



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

AFRICAN PULSE

OCTOBER 2025

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Volume I, Issue 4



Delhi Policy Group

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www.delhipolicygroup.org



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Cover Images:

*Representatives from different African Countries for the first African Chiefs of Defence Staff Summit 2025, held in Abuja, Nigeria from August 25-27 2025. Source: [African Chiefs of Defence Summit](#)
India's Defence Minister, Mr Rajnath Singh with his Moroccan counterpart inaugurated the Tata Advanced Systems Limited's (TASL) manufacturing facility in Berrechid, Morocco on September 23, 2025. Source: [X/@rajnathsingh](#)*

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African Pulse: Africa's Security Landscape and Partnership with India

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Africa's Security Landscape and Partnership with India

by

Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj & Arshiya Chaturvedi

Executive Summary

The African continent has long grappled with a complex interplay of internal and external challenges that have significantly impeded its growth – despite its undeniable geopolitical advantages, including abundant natural resources and a strategically central position on the global map. These challenges include persistent internal conflicts rooted in ethnic divisions, political exclusion, and competition over resources; terrorism and transnational crimes; weak governance; and enduring external interference that has evolved from colonialism to modern-day neo-colonialism – all of which have fostered instability, fragility, and underdevelopment. The pressures and vulnerabilities of African societies are further compounded by contemporary challenges such as climate-induced insecurity, migration, and technology-related threats, including cyber risks and the militarisation of digital systems.

However, in the past few years, Africa has actively reoriented its strategic approach with “Pan-African integration” at its base. Aiming to achieve the continent’s long-delayed development trajectory, the African Union in 2015¹ adopted Agenda 2063, a 50-year plan to realise inclusive and sustainable development across economic, social, political, scientific, and cultural domains.² Complementing this vision are initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) – each designed to advance economic integration, connectivity, and good governance.

In pursuit of this objective, August 2025 marked a key step, when the first-of-its-kind, African Chiefs of Defence Staff Summit was convened, to discuss the mitigation of the continent's security threats.³ UN Deputy Secretary-General and Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group, Amina Mohammed, noted that Africa’s development and the realisation of Agenda 2063 depend on a secure and stable

¹ African Union . “Agenda 2063-SDGs,” n.d. <https://au.int/en/ea/statistics/a2063sdgs>.

² African Union (AU) . “Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.” African Union, 2015. <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>.

³ ACDS Summit. “ACDS Summit 2025,” 2025. <https://www.acdss.com.ng>.

environment, making the strengthening of the continent's security fundamental. To achieve this, the August Summit made a clarion call for African countries to collaborate in defence and security matters, to effectively handle modern, cross-border, and interconnected threats.⁴

India, which has long followed a partnership model aligned with the developmental priorities of its partners, is increasingly positioning itself to play a significant role in helping Africa strengthen its continental capacities. Having previously maintained a limited presence in Africa's defence landscape – focused mainly on training, capacity-building, and peacekeeping – India is now broadening its engagement through defence cooperation agreements that emphasise maritime security, military training, and the defence industry. The most recent example of such a broad and deepening defence partnership is the India-Morocco Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on defence cooperation signed on September 22, 2025.⁵

This brief examines Africa's complex security landscape – from the root causes of its turmoil to the strategies for lasting peace – exploring how India can play a supportive and constructive role, paving the way for stronger ties with the African continent and fostering mutually beneficial cooperation.

The African Security Landscape

The African continent has grappled with recurring episodes of violence and lawlessness, accounting for one-third of all inter- and intra-state conflicts worldwide between 1946 and 2013.⁶ The Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights has observed that Africa ranks second in terms of a region affected by armed conflicts, with more than 35 non-international armed conflicts (NIACs), after the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, which totals around 45 armed conflicts, the majority of which are NIACs.⁷ Among the world's 15 least peaceful countries, seven are in Africa, which are Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan. Another ten African countries fall into the low peaceful countries of the world category.⁸ (Global Peace Index 2025)

⁴ Deputy Secretary-General (Press Release). "Security, Development Intertwined – Lasting Peace Demands Both, Says Deputy Secretary-General, in Remarks to African Chiefs of Defence Summit | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." United Nations, August 25, 2025. <https://press.un.org/en/2025/dsgsm1999.doc.htm>.

⁵ Ministry of Defence (MOD). "India and Morocco Sign MoU to Deepen Defence Cooperation." Press Information Bureau of India, 2025. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2169733>.

