Peace and security governance in Africa:
An Australian contribution?

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Abstract

Despite recent resolutions of some longstanding conflicts and a low prevalence of traditional war between states, Africa remains a region in which many ordinary people continue to experience acute insecurity. Intra-state violence, including that practiced by state security forces or a product of weak state institutions; competition over natural resources, exacerbated by environmental change and external interests; transnational threats and challenges such as organised crime, terrorism, proliferation of small arms, pandemic disease, and mass population displacement; and practices of gender-based violence and child soldiers are all ongoing sources of human insecurity in parts of Africa.

In the face of these challenges, there have been important developments in national, regional and international security governance in Africa. Increasing democratisation and adherence to notions of 'responsible sovereignty' at the national level have helped to reconcile perceived tensions between regime and human security. In the new African Peace and Security Architecture, with the African Union (AU) and its Peace and Security Council as the institutional centrepieces underpinned by the proactive principle of 'non-indifference', an important regional security governance framework has emerged. International actors also remain interested parties: Africa comprises about half of the UN Security Council's agenda, while the US, EU China and others all compete for influence in the region.

In this context, this paper examines how Australia—as a relatively new but increasingly interested external party—might contribute to peace and security governance in Africa, including through its election to the UN Security Council in late 2012. The Australian government has been enhancing its engagement with Africa over the past five years and signed an MoU with the AU in 2010 establishing a framework for closer cooperation, including on peace and security. Canberra also has a Defence Attaché to the AU resident at the new Australian Embassy in Addis Ababa. The paper argues that Australia can make valuable contributions to peace and security governance in Africa in particular areas as long as such engagement has the security of African people as a priority and is pursued in collaboration with African institutions.

Introduction

Unlike in its historical relationship with Asia to the north, Australia has rarely viewed Africa to the west as a direct source of threat to national security. Central to

Australian strategic thinking over many generations has been a fear of coercion or attack by powerful Asian states—particularly Japan, Indonesia, China and now a nuclear-armed North Korea—or concern at being unable to manage key strategic relationships between its bedrock US security alliance and its rising Asian economic partners.[1] Conversely, attack from across the Indian Ocean by an African state has not been seriously contemplated in Australia; it is highly unlikely that any African state has had the motivation or capability to do so. Australia therefore has a different security relationship with Africa.

Australia had, of course, sent military contingents to Sudan and South Africa in the late nineteenth century, and served in the North African theatre during both World Wars, but these were contributions to the British Empire and the Commonwealth and they pre-dated an independent Australian foreign policy.[2] In fact, the sending of Australian troops to North Africa (and the Middle East and Europe) during World War II was a matter of controversy given the more direct threat to Australia of war in the Asia-Pacific. During the Cold War—particularly during the Menzies period— Canberra feared that communism would propagate in Africa (and Asia), and that hostile communist regimes or proxies might come to control key strategic territory and transport routes there, further isolating a geographically vulnerable Australia.[3] The conclusion of the Cold War coupled with the economic emergence of Asia saw Africa recede in strategic importance to Australia; Canberra's main military involvements on the continent were relatively small or niche contributions to multilateral peace operations.

More recently, however, Africa has re-emerged in Australian national security thinking. Broadly, this is due to expanded understandings of 'security' in a globalised era. In particular, there has been increasing recognition in Canberra of the local, regional and transnational security implications of weak states, including those in Africa. An Australian fear of militarily strong states in Asia is therefore in contrast with its concern for the consequences of institutionally weak states in Africa; the latter is similar to the notion of an 'arc of instability' in Australia's immediate region.[4]

In Africa, weak states are the complex product of a range of historical and contemporary political circumstances, both structural and situational. These include, among others, European colonialism, regional Cold War interests, Africa's position in the global economic system, continuing self-interested external interference in African affairs (including in the resources sector), and local corruption, neo-patrimonialism and despotism.[5] Although not itself a major global power, or ex-colonial power in Africa, it would be naïve to suggest that Australia was not to a smaller extent implicated in facilitating some of these conditions of insecurity through its supporting role in the western alliance; however, it would also be fair to say that Australia has a far more defensible track record regarding security in Africa than do many of its western allies.

There is a relative dearth of attention and scholarship in Australia regarding the country's security interests and role in Africa. As Cuttell has argued, there is a 'lack of study and understanding on the nations' military contribution to security and stability in Africa. The Australian public needs a more tangible understanding regarding the importance of Africa to global security and stability'.[6] Against these contexts, this paper examines how Australia has recently been engaging with insecurity in Africa—in thinking and practice—and argues that it now has an opportunity to play a more influential role in mitigating insecurity in Africa. It proceeds in three parts: first, it briefly discusses the nature of insecurity in contemporary Africa and outlines important, emerging forms of African regional security governance. Second, it locates Africa in contemporary Australian security thinking, policy and practice by reviewing key policy documents, statements and security-related operations undertaken in Africa by Australia during the post-Cold War era, and drawing upon contemporary interviews with Department of Defence officials with responsibility for the Africa region.

The paper concludes by arguing that there are three key contemporary opportunities available for Australia to engage more deeply and effectively in mitigating the insecurity prevalent in, and stemming from, Africa: (1) Australia should use the access, influence and resources inherent in its 2013–14 term on the UN Security Council to develop a deeper knowledge of the causes and consequences of insecurity in Africa, and to develop a more extensive set of security relationships and structures in the region that can be utilised and developed beyond its Council term; (2) following the signing of a broad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in late 2010, Australia should seek to further develop its partnership with the African Union (AU) in order to continue to contribute Australian resources and expertise to building indigenous capacity in African regional security governance; and (3) given the substantial presence and influence of Australian-listed resources companies operating in Africa, the Australian government should play a key role in helping to develop a comprehensive and effective resources-sector governance mechanism in Africa that can help to mitigate resources-based insecurity.

