



Peace & Security Council Report

The AU saves the CAR deal *in extremis*, but it needs to do more
Tampering with national constitutions is a threat to stability in Africa
Why the PSC should discuss Cameroon
Is the peace deal in South Sudan holding?
Africa's divisions over Western Sahara could impact the PSC
PSC Interview: Sudan's uncertain transition

The AU saves the CAR deal *in extremis*, but it needs to do more

The African Union (AU) has been quick to react following threats to the February peace deal in the Central African Republic (CAR). It convened a meeting from 18–20 March 2019 in Addis Ababa, bringing together the government of the CAR and the country's 14 recognised armed groups. The aim of the meeting was to bridge differences around the appointment of ministers by President Faustin-Archange Touadera. Some rebels felt the new cabinet was not inclusive enough.

As part of the compromise found in Addis Ababa, three rebel leaders were appointed as advisors to the prime minister. They were put in charge of the new mixed security units in areas they already control. Questions remain, however, about the sustainability of this move.

Meanwhile, the AU and the United Nations (UN) recently appointed new special representatives to the CAR, which could give a boost to the peace process.

The AU is the guarantor of the 6 February CAR agreement, signed in Khartoum, Sudan following months of negotiations. Armed groups still control about 80% of the country's territory.

Foundation for durable peace?

The Khartoum agreement laid the foundation for the restoration of durable peace in the country. The first step for the implementation of the deal was to be the appointment of an inclusive government as a power-sharing dispensation. The appointment of Firmin Ngrebada, the government's lead negotiator in Khartoum, as prime minister was initially welcomed by the various armed groups.

However, the subsequent appointments of cabinet members by Ngrebada and Touadera in early March put the peace agreement in jeopardy. Some armed groups felt the appointments were not in line with the inclusive spirit of the peace deal. This was because prominent leaders such as Ali Darassa were not given ministerial positions, although 10 of the 14 armed groups represented at the talks were in the new government (up from only six previously).

The other contention became the distribution of key ministerial portfolios. Initially and historically, armed groups eyed the position of prime minister as the cornerstone of any power-sharing arrangement. However, the Khartoum agreement was silent on the actual distribution of government positions. Not only did the armed groups not get the prime ministerial seat, but the ministers of economy, finance and budget, defence, foreign affairs, justice, and interior, considered key ministries, were also all retained by the government.

This led to the repudiation of the peace agreement by some armed groups, particularly the *Front Démocratique du Peuple Centrafricain (FDPC)* and the

Current PSC Chairperson

His Excellency Bankole Adeoye, ambassador of Nigeria to Ethiopia and permanent representative to the African Union.

PSC members

Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Kenya, Liberia, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Togo, Lesotho, Zimbabwe

Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC), two of the country's main armed groups.

Fragile compromise found in Addis Ababa?

At the Addis Ababa meeting the AU managed to save the Khartoum agreement. However, this came at a price and only time will tell whether the compromise is sustainable. As a direct result of the Addis Ababa gathering, three major rebel leaders – Darassa, Mahamat Al Katim and Bi Sidi Souleymane – joined the office of the prime minister as advisers in charge of the mixed special security units for the regions they already control.

Importantly, the Khartoum agreement did not deal explicitly – qualitatively or quantitatively – with the distribution of ministerial positions. Although it is the prerogative of an incumbent government to appoint its members, the AU could have stayed involved as this approach placed the agreement at risk of failing from the onset.

Rebel leaders now managing areas they already control

The Addis Ababa process to consider the question of inclusive government was thus to be expected, as the next step to resolve discord over the implementation of the agreement. At the same time, the appointment of rebel leaders to manage the mixed special security units in regions they already control, raises many questions. The armed groups now maintain security in their areas with the legitimacy and means of the state.

In line with the Khartoum agreement, an implementation and monitoring mechanism was to be established

It remains to be seen how these mixed security units will be established and operationalised. The main aim is to restore and sustain civil peace. This peace will only be guaranteed by the return of the rule of law, whether through a centralised or decentralised form of government, or with a unitary or federal state (the current arrangement is a unitary state with a plan for effective decentralisation).

The Addis Ababa compromise saved both the agreement and Ngrebada, whose resignation had been requested by armed groups. Current reports also indicate

weariness on the part of warring parties with continued fighting, which, if true, is encouraging for the prospect of lasting peace. The next steps by the guarantors of the agreement will be crucial.

The role of the AU and partners

The AU's role is clearly spelled out in the February 6 agreement as being one of its guarantors and tasked with monitoring and evaluating its implementation. The organisation played this role in convening the Addis Ababa meeting in late March.