⁶ Brosché, Johan, and Kristine Höglund. "II. The Diversity of Peace and War in Africa." Security and Conflicts, 2014. <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/SIPRIYB15c04sII.pdf>.

⁷ Geneva Academy. "Today's Armed Conflicts," 2024. <https://geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts>.

⁸ Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Peace Index 2025: Identifying and Measuring the Factors that

These protracted hostilities have triggered widespread socio-economic and political decline – weakening governance, fuelling resource exploitation, displacing populations, and exacerbating youth unemployment, poverty, and inequality. According to the IMO's Africa Migration Report 2024, 16.4 million people in Africa were internally displaced during 2022, reaching an all-time high and accounting for 27 per cent of the global total of 60.9 million. This has further intensified due to climate change, adding environmental pressures upon already vulnerable populations. For instance, out of the total internal displacements, over 9 million (55 per cent) were driven by conflict and violence, whereas the remaining 45 per cent resulted from disasters, including droughts, floods, and storms.⁹

This instability has also contributed to high rates of youth school dropouts and unemployment across parts of Africa. In North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, the continent's worst affected areas, 31.2 per cent and 21.9 per cent youth respectively were classified as NEET (not in employment, education, or training), which is notably higher than the global youth NEET rate of 20 per cent for that year.¹⁰ In terms of poverty, while Africa as a whole has seen some decline in poverty levels, the Sub-Saharan African region continues to experience rising poverty levels and remains home to the largest proportion of the world's poor.¹¹ Inequality in Africa is extreme, and food security is also worsening. In 2022, 868 million people were moderately or severely food-insecure in Africa, with Central Africa, Eastern Africa and Western Africa harbouring more than two-thirds of the population, in moderate or severe food insecurity.¹²

These socio-economic and political challenges further create fertile conditions for extremist and terrorist activities to grow and persist. According to the Global Terrorism Index 2025, eight of the 18 countries which are very highly impacted by terrorism are from Africa, with Burkina Faso ranked as the worst-affected country.¹³ Organised and transnational crime, including piracy, illicit trade, and cybercrime, has

Drive Peace, Sydney, June 2025. <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/GPI-2025-web.pdf>

⁹ International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2024). Africa Migration Report (Second Edition). Connecting The Threads: Linking Policy, Practice and the Welfare of the African Migrant. IOM, Addis Ababa. Available at: <https://publications.iom.int/books/africa-migration-report-second-edition>

¹⁰ International Labour Organization (ILO). "Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024 Decent Work, Brighter Futures 20th Anniversary Edition." ILO, 2024. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/GET_2024_EN_web4.pdf.

¹¹ The Hindu Data Team. "While Poverty Is Declining Globally Number of Poor People Rise in Sub-Saharan Africa Data." The Hindu, March 14, 2024. https://www.thehindu.com/data/while-poverty-is-declining-globally-number-of-poor-people-rise-in-sub-saharan-africa-data/article67946590.ece#google_vignette.

¹² FAO, AUC, ECA and WFP. 2023. Africa – Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023: Statistics and trends. Accra, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc8743en>

¹³ Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Terrorism Index 2025: Measuring The Impact of Terrorism, Sydney, March 2025. <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Global-Terrorism-Index-2025.pdf>

also seen a significant increase as these thrive on weak governance, insecurity, and socio-economic vulnerabilities.¹⁴ Moreover, while African nations seek to harness critical technologies such as AI, 5G, and 6G to drive sustainable development, concerns persist over associated risks – including data privacy, cyber threats, technological dependence, and widening social inequalities – that demand careful and coordinated management.

Understanding the Root Cause

These prolonged armed hostilities and associated security challenges are deeply rooted in Africa's history, tracing back to the colonial era, the post-World War II decolonisation struggles, cold war dynamics, and the post-cold war era. Colonial practices - such as drawing artificial borders with no regard for ethnic, cultural, or linguistic identities, favouring certain groups through 'divide and rule' policies, and dismantling traditional governance systems- created deep structural inequalities and lasting resentments. Together, these laid the foundation for the persistent instability seen in many parts of Africa after nations secured their independence. These trends were further exacerbated during the subsequent period in the aftermath of WWII, which was marked by violent independence struggles or revolutions in Africa, characterised by fragile institutions, untested leaders, and ethnic or regional rivalries. With the onset of the Cold War, local conflicts in Africa intensified as they became entangled in global rivalries, with the US and the Soviet Union backing opposing factions to expand their influence in countries like Angola, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the post-Cold War period, instability fed on the traumas and legacies of these earlier conflicts, further weakening state-society relations, eroding political institutions, enabling external exploitation, and deepening challenges such as state failure, ethnic tensions, and resource-based conflicts.¹⁵

