India's Response to State Fragility in Africa

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ABSTRACT New Delhi is increasingly positioning itself as a significant player in African peace, security and development. Examining the question of how India responds to state fragility in Africa, this brief finds that India's engagement is mostly transactional: working around, rather than on, sources of political fragility. Development and security interventions tend to operate in silos, but might change if Indian commercial investments are threatened by persistent instability. New Delhi's pronouncements at global forums increasingly call for a more cohesive and comprehensive approach to development and security in Africa, while framing its own contribution in terms of building new development partnerships for mutual economic growth.

INTRODUCTION

Fourteen of the top 20 states listed in the 2017 Fragile State Index are in Africa.[1] Of these 14, India has ongoing investments in eight.[2] Overall, India's investments in the African continent have increased significantly over the past decade. Most recently, at the 2015 India Africa Summit, India pledged over US$10 billion more in the form of concessional credit and grant assistance.[3] Indian President Ram Nath Kovind recently announced that his maiden overseas visit will be to Djibouti and Ethipoia, reinforcing the importance the current government attaches to

Africa. The question of how India responds to state fragility in Africa thus assumes critical significance. While the index is, without doubt, deeply contentious—it ascribes a static set of standards to ascertain legitimate statehood—it nonetheless highlights the varying levels of instability and fragility in the African continent. India's engagement in Africa might also provide a window into unpacking the trajectory of its development partnerships globally. After all, it is projected that by 2030, the share of global poor living in fragile and conflict-affected regions will

reach 46 percent, up massively from 17 percent today. It is important to understand how India as an emerging economic and military power will help shape global security and development architectures.

This brief examines India's current response to state fragility in Africa. The first section provides an overview of India's investments in African development and security and the second examines in detail the cases of South Sudan and Libya, two of the top recipients of Indian investments, and both among the top 20 in the Fragile States Index. New Delhi typically does not use the language of "fragile states" nor does it have a specific policy framework guiding its engagement in such contexts; its position must therefore be inferred from its investments in African development and security. The third section then looks at India's posturing at global platforms, to see whether there is continuity between New Delhi's approach to fragility in Africa and its global pronouncements. The brief concludes with an outline of future policy trajectories and recommendations relevant for India.

A few points should be noted at the outset. First, as a recent paper by ORF's Malancha Chakrabarty shows, academic and policy literature tends to exaggerate the scale of Indian investments in Africa. Over 90 percent of India's investments are in Mauritius, which is a tax haven; it is then 'round-tripped' back to India, making use of the double taxation avoidance agreement between Mauritius and India.[4] It is thus not surprising that India does not have a formally articulated policy framework for how its responds to state fragility in Africa. India's investments in Africa are nonetheless significant because they are being packaged as "development partnerships" and are poised to grow in scope and scale as New Delhi positions itself as a leading power.

Second, before comparing the approach followed by India to that of OECD-DAC donors—the so-called traditional donors—an important difference in historical trajectories must be recognised. Development interventions by these traditional donors are at least partly informed by a sense of historical responsibility and moral obligation, rooted in their colonial histories. Accordingly, for much of its history, development assistance has been intertwined with a narrative of "charity". India does not have a comparable historical experience that gives it either a sense of global obligation or an impetus for a global mission. If anything, its experience as a former colony itself, and its leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) leads it to reject the hierarchical and paternalistic relationship fostered through "charity"; what India emphasises instead are ideas of reciprocity, mutual benefit, and partnership.[5] Traditional donors are also motivated by the perceived threat to national security from persistent underdevelopment and volatility in the periphery. India's security concerns, on the other hand, are not defined so widely or globally – rather, the most immediate and direct threats emanate in its immediate neighbourhood. It is necessary to recognise these distinct historical trajectories when framing expectations and evaluations about the role of emerging powers like India as providers of global development and security.

Third, it is also important to recognise India's long-standing commitment to the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference, shaped partly by history – its fight against colonial rule and its leadership of the NAM – and partly by strategic and security concerns – to deter external interference in India's management of its multiple internal insurgencies. While India has ignored these principles at multiple occasions, choosing to

prioritise its own national security interests,[6] this principled and strategic posturing has also led to India's rejection of the narratives around 'fragile states.' New Delhi has argued that it imposes an external standard of legitimate statehood and provides a basis for military intervention, thereby violating the principle of sovereign equality.