Insecurity and Regional Security Governance in Contemporary Africa

Jackson reminds us that the level of security enjoyed by most people in the west, including in Australia, is radically different from that experienced by the majority of the world's population, including many people in Africa: 'Citizens of the small group of highly developed nations face no real threat of major war and enjoy abundant food supplies, economic prosperity, comparatively low levels of crime and enduring social and political stability'. In contrast, large segments of many developing countries' populations 'face profound security challenges, including perennial threats of intrastate war and communal violence, poverty and famine, weapons proliferation and crime, political instability, social breakdown, economic failure and, at its most extreme, complete state collapse'. For these people, insecurity, rather than security, is the norm.[7] A UN panel suggested in 2004 that recognition of these

different global experiences of insecurity and the global interconnections between different forms of insecurity were crucial for the pursuit of a more secure world.[8]

We should of course always avoid generalising about Africa. Yet we should also be careful not to gloss over the fact that for many people in Africa insecurity—both from violence and other sources—remains acute, even if there has been encouraging recent progress in some areas, such as reductions in the overall number of conflicts and conflict deaths.[9] As Williams argues, while security is a socially constructed concept, 'By many indicators, the world judges Africa to be its most insecure region'; moreover, inside Africa it is 'abundantly clear that the status quo is not working for the vast majority of Africans. Consequently, security will require significant political change'.[10] The UN Secretary-General warned in 2011 that, despite progress in some aspects and areas, other parts of Africa:

> continue to endure armed conflict, fragility, erosion of the rule of law and chronic poverty, with women and children bearing the brunt of those challenges. The increased threat of violent demonstrations and terrorist attacks as well as unresolved issues around electoral processes and unmanaged diversity continue to pose a strategic challenge for Africa and for its partners within the international community. Human rights continue to be violated with civilians purposely being killed, maimed, sexually assaulted and exploited during conflict, with especially grave impact on women and children.[11]

Despite the disparity in global experiences of insecurity noted above, mainstream (western) security theorising and discourse has focused on managing major interstate war. National security policy, as a reflection of such thinking, has been geared towards preserving the security of the state from external threats—primarily other states. In many ways, this is of little relevance to the experiences of insecurity of many peoples and governments in the developing world. In Africa, for example, major war between independent states has been rare while intra-state conflict is prevalent. Moreover, the developing world has often been used instrumentally by the major powers in pursuit of their own security and other interests.[12] These conditions have created and exacerbated the problem of state weakness and instability in Africa. For example, the self-interested and locally-ignorant nature of colonial governance, coupled with the retention of many artificially delineated state borders, has caused widespread conflict and instability inside post-colonial African states.[13] Cold War client relationships were pursued in Africa at the expense of the interests and security of locals.[14] Western-dominated international economic institutions have prescribed economic policy for, and conditioned external aid to, Africa on the basis of neo-liberal ideological tenets which have tended to benefit western economies rather than African ones and undermined the capacity of African governments to provide public goods, including security.[15] Understanding these contexts is essential to any 'new engagement' with Africa, including by Australia.

The security implications of weak states can be understood in two ways. First, weak states are generally unable to control all of the security-related activities that occur inside their borders, including violent conflict, acts of terrorism, organised crime, weapons proliferation, the spread of communicable disease, population displacement, and competition over natural resources. These unregulated activities can impact the security of states and people beyond the initial state due to transborder 'spill-over' and transnational networks. This can in turn provoke external interventions, which often exacerbate local and regional instability and insecurity. These same unregulated activities, of course, render many local citizens highly insecure and this further undermines stability.

Second, while governments in 'strong' states often maintain their rule through both effectiveness and legitimacy—a combination of a monopoly on the use of force, the provision of essential public services, and a degree of popular identification with the state—many regimes in weak states rely primarily on coercion to maintain power.[16] This causes human insecurity for citizens, who may be the subject of state terror, violence and genocide, or may lack access to basic food security and healthcare when economic development is sacrificed for spending on state 'security services'. In addition, the global development of doctrines such as the Responsibility to Protect and institutions like the International Criminal Court might also provoke external interventions inside African states, which may or may not lead to greater security and stability.

In a recent study of insecurity in contemporary South Asia, Paul argued that regional instability there is caused by a combination of weak states and weak regional cooperative norms, including in regional governance institutions.[17] While the role of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in regional security governance has been circumscribed there, the AU in Africa has been far more proactive and cooperative since its establishment in 2002. Substantial regional normative and institutional development in Africa has established a central role for multilateral security governance, at both the sub-regional and continental levels, premised on finding 'African solutions to African problems' and showing 'non-indifference' to the continent's insecurity (as opposed to a previous norm of 'non-interference' inside African states).[18] A number of indigenous regional institutions have been established to tackle Africa's security challenges. Collectively, these are referred to as the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).[19] They include the AU, with its Department and Commissioner for Peace and Security, and its intergovernmental Peace and Security Council; Regional Economic Communities (RECs); the African Standby Force (ASF), the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the Panel of the Wise, and the Peace Fund.[20]

The growing capacity, legitimacy and centrality of the APSA is important not only for the indigenous regional management of Africa's insecurity, but also because it provides a site of engagement for external actors with security and other interests in Africa. Moreover, the APSA can potentially play a gate-keeping role in mediating these external interests on the continent, including the activities of the US African

Command (AFRICOM), the UN Security Council, in addition to increasingly engaged actors like Australia.

