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Special Focus on UN General Assembly

Relations between the AU and the UN seem to be improving

Heads of state of the African Union (AU) travelled to New York last month to participate in the 70th United Nations (UN) General Assembly meetings. The adoption of the new UN Sustainable Development Goals, as well as peace and security issues, was high on the agenda. In the last few years, relations between the AU and the UN have improved, although there are still many sticking points, notably the funding of peacekeeping operations on the continent.

Once a year African leaders travel *en masse* to the UN headquarters in New York to discuss issues of mutual concern, such as climate change and world peace. Africa is important to the UN as by far the most UN peacekeeping operations are taking place on the continent. Increasingly, Africa is also intervening in conflicts with its own operations, which are subsequently often 're-hatted' as UN missions. This happened last year in the Central African Republic (CAR) and in Mali.

Africa is important to the UN, since the majority of UN peacekeeping operations are taking place on this continent

Relations between the UN and the AU have improved 'considerably', according to sources in Addis Ababa, especially following the opening of a UN office in the Ethiopian capital five years ago dedicated to working with the AU. This office was initially staffed with technical personnel, such as military advisors to help the AU with its – admittedly foreign-funded – missions, for example the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). However, the UN office has increasingly focused on teaming up with the AU Peace and Security Department in joint efforts towards early warning and the planning of peace operations. The focus has shifted from only doing 'capacity building' to sharing information on common problems. This cooperation is especially important if, at some point, an AU mission is transformed into a UN operation. Why not work together from the start?

'The creation of a UN office to the AU was an important step in enhancing the relationship between the two organisations. More constant interaction has been seen between [them],' said Gustavo de Carvalho, a senior researcher at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). However, there is still a lot of work to do. 'There is a need for increased confidence between the two organisations, as well as a better mutual understanding on the way in which each organisation works.'

Many sticking points remain, however, and one UN General Assembly meeting is probably not enough to address these.

PSC Chairperson

H.E. Ambassador Mull S Katende

Ambassador of Uganda to the AU, the ECA and Ethiopia

Current members of the PSC

Algeria, Burundi, Chad, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, The Gambia, Guinea, Libya, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda

Essentially, the AU is a regional institution, made up of member states of the UN, as is the case with the European Union and other regional bodies. The AU PSC, for example, cannot expect to be treated on the same level as the UN Security Council (UNSC), insiders say. Joint field visits to the conflict terrains in Africa are thus not envisaged at this stage. However, the AU PSC is learning a lot from the UNSC and has conducted at least two of its own field missions this year, to Mali and Sudan. The AU Commission chairperson has also travelled to conflict hotspots such as Mali with the UN secretary general.

A complicated joint mission in Darfur

In 2007 the UN and the AU launched the UN–AU Mission for Darfur (UNAMID), which created a unique opportunity for cooperation. However, UNAMID has been beset with problems, as pointed out by ISS experts in an article in July this year. ‘The experience in Darfur showed that the problems of joint peace operations between the AU and UN are good in principle. But in reality, there has been critical challenges in ensuring that the implementation of the mission goes smoothly,’ said de Carvalho. ‘This has a lot to do with the ownership of the mission, but also with the ability of the two organisations to jointly plan and implement together. I think that the UNAMID case shows how much more the organisations still have to do in order to ensure there is a truthful partnership between the two.’

Dlamini-Zuma's term has been marked by an increased commitment to find ‘African solutions to African problems’

Conflict over funding of AU peacekeeping operations

The AU's ‘subsidiary’ relationship with the UN also comes into play in the UN's funding of AU peacekeeping operations. This is a sore point, especially since African leaders and AU Commission Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma are eager to take charge of Africa's conflict-prevention strategies. Dlamini-Zuma's term at the commission, which started in 2012, has been marked by an increased commitment to find ‘African solutions to African problems’.

At the last AU summit in Johannesburg, in June 2015, AU leaders decided to increase their funding of the AU overall and to contribute at least 25% of the budgets of peacekeeping operations. Observers in Addis Ababa speaking to the *PSC Report* say if this were to happen, the UNSC, especially the United States (US), would be more inclined to allow direct funding of AU missions through UN assessed contributions. At the moment funding is distributed and managed by the donor countries, which at times causes friction and does not allow the AU to make decisions independently.

There is opposition to directly paying money into the account of the AU Peace and Security Department (AUPSD) as the US Congress, for example, does not want to create a precedent where the UN allocates funding to regional organisations such as the AU or others, thereby allowing them to act on their own initiative. This might lead to situations where operations are launched or managed in a way that is contrary to the interests of some countries. The US has, however, directly supported contingents deploying to AU missions, as in the case of Burundi's deployment as part of AMISOM.

In Africa, generally, the international community is more than willing to hand over the job of peacekeeping and rapid reaction to crises to the AU. The AU is more flexible than the UN and can react through a decision of the AU Assembly or the PSC when

25%

AU MEMBERS' FUTURE
CONTRIBUTIONS TO
PEACEKEEPING IN AFRICA

there is an outbreak of violence. In the case of fighting the Nigerian terrorist group Boko Haram, for example, the AU mandated the Lake Chad Basin Commission (Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Benin) to launch a Multinational Joint Task Force in January this year. The AU is still waiting for UN funding, but in effect boots are on the ground, mainly through bilateral agreements between these countries.

AU missions are also more robust and African troops are willing to put themselves in the firing line to make peace

The unknown African soldier

AU missions are also more robust and African troops are willing to put themselves in the firing line to make peace, not just to keep the peace, which is what UN operations are mostly mandated to do in Africa. AMISOM is a good example, where hundreds of Ugandan, Burundian and other troops have lost their lives in the fight against the terror group al-Shabaab. Kenya and Ethiopia also have troops in Somalia as part of AMISOM, although they deployed at separate times.

However, unlike the UN, the AU is unwilling to release the number of AMISOM casualties. It claims that this might serve as a propaganda tool for al-Shabaab. Dlamini-Zuma has suggested that a statue for 'the unknown soldier' be erected in Addis Ababa to honour those who have died to keep Africa safe. But this might not be enough.

In contrast, figures are available for the number of African troops who have died in UN peacekeeping missions. In Mali, for example, the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission for Mali (MINUSMA) has lost 56 troops, many of them African. Chad lost 36 soldiers in Mali before it became part of the UN mission. It is now also suffering huge losses in the fight against Boko Haram.

Some experts say that not releasing the casualty figures could undermine AU missions. A number of countries refuse to deploy their staff to AU missions as a result of this. Also see page 22

UN review of peacekeeping missions

The UN understands that the nature of conflicts has changed and that instead of countries' armies facing off, Africa today instead has to deal with civil wars, coups, insurgencies and terrorism. A review of UN peacekeeping operations was done by the High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peacekeeping Operations (HIPPO), led by Jose Ramos-Horta of Timor-Leste, following on the earlier Brahimi report. Here again is

an example of improved AU–UN relations. 'Horta came to see us several times, while [Lakhdar] Brahimi didn't,' said an AU official.

'The African consultation with the UN on the HIPPO review in February was an important opportunity for Africa to showcase its views and expectations about the relationship with the UN,' said de Carvalho. 'The engagement between the two organisations dominated the discussions and the AU provided a position paper to the panel, which delineates its expectations on what should change in UN peacekeeping to better assist conflicts in Africa.'

