.

Trade

India and South Africa have strong economic ties. Commercial relations between the two countries have expanded since the resumption of diplomatic relations in 1993. South Africa is considered as a favourable destination for foreign investments in Africa. Therefore it is not surprising that currently 150 Indian companies are doing business in South Africa, injecting 50 billion Rand (3.5 billion USD) into the local economy.¹ They include Cipla, Ranbaxy, Dr Reddy's, Tata Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra, SBI, ICICI, HCL, Infosys, Vedanta Jindal and others. These companies are involved in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, automotive, information technology, banking and mining. Equally important is the fact that Indian industry has created jobs in the country. It is estimated that

...currently 150 Indian companies are doing business in South Africa...

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Indian businesses employ 18,000 South Africans.² Bilateral trade has grown from 2.5 billion USD in 2003-2004 to 9.6 billion USD in 2018-19.³ At present, trade is mainly in raw materials, there is a strong potential for expanding the items of trade. During the India - South Africa business summit in 2018, this issue was contemplated by the participants from India and South Africa. The focus is to double the trade to 20 billion USD by 2021.⁴

Blue Economy and Maritime Cooperation

India and South Africa have a shared oceanic history. They share the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean often referred to as the bridge between the two countries. Therefore maritime cooperation is quite natural. Pretoria has given priority to the development of the ocean or blue economy. In fact blue economy is central part of Pretoria's maritime policy. In 2014, South Africa launched Operation Phakisa to harness the ocean economy.⁵ In India too, there is a growing recognition of the importance of the blue economy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has observed that ocean economy is central to India's policies. To quote him, "(B) lue chakra or wheel in India's national flag represents the potential of blue revolution or the ocean economy."⁶ Another important national initiative called "Sagarmala", is a programme for port modernisation and infrastructure development along India's coast. Equally notable is India's vision for the Indian Ocean region, SAGAR i.e. Security and Growth for All. An innovative policy, that calls for maritime cooperation with Indian Ocean littorals for stability, security and growth of the region.⁷ India has also talked of assigning greater priority to building maritime connectivity and cooperation in the neighbourhood.⁸ Hence there is a growing convergence between India and South Africa on maritime issues and it is hoped that President Ramaphosa's visit will lead to enhancement of cooperation this sphere.

...there is a growing convergence between India and South Africa on maritime issues...

Defence and Security

India and South Africa have a long standing agreement for defence cooperation. This is reflected in the various military interactions, exchange of visits of service chiefs and the purchase of ammunition for 155 mm Howitzers by India during Kargil war. India and South Africa have been part of the IBSAMAR, maritime naval exercise for several years. The 6th edition of this event was held in October 2018. Similarly, representatives from South African army along with those of 16 other African countries participated in the first Africa-India Field Training Exercise-2019 (AFINDEX-19) in March 2019 Pune, India.⁹ This exercise aims at building synergies in the humanitarian mine action and joint peacekeeping operations under UN charter amongst the participating countries. India and South Africa have been together in several UN peace keeping missions in past.

India and South Africa have been together in several UN peace keeping missions...

During Prime Minister Modi's visit to South Africa in 2016, interest was evinced in partnering in the field of defence and security. Prime Minister Modi had expressed the possibility of Indian and South African companies jointly developing defence equipment and platforms.¹⁰

During President Ramaphosa's visit, the need to strengthen defence ties was reiterated. The presence of Monhla Hlahla, chairperson of Denel, the South African arms manufacturer, in

India recognises the fact that South Africa is a prominent arms producer.

