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Resurgent continent?: Africa and the world: African security and the securitisation of development

Report

African Security and the Securitisation of Development

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Africa is a major stakeholder in security and 'security-development nexus' debates and practice. Although there is no 'one size fits all' meaning of security, there is a general consensus that security refers both to the stability of the state, and perhaps more importantly, to the physical and psychological security of the people (i.e. human security). It is also generally accepted that security is vital for sustainable development. Across Africa, the fundamental challenge of managing or ending conflict(s) remains; and with it comes the challenge of creating or sustaining secure environments and using security as an enabler for development. Many of Africa's traditional security challenges persist, but through its for mal institutions and informal networks, the continent has 'Africanised' the security-development paradigm in myriad ways. As Africa builds its security and development architecture, it is Africans who are now the driving force in the process, in contrast to previous decades when Africa was often a recipient and a junior partner in security-development debates.

HISTORY

Although terms such as 'security development nexus' and the 'securitisation of development' are new, the practice is not a modern invention; there has been a conjunction between security and development throughout the continent's' history. Pre-colonial states and communities were well aware of the complex, constructive and destructive relationship between security and development. Although it is always risky to generalise about Africa, we might perhaps say that there have been five 'ages' of the security-development framework. Following the pre-colonial era mentioned above, the second 'age' is the colonial period, when security and development referred primarily to the colonial and settler states and to the metropole.

The third 'age' was the post-colonial/independence period, which lasted approximately from 1960 until South Africa's first majority government in 1994, included the processes of decolonisation; Africa's proxy wars and alignments during the Cold War; and the wars of liberation in southern Africa. During this period, in which security and development were couched in heavily militarised and politicised terms, Africa had limited agency with regard to its own security and development and was locked into external Cold War orthodoxies. The fourth 'age' is the post-Cold War Age in the 1990s. It is remarkable for the relative dislocation and 'siloing' of the development and security discourse, in Africa and globally.

This was partly as a reaction to failed humanitarian-peace operations in Angola and Somalia and to the genocide in Rwanda. It was also a result of the blandishments of global financial and aid organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank, whose economic prescriptions for Africa emphasised the pre-eminence of market forces and a minimalist state (and its levers) for economic development. Thus security and development were seen by many to be only loosely connected.

The fifth age, of African resurgence, spans the period from the establishment of the African Union (AU) to the present day. This period has witnessed an overall and relatively sustained surge in Africa's economic performance and a widening of Africa's middle class (although poverty and the divide between rich and poor is still a major problem). There has also been an overall improvement in African security (both in hard security and human security) – there have been fewer coups, inter-state conflicts and civil wars. Just as importantly, Africa itself has formalised the link between security and development.

BUILDING AFRICA'S SECURITY, GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT ARCHITECTURE

The 2002 transition from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union has been the catalyst for an African road map for Africa's Security Architecture (ASA). The AU, and the regional and national organisations to which it is linked, have four main premises for Africa's security.

First, although recognising the importance of partnership and assistance from external stakeholders, there is recognition that it is Africa which takes primary responsibility for its security.

Second, Africa's security road-map requires a formal framework, agreed at continental level and implemented at various levels, if it is to have any real-world applicability. This has led to the consensus on an AU led African Security Architecture framework. The ASA articulated the challenges and opportunities for security in Africa, and offers a long-term road map for embedding security in the continent. Third, in terms of its hard security parameters, the ASA recognises the need to build capacity for African forces to cope with peace and stabilisation efforts. This in turn requires the increased professionalisation

of Africa's militaries and improved coordination of continental, regional and sub-regional militaries for alliance operations. The establishment of the regional Africa Standby Force (ASF) brigades in each of Africa's regions is intended to strengthen the work done by AU peacekeeping forces. AU forces have achieved a great deal in peace operations, but because they often operate as allied but national forces under an AU aegis, there have been long term problems of equipment interoperability, logistics (particularly lack of air power), command and control, Standard Operational Procedures (SOP) and funding. The establishment of the ASF, with its permanent regional depots, is intended to build sustainable capacity and capability, as well as to shorten reaction times