The findings of the review were released in June this year, and placed a strong emphasis on support to regional arrangements, especially in relation to the AU. Importantly, the report recommended that the UN have more predictable funding mechanisms to AU missions. The UN secretary general report following the review, which is expected in the next few weeks, will provide more clarity on the kind of engagement that is expected from the UN in this regard.

The UN understands that the nature of conflicts has changed

Another sticking point between the AU and the UN concerns the International Criminal Court (ICC) and international justice in general. The AU has been at loggerheads with the ICC since it issued an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir in 2009, and also opposed the indictments of Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and his deputy William Ruto. 'We think peace should come before justice, but others in the international community disagree,' said the AU-official.

Joint Task Force meeting in New York

Against this background, a range of meetings, both formal and informal, took place in New York. The agenda of the important Joint Task Force meeting, led jointly by the AU and UN, included Libya, Burundi and South Sudan. Burkina Faso was also on this list of countries in crisis to be discussed by AU Peace and Security Commissioner Smail Chergui and his counterpart in the UN, Hervé Ladsous. The head of the UN office to the AU, Haile Menkerios, and other officials were also expected to attend the meeting.

Thematic issues on the agenda were the HIPPO report on the review of peacekeeping missions, as well as emerging threats to peace and security, focusing on counter-terrorism efforts in Mali and the fight against Boko Haram and al-Shabaab.

A number of issues grouped under the heading 'conflict prevention', such as the issue of third terms, were also be

discussed. Post-conflict reconstruction and development, as well as governance issues, was on the agenda as well. The CAR, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Congo, Lesotho and Madagascar were listed as the countries that the meeting would focus on in this context.

The last meeting of the Joint Task Force was in February this year in Addis Ababa.

One of the biggest sticking points between the AU and the UN remains Libya. Africans still have not forgotten UN Resolution 1973, which authorised the NATO-led intervention in Libya in early 2011. Talks to try to solve the current civil war raging in Libya are being conducted by UN special envoy Bernardino Leon, and Africa is largely staying out of it.

Libya remains one of the biggest sticking points between the AU and the UN

Despite the many tricky issues, the AU and UN are increasingly seeing eye to eye. Last month the AU and the UN issued a joint communiqué about the crisis in Burkina Faso, condemning the coup in Ouagadougou. The West African country, on the eve of crucial elections, is a joint concern and a joint responsibility.

Top 10 contributors to UN Peacekeeping missions*

- Bangladesh: 9 432
- Ethiopia: 8 309
- India: 7 794
- Pakistan: 7 533
- Rwanda: 5 685
- Nepal: 5 346
- Senegal: 3 628
- Ghana: 3 242
- China: 3 079
- Nigeria 2 968

*Total police, military experts and troops

Source: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml>



Special Focus on UN General Assembly

PSC calls for a hybrid court and 'strong institutions' in South Sudan

On 26 September 2015 the heads of state of the PSC met on the margins of the UN General Assembly to discuss the ongoing war in South Sudan. In a statement after the meeting, the PSC released details of the controversial report of the Commission of Inquiry into South Sudan and took on board some of its recommendations. These include setting up a hybrid court to try those guilty of human rights abuses during the conflict.

There was relief in the AU PSC when South Sudanese Vice-President James Wannu Igga presented his government's report on the recent peace deal.

'It was so positive, we wanted to clap. We don't usually clap hands in these meetings,' said an ambassador who attended the PSC meeting on September 26.

While South Sudanese President Salva Kiir did not attend the meeting, reportedly accusing the AU of treating him like a 'schoolboy', he did address a UN high-level meeting on South Sudan via a video link three days after the AU meeting.

Aides and security officials were asked to leave the room at the start of the PSC meeting, which lasted more than four hours

Aides and security officials were asked to leave the room at the start of the more-than-four-hour PSC meeting, at the AU's permanent mission to the UN in New York, due to the sensitivity of the discussions. The South Sudanese government's positive report to the meeting paved the way for the release of a report on the atrocities compiled by the AU Commission of Inquiry led by former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo.

The report, which focuses on the 2014 conflict, has been ready since the end of last year. In January, however, during a meeting on the sidelines of the AU summit in Addis Ababa, the PSC refused to receive Obasanjo's report, saying it would scupper sensitive peace negotiations.

Diplomatic sources at the time said the report recommended sanctions against the top leadership of the two warring parties, and this was greeted with resistance by the government of South Sudan and discomfort by regional leaders. South African International Relations Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, however, said there was no political process to deal with the report.

Conditions favourable for the release of the report

An ad hoc subcommittee, consisting of Algeria, Chad, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda, was appointed by the PSC in July to consider Obasanjo's

26 September

PSC SUMMIT ON SOUTH SUDAN

report and make recommendations on the way forward. Now that a peace agreement has been signed – in August – the report can be released.

The annual UN General Assembly was the first opportunity the heads of state of the PSC had a chance to meet and hear these recommendations. During the meeting there was, however, a disagreement about what it meant to release the report. Some leaders said the report should be made available to the UN Security Council, but this suggestion was defeated by other leaders who argued that the UN Security Council had never been involved in the inquiry.

During the meeting there was a disagreement about what it meant to release the report

There are nearly 13 000 UN peacekeepers in South Sudan. ‘We will shoot ourselves in the foot if we don’t release the report [to the public],’ an AU official said soon after the meeting. The PSC’s initial communiqué was redrafted considerably before it was released two days after the meeting, the official added.

In the communiqué’s summary of the report, there was no mention of sanctions or any suggestion that Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar should be excluded from a transitional government, as suggested by the leaked Obasanjo report.

The communiqué ordered two reports to be released: the Obasanjo report, and a separate, dissenting report, written by Prof. Mahmood Mamdani.

PSC takes on board recommendations on hybrid court

The most important recommendation of the report, accepted by the PSC and noted in its communiqué, is that the AU Commission should establish an independent hybrid court to investigate and prosecute those guilty of war crimes under international and local law.

The PSC also accepted the report’s recommendations about the establishment of a compensation and reparation authority and fund, and that a healing and reconciliation process be put into place. Such a process should include the return and resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons.

South Sudanese leaders should ‘thoroughly study the report and fully internalise it, as part of the necessary introspection and critical assessment of their deeds and failures’. The reunification process of the Sudan People’s Liberation

Movement (SPLM), facilitated by leaders from other liberation parties on the continent such as ANC deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa, should also continue.

The PSC recommends that ‘strong, accountable and efficient institutions’ be built in South Sudan, and literacy should be increased. There should also be an ‘adequate devolution of resources, decision-making power and guarantees against undue interference in devolved units by the centre, through the full implementation of the current constitution until a new one is adopted’.

Atrocities

The PSC was horrified by the atrocities outlined in Obasanjo’s report, calling it ‘a scar on the conscience of Africa’.

According to the communiqué, there was ‘sexual and gender-based violence committed by both parties against women, as well as other acts of extreme cruelty and inhuman brutality’, most of it against innocent civilians.