Africa in Australian Security Thinking and Policy

Given that Australia's first ever overseas military contribution was in Sudan, in 1885 (before Federation), Australian military involvement in Africa is hardly a 'new' engagement.[21] Yet, Africa has historically not been perceived as a region of principal strategic importance to an Asia-focused (and -fearing) Australia, even if there were concerns about communist control of strategic positions in Africa during the Cold War. Recently, through an evolving conception of Australian security interests and responsibilities and a changing global security environment, insecurity in Africa has become of greater importance to Canberra. A review of Africa's location in major statements of Australian defence and foreign policy thinking in the post-Cold War era will serve to illustrate this trend.

Security-related interests or activities were not prominent in then-Foreign Minister Gareth Evans' overview of Australia's foreign relations with Africa at the dawn of the post-Cold War era.[22] In Labor's 1994 Defence White Paper, the first after the Cold War, Africa was noted only in passing in relation to limited Australian contributions to UN peace operations on the continent, where the Australian Defence Force (ADF) had 'proven an effective instrument of national policy' in its response to 'peace enforcement and peace building demands', including in Namibia, and 'humanitarian crises' in Somalia and Rwanda.[23] Africa was not considered a region of strategic concern or importance under 'International Defence Interests', and was not even mentioned in 'Other International Interests'. Africa was referred to again only once, under 'Supporting Global Security', where it was noted that 'In some cases, such as in Somalia in 1993–94 and Rwanda in 1994, Defence has participated in operations which had little or no direct strategic significance for Australia, but which supported important international humanitarian objectives'.[24]

Within the Howard Coalition government's 1997 Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper, the first of its kind for Australia, Africa was conspicuous in its near-absence. While Australia had 'global interests which require a foreign and trade policy of broad scope', the priority was the Asia-Pacific region and Africa was not even mentioned under 'important interests…elsewhere'.[25] The paper noted that Australia's 'security interests are most directly engaged' in the Asia-Pacific region and would be so for the foreseeable future.[26] While Australia was a 'continent facing three oceans', the western Indian Ocean bordering Africa was omitted from the list of areas of priority strategic concern.[27] Non-traditional and transnational threats to security, including links between poverty and instability, were identified, but Africa was not cited specifically in relation to this other than to warn about a coming population boom.

The Coalition's 2000 Defence White Paper noted an 'important and lasting trend' towards non-conventional military deployments, such as in UN peace operations. It

cited ADF involvement in such operations in Western Sahara and Mozambique, in addition to the three noted above, and suggested that these types of contributions would 'take a more prominent place in our defence planning' than previously.[28] It also highlighted the importance to Australia of non-traditional security concerns, including terrorism, piracy, organised crime and illegal migration, and suggested that enhanced maritime surveillance capabilities were a key component of the response to such threats. While the Middle East and Central Asia would likely contain the most important strategic issues outside of the Asia Pacific, Africa would instead 'continue to suffer from crises which may require international engagement to minimise suffering and help towards solutions'.[29] Africa did not feature directly in the conception of Australia's strategic interests and objectives, including those 'beyond the Asia-Pacific region'. In any case, any Australian military contribution to operations outside its immediate region would only be 'relatively modest' and 'proportionate to our interests and the commitments of contributors from elsewhere in the world'.[30] During the first post-Cold War decade, then, Africa was not considered important to Australian national security.

Following major acts of terrorism in the United States in 2001 and Bali in 2002, the Australian government's 2003 Foreign Affairs and Trade White Paper highlighted the 'more complex security environment' presented to Australia by a globalised world, primarily in the form of transnational terrorism and organised crime, the proliferation of dangerous weapons, population displacement, and 'resource threats', with a particular focus on South East Asia and the South Pacific.[31] Citing Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Africa was noted in terms of the humanitarian and regional security implications of state collapse. This, in turn, was cited as a motivation for Australian participation in multilateral peacekeeping, and Australia's contributions to newer operations in Sierra Leone and the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict were noted.[32] Yet aside from these brief mentions, and a discussion of Australia's position on Zimbabwe, Africa was again not characterised as a source of any national security concern to Australia.

Similarly, the 2003 Defence Update cited a 'changed strategic environment' resulting in 'less strategic certainty' because the 'strategic advantage offered by our geography does not protect Australia against rogue states armed with weapons of mass destruction and long-range ballistic missiles [or from] the scourge of terrorism.'[33] Globalisation had exposed Australia's 'troubled region' to global security threats[34], and the ADF would need some force restructuring in order to be able to respond to this changing global security environment. The Update did cite Africa as one of the regions in which al-Qaeda cells had been identified[35], but no further details were provided. The only other mention of Africa was in again highlighting Australian contributions to previous and existing UN peace operations on the continent.

The 2004 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) White Paper on terrorism identified North and East Africa as containing 'active terrorist elements and supporters' of concern to Australian national security, and noted as key examples

Osama bin Laden's residence and operations in Sudan in the early 1990s, al-Qaeda's coordinated attacks on the US Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, in August 1998 (killing 300 people) and the rocket attack on an Israeli civilian aircraft in Kenya in 2002.[36] However the African connections to Islamist-inspired terrorism were given less attention than those in the Middle East, South Asia and, in particular, South East Asia.

