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Prospects for Greater Peace

Abstract In this chapter, Cilliers assesses historical and present conflict dynamics across Africa and how they relate to governance, demographics and socioeconomics. Woven throughout is a discussion on the role of peace-keepers and external involvement more broadly, the surge of terrorism in Africa and how these two phenomena bear upon one another. It assesses the origins, nature and implications of the declining trends in armed conflict and the emergence of urban protests as the key feature of violence and instability in much of Africa. In an alternative future scenario, Cilliers assesses what development outcomes Africa could expect if it were to succeed in reducing levels of instability in a scenario named Silencing the Guns.

Keywords Anocracy · Autocracy · Democracy · Demographic dividend · Fatality rate · Islamist extremism · Non-state conflict · Youth bulge

Learning Objectives

- Understand why conflict patterns are often cyclical in nature
- Be able to explain and interpret key conflict indicators such as the fatality rate and the absolute number of fatalities
- Identify which African countries that have suffered the highest number of fatalities from conflict events and which have suffered the highest fatality rate from conflict events.

There is no magic wand to end armed conflict in Africa by 2020, which is the target year set by the African Union towards its Agenda 2063 vision of ‘an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa’.¹ Structurally, inclusive economic development coupled with substantive electoral accountability offers the best prospect for greater peace and stability. Generally countries become more peaceful as they become more prosperous and, above certain levels of income and development, democracy is the most stable form of government. Although, at low levels of development democracy may actually hinder development and it may even be that for ‘for the poorest countries, development may actually stimulate violence’.²

It will take time for Africa to become more peaceful and less violent, in part because of the slow rate at which the structural changes that are needed for stability take place. For example, conflict-affected countries typically have much younger populations than more stable regions and population structure shifts very slowly.

Sustained violence within countries invariably reflects so-called deep drivers of conflict. A history of armed conflict and its social, political and economic legacies, a youthful population, high levels of unemployment and inequality render societies vulnerable to further conflict. And then the causes of violence evolve over time; the political, economic and social dynamics that drove instability a decade ago may no longer do so today. New phenomena in our ever-changing global landscape are sparking conflict. Examples vary, such as efforts by a government to institute a lock-down to manage the spread of the COVID-19 virus when communities live on the margins of survival. Or the deepening of cyclical droughts due to climate change forcing herders to seek new grazing areas and creating conflict with pastoral farming communities. In this context, the threats of climate change loom large as its impact moves from being an accelerator of inequality and deprivation to a direct cause of violent competition over resources such as access to grazing land and water.³

Each country is unique, or, to paraphrase Leo Tolstoy in *Anna Karenina*, ‘Stable countries are all alike; every unstable country is unstable in its own way’. While broad analysis as contained in this book is important, local

¹ See; African Union, n.d. *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*. [Online] Available at: <https://au.int/agenda2063/overview>.

² Hegre, H., Ellingsen, T., Gates, S., & Gleditsch, N. P., 2001. Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816–1992. *The American Political Science Review*, 95(1), pp. 33–48.

³ See, for example, the discussion in Bowsby, D., Chenoweth, E., Hendrix, C., & Moyer, J. D., 2019. The Future Is a Moving Target: Predicting Political Instability. *British Journal of Political Science*, Volume Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–13.

history, detail and context is determinant in shaping violent or peaceful outcomes. The reasons why people join armed jihadist groups and become violent, for example, are often *primarily* local, varied and related to personal experiences and circumstances such as abuse at the hands of authorities rather than the import of some type of foreign ideology such as radical Islam. The one, of course, feeds upon the other and eventually a spark or specific event mobilises local leadership that inevitably frame causality within a broader political, ideological or religious context.⁴

Trends in Conflict

Conflict data on Africa is inevitably incomplete and therefore often contentious. But, the quality of data is improving and it is more readily available than ever before.⁵

The two largest publicly available data providers, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) both rely on media sources to collect and categorise events and fatalities, as do others such as the Social Conflict Analysis Database (SCAD). These data providers collect massive amounts of data on specific events and in this manner build a national picture of conflict from the bottom up. Datasets from other organisations such as the Political Instability Task Force (PITF) and Center for Systemic Peace (CSP) follow a different approach. They try to provide an interpretation of the impact of conflict on the economy, politics and social structure of a country using experts and various indices to help calibrate measurements to more readily allow cross-country comparisons. Other organisations, such as the World Bank and the Ibrahim Index on governance (in its subsidiary indices) follow a similar broad approach but use various indicators of risk in an effort to compare and rank countries, and monitor stability over time.

Whichever source one uses, conflict in Africa ebbs and recedes over time, but the general trend when taking population increases into account is an overall decline in volatility. This is most visible in looking at events or fatalities measured per million people (using data from UCDP or ACLED) rather than comparing the number of fatalities in one country with another since

⁴See, for example Institute for Security Studies, 2016. Mali's young 'jihadists' Fuelled by Faith or Circumstance? Institute for Security Studies, Policy Brief 89. [Online] Available at: <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/policybrief89-eng-v3.pdf>.

⁵See Uppsala Conflict Data Program, n.d. *Department of Peace and Conflict Research*. [Online] Available at: <https://ucdp.uu.se/> and ACLED, n.d. And: The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. [Online] Available at: www.acleddata.com/.

it should be self-evident that the likely trend would be for the number of fatalities to increase as population numbers increase.

In this chapter I generally rely on UCDP data given its longer historical datasets and academic rigour.

Since the wave of independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the most violent period in Africa coincided with the run-up to the end of the Cold War in 1989. During this period Africa served as a proxy battleground between the former Soviet Union and the USA and its allies. In fact, levels of organised violence in Africa rose much more quickly than the global average during the 1970s and 1980s. Africa was becoming more violent compared to other places.

Instances of organised violence and the burden of fatalities have since steadily declined, with the period from 2004 to 2006 being more peaceful than any other in Africa's recent history.

But, violence accelerated again after 2010 with the Arab Spring and the increase in incidences of violent Islamist terrorism. It seems to have peaked in 2014–2015 before starting to decline, although recent years have again seen an increase in instability, particularly in the Sahel. Today it is the Middle East, not Africa, that has the highest conflict burden of all world regions—that is if one calculates the likelihood of a person being killed in armed conflict.

