



NIAS Area Studies
Africa Weekly #07, Vol. 1, No. 7
12 April 2022

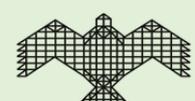


IN FOCUS

**The rise of East African Community: From the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean
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AFRICA IN BRIEF

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COMMENTARY

The rise of East African Community: From the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean

For flourishing cross-border trade and full use of the common regional market, the security situation in the DRC has to be improved. Otherwise, DRC's inclusion in the EAC will not prove beneficial for the EAC but will, in fact, drag the regional states into the vortex of instability that is Eastern DRC.

Sankalp Gurjar



Image Source: State House, Kenya/ The East African

While trade protectionism is on the rise worldwide, Africa is bucking that trend. African countries are lowering trade barriers, opening up their borders, integrating with their neighbours, and are engaged in creating a common market. The economic integration trend is discernible at the regional and the continental levels. Africa has embarked on an ambitious African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), aimed at creating “a single market for goods, services, facilitated by movement of persons” to “deepen the economic integration of the African continent.” However, the progress on the AfCFTA has not made regional economic communities redundant; their salience has gone up even further. Along with the move to create a free market at the continental level, the regional economic communities are also expanding; the East African Community (EAC) is a case in point.

DRC: EAC's new member adds value

In April 2022, the [Democratic Republic of Congo \(DRC\) joined the EAC](#); the EAC has now expanded deep into Central Africa and has seven members: DRC, Burundi,

Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda, and Tanzania. Of the seven countries, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and South Sudan are land-locked and depend on Kenya and Tanzania for access to the Indian Ocean. With the DRC's membership, the geographic expanse of EAC spans from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean. The membership of the EAC will help link the DRC with the Indian Ocean ports. In contrast, countries like [Kenya and Tanzania will get access to West Africa](#) via the Atlantic Ocean. However, for it to happen, the transport infrastructure in the DRC has to be improved and upgraded.

The EAC, functioning since 2000, seeks to unify the East African region. It is [home to 300 million citizens and has a combined GDP](#) of about USD 240 billion. The inclusion of DRC has massively expanded the territory of the common market. The DRC is also [rich in natural resources](#) like copper, gold, diamonds, cobalt, uranium, coltan, and oil; therefore, the economic and trading potential of the bloc has gone up significantly. It is known as [one of the fastest-growing regional economic communities](#) and is “widening and deepening cooperation among the Partner States in various key spheres for their mutual benefit.” In the next few months, the DRC has to ratify the treaty and harmonise its domestic economic framework with the EAC. The [integration of DRC into the EAC will allow](#) the “Congolese citizens to travel freely to the other countries and trade will become much quicker, simpler and cheaper, which

should benefit businesses and consumers in all countries.”

However, the DRC in EAC poses challenges

The DRC is struggling to deal with [the problem of insecurity](#). Various armed rebel groups are operating in Eastern DRC and the peacekeepers from the United Nations are deployed there. In 2021, at the invitation of the DRC, Ugandan troops had entered the DRC to eliminate a rebel group. To flourish cross-border trade and make full use of the common regional market, the security situation in the DRC has to be improved. Otherwise, the inclusion will not prove beneficial for the EAC but will drag the regional states into the vortex of instability that is Eastern DRC. [Another major issue is that of language](#). Till now, the EAC has been dominated by English-speaking countries. French was spoken in Rwanda and Burundi; Kenya, Tanzania, South Sudan, and Uganda primarily use English. The EAC has two official languages: English and Swahili. The inclusion of the DRC will necessitate the greater use of French and may perhaps be added as the third official language. There are indications that the use of Swahili might be encouraged as well.

Other challenges: Debt, China and the Ukraine war

The East African countries face the [challenge of a high level of indebtedness](#). According to the UN Economic Commission for Africa, “Kenya spends 22.6 per cent of its export revenue to debt repayment, followed by Burundi (14 per cent), Rwanda (12.6 per cent) Uganda (12.2 per cent), and Tanzania (8.4 per cent)”. Moreover, the challenge is compounded by the fact that the EAC member-states like Kenya and Uganda face the additional challenge of dealing

with the repayment of the expensive Chinese loans and the political costs associated with it.

