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On the Agenda

A shaky start for Morocco in the AU

The Peace and Security Council (PSC), chaired by South Africa, discussed the issue of Western Sahara on 20 March 2017. Morocco, which had joined the African Union (AU) earlier this year, was absent despite an invitation from the PSC.

Staunch sympathisers of the Sahrawi people such as South Africa and Algeria had hoped that Morocco's admission into the AU would foster renewed dialogue to address the Western Sahara crisis. However, early indications are that Morocco is not willing to relinquish its claim on the territory – and that it is not keen on discussing this in the AU.

A total of 39 AU member states accepted Morocco's bid to join the organisation, which it did at the 28th AU summit in January 2017. Polisario Front officials said they welcomed the admission of Morocco to the AU, since it meant that the conflict would now be addressed within the organisation. The AU has taken numerous resolutions over the years supporting the independence of Western Sahara.

Morocco told the PSC that the issue was being addressed by the UN Security Council

The 15-member PSC invited Morocco to attend its first discussion on the topic since the country had joined the AU. However, Morocco told the PSC that the issue was being addressed by the United Nations (UN) Security Council and that the PSC should adopt a 'neutral position' in this regard.

PSC Chairperson

H.E Sebade Toba

Ambassador of Togo to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the AU

Current members of the PSC

Algeria, Botswana, Burundi, Chad, Egypt, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Togo, Uganda, Zambia

Is the readmission a betrayal of Western Sahara?

Some view the AU's unconditional readmission of Morocco as a failure on the part of the continental body, which has been unequivocal about decolonising Africa. South Africa, for example, wanted Morocco to commit to the long-awaited referendum in Western Sahara, sanctioned by several UN resolutions, before being allowed to join the AU.

Since 1981, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now the AU, has consistently adopted resolutions calling for a referendum on self-determination in Western Sahara. For Morocco's opponents, the case of Western Sahara has always been about decolonisation, and the continental body has recognised the independence of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). This was what prompted Morocco to leave the OAU in 1984.

In view of situations like Western Sahara, the AU adopted the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which insists that 'nothing shall justify the domination of a people by another'.

For supporters of the SARD, Morocco's admission signals the AU's departure from its principles and a dream deferred for the Sahrawi people.

The rise of pragmatism and decline of ideology within the AU

In the run-up to the debate over its admission, Morocco demonstrated its affluence by signing various bilateral deals with a number of African states. The fact that economic ties took precedence during the debate over re-admitting Morocco to the AU shows that African states are increasingly shifting from ideology towards pragmatism.

Morocco demonstrated its affluence by signing various bilateral deals with a number of African states

The belief that Morocco may cover the funding gap precipitated by the overthrow and death of former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi – following the NATO invasion of Libya in 2011 – has also made Morocco's admission attractive to the AU. Gaddafi was a generous contributor to the AU.

Morocco could use this leverage to counteract the perspective of those who support independence for Western Sahara. One strategy is to couch the Western Sahara issue as one of secession – the same as that faced by many countries in Africa, such as Nigeria, Cameroon, Mali, Ethiopia, Senegal, Somalia and Tanzania.

Internationally, Western Sahara has been described as a non-self-governing territory, meaning that Morocco's presence is one of occupation.

Morocco has also indicated that it wants to join the Economic Community of West African states. This could be good for economic development in the region, where Morocco recently signed a significant number of economic deals. But admitting Morocco will test the body's recent gains in defending democratic values and its resilience on the Western Sahara issue.

Will African countries stand up against the exploitation of Western Sahara?

Opponents of Morocco argue that it is occupying Western Sahara due to the considerable dividends it gains from the region's resources. Morocco benefits from the fish stocks, phosphates and other mineral deposits, agricultural produce and oil reserves in the region.

On 21 December 2016 the European Union (EU) Court of Justice ruled against any EU–Morocco trade relations that involve products from Western Sahara. The ruling affects the 2012 EU–Morocco agreement on liberalising trade in agricultural and fishing products.

39

COUNTRIES WANTED
MOROCCO BACK IN THE AU

The question can be asked whether, having signed new deals with Morocco, African states would look beyond the economic gains to deny any deals involving products from Western Sahara.

The AU remains committed to the Western Sahara cause

According to the PSC statement that followed the meeting on 20 March, the PSC decided to elevate the status of former president Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique from the position of AU special envoy to that of high representative for Western Sahara. This is to enable Chissano to mobilise international action on the issue and facilitate direct talks between Morocco and Western Sahara.

The PSC also decided to reopen the AU office in Laayoune, Western Sahara and to reactivate the ad hoc committee of heads of state and government on Western Sahara – established in 1978 during the early years of the violent confrontations. The PSC also restated its call on the UN to address the illegal exploration and exploitation of Western Sahara.

The PSC decided to elevate the status of Joaquim Chissano to that of high representative for Western Sahara

Addressing human right violations in Western Sahara

On 13 March 2017 a court in Morocco resumed the trial of 25 Sahrawi people who allegedly killed 13 Moroccans in Gdeim Izik camp in 2010. But questions are being asked about the Sahrawi victims who have suffered from years of human rights violations and killings by Moroccan forces.