Places of religion and hospitals were attacked, humanitarian assistance was impeded, towns pillaged and destroyed, places of protection attacked, and children under 15 conscripted.

The PSC was horrified by the atrocities outlined in Obasanjo’s report

The report did, however, find that the violence did not amount to genocide.

It said structural causes of the violence included ‘fragility and weakness of all South Sudanese institutions, the lack of accountability, rampant cases of impunity and corruption, extreme ethnicization of politics and the military’, as well as historic divisions within the SPLA/M.

‘The manner in which top-down unity was given priority over genuine reconciliation’ was another cause.

World leaders call for peace

At the UN high-level meeting on South Sudan on September 29, a few days after the PSC meeting, there were once again pleas by world leaders to the South Sudanese to honour the August 27 peace agreement. The ceasefire concluded 21 months of conflict, which started when Kiir accused his former deputy Machar of wanting to overthrow him. More than 700 000 people have fled to neighbouring countries and the conflict has displaced more than 2 million people.

However, there have already been accusations from both sides of violations of the August peace accord.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said: ‘The road ahead will be difficult. I urge the signatories to honour their solemn commitment and implement the agreement without delay. Reverting to war yet again cannot be an option.’

He called on the parties to form the Transitional Government of National Unity to which they have agreed, and grant access to humanitarian assistance for those in need. His deputy, Jan Eliasson, who has been involved in resolving problems in the Sudan for 25 years, expressed hope that ‘the nightmare’ had finally come to an end.

During the meeting Kiir and rebel leader Machar accused one another of violating the ceasefire, but Ban asked them not to betray and disappoint the leaders trying to help them.

Kiir and rebel leader Machar accused one another of violating the ceasefire

Kiir told the meeting he was ‘determined to stop this senseless war’, but he also accused Machar’s opposition forces of violating the permanent ceasefire. Machar, who attended the UN meeting in person, in turn blamed Kiir. ‘The strange thing is, we are attacked, [yet] we are blamed [for violating the ceasefire].’

In March 2015, 77 civil society organisations had written to the PSC to ask for the release of Obasanjo’s report. According to their statement, the release of the report ‘could make an important contribution to South Sudan’s peace process and to the attainment of a peace that is both lasting and sustainable’.

‘[The report] could advance South Sudan’s pursuit of transitional justice and national reconciliation, defer future serious crimes by parties to the conflict, benefit victims and survivors who provided witness testimony, and build confidence in the AU’s commitment to combat impunity on the continent.’

Special Focus on UN General Assembly

African leaders remind the UN of its responsibility in fighting terror



African leaders, speaking at the UN General Assembly meeting, advocated for greater investment by UN member states in the fight against terrorism in Africa. They expressed their concern over the crisis in Libya and discussed the conflicts in the Central African Republic (CAR) and South Sudan.

Nigeria has not forgotten the Chibok girls. In fact, it is doing everything it can to defeat the radical terror group Boko Haram, Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari told world leaders at the UN General Assembly meeting in New York. Buhari, who came into power in May this year, promised that the priority of the Nigerian government – 'around the clock' – was to find the captured Chibok girls, who have been missing since April 2013. '[The] Chibok girls are constantly on our minds and in our plans.'

Nigeria has not forgotten the Chibok girls. In fact, it is doing everything it can to defeat the radical terror group Boko Haram

Of all the issues discussed at the General Assembly, terrorism was the issue most mentioned by African heads of state in their speeches. Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta devoted most of his time to the scourge that has plagued his country in the past several years.

The high cost of fighting terror

Buhari, a former major general, told his peers: 'Boko Haram's war against the people of Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon may not attract as much worldwide attention as the wars in the Middle East, but the suffering is just as great and the human cost is equally high.'

He said his government 'is attacking the problems we inherited head-on' with a strategy that includes cooperation with Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin within the regional Lake Chad Basin Commission. 'We have established a multinational joint task force to confront, degrade and defeat Boko Haram,' he said.

Kenyatta meanwhile called upon the international community to shoulder its responsibility in the fight.

'Kenya has continued to invest billions of shillings in the maintenance of regional peace and security, while many Kenyan lives have been lost in our quest for peace. Kenya therefore implores the international community, in particular the United Nations Security Council, to shoulder its responsibility in a manner that has a direct impact [on] the resolution of those conflicts,' he said.

Sustainable development, according to the goals adopted at the UN in September, will help in fighting terrorism.

'The continued threat of al-Shabaab has had a great impact on Kenya's national security and economy at large.' Somalia, 'an important neighbour of Kenya', where al-Shabaab's presence has had a negative impact on security, also needed assistance, but it had the support of Kenya, Kenyatta said.

African solutions

In addition to calls from across the continent to reform the UN Security Council, in line with the AU position there was also an emphasis on finding home-grown solutions.

Angolan Vice-President Manuel Vicente said the Lake Chad Basin Commission task force against Boko Haram 'is an example of the sort of collective response that deserves the necessary support of the international community in order to purge the African continent' of terrorism.

Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete, who will be stepping down at the end of October, called on the UN to 'seek to forge strategic partnerships' with the regional and subregional organisations involved in conflict resolution.

'Take advantage of the knowledge these organisations have of the history and nature of the crises, the key players and culture of the people, [then] it would be easier to manage and resolve the conflicts,' he said.

He added that the UN should invest in strengthening the capacity of these organisations and member states in 'anticipating, detecting, preventing, managing and resolving conflicts. I am of the view that this capacity is urgently needed in Africa,' he said.

China putting its money where its mouth is

In a move that will assist the AU to intervene in violent crises on the continent, China announced that it would give US\$100 million in military assistance to the African Standby Force over the next five years. This is in addition to the US\$1 billion and an additional 8 000 peacekeeping troops China promised the UN.

Libya

In his address to the UN, President Jacob Zuma of South Africa warned of the consequences should African leaders not be regarded in decision-making on the fate of conflicts on the continent.

'We wish to emphasise that the UN Security Council must take into account the views of the African continent and its subregional organisations when dealing with conflicts in Africa in future,' he said.

'The current situation in Libya and the Sahel region is a direct consequence of some members of the UN Security Council not heeding informed counsel from the African Union,' said Zuma, referring to the AU's roadmap to peace in Libya during the 2011 conflict.

Echoing Russia's complaints that countries such as the United States fomented trouble in states where they wanted to carry out regime change, Zuma blamed 'the militarisation of civilian unrest, which included the massive arming of civilians and opposition groupings in Libya and Syria' for the refugee crisis in Europe.



ADDITIONAL CHINESE
PEACEKEEPING TROOPS

His sentiments were repeated by the leaders of Angola, Tunisia and Zimbabwe.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi said the beheading of Egyptian Christians in Libya in February was 'but a result of complacency in confronting the expansion of extremists in defiance of the will of the Libyan people, tolerating their exclusionary tendencies, and allowing them to hold hostage the destiny of Libya and its people'.

Libyan acting head of state Agila Saleh Essa Gwaider said the Islamic State (ISIL) posed an 'overwhelming threat' to Libya's democratisation.

'We in Libya represent a fledgling democracy seeking to find its way in order to take hold as an added value in the minds of people and to transform ... into transparent, democratic, effective and stable institutions,' Gwaider said. He added that the spread of weapons and armed groups, some of which turned to criminal behaviour and terrorism, resulted in the weakening of the central authority.