Kenya has been [struggling to repay the Chinese loans](#) taken for the construction of the Standard Gauge Railway between Mombasa and Nairobi. In 2018, China held 73 per cent of the total Kenyan debt, giving China an undue influence. Uganda recently realized that the contract with China for the modernization and upgrade of the airport at Entebbe had imposed extremely severe conditions. Uganda concluded that the [contract is binding](#) and that there is no option but to go ahead with the existing contract. [Tanzania and Kenya also cancelled the China-supported port development projects](#) at Bagamoyo and Lamu respectively. DRC has been [embroiled in a dispute with China](#) over the control of a strategically important copper mine. If any of these EAC member states are forced to adjust their economic and/or foreign policies in response to their inability to repay the Chinese loans, it has implications for the regional economic community. Therefore, the strategic implications of these Chinese loans to the East African countries are a challenge that the EAC will have to reckon with.

The war in Ukraine and the tension between the West and Russia have been an ominous development for the global economy. Before that, the Covid-19 pandemic had ravaged the economic prospects of many countries, including those in Africa. The rise in the price of commodities like oil and wheat will further affect economic growth and socio-political stability in Africa. Therefore, although the inclusion of DRC has been a positive development, moving ahead, many challenges await the East African Community.

COMMENTARY

Looking Back: Darfur conflict and its key drivers

The Arab and African identity plays a larger role in conflicts, though they are difficult to differentiate

Anu Maria Joseph



Image Source: ICC-CPI

On 5 April, the International Criminal Court opened the first trial on the atrocities committed in Darfur. A former leader of the government-backed Janjaweed militia, Ali Kushayb, has been charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity. Human rights lawyer Mossad Mohamed Ali said: "[Tuesday] is a momentous day for victims and survivors in Darfur who never stopped fighting to see the day the cycle of impunity is broken."

Since the end of colonial rule, Sudan has seen various rebellions. The roots can be traced to Sudan's socio-geographic divisions; the North comprises a majority of Arab communities, largely Muslims, and the South has mostly African communities following Christianity and animism. The society is further entailed by diverse ethnic groups. However, the Arab and African identity plays a larger role in conflicts, though they are difficult to differentiate. They are dispersed among each other and share similar physical and cultural characteristics.

The Darfur conflict: A brief note

Darfur, the western region of Sudan, with an estimated population of six million, derived its name from the largest ethnic

group - the Fur. Communal conflicts and discontent with the Khartoum regime always existed in Darfur before the rebellions. The government plied the Janjaweed militias with arms to target non-Arabs accused of supporting rebels.

The Darfur conflict began in February 2003, when the Furs, Zaghawa and Masalit communities led a rebellion. The Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) took up arms against the Sudanese government; about 300,000 people were killed, and 2.5 million people were displaced; many villages were burned and pillaged during the deadly conflict. The UN labelled it as "the world's worst humanitarian crisis", and the US called it "genocide."

Three key drivers: Marginalisation, ethnic divides and resources

First, the widespread marginalization. The post-colonial governments are dominated by the Arab elites of Sudan's central and northern parts. Darfur's majority is extensively excluded from political participation, cultural inclusion and economic development by the elites concentrating on their homeland. The government's reluctance to address the grievances has led to deteriorating situations.

Second, the ethnic conflicts. Darfur is home to about 80 tribes and different ethnic groups divided between nomads and farmer communities. Different groups have always been in conflict over grazing and water rights and local politics and administrative boundaries. Events of ethnic cleansing were regular; wells were

poisoned, and farmers deliberately burned grasslands and destroyed water points to avert pastoralists from grazing.

Third, the climate change and environmental issues. By the 1980s, the regions faced acute environmental degradation and climate change. Severe and recurrent droughts displaced two million people. Violence escalated amid the increasing population followed by a lack of food supplies and competition over scarce resources. Further, no steps were taken by the government to safeguard the livelihood for the population. Hence people were more receptive to join different militias.