Africa was also not mentioned specifically in the 2005 Defence Update, other than its citing of the ADF's new contribution to the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) as an example of a circumstance in which the ADF's commitment 'may be small, even down to individuals with unique and specialist skills'.[37] The 2005 Update indicated that 'Defeating the threat of terrorism, countering the proliferation of WMD and supporting regional states in difficulty remain of the highest priority'[38], and noted that 'Non-state players can, in some circumstances, constitute a strategic threat'.[39] Indeed, the Update cited failing states as being of principal concern in this context, due to their facilitation of transnational security threats.[40] The Howard government's parting statement on national security, the 2007 Defence Update, similarly identified the global nexus between fragile states, transnational terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as central national security concerns. Yet Africa barely featured, aside from the mention of the ADF's small contribution to UNMIS.

After Labor won the 2007 Australian general elections the Rudd government delivered, in 2008, the first National Security Statement (NSS) to the Australian Parliament.[41] The NSS, going beyond defence white papers, took a broad view of 'security' and 'national security' as encompassing many non-traditional threats to Australia and Australian interests in the contemporary global security environment. Australia was characterised as 'a regional power, prosecuting global interests' and the latter included 'Promoting an international environment, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, that is stable, peaceful and prosperous, together with a global rules-based order which enhances Australia's national interests'.[42] However, continuing the post-Cold War trend of not viewing Africa as a principal source of national security threat, Africa was not mentioned by Rudd directly in the 2008 NSS.

It was not until Labor's 2009 Defence White Paper that insecurity in and from Africa was given more direct attention, coinciding with broader and 'new engagements' with Africa pursued by the government. While reiterating that Australia's primary strategic and security concerns were located in the Asia-Pacific, it indicated that:

> Beyond our region, Australia cannot be secure in an insecure world. We have a strategic interest in preserving an international order that restrains aggression by states against each other, and can effectively manage other risks and threats, such as the proliferation of WMD, terrorism, state fragility and failure, intra-state conflict, and the security impacts of climate change and resource scarcity.[43]

In this context, Africa was now considered a region of greater concern although, importantly, Australia would have to 'be realistic about our strategic weight and reach, our capacity to influence international affairs militarily beyond our immediate neighbourhood, and the limits of our resources, particularly in relation to the size of our population and the scale of our economy and industrial base'.[44]

The Defence White Paper suggested that 'Regional conflicts, such as in the Middle East and Africa, will likely continue to be a risk in the international system' and were likely to arise due to such factors as the 'breakdown of fragile states; disputes over territory; access to resources, water and energy; population movements, environmental crises or food shortages; conflicts between ethnic or religious communities; or efforts to promote ideological or nationalist goals'.[45] Climate change and rapid population growth would 'sharpen competition for scarce food, water and energy resources in many parts of the world, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, and are likely to exacerbate existing population and infrastructure problems in developing countries in those regions, straining their capacity to adapt and cope'.[46] Furthermore, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) would impact on the developing world, as many states there 'struggle to meet the demands of their citizens, and may be easier targets for foreign influence in ways that might be unfavourable to long-term strategic stability'.[47] The Defence White Paper's more specific 'regional assessment' of Africa cited:

> reasonable prospects for better economic growth, governance and reduced frequency of conflict. Africa is also growing in relative importance as a source of the world's energy supplies. At the same time, economic development is likely to be uneven and insecurity and instability are likely to continue in some countries, exacerbated by environmental pressures. This will lead to calls for international assistance in addressing intra- or inter-state conflicts, either directly or through support for African peace-making and peacekeeping. The growth of Islamist extremist groups in North Africa and the Horn of Africa poses a risk to security regionally and beyond.[48]

Indeed, North and East Africa were included more prominently as regions in which Islamist-inspired terrorism posed a threat, as it was suggested that 'weak states and the continued resonance of those groups' ideologies will provide them with a relatively permissive operating environment and a supply of recruits'.[49] In all regions, the ADF would prepare to play a 'supporting role in countering non-state opponents by assisting in their disruption and defeat where necessary. This might, for instance, take the form of operations against terrorist camps and havens'.[50]

In addition, the Indian Ocean region separating Australia's west from Africa's east coast would have 'greater strategic significance' over the coming two decades, particularly as a key route for regional energy trade. The 2009 Defence White Paper warned that conflicts along the Ocean's periphery and associated transnational security threats, such as maritime piracy, would likely see a greater militarisation

and competition between major powers for strategic advantage in that theatre. Indeed, the Indian Ocean would 'join the Pacific Ocean in terms of its centrality to our maritime strategy and defence planning' in the period to 2030[51], and the ADF would hence be directed to 'contemplate operational concepts for operating in the Indian Ocean region, including with regional partners with whom we share similar strategic interests'.[52]

A final role in Africa identified by Defence was in peace operations. The ADF 'needs to be prepared to play its part in dealing with such contingencies' regarding intra-state war, including deployment for 'humanitarian, stabilisation, counter-insurgency, peacekeeping and reconstruction interventions'. It cited ADF deployments to a number of UN peace operations in Africa as being part of a long history of Australian involvement in global peacekeeping operations.[53] Australia's contributions there have 'earned widespread respect, demonstrated Australia's strong commitment to the role of multilateral institutions in promoting peace, security and international order, and reinforced Australia's standing and credibility as a good international citizen.'[54] Yet, Australia's contributions to peace operations beyond its immediate region are circumscribed because:

