



## Meeting Summary

# Africa's Security and Stability: Key Issues and Opportunities for Progress

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## Introduction

This document is a summary of a meeting held at Chatham House on 7 November 2012. The topic of the meeting was stability and security in Africa, looking specifically at current issues and at prospects and opportunities for the future. The meeting was held as part of the Chatham House Africa Programme 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary series.

Over the past ten years security dynamics across Africa have transformed. At the start of the 21st century the continent was beset by multiple civil and interstate conflicts of a traditional nature, including a significant multi-state conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 2012 all but a very few of these conflicts are over, and much of Africa is now characterised by stability and economic growth.

Yet new security challenges have emerged: in West Africa with the coup in Mali and terrorism in Nigeria, and in the Horn of Africa with tensions between South Sudan and Sudan. Maritime piracy, cyber-crime, drugs trafficking, and extremism, and inter- and intra-state rivalries present new challenges.

At this event a panel of experts reflected on the changing nature of the security threats across Africa and the likely trajectory of such threats in coming years. The meeting consisted of three twenty minute presentations which were given on the record. The following summary is intended to serve as an aide-mémoire for those present and to provide a general summary for those who weren't.

## Alex Vines

It is ten years since the African Union (AU) came into existence and it is also ten years since the African Peace and Security Architecture was initiated. Many countries on the continent are also celebrating or approaching their fiftieth anniversary of independence. This presents an opportunity to reflect and also look forward at what is to come.

There is a decreasing level of civil war in Africa. There are half as many civil wars now as there were in the 1990s, and this has been reflected in the shift in focus by the Africa Programme towards issues of growth, business and investment. Today, wars tend to be fought at the periphery of states with rebel groups benefiting from more transnational ties, but few controlling large areas.

The study of conflict is being dominated by the discipline of war studies calling for a greater focus on non-state actors. But there is increasing electoral violence, so called 'gunpowder' politics, in Africa. Mr Vines cited Nigeria, Kenya, and Côte d'Ivoire as examples of this. On an optimistic note Mr Vines pointed out that the increase in electoral violence is only possible because of the increase in elections. There are also increasing incidences of land and water conflict, a phenomenon that Mr Vines predicted we are likely to hear more about in the future.

Mr Vines pointed out that over the last decade there has been a lot of attention paid to, and a lot of literature produced on, resource wars. He made reference to a talk at Chatham House on the 6 November 2012 on diamonds in Zimbabwe as an example. He went on to say how diamonds, oil, and increasingly drugs, are topics that are being talked about. Another growing concern is the number of incidents of indigenous groups clashing with immigrants, such as the violence seen in South Africa. As a consequence of climate change there has been a migration of people in Africa towards agricultural zones which are well-watered and well-forested, and this is something he expects to see more in the future.

Some things are changing: there has been a strengthening of civil society and political institutions, as well as economic growth and geopolitical shifts, such as the external support for insurgencies. The end of the Cold War has weakened some conflicts and provided opportunities for others; however the insurgencies of the 1990s did not develop into structured fighting forces of the type seen during the Cold War.

The conflicts of today have been described in some academic literature as counter-system rebellions, including those conflicts involving Al-Qaeda in the

Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al Shabaab, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and separatist groups in Senegal, Angola and Mali. Mr Vines stated that this is an interesting moment to reflect on where we have come from, and where we are going.

### David Chuter

Dr Chuter introduced his presentation by asserting that the focus should be less on the type of conflict, and more on the responses to them, asking: Are the AU, African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), and African Standby Force (ASF) either appropriate or sensible?

The AU in its APSA manifestation needs to be a security community: a group of countries that have security interests that are in common, or at least not conflicting with one another. These can range from what Dr Chuter referred to as a simple 'lets all live in peace' set-up, to more formal military alliances similar to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The AU is at the ambitious end of this spectrum according to Dr Chuter.

The high proportion of AU funding going to APSA demonstrates that security is the main concern of the organisation.