Figure 12.1 presents the UCDP estimate of the total number of fatalities from organised violence in Africa since 1990 (left-hand y-axis) compared to Africa's increased population size (right-hand y-axis) from 614 million to 1.3 billion in 2018.⁶ The periods that saw the highest number of fatalities, excluding the extraordinary peak with the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, were in 1990/1991 (mostly in Ethiopia), 1999/2000 (including the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea) and 2014/2015 (Boko Haram in Nigeria).⁷

The data distinguishes between state-based conflict (involving a government), non-state conflict (no involvement of armed forces from government) and one-sided violence when the government or a formally organised crime uses armed force against civilians. In all instances incidents are only included when fatalities amount to 25 deaths per year and per actor.

When total fatalities are adjusted for Africa's rapid population growth to represent the ratio of fatalities per million people in the population, it is clear

⁶UCDP defines such events as 'an incident where armed force was used by an organised actor against another organised actor, or against civilians, resulting in at least one direct death at a specific location and a specific date', Sundberg, R., & Melander, E., 2013. Introducing the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset. *Journal of Peace Research*, 50(4), pp. 523–532. And Croicu, M., & Sundberg, R., 2017. *UCDP GED Codebook Version 17.1*. Department of Peace and Conflict Research. Uppsala: Uppsala University.

⁷Egypt was added to the UCP region of Africa for this calculation.

Fig. 12.1 Total fatalities from all events, Africa, 1990–2018 (Source Uppsala Conflict Data Program Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) Global edition version 19.1, population from United Nations Population Division in IFs v 7.45)

Table 12.1 Most fatalities versus highest fatality rate

Highest number of fatalities	Greatest risk (highest fatality rate per million people)
Nigeria	Central African Republic
DR Congo	Libya
Somalia	Somalia
Sudan	South Sudan
Libya	Sudan
Central African Republic	DR Congo
South Sudan	Mali

Source UCDP version 19.1

that the fatality rate has been steadily, albeit slowly, declining. Today Africans are significantly less exposed to organised armed violence than in the 1980s and 1990s.

Also evident in Fig. 12.1 are four major conflicts: the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the Eritrean-Ethiopian border war (in and around the town of Badme in 1999 and 2000), the large-scale conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (generally known as the Second Congo War or Great War of Africa, that wound down from July 2003 after having involved nine African countries and nearly 20 rebel groups) and the surge in fatalities associated with the activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria in 2014–2015.⁸

With the exception of these four conflicts, the absolute number of fatalities from armed conflict has slowly declined over time and is limited to a handful of countries. The seven countries that experienced the highest number of fatalities due to armed conflict from 2009 to 2018 are Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Libya, the Central African Republic and South Sudan.

Inevitably countries with large populations such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt and the Democratic Republic of Congo tend to record a corresponding high number of fatalities from armed conflict. However, when taking population size into consideration, i.e. fatalities per thousand or million people, the seven countries where citizens were most at risk for 2009–2018 are Central African Republic, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mali (Table 12.1).⁹

⁸The support of Rwanda and Uganda enabled Congolese rebel Laurent-Désiré Kabila to overthrow Mobutu Sese Seko during the First Congo War. After Kabila was installed as the new president, he broke ties with both countries who retaliated by invading the Democratic Republic of Congo, starting the Second Congo War. Thompson, A., 2019. *The Second Congo War*. [Online] Available at: www.thoughtco.com/second-congo-war-43698.

The list in the table includes countries with quite small populations (Central African Republic, Libya, Somalia and Sudan) who have an extraordinarily high casualty burden. Also evident is the profound lethality of violent Islamist extremism and the extent to which that is driving the fatality count. Whereas in 2010 only five countries experienced sustained activity from violent Islamist extremism (Algeria, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Somalia), that number has now increased to 12 countries, with Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Egypt, Kenya, Libya and Tunisia added to the original list.¹⁰

Should Africans or the international community manage to bring stability to these countries, it would have a disproportionately positive impact on continental levels of armed conflict, on investor confidence, the ability of governments to invest in development and improved wellbeing.

The link between transnational organised crime and terrorism is also growing, since the latter generally needs resources to conduct their operations, even as the allegiances between Africa's domestic violent radicals and those in the Middle East have shifted away from al-Qaeda towards the Islamic State.¹¹

In the Sahel, the African region most affected by terrorism, violent extremism is again driven by deeply domestic matters, particularly poor governance and neglect rather than influences from elsewhere. Two considerations inform this belief: the first is the reduction in the flow of money from Saudi Arabia who, for several decades was the main source of financial support to fundamentalist Islam that eventually spawned its violent offspring. The second relates to the defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, where it has lost the territories that once provided it with a relatively safe haven, although the Islamic State is clearly seeking fertile ground in a number of African countries.

However, a relatively recent trend is the emergence of a number of copycat insurgencies that have borrowed the Islamic state nomenclature such as in northern Mozambique and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Repeat violence, or recurring historic conflicts, is a huge problem in Africa. 'Globally, cycles of war tend to repeat themselves in the same countries such as in Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia. Apart from inhibiting development, they

⁹While per capita fatality measures can help measure the comparative conflict burden across countries, it obscures subnational discrepancies. For instance, in Nigeria people in the north are significantly more likely to experience violence at the hands of Boko Haram than people living in Lagos.

¹⁰The Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2018. *Militant Islamist Groups in Africa Show Resiliency over Past Decade*. [Online] Available at: https://africacenter.org/spotlight/militant-islamist-groups-in-africa-show-resiliency-over-pastdecade/?utm_source=June+2018+Month+in+Review&utm_campaign=June+2018+Newsletter&utm_medium=email.

¹¹Alda, E., & Sala, J. L., 2014. Links Between Terrorism, Organized Crime and Crime: The Case of the Sahel Region. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 3(1).

also spillover into the neighbourhood'.¹² Unaddressed grievances are often the drivers of recurrent violence, suggesting that lasting peace, or at least greater stability, will not be achieved until these grievances are addressed. Indeed, the seeds of the next war are often sown during the preceding war.¹³ Doing that takes a long time, often much longer than anyone initially suspects and the result is that efforts at negotiating an end to violence or stabilising a situation through the deployment of peacekeepers, such as in South Sudan or the Central African Republic, often needs to be measured in decades rather than years.

Given that only inclusive economic growth can produce the resources required to alleviate these root causes, conflict-torn countries in Africa are caught in a catch-22 situation. Poor countries are more violent and because of this they cannot grow rapidly enough to alleviate the stresses and grievances that lead to instability.