President Ramaphosa's delegation indicates their interest in exploring further cooperation with India.¹¹ It is to be noted that in 2005 Denel was blacklisted by India on corruption charges. However these charges could not be validated by the CBI inquiry in India. Subsequently in 2018, the South African company was taken off the Indian defence ministry's black list.¹² This development indicates that India recognises the fact

that South Africa is a prominent arms producer. Such cooperation would be fruitful not only for meeting mutual defence needs but also for responding to the regional and global demand for defence equipment

Multilateral Partners

India and South Africa have a parallel partnership at the global level. They share the views on global governance reforms, combating global terrorism and climate change. They are also partners at various fora such as IBSA, BRICS, IORA, IONS and BASIC. The formation of IORA has its roots in President Nelson Mandela's remarks during a visit to India in 1995, that "(T) he natural urge of the fact of history and geography should broaden itself to include the concept of an Indian Ocean Rim for socio-economic cooperation and other peaceful endeavours."¹³ Currently South Africa is the chair of IORA. India and South Africa should join hands for expansion and further reinvigoration of the IORA activities from maritime safety and security to blue economy, renewable energy, fisheries development and greater networking amongst institution and academics of the region. Similarly India and South Africa have worked together for reforming global financial architecture at the BRICS, alleviating poverty and hunger in the developing countries through the IBSA fund and lobbying for greater climate finance commitments by the developed countries for developing countries as part of BASIC.

Thus, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa's visit to India provided an opportunity to honour the contribution of Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi and reinvigorate India's relations with South Africa, a strategic partner and a leading economic power in Africa.

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Commentary

AMISOM AMIDST THE DANGERS OF AL-SHABAAB

It will be difficult to build a set of genuine national security forces when there is no widespread agreement on what constitutes the Somali 'nation' and how it should be governed. The future of Somalia thus hangs in balance.

Aarushi Vikram *

Somalia is undergoing a period of instability as Al-Shabaab – a terrorist organisation having declared allegiance to Al-Qaeda – has continued to wreak havoc across the state and nearby states. The primary motivation behind these efforts is to overthrow Somalia's Western-backed government and to implement its extremist, hard-line version of the Sharia law. While efforts have been made by organisations such as the African Union's Peace and Security Council, the African Union and the United Nations, Al-Shabaab attacks have continued not only in Somalia but all across East Africa. The incidences of these terror attacks has grown exponentially. For instance, in March 2019, Mogadishu witnessed seven Al-Shabaab attacks in a week with the insurgent group claiming the lives of close to thirty people.¹

One of the most prominent initiatives taken by the African states is African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). AMISOM was created under the aegis of African Union's Peace and Security Council in 2007, as a regional peacekeeping mission operated by the AU, with the approval of the UN.

AMISOM and its limitations

...AMISOM has been successful in limiting these attacks and pushing Al Shabaab out of Mogadishu...

It is difficult to stabilise areas void of a functional central government or absent peace processes. In such situations, the problem of combating transnational armed groups which use asymmetric and terror tactics while retaining deep connections with the local population becomes increasingly complex. Yet, African states have come together to combat the impending problem of Al-Shabaab and protect the Somali

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state against the terrorist group. Countries such as Burundi, Djibouti, and Ethiopia have provided troops; while countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Zambia have contributed police personnel. Uganda and Kenya have provided both. Over the years of its presence in Somalia, AMISOM has had many victories. One of the major victories came a decade after its deployment in Somalia in 2017 when Somalia held parliamentary and presidential elections in a relatively stable atmosphere. AMISOM has also been responsible for preventing several attempted attacks by Al-Shabaab. While AMISOM has been successful in limiting these attacks and pushing Al Shabaab out of Mogadishu, its efficiency has been in question since its inception.

Firstly, while the Al-Shabaab is extremely resilient and adaptive and AMISOM faces serious challenges in the area of logistics and supplies. AMISOM operates in an environment where everything ranging from troop deployment to equipment is controlled by the troop-contributing country and not the mission. This minimises the control that force commanders have to direct their own forces as the troop-contributing countries exercise more control from within their own territory than the force commanders can within Somalia. This often delays or hampers operations. AMISOM lacks the requisite force enablers (transportation or communications) and force multipliers (combat aircrafts, infantry fighting vehicles or heavy artillery) to deliver on its mandate effectively which hampers its ability to hold liberated areas. Finally, Al-Shabaab has knowledge of the local culture and language along with an intelligence arm it uses to collect information from the population under its control. This ensures that Al-Shabaab has better access to intelligence, which is one of the biggest hindrances faced by AMISOM.²

