



India & Challenges in African Stability

This editorial is based on [India's G-20 opportunity for an African Renaissance](#) which was published in The Hindu on 25/08/2023. It talks about the issues and challenges faced by the African continent and how India could leverage its position to maintain stability in the continent.

For Prelims: [Economic Community of West African States \(ECOWAS\)](#), [Belt and Road Initiative](#), [Suez Canal](#), [Horn of Africa region](#), [India-Africa Forum Summit \(IAFS\)](#), [International Solar Alliance \(ISA\)](#), [Commonwealth](#), [African Union \(AU\)](#), [BRICS](#), [G-20](#), [JAM trinity \(Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile\)](#), [DBT \(Direct Benefit Transfer\)](#), [UPI \(Unified Payments Interface\)](#), [Aspirational Districts Programme](#), [African Continental Free Trade Area \(AfCFTA\)](#)

For Mains: Challenges in the African Continent and their impact on India, How India can help Africa.

Like an absentee landlord, Africa is flagging its demands nowadays on multilateral fora such as [BRICS \(Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa\)](#), the G-20 and the [United Nations General Assembly](#). For a continent with 54 countries, over a quarter of the ["Global South"](#), it is populated at BRICS and the G-20 by South Africa, an atypical representative of the African continent.

What are the Challenges and Disruptions faced by African Countries?

- **Misgovernance:** Many African countries suffer from poor governance, corruption, nepotism, and lack of accountability. These problems undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of the state institutions and create public discontent and distrust.
- **Unplanned Development:** Many African countries face the challenges of rapid population growth, [urbanization](#), environmental degradation, and resource scarcity. These issues require careful planning and management to ensure sustainable development and social welfare.
- **Dominance of Ruling Tribes:** Many African countries are characterized by ethnic and tribal diversity, which can be a source of richness and pluralism, but also of conflict and violence. Some ruling tribes or elites tend to monopolize power and resources, marginalize or oppress other groups, and fuel resentment and rebellion.
 - **Inter-Tribal Scrimmage:** Many African countries witness frequent clashes between different tribes or communities over land, water, cattle, or other resources. These conflicts are often exacerbated by climate change, drought, famine, or displacement.
 - They result in loss of lives, destruction of property, and humanitarian crises.
- **Terrorism:** Many African countries are affected by the **threat of Islamic extremism and terrorism, which is often linked to global networks such as Al-Qaeda or ISIS**. These groups exploit the grievances and vulnerabilities of the local populations, recruit fighters, carry out attacks, and destabilize the security and stability of the region.
- **Changing Climate:** Many African countries are **highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, floods, droughts, desertification,**

and diseases. These effects pose serious challenges to the livelihoods, food security, health, and resilience of the people and the ecosystems.

- **Runaway Food Inflation:** Many African countries face the problem of **high food prices, which are driven by various factors such as supply shocks, demand pressures, market distortions, speculation, or currency depreciation.** These factors reduce the purchasing power and access to food for millions of people, especially the poor and the vulnerable.
- **Urbanization and Youth Unemployment:** Many African countries experience **rapid urbanization, which is often unplanned and unmanaged.** This leads to the emergence of slums, overcrowding, pollution, crime, and social exclusion.
 - Moreover, many African countries have a large and growing youth population, which faces high rates of unemployment, underemployment, or informality. These conditions create frustration, despair, and potential for social unrest.
- **External Interventions:** Military interventions by France, the United States, and Russia's **Wagner Group** to curb militancy have shown that they often worsen the situation. These interventions have costs: keeping dictatorships in power to protect their economic interests, such as uranium in Niger, gold in the Central African Republic and oil in Libya.
- **Return of Military Generals:** In the past decade, military leaders have regained power in Egypt, **Burkina Faso, Mali,** and **Niger.** Meanwhile, the armed forces in **Libya** and **Sudan** have divided and are competing for control.
- **Regional and Continental Dynamics:** Regional organizations play a crucial role in maintaining stability. However, when member states themselves have military governments, enforcing democratic norms and stability becomes more challenging.
 - For instance, when the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** recently threatened to act militarily against Niger's junta, two member-States, **Mali** and **Burkina Faso** — both run by military governments — opposed the idea.
- **China's Changing Role:** China's significant investments in Africa have played a substantial role in the continent's economic growth. However, Africa's heavy reliance on exporting raw materials to China has made it vulnerable to shifts in China's economic priorities. As China's economy slows and its focus shifts, African countries that heavily depended on commodity exports may face economic challenges.
 - **Debt Concerns:** While China's **Belt and Road Initiative** has brought infrastructure development to many African countries, it has also led some nations to accumulate high levels of debt.
- **Geopolitical Tensions:** The involvement of various global powers in Africa has historical, economic, and geopolitical dimensions. Former colonial powers like France and the UK, as well as the US, have economic interests and historical ties to the continent. Geopolitical tensions between these powers can impact Africa's stability and development.
- **Economic Challenges:** Economic downturns in major global economies like Europe and the United States can limit their capacity to engage with Africa. This can affect development aid, investment, and trade relationships.
 - Europe's focus on curbing illegal migration from African shores has influenced its engagement with African countries. While **addressing migration is important, an overly narrow focus on this issue can overshadow broader development and stability concerns.**

How is India Affected by these Turmoils in Africa?

