

# Perspectives on African Security

**On the State of Peace and Security in Africa**

Olusegun Obasanjo

**From Bangui to Eastern Congo**

Greg Mills





## Executive Summary

This Discussion Paper is comprised of two separate reflections on African security, the first by the former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, the second by the Brenthurst Foundation's Director, Greg Mills. President Obasanjo's contribution is an edited version of his opening address to the Third Tana High-level Forum in April 2014 in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. President Obasanjo anchors his analysis of the current and historical context of today's security challenges to the AU's pledge not to bequeath to future generations of Africans a legacy of wars and conflicts, by silencing the guns by 2020 – a tall order given that from 1960 until the present day, 50 per cent of African states have been ravaged by one form of conflict or the other. Concerned that Africa might be overwhelmed by the scale and dynamism of the new forms of conflict which have emerged in the post-Cold War period, Obasanjo breaks down the various security challenges into a number of categories and highlights the numerous, interwoven triggers of these conflicts. In order to achieve sustainable peace in Africa, he ends by outlining five non-negotiable priorities – priorities for peace – to fast-track the implementation of already existing mechanisms, which hitherto have not succeeded as well as originally envisaged.

Moving from the pan-African security context to detailed case studies, Greg Mills examines South

Africa's recent peacekeeping involvement in Central African Republic and the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Mills first reviews tactical and strategic lessons which emerged from South Africa's costly peace support intervention in the CAR, now infamously referred to as the Bangui Episode, though some of these weaknesses had previously come to light in earlier missions, notably Darfur. These lessons are considered in the context of the 3500-strong Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) which came into being in May 2013 to help stabilise the perennially insecure and unstable eastern Congo, whose civilian population has endured untold hardships on account of rebel groups and ineffective government forces. A key conclusion of his analysis of the UN mission in the DRC is that their mandate *per se* has not been responsible for their failures but rather the key problem lies in the (flawed) interpretation of that mandate. Mills ends by reflecting on what metrics should be used to determine the success of missions such as the FIB, concluding that it will ultimately depend on whether it can help to stabilise the DR Congo. Critically, unless the moment of security it can provide is backed up by local economic and political progress, it will remain just that – a moment.

# On the State of Peace and Security in Africa

*Olusegun Obasanjo*

Recent developments and security threats in Mali, Central African Republic and Nigeria are alarming. And we cannot forget South Sudan and what we commonly call the endless conflicts in Somalia and the Great Lakes. The African Union (AU), at its

50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, pledged not to bequeath to future generations of Africans a legacy of wars and conflicts, by silencing the guns by 2020. But 2020 is around the corner. What is the way out of this situation?

## Background to Today's Security Concerns

The African continent has no doubt witnessed some transformations in the last decade or two, ranging from advances in the use of communication technology, to rapid economic growth triggered by an expanding market for Africa's commodities; and a burgeoning youth population able to innovate in this environment. At the same time, our potential to translate these transformations into stable peace and development for African people is hampered by the continuing threat of armed conflict, along with its transmutations. Armed conflicts have become a recurrent reality in Africa since independence.

From 1960 until the present day, 50 per cent of African states have been ravaged by one form of conflict or the other. The post-Cold War resurgence is particularly disturbing. Peace and security scholars have attempted to classify armed conflicts on the continent into various categories – some of which understandably only feature in our discourses in a historical sense. Categorisation at this point is necessary, if only as an indication of how far we have come as a continent.

- *Post-colonial conflicts* arising from agitations for liberation from the control of colonial settlers in countries such as Namibia (1990); Zimbabwe (1980); and apartheid in South Africa (1994).
- *Boundary and territorial conflicts* such as the Angolan Bush War in South Africa, from 1966 to 1989; and the Algeria–Morocco conflict over the Atlas Mountain area in (1963); the territorial tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea (1998–2000); the Kenya–Somali war (1963–67); the Somali–Ethiopian conflict (1964–78); the Egypt–Libya conflict (1977); and the Cameroon–Nigeria

conflict over the disputed Bakassi Peninsula (1994) – the settlement of which I was part of.