The AU has been at the forefront of those calling for a human rights mandate for the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). MINURSO is virtually the only UN mission without a human rights mandate. Its current mandate ends in April 2017, which is an opportunity to push for a human rights component and the need for self-determination in the region.

The UN and the AU has a greater role to play in dispelling the belief that ‘the louder the gun, the greater the international effort to resolve disputes’. AU member states also have a significant role in sticking to the AU common position on the issue and raising momentum on finding a solution to the quest for self-determination in Western Sahara.

On the Agenda

Denialism plagues Africa's early warning system

Why does the PSC never discuss certain conflicts in Africa, despite alerts by its own early warning system? For example, Zimbabwe has never been on the agenda of the PSC despite the ongoing political instability in the country. During the PSC meeting on early warning and the state of peace and security in Africa on 21 March, it was clear that the continent's tools to prevent conflict are not being used adequately.

As the costs of peace support operations such as those in Somalia soar, most international actors are putting greater emphasis on conflict prevention. The old adage, prevention is better than cure, has acquired critical significance in a context of budgetary constraints and looming cuts in the United States' contributions to the UN budget for peacekeeping operations. A critical element of any conflict prevention remains early warning, which is supposed to prompt timely actions to prevent emerging crises from deteriorating.

The old adage, prevention is better than cure, has acquired critical significance

Concerns regarding the denial of emerging crises

At the AU level, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) was created by the PSC protocol in 2004 'in order to facilitate the anticipation or prevention of conflicts'. The CEWS is located in the Peace and Security Department and works on open sources such as newspapers and academic papers, among others, to detect signs of instability on the continent. It then produces situation reports that include recommendations.

Ten years after its operationalisation, the CEWS still faces many challenges identified by the PSC. These were first raised in July 2015, when an open session was held on the same question. The 2015 open session took place during the chairpersonship of South Africa, which again assumed this position last month. The staffing shortage, identified in 2015, for example, still remains an issue.

However, the main challenge is the negative reaction by some member states when situations in their countries are the subject of early warning. The PSC, following its meeting on 21 March 2017, expressed 'concern over the continued denials of objective/credible early warning signals of looming crisis, thereby undermining the conflict prevention capacity of the council'. This concern was



2004

CREATION OF THE CONTINENTAL
EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

also raised during the open session held in 2015. It is also addressed in the recent AU Master Roadmap Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2020, which vows to 'expose those who deny brewing crises'.

Lack of political will

The issue of denialism is strongly linked to the lack of political will – sometimes within the PSC – to address crises. In this regard, the master roadmap calls for 'the establishment of clear channels of communications on early warning reports to the PSC'.

Indeed, the drafting of an early warning report does not necessarily result in a PSC meeting. Looking at the past PSC meetings dedicated to horizon scanning, specific country situations are rarely addressed.

Some member states have lobbied their allies within the PSC to avoid being placed on the agenda

So far, the end users of CEWS outputs have mostly been the AU Commission (AUC) rather than the PSC. A channel of communication between the CEWS and member states is yet to be found. While the PSC protocol outlines the functions of various pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture, it lacks a policy process regarding their coordination.

Often the CEWS cannot present situation analyses if the states in question do not approve. In the recent past, some member states have even lobbied their allies within the PSC to avoid being placed on the agenda, despite alerts by the CEWS.

From this perspective, the call by the PSC for 'the promotion of synergies between the AU Commission and other African institutions, including think tanks and research institutions, whose activities focus on conflict prevention' is an indirect acknowledgement of this situation. The involvement of think tanks could be an alternative way to resolve the problem of meddling by individual member states.

Root causes of instability

The PSC has also explicitly called for sustained action to address *the root causes* of violent conflicts.

The current mandate of the early warning unit, however, is a focus on the direct prevention of conflict. It looks at triggers of conflicts rather than structural causes. Therefore, some responses advocated by early warning are short term and could ultimately prove to be ineffective.

This tendency to look at short term triggers is again fuelled by the reluctance of member states to see their structural problems addressed by an external actor, including the AU.

Looking at root causes also requires better cooperation between the CEWS and other departments and organs of the AU that look at structural conflict prevention.

Uneven coordination with RECs

A critical issue is the relation between the CEWS and the regional early warning systems, since the AUC rarely sends its staff on the ground to collect information. It differs in this regard from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which have analysts in every country of their respective regions. An effective early warning architecture requires close coordination between the desk research done by the CEWS and the field approach of the regional economic communities (RECs). However, since regional systems differ, the degree of collaboration with the CEWS is uneven. For example, the Southern African Development Community is a closed system, so it cannot cooperate with an open system such as the CEWS.

Some responses advocated by early warning are short term and could ultimately prove to be ineffective

Structural prevention an opportunity for improvement

The future operationalisation of the structural conflict prevention framework adopted by the AU in 2015 could provide a framework for improving the effectiveness of early warning.