ISIL aims to stretch its influence from Mauritania to Bangladesh, making the whole region subject to the 'rule of the jungle' while claiming it as the 'rule of Islam', he said. The Libyan authorities' efforts to fight terrorism were hampered by external support for terror, Gwaider added, in addition to the UN Security Council arms embargo.

CAR leader rushes home

The CAR's interim President Catherine Samba-Panza, meanwhile, had been hoping to walk into the UN General Assembly meeting with her head held high. But she had barely arrived in New York City when, on 26 September, reports came in of renewed violence in the capital, Bangui, something which, five days later, Samba-Panza would describe as an attempted coup. This as election preparations in the conflict-ridden country appeared to be on track for 18 October.

Samba-Panza rushed back to Bangui, leaving her foreign minister to address the General Assembly. She had to use a video link to address a high-level UN meeting on

the CAR on 30 September. She told the meeting that the violence highlighted the challenges in implementing the recommendations of the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation; the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme; and security sector reform.

She called for concrete commitments from the country's partners and donors 'to help the people of the Central African Republic get out of the spiral of conflict and suffering that they have been victims of'.

Samba-Panza had barely arrived in New York City when reports came in of renewed violence in the capital, Bangui

Even though the AU last year held a day-long fundraising drive to address the conflict in the CAR, this year in New York African leaders seldom mentioned the country.

Hotspots such as South Sudan and Mali discussed

The peace processes in both South Sudan and Mali were also discussed in high-level meetings at the UN. In the case of South Sudan, the various parties involved in the conflict resolution efforts were still waiting to see if an agreement signed in August would hold.

The PSC held a meeting on South Sudan on 26 September, where it decided to release the controversial Obasanjo report on the crisis (see page 3). At a UN meeting on 30 September, both President Salva Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar accused each other of fuelling the conflict.

Kenyatta, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) rapporteur, said he was concerned about the 'emerging governance and humanitarian crisis in South Sudan' and urged the UN and IGAD to support the peace process.

At the high-level meeting, Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, the IGAD chairperson, warned of the consequences should any party go back on the peace deal.



Situation Analysis

Stakes are high as a series of elections looms across Africa

The AU early warning system will be working overtime in the next few weeks as Africa heads into a series of high-risk elections. Elections in Burkina Faso have been postponed following a coup d'état in mid-September, and violence in the Central African Republic (CAR) might see the polls in that country, planned for 18 October, also being postponed. Elections are meanwhile going ahead in Guinea on 11 October and in Côte d'Ivoire and Tanzania on 25 October. Presidential elections are also being held in Benin and Niger in early 2016.

Burkina Faso in pre-election turmoil

Recent events in Burkina Faso, following a coup d'état on 16 September 2015, are a grim reminder of what can happen when the run-up to crucial presidential elections goes awry.

Eleven people were killed in the capital Ouagadougou before civil society and the army teamed up and threatened to oust the *Régiment de Sécurité Présidentielle* (the presidential guard, or RSP) responsible for the coup. More violence was averted thanks to an intervention by regional leaders, who convinced coup leader Gilbert Dienderé to hand power back to the transitional government.

The AU early warning system will be working overtime in the next few weeks

The PSC reacted swiftly and condemned the coup. The PSC met on Friday 16 September and again on 18 September, when it suspended Burkina Faso in conformity with its protocol on unconstitutional changes of government. Following the restoration of a civilian government, it lifted the suspension through a decision at its 547th meeting, held at the level of heads of state in New York on 26 September. In its statement the PSC 'commends the people of Burkina Faso and all concerned political and civil society actors for their exemplary mobilisation, which helped to foil the coup d'état'. The PSC also put on hold planned sanctions against Burkina Faso.

Could the PSC be accused of dropping the ball after the popular uprising that drove out former president Blaise Compaoré at the end of October 2014? Signs of serious trouble have been brewing in the country ever since members of the former majority party, who supported Compaoré's third-term bid, were excluded from running in the upcoming elections. Conflict between the RSP and Prime Minister Isaac Zida also spelled danger.

Since the events of October 2014, the PSC has held a number of meetings on Burkina Faso, but the country was pushed off the agenda by more pressing issues such as the crises in Burundi and South Sudan. Together with the Economic Community of West African States and the United Nations (UN) it has set up the

International Support Group to the Transition in Burkina Faso (GISAT-BF), which has held meetings throughout 2015. The PSC asks in its latest statement that the GISAT-BF reconvene and oversee a number of crucial outstanding issues, such as the reform of the security sector. The jury is still out on whether more early warning work should have been done to prevent the situation in Burkina Faso from deteriorating to such a degree ahead of the elections. The polls, initially planned for 11 October, are now likely to be held at a later date.

The jury is still out on whether more early warning work should have been done

Renewed conflict in the CAR may delay elections

The possible postponement of the upcoming polls in the CAR, planned for 18 October, has also been mooted due to the renewed violence that broke out last month. More than 20 people were killed in the capital Bangui following the death of a Muslim taxi driver on Saturday 26 September. The violence has since spread to other parts of the country and the death toll is nearing 60 people, according to government figures.

Those in favour of going ahead with the elections despite the violence say that the situation in the CAR is extremely volatile and the administration has not nearly recovered from the 2013/2014 war, so to postpone the elections would not make any real difference. Waiting until the country is ready could mean postponing the polls indefinitely, said CAR expert and Institute for Security Studies (ISS) consultant David Smith. He said that since so many identification documents were destroyed by the Seleka rebels in 2013 these would take a long time to reconstitute. 'There has never been a proper electoral list. Now that birth certificates have been destroyed, it is almost impossible to know who is living in the CAR.'

Even before the current outbreak of violence it seemed clear the elections would be postponed, but they should take place soon, he said. 'The transition should end so that there is an elected government that can be held accountable.'

To postpone the elections would not make any real difference

France, which sent troops to Bangui in 2013 to end the worst inter-ethnic and interreligious violence, also seems in favour of ending the transition period as soon as possible.

Other commentators, however, believe a minimum of stability is necessary to ensure the polls take place without the added context of political violence. Speaking to the international media while attending the 70th UN General Assembly in New York, interim President Catherine Samba-Panza acknowledged that the situation in her country was still extremely fragile. She pointed the finger at 'former leaders', reinforcing rumours that former president Francois Bozize might be behind the renewed instability.

Tensions ahead of Guinea's presidential poll

Meanwhile voting is going ahead in Guinea, where crucial polls are taking place on 11 October. Given the fierce contestation around the presidential elections in 2010 and

Presidential elections

GUINEA: 11 OCTOBER

CÔTE D'IVOIRE: 25 OCTOBER

TANZANIA: 25 OCTOBER

CAR: POSTPONED

BURKINA FASO: POSTPONED

the legislative elections in 2013, this is one of the most high-risk polls in the region. A last-minute postponement of the elections is also not excluded.

The main contentious issues in the run-up to the poll have been the lack of confidence in the neutrality of the *Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante* (CENI, the electoral commission); the electoral calendar, which has set the presidential elections ahead of the local elections; and the possible manipulation of the voters' roll in certain regions.