INDIA'S SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT INVESTMENTS IN AFRICA

The term 'fragile states' is contentious, mostly because it imposes a standard of legitimate statehood, one that is constructed within certain geographies of power. The OECD's State of Fragility report attempts to eliminate such standard-based categorisation for fragile states, and instead identifies countries that are the most vulnerable across five dimensions of risk and vulnerability linked to fragility: 1) violence (peaceful societies); 2) access to justice for all; 3) effective, accountable and inclusive institutions; 4) economic foundations; and 5) capacity to adapt to social, economic and environmental shocks and disasters.[7] Framed in this manner, traditional donors, including the US and UK, have figured in the fragile state index released earlier this year by Foreign Policy. As India does not have a specific policy document pertaining to states of fragility, its position has to be inferred from its various economic, development, and security investments in Africa. These will help understand how, if at all, India addresses the above dimensions of risk and vulnerability in Africa.

Economic Diplomacy as Development Partnerships

Development partnerships between India and African states date back to the 1960s when New Delhi started the International Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme.

Since then, hundreds of African government officials and professionals have trained in India. Since the liberalisation of the Indian economy in the 1990s and the decade of high growth that followed, India's development partnerships have grown in volume and diversity. In terms of amounts allocated by India for grants, loans and training programmes, there has been a four-fold increase from 2003-4 to 2013-14. Since the early 2000s, India has begun to use Lines of Credit or export credits as one of its key development partnership instruments.[8]

In Africa, partnerships are channelled primarily through lines of credit, reflecting India's economic and commercial interests on the continent – in particular, access to raw materials and new markets to sustain Indian economic growth. Africa currently supplies one-fifth of India's crude oil imports; this figure was zero in 2005. In 2012, mineral products, precious stones, and metal imports from Africa constituted 86 percent of all Indian commodity imports.[9] India's investments are concentrated in resource-rich parts of Africa, including oil investments in fragile states such as Sudan, Nigeria and Libya.

In the last decade, almost US$ 9 billion in concessional credit was approved for nearly 140 projects in more than 40 African countries, with special emphasis on LDCs and SIDS partners. Most recently, at the Third India-Africa Forum Summit held in New Delhi in October 2015, India made a pledge of concessional credit worth US$10 billion to Africa in the next five years, a doubling of its existing commitment, and grant assistance of US$600 million, which includes an India-Africa Development Fund of US$100 million and a Health Fund of US$10 million. These development partnerships, however, are framed around the principles of South-South Cooperation, to both lend legitimacy to these economic engagements as a form of southern

solidarity and to differentiate India's approach from that of traditional donors. [10]

India was not found to have any explicit programmes that address the causes of state fragility and vulnerability – such as access to justice, rule of law, or human rights violations. As a developing country with immense development challenges of its own, there is little reason for India to make such social sector investments unless there is an opportunity for mutual benefit. India is also reluctant of programmes that can jeopardise its commercial investments; and has repeatedly cautioned about the destabilising effects of external intervention in the domestic affairs of states. Emma Mawdsley argues that while this is partly because of the anchoring of south-south cooperation in historical principles of non-interference and respect for sovereign decision-making, "it is also because the priority for development partners like India is to support programs for growth and productivity – programs that can yield win-win outcomes for both."[11]

In fragile or transitional settings, however, there is the risk that development partnerships could entrench the power of unrepresentative elites and fuel instability and insecurity. In Eritrea for example, India provides support for education programmes in line with the principle of demand-driven aid, even while Eritrea is considered to be ruled by a repressive regime that uses the public education system as a form of social control. The principle of 'demand-driven' development partnerships also obscures the fact that elite projections of national interest drive much decision-making, including the choice of recipients and nature of programmes. Assertions of win-win outcomes are thus founded on a simplistic construction of national interest of both partners, which obscures the contested and dislocating nature of development.