There has also been a gap between the mission's capabilities and its mandated tasks. It is limited by certain political, operational and structural challenges. Owing to the differences among countries contributing troops to it, AMISOM has seldom functioned as a unified mission. It has struggled to carry out the non-military aspects of stabilisation. It has also failed at enabling Somalia's political elites to reconcile and implement a workable national security architecture focused on defeating Al-Shabaab. As a result, AMISOM has its operations curtailed while waiting for the establishment of effective local security forces by the Somali politicians which would allow it to draw down.

...AMISOM has seldom functioned as a unified mission.

Kenya's Participation

There have been criticisms regarding Kenya's role in AMISOM. This is due to its own troubled relations with Somalia. Kenya, as Somalia's neighbouring state, has been facing threats and several attacks from Al-Shabaab. While this justifies its contributions in AMISOM, there are certain other factors which need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, Kenya and Somalia have been going through interstate conflicts at various levels. Due to this, in the past, Kenya has declared Somalia an enemy state, denied refugee status to those fleeing from Somalia to Kenya and recently, during a maritime dispute, also sent back the Somali ambassador to Kenya.

There are perhaps deeper incentives for Kenya's participation in AMISOM.

There are perhaps deeper incentives for Kenya's participation in AMISOM. There is a potential mismatch between the public justifications and the possible drivers of deployment.³ These drivers could be – political advantages relating to international prestige along with external partnerships; economic support for the domestic security sector; gaining access to external sources of finances, a wager in its own conflict with Somalia.⁴ Kenya has been perceived as a strategic ally of the US in its counter-terrorism efforts in the continent since the 1998 bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi. This has led to Kenya becoming one of the largest recipients of Western foreign aid and security assistance on the continent.

...an extremely relevant driver for Kenyan contribution to AMISOM and Somalia could be to improve the Kenyan army's image...

Another reason for Kenya's contributions could be its underlying desire to make the vast semi-arid north-east safe for tourism and foreign direct investment. Terrorist activities there would not only affect tourism but also deter potential foreign investors. This could be justified as merely a few months after the Kenyan army began the incursions into the Southern part of Somalia, a billion-dollar deal with South Sudan was signed and less than half a year later, Kenya announced the discovery of oil for the first time. Moreover, an extremely relevant driver for Kenyan contribution to AMISOM and Somalia could be to improve the Kenyan army's image which got tainted due to reports of smuggling ties⁵ and procurement scandals⁶, which has been successful so far.

Future for Somalia

Transition plans show that AMISOM will depart from Somalia in 2020.⁷ It is necessary that both, the state of Somalia and AMISOM, take effective measures to ensure that the transition from AMISOM forces to Somali National Security Forces does not lead to a destructive fate for Somalia.⁸ The concern though is the Somali armed forces are not ready yet for this transition. Building an effective Somali National Security Force is complicated as clan and other personal loyalties have in the past trumped apparent loyalties to the federal governments, and the senior officer corps has been riddled with tendencies towards nepotism and corruption. It will be difficult to build a set of genuine national security forces when there is no widespread agreement on what constitutes the Somali 'nation' and how it should be governed. The future of Somalia thus hangs in balance.

...the Somali armed forces are not ready yet for this transition.

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Viewpoint

DECIPHERING BEIJING'S DIGITAL CONNECTION IN AFRICA

As the digital infrastructure backed by China becomes increasingly prevalent in the African continent, it is also important for the latter to have enough oversight to ensure that these tools are not misused. Moreover, it would be more beneficial for Africa to allow other players to thrive in the region.