- *Conflicts linked to secessionist ambitions* such as the case of Sudan and South Sudan from 1983–2011; the age-long Cassamance rebellion in Senegal; the Cabinda agitations in Angola; and the Biafra civil war in Nigeria 1967–70.
- *Resource-based conflicts* such as the Sudan and South Sudan conflict over the Abyei region; the Congo Brazzaville conflict in 2007; the Angolan conflict; and the Senegal/Mauritania conflict of 1989.
- *Identity-based conflicts* such as inter-ethnic or inter-tribal conflicts. Examples of these are the 1994 Rwandan Genocide; the Burundi massacre; the Tuareg uprising in Mali; clan fighting in Somalia and Liberia; Algerian Berbers fighting against the ruling Arab class in Algeria; and the ongoing South Sudan conflict.
- *Annexationist conflicts* such as the occupation of the Western Sahara by Morocco in 1975; and British Southern Cameroons in 1961.
- *Poverty, denial and perceived or real injustice induced conflicts* like the militancy in the Niger Delta of Nigeria or the current Boko Haram insurgency.

Even though a substantial decline in the occurrence of inter-state conflicts, including many of those mentioned above, was experienced in the 1990s, an alarming rise in the number of intra-state conflicts, and what some scholars refer to as 'new wars' in their various forms and shades, is taking place. By nature, these conflicts tend to be more intense

and intractable. They range from large-scale warfare to low intensity conflicts; and of late we have seen how public protests and people's movements can set off a chain of violent, even if transformative events. Over the past years, countries such as Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Ethiopia-Eritrea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, Mali, Central African Republic and Nigeria have witnessed one form of escalating conflict or the other with their attendant consequences. Some of these countries are still undergoing heart-wrenching episodes of violence at the moment. The gory events of the last month of 2013 in South Sudan and the horror witnessed on the streets of Bangui in Central African

## Triggers

Politically, poor governance, state building processes such as struggle for control of power and unconstitutional change of government remain key conflict drivers. Economically, corruption, struggle for ownership, management and control of natural resources, as well as unequal distribution of these resources constitute major factors that trigger conflicts across the continent. Socially, inadequate capacity for diversity management, the real or perceived inequality and discrimination against minorities, marginalisation along ethnic and religious lines as well as the alienation and consequent disillusionment of the youth are further additions. Internationally, colonial legacies, and foreign interference in political transition and governance have equally triggered conflicts.

But what is indeed new is the pattern of mutation of old conflicts. As a result, we sometimes see their manifestation in more extreme forms of militancy. To be certain, this extreme expression of violence is not the preserve of Africa. However, while it is tempting to conclude that what we are experiencing is copycat stealing of 'narratives' from all over the world, we must reflect on how deeply militant groups believe in those narratives. Initial evidence suggests that despite a copycat method of expression, these are reactions to local rather than global conditions. We now know that we cannot ignore the 'power of Africa's streets' both in its violent and non-violent

Republic attest to this and in my view should challenge our resolve as Africans to silence the guns in these places forever.

Further additions to these are growing and menacing terrorist activities and insurgencies taking place in Somalia, Mali, Kenya and North Eastern Nigeria to date. In some respects, these conflicts and forms of insecurity are not as new as some peace and security scholars might claim. For one, their root causes and triggers are not necessarily new. We have long spoken about the structural violence that underlines armed conflict. The Constitutive Act of the AU pays particular attention to this. We have also noted that the triggers of these conflicts are numerous and interwoven. Several are worth highlighting.

manifestations. The phenomenon in which largely young populations take to the streets to voice their feelings of exclusion through mass non-violent protests; and another phenomenon in which a form of socialisation causes young people to throw bombs on themselves and are ready to kill deserves closer attention. As a result, we see the threat landscape changing. We therefore must ask ourselves whether this threat landscape is changing fundamentally and whether we are still looking at the right framework for addressing the breadth of security challenges confronting the continent.

We now know that we cannot ignore the 'power of Africa's streets' both in its violent and non-violent manifestations

The consequences of conflicts in their various manifestations on state, human and collective security are enormous, and it is therefore imperative for African leaders to muster the necessary resolve and determination to ensure that these deadly conflicts and their negative consequences on our citizens becomes a thing of the past.