> it is not a principal task for the ADF to be generally prepared to deploy to the Middle East, or regions such as Central and South Asia or Africa, in circumstances where it has to engage in ground operations against heavily armed adversaries located in crowded urban environments. This entails a requirement to engage in high-intensity close combat which brings with it the risk of an unsustainable level of casualties for an army the size of Australia's.[55]

The 2009 Defence White Paper suggested that it would 'remain in Australia's interests to encourage peace and stability in Africa as part of our contribution to global security, through targeted defence cooperation and capacity building in areas such as peacekeeping'.[56] Such efforts would simultaneously 'contribute to Africa's capacity to manage its security'.[57] Similarly, in its 2009 submission to the Joint Standing Committee Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade (JSCFADT) *Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa*, the Department of Defence stated that:

> Australia values our bilateral defence relationships with African nations and our increasing multilateral engagement with Africa, through both the African Union and the United Nations. Through our focused and targeted contributions to peacekeeping operations and capacity building, Australia is supporting global efforts to encourage peace, stability and security on the African continent…Defence will continue to focus on building African peacekeeping capability through the African Union and the United Nations and on fostering defence relationships with select African Nations.[58]

The Australian Government's 2010 Counter-terrorism White Paper also cited parts of Africa as a source of terrorist threat to Australia, as the 'geography of threat' had changed and a 'new generation committed to terrorism' was potentially emerging.[59] The rise of Somalia as a staging ground was viewed as a major area of concern as the successful targeting of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere in the broader Middle East had diffused operatives to other areas in which it was possible to exploit 'lawless spaces, poor governance and regional grievances'.[60] As such:

> The challenges seen in the Middle East also occur in North Africa. Groups such as al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb have proved particularly adept at reinventing themselves, adopting local grievances and extending their field of operation into other parts of Africa, particularly the Sahel countries such as Mauritania, Mali and Niger. Terrorist operations against Western interests there will recur and North Africa's greater connection to Western Europe allows local al-Qa'ida-inspired groups to pose a recurring threat to the European continent. Terrorist activity in Somalia has intensified in recent years with the growth and consolidation of the al-Shabab group. No early return to stable government is in sight in Somalia and terrorist activity within the country and the adjoining region can be expected for years to come.[61]

The above review has situated Africa in post-Cold War Australian national security and strategic thinking. We can see that Australia's traditional security concerns and priorities remain in its immediate neighbourhood and the broader Asia-Pacific region. Until recently, insecurity in and from the African region had been given little emphasis in Australian security and defence policy, and in some cases was barely noted other than as minor humanitarian contributions. A changing global security environment and a wider conception of Canberra's security interests and responsibilities meant that Africa had become more prominent by the time of the 2009 Defence White Paper. The JSCFADT suggested that this in fact represents the start of a 'significant change in Australia's security relationship with Africa'.[62] The linkages between insecurity and instability in other parts of the world, including Africa, and transnational security threats had become more prominent, while a more globally-engaged Australia would seek to take greater responsibility for managing such threats. In and from Africa, the primary threats to Australia have been identified as transnational terrorism and crime and maritime piracy, while the government retains a specific if modest role for Australia in contributing to peace operations on that continent. Both types of insecurity—threats to national and human security—are perceived to emanate from weak states and a lack of security governance in Africa. In this context, what contribution is Australia making in practice to mitigate these two types of insecurity?

Australian Engagement With (In)Security in Africa

In 2009, the Department of Defence outlined its 'modest' engagement with Africa,

albeit one that was in the process of being 'enhanced' under the Labor government. Defence's 'engagement with Africa is primarily based on our commitment to Africa-based UN peace operations, engagement with select African nations, provision of training to select African Forces and African Union personnel, and shared strategic priorities including the Indian Ocean Region'.[63]

Under the Defence Cooperation Program—which consists of 'senior level contact and training and education opportunities'—Defence has bilateral relations with Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Rwanda, Algeria, Djibouti, Morocco, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Tanzania, Lesotho, South Sudan, Sudan, Ghana, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Botswana, the African Union, and the East African Standby Force. There were much lower levels of African involvement in the Program prior to 2009.[64] Australia's multilateral relations with African countries are channelled through the AU.[65] Indeed, Canberra signed a MoU in September 2010 with then-Chairperson of the AU Commission Jean Ping establishing a 'framework for close cooperation', including on matters of peace and security (see discussion below in conclusion).[66] The Australian Federal Police (AFP) also has a Liaison Post in Pretoria, South Africa, with responsibility for forty-two African countries (plus Mayotte and Réunion), while the Liaison Post in Beirut, Lebanon, has responsibility for Algeria, Mauritania, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco and Libya, and the Liaison Post in Dubai, UAE, covers Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea and Ethiopia.[67]

In early 2011 the ADF's Colonel James Davey took up the newly created post of resident Australian Defence Attaché (DA) to the AU, based at the new Australian Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (the city hosting the AU's headquarters).[68] The purpose of the new post was variously defined as to 'strengthen Australia's ability to engage with Africa in areas of mutual interest'[69], to 'help identify areas for cooperation and identify scope for further Defence engagement and support in niche areas to help promote peace and stability in Africa'[70], and to 'build our security and defence cooperation with the African Union and African countries'.[71] The Duty Statement for the position included assisting in developing and implementing cooperative Defence activities in Africa; supporting Defence's input into broader Australian engagement with the continent; identifying and advising Defence on future operations in Africa based on Australia's national interests; advising on possible Australian contributions to UN and AU peace operations in Africa; representing Defence in Africa; and acting as its foreign liaison on the continent.[72] This was a significant step towards greater security engagement but additional supporting staff would likely be required for such a role.

