

Guest Editorial

*Ruchita Beri**

India and the African countries share a close, historical and multifaceted relationship. The India–Africa defence and security partnership has evolved in recent years. It is embedded in shared values, principles of equality and commitment to peace, security, stability and prosperity. The foundation of India–Africa defence relations is based on the two guiding principles namely ‘SAGAR’—‘Security and Growth for All in the Region’ and ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’—‘The World is One Family’. India’s approach towards Africa is guided by the Kampala Principles enunciated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in 2018.

Over the decades, defence ties have intensified as India and Africa face a plethora of common security challenges like piracy, drug trafficking, illegal fishing, terrorism, insurgency, violent extremism and conflicts. India’s defence engagements with the African countries rest on African priorities and include providing training, military equipment; counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism training, technical assistance in the maritime sphere; joint exercises and friendly port visits; and collaborative efforts to build inclusive dialogue platforms.

Some significant developments in the recent past include the first-ever India–Africa Defence Ministers’ Conclave (IADMC) held in conjunction with DefExpo in February 2020, which led to the adoption of the ‘Lucknow Declaration’. Subsequently, the India–Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD) during DefExpos has been institutionalised, to be held once every two years. The second IADD was held in October 2022, following which the ‘Gandhinagar Declaration’ has been adopted.

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Considering these developments and the growing potential for a mutually beneficial defence partnership between India and Africa, this special issue endeavours to explore and examine the existing common security challenges faced by India and Africa, the various dimensions of India–Africa defence cooperation and scope for new areas of cooperation in the defence and security sector.

The issue begins with an analysis of defence related developments in the African continent. While Africa has witnessed several conflicts in the recent decades, the political leadership and regional organisations have evolved “African solutions for African problems”. It analyses the military capabilities and military expenditure trends of the African countries and the nuances of India’s defence cooperation with the African region. It explores the traditional mechanisms of defence cooperation as well as the new initiatives. The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on both domestically as well as on relations with countries across the world. This special issue scrutinizes India’s defence diplomacy towards the region over the years and also in the post COVID-19 phase.

Apart from focusing on India’s pan-Africa policy, the issue also studies the defence cooperation with specific regions such as East Africa with which India has maintained close economic and political ties from the colonial times. India’s defence engagement with some countries in the region like Nigeria and Egypt has also been examined in this issue. Nigeria is a leading economy, the most populous country, and also India’s largest trading partner in the continent. Similarly, Egypt has the largest defence force in the region and is also India’s strategic partner. At the same time, an attempt has been made to analyse security challenges and defence cooperation with island states like Mauritius, Seychelles and Madagascar in the Western Indian Ocean region.

This special issue delves into certain significant themes of India–Africa defence cooperation. Terrorism is a complex problem that continues to threaten the international community. Spread of terrorism is a scourge that made a deep impact on society and politics of North-West Africa. This issue examines the ideology and activities of various terror groups operating in the region and also discusses possibilities of counter-terrorism cooperation between India and countries in the region.

Persistent conflicts in Africa have led to continuous presence of the ‘blue helmets’, the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force on the continent since the conflict in Congo in the 1960s. Several experts agree that the UN peacekeeping operations help in protecting the civilians and reducing the impact of conflict. The United Nations Special Committee has recently

submitted a report after conducting a comprehensive review of the UN peacekeeping activities across the world including Africa. The special issue examines the UN-led peacekeeping efforts in the region and also analyses India's contribution in this sphere.

India and African countries share the waters of the Indian Ocean. It is therefore quite natural that Maritime Security is an important aspect of India–Africa defence cooperation. This issue examines the various drivers of India–Africa maritime cooperation. The maritime strategies pushing India's maritime engagement of the region are also discussed. It analyses the main areas of maritime cooperation with littoral countries in Africa and the island states. India's naval diplomacy and its response to key challenges in the region, such as piracy and natural disasters are covered in great detail.

This special issue of the *Journal of Defence Studies* carries articles written by researchers mainly from India. An attempt has also been made to bring in the African perspective on the burgeoning defence ties between India and African countries. As India expands its relations with this important region, it is hoped this special issue of the *Journal of Defence Studies* will help in greater understanding and encourage fresh research on India's defence cooperation with Africa. The publication of this special issue would not have been possible without the hardwork of all contributors and guidance of Amb. Sujan R. Chinoy, Director General, MP-IDSA.