Politically, Africa's ability to establish secure, democratic, and economically prosperous states is being hampered. State institutions and infrastructures are eroded, thereby undermining the integrity of the state. Formal economies have collapsed, giving room for the rise of shadow states where warlordism, impunity, and criminality thrive.

Socially, the humanitarian dilemma across the African continent is huge. The incalculable loss of human lives, the damage to material infrastructure and environmental resources and the massive flows of refugees and internally displaced persons is a scar on our conscience.

It is imperative for African leaders to muster the necessary resolve and determination to ensure that these deadly conflicts and their negative consequences on our citizens becomes a thing of the past

Economically, the loss of income and assets, damage to infrastructure, diversion of resources from socio-economic development to peacekeeping, collapse of trading systems, cuts in social spending and capital flight, are some of the negative consequences of these armed conflicts.

Our actions as decision makers, private stakeholders and civil society should complement the relentless efforts of National governments, the AU, Regional Economic Communities and the international community on the prevention, management and resolution of these conflicts.

National governments have adopted several measures, policies and initiatives to enhance peace and security in affected countries.

At the regional level, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have, in accordance with the Constitutive Act of the AU, consistently condemned unconstitutional changes of governments in the region, imposed sanctions against defaulting member states and facilitated mediation processes in these conflicts. They have equally deployed peacekeepers and human rights

observers to conflict affected countries. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) also intervened in resolving conflicts in Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia.

At the continental level, The African Union, since its transformation from the OAU to the AU in 2001, embarked on a paradigm shift from its principle of non-interference to a principle of non-indifference and the right to intervene. Guided by the principle of 'African Solutions to African problems' the AU has taken significant actions to enhance peace and security in the continent. The adoption of the Protocol Relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council in December 2003 and its framework for conflict-prevention, management and resolution in Africa – the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), are commendable.

The AU has undertaken several peacekeeping missions in Burundi, Comoros, Somalia, Darfur and Central African Republic with significant results. Also worth mentioning is the evolving AU Agenda 2063, which places balancing state and human security as one of its core priorities, The African Common Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda which explores the interconnectedness between peace, security and sustainable development and the African Governance Architecture (AGA) which aims at promoting good governance for sustainable peace and security.

At the global level, the United Nations have supported the restoration of peace and security in Africa through the adoption of various resolutions, which established various peacekeeping missions across the continent. These efforts have been supported by financial and technical support of various development partners and non-state actors across the globe.

Would these efforts be enough to eradicate conflict by 2020? Certainly not, we need to do more. Much also depends on our ability to engage in hard collective thinking and 'horizon scanning' in ways that enable us to inject flexibility when required, into our existing response frameworks. The Tana Forum offers an important contribution to a process of collective thinking.

If we must achieve sustainable peace in Africa, the following non-negotiable priorities to fast-track the implementation of already existing mechanisms are of utmost importance:

## Priorities for Peace

- Democracy and good governance must form the basis of management of affairs of every country in Africa. Peace, security and good governance are fellow passengers.
- African leaders and decision-makers must reaffirm their commitment in terms of resources and demonstrate the political will required to ensure the operationalisation of an African-owned APSA. African Solutions will ring hollow if we fail to fund our initiatives and programmes.
- The implementation of the African Governance Architecture must be accorded the needed priority as APSA and AGA are two sides of one coin. While AGA focuses on broader questions of governance, APSA places emphasis on the mechanisms for conflict management, resolution and peacebuilding. These two must work together to bring about peace and security in the continent.
- All components of APSA should be equally implemented for a more coherent and comprehensive approach to managing peace and security in Africa.
- African stakeholders; government, private sector, and civil society, must make concerted efforts to support existing mechanisms and initiatives,

building strong infrastructure of government and viable institutions.

A pivotal moment is now upon us, the long-running debate on achieving sustainable peace and security in Africa is like running a marathon. Implementing existing frameworks and initiatives will require resilience, dedication, resources, and patience, perhaps more patience than we would like. We must all set our minds and put our hands together to achieve this imperative order for Africa.