Dr Chuter argued that there are eleven 'assets' required to build a functional security community, and the bigger the community, the more of each of these 'assets' it requires. These 'assets' are:

- *Reasonable commonality of interests* - At a minimal level, interests should at least be compatible and not opposed. The larger the organisation, the more difficult this is.
- *Capable states as members* - States themselves need to be able to act in the community and make it work.
- *Assets and capabilities* - States need diplomatic, military, political, institutional and economic capabilities which can be used to further the interests of the security community.
- Trained and equipped forces capable of deploying outside of their country - This is a particular challenge in Africa.
- *Capabilities to spare* - Countries need to be able to send some of their best people and assets to the organisation, not just those that the country 'wants to get rid of'.

- *Central coordination* - Weak or ineffective central organisation will not make an ambitious structure work.
- *Monopoly on the issues you are dealing with* - A security community needs to have influence over the issues with which it is concerned and be a central interlocutor in that issue.
- States need to be willing to provide practical support to the functioning of the security community.
- There needs to be a desire to use that community as opposed to another international organisation, former colonial power or ally to solve a crisis.
- *Money* - One problem is that some rich countries do not contribute, and some poor countries cannot contribute.
- *Strong system* - A security community needs a system that is capable of central direction, command, and control of operations that are going to be carried out.

The example of the European Union (EU) is one of the best, yet it highlights the difficulties in setting up a reasonable security organisation. There are problems in the commonalities of interest, differences in capabilities and an unwillingness to rescind national sovereignty.

The AU is in a more difficult position, according to Dr Chuter. There are problems of commonalities of interest and capacity, as many states do not have the capacity to keep secure themselves, let alone enough capacity to spare for collective security.

Dr Chuter stated that when issues arise in Africa, the AU is often a marginal player rather than a monopoly holder.

Furthermore, Dr Chuter highlighted the importance which the AU attributes to ASPA, questioning whether such frameworks are the solutions to Africa's problems, and what form such solutions should logically take.

Dr Chuter deduced that if a security solution is the answer, this demonstrates that security is the main problem in Africa today. More specifically, the problems in Africa resemble those in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. While this may be the suggestion, it is false as many problems in Africa are actually a direct result of the colonial era.

African countries are still dealing with territorial disputes that are a direct result of decolonisation. In fact the after-effects of the colonial era have been the principal, but not the only, cause of conflict in Africa.

Dr Chuter asserted that the main problems in Africa are not security-related, but are health and food-related, for example having inadequate access to clean drinking water, the prevalence of malaria and so on. However, there is no comparable financial or political will to combat these problems.

The AU structure assumes that a strong organisation can be born out of weak states. It is more ambitious, is being constructed faster and is more all-encompassing than the EU's peace and security structures, all with a fraction of the EU's resources. To illustrate this point, Dr Chuter quoted a UK diplomat in Kinshasa who stated, 'imagine trying to run a country the size of Europe, with the budget of Birmingham'.

Dr Chuter argued that there has been a continuation in African nations' obsession with building Western-style states, and in the belief that Western ideas can be imported and will work. If such plans have failed at the national level, why should they work at an international level?

If the ASF is the solution, this implies that Africa's security problem can be addressed by a light brigade, largely made up of infantry, which can be deployed for six months.

In neither pre- nor post- colonial times have African military solutions based on European models been effective at the domestic level. Such efforts have tended to be pocket-sized versions of European forces which, without the training or the financing, have not been successful.

Referring to earlier remarks on the location of conflict at state peripheries, Dr Chuter said that it is hard to conceive how nations that do not hold a monopoly on the legitimate use of force within their own territories can come together to create a mutual security guarantee.

Dr Chuter concluded that Africa is imitating former colonial powers. Rather than a strong AU, Dr Chuter argued that the West wants to continue a sadomasochistic relationship with smaller African states. He maintained that this is a system which is financed by external actors and ignores African solutions. He posited that African problems need to have African solutions which originate from the continent itself. These need to draw upon the wealth of African culture and knowledge.

## Amandine Gnanguenon

Dr Gnanguenon started by stating that all opinions were her own and not those of the French Ministry of Defence.