Other scholars have argued for example that India's (and China's) "resource grab" in Africa could perpetuate the structural conditions contributing to poverty and conflict.[12] In 2012, mineral products, precious stones, and metal imports from Africa constituted 86 percent of all Indian commodity imports from the continent.[13] A history of African development, however, demonstrates clearly the deleterious impact of a 'resource curse' on peace, security, and economic progress. Finally, studies also highlight that India's development partnerships are signed at the highest level of government, with little consultation from lower-level ministries that might be better placed to grasp technical requirements.[14] Most LOC contracts have also been awarded to a select few Indian firms, raising questions of transparency, accountability, and suitability.

In spite of such criticism, it is also worth considering that emerging powers like India are widening the range of financing resources available to African states, and thereby according these states some degree of agency in charting their development trajectories.[15] The extent to which African states are able to use these new finances to promote equitable development outcomes will ultimately depend on national governments and their institutions. In Ethiopia for example, where Indian private sector companies have been accused of land-grabbing, the Ethiopian government has made little attempt to regulate foreign investments.[16]

Security Investments in Africa

India is one of the largest contributors of peacekeepers to UN missions in Africa, with Indian contingents having so far served in 22 UN peacekeeping missions in 16 African countries. Moreover, thousands of African military officers have received professional training from India.[17] India's maritime security interests in the Indian Ocean – approximately 80 percent of India's energy imports traverse through the Indian

Ocean and its different channels – has led to the emergence of defense agreements and joint naval training programmes with several countries in East Africa and the Indian Ocean island states. This includes the deployment of Indian naval vessels to patrol territorial waters and support to African coast guards, as well as an Indian radar surveillance and listening post in East Africa.[18] India has thus made considerable investments in African security multilaterally, but bilateral engagements are also increasing.

The changing nature of peacekeeping operations in the past two decades, from peacekeeping to robust peacebuilding, often involving the use of force, however poses a challenge for India's commitment to the principle of non-interference. At global platforms, India has pressed the case against abandoning the traditional principles of local consent, neutrality, and non-use of force except in self-defence in UN peacekeeping. However, in practice, India has participated in a number of mixed mandate missions. It has frequently contributed combat and police forces to UN missions. Garima Mohan also argues that India, similar to China, has become more pragmatic in their foreign policy approach to peacekeeping as future 'responsible powers.'[19] Thus, the decision to provide combat troops has not been informed by a strategic re-orientation of policy but the security needs on the ground, as in when the UN's Protection of Civilian camps came under heavy attack in Malakal and Pibor; the Indian battalion played a vital role in protecting the thousands of civilians seeking shelter there.[20] It is relevant to note, however, that this engagement with robust peace- building has been mostly ad-hoc, and the ambiguity has given India space to withdraw from or refuse to participate in some missions, while be more actively involved in others.

Moreover, African governments have themselves called for more robust peacekeeping — AU mandates are in fact frequently more

ambitious, muscular, and intrusive than UN missions. The challenge for India, as Kudrat Virk argues, then becomes one of willingness to "re-think its approach to peacekeeping, not merely as an aspect of its UN diplomacy but of its Africa policy, or risk neglecting the context in Africa itself and forfeiting the pay-off of its past contributions."[21]

Security and Development Silos

New Delhi does not have a cohesive security and development strategy in Africa. India's peacekeeping strategy for example is not linked to any direct security or economic threats;[22] similarly, LoCs are administered by the EXIM Bank, which has little to do with India's peacekeeping engagements. More cohesive positioning is limited to selective advocacy on global platforms; for example, India has called for a holistic approach to conflict prevention in Africa, linked to sustainable development,[23] and a focus on strengthening the capacities of the Africa Union, regional organisations and national governments.[24]

However, the question of coherence will become important if Indian security investments are under threat. This was already a concern in Sudan, where India's strong commercial engagement led it to appoint a special envoy to encourage a negotiated settlement to the conflict between South and South Sudan. This marked a departure from India's typical approach in the continent – to work "around conflict" rather than "on conflict"; India did however chose to use back-door channels and remain on the sidelines of international efforts to broker peace.[25]

CASE STUDIES: LIBYA AND SOUTH SUDAN

This section examines India's investments in two of Africa's resource-rich and fragile states. India's approach is to "work around" a conflict rather

than "work on" it; for the most part, it seems agnostic to the nature of the ruling regime and the implications this might have issues of domestic governance, rights, and instability. The preference is for a stable government it can engage bilaterally with to support its commercial engagements. India's engagement in Libya and South Sudan can be described as mostly "transactional" rather than principled or even pragmatic.