Three major actors: Rebel groups, National Congress Party, and Libya

First, the SLM/A and JEM. The two rebel groups launched the initial rebellion against the government. Though both had similar objectives, structural differences kept them divided. The JEM with a centralized leadership structure always remained cohesive while SLM/A was a fragile alliance of rebel leaders of Fur, Zaghawa and Masalit.

Second, the role of the National Congress Party (NCP). The party came to power in Sudan through a military coup in 1989. Under Omar al Bashir, the NCP was responsible for human rights atrocities, including summary executions, torture, arbitrary detention and intentional attacks on non-Arabs. The ruling party had power bases among the Darfur elites. To deflect the rebel efforts, the elites supported and funded the Janjaweed militia, which were responsible for slaughtering more than 480,000 men, women and children since 2003.

Third, the role of Libya. Muammar Gaddafi formed Islamic Legion to set up an Arab belt with its neighbours to establish Libya's hegemony in the region. Despite its defeat by Chadian troops, its elements were armed and trained and with

an Arab supremacist ideology wherein it presented Arabs as more civilized than Africans. Many of the Janjaweed militias were trained by the Legion. The ideology influenced the Arab descents in Darfur to form the political coalition, the Arab Gathering. Successive governments in Khartoum supported this pro-Arabism and backed the Arab ethnic groups in various communal conflicts in Darfur. In addition, the dominant Arab elites tried to create a national identity based on Arabism and Islam.

Aftermath and international response

In April 2004, the government and the rebel groups announced a ceasefire to ensure humanitarian assistance. Subsequently, the SLM/A's innate fragility led to its dramatic fragmentation. Clashes between various divisions over disagreements to sign the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement exacerbated the situation causing the rebels to form several splinter groups. Many of these groups exploited the chaos, further worsening the situation.

The efforts by regional and international actors, including the US and European governments, could not develop a coherent approach to the Darfur conflict. The UN efforts through resolutions and warnings were hampered by the Sudanese government. It declared unwillingness to accept European troops on the ground and allowed only African Union peacekeeping forces. Though the government agreed to the UN's 'hybrid force'- a mixture of UN and AU troops, were hindered by insufficient funds, complex logistics and reluctance of the government. The Darfur Peace Agreement went in vain as the majority of rebel factions disagreed. Again, governments lack of compliance to rulings by the International Criminal Court challenges the efforts.

The crisis in Darfur has its roots in multi-level interconnected and parallel issues. Disagreements within highly divided rebel groups and the government's strategies

against the peace processes amplify the root causes. Lack of strong resolve by the international community challenges in reaching a settlement in Darfur. However, the ongoing trial by the ICC, Omar al-

Bashir's prosecution and recent advancements are milestones bringing justice for Darfur.

AFRICA IN BRIEF

6 April -12 April

by Anu Maria Joseph, Poulomi Mondal and Apoorva Sudhakar

ETHIOPIA

Rights groups accuse regional forces of ethnic cleansing in Tigray

On 6 April, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch accused Amhara authorities, regional forces and militias of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Tigray. It also accused the armed forces from the Amhara region of conducting campaigns of ethnic cleansing. Amnesty International's Regional Researcher for the Horn of Africa, told the BBC: "This campaign of ethnic cleansing was conducted through a series of human rights abuses including mass detention and torture, sexual violence, extrajudicial killings, denial of humanitarian aid and forced expulsion of Tigrayans." On 7 April, the Ethiopian government called the rights group's reports of war crimes "unhelpful" and accused the groups of interfering in its internal matters. However, the government has pledged to "examine" the allegations. On 9 April, the US called for the release of thousands of Tigrayans who were arbitrarily detained and for access to be granted to international monitors. Since the conflict broke out in November 2020, rights groups have accused all warring parties, including the federal army, its allies from Amhara and Tigrayan rebels, of war crimes. (Joice Etutu, "[Ethiopia militias accused of Tigray ethnic cleansing](#)," *BBC*, 6 April 2022; Kalkidan Yibeltal; "[Tigray war crimes probe 'unhelpful' - Ethiopia](#)," *BBC*, 7 April 2022; Kalkidan Yibeltal, "[US demands Ethiopia access amid ethnic violence report](#)," *BBC*, 9 April 2022)