In 2009, the then Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon had announced the new resident DA position while in Addis Ababa to meet with AU representatives and his Ugandan counterpart.[73] Fitzgibbon also announced other new 'African engagement initiatives' for Defence that formed part of the government's 'commitment to deepen and broaden engagement with the African continent', while his visit itself 'offered the opportunity to compare perspectives and discover areas of mutual interest where Australia and Africa can further cooperation and the sharing of expertise on peace

and security matters'.[74] Indeed, Defence engagement with Africa is now about $1 million a year on program delivery, up from $200–300 000 in 2009, which is a quadrupling for this period. According to McGregor, this level of spending is commensurate with Australia's strategic interests in Africa.[75] The discussion below briefly outlines Australia's particular contributions to four main types of security operations in Africa: 1) peace operations and training; 2) counter-terrorism; 3) counter-piracy; and 4) counter-transnational organised crime.

1) Peace operations and training

According to Defence, 'most engagement in Africa…is related to the UN and peacekeeping, and that is our focus' .[76] Yet Australia's commitments to UN peacekeeping operations in Africa are fairly small compared to those of the EU, and to Australia's recent military involvements in the Middle East. For example, through its African Peace Facility, the EU has channeled €740 million (AUD$930 million) to Africa since 2004.[77] Indeed, Australia has considerable expertise in peacekeeping, having sent 65 000 troops to fifty global operations, having led operations in Cambodia and East Timor, and being the twelfth largest global contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget (at about $150 million). Yet Africa has traditionally been viewed as a site of small or niche Australian contributions.

Australia has been involved in fourteen separate peace operations in Africa, starting with its contribution to the UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC) in 1960. These include operations in Uganda, Namibia, Western Sahara, Somalia, Rwanda, Mozambique, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Sierra Leone, and Sudan (including in the joint UN-AU Hybrid operation in Darfur, UNAMID), as well as a small contribution to the current UN operation in South Sudan (UNMISS). In addition, ADF personnel are seconded to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, including previously as the lead planner for Africa operations and in support of maritime counter-piracy planning in the water of the Horn of Africa. In 2011-12 an ADF officer was Military Adviser to the UN Office of West Africa in Senegal. Collectively there commitments total nearly 2500 military personnel.[78]

Most of these contributions have been small except for the 1100-strong Australian contribution in Somalia during 1992–94 and the 300 medical staff sent to post-genocide Rwanda in 1994–95.[79] The Commonwealth Monitoring Force (CMF) in Rhodesia, deployed to monitor the ceasefire and implement the negotiated political transition to majority rule in 1979–80, also included 150 Australian army personnel.[80] This was Australia's largest peacekeeping contribution during the Cold War, and Londey argued that in Rhodesia (as in Indonesia), Australian peacekeepers 'assisted successful transitions to independence, playing their part in smoothing the transition and helping to minimise conflict along the way'.[81]

In financial year 2010-11, Australia's troop commitment to UN peacekeeping operations in Sudan cost Defence around $1.8 million. Defence also provided $3.5 million to the UN Trust Fund for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and

sent one ADF officer to support planning for the expansion of AMISOM operations in 2012. Between 2010 and 2012, AusAID spent $6 million on peace-building; $2 million of this was directly to projects in Sierra Leone and Burundi, while $4 million went to the UN Peacebuilding Fund, of which 88 per cent of overall funds are spent on projects in Africa. Total Australian support for UN peacekeeping and peace-building operations in Africa rose from $83 million in 2007 to $111 million in 2009.[82]

Another key form of Australian security engagement with Africa is training for both peacekeeping and traditional defence and policing functions. Defence cites how a number of African governments are interested in learning from the Australian military, which has considerable operational experience in peacekeeping and is of a similar size to many of its African counterparts.[83] Australia is also helping to train the East African Standby Force, is running military observer courses in Kenya and Rwanda, and is bringing African military trainees out to Australia, including one in the Australian Defence College. Since 2007, Defence has also provided funding for the E-Learning for African Peacekeepers (ELAP) program, which is run by the Peace Operations Training Institute and 'specifically targets members of [the] military, police and gendarmerie of the African continent'.[84]

In 2008, the CMCE hosted a workshop to draft guidelines for the protection of civilians in AU peace operations. In March 2010 the Australian government through CMCE supported and co-hosted with the AU the 'International Symposium on the Protection of Civilians in Conflict Zones' at the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa. In addition, Defence sponsors a number of African participants to attend in the UN Military Observers and other peacekeeping-related courses in Australia, while Defence and the AFP co-hosted the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centre Annual Conference in Sydney, which 'provided a key opportunity for global practitioners in the area of peacekeeping education, training and operations to discuss key issues relevant to the sector', with a number of African representatives attending.[85]

2) Counter-terrorism operations in Africa

Defence is keen to emphasise its important contributions to peace operations and training, but Australian contributions to counter-terrorism operations in Africa are harder to ascertain. In early 2012, reports in the Australian media claimed that Australian Special Air Service (SAS) soldiers were operating potentially illegally in African countries with which Australia was not at war 'in an unannounced and possibly dangerous expansion of Australia's foreign military engagement'.[86] *The Age* 'confirmed that troopers from the squadron have mounted dozens of secret operations over the past year in African nations including Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Kenya' and it was 'believed the missions have involved gathering intelligence on terrorism and scoping rescue strategies for Australian civilians trapped by kidnapping or civil war.'[87] However, both the Australian Minister for Defence Stephen Smith and his Defence Attaché to the AU James Davey rejected claims that any illegal operations were taking place, with Smith indicating that Australian operations

overseas were always legal and under ministerial or cabinet oversight.[88]

Cuttell has suggested that there would be great scope for Australia to work closely with US AFRICOM on counter-terrorism operations in North Africa and the Horn of Africa where there are strong mutual interests.[89] In some arenas, particularly Somalia, counter-terrorism operations are viewed as integral to peace operations. As noted above, Canberra contributes to the UN Trust Fund for AMISOM, which was deployed in part to defeat the al-Shabaab terrorist group,[90] and had contributed tactical bomb suits and Improvised Explosive Device (IED) equipment to AMISOM's UN Support Office.