Kritika Roy*

China's Belt and Road Initiative is the reincarnation of the historical Silk Road that is being built to facilitate trade and commerce between China and the Eurasian and African nations through infrastructure building, including internet infrastructure. The actualisation of this initiative involves connectivity by road, rail and sea. Digital connectivity would be another vital aspect of the digital silk route. The topic of China's expanding digital infrastructure is often understated. The digital aspect of the BRI should be the most weighted issue especially for African states that are still in the preliminary stages of building digital infrastructure as it could generate security concerns in the foreseeable future.

Background

The BRI was officially launched in 2013 and soon became an instrumental part of China's foreign policy. Beijing's connectivity project envisages a web of Chinese funded physical and digital infrastructure. In March 2015, an official blueprint on BRI highlighted China's interest in creating an information silk road which includes the building of fiber optic cable networks, mobile structures, satellite passageways and e-commerce link.¹ Even the 2017 speech of President Xi Jinping in the BRI forum outlined the importance of next generation technologies like quantum computing, cloud computing, nanotechnology, big data, and artificial intelligence to facilitate innovation driven development.² Undeniably, many of these digital investment projects may appear lucrative and attractive on the surface, however, bleaker portends lie underneath.

...an official blueprint on BRI highlighted China's interest in creating an information silk road...

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The most debated concern has been that of the debt trap that would besiege the recipient countries leaving them vulnerable to China's influence.³ Another major concern is the increasing expanse of Chinese internet and digital technology companies in the African continent. China's "no questions asked" investment style along with cheap customised products are facilitating the growth of many of its companies in the continent. Simultaneously, there are rising fears regarding the spread of China's model of internet control and repression.

Concerns regarding China's Digital Investments

A large number of Chinese investments and digital technologies are pouring into the African continent. Zambia is spending USD 1 billion on China-built surveillance, telecommunications and broadcasting equipment.⁴ Neighbouring Zimbabwe signed a contract with a Chinese company named CloudWalk Technology, to implement facial recognition across the country, with cameras expected to be installed at city streets, airports as well as transit facilities by Hikvision (a Chinese firm).⁵ Alibaba signed three agreements with Rwanda to create an online platform to facilitate the Rwandan ecommerce market.⁶ In Mauritius, off Africa's east coast, Huawei (Chinese telecom giant) is installing 4000 cameras.⁷ In South Africa, Huawei will open a new cloud data services center. The company is also advising Kenya on its Information and Communication Technology master plan. Huawei and ZTE are capturing the African digital market in a big way.⁸ In a report prepared by McKinsey, a consultancy firm, it was stated that nearly half of the Chinese companies in Africa have introduced a new product or service in the digital sector.⁹

...nearly half of the Chinese companies in Africa have introduced a new product or service in the digital sector.

China has also been promoting the use of Beidou which is often called the "digital glue" that would weave all Chinese technologies into a single thread.¹⁰ Beidou is an alternative to the US's Global Positioning System (GPS) system and will most likely become an "essential" for smart phone users across the BRI economies.

Many Africans do believe that Chinese investments are actually a welcome change as opposed to the west, which has only exploited them for the selfish gains.¹¹ No doubt, China has a good way of spotting trends, making cost-effective products and understanding the needs of the customer that allows it to easily capture the market. But there is also a growing concern within the continent that is not just about the Chinese investments, but rather the import of the Chinese way of dealing with the internet.¹² There are many bloggers that point out the government's ability to control the internet and monitor all digital devices. Many reports also highlight that the net freedom index and freedom of speech have continued to fall in many parts of Africa.¹³ This raises apprehension for the fragile democracies in the continent as the intersection of politics and technology has already resulted in the securitisation of the internet in countries like Ethiopia; imbibing China's internet governance model may worsen the scenario in many places.¹⁴

...Africans do believe that Chinese investments are actually a welcome change...

...the intersection of politics and technology has already resulted in the securitisation of the internet...