It could lead to closer collaboration between the CEWS, the relevant units in the Department of Political Affairs

and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). Indeed, the APRM's review of governance structures in African countries can provide a picture of the structural vulnerabilities faced by these states.

There is currently a good working relationship between the early warning and electoral units. Long-term observation missions deployed by the Department of Political Affairs, for example, usually include staff from the early warning unit. The remaining challenge is to expand this cooperation to address structural issues.

The APRM's review of governance structures can provide a picture of the vulnerabilities faced by these states

The conflict prevention framework creates two instruments: the Country Structural Vulnerability Assessment (CSVA) and the Conflict Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategy (CSVM). It should allow the CEWS to get a comprehensive view of the emerging instability, in which case it can argue in favour of adequate responses in the short, medium and long term. However, these tools can only be deployed with the consent of member states, and it is unlikely that member states facing looming crises will allow such initiatives.

It is necessary for the AUC to consider other options if AU member states are reluctant to have an assessment of their vulnerabilities. The CSVA could be used as an internal template document within the CEWS, as well as the framework for collaboration between other departments, RECs and the APRM. In this way the AUC can build up a coherent and comprehensive body of knowledge about triggers and root causes of instability in Africa. The AUC will then be able to propose to the PSC more adequate responses to prevent the eruption of conflicts on the continent.



On the Agenda

The Darfur illusion: hostilities are decreasing but no peace in sight

The AU is struggling to convince all the stakeholders in Darfur to agree to a binding ceasefire based on a comprehensive agreement. The array of rebel movements and factions in Darfur makes for an increasingly complex situation, compounded by clashes among ethnic groups at the community level.

The security situation in Darfur can be very misleading. Since their offensives in 2015 and 2016, government forces, assisted by militias, have significantly reduced the presence of rebel movements in Darfur. This was confirmed by the PSC when it met on 29 March to discuss Darfur and the activities of the AU–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). At this meeting the PSC noted the improvement in the situation and called for a review of the ‘deployment [of the mission] in the context of the improved environment in Darfur’.

The offensive by the government has also deprived rebel movements of the support they received from local communities. Moreover, the changing geopolitical context, with the *rapprochement* between Sudan and some of its former regional foes and Western critics such as Uganda, South Sudan and the United States, has decreased the backing that rebel movements have enjoyed since 2003.

Since their offensives in 2015 and 2016, government forces have significantly reduced the presence of rebel movements in Darfur

On the surface, then, things are calm. However, clashes continue, and since the violence started in 2003 no comprehensive peace agreement has been signed by all the main stakeholders.

No comprehensive peace agreement

The Darfur conflict erupted in 2003 when two rebel movements took up arms to protest against the economic and political marginalisation of their groups (the Fur, Zaghawa and Masalit) in Sudan at both the local and the national level.

Since then, two peace agreements have been signed, the Darfur Peace Agreement of 2006 and the Doha Document of Peace in Darfur (DDPD) of 2011. Neither of them was signed by all the rebel groups*. At this point

2011

SIGNING OF THE DOHA DOCUMENT
OF PEACE IN DARFUR

the government still views the DDPD as the framework for any settlement. The major groups, however, reject this document and view it as being too favourable to the government.

Unilateral ceasefires the norm

Both parties have instead declared unilateral ceasefires on separate occasions. Since October 2015 the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) chaired by Minni Minawi and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) have announced six-month ceasefires, renewed over time.

In June 2016 the government also declared a four-month cessation of hostilities, extended for two months in October, another month in December and recently for six months in January 2017. From the government's perspective, these actions were necessary to convince the outgoing Obama administration to lift the 20-year-long US sanctions against Sudan.

At the local level, the situation remains volatile because of recurrent inter-communal conflicts

Tensions at the community level

At the local level, the situation remains volatile because of recurrent inter-communal conflicts, with clashes between 'Arab' militias and 'non-Arab' groups, 'Arab' militias and the government, and among 'non-Arab' groups. Competition remains fierce over resources such as gold in the Jebel Mara and land that has become vacant because of the displacement of around 2 million people from Darfur.

The lack of a clear legal framework governing land ownership fuels the use of violence in the disputes between the various groups. This situation will be aggravated if the internally displaced were to return to Darfur.

These concerns have largely been ignored in the decisions over the fate of Darfur. This was illustrated by the referendum held in April 2016 on the area's administrative status. Originally a federal state, Darfur had been divided into three states in 1994 and then into five states.

During the referendum, 97% of voters chose the 'states option' over the 'regional option'. This meant that Darfur would remain divided into five states. The referendum was strongly criticised by many stakeholders and observers because of the security context, which did not allow internally displaced persons and refugees to participate. The organisation of this poll also raised questions about the government's commitment to address the grievances that lead to the current conflict.

The main ethnic groups, the Fur and the Zaghawa, also complained that the goal of these changes was to reduce their political weight while increasing the dominance of Arab tribes.