Moreover, being situated in a conflict-ridden region is a major risk factor for conflict; neighbouring countries are very likely to experience the spillover effect of the instability.¹⁴ This is currently most evident in the Sahel. Briefing the United Nations Security Council, in January 2020, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, UN Special Representative and Head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), described a region that has 'experienced a devastating surge in terrorist attacks against civilian and military targets'. Chambas, who serves on the Board of the ISS where I work, proceeded to paint a picture of relentless attacks on civilian and military targets that he said, have 'shaken public confidence'. Casualties in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, have leapt five-fold since 2016—with more than 4000 deaths reported in 2019 compared to some 770 three years earlier. 'Most significantly, the geographic focus of terrorist attacks has shifted eastwards from Mali to Burkina Faso and is increasingly threatening West African coastal States.... And displacement has grown ten-fold to about half a million, on top of some 25,000 who have sought refuge in other countries'.¹⁵

According to the World Development Report 2011, a 'country making development advances, such as Tanzania, loses an estimated 0.7% of gross

¹²Gates, S., Nygård, H. M., & Trappeniers, E., 2016. Conflict Recurrence. *PRIO Conflict Trends* 02.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Goldstone, J. A., Bates, R. H., Epstein, D. L., Gurr, T. R., Lustik, M. B., Marshall, M. G., Ulfelder, J., & Woodward, M. 2010. A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability. *American Journal of Political Science*, 54(1), pp. 190–208 and Hegre, H., Nygård, H. M., Karlsen, J., & Strand, H., 2013. Predicting Armed Conflict, 2010–2050. *International Studies Quarterly*, 57(2), p. 7.

¹⁵UN News, 'Unprecedented Terrorist Violence' in West Africa, Sahel Region, 8 January 2020. https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/01/1054981?utm_source=Media+Review+for+January+9%2C+2020&utm_campaign=Media+Review+for+January+9%2C+2020&utm_medium=email.

domestic product (GDP) every year for each neighbour in conflict'.¹⁶ Furthermore, neighbouring countries that are in turmoil regularly offer safe havens for rebel groups and insurgents that operate across borders.¹⁷

Africa's Leadership in Conflict Prevention and Management

An important reason for Africa's declining conflict burden is that, over the last two decades, Africans have increasingly taken the lead in making peace through political efforts including mediation, diplomacy and, when these fail, the provision of peacekeeping forces. Clearly, preventing conflict is where the focus should be and is pursued through structures such as the African Union's Peace and Security Council and the various components of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), both at the level of the African Union and in subregions such as in West and East Africa. Once conflict has erupted the introduction of peacekeepers remains the most important and effective means through which to respond to conflict with substantial benefits. Based on extensive research, the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) holds that the risk of conflict recurrence drops by as much as 75% in countries where United Nations peacekeepers are deployed.¹⁸ It is here that the impact of COVID-19 is likely to have a considerable impact on, for example, the rotation of peacekeepers and on the ability of peacekeepers to undertake their tasks amidst travel restrictions and the need for social distancing and other measures. More broadly COVID-19 is also likely to limit diplomatic and related peacemaking efforts although it will affect peacekeepers, civilians and troublemakers equally.

Côte d'Ivoire is often used as a recent example of successful peacekeeping (there are many previous ones). On 30 June 2017, the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) concluded its mandate, some 13 years after it was established. It was a turbulent ride, for resurgent post-electoral violence in 2011 had led to the deaths of approximately 3000 people. But eventually the contribution the UNOCI made to stability and the country's economic recovery enabled the withdrawal of the peacekeepers.

¹⁶The World Bank, 2011. *World Development Report 2011 Conflict, Security, and Development*, Washington: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, p. 5.

¹⁷Hegre, H., Nygård, H. M., Karlsen, J., & Strand, H., 2013. Predicting Armed Conflict, 2010–2050. *International Studies Quarterly*, 57(2), p. 7.

¹⁸Gates, S., Nygård, H. M., & Trappeniers, E., 2016. Conflict Recurrence. PRIO Conflict Trends 02.

From 2012 to 2018 Côte d'Ivoire averaged growth in excess of eight percent per year. The government of President Alassane Ouattara placed particular emphasis on making the country attractive to private-sector investment that came at some costs to the fiscus. The measures include various exemptions from value-added tax, reductions in customs duty and tax exemptions on profits as it seeks to increase trade and attract opportunities in agriculture, industry, mining and services. Such measures inevitably imply a degree of short-term pain, but eventually more rapid economic growth, more job opportunities and better wages, if accompanied by appropriate redistributive policies.

In the longer term, fundamental political, social and economic reforms are often required to ensure durable peace. At least some of these measures have been put in place in Côte d'Ivoire. However, even after more than a decade of peacekeeping it will still take several years to decisively break the cycle of violence that prevailed before.

Africa itself has limited ability to fund and sustain expensive peace missions, such as those required in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Mali and Somalia. As such, it often looks towards the United Nations to either undertake or support the efforts by Africans.

In spite of the UN's unwillingness to assume direct responsibility for peacekeeping in Somalia where its previous efforts ended so ignominiously and the ever-present legacy of the failure by the international community to prevent the genocide in Rwanda, the UN remains the most important player in this regard. But there are many number of conflict situations in Africa where the UN is unwilling or unable to deploy, leaving the ball in Africa's court. The result is a clear trend towards peacekeeping in Africa by Africans and a strong desire from the continent to move towards a system whereby peacekeeping missions in Africa are funded through a system of assessed contributions from UN member states instead of the messy and complex system of voluntary contributions currently used.

Changing Characteristics of Organised Violence

Unlike other regions, Africa experiences a high level of conflict between armed groups and factions that are fighting one another instead of the government, with the UCDP referring to this as 'non-state conflict'. This type of violence is mostly due to absent, weak and unconsolidated governance. Simply put, in areas where the government is not able to exert its authority,

provide stability, political, economic or social competition between tribes, herders and pastoralists, local militias and traditional groups become more readily violent.

And as the number of conflict actors has increased, conflict in Africa has become more complex. Rebel (and extremist) groups often split into further groupings, which complicates efforts at mediation or reconciliation. Attempts to craft inclusive peace agreements invariably fall short of their stated goal to include all key protagonists, for no sooner do mediators persuade all parties to sign an agreement that a group splits off and a new faction emerges. Additional demands follow while commentators and interest groups readily agitate for the maximum inclusion as part of agreements. Although, actually the problem with most peace agreements is not that they are not inclusive enough, as is frequently claimed, but that they are not implemented!¹⁹

While the level of resources within a country impacts on state capacity, it is generally not the absolute level of resources (or the absence thereof) that fuels discontent, but rather the distribution of the limited resources within and between groupings. Civil wars generally occur more frequently in countries with a large population with one or more dominant ethnic, linguistic or religious grouping compared to countries that may have a more evenly balanced ethnic composition.²⁰ Recent research on the factors that underlie ethnic strife contends that nearly 80% of the continent's major ethnic groups have never participated in any civil war. The origins of most ethnic conflicts, it found, can generally be traced to the existence of precolonial states and the extent to which insecure postcolonial leaders privileged particular ethnic groups above others.²¹

The comprehensive 2018 World Bank/United Nations report *Pathways for Peace* highlights that: 'Exclusion from access to power, opportunity, services, and security creates fertile ground for mobilizing group grievances to violence, especially in areas with weak state capacity or legitimacy or in the context of human rights abuses'.²² Conflict in Africa is not directly driven by ethnic divergence as is often assumed, but by the old adage of history and

¹⁹Joshi, M., & Quinn, J. M., 2017. Implementing the Peace: The Aggregate Implementation of Comprehensive Peace Agreements and Peace Duration After Intrastate Armed Conflict. *British Journal of Political Science*, 47(4), pp. 869–892.