In the words of the late South African President Nelson Mandela: 'It always seems impossible until it's done.' Let us press on in this conviction therefore – strongly and consistently, towards our goal of achieving sustainable peace and human security in our dear continent, Africa.

*This Paper is an edited version of HE President Olusegun Obasanjo's opening address to the Third Tana High-level Forum on 26 April 2014 in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. The Brenthurst Foundation thanks the Tana High-Level Forum Secretariat for its kind permission to use President Obasanjo's address.*

# From Bangui to Eastern Congo

## Identifying and Applying Lessons from South Africa's Recent Peacekeeping Involvement

*Greg Mills*

Africa is the peacekeeping continent. It is the site for 70 per cent of nearly 100 000 United Nations peacekeeping deployments world-wide. Over 60 000 African troops from 39 countries serve in peacekeeping operations across the globe. Still, in spite of a record number of UN peacekeepers in Africa, roughly twice as many as in the early 1990s, success has been far from guaranteed, with the spread of new conflicts from South Sudan to Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR) apparently difficult for peacekeepers to keep up with.<sup>1</sup>

Mirroring an improving African economic situation overall, based on higher growth rates during the 2000s, there is a nascent assertiveness in continental

peacekeeping missions. Despite security setbacks in CAR and in Nigeria in the fight against Boko Haram, in response to deteriorating security problems in the eastern Congo, a 3 500-strong *Force Intervention Brigade* (FIB) came into being in May 2013. The origins of the FIB reveal frustration over the UNs' apparent inability to deal with the Congolese rebels and protect the civilian population. It also reflects the strategic and tactical lessons learned by South Africa over the last two decades of peacekeeping involvement, and also its commitment to changing positively both the image of the continent and the harsh, violent reality of its trouble-spots.<sup>2</sup>

### A Summary of Lessons

On 23–4 March 2013, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) experienced its own 'Black Hawk Down moment' in the CAR, when its mission there, already unclear, went badly wrong, resulting in the deaths of 13 of the 240 deployed South African soldiers,<sup>3</sup> the wounding of another 27, and as many as 700<sup>4</sup> opposition rebel deaths.<sup>5</sup>

The lessons from the so-called 'Bangui episode' brought into sharp focus the strategic and tactical weaknesses in South Africa's engagement in peace support operations, some of which had already been highlighted by earlier missions, notably of that in Darfur. It should be added, however, that there is an extreme culture of secrecy surrounding these missions and their mandate and motives, much to the frustration of parliamentarians, at least of the opposition. For example, while there are reportedly three ongoing Boards of Enquiry into the Bangui episode, and one additional completed Internal Review process, there has been no public information yet

forthcoming, and only one question answered in parliament. The only public admission about the SANDF's role in Bangui is that South Africa needs proper air transport.

These missions both illustrated and amplified extant operational and institutional challenges faced by the SANDF generally, including the age of personnel, rates of HIV-infection approaching 25 per cent, continued reliance on a small group of deployable personnel, reliance on reserves (currently supplying one of four companies in the Congo, for example, with 14 500 reserves called up in 2014 alone), and the unserviceability of key materiel including fighters, submarines and the corvettes due to a lack of funding, skilled personnel and spares.<sup>6</sup>

These lessons from Bangui and other deployments (including South Africa's role in an anti-piracy operation off the coast of Mozambique – 'Operation Copper'<sup>7</sup>) can be divided between the tactical and strategic domains, and distilled in the following table:

## Tactical Lessons

Lack of airlift (in the words of one, retired senior officer, which 'must be owned, otherwise it takes too long to be hired in'). The Ilyushin Il-76 option, hired for the occasion, is seen as 'too tight a flight to take [Oryx] helicopters, thirsty and cannot fly into smaller airports'.

In addition to a purchase or leasing arrangement for strategic airlift, this has highlighted the need for a regional hub for basing, such as Entebbe, from which tactical airlift with the likes of C130s can occur.