The exploitation of Africa by external forces, once a hallmark of colonialism, has persisted to this day in subtler forms, with emerging stakeholders pursuing influence and control driven by contemporary interests and needs. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as neo-colonialism, was powerfully articulated by Kwame Nkrumah in his 1965 work 'Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism'.¹⁶ He argued that the existing systems of governance and economy in Africa, which are largely inherited from the colonial era, continue to subordinate African interests to those of foreign powers, including international finance, foreign extractive industries,

¹⁴ University for Peace (2022). Illicit Economies and Organized Crime in Africa (White Paper). University for Peace. <https://upeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Vieira-Illicit-Economies-and-Organized-Crime-in-Africa-White-Paper.pdf>

¹⁵ Kollmeyer, Christopher. "Colonial Legacy and Contemporary Civil Violence: A Global Study from 1960 to 2018." Oxford Academic, March 10, 2025. <https://academic.oup.com/sf/article/104/2/640/8068537>.

¹⁶ London School of Economics and Political Science. "Kwame Nkrumah." London School of Economics and Political Science, n.d. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/africa/Hub-for-African-Thought/Thinkers/Kwame-Nkrumah>.

and the geopolitical priorities of major powers, despite Africa having gained independence long ago. To overcome neo-colonialism, Nkrumah had called for overhauling these structures to ones that match African realities and facilitate their interests.¹⁷

Building African Security Architecture¹⁸

On August 25, 2025 the first African Chief of Defence Staff Summit was held in Abuja, Nigeria. The summit brought together military and strategic leaders from across the continent to discuss and collectively address Africa's common security challenges, which have long hindered its progress and growth. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group, underscored the importance of greater regional coordination and collaboration among African nations to develop indigenous solutions. She called for the adoption of forward-looking strategies and the effective use of emerging technologies - such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity tools, and digital infrastructure - to meet the continent's evolving needs. Crucially, she stressed that these challenges cannot be addressed through superficial fixes or cosmetic interventions. Instead, they require comprehensive responses that address root causes. Central to this approach, she noted, is the imperative of strengthening institutions, an essential foundation for building resilient democracies and enhancing long-term security.

She further emphasised that continental-level defence cooperation would enable African nations to pool financial and strategic resources to counter transnational security threats more effectively, moving beyond fragmented, country-specific responses. Such collaboration, she noted, is also vital for advancing intelligence, surveillance, and technological innovation. For instance, actively conducting joint maritime patrols and collaborating in the development of drone technologies, artificial intelligence, and cyber tools for surveillance and intelligence gathering would enable faster, smarter, and more efficient responses. Highlighting the presence of numerous military and academic centres of excellence across Africa - born of the continent's unique vulnerabilities - Amina called for their more strategic and efficient use in training law enforcement agencies to build essential skills and strengthen institutional and operational capacity. She also underscored the importance of forging strong public-private partnerships in the security domain, and of creating integrated systems where security agencies work closely with engineers, technicians, and innovators

¹⁷ Tegegne, Yalemzewd Dessie. "Neo-Colonialism: A Discussion of USA Activities in the Horn of Africa." *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 11, no. 1 (April 10, 2024). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2335755>.

¹⁸ Supra Note 4.

from research and development centres. Such collaboration, she stressed, is vital to ensure African security forces remain equipped for modern defence challenges.

The Deputy Secretary-General of the UN further asserted that it is time for Africa to take ownership of its security challenges, especially as UN peacekeeping faces mounting difficulties due to waning political support and deadlocks in the Security Council. She highlighted Africa's demonstrated military and strategic capacity, noting that 9 of the top 15 contributors to UN peacekeeping missions are African nations. In line with the emerging political principle of "African solutions to African problems," she advocated for the creation of a dedicated African peacekeeping force, one that is inclusive and diverse, with active participation of women in peace-building and peacekeeping, moving beyond traditionally male-dominated structures.

The key takeaway from this meeting was that African nations must take greater ownership of their own security. The notion of a continent rising to meet its own defence needs is powerful, even though realisation remains deeply complex, with finance, logistics and interoperability being among the key issues in driving this agenda forward.

Tracing India-Africa Defence Cooperation

Before 2014

India and Africa, bound by the shared historical experience of colonial exploitation and subjugation, find a natural foundation for solidarity in their parallel struggles for freedom and dignity. Geography also binds – India shares the Indian Ocean with the East African countries and island nations, making them key strategic neighbours.