Fourth is the realisation that Africa's security, governance and development are interlinked. In this regard, the ASA should be seen as part of what we might call a wider African Security, Governance and Development (ASGD) architecture. There are no rigid barriers between security, governance and development, indeed, the conditions under which regional and continental forces can intervene include situations in which a governance and/or development crisis creates insecurity (for instance, military coups or extreme environmental crises). This securitisation of development, which recognises that security is a prerequisite for sustainable development, is important. Also important and often ignored is the 'developmentalisation' of security; i.e. the recognition that security forces can, and should on occasion, contribute directly or indirectly to development. This developmentalisation of security is already becoming the 'new wave' in the security-development nexus. It has been spurred by the global recession, by the growth of civil society in Africa, by the increasing professionalisation of Africa's militaries and by questions regarding wealth distribution in Africa. It relates to longstanding questions about the nature of the state in Africa, about the role of the military, and about whether militaries can engage in non-traditional projects such as state-building. This has been a major issue for allied forces in Afghanistan and Iraq – it is also a question which the ASF and Africa's militaries will have to engage with. This is one of a number of challenges and opportunities for Africa as it creates an ASGD. The increasing interaction of Africa's governance, security and development institutions is fundamental for the continent as it seeks to widen its footprint in the global system. This entails ending, or at least moderating, the traditional compartmentalisation and mutual distrust and antipathy which characterised relations between the security, justice, political and development sectors.

Although there can be few illusions that these tensions will end anytime soon, in practice Africa has achieved a great deal of success in muzzling the traditional turf wars which have characterised similar institutions in organisations such as the European Union.

Although necessity and desire dictate that Africa take primary responsibility for its own security and development, there is no doubt that much of this will be done through continued partnerships with external actors such as the US, EU, China and other Asian and Middle East countries. Since pre-colonial times Africa has had a long tradition of establishing and adapting utilitarian external alliance systems; in some ways, these alliances are a modern continuation of these practices. Interestingly, however, over the past decade, the Sino-African entente, with all its achievements and flaws, has helped to usher a profound re-examination of trade and aid, particularly as it relates to Africa and predominantly from an African perspective. It is likely that there will be a complementary interrogation of the peace and security aid 'industry' in Africa, principally as it pertains to peace operations, and funding for security sector reform (SSR) and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR). Indeed this is already beginning: the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and other multinational peace and security organisations are coming under increasing scrutiny from their host nations, and there are deeper debates about SSR and DDR best practice, outcomes and local ownership. None of this suggests that the hybrid nature of local-foreign security and development in Africa will, or should, end; but it is being reformatted for an African age.

There are a plethora of challenges for African security and development: coups, conflict and criminal networks are just a few of the problems faced as the continent attempts to implement what is in effect a pragmatic morality and code of conduct for a new age. Africa's police forces, which are the daily interface between security, justice, governance and development, will have to be a priority for professionalisation and capacity-building. In addition, as shown recently in Niger and Guinea, the AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are taking an activist stance against military takeovers and unconstitutional transfers of power, a trend which shifts OAU 'non-interference' to AU 'non-indifference'. This is important, but the African community also needs to review authoritarian regimes which refuse to hold elections, or rig elections, or refuse to concede

power after electoral defeat. It is crucial that Africa does not try to pacify security and governance narratives by ignoring political, human rights and economic abuses for the sake of consensus-building.

While it is easy to dwell on the problems, it is also useful to pay attention to what Africa has gotten right: many of Africa's military, political and financial institutions, although often hampered by lack of resources, have world class personnel and are highly proficient. For instance, African peacekeepers are highly regarded in global operations. Also, claims that the global recession has had a lesser impact on Africa because Africa's economies are smaller and have a much greater informal economy, are only partly true; it may well be that many of Africa's financial institutions are in fact better managed than their developed world counterparts. Africa's diverse state systems, which are often seen as a liability for continental development, may actually be an asset; it gives alternatives in cases where a Westphalian state model may be inapplicable. It may also encourage public-private sector partnerships and the informal economy to become key components of the ASDG architecture. Also worthy of note is increasing African ownership of the ranking systems for Africa's security-development nexus. Various organisation do country risk assessments and rankings according to complex indices of governance, human rights, security and development . These rankings do matter, as they are taken seriously by investors and other interested parties. Traditionally, it is externally based consultancies which have done the rankings; now however, African-led and African-based groups such as the Mo Ibrahim Foundation and Afrobarometer are also issuing rankings which pay particular attention to the divergent opinions of citizens of the relevant counties.

CONCLUSION

There will always be differences of opinion regarding the theory and practice of security, governance and development in Africa. What matters, however, is that the importance of these linkages has been recognised in Africa and that concrete action is being taken by the continent to establish a sustainable ASGD architecture that is appropriate to local priorities. This retreat from outsourcing its agendas is a recognition by Africa and its people that it is they in the long run who will make the continent's future. ■