In line with article 29 of the Khartoum agreement, an implementation and monitoring mechanism was to be established. The AU would co-preside over the executive committee for monitoring and implementing the deal, along with the CAR government, and include parties to the agreement as well as other stakeholders.

This executive committee is currently being established. Its composition and dynamics will be decisive. In addition, the effective and timely establishment of the other implementation and monitoring organs – the national committee for implementation and the implementation committees at prefecture level – will be crucial in ensuring the agreement holds.

In this endeavour, individuals are just as important as the framework. The AU recently appointed Matias Bertino Matondo, an experienced diplomat, as its new special representative and head of the AU office in the CAR (replacing Bedializoun Nebié Moussa). Matondo will have to quickly transition into this new role and lead the executive committee from Bangui. He will also have to work closely with newly appointed Mankeur Ndiaye, special representative and head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

Another important element in this equation will be the very experienced Adolphe Nahayo, special representative of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Secretary General and head of office in Bangui. He has been in this position since 2014 and his experience on the ground will benefit his two newly arrived counterparts.

Urgently establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and bodies, building trust among the different parties, and placing a prohibitive price on the violation of the agreement are essential to its implementation and viability.

Tampering with national constitutions is a threat to stability in Africa

Africa is again witnessing an increased number of constitutional amendments that allow incumbents to extend their terms and centralise political power.

The latest of these is in the Comoros, where President Azali Assoumani was elected for another term last month after controversial changes to the constitution in July last year. Assoumani could now potentially stay in power until 2029.

In Egypt, Parliament has also recently approved amendments that could see President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi remain in office until 2030.

These cases follow an earlier wave of changes to presidential mandates in Rwanda, Burundi, the Republic of Congo and Chad. The changes were made through controversial referendums in which ruling parties and incumbents were accused of manipulating outcomes.

Since 2015 Algeria, Burundi, the Comoros, Chad, Gabon, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Togo, and Uganda have amended their constitutions in favour of incumbents, either to centralise power or to extend term limits.

The lack of robust response to such practices is tantamount to condoning authoritarianism

This has happened despite the existence of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, which states that 'illegal means of accessing or maintaining power constitute an unconstitutional change of government and shall draw appropriate sanctions by the Union'. The illegal means include 'the use of any amendment or revision of the constitution or legal instruments, which is an infringement on the principles of democratic change of government'.

The charter has been signed by the majority of African states, including Burundi, the Comoros, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Togo and Uganda. The unconstitutionality of such changes was re-emphasised by the 2009 PSC Retreat decisions.

The issue has been debated at many levels, but there is still no consensus in the African Union (AU) on when amendments constitute 'unconstitutional changes of government' as defined by the charter, and whether such actions should be sanctioned.

Currently, only military coups are sanctioned in accordance with the provisions of the charter and the Lomé Declaration.

The PSC has also discussed this at length over the years and has tasked the AU Commission with developing a comprehensive framework of the various legal provisions established to deter unconstitutional changes of government.

Yet, in many AU member states, such amendments continue and ultimately infringe on democratic principles, leading to instability and authoritarianism. In order to prevent this, the PSC should ensure member states adopt and domesticate its legal frameworks, and adhere to democratic standards when amending their constitutions.

Approving authoritarianism

Most constitutional amendments take place before elections and usually seek to effectively weaken established, albeit imperfect, democratic principles, political participation, separation of powers and power alternation. This is particularly true of amendments that serve to disqualify political opponents and extend the tenure of incumbents while undermining the separation of powers or expanding executive control of power.

In the context of the charter, the lack of robust response to such practices is tantamount to condoning authoritarianism.

Peace and security challenge

Incumbents' attempts to amend constitutions contribute to insecurity, instability and violent clashes in parts of Africa. This has been the case in countries such as

Burkina Faso (2014), the Democratic Republic of Congo (2015–2018), Burundi (2015), Togo (2017–2019), and Sudan (2018–2019). So far, the AU has been reactive rather than proactive in these matters.

A slippery slope

In some cases, the inability to anticipate the end of a particular regime (owing to its continued stay in power through a constitutional amendment) sees citizens resorting to violent protest, armed dissent or assisted military coups d'état as a means of unseating that leader.

This was the case during the 2011 Arab Spring, the 2019 protests in Algeria and the recent popular protests that led to the overthrow of President Omar al-Bashir in Sudan – all countries where there has been no limit to incumbents' stay in power. In the end, al-Bashir and Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria were toppled through popular protests in what has been termed as 'assisted military coups d'état' in April 2019.