Despite this strategic relevance, India-Africa defence relations have predominantly been limited to cooperation in the areas of defence training, capacity building, peacekeeping, and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief efforts – dating back to 1958, when India helped establish the Imperial Military Academy in Harar, Ethiopia.¹⁹ This foundational commitment was significantly expanded in 1964 with the launch of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme. Through ITEC, India has since provided extensive training to African defence personnel in premier institutions such as the Defence Services Staff College and the

¹⁹ Bhattacharya, Samir . "Tracing the Future of India-Africa Defence Cooperation." Vivekananda International Foundation, (VIF) August 6, 2022. <https://www.vifindia.org/article/2022/august/06/tracing-the-future-of-india-africa-defence-cooperation>.

National Defence College, covering diverse areas including defence management, strategic studies, logistics, and marine and aeronautical engineering.²⁰

Complementing these in-India training initiatives, India has also deployed military training teams to several African countries—such as Botswana, Mauritius, Zambia, and Namibia—to build in-country capacity.²¹

Another vital dimension of India's defence outreach is its longstanding contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa. As one of the largest and most consistent contributors to UN peacekeeping, India is widely recognised for its professionalism, humanitarian efforts, and effective conflict resolution. The UN, through its Under-Secretary-Generals for Peacekeeping Operations, has often thanked India for its steadfast support in protecting civilians in fragile conflict zones.²²

India has also led efforts to advance gender inclusion in peacekeeping. In 2007, it deployed its first Formed Police Unit in Liberia, marking a significant step in empowering women in international peace and security roles.²³

To institutionalise and scale its peacekeeping support, India established the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK) in Delhi in 2000, which now trains over 12,000 troops annually. In 2016, India launched the UN Peacekeeping Course for African Partners (UNPCAP-01) at CUNPK, in collaboration with the United States, to further strengthen African capacities in UN operations.

In the domain of maritime security cooperation, India's engagement with Africa has been limited to operational deployments, focused on counter-piracy efforts as opposed to a comprehensive security framework. Since 2008, it has undertaken operations in the Gulf of Aden, involving the regular deployment of Indian Naval Ships for extended patrols and escort missions, safeguarding commercial shipping and ensuring the safe passage of vessels.²⁴ At a bilateral level, India's cooperation with African countries has been restricted to only a handful of Indian Ocean Region (IOR) littoral states, including South Africa, Mozambique, Seychelles and Tanzania. The scope of cooperation again has been modest, encompassing areas such as training, the

²⁰ Beri, Ruchita . "India- Africa Defence Engagement: Towards New Avenues." Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), August 29, 2024. <https://www.vifindia.org/article/2024/august/29/India-Africa-Defence-Engagement-Towards-New-Avenues>

²¹ Ibid

²² Ministry of Defence (MoD). "United Nations Troop Contributing Countries' Chiefs Conclave 2025 Commences in New Delhi." Press Information Bureau of India (PIB), 2025. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2179086>.

²³ Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). "India's Legacy in UN Peacekeeping: Leadership, Commitment, and Sacrifice." Press Information Bureau of India (PIB), 2025. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2109587>.

²⁴ Supra Note 20.

transfer of defence equipment, often as gifts or through India's line of credit system, joint naval patrols, port visits, and other operational engagements, such as hydrographic surveys and maritime security operations. Seychelles is one such African country with which India has been conducting joint military exercises, LAMITIYE ('Friendship'), since 2001.²⁵

Post 2014

However, over the last decade, India has adopted expansive geopolitical strategies such as SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and MAHASAGAR, reflecting its broader strategic vision in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Guided by this vision, India has been progressively deepening its engagement with Africa, including in the defence sector.

In March 2019, India and Africa conducted the inaugural Africa-India Field Training Exercise (AFINDEX-19) in Pune. This continental-level military exercise, which saw the participation of contingents from 17 African nations, was aimed at strengthening India-Africa defence cooperation—facilitating the exchange of best practices, strengthening team cohesion, and conducting tactical operations in Humanitarian Mine Assistance and Peacekeeping Operations.²⁶

The second edition of AFINDEX was held in March 2023, again in Pune, involving 124 participants from 25 African countries, and Indian troops from the Sikh, Maratha, and Mahar regiments. An 'Equipment Display' was organised as part of this exercise event, showcasing 75 indigenous products from 32 industries manufactured under the 'Make in India' initiative. An expansion both in terms of scale and participation from its 2019 debut, yet not a full-scale troop participation from all African nations — with several represented only by observer delegations.²⁷

On April 13, 2025 India launched its first large-scale multilateral naval exercise with African nations in the Indian Ocean Region — the Africa-India Key Maritime Engagement (AIKEYME) 2025. Held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the six-day exercise brought together nine African countries alongside India: Comoros, Djibouti, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, and Tanzania. Conducted in two phases — a harbour phase and a sea phase — the exercise aimed to

²⁵ Ministry of Defence (MoD). "Indian Army Contingent Departs for Seychelles for Joint Military Exercise 'Exercise Lamitiye - 2024.'" Press Information Bureau of India (PIB), 2024.
<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2015283>.