The opposition earlier this year demanded that the local elections be held before the presidential elections, because it suspected local councillors of having a hand in fraudulent results in the past two contested polls. The opposition would have liked to try to recover its major municipalities, such as those in Conakry, before going into the all-important presidential elections. The government, however, insisted that a delay in the presidential elections could result in a power vacuum if these overran the mandate of President Alpha Condé.

The opposition still has reservations about the neutrality of the electoral commission

Thanks to an agreement signed on 20 August between the government and the opposition, some of these issues have since been addressed. For example, it was agreed that each party would govern the local area where it had won a seat in the legislative elections, thereby appeasing some of the fears concerning the continual postponement of the local elections.

Despite certain measures taken by the government following the August agreement, the opposition still has reservations about the neutrality of the CENI, the voters' roll and the distribution of voters' cards. Criticism of the process by opposition parties such as Cellou Dalein Diallo's *Union des Forces Démocratiques de la Guinée* and Sidy Touré's *Union des Forces Républicaines* could lead to post-election disputes.

Ultimately, experts say that the deep-seated acrimony between Condé and his main opponent, Diallo, dating back to the 2010 elections and the lack of constructive dialogue, could sow the seeds of political violence around these polls. The spectacular announcement by Diallo in June 2015 that former coup leader Moussa Dadis Camara would be returning from his exile in Burkina Faso to support Diallo, has been met with widespread scepticism and accusations of political opportunism. Diallo has been warned of putting his reputation on the line through an association with a leader who clearly has no respect for the democratic process. Camara belongs to the smaller Guerzé ethnic group, which could be key in the battle for power that opposes the Fulani (Diallo's supporters) and the Malinké, Condé's ethnic group.

According to Maurice Toupané, researcher at the ISS Dakar office, Camara is still popular and his alliance with Diallo could have a negative impact on the chances of the incumbent. The violence that broke out in the N'Zérékoré region on 2 October between Condé's and Diallo's supporters shows that this region is strategic for both candidates. 'The instrumentalisation of ethnic sentiments could lead to even more violence and hamper the holding of peaceful elections,' said Toupané.

2 October

PRE-ELECTION VIOLENCE
IN N'ZÉRÉKORÉ

Complex political battles in Côte d'Ivoire

The presidential elections in Côte d'Ivoire have largely been described as a shoe-in for President Alassane Ouattara, especially given the large coalition supporting him

(the *Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix*, or RHDP). The international media has also been focusing on the huge economic gains made by Côte d'Ivoire following the 2011 political violence.

Observers, however, warn that it will be difficult to prevent incidents of localised instability linked to the elections, given the fact that so many parties are questioning the conditions under which the elections are being held.

It is also not true that all the major political actors are behind Ouattara, even if he has the support of former president Henri-Konan Bedié, leader of the powerful *Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire* (PDCI). A number of well-known political actors, such as former foreign minister and Organisation of African Unity secretary-general Amara Essy and former president of the West African Development Bank Charles Konan Banny, who also heads the reconciliation commission, broke away from the PDCI and are now also candidates in the presidential poll.

It will be difficult to prevent incidents of localised instability

Divisions within the main opposition party have aggravated the already complex political terrain in Côte d'Ivoire. A section of the *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI) of former president Laurent Gbagbo is advocating participation in the elections, while others are boycotting the process, as in 2011 and 2013, in protest against Gbagbo's incarceration in The Hague by the International Criminal Court, and what they consider to be an uneven electoral playing field. Legal wrangling over who has the right to lead the party has aggravated the bitter dispute between those participating in the elections, led by Pascal Affi N'guessan, and the pro-boycott faction, led by Aboudramane Sangaré.

In the last few months, these opposition politicians and groups have formed two coalition groups. These are the *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques* (made up of Affi N'guessan's faction in the FPI and 10 smaller parties), and the *Coalition Nationale pour le Changement* (consisting of independents Konan Banny and Kouadio Konan Bertin, the party led by the former chairperson of the National Assembly, Mamadou Koulibaly, and the Sangaré faction in the FPI).

Senior researcher Lori-Anne Thérout-Bénoni, head of the ISS office in Dakar, believed that the break-up of the opposition in so many coalitions and individual candidates would be favourable to the ruling RHDP. Ouattara is campaigning for a first-round win and would like to avoid large-scale contestation of the results. 'The RHDP is hoping for what Ivoirians term a *clean* election,' she said.

The opposition has raised a number of questions concerning the organisation of the elections. These include the neutrality of the electoral commission, which plays a crucial role in organising the election, and equal access by all the parties to the state media.

Many longstanding issues also threaten to derail the stability of Côte d'Ivoire over the long term. The reform of the security forces, national reconciliation, impunity for those responsible for past political violence, land ownership and the issues around identity and nationality (including that of the current president) all need to be resolved to ensure that the country does not fall back to the violent political contestation of the past few years. 'There is always the possibility that any one of these issues can be exploited for political purposes,' said Thérout-Bénoni.

Tanzania's hottest contest yet

Of all the elections taking place in Africa this month, the presidential election in Tanzania, on 25 October, is the least likely to be derailed. Tanzania's strong tradition of peaceful elections and the confidence in the country's electoral systems are largely to thank for this situation. However, high drama within the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), one of Africa's longest-ruling parties, has culminated in a much tenser electoral race than pundits foresaw.

Many observers believe that Magufuli is likely to win the elections

At the beginning of 2015, it seemed clear to observers that the main contest would be between the CCM, relying on its long tradition as liberation movement, and the main opposition party, the Chadema. Following a bruising process within the CCM, however, the cards have now been scrambled and the main contenders are the CCM's John Magufuli and former prime minister Edward Lowassa, who had broken away from the CCM in July after losing his bid to lead the party to elections.

Many observers believe that Magufuli, the Minister of Works, is likely to win the elections, thanks to his reputation of largely steering clear of political bickering and the backing of his powerful party. Magufuli has also not been tainted by the corruption scandals that have marked the last few years of CCM rule.

Lowassa, however, is a colourful figure, who managed to secure the signatures of thousands of CCM members during the primaries. He can also count on the support of those who accuse the CCM of dragging its feet in the economic

modernisation of the country. Despite private companies' flourishing in Tanzania, some still accuse the CCM of clinging to the socialist ideologies of its founder, Julius Nyerere, and not following the reform path of its neighbour Kenya, the economic powerhouse of the region.

Some still accuse the CCM of clinging to the socialist ideologies of its founder, Julius Nyerere

Serious problems also plague Tanzania in the run-up to the poll. The reform of the constitution and the hotly disputed status of Zanzibar are some of the issues that have not been resolved. Plans for a new constitution have been in the pipeline for decades and it was expected that a referendum on the constitution would take place before this election. This has now once again been postponed.

While post-election violence on the mainland is not foreseen, experts warn that the radicalisation of certain elements on the island of Zanzibar, with its proximity to Mombasa and Somalia, can create problems, as has been the case in previous elections.

Situation Analysis

In Mali, fragile progress requires extreme vigilance



Despite the signing of a peace agreement in June this year violence continues in the north of Mali and sporadically in other parts of the country. Disarming rebel groups and rooting out criminal networks are the immediate priorities of the government of Mali and the international community, which do not always see eye to eye. The AU and the PSC have been involved in the peace process ever since war broke out in 2012.