SUDAN

Sudan militia leader pleads not guilty at ICC Darfur trial

On 7 April, former militia leader Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman denied

committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur, in a trial at the International Criminal Court. The accused, also known as Ali Kushayb, pleaded innocent to all 31 charges against him saying "I reject all these charges" and that ICC should first focus on atrocities committed by the government-backed forces in Darfur nearly two decades ago. Prosecutor Karim Khan said the accused was "a willing and knowing participant in crimes" and "one of the key senior Janjaweed militia leaders" who worked "hand-in-glove" with Sudan's the then government in the counterinsurgency operations. The prosecutor further added: "You will see that he took pride in power that he thought he exerted the authority that he had." (Jason Bruke, "[Sudan militia leader denies war crimes at landmark ICC Darfur trial](#)," *The Guardian*, 7 April 2022; "[Former Sudanese militia leader pleads not guilty at ICC Darfur trial](#)," *Africanews*, 7 April 2022)

RWANDA

Refugees of 1994 genocide return

On 5 April, the BBC reported that many of the Rwandan refugees in Mozambique, who escaped the 1994 genocide, had begun returning to their home country. The ethnic war between minority Tutsis and majority Hutus groups, which ended up in genocide, left more than 800,000 dead and millions to leave the country. The Mozambique authorities estimated that about 3,000 Rwandan refugees reside in the country. Further, the Rwandan government is supporting the refugee reintegration programme. Many of the refugees now believe that the situation in the country has changed, which encouraged them to a voluntary return. About 19 refugees will be returning back to Rwanda this week. (Jose Tembe,

["Rwandan refugees begin return from Mozambique," BBC, 5 April 2022\)](#)

SOMALIA

Prime Minister and President in another row over expulsion of the African Union envoy

On April 7, Somalia's Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble expelled an African Union envoy. The Prime Minister's office stated that it was declaring Francisco Madeira "persona non grata for engaging in acts inconsistent with his status as a representative of the African Union Commission," ordering him to leave within 48 hours. The move triggered a new dispute with President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, who objected to the decision calling it illegal. The statement from the presidency said: "The president has not received any complaint about interference in his sovereignty and does not approve of any illegal action against Ambassador Francisco Madeira". The two leaders are regularly in clashes leading the country to political crisis and delaying the presidential elections. ("[Somalia: President and PM clash over presence of AU envoy,](#)" *Africanews*, 7 April 2022)

SOUTH SUDAN

More than 7.7 million facing extreme food insecurity, warn the UN and government

On 9 April, the UN and South Sudan government said extreme weather conditions, increasing armed violence and the number of internally displaced people have worsened the food insecurity in the country. More than 7.7 million people, almost 63 per cent of the total population, are facing extreme food crises. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan said: "We will continue to have the situation we have in South Sudan if we don't start to make that transition to ensuring peace at the community levels". According to a joint report by the UN and the government, people belonging to the regions of Jonglei, Upper Nile, Warrap, and Eastern Equatorial states are the most

suffering from food shortages. ("[More than 7.7 million facing food crisis in South Sudan,](#)" *Al Jazeera*, 9 April 2022)

South Sudanese rivals sign an agreement for unified army command

On 4 April, South Sudan rivals signed an agreement regarding the unified formation of armed forces command in the capital Juba. The unified command is a key pillar of the 2018 peace agreement. The deal integrates opposition commanders into the armed forces. President Salva Kiir's faction in the forces will have 60 per cent representation in key positions of army, police, and security. Vice President Riek Machar's faction SPLM-IO and other opposition groups will account for 40 per cent. The opposition forces will submit the list of commanders within one week and be followed by the graduation of the unified forces and their deployment. Major General Martin Abucha, representing Mr Machar's faction, said: "People of South Sudan are yearning for peace and peace is about security and today we have made a milestone in that. We have agreed that we shall be moving forward." (Nichola Mandil, "[South Sudan rivals agree on unified army command,](#)" *BBC*, 4 April 2022)

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Fresh fighting in Rutshuru triggers inflow of refugees to Uganda