²⁰Hegre, H., Ellingsen, T., Gates, S., & Gleditsch, N. P., 2001. Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816–1992. *The American Political Science Review*, 95(1), pp. 33–48.

²¹Paine, J. (n.d.). Ethnic Violence in Africa: Destructive Legacies of Pre-Colonial States. International Organization, 1–39. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818319000134>.

²²United Nations and World Bank, 2018. *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, Washington: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, p. xviii.

the ongoing mobilisation of identity for political and economic participation and influence.

This discussion takes us to an important trend. In sharp contrast to the declining impact of armed violence, Africa is experiencing an increase in incidents of anti-government social violence, including riots and violent protests.

More Riots

While larger-scale armed conflict is likely to continue its steady long-term decline, it's less clear what the short-term impact of the increase in social instability and protests will be. As is the case elsewhere in the world, democratic African governments are less repressive and tend to use less violence against civilians than their autocratic counterparts. In general, few civilians are killed during protests even if the number of protest events may increase compared to incidents of armed conflict.²³

According to ACLED, non-violent protests and violent riots in Africa have increased 12-fold since 2001 and accelerated since the start of the Arab Spring in December 2010. The Arab Spring eventually impacted a belt of North African countries from Morocco to Egypt, as well as Somalia, Nigeria and Sudan, but only Tunisia emerged with significantly improved levels of democracy.²⁴

Particularly evident from the data on riots and protests are events in Egypt in 2013 with the one-year anniversary of the inauguration of President Mohamed Morsi in June when millions of Egyptians called for his departure. These developments culminated in the coup d'état or Second Egyptian Revolution during which General (now President) Abdel Fattah el-Sisi assumed power. In Libya, the Arab spring loosened Muammar Gaddafi's grip on the nation and eventually prompted the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to abuse a UN Security Council mandate to settle old scores that in turn ignited an active civil war that has devastated the region.

Nigeria also experienced a peak in riot and protest in 2015 during the country's closely contested national elections when the incumbent Goodluck Jonathan lost to General Muhammadu Buhari. Riots and protests have also

²³Cilliers, J., & Hedden, S., 2014. *Africa's Current and Future Stability*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, p. 16.

²⁴According to the ACLED codebook a protest is 'a non-violent, group public demonstration, often against a government institution. Rioting is a violent form of demonstration.' Raleigh, C., & Dowd, C., 2015. *Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook*. s.l.: The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, p. 9.

been increasing in Ethiopia, Tunisia, Algeria, Kenya and Sudan in recent years. In 2019, large-scale protests erupted in Algeria and in Sudan where thousands of people took to the streets to demand the end of two of Africa's longest ruling presidents, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who had presided over Algeria since 1999, and Omar al-Bashir, who served as president of Sudan since a coup d'état in 1993. Public displays of anger and resistance eventually forced both from power.

The extraordinary increase in the number of riots and protests probably reflects the impact of increased levels of education on Africa's young amidst limited job opportunities. It reflects Africa's, urbanising social landscape as well as the impact of social media and internet access, which has fomented a broader shift in power away from the few political elites and towards the public, now armed with information and the ability to communicate in real time with one another.

The nature of violence and instability seems to change as countries transition to democracy. Whereas political change is often associated with large-scale violent rupture, lower intensity riots and protests are more prevalent in democracies, South Africa and Kenya offering two good examples.

By comparative African standards, South Africa is very democratic and protests are the order of the day. Since South Africa has undergone a fairly recent political transition from apartheid to democracy, it is inherently more prone to civil conflict, particularly given its very high levels of inequality and unemployment. In recent years the political crisis associated with slow growth, corruption and patronage under former President Jacob Zuma gathered speed, sparking protests across the country as part of the #ZumaMustFall campaign. The transition to President Cyril Ramaphosa in 2018 has the promise to reverse this trend but the country remains unsettled due to rising unemployment and falling incomes.

However, it is in Ethiopia that has experienced the most riots and protests on a per capita basis, and Somalia where they were most fatal. In 2016 Ethiopia experienced an extraordinary increase in the number of riots and protests as the Oromo and eventually also the Amhara ethnic groups started protesting against the perceived dominance of the minority Tigray ethnic group. Whereas Tigrayans make up only about six percent of Ethiopia's population, they have long been accused of holding inordinate economic, political and security influence. An acute drought and the floods in the highlands, particularly in the Amhara and Oromia regions, deepened this sense of discontent.

The first reaction from the Tigrayan-dominated government was to institute a national state of emergency in 2016 that was accompanied by brutal

suppression. But eventually in March 2018, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn stepped down to make way for a much younger replacement, Abiy Ahmed, from the Oromo ethnic group. Abiy has embarked on a raft of reforms, including ending the state of emergency, releasing political prisoners, reforming the security agencies, reaching out to Eritrea (for which he was awarded the Nobel peace prize) and opening up the economy with far-reaching implications for Ethiopia and the region. That this did not go down well with all concerned became apparent in June 2019 when the Army Chief of Staff and others were assassinated during a failed coup attempt in the Amhara region and as this book goes to print, the country may be teetering on the brink of a wider conflagration as Tigray tries to assert greater autonomy from the center.

Generally riots and protests appear to have become less deadly over time, meaning that there are fewer fatalities per event. For example, while Africa experienced an average of eight fatalities per riot/protest event from 2001 to 2003, that average declined to three from 2015 to 2017, although wider access to social media reporting may also have played a role.²⁵

The steady rate of urbanisation is clearly associated with the increasing number of riots and protests since these are overwhelmingly urban phenomena. Although estimates of urbanisation conceal vast subnational differences, Africa was on average only 34% urban in 2001, but this increased to 42% by 2018. Being significantly less urbanised than other regions in the world, the inevitable process of more rapid urbanisation in the future could prove to be politically destabilising. It will increase the opportunity for riots and protests since the region is also undergoing changes in regime type and democratising (see Chapter 13).