On 20 June 2015, the last major rebel group finally put pen to paper on the Algiers Agreement, a peace plan designed to end the conflict in Mali and heal the great north–south divide that has been such a source of instability since independence in 1960. The government, along with militias ostensibly loyal to it, had already signed in May, but the Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA) held out for more concessions.

The plan worked. The CMA, which, in its previous iteration (as the Movement for the National Liberation of Azawad) initiated the civil war in 2012, succeeded in having its fighters included in a security force for the north and won guarantees from the government that residents of the region would be better represented in government institutions.

Peace plan unexpected

Both the government and the international community welcomed the plan. ‘Hand in hand, let us make Mali better, more brotherly, more united than ever,’ said President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta on the conclusion of the deal. ‘Long live a reconciled Mali! Long live peace!’

The achievement of the peace plan was regarded by many as an unexpected twist, underlining yet again Mali’s seemingly unlimited capacity to surprise. In this country making predictions is a mug’s game – which only makes planning for the future even more difficult. Besides, as always, signing things is easy, but implementing them is another story altogether.

The Malian crisis goes beyond the distribution of political power

‘It is important not to have unrealistic expectations regarding the peace agreement. Its main objective is to lay down the framework that will enable the Malian parties to find a sustainable solution to the crisis. Consequently, the agreement does not cover either the structural causes or the root causes of the crisis, nor the different dimensions of the crisis. The Malian crisis goes beyond the distribution of political power between the different regions. The crisis facing the country extends to other important challenges such as drug trafficking, poor governance, lack of legitimacy

20 June
2015

SIGNING OF ALGIERS
PEACE AGREEMENT

and endemic corruption in all state institutions,' said Ibrahim Maiga, a researcher at the Institute for Security Studies.

The *PSC Report* travelled to Mali in late August to assess the country's progress. In the last few months there has been a noticeable increase in international media reports of violence and confrontation, specifically terrorist attacks. Most significant was the attack in early August on the Byblos Hotel in the central town of Sevare, which left 13 people dead, including five officials from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

The first major challenge is managing – and eventually disarming – the various armed groups operating in central and northern Mali

Increasing violence

Other incidents in the last month alone include a 'heavy arms attack' on a Malian army checkpoint, which killed two; an ambush of an army camp at Gourma-Rharous, which killed 10; another ambush of a checkpoint on the Diabaly-Nampala road in the Niono district, which killed two; and an attack by gunmen on Gaberi village, killing 10 civilians. In many cases the assailants remain unidentified.

As Bruce Whitehouse, a Bamako-based anthropologist, explained on his blog, the recent spate of attacks is a worrying sign that violence is actually spreading in the wake of the Algiers Agreement: '[T]he "bad guys" who, for the most part, once contained their nefarious activities to Mali's unruly northern reaches – particularly the regions of Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal – have penetrated into the rest of the country. Of Mali's nine administrative regions plus the District of Bamako, each has now been the scene of at least one terrorist attack, and most have seen terrorist violence within the last 90 days.'

In light of this, the *PSC Report* wanted to obtain a first-hand, on-the-ground perspective on the current situation. Is the Algiers Agreement holding? How fragile is the peace? Is Mali on the brink of war again and, most importantly, is there anything that the AU and specifically the PSC can do about it?

Conversations with government officials, representatives of the AU and the UN, leading civil society figures, academics and Western diplomats – most of whom would only speak candidly if their anonymity was guaranteed – created a picture of a country that has made significant progress since the crisis of 2012, but which remains dangerously volatile. Complicating the situation is the fact that the threats come from several different directions and the various actors involved in

finding a solution are not necessarily all trying to solve the same problem.

Clashing priorities

The first major challenge is managing – and eventually disarming – the various armed groups operating in central and northern Mali. Generally speaking, these fall into three broad categories: separatist rebels seeking an independent state in the north (the would-be state of Azawad), mainly under the banner of the CMA; militia groups opposed to the separatists, negotiating as the Platform movement, over which the government has some limited authority; and radical Islamist groups such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. There are overlaps among these categories and some groups that fall outside them.

An exploration of ways of dealing with these armed groups reveals a divided approach between the government and the international community. Prior to the Algiers Agreement the government had been advocating a hard line against the separatist rebels, favouring a military solution. This perhaps explains a widely held perception, expressed by several interviewees, that the government is supporting, or even financing, the Platform militias. 'In this context, terrorism is a secondary priority for the government: it's a problem, but you can't fix terrorism until you've fixed the political situation. Having said that, there is a political and ideological connection between some of Mali's armed groups and al-Qaeda, Islamic State, etc. But it is not an operational connection,' said a source in MINUSMA.

France takes the lead on almost all counter-terrorism operations in Mali

The international community is much more focused than the government on the terrorism element. Major regional and international powers, particularly Algeria and France, are worried that the vast, unprotected deserts of northern Mali have been and will continue to be used as a base for terrorist organisations wishing to destabilise the region as a whole. That is presumably why Algeria insisted on being allowed to lead the international mediation team and why France created Operation Barkhane, a counter-terrorism force of 3 000 soldiers designed to combat terrorism in the Sahel. At present France takes the lead in almost all counter-terrorism operations in Mali (the Malian government does not have the capacity to do so, and MINUSMA wants to avoid direct combat operations). Operation Barkhane is the follow-up to Operation Serval, which stopped terror groups from advancing to the capital, Bamako, in January 2013.

'Algeria wants security in the north at all costs. And I have to be honest, most of the international community agrees. Security is the priority,' a Western diplomat confirmed. This clash of priorities may have important ramifications when it comes to the allocation of scarce time and resources. For example, the government regularly criticises MINUSMA for not being active enough in confronting rebel groups. Not that there is much the government can do about this: in key areas of the north, most notably Kidal, it has no real presence and must rely on MINUSMA to carry out some of the functions of the state.

'Government reach is limited. There is still no government presence in Kidal. The Mali government is not in control of north and is entirely reliant on Operation Barkhane and MINUSMA, who have different interests,' complained a senior government official. The government's authority is also limited by control issues with the military, which is notoriously unwilling to be deployed into dangerous areas. Incidents such as the killing of more than 100 Malian soldiers during a massacre in Aguel'hoc at the beginning of the war, in January 2012, have contributed to this reluctance.

Broad mandate

France's interests are clear: Operation Barkhane is explicitly about counter-terrorism. But it is not always as easy to work out the motivations for MINUSMA's decision-making. The mission's mandate is broad, even though the United Nations (UN) Security Council did attempt to narrow it down in June 2014: '[T]he Security Council amended the mandate of the Mission and decided that it should focus on duties, such as ensuring security, stabilization and protection of civilians; supporting national political dialogue and reconciliation; and assisting the reestablishment of State authority, the rebuilding of the security sector, and the promotion and protection of human rights in that country,' said MINUSMA in a statement.

MINUSMA's difficulties are exacerbated by the severity of the working conditions in the north

Although MINUSMA is one of the largest and most expensive peacekeeping missions in the world (with 10 207 uniformed personnel and an annual budget of US\$628.7 million), this is a daunting list of duties. Complicating things further is the mission's large and unwieldy leadership team – a function of the quotas for fair geographic representation – which can disagree at times over how to interpret the mandate.