3) Counter-piracy operations

Maritime piracy off the coast of the Horn of Africa, stemming primarily from Somalia, was identified above as an emerging, significant security concern for Australian interests that would draw increased Australian engagement with Africa and the Indian Ocean region in the future.[91] Australia participates in the UN Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, and ADF secondees to the UN have supported planning and capacity building for African maritime security efforts in both the Gulf of Guinea and the Horn of Africa. Defence 'contributes to counter-piracy efforts off the coast of Somalia through the deployment of an Adelaide Class Guided Missile Frigate, which is flexibly cross-tasked between the US-led Combined Maritime Forces Combined Task Forces on counter terrorism, counter-piracy and maritime security'.[92] In addition to these more direct measures, the broader government approach is to build the capacity of regional governments and militaries to tackle piracy.

4) Counter-Transnational Organised Crime

The AFP has warned that Australia is 'not immune to the transnational criminal activity originating from the African based criminal networks'. This includes drug and human trafficking, cybercrime, and money laundering.[93] The Australian government allocated $17.5 million over four years from 2009–10 to build the capacities of law enforcement agencies in African countries, primarily in relation to countering transnational crime and terrorism. The Attorney-General's Department received $4.5 million to develop stronger legal frameworks,[94] while the Australian Transaction Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC) received a further $8.1 million to assist with its anti-money laundering capacity. AFP activities in Africa include forensic training and other police cooperation on countering transnational crime and terrorism.[95] The AFP was budgeted $4.8 million over four years from 2009–10 to support a forensic program in African countries.[96]

Conclusion: Security in Africa—Responsibilities and Opportunities for Australia

This paper has outlined the nature of insecurity and regional security governance in contemporary Africa, and located Africa's position in contemporary Australian

security thinking and practice. It concludes by arguing that there are three key considerations that should guide this relationship into the future, framed in terms of responsibilities and opportunities for Australian engagement with security in Africa.

The first consideration, regarding responsibility, is that Australian engagement should not create further insecurity or instability for African peoples. In this sense, maintaining or improving African peoples' security—their human security—should be a priority of Australian engagement, including through Australian involvement in counter-terrorism and counter-piracy efforts and its support of global and regional normative developments that privilege human security over narrow national or regime security. Supporting human security and 'responsible sovereignty', such as the physical protection of civilians during armed conflict, or by mitigating underdevelopment, or by accepting additional refugees from Africa for resettlement, would remove sources of insecurity and build a more sustainable peace on the continent as well as a positive reputation for Australia.[97]

The second key consideration, also regarding responsibility, is that Australia should aim to support the building of indigenous security-providing capacity in African states and regional governance institutions like the AU. This would be a means to creating sustainable security and security governance that will be in the interests of African peoples, African states, Australia, and other stakeholders concerned with the human and transnational insecurity prevalent in and emanating from Africa. As indicated above, regional institutions can play an important 'gate-keeping' role for the continent by mediating and managing external interests for mutual benefit.

The third key consideration, regarding opportunities, accepts that Australia is a relatively small overall actor in Africa and as such does not have the capacity to independently shape the broader security dynamics on the continent. In turn, Africa has not been a region of primary security concern for Australia. Indeed, Australia's 'involvement in the security of African nations is characterised by small numbers of personnel directly involved, combined with commitments on financial assistance and training. This requires careful identification and planning to allow these limited interventions to achieve the maximum benefit for the resources invested.'[98] However, I would argue that Australia currently has the opportunity—should it wish to take advantage of it—to magnify its contribution to tackling insecurity in Africa, in the following three ways:

(1) Through its elected seat on the UN Security Council during the 2013–14 term

A voting seat on the world's most powerful multilateral security governance body— secured by secret ballot in October 2012—gives Australia the chance to be deeply involved in understanding and making decisions on major global security issues during 2013–14. In this broader role, Australia can contribute to setting agendas, promoting norms, sanctioning actors, and designing peacekeeping, counter-terrorism and many other types of operations. In 2013, Australia will be working directly alongside Africa's non-permanent representatives on the Council—Togo,

Morocco and Rwanda—and this presents a good opportunity to collaborate with African countries on managing peace and security issues. Although this does not assume that African states are all united: Morocco is not an AU member due to its ongoing dispute over Western Sahara, and the DRC strongly objected to Rwanda's UNSC candidacy due to ongoing cross border tensions between the two stemming from the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

Moreover, Africa features heavily on the agenda of the Council. For example, between 1948 and 2010, twenty-seven out of a total sixty-six UN peace operations were deployed in Africa, representing the largest regional share (about 41 per cent).[99] Between 1990 and 2011 about 44 per cent of all Council meetings have pertained to Africa.[100] In 2011 alone, Africa accounted for 68 per cent of all Council meetings devoted to country-specific/regional situations (120/177 meetings), with the most frequent agenda items being Sudan, Somalia and Libya. Of this 68 per cent, 79 per cent were on sub-Saharan and 21 per cent on North Africa.[101] In addition, the Security Council and AU have been developing a strategic relationship to coordinate their respective roles and partnerships in peace and security governance in Africa, including the novel design and deployment of the AU-UN Hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which is the first such hybrid peace operation between the UN and a regional organisation.

