Nordiska Afrikainstitutet
The Nordic Africa Institute

# SECURITY WITHOUT SABRE-RATTLING
## COUNTERACTING INCREASED MILITARISATION IN AFRICA

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Front cover: Kenyan police officers, belonging to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), salute during the playing of their national anthem during a medal ceremony in Mogadishu, Somalia, on July 14, 2017. Photo credit: AMISOM, Public Domain. Back cover: Mogadishu, 15 October 2017, AMISOM's Ugandan Contingent. Photo Tobin Jones, AMISOM, Public Domain.

# SECURITY WITHOUT SABRE-RATTLING
## COUNTERACTING INCREASED MILITARISATION IN AFRICA

Lack of resources makes the African Union dependent on external funding for military support and peacebuilding. Policy makers who want to support the AU and its members in their efforts to avoid becoming pieces in external powers' geopolitical puzzle, should promote non-military solutions to security challenges.
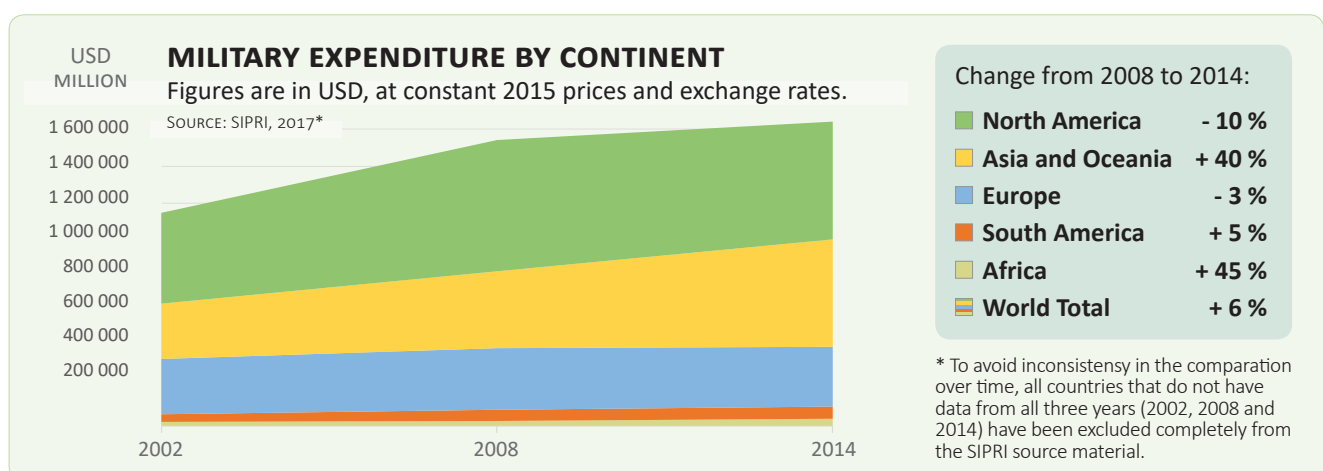
MIKAEL ERIKSSON, Senior Researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute

The theme of the last AU summit in Addis Ababa (22-29 January) was "Winning the Fight against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa's Transformation." Echoing past summits, the summit concluded that Africa must be the caretaker of its own destiny and that corruption is a deep-rooted curse with severe implications for political transformation, development, peacebuilding and conflict resolution in many African countries. Although not directly related to military affairs, corruption must indeed be seen as an integrated part of AU's peace and security agenda.
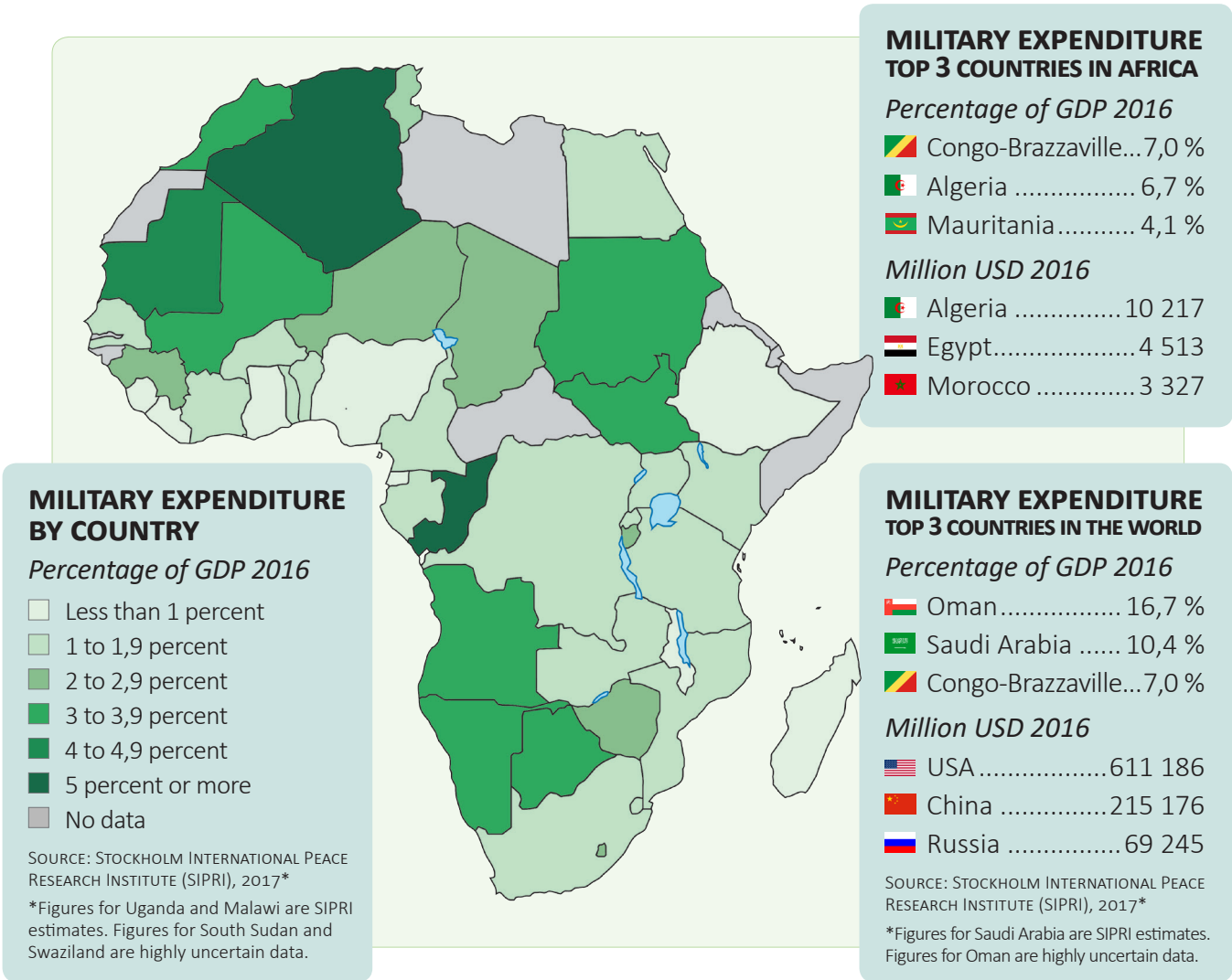
Military expenditure has increased globally over the past decade, and generally to a greater degree in Africa.

According to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), military expenditure in Africa increased by 45 percent from 2008 to 2014, at constant prices and exchange rates. The average global increase, over the same time period, was 6 percent. This trend is in stark contrast to the pacifist vision the AU adopted in 2013 to "Silence the Guns" by 2020. A vision aimed at terminating conflicts across the continent.

With increased militarisation comes increased foreign involvement in the security affairs of many African states. Lack of resources, technology and military capacity in the AU and regional economic communities (RECs) has opened the door to external funding, capacity building, and external actor interventions. These



**MILITARY EXPENDITURE BY CONTINENT**
Figures are in USD, at constant 2015 prices and exchange rates.
SOURCE: SIPRI, 2017*

USD MILLION

Change from 2008 to 2014:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| North America | - 10 % |
| Asia and Oceania | + 40 % |
| Europe | - 3 % |
| South America | + 5 % |
| Africa | + 45 % |
| World Total | + 6 % |

* To avoid inconsistensy in the comparation over time, all countries that do not have data from all three years (2002, 2008 and 2014) have been excluded completely from the SIPRI source material.

Military expenditure in Africa is very low in a global comparison, but over the last decade it has been growing at a considerably higher pace than the global average, 45 percent compared to 6 percent from 2008 to 2014. The increase has been faster in North Africa than in Sub-Saharan Africa, 62 percent compared to 28 percent over the same time period.