97%

THE PERCENTAGE OF VOTERS
IN DARFUR WHO CHOSE
THE STATES OPTION

AU High-Level Panel struggles to create confidence

As the conflict in Darfur drags on, the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) remains the primary mediator trying to get a lasting peace deal. The main problem is the divergence among warring parties on how to settle the conflicts in Sudan. The rebel movements want a national process to address the root causes of instability such as governance, human rights and inclusivity. Yet they boycotted the National Dialogue organised by the government, which could have been a relevant forum to address these issues. They labelled it ‘a monologue’ without genuine exchange and denounced the lack of a neutral mediator.

The rebel movements want a national process to address the root causes of instability such as governance, human rights and inclusivity

Meanwhile the government and some of its local allies wish to address each conflict in Sudan – in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile (the so-called Two Areas) – separately.

It is still unclear how real the government’s commitment is to actually improve governance and open up the political space to include other actors than the ruling party. With the decreased presence of rebel movements in Darfur, it is unsure that an end to the 14-year conflict could be reached through the current talks mediated by the AU. The government may believe that its military superiority on the ground in Darfur negates any

incentive to make concessions to rebel movements in such negotiations.

While the AUHIP could facilitate the signing of a roadmap to end both conflicts in Darfur and the Two Areas on 8 August 2016, it could not prevent the failure of the talks between the government, the Darfur rebel movements and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement–North, which operates in the Two Areas. The Darfur rebel groups refused to communicate their military positions to the government.

Some of the rebel movements also have reservations about the neutrality of the head of the AUHIP, former South African president Thabo Mbeki. The continuous support of the AU to al Bashir in its feud with the International Criminal Court does impact perceptions of the AU’s mediation, in Darfur and elsewhere. Groups such as the SLM-AW do not even participate in the AU-led talks.

The AUHIP is struggling to create a context of confidence, as many rebel movements are suspicious

*Major rebel movements in Darfur			
Name	Movement	Major ethnic component	Leader
SLM/A AW	Sudan Liberation Movement/Army	Fur	Abdul Wahid Nur
SLM/A MM	Sudan Liberation Movement/Army	Zaghawa	Minni Minawi
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement	Zaghawa	Gibril Ibrahim