China's benign gift of the headquarters' building to the African Union (AU) caused much consternation regarding "backdoor access" to humongous data of public records, government documents and financial data.¹⁵ In an investigation report brought forth by a French newspaper, China was alleged of inserting a backdoor in African Union's servers that allowed the copying of confidential data on to

servers in Shanghai. Although, China has denied the allegations but the prevalent fears continue to haunt the China built AU headquarters.¹⁶ Potential threats to national security on grounds of espionage and data theft had also motivated the US and its allies, namely Australia and Japan, to rethink its investment plans with Huawei.¹⁷

Limited technical capability of the Africans often favors China's aim of investing in digital infrastructure as China will have to directly operate the African system for some period and train the citizens before giving full control back. In a report, it was also highlighted that all facial data collected in Zimbabwe has to be sent to China so that the company could refine its algorithm. This means that Zimbabwe may not have exclusive control over its data. Thus, this could be a lingering security concern that Africa might have to face in the foreseeable future.

...China will have to directly operate the African system for some period and train the citizens...

The Way Ahead

As the digital infrastructure backed by China becomes increasingly prevalent in the African continent, it is also important for the latter to have enough oversight to ensure that these tools are not misused. Moreover, it would be more beneficial for Africa to allow other players to thrive in the region. For instance, India has successfully launched unique digital initiatives aimed at digital transformations. Additionally, the World Bank and the International Financial Corporation are also formulating strategies in creating the right condition for strengthening digital infrastructure and ensuring that digital economies flourish in the region. Furthermore, they are working towards supporting the start-ups to create jobs and develop new products and services for the African markets.

Africa should learn to leverage the technologies and infrastructure provided by China and aim to build and promote their own indigenous digital ecosystem. This integrated approach of Africa would give them more bargaining power over China and other players. Moreover, indigenously started initiatives would also allow the country to draft its own internet governance rules and regulation rather than blindly following any nation. This would also enable them to take charge of their data and ensure its protection by providing and promoting the local companies. It is pertinent for Africa to start playing by its own rules in the digital era, lest it becomes a case of too little too late.

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Book Review

Marta Iñiguez de Heredia, and Zubairu Wai, eds. *Recentering Africa in International Relations: Beyond Lack, Peripherality, and Failure*, Springer, 2018.

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There is an abundance of literature on Africa that deals with Africa's economic growth, development and the security situation on the continent. Most of this literature deals with post-colonial Africa, and makes a case that Africa is the most underdeveloped region in the world, plagued by conflict, civil wars, corruption, mismanagement of natural resources and abject poverty. Consequently, it advocates either the giving financial and material aid to African countries or demonstrates the effects (or lack thereof) of the recent spate of economic growth experienced by some African states.

Much of this literature is based on Eurocentric theories and assumptions that are adopted without critical examination, and hence essentially pathogenies the African situation. In "Recentering Africa", the authors argue for the need to abandon this blind application of existing narratives to Africa and instead shed light on the need to view Africa in its proper historical context without an unfair comparison to idealised European states. This book undertakes the "double task of deconstruction and reconstruction" of the discourse on Africa in International Relations and argues that Africa has been artificially placed at the periphery of world politics by deliberately making invisible its role in the shaping of the rest of the 'modern' world.

Recentering Africa is a collection of writings from ten eminent theorists and academics whose fields of expertise span from African political thought and post-colonial studies to commercialisation of agriculture, development and social justice. All the contributors are

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active in academic circles, which has heavily influenced their style of writing. Despite attempts to present the key arguments of each chapter in a crisp form in the introduction and/or conclusion, comprehending the nuanced arguments presented by the authors may be a challenge to readers unaccustomed to academic writing. Furthermore, the widely varied topics of the chapters also present a challenge to the reader as it is not always apparent whether and how they relate to each other. Zubairu Wai however, does an excellent job of connecting all the dots and presenting a unified argument in the introductory and concluding chapters of the book.