North Africa, the location of the Arab Spring, is significantly more urban than sub-Saharan Africa. In 2010, the year in which it erupted, 53% of people in North Africa lived in urban areas compared to 35% in sub-Saharan Africa. With a large portion of people in towns and cities, that population density facilitated the kind of crowd and mass dynamics that eventually ejected Zine El Abidine Ben Ali from his presidency in Tunisia, forced a rotation in the governing elite in Egypt and culminated in civil war in Libya.

²⁵See the analysis in Cilliers, J., 2018. *Violence in Africa: Trends, Drivers and Prospects to 2023*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, p. 10.

Structural Drivers of Violence

The structural drivers of violence in Africa are complex and country specific, although there are a number of common themes that relate to poverty, democratisation, regime type, population age structure, repeat violence, the bad neighbourhood effect and poor governance. Crowd and mass violence typically requires politicisation and triggering event(s), such as the decision by the young Tunisian fruit seller Mohamed Bouazizi to self-immolate on 18 December 2010—the event that is generally accepted as having started the Arab Spring.

For such a spark to have ignited the widespread violence and unrest that followed, societies need to be afflicted by very high levels of social tension and discontent. In this instance, tension was largely the result of limited social, economic and political opportunity in North Africa and the Middle East against a backdrop of relatively high levels of education. In addition, North Africa experienced a downturn in economic growth before the Arab Spring that inevitably increased the sense of relative deprivation.²⁶

While the debate about causation is contentious, some things are fairly obvious. In southern Africa the extraordinarily high level of inequality in countries like Namibia, Botswana and South Africa presents a potential threat to stability. An interesting reason for this is the fact that the informal sector in these countries is quite small by comparative standards. The extent of autocratic repression in countries such as Equatorial Guinea and the Kingdom of Eswatini will certainly present a problem in the future if left unattended. Recurrent efforts by leaders such as Obiang Nguema Mbasogo (Equatorial Guinea), Mswati III (Eswatini), Paul Biya (Cameroon), Yoweri Museveni (Uganda) and Idriss Déby (Chad) to extend their terms in office or effect dynastic succession present obvious challenges as pressure mounts without the prospects for either democratic change or generational succession.

However, so far there is no scholarly consensus on the direct causal link between factors brought about by climate change, such as desertification, and the outbreak of conflict in Sudan (Darfur) and Mali, although it is clear that specific events such as droughts sometimes lead to violence. One example

²⁶In respect of the latter, Hughes found that 'a 1.0% drop in a moving average of economic growth (carrying 60% of the moving average forward) is associated with a 0.04 point increase on a 0–1 scale for the rate of internal war'. Hughes, B. B., 2019. *International Futures: Building and Using Global Models*. Cambridge: Academic Press, p. 180. Also see Ianchovichina, E., Mottaghi, L., & Devarajan, S., 2015. *Inequality, Uprisings, and Conflict in the Arab World*. New York: The World Bank.

would be the drought in Ethiopia before the 2016 riots and protests.²⁷ In many countries in the Sahel, a region with a particularly rapidly growing young population, conflict between herders and farmers causes more fatalities than terrorism and the role that climate change plays in accelerating a trend towards armed conflict is increasingly evident.

As climate change alters the nature of resource dependence, it will impact states with large natural resource benefits. A report by Cullen Hendrix and Idean Salehyan found that

Water shocks may lead to social conflict via their effects on resource competition, poor macroeconomic outcomes, and reduced state capacity ... deviations from normal rainfall patterns have a significant effect on both large-scale and smaller-scale instances of political conflict... wetter years are more likely to suffer from violent events. Extreme deviations in rainfall – particularly dry and wet years – are associated with all types of social conflict (violent and nonviolent, government-targeted and non/government-targeted), although the relationship is strongest with respect to violent events, which are more responsive to abundant rather than scarce rainfall.²⁸

African countries will experience widely different effects from climate change in the coming decades (see Chapter 15), which will strain the ability of large regions to support local populations under current developmental conditions. Some areas of the continent are likely to become warmer and drier and experience more frequent and severe droughts close to major population centres, particularly in the Sahel.²⁹ Other parts of the continent may experience widespread drought and potentially famine without proper government intervention, while the Eastern swathes of the continent will likely experience heavier rainfall, which could also adversely affect crops and food security.

Current evidence on the impact of climate change and conflict is country- and region-specific. For example, while the evidence from East Africa is that socio-political factors are more robust drivers of conflict than climate

²⁷See, for example, Buhaug, H., Gleditsch, N. P., & Theisen, O. M., 2008. *Implications of Climate Change for Armed Conflict*, Washington: Social Development, The World Bank. Also see Andrews-Speed, P., Bleischwitz, R., Boersma, T., Johnson, C., & Kemp, G., 2012. *The Global Resource Nexus The Struggles for Land, Energy, Food, Water, and Minerals*, Washington: Transatlantic Academy, pp. 3–4.

²⁸Hendrix, C. S., & Salehyan, I., 2012. Climate Change, Rainfall, and Social Conflict in Africa. *Journal of Peace Research*, 49(1), p. 36.

²⁹Kwasi, S., Cilliers, J., Donnefeld, Z., Welborn, L and Maiga, I. 2019. Prospects for the G5 Sahel Countries to 2040, Institute for Security Studies, 4 December 2019 [Online]. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/research/west-africa-report-for-the-g5-sahel-countries-to-2020>.

change,³⁰ our work on the future of the five Sahel countries points to a more direct link between climate change and conflict as herders are being forced to move earlier and further south in search of grazing, intensifying competition within pastoral communities.

Regime Capacity, Type and Regime Dissonance

The capacity and nature of the governmental system of a country has an important impact on the probability of violence.

The changes in Africa's growth prospects during the last two decades signify a structural transformation in the continent's fortunes. Improvements in general living conditions are very likely to translate into stability. The reason for this is actually not that people are more content with improved standards of living, but because the capacity of governments to provide or enforce security increases as countries develop.

Stability not only depends on the nature of the government (i.e. democratic or autocratic) or inequality and unemployment but also on whether the government has the means to provide or enforce security. Poor countries have limited capacity which constrains the state's ability to govern and enforce security. In that sense, Africa was trapped in a vicious circle—many countries are unstable because they were poor, and because they are poor they were unstable.