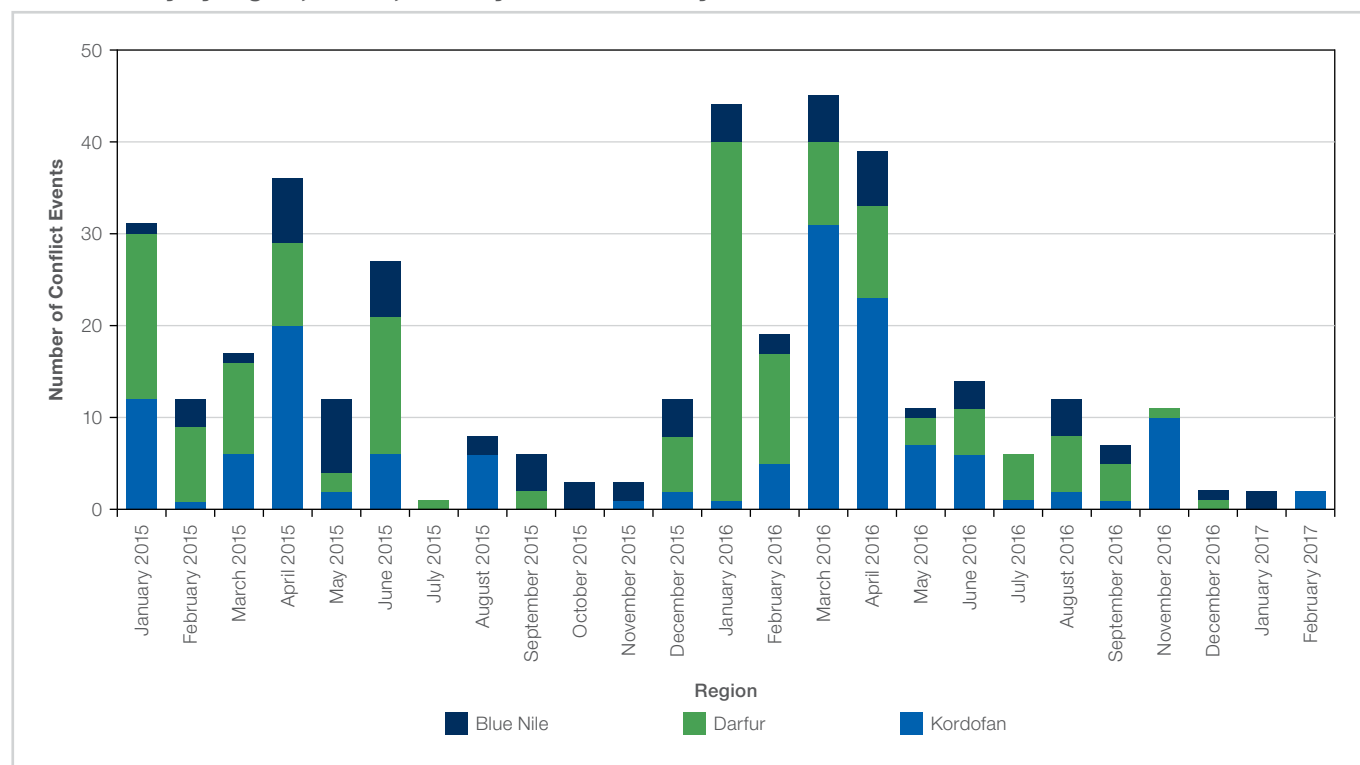
Rebel movements in Darfur

When the war broke out in 2003, the rebel movements were the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), chaired by Minni Minawi (Zaghawa) and Abel Wahid Nur (Fur); and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), chaired by Khalil Ibrahim, a Zaghawa and former state minister with links to Hassan al Turabi, the former speaker of the National Assembly and main ideologue of the Khartoum regime. The SLM-AW, led by Nur, currently has a foothold in the mountainous Jebel Marra (Central Darfur). This is despite many offensives by government forces that allegedly included the use of chemical weapons. The other main rebel groups – Minawi’s faction (SLM-MM) and the JEM led by Gibril Ibrahim – mostly operate outside Darfur, in Libya and South Sudan respectively.

of a government that has a history of breaking its commitments outlined in the various peace agreements. On the part of the government, it is unclear whether the military option has been totally ruled out.

It also remains to be seen how the fractured relations between communities in Darfur will be healed without common ground among the stakeholders on how to reform the governance system in the country.

Rebel activity by region, Sudan, January 2015 – February 2017



Sudan witnessed a decrease in violent political conflict which marked a continuation of falling levels of political violence in the country.
Source: Armed Conflict and Location Data Project (ACLED)



Situation Analysis

Mali's jihadist merger: desperate or dangerous?

A merger of some of the most notorious groups based in Mali is the latest face of jihadism in the Sahel. Under the new banner of Jamâ'ah Nusra al-Islâm wal-Muslimîn (Group for the support of Islam and Muslims), or JNIM, the group has claimed responsibility for several attacks carried out in Central Mali, the latest of which occurred on 29 March killing three Malian soldiers.

These attacks took place a few weeks after the new alliance announced itself on 2 March. The JNIM is a merger of Ansar Dine, Katiba Macina, al-Mourabitoun and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The new alliance is led by Iyad Ag Ghaly, who previously led Ansar Dine. Ag Ghaly renewed his allegiance to Abdelmalek Droukdel, emir of AQIM; Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda leader; and Taliban leader, Mullâ Hibatullâh.

A few days later, on 14 March, Droukdel endorsed the merger and called 'all jihadist groups to follow the example... and to unite', under the banner of al-Qaeda. On 19 March, al-Qaeda Central issued an official statement congratulating the new group.

Some analysts see the merger as a response to AQIM weakening amid the Islamic State's growing influence

Growing influence of the Islamic State

Some analysts see the merger as a response to AQIM weakening amid the Islamic State's (IS) growing influence in the region, while others believe it serves mostly to formalise the links and relationships that have existed between these groups for years.

The long-dreaded collaboration comes at the height of the Malian crisis; following on from the occupation of the north by AQIM, Ansar Dine, and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa between April 2012 and January 2013.

To view the merger in the light of competition between IS and al-Qaeda at the international level – and particularly in West Africa – wouldn't be misplaced. Although AQIM continues to be a central player in regional jihad, its supremacy is disputed by small groups that claim to be from IS. These include the Islamic State in the Great Sahara (ISGS), led by Adnan Abou Walid al-Sahraoui, which is active in the Liptako-Gourma – a geographical area straddling the border areas of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.

JNIM

A MERGER OF:
ANSAR DINE, KATIBA MACINA,
AL-MOURABITOUN AND AL-QAEDA
IN THE ISLAMIC MAGHREB

It was believed that setbacks for IS in its strongholds in Syria, Iraq and Libya would have reduced its attraction. However, a recent report citing French military intelligence sources pointed to ongoing efforts by the ISGS and the Islamic State in West Africa – the IS-endorsed Boko Haram branch – to deepen their relationship and extend the influence of IS to Mali and Burkina Faso. Such a strategy could indeed reduce AQIM's influence.

By joining forces, these groups will have bolstered their cooperation, which could result in a tenfold increase of their activities

Fueling insecurity

Questions remain about how, precisely, this new alliance will affect the security situation. An evident concern is that by joining forces, these groups will have bolstered their cooperation, which could result in a tenfold increase of their activities. Groups like al-Mourabitoun, with more experience, could share their expertise with new movements like Katiba Macina, such as in the field of explosives manufacturing.

The structural and organisational mechanisms of the new alliance are not yet apparent; nor is it clear how it would affect the inner workings of the various groups. Yet it is to be expected that the respective groups would retain their identity, as well as a degree of leeway in their actions.

In so doing, they will continue to fuel insecurity in their traditional areas of operation. These differ according to the social, economic and security realities of their respective areas. JNIM's position as a key actor in the *regional* jihad should not divert attention away from those deep-rooted local realities.

This current trend of attacks by JNIM sparks fears of a resurgence of all-out attacks in coming weeks.