The need to have a balanced force. In particular, there has been in instances a lack of offensive airpower: 'need to fight fire with fire'. The Rooivalk deployment in the eastern Congo flows from this. Placing troops in harm's way in lightly armoured vehicles where the 'spoilors' have weapons that can easily penetrate them has been another take-away from Bangui and Darfur.

Need for Command and Control links with others, including NATO members, notably absent during President Zuma's attempted diplomatic foray in the Libyan crisis.

The need for proper maritime surveillance, not with a 70-year old airframe in the Dakota. (This is also a lesson from the disappearance of MH370.)

Frequency of troop rotations is seen as critical, as is the training between, so they don't just become peacekeepers, with all of the perverse financial incentives that go with this. (The provision of a battalion to UN peacekeeping operations is estimated to yield the contributing country as much as \$7 million over a six-month rotation.<sup>8</sup>)

Interoperability remains a problem on the continent, not least given that many countries (especially those in southern Africa) are going the Chinese equipment route.

Uneven caveats, including over who is willing to operate what at night; and it does not take long for the opposition to work these out.

Problems of discipline; not just in terms of fraternisation and relations with locals, but maintenance of equipment, said in Darfur to be 'Like a graveyard' as a result. Overall, the standards of discipline relates to a lack of experienced senior NCOs and unwillingness to enforce routines.

Constant and disruptive visits by VIPs.

Lack of intelligence co-ordination and a lack of UN intelligence capacity – 'a dirty word' but which hampers every operation. 'Good intelligence could make missions far easier', said one SA officer. But different problems. 'In Congo, not enough intel; in Sudan, not enough discretion in with whom it was shared.'

Too much hesitancy to use civilian contractors, which would have been cheaper and improved serviceability.

Wrong sorts of equipment for the opposition; for example, soft-skinned vehicles in Darfur against 14.5mm and 23mm heavy weapons. 'If the mandate does not allow this, we should not go'.

CAR has also highlighted problems in procurement, especially tents and parachutes delivery systems.

Problems with deployment of equipment have also been pointed out by CAR: The failure to find a way to issue at least some Mamba vehicles to the protection force; and the failure to deploy air reconnaissance assets, either from Denel or the Air Force.

## Strategic Lessons

**DR Congo:** The mission was initially to oversee elections, and then mutated into the protection of the civilian population. It became a tautology even though it was not resolving the core problems of security in the east.

Questions about why the mandate of dealing with insecurity only applies in the country and not on the outside – e.g. in terms of the funding or succour of rebel groups, which opens the back door for instability given regional interests.

AMISOM's success in Somalia has illustrated that an African solution is difficult but possible.

**CAR:** Equipment for the initial mission was suitable, but when the mission changed and the situation turned against the government, the mission should have changed, but there remained a political imperative to stay engaged when we should have reconfigured the forces or withdrawn.

Frustration overall over the long lead times to agree on and deploy missions, which has given rise to the African Capacity to Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC). As South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Co-operation Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane has put it, 'Leaders in that region [ECOWAS] say, it took them 11 meetings in 11 months polishing the decision to intervene in Mali, until one day they woke up and the rebels were now marching towards Bamako. That shouldn't have happened.'<sup>9</sup>

South Africa had no diplomats in CAR, a country that borders the SADC, let alone an attaché. Worse, the force commander had to be his own diplomat; at least he should have had someone from the Department of International Relations and Co-operation (and/or the SA Secret Service) attached to handle those aspects.

## Implementing for the Eastern Congo

The occupation of Goma by the M23 rebel grouping in November 2012 went largely unanswered by the DR Congo peacekeeping operation (MONUSCO) troops, their mandate only allowing them to protect civilians, a situation the French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius called 'absurd'.<sup>10</sup> One result was a reported 'protest' at the UN from the funding countries at the high cost of MONUSCO and the absence of any obvious progress. Not only had the UN failed in its abovementioned mandate to protect the civilian population, but the fifteen years of MONUSCO (and its predecessor MONUC) had clearly not midwived sufficient Congolese central government capacity given the flight of around 2 000 'soldiers' (at least in name) of the DRC army (FARDC) and 700-odd Congolese policemen when the M23 advance approached the outskirts of Goma and the inactivity of the 1 500-odd armed UN peacekeepers in Goma.