The highest-profile example of these internal divisions came in late August, when Arnauld Akodjènou, the mission's Deputy Special Representative in charge of political affairs, resigned – allegedly in response to criticism both internally and externally (from the government and rebel movements) of his decision to establish an exclusion zone around Kidal.

MINUSMA's difficulties are exacerbated by the severity of the working conditions in the north. Although staff at the Bamako headquarters enjoy air-conditioning and access to a swimming pool and golf course, peacekeepers in the field must contend with the extremely hot, dry climate and the thick dust that accumulates quickly, often making equipment (especially electronic equipment such as laptop computers) unusable. It is also dangerous: since its inception in 2013, MINUSMA has suffered 56 fatalities.

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THE NUMBER OF FATALITIES THAT
MINUSMA HAS SUFFERED SINCE ITS
INCEPTION IN 2013

It is in managing the conflicting priorities of these various actors that the AU is probably able to make the greatest impact. Although the AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL) is vastly under-resourced and under-staffed compared to MINUSMA, Pierre Buyoya, the AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, is playing an active – and, by most accounts, effective – role in political negotiations. Mali's government believes the AU can provide much-needed support to argue the government's case on the international stage and to make sure that it is not only the interests of the major powers that are taken into account.

Drug wars

Increasingly, however, decision makers in both Mali and the international community are realising that the political situation is only half the problem – and therefore a political solution is only half a solution. The other major factor is that northern Mali has become increasingly popular as a route for drug smuggling from South America into Europe. These routes are also used for human trafficking and to smuggle cheap, illegal goods from southern Algeria's preferential tax zone into Mali. Because of its illicit nature, quantifying the flow of narcotics across the Sahel is impossible, but analysts agree that the drug trade and political instability are intricately linked: the drugs help to fund the armed groups, which must also resist state control in order to protect their illegal profits.

'It is easy for criminals to claim the political discourse to excuse their activities, and to prevent a stronger state from clamping down,' said Ibrahim Iba N'Diaye, a professor at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure in Bamako. N'Diaye explains that elements of the state are involved too. 'There is some government implicated, especially military, in the drugs trade.'

Trade routes have always been northern Mali's economic lifeline. In such a harsh, inhospitable environment there are few other economic opportunities. Historically, traders would transport commodities such as salt and gold; these days it is cocaine and hashish. The narco-trafficking is largely controlled by the various armed groups, but ordinary northerners benefit too – and this makes it difficult for them to welcome a political settlement wholeheartedly. 'So, while people want doctors and teachers back, they don't necessarily want police or borders or the full state apparatus – that would be bad for business,' said N'Diaye.

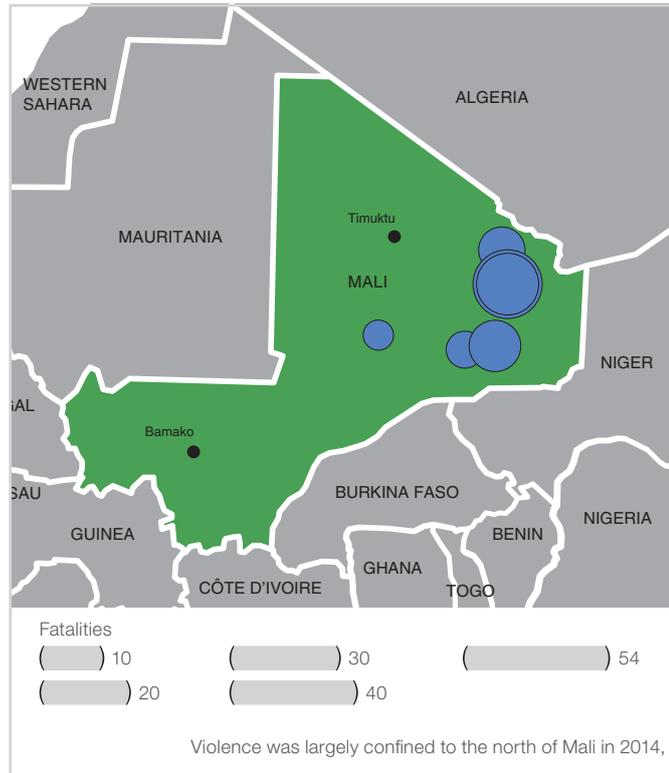
Historically, traders would transport commodities such as salt and gold; these days it is cocaine and hashish

The drug trade may be contributing to the instability in other ways too. Sources in MINUSMA said they are worried that South American drug traffickers may also bring lessons in political resistance; the worst-case scenario is that Mali's armed groups will start learning from Colombian groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), if they have not done so already. FARC members are experts in blending politics and criminality, with devastating long-term consequences for the state.

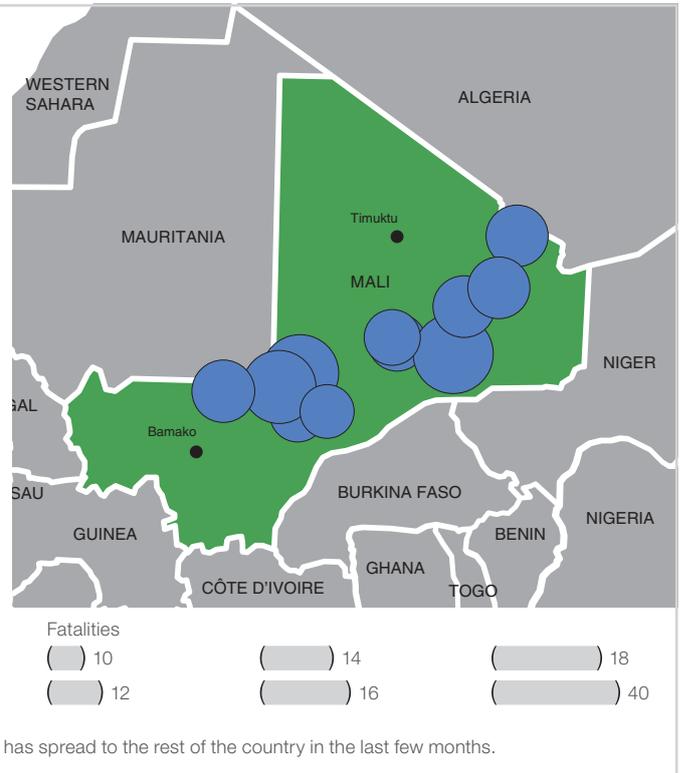
'Organised crime, including drug trafficking, is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges that Mali will continue to face in the short and medium term.

Resolving this problem is one of the main preconditions for settling the Malian crisis ... A number of recent initiatives taken at national and regional level have

Fatalities in Mali 2014



Fatalities in Mali 2015



Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project

contributed to strengthening the legal arsenal and the material means to fight drug trafficking. However, the results that have been achieved until now do not match the expectations, considering the resources deployed. The involvement of certain politicians, security officials and businessmen in the traffic is a major hindrance to effectiveness,' said Maiga.