There has been an exponential increase in the acts claimed by, or attributed to, these groups over the past two years. In 2016, at least 257 attacks were reported in Mali and its neighbouring countries (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger): an increase of nearly 150% compared

to 2015. At least 60 attacks have been recorded during this first quarter of 2017. The most likely scenario is a continuation of localised attacks in northern and central Mali, as well as in border regions.

This trend will, of course, depend on whether these groups are willing, and indeed able, to assert their presence.

Addressing the root causes of the crisis

Despite their limitations, the effectiveness and adequacy of the French Operation Barkhane and the Malian armed forces (FAMA) will be decisive; at least in the short term. Judging from recent operations in Central Mali, FAMA seems to be increasingly effective – at least from an operational point of view.

It is important to note that the JNIM also comes at a time when attempts to implement the June 2015 Mali peace and reconciliation agreement are slow and difficult. This raises the issue of the inclusion of 'Malian jihadists' in the ongoing political process, one of the main recommendations of the National Understanding Conference (Conférence d'entente nationale) held in Bamako from 27 March to 2 April. One of the major objectives of the conference was to address the root causes of the political and security crisis in the country.

Despite doubts about the outcome of the conference, it was an opportunity to find ways for the groups to take a hold locally, by determining appropriate responses to the social, economic and security challenges they face. Malian actors must work together to ensure that the outcomes of this process are a success.



Situation Analysis

Will the AU coordinate the new 'save Somalia' campaign?

On 11 May 2017, the international community will be called upon to put its hands deeper into its pockets at the planned London Conference on Somalia. The AU has decided to withdraw from the country by 2020, and is arguing for a final push against al-Shabaab before that date – a costly undertaking. Humanitarian aid is also needed due to drought and a cholera epidemic in the country.

Earlier this year the AU commemorated the 10th anniversary of its mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The mission, which was established on 19 January 2007 by the PSC, has had chequered results. On the one hand, it has heightened hopes for a more peaceful and secure Somalia. The recent election of President Mohamed Abdullahi 'Farmajo' inspires optimism. On the other hand, the country is still not safe. Terror attacks in the capital Mogadishu continue and large areas of the country are still in the hands of al-Shabaab.

Terror attacks in the capital Mogadishu continue and large areas of the country are still in the hands of al-Shabaab

High-level visits

Internationally there is consensus that Somalia needs more help. In recent months, various leaders such as British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and the new AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat have undertaken visits to Somalia to assess the situation.

This is ahead of the London Conference, which is aimed at harnessing international support for improved security, political reform and economic development in Somalia.

The conference is the second of its kind, with the first having been held in 2012. Representatives from Somalia and the region, as well as from the United Nations (UN), the AU, the European Union (EU), the League of Arab States and the Organisation of Islamic Conference, among others, are expected to attend.

While aid has been forthcoming to Somalia over the past decade, this has not always taken place in a coordinated way. The AU, which has been working closely with the government of Somalia, will have to play a greater role in

19 January 2007

AMISOM IS ESTABLISHED

this regard. Mahamat's visit on 18 March was a step in the right direction and showed his commitment to the country's peace and security.

The PSC also undertook a three-day field mission to Somalia from 23–26 March to assess the needs of the country. During the visit, the PSC ambassadors participated in a wreath-laying ceremony for AMISOM soldiers who had died in combat.

Strengthening AMISOM

Despite its gains, AMISOM, together with the 20 000-strong Somali National Army, has not been able to vanquish al-Shabaab's forces, which continue to hold significant territory in the country. Al-Shabaab's forces are estimated at about 7 000–9 000.

Inadequate military hardware and dependence on international donors have largely constrained the mission

Inadequate military hardware and dependence on international donors have largely constrained the mission from proactive interventions to liberate regions from al-Shabaab and consolidate its gains.

Meanwhile, discussions are still underway to authorise an additional 4 000 troops to the 22 000-strong AMISOM forces. The additional troops, requested by the AU at the end of last year, are expected to get a six-month mandate to support AMISOM and Somali forces to carry out a major offensive to dislodge al-Shabaab from its strongholds in Jubba Valley, the Hiran region and the North East coastline. This is part of the plan for AMISOM to exit Somalia by 2020. The additional troops from Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya are said to be ready, but a lack of funding is delaying their authorisation and deployment.

Last year, the EU cut its funding for troop allowances by 20%, which dealt a blow to AMISOM's ability to continue fighting al-Shabaab.

The London Conference provides an opportunity for international partners to find a more sustainable funding mechanism for AMISOM. This includes advancing the AU's request for the use of UN-assessed contributions

in support of AU-led missions, particularly in support of AMISOM.

Trump guns for al-Shabaab

While the additional force struggles to get off the ground, there are other indications that the military offensive will intensify. United States President Donald Trump recently relaxed the conditions for airstrikes against terrorists in Somalia. This could boost AMISOM's campaign, even though there have been concerns about collateral damage in US airstrikes in the past few years.