- **Economic Impact:** India has significant trade and investment ties with Africa, which are affected by the instability and insecurity in the continent.
 - **India-Africa trade reached USD 98 billion in 2022-23** and India is the **fifth-largest investor** in Africa.
 - India also provides concessional lines of credit to fund development projects in Africa, has **extended over USD 12.37 billion in concessional loans.**
 - India has completed **197 projects and has provided 42,000 scholarships** since 2015.
- **Security Impact:** India has a strategic interest in maintaining peace and stability in Africa, especially in the **Horn of Africa region,** which is an essential shipping lane that connects the Indian Ocean to the **Suez Canal.**
 - India also participates in **peacekeeping missions and counter-terrorism efforts** in Africa, as well as provides training and capacity-building to African security forces.

- The turmoil in Africa poses threats to India's security interests and objectives, as they create breeding grounds for terrorism, piracy, organized crime, and human trafficking.



- **Diplomatic Impact:** India has a long-standing partnership with Africa, based on mutual respect, solidarity, and cooperation. India supports the aspirations of African countries for self-reliance, democracy, and development.
 - India engages with them through various platforms such as the [India-Africa Forum Summit \(IAFS\)](#), the [International Solar Alliance \(ISA\)](#), and the [Commonwealth](#).
 - The turmoils in Africa undermine the credibility and effectiveness of the [African Union \(AU\)](#) and other regional organizations
 - They also create divisions and tensions among African countries, and invite more intervention from external actors such as China, Russia, France, the UK, and the US.
- **Humanitarian Impact:** India has a large diaspora in Africa, estimated at about 3 million people, who are mostly engaged in trade, commerce, and professional services.
 - India **also provides humanitarian assistance to African countries affected by conflicts**, disasters, or epidemics, such as food, medicine, equipment, and personnel.

How can India leverage its Position to Help Africa?

- **Political Support:** India can use its diplomatic influence and goodwill to support the African countries in their quest for peace, democracy, and development.
 - India can also **advocate for the African voice and interests in the global forums, such as the [United Nations](#), the [G-20](#), and the [World Trade Organization](#).**
 - India can also foster regional cooperation and integration among the African countries, by **supporting the African Union and its initiatives, such as the [African Continental Free Trade Area \(AfCFTA\)](#) and the [African Peace and Security Architecture \(APSA\)](#).**
- **Economic Partnership:** India can enhance its trade and investment ties with Africa, by providing more market access, preferential tariffs, and quality products and services.
 - India can also **increase its development assistance to Africa**, by offering more concessional loans, grants, and technical cooperation.
 - India can also **share its best practices and experiences with Africa** in fields such as agriculture, rural development, microfinance, small and medium enterprises, and digital economy.

- India can offer force multipliers such as targeted investments and transfer of relevant and appropriate Indian innovations, such as the [JAM trinity \(Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile\)](#), [DBT \(Direct Benefit Transfer\)](#), [UPI \(Unified Payments Interface\)](#), and [Aspirational Districts Programme](#).
- **Security Cooperation:** India can strengthen its security cooperation with Africa, by providing more training, equipment, and intelligence to the African security forces.
 - India can also **contribute more to the peacekeeping missions and operations in Africa**, by deploying more troops, experts, and resources.
 - India can also **collaborate with Africa in countering the common threats of terrorism, piracy, organized crime, and human trafficking**.
- **Science, Technology, and Innovation Collaboration:** India can boost its science, technology, and innovation collaboration with Africa, by supporting more scientific research and development projects in Africa.
 - India can also **facilitate more technology transfer and adaptation** to Africa, by providing affordable and appropriate solutions to the African challenges and opportunities.
 - India can also **promote more innovation exchange and cooperation** with Africa, by encouraging more start-ups, incubators, and hubs to collaborate across the continent.

Drishti Mains Question:

The African continent is currently grappling with multiple political turmoils. In this context, discuss the potential impacts of these turmoils on India and elucidate the strategies that India can adopt to contribute to the maintenance of stability in the region.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following statements: (2016)

1. The India-Africa Summit
2. held in 2015 was the third such Summit
3. was actually initiated by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1951

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
 (b) 2 only
 (c) Both 1 and 2
 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- India-Africa Summit is a forum to re-initiate and reboot relation between India and African countries.
- It started from 2008 with New Delhi as its first venue. Since then, the summit has been held every three years, alternately in India and Africa. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- The second summit was held in Addis Ababa in 2011. The third summit, scheduled to be held in 2014, was postponed because of the Ebola outbreak, and took place in October, 2015 in New Delhi. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

Mains

Q. How does India see its place in the economic space of rising natural resource rich Africa? (2014)

Q. Increasing interest of India in Africa has its pros and cons. Critically Examine. **(2015)**

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