Libya

India's investments in Libya have been led primarily by ONGC.[26] As global concern about the Gaddafi regime grew, most global oil majors and Wall Street banks stopped trading crude oil with Tripoli. New Delhi, however, did not cease its engagement, much to the dismay of many western human rights organisations. India's position in UN Security Council debates on the application of R2P in Libya swung between principles and pragmatism.

India voted in favor of UNSC Resolution 1970 reminding the Libyan state of its responsibility to protect its population. But, it was wary about the use of military force and calls for a no-fly zone as suggested by Resolution 1973. It argued that the use of force could lead to greater bloodshed; that diplomatic means to resolve the crisis had not been fully explored; and that the international coalition was supporting the rebels in what was rapidly becoming a civil war with the objective of regime change.[27] India abstained rather than rejected Resolution 1973, arguably concerned about its international reputation. As Kudrat Virk argues, "India's abstention reflecting the continuing tug-of-war between its genuine concerns about the appropriateness of armed intervention and its reluctance to break from consensus."[28]

Once Gaddafi was ousted, however, India extended help to the Libyan National Transition Council. New Delhi also provided humanitarian assistance of US$1 million through the UN Office of Commissioner of Humanitarian Aid. Another supply of humanitarian assistance, consisting of mainly life-saving drugs and medical equipment worth US$ 1 million, was also provided to the NTC in Tripoli in January 2012. In 2012, GoI and Tripoli also signed a Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation in Field of Elections.[29]The Libyan ambassador to India, Ali Al-Issawi, also shared Libya's hope to learn from the Indian experience in drafting a constitution and rebuilding an economy. Ambassador Al-Issawi said they "are building the system from scratch" and they will need help in certain areas like parliamentary system and local administrative setup.[30]

Many Indian companies have resumed their projects in Libya after the removal of Gaddafi. They are perhaps the few foreign companies currently executing and finishing their projects. These firms have commissioned major power plants, constructed housing units, roads and bridges. Several new Indian companies are also looking for projects in the reconstruction, infrastructure and services space. An 18-member Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) delegation also visited Tripoli to identify mutually beneficial business and investment opportunities.[31] Indian Ambassador to Libya also stated that India could help build Libya's human resource capacity by transferring residual knowhow to Libyans. "We believe in sharing with other developing nations whatever expertise India has achieved...We are also ready to provide training and technical support in IT and we are ready to transfer our knowledge and knowhow to Libya by setting up a centre of excellence in IT in Libya," Trigunayat stated.[32]

South Sudan

After its creation, South Sudan assumed the bulk of united Sudan's oil production; but, the

pipelines and the Red Sea export terminal remained in the north, creating several disputes that have worsened since the start of the civil war in 2013. Indian investments have been destabilised by the ongoing violence in South Sudan, and Indian nationals and workers have had to be routinely evacuated with every new cycle of violence.[33]

India has also been one of the leading contributes to UNMIS – the UN Peace-building mission in South Sudan. The Indian deployment comprises a medical corps, engineering units, and a supply corps, which have been crucial to running a mission in a new country with almost no existing infrastructure. However, given the nature of the conflict, Indian soldiers have not shied away from robust peacekeeping and have also played an important role in protecting the mass of civilians fleeing from violence. UNMIS, however, has a limited mandate and does not have the tools to broker a lasting solution. As a result, regional and external actors have taken over the mediation process through forums like the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and IGAD plus. India has not participated in these forums.[34]

India had previously engaged in mediation between Sudan and South Sudan, when it was not technically seen as interfering in internal matters. In March 2012, the Ministry of External Affairs appointed a special envoy to Sudan and South Sudan. This position was later given to the secretary for the Development Partnership Administration, the body managing India's international development partnerships. The idea was that this would enable India to both articulate its position for a speedy resolution to the conflict and offer South Sudan several capacity-building and infrastructure projects. However, these projects were either suspended or never initiated due to the civil war, and the position of special envoy became vacant in late