The question is whether this will create a lasting peace. Experience shows that on occasion, al-Shabaab will retake towns and areas after peacekeepers pull out. This casts doubt over AMISOM and the Somali National Army's capacity to consolidate security gains and ensure the defeat of al-Shabaab in the short to medium term. More likely, there will remain a need for international support to Somalia's forces beyond 2020 if AMISOM withdraws.

Defections on both sides

Early this year, a number of al-Shabaab senior leaders surrendered to the Somali forces in line with the government's amnesty provisions. While this is progress, the PSC in its latest six-monthly report highlighted the persistent defection of some Somali soldiers to the al-Shabaab camp. Such defections betray AMISOM and the Somali National Army's intelligence and operations.

Experience shows that on occasion, al-Shabaab will retake towns and areas after peacekeepers pull out

This also highlights the need to address the persistent concerns about funds for Somali security forces, including the continuous delays in paying them. During his campaign, Farmajo promised to ensure the payment of soldiers. However, recent protests by Somali soldiers suggest that this has not been forthcoming.

Greater international support to Somalia in this regard could help to boost incentives for Somali officers to remain in the army and fight al-Shabaab.

Winning the hearts and minds of Somalis

Moreover, key to AMISOM's exit is the need to secure the allegiance of Somalis to the government. The outcome document of an AU workshop marking the 10th anniversary of AMISOM insists that the fight against al-Shabaab cannot be won by military might alone – it is necessary to 'win the hearts and minds of Somalis'.

Hence, the international community needs to address survival challenges that make people vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism. Among Somalia's challenges is the looming famine caused by the drought that has affected over half of the population.

Al-Shabaab has been engaging in a publicity campaign highlighting that it is providing food aid to the communities under its jurisdiction. This is a significant shift from its approach in 2011, when it neither delivered aid nor allowed aid agencies to provide aid in its strongholds. The resultant catastrophe affected the group's political capital and local support.

Although al-Shabaab still prevents aid agencies from entering the region under its control, its new approach of providing aid to people could win over that part of the population in desperate need of food.

The international community needs to address survival challenges that make people vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism

The AU and the international community have to intensify their efforts to address the humanitarian crisis in an attempt to match al-Shabaab's efforts to win over the Somali population. This includes addressing the immediate food security concerns and the cholera outbreak, in addition to working with the new government to provide political services, boost the economy and address corruption and unemployment.

Protecting the rights of Somali refugees

The fate of Somali people displaced by violence and hardship is also key to the stabilisation effort in the country. In recent years, Somalia's neighbours have witnessed an influx of refugees fleeing violence and

humanitarian disasters. Others seek safer havens outside the East African region. The recent killing of Somali refugees off the coast of Yemen illustrates some of the ordeals that they face.

On 25 March 2017 the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) convened a special summit to find ways to provide more protection for refugees entering neighbouring countries and to facilitate voluntary returns. This includes accelerating IGAD's support to the security and socio-economic initiatives in the region.

The recent killing of Somali refugees off the coast of Yemen illustrates some of the ordeals that refugees face

IGAD leaders also committed themselves to enhance the education and training of refugees for 'self-reliance in the countries of asylum' and in Somalia when they return. If successfully implemented, this could ensure communities are less vulnerable to radicalisation and less prone to risk dangerous migration routes.

It is, however, uncertain how the new IGAD commitment affects Kenya's plan to close the Dadaab camps near its border with Somalia. A Kenyan court has temporarily blocked the closure of the camp, but the government intends to appeal the decision.

At the London Conference the international community has to find ways to share the burden in order to support Somalia's neighbours to tackle the refugee flows, along with addressing the challenges faced by Somalis.

Addis Insight

Being frank about Africa's democracy: progress and deficits



This year the AU celebrates the 10th anniversary of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. This charter is vital on a continent where a significant number of citizens still live under authoritarian regimes. The AU communiqué that was released on 15 February 2017, celebrating this event, admits that the continent has recorded only 'modest gains' when it comes to democracy. Persistent democratic deficits call into question the impact of the charter on AU member states.

The Charter on Democracy, signed by 46 and ratified by 29 AU members thus far, is intended to guide member states to pursue values of good governance, rule of law, free and fair elections, accountability and constitutional changes of government.

In the last few years an increasing number of Africans have been able to choose their political leadership through free and fair elections. This has been evident in the recent elections in Benin, São Tomé and Príncipe, Cape Verde, Ghana and The Gambia, as well as in the presidential election in Somalia in early 2017.

The charter is a powerful tool that sets out the AU's principled position in this regard

The charter is a powerful tool that sets out the AU's principled position in this regard. Since its adoption there has arguably been a greater measure of regional commitment in preventing the subversion of democracy by strongmen in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire and The Gambia.

Fewer coups in Africa

The reduction of coups in Africa has also been attributed to the AU's rejection of unconstitutional changes of government, as evidenced by continental agreements such as the Lomé Declaration of 2000, the AU Constitutive Act and the Charter on Democracy.

The AU's rules on unconstitutional changes of government were, however, challenged during the popular uprisings in North Africa in 2011 and the popular movement that ousted then president Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso at the end of 2014.