²⁶ Ministry of Defence (MoD). "Opening Ceremony: Africa-India Field Training Exercise-2019." Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2019. <https://www.pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=189450>.

²⁷ Ministry of Defence (MoD). "India- Africa Joint Military Exercise 'Afindex-23' Concluded at Foreign Training Node, Aundh, Pune." Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2023.
<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1911766>.

strengthen maritime cooperation and enhance regional capacity to address shared security challenges.²⁸ Clearly, this was a serious endeavour to step up maritime coordination – a meaningful, albeit not full representation of littoral states.

To maintain momentum at the continental level, India also hosted the first India-Africa Defence Ministers' Conclave, alongside DEFEXPO in Lucknow in February 2020. Attended by 154 African delegates, including Defence Ministers from 14 countries, 19 Defence and Service Chiefs from 38 countries, as well as Members of Parliament, the focus of this conclave was 'India: The Emerging Defence Manufacturing Hub 'with a focus on Digital Transformation of Defence.'²⁹

In October 2022, the India-Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD) was held on the sidelines of the 12th DEFEXPO in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, with representatives from 50 African countries in attendance, including 20 Defence Ministers, 7 Chiefs of Defence Staff/Service Chiefs, and 8 Permanent Secretaries. During this meeting, the parties explored new areas of cooperation in capacity building, training, cyber security, maritime security, and counter-terrorism cooperation. An agreement was also signed on the institutionalisation of this dialogue, to be held biennially alongside successive DefExpos. Further, during this 2022 dialogue, India announced an expansion of the ITEC Professional Military Education (PME) training slots for African countries and launched the India-Africa Security Fellowship Programme to support research by African scholars in defence and security studies.³⁰

This momentum toward a deeper defence partnership in Africa is also evident bilaterally with individual African countries. Countries like Tanzania and Mozambique have had defence relationships with India since the late 20th and early 21st centuries, respectively; however, no significant progress had been made until recently. In 2021, India and Tanzania established a Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) to deepen and diversify their defence cooperation. In October 2023, the two nations elevated their relationship to a Strategic Partnership³¹ and in 2024, at the 3rd India-Tanzania JDCC meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Samia Suluhu Hassan agreed on a five-year roadmap (2025–2029) to guide future

²⁸ Ministry of Defence (MoD). "Africa India Key Maritime Engagement (Aikeyme) 2025 Inauguration." Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2025. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2121521>.

²⁹ Ministry of Defence (MoD). "Year End Review – 2020 Ministry of Defence." Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2020. <https://www.pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1685437>.

³⁰ Ministry of Defence (MoD). "India-Africa Defence Dialogue Held on the Sidelines of DefExpo 2022 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat; Paves Way for Strengthening of India-Africa Defence Relations." Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2022. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1868820>.

³¹ High Commission Of India Dar Es Salaam. "High Commission of India Dar Es Salaam India-Tanzania Bilateral Relations." Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), n.d. <https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Tanzania-02-11-2023.pdf>.

collaboration in military training, the maritime sphere and defence industries.³² From 2022, India and Tanzania, along with Mozambique, have been conducting a trilateral maritime exercise (IMT TRILAT)³³ with its second edition held in March 2024, off the coast of Africa.

In 2016, India and Kenya signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Defence Cooperation and subsequently established their Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) in 2019.³⁴ The Goa Shipyard Limited of India and Kenya Shipyards Limited also signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2023 to strengthen cooperation in ship design and shipbuilding.³⁵ During the third meeting of the committee in 2024, held in New Delhi, the two countries expanded their engagement in areas such as capacity building and defence industry collaboration.³⁶

Meantime, India-South Africa defence relations have seen some momentum with the signing of two new agreements on submarine cooperation during the 9th India-South Africa Joint Defence Committee (JDC) meeting held in Johannesburg in June 2025.³⁷ The Indian Navy and South African Navy have also signed an Implementing Agreement (IA) on submarine-rescue cooperation on 4 September 2024.³⁸

Similarly, since 2021, India has conducted joint patrols off Madagascar's Exclusive Economic Zone, including the first-ever Passage Exercise, aimed at enhancing maritime security and naval interoperability.³⁹

To the west – India and Nigeria's defence cooperation is steadily intensifying. The two countries are actively engaging in Strategic and Counter-Terrorism Dialogues at the level of their National Security Advisers, while the Indian Navy continues to visit

³² Ministry of Defence (MoD). "3rd India-Tanzania Joint Defence Cooperation Committee Meeting Held in Goa to Further Expand Bilateral Ties." Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2024.