It's less the mandate that is the problem but rather its interpretation that is broken

The varied performance of the UN forces suggests, however, that the mandate *per se* has not been the problem. In the eastern Congo, MONUC failed to defend Goma and Bukavu in 2004, Bunia in 2003, and Kisangani in 2002, in each case coming up with other excuses. On the other hand, it defended Goma repeatedly in 2006 and early 2008 under a very similar mandate. Bottom line: It's less the mandate that is the problem but rather its interpretation that is broken.

M23 withdrew from Goma in December under considerable African and international pressure, not least from other regional actors. After the failure of the UN to intervene, 11 African states signed the *Peace, Security and Co-operation Framework* for the DRC in February 2013 – designed to re-establish peace in the eastern DRC. With a significant contribution from SADC states, a 3 500-strong *Neutral Intervention Force* (NIF) was created with a robust mandate to conduct aggressive operations in the

protection of civilians under threat, and neutralisation of armed groups. In fact it was impractical because of the prohibitive cost and lack of support to the deployed forces, but in spite of this the individual states actually started planning what they were going to contribute and how they were going to self-fund.

From a South African vantage, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO) seemed to be concerned by the negative publicity: that is, the NIF was threatening to achieve with 3 500 troops what MONUSCO with 17 000 couldn't do, and it would appear that this further embarrassed – or at least politically outmanoeuvred – the UN who then proposed the deployment of a UN intervention brigade, based on the SADC troop component committed to the NIF. This was supported by the AU and the *Force Intervention Brigade* (FIB) which came into being in May 2013, as noted above, with South Africa, Tanzania and Malawi being the primary contributors, in terms of UN Security Council Resolution 2098 of 1 April 2013. Of interest was the adoption of an aggressive mandate authorising '... *neutralising armed groups ... contributing to reducing the threat posed by armed groups to state authority and civilian security in Eastern DRC and make space for stabilisation activities*'.<sup>11</sup>

In response, the SANDF re-rolled its existing battalion (6 SAI) deployed at Goma; Malawi redeployed its battalion from the UN mission in Cote d'Ivoire; and Tanzania provided a battalion and the Brigade Commander.<sup>12</sup> South Africa reportedly bid for, but was denied the command post by high UN politics.

The FIB has additional offensive capacity in the form of Special Forces, artillery, armed APCs, UAVs, transport helicopters (5 x Oryx included) and gunships (3 x Rooivalk). Of particular interest is the success achieved by the Rooivalk which was deployed at the beginning of November 2013 and has flown a number of missions (perhaps as many as 15) up to March 2014. Another factor which has had a significant effect, real and psychological, is the success achieved by the SANDF snipers. Again, here, this raises questions less about equipment and mandate than will. While there is no doubt the Rooivalks have been used to great effect, MONUC/MONUSCO

has had MI-25s and MI-35s with similar capabilities. The question is whether the mission leadership is willing to use them, and troop contributing countries are willing to accept the risks of combat.<sup>13</sup> The poor performance of some elements of the UN force in Goma in the face of M23 highlights this challenge.

The creation of the FIB has clearly indicated that a robust/aggressive mandate can achieve results, at least in the short-term. It has allowed UN forces to go onto the offensive to achieve military objectives; the mandate has permitted the engagement of

rebel groups in the field (away from built-up areas and refugee camps) and deterred them from future adventures; it has engendered confidence in the local civilian population that stability can be imposed; and it has imparted satisfaction in the UN troops that they can really make a difference and confidence that they can win a skirmish.

In sum, the mission in the Congo is seeing the first signs of stabilisation and success after years of despondency.

## Congo Lessons and Metrics

The Congo FIB has not yet had an impact on South African defence and foreign policy in the same way that CAR has achieved. Still there are already a number of lessons learned: success can be achieved if the rules of engagement are adapted to suit the situation; of the need to equip your force with what they require to achieve the objective (include in the Status of Force Agreement) and to invest in intelligence, primarily at the tactical level, allowing you to take the initiative; and to look for an early spectacular ‘quick victory’ that will encourage your forces, discourage the enemy and generate support within the local population, notably such as with the Rooivalk operation.