Critics of the Australian UNSC election campaign argued that Australia's 'new engagement' with Africa could be reduced to a cynical self-interested ploy to tie up the votes of the 54-member African bloc in the UN by offering increased aid and other symbolic gestures in the years leading up to the vote. In attracting 140 of 193 UN votes (comfortably above the 129 required), it appears that a large number of African states did indeed vote for Australia in the first round[102], enabling it to outscore competitors Luxembourg and Finland. Canberra never denied that *one* of its motivations for enhanced engagement with Africa was to secure African votes for the Council seat, but it rejected the claim that this was its sole or even primary motivation. For example, then Foreign Minister Stephen Smith declared in 2010 that 'of course, in Africa, as in all regions of the world, Australia seeks to build support for its candidacy'.[103] Australia has also publicly supported calls for 'appropriate permanent African representation' on the Council, one of the key UN reforms demanded by the AU, and this can been sees as a useful trade-off.[104]

Had Australia failed to gain election to the Council, and then proceeded to disengage with Africa, then we might conclude that winning African seats was the government's only interest in the continent. But this would be to deny the importance of Australian resources sector interests in Africa, and to fail to appreciate that the UNSC bid is one part of a broader desire by Australian Labor governments for Australia to become more engaged in global and regional governance, which would in any case require developing a deeper relationship with Africa. Moreover, now that Australia has secured a seat on a body that spends about half of its attention on Africa, Australia has an opportunity to become even more deeply involved in matters of peace and security prevalent in and stemming from

that continent, including those that Canberra considers to be national security threats. To some extent this will rely on Australia pursuing a more independent identity on the Council, which would gain it credibility with its African partners.[105] But Australia can use this position to gain direct and deep knowledge and experience of insecurity in Africa, which will provide a basis for longer-term engagement with such challenges beyond its Council term.

(2) Through its partnership with the African Union

As noted above, the AU has over the past ten years developed into an important regional governance body, including on matters of peace and security. The AU's Peace and Security Council itself functions along similar lines to the UN Security Council and has deployed peace operations to Burundi, Darfur and Somalia while coordinating a range of other security activities through the broader framework of the APSA. As such, any external actor that is genuine about security engagement with Africa, including Australia, will need to work in partnership with the AU.

Australia has been pursuing deeper engagement with the AU. In January 2009 Stephen Smith addressed the AU Executive Council, the first for an Australian foreign minister since the AU's establishment. Smith acknowledged the AU as the 'principal body for African integration and cooperation' and for 'playing an internationally recognised role in advancing Africa's economic prosperity and peace and security objectives'.[106] He indicated that Australia was enhancing its engagement with the AU because it wanted to support African efforts to address, *inter alia*, peace and security challenges. In September 2010, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Australia signed an MoU with the AU; the AU Commission chairperson 'warmly welcomed' Australia's growing engagement with the continent, and the stated aim of both parties was to pursue greater cooperation and a deeper relationship for mutual benefit.[107] In January 2011, Kevin Rudd officially opened the new Australian Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, also home of the AU, and established the position of Defence Attaché to the AU. Rudd also addressed the AU Executive Council in January 2011. In January 2012, Rudd and AU Commission Chairperson Jean Ping signed a two-year agreement to enable Australia to support, with $2 million, the Institution and Capacity Building Programme of the Commission. The Chairperson 'underscored the importance and depth of AU relations with Australia'.[108] According to Defence, the AU and many African states appreciate Australia's approach to the continent—it is more informal than many other western states, Australia brings no colonial baggage, and Australia is not a major global power—and these characteristics help to facilitate trust and engagement.[109]

(3) Through its influence in the natural resources sector in Africa

Australia and Australian-listed companies have significant involvement and investment in the African natural resources sector, totaling some $50 billion worth of investment. Australia is therefore an important actor in that sector, disproportionately to its overall influence in Africa. This gives Australia an enhanced

opportunity (and of course responsibility) to play a role in ensuring that natural resources exploitation in Africa does not create inequality, conflict and further insecurity for African people. There is ample evidence that resources can be both a key source of national economic development, and a key source of violent conflict and exploitation.[110] Australia's position in this sector, and its experience and expertise in natural resources management, should be used to mitigate the potential for resources-based conflict in Africa.

It can do this by designing and committing to initiatives and regulations that promote or enforce genuine corporate social and environmental responsibilities for resources companies in their African operations. Some examples include the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which Australia is currently piloting, and the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, a 'global initiative to promote human rights while ensuring the security of mining projects'. In December 2012, Foreign Minister Bob Carr announced that Australia would join the latter, claiming that the initiative could 'help [Australian mining] companies lower risks and manage mine security in a way that respects the human rights and freedoms of local communities.'[111] As with supporting 'responsible sovereignty' regarding African governments, Australia should support responsible resources extraction in Africa.

Together, these three opportunities give Australia the chance to pursue greater engagement with (in)security in Africa. If Canberra accepts certain responsibilities to go along with its increasing interests in Africa and these new opportunities for influence, Australia has the potential to be an important, constructive, and respected player in emerging African security governance.

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