On 6 April, fresh fighting broke out in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, days after the rebel group M23 declared a unilateral ceasefire to hold talks with the government. According to sources, the government forces are fighting in the Rutshuru region in North Kivu province to recapture the villages occupied by M23 rebels. The rebel group said they want the peace agreement signed a decade ago, to be respected. It provided for M23 to operate as a political party, end the discrimination of Congolese ethnic Tutsis in the armed forces and return refugees. Following the fighting, about 6,000

refugees who returned in the last few days fled to neighbouring Uganda. (Patience Atuhaire, "[Thousands flee fresh fighting in eastern DR Congo](#)," *BBC*, 6 April 2022)

At least six people killed in an explosion at Katindo military camp

On 8 April, BBC reported, that at least six people were killed and 15 others were wounded following an explosion in a bar at the Katindo military camp in Goma. The victims included a lieutenant colonel and his wife, a captain, the owner of the bar, and a 12-year-old. The local authorities have started an investigation into the incident. The DR Congo military is fighting several rebel groups in the region, but it is not clear the explosion was a rebel attack. (Emery Makumeno, "[Blast in DR Congo military camp kills at least six](#)," *BBC*, 8 April 2022)

NIGERIA

At least ten soldiers killed in an attack by bandits

On 5 April, The Guardian reported at least ten soldiers were killed and a few wounded in an attack by local bandits on a military facility in Birnin Gwari in the northwestern state of Kaduna. According to the news report, the bandits came on motorcycles with heavy weapons, including rocket-propelled grenades (RPG). One of the military sources said: "We lost 11 men while 19 soldiers were wounded in action after they overwhelmed the troops. They also burnt down three armoured personnel carriers (APC) after they overwhelmed the troops". Neither the Nigerian government nor the military has confirmed the incident. A similar attack on a passenger train killed dozens last week in the same region. About 168 people are still missing in that attack. (Abdulganiyu Alabi, "[11 soldiers killed as gunmen attack military base in Kaduna](#)," *The Guardian*, 5 April 2022; "[Bandits' kill 10 soldiers in attack on Nigerian military facility](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 5 April 2022)

Gunmen attack across four villages claims more than 100 lives

On 10 April, Associated Press reported that over a 100 people had killed by gunmen across four villages in central Nigeria's Plateau state. The death toll is yet to be confirmed; witnesses said gunmen killed 130 people, including children. The BBC said the death toll runs over 150 and reported that residents of the affected villages were fleeing to neighbouring villages. (Chinedu Asadu, "[Gunmen kill more than 100 in Nigeria's north, say survivors](#)," *Associated Press*, 12 April 2022)

THE GAMBIA

Adama Barrow's party wins the election in a narrow victory

On 10 April, President Adama Barrow's party won a narrow victory in legislative elections. According to results published by the Gambia's independent electoral commission Barrow's National People's Party won 19 of the 53 contested parliamentary seats against the main opposition United Democratic Party's (UDP). However, the party is short of an absolute majority to govern the country alone. On 9 April, Gambians voted for a new National Assembly, electing 53 legislators for a five-year term, with the President Adam Barrow picking five others including the parliament's President. About 40 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) observers are deployed in seven administrative units to monitor the electoral process. In 2017, Borrow rose to power after winning the presidential elections. In 2021, he was re-elected guaranteeing political stability in the country. (Virginia Pietromarchi, "[The Gambia votes for a new National Assembly](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 9 April 2022; "[Gambian president's party narrowly wins legislative polls](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 9 April 2022)

BURKINA FASO

Former president sentenced to life imprisonment for Sankara murder

On 6 April, a military tribunal sentenced former president Blaise Compaore to life imprisonment for his involvement in the assassination of Thomas Sankara. Compaoré received the sentence in absentia as he is in exile in Ivory Coast. Compaore came to power in 1987 through a coup after his predecessor Sankara, and 12 others were gunned down. Compaore stayed in power till 2014 until a popular uprising forced him to flee the country. (Declan Walsh, "[Ex-Leader of Burkina Faso Convicted in Killing of Thomas Sankara, His Predecessor](#)," *The New York Times*, 6 April 2022)