**MILITARY EXPENDITURE TOP 3 COUNTRIES IN AFRICA**

*Percentage of GDP 2016*

- Congo-Brazzaville...7,0 %
- Algeria ................ 6,7 %
- Mauritania.......... 4,1 %

*Million USD 2016*

- Algeria .............. 10 217
- Egypt................... 4 513
- Morocco ............. 3 327

**MILITARY EXPENDITURE BY COUNTRY**

*Percentage of GDP 2016*

- ☐ Less than 1 percent
- ☐ 1 to 1,9 percent
- ☐ 2 to 2,9 percent
- ☐ 3 to 3,9 percent
- ☐ 4 to 4,9 percent
- ☐ 5 percent or more
- ☐ No data

SOURCE: STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SIPRI), 2017*

*Figures for Uganda and Malawi are SIPRI estimates. Figures for South Sudan and Swaziland are highly uncertain data.

**MILITARY EXPENDITURE TOP 3 COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD**

*Percentage of GDP 2016*

- Oman................. 16,7 %
- Saudi Arabia ...... 10,4 %
- Congo-Brazzaville...7,0 %

*Million USD 2016*

- USA .................. 611 186
- China .............. 215 176
- Russia ............... 69 245

SOURCE: STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SIPRI), 2017*

*Figures for Saudi Arabia are SIPRI estimates. Figures for Oman are highly uncertain data.

interventions take many different forms, ranging from joint military exercises, to troop deployment and the construction of semi-permanent military bases across the African continent.

## Military solutions to non-security challenges

The reliance on external involvement in African security affairs comes at a high price. Firstly, it creates an asymmetry, with external states dominating the African security agenda. In this asymmetry African states loose the opportunity to shape their own destiny. Secondly, external actors tend to opt for quick military solutions in areas where they find a national interest rather than investing in long-term support addressing local concerns and root causes that they can engage with militarily. This goes for Western powers and agencies as well as non-Western states such as China, Russia and states in the Middle East. Thirdly, as research findings have shown, an increasing number of non-security-related challenges across the continent have tended to become militarised. For example, military forces have been used to address epidemics, local political riots, and development issues.

Moreover, political discourse is becoming more and more militarised all over the continent. For example, politicians are increasingly associating security issues with the fight against terrorism and regime security, as opposed to resilience of communities and human security. There are also many examples, across Africa, where external powers, although to some degree unintentionally, use a language of war and military threat when rallying support for development issues and peace promotion and the fight against diseases or climate change. Previously separate areas, such as development and security, are now melding into the same political agenda – and the universal solutions to all challenges in these arenas are military interventions.

## Past pan-African debates

The pan-African movement and its ideological origins offer important perspectives on current AU security reform, involving paradigms that foreign actors often

miss. For generations, the movement has been engaged in a healthy debate on what African security is and in what way it could institutionally tackle insecurities across the continent. Two paradigms dominate: the short- and the long-term security perspectives.

In the short term, the understanding is that security is closely associated with conventional military interventions in response to wars, rebellions and terrorism. African governments and the AU have, as a rule, and not without well-founded reasons, seen strong military institutions as the primary answer to security issues. To address these security challenges, over the past two decades, the AU has been stepping up its institutions and instruments. Examples here include the creation of the African Standby Force, the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises, and various ad-hoc military arrangements, such as African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM).

In stark contrast to the short-term and more immediate hard security discourse are long-term security challenges that undermine the peace and stability of African states and societies. For instance, across Africa, as elsewhere, climate change presents a profound challenge. Access to food, fresh water and clean air is gradually becoming more difficult, because of pollution, competition for resources and climate variation. To guard against these effects, the AU needs to invest heavily in adaptation, not least in terms of smart infrastructure and viable social support mechanisms.

Other long-term security challenges include illiberal practices, such as third-mandate governance prolongations, corruption, and regime protection by African political elites and their external collaborators. Politicians are extending their mandates, ignoring norms enshrined in the Constitutive Act of the African Union. Corruption is eating its way into public life, thereby also undermining citizens' trust in public and security governance regimes. In several African states, politicians are close to armed groups or organised crime syndicates. This is gradually building into an enormous security-re-

Camp Thies, Senegal, June 19, 2014. A US and a Nigerian soldier in a training excercise for the US Army and its African partner forces. The United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) is responsible for US military operations in an area covering all of Africa, except Egypt. The command's programs are coordinated through offices in approximately 38 of Africa's 56 nations.

