SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF MEGATRENDS IN AFRICA

INSTITUTIONAL LEAD

Africa Center for Strategic Studies

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OVERVIEW

Insecurity in Africa is not an exclusively military or defence phenomenon. Understanding and responding to insecurity in Africa requires a keen understanding of a broad range of drivers, such as demography, climate change, urbanization and migration. This session examined how these megatrends will interact with evolving security conditions in the coming decades, and how to identify appropriate policy and institutional responses.

FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the session was to review both external and endogenous forces shaping African security futures and to consider a range of alternative potential scenarios. The session also aimed to identify key security sector institutions and actors charged with confronting these challenges in the coming decades. Finally, the session was to consider approaches by African stakeholders and external partners for developing and strengthening these institutions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The megatrends of urbanization, migration, climate change and the global economy are present in Africa and have consequences for other issues in the region.

There is a rapid economic growth in Africa, and it has been resilient to negative trends in the global economy. Non-resource sectors (e.g. services, manufacturing, agriculture) have produced the most growth. However, a major challenge is that the growth is disproportionally distributed among the population. Women and youths are marginalized, and poverty and unemployment rates are not decreasing. The drivers of economic growth are the transformation of quality institutions, macroeconomic policies, infrastructure and the informal sector, which employs a lot of people. In the long-term, the African economy is predicted to continue growing. A clear challenge is the dependence on diminishing resources, for example oil. The implications of economic growth for security and governance might result in a fast-growing middle class. When the middle class increases, it is going to expect accountable and legitimate governance. Other implications might be a decreased fertility rate, increased demand for transparency in the security sector and improvement of professionalism within the security sector.

One framework within which urbanization could be viewed is: (*a*) homogenizing of the population (e.g. tribe and ethnic identity will change); (*b*) spread of technology (especially for urban youth); (*c*) change of norms (e.g. on gender, and clashes between traditional and modern beliefs); and (*d*) climate change. Africa is vulnerably to climate change and there have already been consequences such as drought, cyclones and water shortages. The water shortage in Cape Town, South Africa, made the vulnerability of African cities visible. Huge slums might be created in the big cities, increasing urban-based violence. In summary, urbanization is taking big leaps and the effects are difficult to predict.

Even though migration is a global threat, Africa is going to be affected more by increased migration as it hosts more than half of the world's internally displaced persons (IDPs). Migration today is

mainly regional, but migrants are to a greater degree eventually moving overseas. There will be consequences for other countries as well.

The megatrends affect each other. Globalization leads to economic growth, which leads to a rising middle class, which in turn leads to greater migration in a positive sense (more people have the opportunity and means to go abroad). The scenario could also be negative: urbanization leading to increased insecurity, which triggers negative migration, increased conflict over natural resources because of climate change, internal displacement and regional conflict. The Horn of Africa in particular is going to be affected by climate change, which will increase migration to the Middle East. This development will bring more barriers to free movement between states, which is something that the African Union (AU) has worked a lot to achieve. Regional integration is an important part of the AU's Agenda 2063. The development, positive or negative, depends on how climate change is handled. It is necessary to implement the AU agenda in national policy frameworks. With a policy of free movement in the region, the organized crimes of smugglers will decrease.

Megatrends have an impact on the nature of the state: the democratization process is an important driver of positive change. The capability and behaviour of African states are crucial when it comes to the threat of climate change. If states have the capacity to deliver on energy, water and food security, conflict can be avoided and democratization will proceed. States' provision of education for the people is also important. The capacity of states is thus significant in terms of the current population boom. Currently, many states neglect the agricultural sector, which provides a lot of employment and is crucial for food security. In Ethiopia, for example, there is a major gap between the jobs created by the state each year and the people who need employment. When a state is unable to provide stability to the people, it has an impact on the peace and security landscape. Subnational actors could play a role in delivering stability. However, there is currently a tension between decentralization and central governments. Global and regional actors have the ability to have an impact on stability in Africa through trade and policies. The question is how this could be regulated.

Regarding transitional justice, there is a move towards new treaties and agendas developed by, for example, the AU, targeting subnational entities. This will make transitional justice easier to achieve. Foreign military intervention can be seen as a post-colonial force and a creator of insecurity. There is a need to rethink the traditional distinction between external and internal security.

Practical steps are needed for African countries as well as external partners to adapt to the megatrends. States should invest more in regional institutions to provide state security. Security institutions must understand the implications of the megatrends. The focus in the regional agendas needs to shift from conflict management to development. The AU's Agenda 2063 identified some drivers of change: development of the state, decentralization to serve the people's needs, development of the public sector (not all AU member states have ratified this part), industrialization, management of natural resources, infrastructure development, regional integration and trade agreements. Public safety should be prioritized through allocating more resources to the police and informing them how to deal with security issues such as counterterrorism. In addition, stakeholders should get closer to the people and build trust; reinforce African resilience; integrate civilians and invest resources back in the people; recognize that gender equality make societies better; encourage dialogue with Africa and donors on how to create good legislation targeting these issues. Funding is a major challenge in handling these issues.

One view is that African militaries are barely able to take care of themselves. Most of their budgets goes to salaries instead of training or new equipment. States need to take ownership of these issues. Donors are focusing too much on development and forget the security implications. Until African actors take leadership and ownership of these questions, nothing will change.

There are also criticisms of the AU. Donors focus a lot on supporting regional instruments, but the AU lacks political will and no one is holding it accountable. Focus need to shift outside the AU framework because it is mainly handling urgent issues without having conversations like this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Grasp the urgency of the megatrends and their implications.
- Recognize that climate change and how it is dealt with affects Africa, and vice versa.
- Observe megatrends in other regions as there is a risk of spillover into Africa.
- Train indigenous military forces to fight the terrorist groups in Africa in place of foreign military presences. Many young people are willing to defend their country, but this is not recognized in the international community. Investment companies could allocate money to build a security force in the country (with no demands, debts etc.).
- Focus financing more on the transition to renewables and make Africa more self-sufficient. Africa need to develop its own financing models, not only from donors.
- Donors should emphasize education (especially for girls), focus more on investment in justice instead of the military, and invest in infrastructure to increase trade.

RESOURCE LINKS AND DOCUMENTS

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