Furthermore, and contrary to popular belief, government spending on security in Africa tends to be quite low when compared to the level of insecurity on the continent and to other regions such as the Middle East. Spending is also skewed towards providing security for the president or governing elite rather than on responding to real security needs. Given the continent's long history of coup d'états and interference by the military in government, security spending is often also divided between a number of competing and overlapping security services as leaders try to ensure that no single agency could pose a threat to them. At the same time many areas in Africa are unpoliced and national and local government representation is thin or non-existent. Institutions are weak and because of high levels of poverty, rent-seeking is high.

Because military rule and one-party governments have generally been an unmitigated disaster, there is strong support for democracy, discussed in more

³⁰Maslin, M., 2018. *Politics and Poverty Caused Past Conflicts in East Africa—Not Climate Change*. [Online] Available at: <https://theconversation.com/politics-and-poverty-caused-past-conflicts-in-east-africa-not-climate-change-96372>.

detail in Chapter 13. The problem, however, is that when leaders eventually are pushed in this direction they allow for nominal not substantive democracy. Nominal democracy can be found in Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Algeria where the theatrics of regular elections regularly proceed but there is no real choice or true debate.

A significant amount of research underpins the finding that only when there are truly free and fair elections that offer prospects for change in leadership, can democracy lead to improved human development. This is because electoral competition incentivises politicians to provide public goods and services. Improved government effectiveness (and hence better service delivery) can therefore be associated with substantive democracy but generally not with nominal electoral democracies.³¹

At this point in time most African countries are so-called anocracies³² — countries that have elements of both autocracy and democracy. Examples of anocracies include Côte d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Algeria, Burundi and The Gambia. In these mixed or intermediate regimes regular competitive elections take place, but the legislature has little effective control over the executive branch of government. Thus anocracies are

characterized by institutions and political elites that are far less capable of performing fundamental tasks and ensuring their own continuity. Anocratic regimes very often reflect inherent qualities of instability or ineffectiveness and are especially vulnerable to the onset of new political instability events, such as outbreaks of armed conflict, unexpected changes in leadership, or adverse regime changes (e.g. a seizure of power by a personalistic or military leader in a coup). Anocracies are a middling category rather than a distinct form of governance.³³

Anocracies are less stable than full autocracies, which are in turn less stable than consolidated democracies. The relationship takes the form of an inverted U with intermediate regime types six times more likely than democracies and 2.5 times more likely than an autocracy to experience new outbreaks of

³¹Ibid., p. 6.

³²On the Polity score a mixed/intermediate regime type (s) has a score from +5 to -5 in an index that ranges from + 10 to - 10. V-Dem distinguishes between different types of democracy each with its own index. Its electoral democracy index is closest to the Polity IV index.

³³Marshall, M. G., & Elzinga-Marshall, G. C., 2017. *Global Report 2017 Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility*. Vienna: Center for Systemic Peace, p. 30.

civil conflict. More than half of anocracies experience a major regime change within five years and 70% within ten years.³⁴

Anocracies with factionalised party systems, where one ethnic grouping is advantaged, are particularly vulnerable to political instability since political mobilisation generally transforms diversity into violence.

Finally, research at the Institute for Security Studies points to two important albeit tentative outcomes in terms of violence as it relates to regime type. First, if a country is significantly more democratic than other countries at similar levels of income and education, such an imbalance increases opportunities for corruption and the risk of acute episodes of violent protests and demonstrations. Examples include Mozambique (low income), Kenya (lower-middle income) and South Africa (upper-middle income). Second, if a country is significantly less democratic than could be expected given its levels of income and education, the pressure for political participation and accountability is likely to grow, with Equatorial Guinea and the Kingdom of Eswatini serving as textbook examples to watch. Such pressure could lead to instability and even a violent rupture, particularly around leadership renewal. Other examples include North Africa before the Arab Spring but also possibly Ethiopia (low income), the Republic of the Congo (lower-middle income) and Libya (upper-middle income).

Youth and Unemployment

Given its current median age of 19 years (18 for sub-Saharan Africa), Africa has an exceptionally youthful population although fertility rates differ significantly across regions and within countries. Large youth bulges, defined as the presence of a large population between 15 and 29 years of age relative to the total adult population, are robustly associated with an increased risk of conflict and high rates of criminal violence. This is particularly true when young people lack opportunities in terms of education, training and employment and feel they have no voice.³⁵

³⁴Ibid. p. 12; Goldstone, J. A., Bates, R. H., Epstein, D. L., Gurr, T. R., Lustik, M. B., Marshall, M. G., Ulfelder, J., & Woodward, M. (2010). A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability. *American Journal of Political Science*, 54: 190–208, p. 195; Knutsen, C. H., & Nygård, H. M., 2015. Institutional Characteristics and Regime Survival: Why Are Semi-Democracies Less Durable Than Autocracies and Democracies? *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3), pp. 656–670; Hegre, H., Ellingsen, T., Gates, S., & Gleditsch, N. P., 2001. Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816–1992. *The American Political Science Review*, 95(1), pp. 33–48.

³⁵Urda, H. 2011. Demography and Armed Conflict: Assessing the Role of Population Growth and Youth Bulges, Centre for Research on Peace and Development, Working Paper No. 2; World Bank, World Development Report 2011, p. 6.

However youth bulges appear to be more closely related to low-intensity conflict than to civil war.³⁶ Figure 12.2 shows the size of the youth bulge in 2018 and 2040 for different global regions. Sub-Saharan Africa is the youngest region globally with almost half of its adult population currently between 15 and 29 years, declining modestly to 43% by 2040.

Generally, higher education levels are associated with lower conflict vulnerability, but this depends on the size of the youth bulge, levels of employment and degree of urbanisation.³⁷

Many of these correlations were evident in North Africa at the time of the Arab Spring and again now in Algeria and Sudan.³⁸ In the next five years, Somalia, Niger, Central African Republic, Chad, South Sudan, Uganda, Mali, Zambia and Uganda and Angola, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique and Burkina Faso all have more than half of their adult population in the age bracket from 15 to 29 and therefore be particularly at risk of violence and conflict, given that they also have high levels of unemployment.³⁹ The only African countries with less than a third of their adult population in the youth bulge are Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritius and the Seychelles. The fact that the youth bulge is coming down rapidly in a number of North African countries is particularly important in reducing this important structural driver of violence, but is only likely to have an impact if accompanied by substantive economic freedom that provides economic opportunity to a much larger swathe of citizens.