Dr Gnanguenon stated that it was necessary to first look at the nature of insecurity and instability in Africa. She spoke of the decreasing level of conflict in Africa, but noted that there are complexities because of three elements:

- Conflicts can be read through two chronological frames: short-term and long-term. There is a predominance of short-term visions of conflict, despite their long-term roots which include resource scarcity and law and order issues.
- Regional spill-overs result from geographic proximity and economic, political, historical, and cultural links between border states.
- A lack of political leaders at the domestic level and weak states allow other groups to play a role.

Dr Gnanguenon summarised the insecurity and instability in Africa as a vicious cycle where the borders between local, national and regional spaces disappear.

The ASF is not a new concept; the idea of an African high command has been in existence since Kwame Nkrumah advocated it in 1958.

The ASF is part of the APSA which was created in 2002. It is centralized around the AU and structures of the RECs.

Dr Gnanguenon drew a comparison between APSA and the UN's use of Chapter 8, which gives a role to regional organisations in peace and security operations.

She stated that the two-level system of collective security creates more official cooperation within APSA.

The APSA has a number of tools to help prevent conflicts. The ASF is one example. It is based on five regional forces and this poses challenges. The ASF is supposed to be available to the AU's Peace and Security Council for managing conflict. It is supposed to be fully operationalized by 2015 and composed of multi-disciplined contingents of police, military and civilians. Every state is supposed to belong to one regional force though there are

exceptions, notably Angola, which decided to belong to the central force as well the southern forces.

The AU's response is categorized into six potential scenarios. These are largely drawn from the experience of the Rwandan genocide, which is an example of the sort of extreme scenario where the international community does not have the capacity to react quickly but the AU could intervene.

An alternative option would be to use the forces of one region in another region – such as the deployment of troops from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) into the Horn of Africa. This could be most effective in cases where states are dubious of neighbour state involvement.

The nature of war and the potential solution should be considered in the interaction of conflict tools.

The state is simultaneously part of the problem and part of the solution because state legitimacy at the international level is often disconnected from state legitimacy at the domestic level. This is new particularity in Africa, and in response to this there is a need to reintegrate the limits of a state-based system.

The role of the national armies is important because the ASF is based upon national armies and their capabilities. In the case of the DRC, the national defence and security forces have been used to oppress and repress the population instead of protecting it, demonstrating an obvious limit. The ASF is not, and will not be, the only solution to solve every security problem. Prevention should be the objective in conflict management. It is crucial to manage conflict in the short-term, while at the same time ensuring that the factors for the next conflict are not being created. Also, military intervention could sometimes be a necessary precondition for solving the deeper roots of conflict in the long-term, but intervention can be both a factor in stability or instability, as was shown in Libya.

At the moment, African states' lack of capacity creates a strong dependence on external partners. These forces need training, equipment and logistical and intelligence support. This is not an issue at the operational level, but the dependence on external partners is an issue at the political level because the RECs and, more broadly, African states cannot control the agenda of deployment.

Dr Gnanguenon agreed with Dr Chuter that there is a need to leave the AU aside and look to the RECs. Because of the risks of regional spill-over, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), ASF and regional forces are



perceived as useful structures. However, they are limited. In the case of the co-operation between the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and ECOWAS to fight piracy, the reason for cooperation is the need to solve a problem which is common to both regions.

The APSA is very ambitious, and the use of the RECs provides a flexible framework to deploy regional forces. Dr Gnanguenon added that unlike EU countries, Africa's national militaries are being built from the regional level. This may seem bizarre, but in Dr Gnanguenon's opinion the ASF is a very good example of how national capacity can be built at the regional level. She viewed the project as one of regional cooperation in order to create and build some national capacity.

To conclude, Dr Gnanguenon stated that we should be aware of the difference between legitimacy and legality. Legality is not the same as legitimacy, because you have to prove that you have the capacity for the solution. This is why military intervention is an interesting, but short-term option, because it can never solve the very deep political issues within African states.

### **Knox Chitiyo**

Dr Chitiyo focused on the idea that Africa and the APSA are at a crossroads in terms of the structure of African security operations.

