

Africa after the Africa Commission:

What priorities for
the German G8?

Conflict management

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Key messages conveyed by conflict and conflict management trends in Africa

- Regional and sub-regional organisations are an integral part of the design and implementation of conflict management norms and strategies on the continent and are becoming increasingly more proactive in this regard.
- The incident of large scale armed conflict between and within states, which pose a threat to international peace and security are on the decline e.g. the last 5 years have seen reduction in violent conflicts in Angola, Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone
- International policy responses in the area of conflict management are still heavily focused on short term measures, which consist largely of military approaches such as developing the capacity to plan and execute peace support operations at regional and continental levels.



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Implications for actors responding to African conflicts

- The need to sustain the capacity to cope with current conflicts. The AU Mission in Darfur has been heavily supported by the EU through the Africa Peace Facility but serious gaps remain
- The AU still lacks considerable capacity – both logistical and human resource – to replicate whatever limited success it has achieved in the area of peacekeeping
- The absence of a strong civilian component to African peace missions remains a serious gap in a region where this aspect of conflict management has traditionally been the preserve of the military.
- This limited capacity is also reflected in the process of operationalizing other aspects of the AU peace and security architecture, which correctly envisages multiple tasks and roles for civilians at various levels e.g. the Continental Early Warning System; Panel of the Wise



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Implications for actors responding to African conflicts

- The capacity to anticipate future conflict and to understand the nature of the terrain that will shape conflict management. Among other things, this capacity is hampered by overwhelming attention to current conflicts and crises (Dafur, Somalia).
- A gradual reduction in major armed conflict in Africa suggests that while regional organisations remain pre-occupied with conflicts like Dafur and Somalia, the prevalence of low intensity conflicts in countries where there is neither peace nor war, will present a growing challenge
- In these types of terrain, many of the low intensity conflicts are unlikely to constitute a major threat to international peace and security but will be potentially disruptive with adverse consequences for security and development in these settings.



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The future conflict management terrain

- Current trends point to two potentially explosive features – the proliferation of security providers other than those sanctioned by the state; and a surging youth population creating pressures for jobs, education and health, etc. This applies to much of sub-Saharan Africa
- Both of these features have serious implications for security and development in Africa. They can mitigate conflict in the short term while retaining the capacity to cause maximum disruption
- The current pace and scale of democratic transitions in some of these fragile contexts cannot adequately mitigate the adverse impact of the fallouts from the lack of state monopoly over the means of violence and youth vulnerability and exclusion
- Situations like Dafur and Somalia invariably focus the attention of peace planners on attaining political stability and creating a secure environment rather than on fine-tuning strategies for the longer term goal of security and development



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The future conflict management terrain

- The challenge that confronts African policy makers as well as regional and international organisations is to sharpen and align available policy instruments in order to effectively meet the challenges of this environment
- There is thus a need to look beyond current crises and prevailing circumstances to help construct longer-term security and development scenarios for a changed terrain
- A multi-track approach is required to deal explicitly with the military interface and involves broadening the current constituency of actors



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The future conflict management terrain

- Regional policy frameworks must move beyond the military solution in conflict management. Current responses, like the peace and security architecture are geared toward the prevention of violent conflict. There is a need for a more proactive approach to the common governance and security challenges, which generate conflicts that may not necessarily escalate to large scale armed violence.
- The success of current and future conflict management efforts will depend on the existence of a sound knowledge base in African institutions. The present situation suggests that sustaining the capacity to respond to conflict situations requires greater civilian capacity at both field and headquarters and a residual knowledge base within regional organisations in the area of conflict management.



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Policy implications

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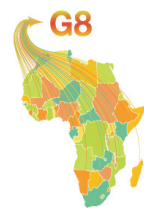
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