The next steps are critical however, including the transition from the military task (intervention, separation, etc.) in establishing a cease-fire from the post conflict responsibility of maintaining law and order which is essentially a police function. In Congo as elsewhere, the military component is critical to create a moment of stability, but it is essential that this is backfilled with economic activity, local security, infrastructure spend – in a word, governance. The ability of the DRC to do this, alone or in tandem with other actors, remains, to put it politely, a challenge.

The consolidation of military gains will have to depart, fundamentally, from the assumption that there is a clear division between conflict and post-conflict environments. The UN has tended to assume a post-conflict environment as a prerequisite for deployment. In most cases that is an inaccurate strategic assumption that leads to many problems,

including the lack of a coherent pol-mil strategy to change conflict dynamics towards a political settlement. To the extent that peacekeeping operations carry out any diplomatic peace-making and building, they have attempted to do so in a predominantly top-down way, involving leadership. But longer-term solutions will require, for example, addressing the underlying land tenure issues that drive conflict in parts of the eastern Congo, where land is connected to political power. In sum, to be successful, peacekeepers need to think about co-ordinated bottom-up and top-down peace building/keeping/ enforcement approaches, not just top-down leadership dialogues and co-option.

The UN has tended to assume a post-conflict environment as a prerequisite for deployment

Success will also depend on keeping the regional players onside, or at least inside, which is hard to do given the combination of existentialism and self-interest. Indeed, the size and equipment of the FIB relative to the mission should be considered in the context. In the opinion of a number of analysts, the force levels in North Kivu – let alone the rest of the eastern DRC – are too low to ensure the sustained stability required to enable lasting economic, social and political progress. Peace remains fragile until the potential for guerrilla activities inside the Congo

and potential attacks from the DRC against Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi is addressed. It should be stressed that there has been no major engagement with M23, apart from when they were struck by the Rooivalk flight, which they had not been prepared for. For the rest, they have just faded away

as guerrillas do. The M23 elements in North Kivu at Masisi, Walikali and elsewhere further westward remain likely still in place, ready to fight another day, perhaps under a different name but over the same set of issues.

## Metrics for Success?

Finally, what metrics should be used to determine the success of missions such as the FIB. Should this be the speed of intervention *a la* ACIRC, the effectiveness of the response, the speed of exit, or the sustainability of what it leaves behind?

The FIB's success will ultimately depend on whether it can help to stabilise the Congo, whether the moment of security it can provide will be backed up by local economic and political progress

Even though the indications are that South African forces have done well, they are experiencing, reportedly, challenges in generating sufficient numbers of troops to be redeployed, though since there is such a culture of secrecy around this, it is hard to discern what is rumour and what is fact. As mentioned, parliament in South Africa has yet to be briefed on the mission – quite extraordinary given the robust mandate and the fact this is a highly volatile conflict zone.

Still, an assessment on the usefulness (or not) of the FIB is not to be made in months or even years.

After all, MONUC was a success early on; only later, following two elections, was its effectiveness called into question, its value dependent less on its mandate than the enthusiasm of its component leadership. Its success will be judged as to the extent to which the Congolese government seize the opportunity created by this 'moment' of stability, and are in so doing able to break a pernicious conflict tautology of weak government, poor leadership, little or no revenue base, donor dependency, poor governance, a rent-seeking political economy, low per capita income, widespread poverty, a fragmented criminal justice system, immature democracy and institutions, and poor leadership.

The US *Assistant Secretary of Defense* for International Security Affairs, Derek Chollet, has referred to the need to establish a 'new normal' for America's operations and presence in Africa. In eastern Congo, the FIB's success will ultimately depend on whether it can help to stabilise the Congo, whether the moment of security it can provide will be backed up by local economic and political progress. The FIB's success, indeed, depends largely on the Congolese themselves, since foreign peacekeepers cannot want peace more than the Congolese, unless they plan on being there forever. If the Congolese step up to the plate, it will offer, to parody Secretary Chollet's above description, a 'new abnormal'.