Currently, the military has taken over power in Sudan while the former president of the senate is acting head of state until new elections in Algeria. Protestors, however, question the ability of those currently in power to organise fair elections.

The AU Commission has labelled the situation in Sudan an unconstitutional change of government and on 15 April the PSC gave the country's military rulers a two-week deadline to hand over power to civilian rule.

The gap in the articulation of AU legal frameworks means that any attempt by citizens to remove incumbent leaders without using means articulated in their national constitutions, can be categorised as 'unconstitutional'. At the same time, the actions of many governments evade the AU's attention.

A semblance of legality

In February Egypt's Parliament approved a motion to amend the constitution. If passed, and validated through a referendum, el-Sisi could remain in power until 2030. Critics believe that these measures will expand the powers of the president and the military, and undermine the independence of the judiciary.

Most constitutional amendments in favour of incumbents have followed similar seemingly democratic processes that appear to garner national consensus, mostly through referendums, but that work in favour of particular leaders and their parties.

The AU Commission was tasked by the PSC in August 2018 to collect the constitutions of member states for reference purposes, but this has not been used effectively as a monitoring mechanism for constitutional amendments.

While the commission was also tasked with developing benchmarks to help monitor compliance with the standards set out in the AU's legal frameworks, it currently does not have a mechanism to determine whether member states adhere to existing frameworks.

2 April 2019

BOUTEFLIKA REMOVED
FROM POWER IN ALGERIA

Thus, while the AU has the legal frameworks in place to respond to undemocratic constitutional amendments, delays in the articulation of a clear implementation plan and a lack of clarity in delegating responsibility to monitor compliance have hindered its response.

Defining unconstitutional changes

Given the growing danger posed by constitutional amendments, the PSC should prioritise the issue and enforce related legal frameworks.

The most important first step is for the PSC to articulate which circumstances leading up to constitutional amendments qualify as unconstitutional changes of government. Related to that is the need for it to follow up on its decision for the AU Commission to develop guidelines for amending national constitutions.

Given the growing danger posed by constitutional amendments, the PSC should prioritise the issue and enforce related legal frameworks

The measures to be taken when constitutional amendment processes are deemed unconstitutional should also be articulated, to ensure the consistency and predictability of the continental response. So far, AU legal frameworks only provide reactive punitive measures for unconstitutional changes of government.

Here the PSC should also follow up on its decision for the AU Commission to develop guidelines for amending constitutions. Rather than taking only punitive responses, the PSC should aim to mandate a specific sub-committee with the task of monitoring constitutional amendments. The committee can support member states, and undertake observation and advisory missions to ensure amendment processes are constitutional, transparent and abide by the will of the people.

Monitoring compliance

The PSC can further monitor compliance by requesting member states to officially inform the AU of any constitutional amendments so as to enable the PSC to deploy observation or advisory missions to assist the process.

As has been the PSC's intention since 2014, the various legal provisions established to deter unconstitutional changes of government should also be consolidated into a single comprehensive legal framework. This will help established technical organs to monitor ongoing constitutional amendments to inform the PSC's early response actions.

Lastly, the PSC should enjoin member states that have not signed or ratified relevant AU legal frameworks to do so in support of continental efforts to promote good governance and democracy.

15 days

THE AU DEADLINE
TO SUDAN'S
MILITARY RULERS

Is the peace deal in South Sudan holding?

In September 2018 South Sudanese actors signed a new peace agreement to 'revitalise' the 2015 deal, which had collapsed. The new agreement, the result of months of negotiations led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), secured the buy-in of most of the parties to the conflict.

Despite a challenging context and scepticism about the viability of the agreement, the country has since seen noticeable progress in a number of key areas.

First, the majority of exiled opposition leaders have returned to Juba within the framework of the agreement. According to those facilitating the process, having many of the political leaders in the same space has made it easier for important consultations to take place. As of early March and since the return of most of the opposition to Juba, the United Nations (UN) mission in the country has facilitated about 70 such meetings.

The return of the opposition leaders was made possible by a noticeable reduction in fighting across the country. This was partly in response to the provisions of the permanent ceasefire.

The majority of exiled opposition leaders have returned to Juba within the framework of the agreement

The improving security situation has also permitted the return of some internally displaced people (IDPs) to their homes. According to the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for South Sudan, David Shearer, about 135 000 people have made such a move. In the first quarter of 2019, about 12 000 people left IDP camps for their various homes.

Finally, as a result of these changes, there has been renewed optimism among citizens about the prospect of peace in the country. This is crucial in securing the buy-in of citizens on which to anchor sustainable peace in the country.