Ex-President released from house arrest

On 7 April, former president Roch Kabore, who had been under house arrest since the military takeover in January, was released. The release came after West African leaders called for Kabore's release and an acceptable timeline for a return to democracy. The interim government has promised to ensure additional security measures to guarantee his safety. ("[Burkina Faso: Ex-president Kabore released from house arrest](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 7 April 2022)

About 12 soldiers and four paramilitary fighters killed in an attack on an army base

On 8 April, at least 12 soldiers and four paramilitary fighters were killed in an attack on an army base in Sanmatenga province. An army statement said that the attack also left more than 20 soldiers wounded. Several armed groups, linked to al-Qaeda and ISIL (ISIS) are active in the region, trying to gain control of the terrain where the borders of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger meet; however, it is not yet confirmed who carried out the attack. ("[At least 16 killed in attack on army base in Burkina Faso](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 8 April 2022)

MALI

Mass execution of 300 people: Russia denies any involvement

On 5 April, Human Rights Watch condemned the mass execution of 300 people, including civilians, by the Malian troops and the foreign mercenaries in Moura. It described the massacre as "the worst single atrocity reported in Mali's decade-long conflict." The residents told the HRW that people were ordered to deliberately walk in groups of ten before getting executed. On 7 April, Malian authorities said they had opened investigations into the allegations. Meanwhile, Germany and France joined the US and the EU to call for an independent investigation into the reports of mass killings. On 8 April, Russia denied allegations of its involvement. Previously, on 1 April, the Mali junta admitted that about 203 militants were killed during military operations since 23 March, but denied allegations of involvement of Russian mercenaries. ("[Mali: HRW condemns 'deliberate slaughter' of 300 men by military](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 5 April 2022; "[Russia denies mercenaries involved in Mali massacre](#)," *BBC*, 8 April 2022; "[Mali troops and suspected Russian fighters accused of massacre](#)," *BBC*, 5 April 2022; "[Mali probes alleged massacre by Russian fighters](#)," *BBC*, 7 April 2022)

REGIONAL

Multiple organisations concerned over extreme hunger in West Africa

On 8 April, the UN World Food Programme, in its press release, said the food and nutrition crisis in West Africa was likely to impact 41 million people in West and Central Africa in 2022, recording an increase from the estimated 10.7 million in 2019. The press release said several countries in the region witnessed a 40 per cent increase in prices, further aggravated by the disruptions caused by the Ukraine conflict. Previously, on 5 April, various international aid groups said that about 27 million people in West Africa face extreme hunger leading the

region to its worst food crisis in a decade. Eleven organisations including, Oxfam, ALIMA and Save the Children, warned that by June the figure could rise upto 38 million. Oxfam’s regional director for West and Central Africa said the situation had deteriorated by “drought, floods, conflict, and the economic impacts of COVID-19”, has displaced millions and is “pushing them to the brink”. Since 2015, the number of people in need of emergency food aid in west African

countries of Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Mali, and Nigeria has increased remarkably to reach 27 million. (“[Hunger in West Africa reaches record high in a decade as the region faces an unprecedented crisis exacerbated by Russia-Ukraine conflict](#),” *UN World Food Programme*, 8 April 2022; “[Oxfam, others: West Africa facing worst food crisis in a decade](#),” *Al Jazeera*, 5 April 2022)

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About NIAS Africa Studies

As a part of the area studies initiatives, the Institute started a focussed study on Pakistan in 2020. In 2021, it expanded the area studies to include Europe Studies, China Reader, and Maritime Studies. In 2022, the Science, Technology and International Relations (STIR) programme at the Institute is further expanding its area studies, to include Africa.

The primary focus of NIAS Africa studies would be on the following five verticals: contemporary political issues, colonial legacies, problems of governance, civil-military equations, and the rise of radical Islamic groups. The primary objective is to study Africa from an internal prism. .

NIAS Africa Studies would include a series of expert lectures, workshops, publications and a weekly exclusively focussed on Africa. The initiative also aims to create a network of young scholars studying Africa and also African scholars studying in various Indian institutions.

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