Somalia, March 28, 2013. Soldiers from the Somali National Army participate in AMISOM training ex-cercise. The AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is a peacekeeping mission in Somalia, operated by the AU with UN approval. With 22,000 armed personnel from eight African countries, it serves as an example of how the AU has been step-ping up its institutions and instruments over the past two decades.

lated concern for the entire AU project. While Africa is not unique in this regard, compared to other regions of the world, it has its own sets of challenges that are uniquely profound.

How then can we understand this growing trend of militarization, and how should Africa build on its past?

### From human dignity to Pax Africana

We can trace the process of improving institutional re-sponses to security challenges in Africa back to the early days of pan-Africanism. African leaders have vacillated between a human security approach (i.e. security for the African peoples and communities) and conventional hard security for African states and regimes.

In the early twentieth century, the pan-African move-ment mainly conceived of security as a matter of bringing together the African diaspora under a shared identity and human dignity. The slave trade, political representation and what we today define as human rights, were at the core of the pan-African "human security" movement.

The pan-African movement's thinking on peace and security changed and became more of a debate over the kind of security posture Africa collectively should take. Many leading pan-Africanists particularly came to articulate this process after the Second World War, in

the early days of decolonisation. At the time, pan-Afri-can scholars explicitly began to relate to the notion of security by, for example, speaking of a Pax Africana.

As an illustration, first president of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah's conception of pan-African security, sugge-sted the security of the African continent was crucial for the survival of young African states. This contrasted with earlier ideas in the pan-African movement that focused on bringing the diaspora together and enhan-cing the dignity of Africans. Concern shifted from the individual to the state.

### Increased investment in counterterrorism

Since the creation of the AU's predecessor, the Organi-sation of African Unity (OAU), in 1963, many African leaders have closely tied security to military security. An important driver of the security debate at the time was the cold war system, in which Africa increasingly beca-me an arena for proxy confrontations between external actors.

A clear breaking point in the debate on African peace and security came in the 1990s, when the AU began to move away from its post-colonial security discourse. AU policy makers introduced human security as one of the core principles of Africa's conception of security. Issues

such as human rights, democracy and peace were put on the agenda. Yet, in practice, the heads of the member states still saw the mandate to deal with peace and security as an exclusive domestic jurisdiction based on their interests.

While there were reasons to believe that the human security discourse might survive as a theme, the 11 September 2001 attacks, and the terrorism security discourse that followed, penetrated African debate and practice. Investment in counterterrorism structures grew immensely, in cooperation with Western powers.

The question now is where the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the AU framework for conflict management and peacebuilding, is heading, in terms of its conceptualisation of security. Clearly, the AU's understanding of security has developed considerably from that of the OAU.

Framed within different themes of continental integration, security will be at the heart of AU summits for years to come. Tensions among African leaders will continue to involve the question of which security institutions to invest resources in. By reformulating security discourses and practices, African leaders can address other long-term and non-conventional security concerns.

## Conclusions and policy recommendations

- Donor countries and development organisations should consider, in a more holistic way, how their support to African governments, the AU and RECs, affect the continent's security sector.

- External actors need to consider alternative ways to support Africa's security sector, by investing in institutions that address root-causes of long-term security threats instead of military quick fixes.

- External actors seeking partnerships with the AU and its members need to recognise that African security discourses rest on a long debate within the pan-African movement that is far from over and that cannot be changed from abroad.

- The AU needs to democratize and make the involvement of African citizenry in its decision-making processes more transparent, so that human security concerns can progressively be brought to the core of the African security agenda.

*This analysis was written within the research programme AU Waging Peace? Explaining the Militarization of the African Peace and Security Architecture, funded by the Swedish Research Council.* ∎

Freetown, Sierra Leone, August 13, 2014. An officer from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) works with members of Sierra Leone's Armed Forces during the Ebola outbreak. The fight against Ebola in West Africa is an evocative example of how non-security challenges have become militarised.

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## About the Author



NAI POLICY NOTES is a series of short briefs on policy issues relevant to Africa today, intended for strategists, analysts and decision makers in foreign policy, aid and development. They aim to inform public debate and generate input into the sphere of policymaking. The opinions expressed in the policy notes are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute.

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