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2077414>.

³³ Ministry of Defence (MoD). "Indian Navy Participates in Maiden Trilateral Exercise with Mozambique and Tanzania." Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2022.

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1871827>.

³⁴ High Commission of India, Nairobi. "India-Kenya Bilateral Relations." *Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)*, 2021.

<https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Kenyaaug21.pdf>.

³⁵ Ministry of Defence (MoD). "Raksha Mantri & Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Defence Discuss Capacity Building & Defence Industry Cooperation during Talks in New Delhi." Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2023.

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1953231>.

³⁶ Ministry of Defence (MoD). "India and Kenya Holds 3rd Joint Defence Cooperation Committee Meeting." Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2024. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2051336>.

³⁷ Ministry of Defence (MoD). "Defence Secretary Leads Indian Delegation to South Africa for 9th Joint Defence Committee Meeting in Johannesburg." Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2025.

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2139247>.

³⁸ Ministry of Defence (MoD). "Indian Navy and South African Navy Sign Implementing Agreement to Enhance Submarine Rescue Support Cooperation." Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2024.

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2051795>.

³⁹ Special Correspondent. "India Conducts First-Ever Joint Patrol in Madagascar EEZ." *The Hindu*, March 24, 2021. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-conducts-first-ever-joint-patrol-in-madagascar-eez/article34155666.ece>.

Nigerian ports as part of anti-piracy operations.⁴⁰ Most recently, in 2025, high-level bilateral defence talks saw both sides express a clear interest in expanding collaboration in the defence industry.⁴¹

There has also been a clear focus by India on its defence engagement with North Africa, extending beyond East, Southern and Western Africa. Egypt and Morocco serve as important partners in this regard, and the cooperation is both strategic and multifaceted (maritime, industrial, counter-terrorism, etc.).

With Egypt, India has signed a Defence Cooperation MoU in September 2022. The two countries have also conducted multiple joint military exercises and programmes in recent years. These include the first India-Egypt Joint Tactical Air Exercise in 2021; Tactical Leadership Programmes between the Indian Air Force and the Egyptian Air Force in 2022 and 2024; a bilateral air exercise featuring Indian Rafale aircraft in 2024; and a joint air exercise at an Egyptian airbase in 2023. They also participated together in the multilateral tri-service exercise 'Bright Star' in 2023 and the multilateral naval exercise MILAN in 2024. Most recently, in 2025, the two sides conducted the third edition of Exercise Cyclone involving their Special Forces.⁴²

In 2025, as part of their growing defence-industrial cooperation, an Egyptian delegation participated in Aero India. Later that year, India's Secretary of Defence Production, accompanied by senior representatives of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and Bharat Dynamics Limited, visited Egypt to explore avenues for collaboration.⁴³

Morocco is the most recent African country with which India has deepened its defence ties, when a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on defence cooperation was signed in Rabat on 22 September 2025. The identified areas of cooperation under this agreement include: counter-terrorism, maritime security, cyber defence, peacekeeping, military medicine, and expert exchanges, with a special focus on strengthening defence-industrial collaboration.⁴⁴ While the two countries have not had significant defence engagement in the past, this new partnership stands out in India's Africa outreach, for its remarkable intensity and rapid progress. This is reflected in the fact that during the same meeting, India's Defence Minister announced

⁴⁰ Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). "• INDIA -NIGERIA BILATERAL RELATIONS Political Relations." MEA, 2025. <https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Nigeria-08-04-2025.pdf>.

⁴¹ Ministry of Defence (MoD). "Raksha Rajya Mantri Holds Bilateral Meeting with Nigerian Minister of State, Defence in New Delhi." Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2025. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2155660>.

⁴² Embassy of India, Cairo. "Egypt : India-Egypt Relations." Eoicairo.gov.in, May 23, 2025. <https://www.eoicairo.gov.in/page/political/>.