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COUNTRIES RATIFIED THE AFRICAN
CHARTER ON DEMOCRACY

Following these events, the PSC urged AU members to hold a special summit to address the question of whether the overthrow of authoritarian regimes by popular revolt should also be condemned according to its own rules. Such a summit was never held.

Constitutional manipulations

Many subtle subversions of democratic transitions are, however, taking place despite the adoption of the Charter on Democracy. A case in point is the growing trend among some leaders to remove term limits set by their countries' constitutions.

Many subtle subversions of democratic transitions are taking place despite the adoption of the charter

Last year alone, the presidents of the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Chad, Djibouti and Equatorial Guinea secured their re-election after having rolled back term limits. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo the constitution was defied when elections were not held in 2016.

This removal of term limits has occurred despite the fact that the Charter on Democracy frowns upon 'any amendment or revision of the constitution or legal instruments, which is an infringement on the principles of democratic change of government'. But the AU is tight-lipped when it needs to be outspoken.

Flaws in the judiciary and electoral commissions

Elections remain one of the major spaces for citizens to exercise their democratic rights, especially in Africa, where citizens' other rights are often determined by the whims of incumbent leaders.

However, a 2016 public survey showed that many citizens distrusted their national electoral commissions. In Kenya, for instance, polls suggest a lack of confidence in the judiciary and electoral commission ahead of the general elections in August 2017. A similar lack of confidence in these two key institutions was the basis for the 2007/2008 electoral violence in the country. The judiciary and electoral commissions need to play a greater role in mitigating the violent contestation of results.

Political suppression

Civil society has made some progress in pushing for more accountability and transparency within the political sphere. But that space is increasingly shrinking owing to political repression and the over-regulation of contemporary mediums for freedom of speech.

During elections in 2016, the governments of the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Chad and Uganda opted for Internet and social media shutdowns. The Cameroonian government also recently blocked the Internet in its English-speaking regions. This move has curbed political participation and activism.

The shrinking of political spaces is also noticeable from the systematic weakening of opposition movements, especially in countries with long-serving leaders such as the DRC, Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea and Zimbabwe.

Yet progress in African democracy and governance cannot be measured merely by having new faces in office. A number of opposition movements have sought political office without any interest in improving political governance. Some opposition parties merely represent a political class that want a 'stake in the pie'.

The shrinking of political spaces is noticeable from the systematic weakening of opposition movements

The outcomes of the revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, as well as the triumph of the opposition in Nigeria and the former southern Sudan, highlight concerns over opposition movements in the continent. Having a change of government does not always rhyme with more democracy.

The question of good governance

The celebration of the Charter on Democracy coincided with the Mo Ibrahim Foundation's announcement on 28 February 2017 that there was no winner of the 2016 Ibrahim Prize for achievement in African leadership. This was the second time since 2015 that no former African leader reached the standards set by the foundation.

A first for Togo

On 27 March 2017, the AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat congratulated Togo on becoming the first country to submit a progress report in line with article 49 of the Charter on Democracy, Governance and Elections.

'As we commemorate the 10th anniversary of the adoption of Charter this year, the AU Commission seizes this opportunity to urge all state parties that are due to submit state reports on the implementation of the Charter to do so in order to facilitate inter-state sharing of comparable lessons and experiences towards the promotion and consolidation of democratic governance on the continent,' Mahamat said according to a statement released by the AU.

While the Ibrahim Prize is not a definitive test of leadership in Africa, the economic downturns in a number of top African countries – such as Nigeria, South Africa, Angola and Kenya – call into question the foresight and capacity of the current crop of leaders in the continent.

Gradually, the 'Africa rising' narrative is giving way to a narrative of Africa's resilience.

While Africa celebrates a decade of the Charter on Democracy, frank talk is needed on the governance conundrum

This year it is predicted that African economies will be characterised by a rising debt crisis and the continued low prices earned by most commodities. The latter has been worsened by the failure of some African governments to diversify their economies.

Much of the tactical displays of some African leaders are expressed in political manoeuvrings to remain in power and to siphon public funds to private coffers.

The 2016 Corruption Index by Transparency International shows that big countries in Africa such as South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya have failed to improve their score in terms of corruption. Other countries such as Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Libya, Eritrea, Angola and Guinea-Bissau are at the bottom of the index. Botswana and Cape Verde are Africa's best performers in the index.

While Africa celebrates a decade of the Charter on Democracy, frank talk is needed on the democratic and governance conundrum in the continent. This discussion is not only pertinent at the level of the AU and its organs but also key at all levels of society where future leaders emerge.



About the ISS

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) partners to build knowledge and skills that secure Africa's future. Our goal is to enhance human security as a means to achieve sustainable peace and prosperity.

ISS' work covers transnational crimes, migration, peacekeeping, crime prevention and criminal justice, peacebuilding, and the analysis of conflict and governance.

Using its networks and influence, the ISS provides timely and credible analysis, practical training and technical assistance to governments and civil society. This promotes better policy and practice, because senior officials can make informed decisions about how to deal with Africa's human security challenges.

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