No time to relax

Although Mali's progress since the 2012 crisis is encouraging, there is clearly plenty to be worried about. One can take one's pick from a variety of destabilising factors, such as the failure by all concerned parties to implement the Algiers Agreement (the terms of which have already been repeatedly tested by aggressive rebels and sluggish government implementation); the presence on Malian soil of radical Islamists; the diverging aims of the Malian government and the international community; and the growing economic dependence on narco-trafficking in the north.

Against this background it is vital for the AU to keep a close watch on the situation and use its influence to protect Mali's long-suffering citizens in the best way possible. This is not the time to relax – the crisis is far from over.



Addis Insight

Should AMISOM release an accurate death toll?

Africa's biggest peacekeeping mission, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), has suffered huge losses these past few months. This has sparked a rethink of the strategy and composition of AMISOM. Some experts argue that the ambiguity around casualties undermines the mission.

Every UN peacekeeping mission has its own website. And there, in bold type in the 'Fact and Figures' section, is a statistic: the number of peacekeepers who have lost their lives serving in that particular mission. This transparency is in stark contrast to that of the AU's highest-profile peacekeeping mission, AMISOM. AMISOM has been in Somalia for eight years now, but accurate information on injuries and fatalities is notoriously difficult to come by.

A case in point: On 1 September 2015, al-Shabaab attacked an AMISOM base in the small town of Janaale, Lower Shabelle region. Al-Shabaab's propaganda unit declared the attack to be a major victory, and claimed that it had killed more than 50 AMISOM soldiers. While acknowledging the attack, AMISOM refused to comment on the number of casualties it had incurred. To this day, we still do not know the exact number of soldiers who died in Janaale.

AMISOM refused to comment on the number of casualties it had incurred

What information we do have comes from the Ugandan People's Defence Force, as it was AMISOM's Ugandan contingent that was operating in Janaale – but even the Ugandans cannot agree on an exact number.

Rosebell Kagumire, a Ugandan journalist, explained the difficulties she faced in trying to extract an accurate death toll from the authorities: 'Our army spokesperson first said 10 people but we knew it was a big attack, and it took them 40-something hours to come up with that number. This makes it suspicious – it wouldn't take so long when just 10 people were killed. It was like they were taking time to come up with a figure that would not arouse anger in the country about the lack of protection for soldiers, and to prevent people from questioning the tactics of peacekeeping forces.'

This number then changed: another military spokesperson said 12, and on a state visit to Japan Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni said it was 19. 'Sometimes we get more accurate numbers from al-Shabaab,' said Kagumire.

A matter of policy

As a matter of policy, AMISOM is not allowed to release specific casualty counts. Officially, the mission delegates this responsibility to troop-contributing countries, each of which has its own policies about how to handle the information. Uganda, for example, will not release numbers until the families of the victims have been informed.

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THE NUMBER OF TROOPS IN AMISOM

Ethiopia, on the other hand, has a policy of not commenting on casualty counts at all, treating this information as a state secret.

It is also not always easy to gather this information in the first place. 'AMISOM is beset with technical challenges that prevent good and timely reporting of *anything*, including casualties. Poor communications, within each military's sector and between each force, is a big issue here. Commanders right down to the basic platoon leader have difficulty coordinating communications equipment and protocols, meaning you often end up with a broken telephone process of reporting any aspect of operations, including casualties,' said John Stupart, editor of the *African Defence Review*.

From AMISOM's perspective, this ambiguity around casualties is a double-edged sword. 'On the plus side for the military involved, it allows their ability to control the message, as it were, about engagements with al-Shabaab. Obviously this only works in skirmishes or outcomes where AMISOM forces are victorious, and not like the case where 50 Burundians are killed and a base overrun [in the town of Leego in June this year]. On the downside, it rapidly erodes public trust to hide or simply be unable to accurately report your war dead. If the dead are not reported and, most importantly, honoured, you can very quickly lose domestic support for your expedition in Somalia,' said Stupart.

This ambiguity around casualties is a double-edged sword

Kagumire argues that, in Uganda, the domestic support is already wavering. 'First of all we need to honour [fallen soldiers], the families need to know the sacrifice to serve in another country is appreciated. It's important they feel some level of appreciation. When they see numbers saying 10 died and then only 10 names are published, but you know your relative is dead and his name doesn't come out, it's a form of disenfranchisement for these families. The false information has a ripple effect on how families and communities feel ... It's a question of transparency, but also of honour.'

'Impossible to provide an accurate figure'

In a special report, Paul Williams, Associate Professor of International Affairs at the George Washington University and co-author of *Counterinsurgency in Somalia: lessons learned from the African Union Mission in Somalia, 2007–2013*, attempted to pin down exactly how many fatalities AMISOM has suffered in total. Estimates vary from a little over 1 000 deaths to more than 4 000 deaths, but Williams concludes that 'it remains impossible to provide an accurate figure for the number of peacekeepers who have sacrificed their lives serving on this mission'.

Williams outlines three reasons why this is important. First, peacekeepers who die deserve to have their sacrifice publicly recognised. Second, families of the victims are eligible for compensation payments, which cannot be made if their deaths are not acknowledged. 'Reports persist that compensation payments to next of kin are sometimes delayed for long periods and might not always be for the amount stated in the Memoranda of Understanding,' noted Williams.

Third, the ambiguity over casualties could have a negative impact on AMISOM's ability to fulfill its mandate. '[T]he deliberate policy of keeping such information secret has arguably contributed to undermining AMISOM's credibility to the extent that its strategic communications are perceived by many Somalis to be unreliable. No modern peace operation can succeed if it does not have the support of the local population, and greater clarity about the issue could be an important part of re-establishing AMISOM's credibility as a trusted source of information and demonstrate the sacrifice AMISOM's contributing countries have endured in the effort to bring peace to Somalia,' said Williams.

Although AMISOM has made considerable progress in Somalia over the years, the fight against al-Shabaab is far from won – and it is likely that many more peacekeepers will die before the mission has fulfilled its mandate. Perhaps now is the time for the mission, and the PSC, to examine whether its policy around the release of casualty figures is helping or hindering its efforts.



About the ISS

The Institute for Security Studies is an African organisation that aims to enhance human security on the continent. It does independent and authoritative research, provides expert policy analysis and advice, and delivers practical training and technical assistance.

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Acknowledgements



GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



The publication of the PSC Report is made possible through support from the Government of the Swiss Federation, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the government of New Zealand and the Hanns Seidel Stiftung. The ISS is also grateful for the support of the following members of the ISS Partnership Forum: the governments of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the USA.

About us

The *Peace and Security Council (PSC) Report* is an initiative of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) through its office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It was established in 2009 with the principal aim of supporting and complementing the work of the African Union (AU) and its Peace and Security Council through the provision of regular, independent and research-based information on and analysis of the PSC and its activities. The *PSC Report* offers the wider constituency of the AU, as well as African civil society organisations, the media and the international diplomatic community a reliable means of following and tracking the work of the PSC.

The *PSC Report* accomplishes these objectives through the publication of regular reports on issues that are either on the PSC's agenda or that deserve its attention. Through its webpage dedicated exclusively to the ISS' work on the PSC, the *PSC Report* also offers regular updates on current and emerging agenda items of the PSC.

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