The book, consisting of twelve chapters, is thematically organised into three clusters – refutations, affirmations and future avenues. As Wai explains, this organisation stems from an examination of the existing scholarship on Africa and is an attempt to challenge the widely held assumptions about the causes of Africa’s perceived problems of underdevelopment and constant conflict. The introductory chapter succinctly points out the pervasiveness of these assumptions in recent and credible academic literature. According to Wai, the notions that Africa has only recently entered the international political and economic system and that the solution to Africa’s problems lies in adopting Western ideologies, values, modes of governance and economic patterns, are misplaced.

The first of these thematic clusters – refutation – begins by rejecting the notion that Africa was at the periphery of global politics until recently. Instead, the contributors present evidence of that fact that this perception exists because the practitioners of the discipline of IR consistently ‘write over’ the contributions of the African continent to world politics. These modalities are written into the discipline of IR, and the authors find that even discourses that are critical of the dominant Euro-centric narrative may retain traces of the very thing they try to criticise. The second cluster – affirmation – asserts Africa’s relevance to the global production of power, not just in post-colonial times, but since the inception of trade between Africa and the rest of the world. It also repositions Africa in IR by elaborating on the importance of the African experience to the rest of the world in an attempt to counter its consistent ‘peripheralisation’. The third cluster – future avenues – imagines and suggests futures for Africa in world politics. Though not all topics dealt with in the book lend themselves to concrete courses of actions in the future, some authors do suggest a way forward while others accept that at the moment, the discipline itself lacks the tools to deal with some of the issues highlighted in the book.

There are several recurring themes that occur in the book. Some chapters deal with the theoretical aspects of themes like universalisation of the European experience (Chapters 2,3,8), temporality in notions of development (Chapter 7), sanitisation of European history when compared to the African present (Chapters 2,3) and the violence perpetrated by colonising actors in the name of sovereignty (Chapter 5). Other chapters demonstrate the “materialisation of discourses” through case studies of conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Chapter 3), depictions of Africa in world media (Chapter 4), the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Chapter 6) and leasing out agricultural land to foreign countries (Chapter 9). Similarly, Chapters 9, 10 and 11 present the possibility of producing “another IR for Africa” by emphasising the importance of including indigenous knowledge

systems, studying efforts at Pan-Africanism aimed at federalising Africa and the shift from a colonial 'idea of Africa', to a decolonial 'African idea'.

The authors, all of whom have an intimate knowledge of Africa, do not necessarily drive towards the same conclusion but rather engage in a debate with each other and with the discipline. In this book, this occasionally leads to contradictory conclusions. Interestingly, though most of the authors argue for a recentering of Africa in IR, Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni in the final chapter argues against this because the continent is "already in the bowels of colonial capitalist modernity and its violent processes of domination and exploitation". He suggests that the attempt to include Africa in a discourse that led to its exploitation and marginalisation be abandoned and the production of alternative decolonial narratives that foreground historical processes which brought Africa to where it is today be prioritised.

This book contributes to the effort to decolonise international relations and bring to the fore the experiences and voices of a region that has always been rendered invisible, peripheral and subaltern by IR. It successfully brings to the reader's notice that the continent is and has always been central to world politics and that the notion of its peripherality is due to the stereotypes and tropes about Africa prevalent in the discipline of IR. It also advances the cause of making countries that historically benefited off Africa responsible for their actions by highlighting the role of historical processes and their complicity in producing Africa's current state. Thus, instead of looking at poverty, underdevelopment, conflict and the like as a condition, the contributors make a case for looking at it relationally, with respect to other global actors. Most importantly however, the book does not hesitate to point out the deficiencies in its own field of critically studying the African experience. The authors acknowledge the biases persistent in this and other previous works dealing with similar themes and accept that there is a need to develop robust alternate frameworks.

By criticising the stereotypes that surround Africa, the book establishes that Africa and its constituents should be looked at as unique entities rather than a homogenous space that typifies failure. Finally, the book succeeds in its attempt to challenge the reader's assumptions and forces the reader to think about the role scholarship plays in shaping society.

Call for Contributions

IDSIA 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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