## Endnotes

- 1 As of the end of 2013, more than 70 per cent of the 98 267 UN peacekeepers deployed globally were in sub-Saharan Africa. At [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/record-number-of-un-peacekeepers-fails-to-stop-african-wars/2014/01/03/17ed0574-7487-11e3-9389-09ef9944065e\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/record-number-of-un-peacekeepers-fails-to-stop-african-wars/2014/01/03/17ed0574-7487-11e3-9389-09ef9944065e_story.html).
- 2 A version of this briefing was prepared for the African Executive Dialogue Seminar, ACSS, Washington DC, 28–30 May 2014, and is based on interviews with serving and former South African soldiers, analysts, politicians and diplomats.
- 3 Four hundred was the ceiling set for the mission.
- 4 This is the guesstimate of the force commander. Other sources suggest a higher figure.
- 5 Two others died later in SA. Every soldier who was wounded but made it into the base in the CAR, lived to make it back to SA despite primitive facilities, no doctor, etc. The deployed small medical team reportedly worked wonders. For details on the mission and its motives and objectives, see ‘Central African Republic: Is this what our soldiers died for?’, *Mail and Guardian*, 28 March 2013, at <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-03-28-00-central-african-republic-is-this-what-our-soldiers-died-for>; and ‘Did Zuma Defy the Constitution’, *Mail and Guardian*, 9 April 2013 at <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-04-08-zuma-constitution-car-deployment-sandf>.
- 6 For background on SANDF’s operational challenges, see James McGregor, ‘The South African National Defense Force – A Military in Freefall’, at [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=40364&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=684&no\\_cache=1#.U4iOk9iKCpo](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=40364&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=684&no_cache=1#.U4iOk9iKCpo).
- 7 See [http://www.dod.mil.za/operations/international/operation\\_copper.htm](http://www.dod.mil.za/operations/international/operation_copper.htm).
- 8 Cited in Colonel Daniel Hampton, ‘Creating Sustainable Peacekeeping Capability in Africa’, *Africa Security Brief*, April 2014.
- 9 See ‘SA backs African rapid response force’, 30 May 2013 at <http://www.southafrica.info/africa/rapid-response-300513.htm>. See also Kodjo Tchioffo, ‘Establishment of an African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC): Analysis of this new-fangled mechanism vis-à-vis the African Standby force (ASF) and its Rapid Deployment Capability (RDC) within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)’, at [http://www.academia.edu/5255703/Establishment\\_of\\_an\\_African\\_Capacity\\_for\\_Immediate\\_Response\\_to\\_Crises\\_ACIRC\\_Analysis\\_of\\_this\\_new-fangled\\_mechanism\\_vis-a-vis\\_the\\_African\\_Standby\\_force\\_ASF\\_and\\_its\\_Rapid\\_Deployment\\_Capability\\_RDC\\_within\\_the\\_African\\_Peace\\_and\\_Security\\_Architecture\\_APSA](http://www.academia.edu/5255703/Establishment_of_an_African_Capacity_for_Immediate_Response_to_Crises_ACIRC_Analysis_of_this_new-fangled_mechanism_vis-a-vis_the_African_Standby_force_ASF_and_its_Rapid_Deployment_Capability_RDC_within_the_African_Peace_and_Security_Architecture_APSA); and Institute for Security Studies, ‘New ‘super’ combat brigade: creation of an African elite?’, 14 June 2013 at <http://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/new-super-combat-brigade-creation-of-an-african-elite>.
- 10 At [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-11-20/news/sns-rt-us-congo-democratic-fabiusbre8aj135-20121120\\_1\\_congolese-troops-monusco-peacekeeping-force](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-11-20/news/sns-rt-us-congo-democratic-fabiusbre8aj135-20121120_1_congolese-troops-monusco-peacekeeping-force).
- 11 At <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/monusco/background.shtml>.
- 12 Reportedly, the SANDF was apparently ‘not amused’ at being overlooked for the FIB command post.
- 13 I am grateful to Maxwell Kelly for this among other points.