2013. While India has since sent diplomats to assess the situation and follow peace negotiations in Addis, it has chosen to remain largely on the margins of international mediation efforts.[35]

GLOBAL POSTURING

Global negotiating platforms such as the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) are used by states to pursue national interests, but also to project a particular identity and political vision. At such global platforms, New Delhi has remained committed to its position that state stability is a prerequisite for international peace and security. However, what is perhaps new is that it now has begun to emphasise the need for a holistic approach to security and development. There has been a gradual shift in its position - from a position of principled opposition to any form of international interference to now gradually accepting that in certain circumstances the international community may play a more proactive role in the domestic affairs of a particular state. India's position on the R2P debate is indicative. India was highly skeptical of R2P doctrine during negotiations at the World Summit in 2005, arguing that it should not be used "as a cover" for conferring legitimacy on the so-called "right of humanitarian intervention".[36] At the UNGA in 2009, however, India recognised for the first time the notion of "sovereignty as responsibility";[37] at the same time, it argued for the sequential ordering of the R2P pillars whereby the primary responsibility of the international community is to support the state in building its capacity.[38] At the 2015 Negotiations on Financing Sustainable Development, India highlighted this once again, this time emphasising the need for appropriate financing mechanisms.

A similar shift can be seen in India's position on peacekeeping. The shift towards more robust

forms of peacekeeping, as the previous section argued, has posed a principled challenge for India, challenging the principle of non-interference and consent. However, as WPS Sidhu argues, India seems to be evolving a "peacebuilding as state building" approach. Statements by India's foreign policy elite suggest that India envisions an "inclusive" and "comprehensive" approach to peacebuilding—one that combines the provision of humanitarian assistance with activities that help resume economic activity and create political and administrative institutions to improve inclusive governance.[39]

Indian representatives have also argued that sustainable peace must be rooted in broader commitments to conflict prevention and sustainable development. Tanamay Lal, in his capacity as India's Permanent representative to the UN argued, for example, that, "A more holistic approach toward gender equality and empowerment, access to healthcare, education and employment and strengthening of democratic institutions and processes are all important aspects of a holistic approach to prevent conflict."[40] In recent negotiations around the Sustainable Development Goals and the Post 2015 development agenda, India further clarified its understanding of the relationship between development and peace and security. In a statement on 'Indian priorities in the post-2015 Development Agenda', Counsellor Amit Narang argued, "The task of the development agenda must be to create conditions for rapid economic growth, for eradication of poverty, want and hunger and for holistic and sustainable development. All these, in our view will in turn contribute to build lasting peace, prevent conflict, and promote stability. In other words, peace and stability in the context of the development agenda should be looked at from a developmental lens."[41]

CONCLUSION: POLICY TRAJECTORIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite growing economic and commercial ties with Africa, New Delhi chooses not to directly address the underlying causes of state fragility and vulnerability in the continent. Much of India's engagement in Africa takes place through the form of export credits, which are managed by the EXIM bank and executed through either public sector holdings like ONGC or private sector companies. This engagement has been mostly transactional and New Delhi has rarely issued directives to steer these commercial transactions in a manner that might directly seek to address state fragility. The argument that continued Indian investments, particularly in resource-rich African states, is helping keep in power authoritarian leaders is one that needs substantiation over a longer time frame, though it is safe to say that India is far from the only actor – west or east, north or south – that has overlooked human rights violations in its bilateral engagements. In fact, human rights conditionality, or similar instruments, has rarely worked in changing the behaviour of authoritarian leaders.

There is, however, a seeming disconnect between its global posturing and its approach in Africa. While at a global level, India has recently begun to argue for a more holistic approach to security and development, linking sustainable peace to conflict prevention and sustainable development, in Africa its development and security arms tend to work independently of each other. This is at least partly because, as noted above, it is a very different set of actors leading both kinds of initiatives. It is also possibly because its investments in Africa are still very small, and almost entirely concentrated in one country. But, India's global pronouncements on matters related to security and development might also be seen as a way of highlighting the gap between the policy and

practice of the so-called traditional donors. New Delhi has frequently noted, for example, that western states are yet to contribute their share to peacekeeping budgets or meet their existing ODA commitments.