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ministry of Defence (MoD). "India and Morocco Sign MoU to Deepen Defence Cooperation." Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2025. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2169733>.

the opening of a new Defence Wing at the Embassy of India in Rabat⁴⁵, and a day later, along with the Moroccan Defence Minister, inaugurated India's first overseas defence manufacturing facility, the Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL), in Berrechid. This state-of-the-art defence manufacturing facility will produce India's indigenously developed Wheeled Armoured Platform (WhAP) 8x8, which is jointly developed by India's DRDO and TASL.⁴⁶

This strategic outreach can be of particular significance considering that Morocco ranks among Africa's top arms-importing countries. Further, being situated in North Africa, the region that accounts for the highest volume of arms imports on the continent, and bordering the highly volatile West African region, Morocco offers India not only access to its national defence sector but also a pivotal entry point for its defence outreach in Africa. Morocco's geographical proximity to Europe could also play a critical role in promoting and expanding India's defence exports to European markets and thereby amplify its global defence footprint.

Way Forward for India-Africa Security Partnership

India's defence ties with the African nations are witnessing a significant deepening that extends far beyond the historically limited focus, with 2025 being particularly significant, having seen remarkable developments that set the tone for this momentum. India's developmental model in Africa stands apart for its inclusivity and respect for sovereignty. Yet, as Amina J. Mohammed has rightly noted, this engagement must be anchored in the parallel strengthening of African institutions and security ecosystems – without which development gains may remain fragile.

With respect to strengthening Africa's security apparatus, India, with its rich experience in counter-insurgency (COIN) and counter-terrorism (CT) operations, is uniquely positioned to support the continent in building its security capacity. For instance, India and Africa could potentially engage in intensive training programs, workshops, and joint exercises, where African forces could learn Indian best practices, ranging from intelligence gathering and surveillance to rapid response techniques. India could also play a role in developing Africa's intelligence capabilities, by training analysts, and providing modern technology and equipment, such as surveillance drones, monitoring systems, and communication tools, all critical for effective operations.

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Ministry of Defence (MoD). "Raksha Mantri Inaugurates TASL's Defence Manufacturing Facility in Morocco for Production of Wheeled Armoured Platform." Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2025.
<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2170242>.

As a major naval power in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), India could help African countries develop skills, systems, and infrastructure to manage their maritime zones more effectively by sharing expertise in patrolling and advising on fleet operations. It could also assist in establishing and upgrading coastal radar chains and surveillance networks, as it has done in Mauritius, Madagascar, and Seychelles. Furthermore, India could increase African liaison officers at its Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) at Gurugram, which would facilitate both strategic intelligence and hands-on training for African navies to improve their maritime operations, strengthen surveillance, and enhance regional coordination.⁴⁷

Another area of deeper engagement in supporting Africa's security framework is defence trade. Global military spending in 2024 reached a record high, observing a 9 per cent increase from 2023. Africa's military expenditure for 2024 also recorded a 3 per cent increase from 2023, totalling US\$ 52.1 billion.⁴⁸ The major arms suppliers of Africa for 2020–24, as per SIPRI trends, were Russia with a 21 per cent export to Africa imports, followed by China at 18 per cent and the USA at 16 per cent.⁴⁹ Russia has been Africa's preferred arms supplier for its low-cost defence equipment, but its exports have suffered a significant decline of 64 per cent between 2015–19 and 2020–24 due to international sanctions and domestic need, amidst the Russia-Ukraine war. This has created a vacuum that China has readily filled, offering inexpensive military hardware and thereby expanding its footprint in the African defence market. But despite affordability, Chinese defence equipment has faced some criticism for being sub-standard or prone to malfunction, based on reports of equipment failure.

India, which is known for its low-cost, yet effective defence equipment and has seen a remarkable rise in its defence exports, from ₹686 crore in FY 2013-14 to ₹23,622 crore in FY 2024-25—a 34-fold increase over the last decade—still maintains a minimal presence in the African market.⁵⁰ While India's defence portfolio includes advanced platforms — from missiles to radars and aircraft — its exports to Africa have largely comprised non-strategic systems such as interceptor boats, armoured vehicles, and basic components, primarily to countries like Seychelles, Mauritius, and Mozambique, often delivered as grants or through concessional credit. There stands a strong potential for India to export its more advanced systems to Africa, and the recent Tata facility in Morocco exemplifies that India aims to expand its defence trade in Africa,

⁴⁷ Ministry of Defence (MoD). "Maritime Security: Memorandum of Understanding (Mou) between the Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region (Ifc-Ior) and Regional Coordination Operations Centre (Rcoc)." Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2023. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1901371>.