³⁶Hegre, H. Karlsen, J., Mogleiv, H., Strand, H., & Urdal, H. 2013. Predicting Armed Conflict, 2010–2050. *International Studies Quarterly*, 57(2), pp. 250–270, p. 6.

³⁷Ibid., p. 5.

³⁸Although the size of the youth bulge is often considered as an important factor in the Arab Spring, the size of the bulge in North Africa is considerably lower than in the rest of Africa, pointing to the role played by other factors, most likely the low levels of political, economic and social inclusion in the region compared to other countries at similar levels of income and education. Tunisia had the lowest poverty rates among these countries but inequality is significantly lower in Egypt. The average income levels of Libya and Algeria are substantially higher than that of Tunisia and Egypt. Mobile phone subscriptions were highest in Libya. Country level differences are important. For example the youth bulge in Tunisia (where the Arab Spring started) was 8 percentage points below the average in Algeria, Egypt and Libya (all at roughly 42/42% in 2010). Yet Tunisia, a much smaller and more homogeneous country, is the only one to have seen a successful transition from autocracy to democracy. Some reasons for the heterogeneous outcomes are self-evident, for example Egypt and Algeria both have strong central governments and large security structures while Libya was a dysfunctional state that descended into civil war even before the NATO military intervention that tipped the country into widespread instability and chaos. Brown, C., 2014. *The Tunisian Exception*. [Online] Available at: www.juancole.com/2014/10/the-tunisian-exception.html.

³⁹Ethiopia's youth bulge is coming down more rapidly than most other low-income countries in Africa due to the successful implementation of the provision of water, sanitation, basic health care and availability of contraceptives that have, in combination, resulted in a rapid decline in total fertility rates in recent years. Ethiopia is expected to experience a decline in fertility rates from 4.6 currently to 3.7 children by 2030. See Donnenfeld, Z., Porter, A., Cilliers, J., Moyer, J., Scott, A., Maweni, J., & Aucoin, C., 2017. Ethiopia Development Trends Report, Institute for Security Studies, pp 16–17.

Fig. 12.2 Ratio of youth (15–29) to adults (+15), selected regions in 2018 and 2040 (Source: IFs version 7.45 initialising from United Nations Population Division medium variant life-expectancy the 2017 revision)

A causal link between youth unemployment and violence in developing countries is widely assumed, particularly crime, gang violence and domestic violence, but solid evidence remains insufficient.⁴⁰

Poor Governance and High Levels of Inequality

In Chapter 13, I contend that at low levels of income and development, the nature of the governing elite is more important for economic growth and for positive development outcomes than the extent to which countries are democratic or authoritarian. Countries fortunate enough to have a developmentally oriented governing elite grow much more rapidly, particularly if there is a cohesive governing party or coterie of leadership with a clear focus on development.

The difference between stable and unstable poor countries is often a political elite that effectively distributes services (particularly among different ethnic groups), develops sustainable institutions, minimises corruption and encourages the development of the private sector while focusing on equitable growth. To this end the Ibrahim Index of African Governance defines governance as ‘the provision of the political, social and economic public goods and services that every citizen has a right to expect from their state, and that a state has the responsibility to deliver to its citizens’.⁴¹

The index measures a country’s overall governance performance across four sub-components, namely safety and rule of law, participation and human rights, sustainable economic opportunity and human development. Countries that score the worst in the overall governance index are Somalia, South Sudan, Eritrea, the Central African Republic, Sudan, Libya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Angola and Burundi. All of these countries were allocated a score below 40 out of a possible 100.

High levels of inequality often point to a government that largely looks after the interests of specific sectors or elites or is unwilling to undertake the necessary measures to address inequality. This is reflected in the high inequality scores of South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Equatorial Guinea, Lesotho, Comoros, Zambia and the Central African Republic.⁴² Today former liberation parties that have grown complacent in power dominate

⁴⁰See for example Idris, I., 2016. Youth Unemployment and Violence. Rapid Literature Review. GSDRC University of Birmingham, November.

⁴¹Ibrahim, Mo, 2018. *Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG)*. [Online] Available at: <http://mo.ibrahim.foundation/iiag/>.

⁴²Rates of infant mortality are widely used as an indicator of poor service delivery and even as a short-term indicator of impending problems including a violent rupture.

governments in southern Africa. Their inability to grow their economies means they have also been unable to change the patterns of inequality inherited from colonialism, white settler dominance and apartheid. Instead of growth, they turn their attention to (re)distribution which has much more limited potential. With no prospects for political, generational and policy renewal that could impact on these structural imbalances, the promise that is inherent to regular free and fair elections is now also being frustrated. This is perhaps best reflected in the recent change in the top leadership in Zimbabwe (octogenarian Robert Mugabe was replaced by the slightly younger Emmerson Mnangagwa) that has brought little substantive change to a country that has levels of income much lower than when its white minority government declared unilateral independence from Britain several decades ago.

In South Africa, only its relatively high scores of governance (and democracy) outcomes have been able to constrain violence, given its high levels of inequality and unemployment. And in Gabon, Ali Bongo Ondimba assumed power from his father in 2009 who had controlled the country since the 1960s. Eventually, without leadership and political renewal, countries inevitably grow below their potential and consequently social problems fester.

Perceptions about the distribution of wealth between groups and levels of equity in a society play an important role and fuel discontent. But as discussed in Chapter 7, inequality changes very slowly.

In Central Africa the recent downturn in global commodity prices has exacerbated an already fragile situation. There, as elsewhere, the government is unable to deliver the most basic services yet the political elite have been exceptionally creative in designing strategies to retain their hold on power through 'personalised presidential systems supported by patronage networks sustained mainly through elite bargaining and collusion with traditional rulers'.⁴³

Besides a history of conflict and chronic underdevelopment, those countries in sub-Saharan Africa that suffer severe inequality, rely heavily on primary commodities, have a large youth bulge and an oppressive regime are virtually assured of future instability and even a violent rupture.

Even then growth in itself could be insufficient to forestall instability. This was demonstrated in Ethiopia where the government instituted a national state of emergency in October 2016 after a decade of remarkable economic

⁴³Donnenfeld, Z., & Akum, F., 2017. *Gathering storm Clouds: Political and Economic Uncertainty in Central Africa*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, p. 11.

growth. Growth had, in fact, widened discontent in a country that many felt was being controlled by a small ethnic elite from Tigray.