Alternatively, this global posturing might be designed to indicate that India is a responsible great power. In this context, it is worth noting that India is a founding member of the UN Democracy Fund, with the second largest contribution to this Fund after the United States. This might seem at odds with its reservations on international interference in internal governance and human rights issues. However, India's support for democracy promotion does not reflect a principled posturing about the value of promoting democracy globally; rather, as Sidharth Mallavarapu argues, India's support for UNDF needs to be understood as part of a larger Indian quest for great power standing and its recalibration of ties, particularly with the US in the post Cold War period.[42] However, as J Cartwright argues, India has retained a concern with not being a proselytiser but to be an exemplar.[43] India has also been an active member of the Human Rights Council (HRC), and in 2011 was re-elected to the HRC. India's approach has been to avoid confrontation, favouring instead dialogue and diplomacy. In 2011, India along with its IBSA partners sent a delegation to Damascus to discuss methods of peacefully resolving the dispute; the mission, however, produced no perceptible impact on the parties.[44]

Relating to this to the Africa context, it would imply that even if India takes on a more proactive role in addressing some of the underlying causes of state fragility, this is likely to be through trainings or sharing best practices, and not through direct programmatic interventions.

India might also take a more proactive role if its investments are threatened, particularly its import of oil. Again, India is likely to use its preferred approach of back-door diplomacy rather than join a broader international coalition. With the rise of nationalist governments across the world, the liberal moment also seems to be waning – unlike a decade ago, it seems increasingly unlikely that India would now join such a coalition out of reputational concerns or because of expectations of what it means to be a great power.

Finally, India has been clear that south-south cooperation cannot be expected to contribute any new finances to global development goals. At global negotiations around the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 and in consultations leading up to the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016, India argued for a "common but differentiated responsibility" towards achieving global development[45] and humanitarian[46] objectives, i.e., while states have a common responsibility to secure global peace and development, the nature and magnitude of that responsibility differs across states in proportion to historic responsibility and capacity. In other words, the responsibility for global development as a targeted allocation of finances and programmes must continue to lie with western industrialised states.

Rather, the main contribution of southern actors like India will be in creating development partnerships for mutual economic growth. If for example, its infrastructure investments can help create more and better jobs in African states, then this would be a critical stabilising intervention. It is unreasonable to expect that SSC will follow the same trajectories as traditional north-south aid flows; rather, it is shaped by different histories, priorities, strengths, and challenges. Thus, the main, and valuable contribution of SSC will lie in

investments that are in a sense the background conditions for state building - trade facilitation, investments in basic infrastructure and productive capacity, and training and infrastructure.

Even as Indian programmes do not directly address the causes of fragility and vulnerability in African states, New Delhi should consider mechanisms through which it can manage and lessen the risks associated with a conflict-blind approach to its African investments. Investing in knowledge production - by academics, think tanks, and others – to support risk management in Africa, could enable this. Building long-term partnerships with civil society actors in African states should also figure in a long-term strategy, a strategy that can also help India build good will. Doing south-south cooperation better, in a more accountable, productive, and informed manner, will incrementally help address causes of fragility. Projects should attempt to make relevant backward and forward linkages, both in terms of infrastructure and human capital that can then support the local economy. An infrastructure project that is collectively planned by Indian companies and local partners can for example, create jobs and promote access to economic opportunities. Finally, India might also identify and pursue avenues for collective advocacy on global platforms to facilitate, for example, access to new forms of development finance, favorable terms of trade, and technology transfer. ⊛RF

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ENDNOTES

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6. India has frequently departed from the principle on non-interference as it has attempted to carve out and manage its sphere of influence in South Asia - examples include its military operation against East Pakistan in 1971, the annexation of Sikkim in 1975, its defense of Maldives in 1988, punitive economic measures against Nepal in 1989, and its support for peacekeeping and counter insurgency in Sri Lanka in 1987 and again in 2009. India has also been active in promoting intervention beyond its neighbourhood. For example, India took the lead in pressing the international community to sanction the apartheid regime in South Africa, and backed the Vietnamese intervention of Cambodia in the 1980s. Most recently, India's softening stance on non-intervention was visible in its decision to abstain on a UNSC resolution to sanction military intervention in Libya.

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