There are various security challenges in Africa: funding, resources and prioritization of the structure of the security framework. Dr Chitiyo stated that African states, the AU and the RECs need to make a decision as to what kind of militaries they want and need, and what is practical for the types of challenges faced.

The notion of security has become much broader since the AU was established. It is no longer simply about African armies, but about a more comprehensive security which includes armies, police forces, judiciaries and civil society.

From a regional perspective one of the new challenges is post-electoral violence. This will be most evident in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the East African Community (EAC). Examples in 2013 could include Zimbabwe, which is going through a very important constitutional process and will have elections, and also Kenya and Madagascar which are also due to go the polls in 2013.

In 2007 and 2008 there were messy post-electoral outcomes and violence in these countries. In 2013 these countries will again face similar challenges.

The set-up of Zimbabwe's Government of National Unity is in a sense very similar to Kenya's National Unity Government, although there are also some important differences, and their 2013 elections will be an immediate and clear challenge to both countries.

Dr Chitiyo argued that if there is a messy process in one country, it could become a template for messy transition in another. On the other hand, there could be a circuit of transitions where a post-electoral outcome that is handled well in one country will lead to a well-handled outcome in another.

Dr Chitiyo stated that we are heading into an era where we are talking about such issues inter-regionally. While in theory SADC, EAC, and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) are completely distinct regional entities, in practice there are a lot of commonalities and shared political processes. Elections present a true opportunity for intra-regional dialogue. Discussing a way forward will ensure that outcomes are managed well and do not degenerate into violence, whatever the result of an election.

Dr Chitiyo argued that aside from the elections, there needs to be more focus on Africa's police forces. These are as much a component of Africa's security as African militaries are, and will be increasingly relevant in addressing the new security challenges.

Capable police forces are vital for economic growth, democracy and security. There are currently various challenges to law and order including narcotics trafficking, urban crime, piracy, poaching, social conflict and trans-border issues. Many of these challenges are currently being dealt with by militaries when a competent police force might be more suitable. The police are the daily interface between civil society, the judicial structures, governance and the military. In a sense they sit at the centre of African security on a daily basis. As such, an effective police force can play a critical role in public security, nation-building and peace-building. Yet African police budgets have declined by over 10% on average over the past decade, despite army and national budgets increasing.

The next potential threat area covered by Dr Chitiyo was the coast of eastern Africa. Somali piracy is in decline, but that does not mean that piracy off Somalia is no longer a problem, rather that precautions seem to be working. The increasing stabilisation and rebuilding of Somalia has played a part in this, as has the situation in Yemen.

Following gas finds in the region, there are likely to be major gas exports in the near future. This has resulted in massive plans for increasing infrastructure which will increase container traffic through the ports in the area. This would result in an increase in cargo for energy vessels, supply ships and drilling ships. Many of these are very technical ships, some of them are actually very slow-moving, and they will be carrying valuable crew and cargo. Therefore they will be easy targets.

Another challenge is climate change with potential threats posed by water availability, food security, disease, and migration. Over the last decade climate change has been writ at large as a massive threat to African development. Dr Chitiyo was not entirely convinced that climate change is as much of a threat to African development as it has been shaped up to be. He stated that land is now, and always has been, an issue in Africa. What is more important for the next decade is the issue of large scale land transfers. A lot of Africa's land is being bought by corporations which causes clashes with the local communities. The clash between new forms of land ownership against traditional and community forms of land ownership is one of the big challenges and opportunities.

Dr Chitiyo asked the question of what 'dividend' is growth paying to the African youth? The issue of the 'growth dividend' being received by the youth in Africa will present a real challenge for Africa.

In terms of broader security Dr Chitiyo thought that AMISOM has presented opportunities and challenges to African security. AMISOM has been cost effective and it has demonstrated that African security can be cost effective, being done on a minimal budget. It is not perfect, but it has shown that Africa can take control of its own security on a minimal budget.

To conclude, Dr Chitiyo said that he thinks people are now more positive in Africa, and that they are seeing the future more in terms of opportunities than challenges.