⁴⁸ Liang, Xiao, Nan Tian, and Et.al. "Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2024." *SIPRI*, April 2025. https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/2504_fs_milex_2024.pdf.

⁴⁹ George, Mathew, Katarina Djokic, and Et.al. "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2024." *SIPRI*, March 2025. https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/fs_2503_at_2024_0.pdf.

⁵⁰ Government of India. "Atmanirbharta in Defence Sector." Press Information Bureau (PIB), August 2025. <https://www.pib.gov.in/FactsheetDetails.aspx?Id=149238>.

while simultaneously fostering local economic development, infrastructure growth, and stronger strategic ties, moving from mere exporter to partner in regional capacity-building.

India could also critically support a strengthening of Africa's institutional capacity to address regional challenges and threats, by sharing its digital public infrastructure and other technology-related tools and platforms. Recognising the transformative potential of DPI, India has actively reached out to countries globally to share its DPI (the India Stack) or help them build similar digital ecosystems tailored to their local needs. Many African countries have either adopted, or are in discussion to implement different platforms and digital tools operating under India Stack. There are studies suggesting that well-designed digital tools and broader digital transformation can facilitate effective governance and resilience in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations (FCAS).⁵¹

India is already sharing its digital platforms with Africa, notably through the e-VidyaBharti and e-AarogyaBharti network projects in education and healthcare.⁵² However, there remains significant scope to scale up this digital partnership – especially in areas such as e-governance, fintech, digital ID, and capacity-building – to enhance transparency, reduce corruption, and strengthen institutional trust across the continent.

That said, while the potential for India-Africa digital collaboration is immense, it is important to acknowledge the fundamental challenges that persist – including limited internet access, underdeveloped infrastructure, and growing concerns around data privacy and cybersecurity. These are not unfamiliar to India. In fact, its own journey through similar constraints makes its experience particularly valuable in shaping context-specific solutions for Africa's digital transformation.

For instance, India ranks second globally – after the United States – as one of the most targeted nations for cyberattacks.⁵³ Yet, it has significantly enhanced its cyber resilience, earning Tier 1 status in the Global Cybersecurity Index 2024, released by the International Telecommunication Union.⁵⁴ This makes cybersecurity an

⁵¹ World Bank . “Accelerating Digital Transformation in Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations,” May 14, 2025. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2025/05/12/accelerating-digital-transformation-in-fragile-and-conflict-affected-situations>.

⁵² MEA Media Center. “Official Launch of E-VidyaBharti and E-ArogyaBharti Project by External Affairs Minister .” Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), 2025. <https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/31928/Official+Launch+of+E+VidyaBharti+and+E+ArogyaBharti+Project+by+External+Affairs+Minister+October+09+2019%20>.

⁵³ Desk, TOI News. “India Ranked Second in Global Cyber Attack Targets: Report.” The Times of India. Times Of India, January 2, 2025. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-ranked-second-in-global-cyber-attack-targets-report/articleshow/116893292.cms>.

⁵⁴ Ministry of Communication. “India Achieves Tier 1 Status in Global Cybersecurity Index 2024.” Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2024. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2057035>.

especially promising area for India–Africa cooperation — one that can underpin safe, inclusive, and sustainable digital growth across the continent.

Conclusion

The African continent is undergoing a strategic reorientation, marked by a growing assertion of agency in shaping its own development and security agenda. Embracing the political ethos of “African Solutions for African Problems,” it seeks to address regional security challenges through homegrown approaches, strengthened continental defence cooperation, and targeted partnerships aimed at building institutional capacity and reinforcing its security architecture.

India, which has actively embraced the principle of self-sufficiency or *Atmanirbharta*, could potentially play a pivotal role in supporting Africa’s capacity to address its development and security challenges. By sharing its experience in building resilient institutions, advancing digital governance, and enhancing capabilities in defence and cybersecurity, India offers lessons that are contextually relevant to many African nations.

However, such cooperation unfolds within a crowded and contested space. Africa today is a complex geopolitical chessboard, where the interests of multiple external actors — each with their own strategic and economic agendas — compete, intersect, and sometimes collide. In this environment, any engagement, however well-intentioned, must navigate overlapping influences and institutional sensitivities.

Still, India’s unique developmental model, rooted in partnership rather than patronage, potentially offers a compelling alternative — one that, if pursued with mutual respect, consistency, and local alignment, could strengthen Africa’s ability to meet its regional priorities while deepening India-Africa strategic ties in service of a more equitable global order.



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