Modelling the Prospects for Greater Peace: The Silencing the Guns Scenario

The IFs forecasting platform uses historical data from the Center for Systemic Peace to initialise its forecasts on stability. Different from the datasets from UCPD and ACLED, the dataset interprets the impact of instability on each country since smaller and poorer countries (for example) have different conflict absorptive capacities to richer countries. The algorithms that drive the forecast on instability in turn relies on many of the conflict drivers and correlations discussed in this chapter.⁴⁴

In the Silencing the Guns scenario, I reduce the general governance risk in the fourteen countries that have repeatedly featured in this chapter, namely Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, South Africa and Sudan.⁴⁵ The impact is to improve the contribution that social capital makes to multifactor productivity within the IFs forecasting platform. Improved multifactor productivity (or technology) is, in turn, one of the three components of economic growth, the other two being labour and capital.

Stability translates into lower levels of corruption and more effective and capable governance—all of which will improve the investment climate on the continent. By 2040 these 14 countries should, according to the IFs forecast, have increased their exports by US\$26 billion and increased their stock of foreign direct investment by more than US\$70 billion. While more stability translates into bigger inflows of foreign direct investment it is likely to reduce development assistance as funds are diverted to countries in greater need.

⁴⁴The Center scores and categorises all major episodes of political violence in countries with a population larger than 500,000. Each Major Episode of Political Violence, or MEPV, is allocated a score to reflect the magnitude or national impact of that event per year from 1 (sporadic or expressive political violence) to 10 (extermination and annihilation) and allows for comparisons across categories and cases. To date the highest value allocated to an event is a 7 (pervasive warfare). As opposed to the datasets from UCDP and ACLED that try and gather much more granular data (such as all riots and battles that resulted in fatalities), the threshold for inclusion in the dataset is a minimum of 100 'directly-related fatalities' per year and at least 500 over the event duration. See Center for Systemic Peace, 2017. *Global Conflict Trends: Assessing the Qualities of Systemic Peace*. [Online] Available at: www.systemicpeace.org/conflictrends.html.

⁴⁵Normally such a scenario would imply an increase in general defence and security expenditure that would offset some of the improvements in growth. This is not included in the scenario.

Governments in these countries would be able to roll out more electrification schemes (according to IFs a million more persons would be connected), allow more people to be connected to safe water and sanitation, education and offer more health care services for more citizens, and tourism can also flourish. The results are improvements across various dimensions such as a small reduction in infant mortality rates and, as conditions improve, fertility rates will decline. For example by 2040, Africa will have almost 140,000 fewer births than in the Current Path. More stability in these fourteen countries will have a regional impact, indeed on the prospects of the entire continent. Fewer children would suffer from malnutrition compared to the Current Path forecast. Furthermore, fewer Africans will seek to flee their home countries, resulting in lower levels of refugees and reduced migration.

More stability and foreign investment translate into a bigger economy and improved economic growth. In the Silencing the Guns scenario, the African economy is US\$182 billion larger than in the Current Path forecast in 2040 (in market exchange rates). The cumulative gains from 2020 to 2040 are impressive, amounting to an increase of US\$979 billion. By 2040 the average GDP per capita in the fourteen countries will have increased by US\$230, and nearly 18 million fewer Africans would be living under the international extreme poverty line of US\$1.90 per day. In addition, levels of democracy are likely to increase and governance will improve.

Conclusion: Focusing on Conflict Prevention

The complex and country-specific structural drivers of conflict in Africa are interlinked with external factors like the impact of radical ideology, currently in the form of fundamentalist Islamism, and geopolitical competition. Yet we are likely to see further reductions in instability in the twenty-first century since levels of education and literacy are increasing, as are levels of substantive democratic accountability, while trade and travel all connect us more closely than before. The COVID-19 pandemic will slow and may disrupt these trends but is unlikely to disrupt globalisation in a fundamental way.

Poor governance and lack of inclusive economic development lie at the heart of Africa's instability challenge. For instance, in West Africa and the Sahel political violence is being driven by a sense of marginalisation and exclusion from the political centre. Africans need to confront this reality instead of succumbing to the militarised approaches to combating terror that, with much more resources, have failed in Afghanistan and in the Middle East.

Generally, states in sub-Saharan Africa are younger and poorer (in terms of income) than most of their international peers. Colonialism and its legacies have severely disrupted their natural evolution, and political violence has been a central feature of the region's colonial and postcolonial history.

While armed conflict is often more prevalent in rural areas, riots and protests are becoming an overwhelmingly urban phenomena, particularly since the share of Africa's urban population living in slums is steadily rising. Political violence in Africa is already largely urban-based, and instability in Africa is likely to affect cities and the unpoliced and unplanned urban sprawls rather than rural areas going forward.⁴⁶ Clearly conflicts over land, property rights and services for urban residents need to be addressed by integrated urban development strategies.⁴⁷

Against that backdrop, the gains in peace and stability over the past two decades are impressive. These include significant multilateral, regional and bilateral efforts and investments in conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping⁴⁸ and peacebuilding. Much remains to be done, however, such as ending the extent to which conflict in one country, such as Libya, is instigated and fuelled by neighbouring countries.

Africans have to further expand and capacitate the structures that form part of the African Union's African Peace and Security Architecture. To be effective, however, these institutions need to adopt different practices from those of the recent past where the organisation looked the other way when elections were being stolen in Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere. An approach premised on longer-term stability requires clear standards for governance, accountability and the provision of security. Africa needs to move from its focus on conflict management to substantive conflict prevention and a focus on the structural drivers of violence such as poor governance. Few investments can compete with the provision of education, for example, as a means to drain the swamp of ignorance that allows radical ideologies to flourish.

Clearly violence, instability and armed conflict in Africa will remain a major concern that requires an ongoing and dedicated response from the African Union, its member states and the international community for the provision of continued aid and humanitarian assistance to poor countries,

⁴⁶See for example, Commins, S., 2018. *From Urban Fragility to Urban Stability*, Washington: The Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

⁴⁷Bello-Schünemann, J., & Aucoin, C., 2016. *African Urban Futures*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.

⁴⁸Of the 15 current United Nations peacekeeping missions, five are in sub-Saharan Africa.

in peacekeeping in fragile ones and towards the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Africa is set to remain turbulent because it is poor and young and because African governments have limited capacity to provide security. Perhaps more importantly, Africa can expect instability because it is growing and dynamic. Many African countries are experiencing a political awakening that is uncharacteristic of a continent that has long suffered at the hands of foreign intervention and autocratic exploitation by their own elites. The challenge is to productively channel that energy.

Protest has become a more acceptable public behaviour in many countries since there is an increased number of electoral democracies, although the quality of democracy is thin. This is reflected in the changing nature of violence whereby the ballot, not the gun, is slowly becoming the main source of political contestation. This is the theme of the next chapter.

Further Reading

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