Critical issues remain unresolved

The above developments are significant in the context of the dire humanitarian situation that has characterised the conflict since 2013. However, the current progress

cannot be attributed to the successful resolution of the critical issues at the heart of the current crisis. It is, instead, the result of a general atmosphere of war-weariness across the country, a weakened opposition, regional pressure and the self-seeking choices of certain politicians working to appropriate emerging positions for financial gain. The real issues at the heart of the current crisis remain unresolved.

In the run-up to the collapse of the 2015 agreement, there was tense political contestation between President Salva Kiir and his former deputy Riek Machar, and strong disagreement over the interpretation of some of the provisions of that agreement. This took place in an atmosphere of deep mistrust between the two leaders.

There were also serious delays in integrating the armies that the two leaders controlled and an inability of the leaders to transition from the battlefield to the boardroom. Added to that was a lack of political will on the part of Kiir to implement the agreement. A perfect cocktail of issues thus existed for a return to war. The peace process at the time did not manage to alter these underlying variables, hence the collapse of the peace agreement in 2016.

Unfinished business

Currently, despite the macro signs of progress noted above, there are still undercurrents of deep suspicion, a lack of political will to fully implement the peace agreement and delays in unifying the army. Progress in South Sudan should thus be measured by the extent to which existing responses are able to address these issues.

According to IGAD's regional monitoring mechanism, the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), only 44% of the overall milestones to be achieved in the pre-transition period have been completed since the signing of the peace agreement. The majority of these relate to the establishment of institutions and mechanisms rather than core controversial issues. Thus, about 56% of the required crucial milestones

have not been met. These include the most contentious and crucial issues, particularly the unification of the army, determination of state boundaries and constitutional amendments.

These unaddressed issues are the most difficult to deal with and can also create new tensions. Some opposition members argue that the failure to tackle core issues is indicative of the government's cherry picking of what to implement. The actual work needed to sustain progress remains to be done.

Lack of funding

Because of scepticism, donor fatigue and eroded goodwill, the implementation of the peace agreement has also not been able to attract enough funding from the international community. Questions are therefore being raised as to why the increases in oil revenue are not being committed to the implementation of the peace agreement. As of February 2019, for instance, the US\$285 million budget of the National Pre-Transitional Committee (NPTC) had not been fully funded and had received a pledge of only US\$10 million from the government.

With only one month to the deadline, in May, it is unlikely that the agreement's pre-transitional milestones will be achieved. This is owing, in part, to the lack of proper funding and the inability of the South Sudanese government to commit additional funds to the implementation of the agreement, as well as accusations of mismanagement of the available meagre resources by members of the NPTC, which also raises questions about local ownership.

Possibly the biggest obstacle is the fate of Machar. Despite regional pronouncements to the contrary, Machar has not been able to travel in the region since his arrival in Khartoum in June 2018. A senior member of the SPLA-IO once asked, 'If all is well, why is our chairman still unable to travel in the region?' IGAD member states' refusal to allow Machar to travel freely shows the continued lack of neutrality among neighbours when it comes to opposition groups.

The need for pressure

The seriousness of those issues that have yet to be addressed points to the need for cautious optimism. As the pre-transition period defined by the revitalised agreement ends in May 2019, chances of resolving all the critical issues are slim. A request for an extension of the pre-transition is highly likely, but might work in favour of the incumbent rather than the opposition, as the government has the upper hand in many aspects of the ongoing implementation.

A second scenario of moving into a transition phase without addressing all the crucial issues will only amount to repeating the mistakes of the past by creating conditions that can cause a quick relapse into conflict, as in 2016.

Overall, therefore, the IGAD implementation structures and the continental response frameworks need to apply pressure on the parties to resolve all the crucial issues before the end of the pre-transition period. That is the only way to sustain the progress made and to make the required strides towards peace in South Sudan.

US\$ 10 million

PLEGGED FOR THE
PRE-TRANSITION
COMMITTEE FOR
SOUTH SUDAN

Africa's divisions over Western Sahara could impact the PSC

AU member states are more divided than ever over the longstanding Western Sahara conflict. This was evident during the two coinciding conferences on the issue held by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Morocco in March 2019.

Clearly, the Western Sahara issue is set to be a major challenge for the PSC in the coming months. Several PSC members support Western Sahara, while others side with Morocco, also a member of the council.

Going forward, if the AU wants to remain relevant, it is crucial that the PSC meet at the level of heads of state to discuss Western Sahara. This follows the decision made by the AU Assembly in Nouakchott last year that the issue would only be discussed by the PSC at the highest level and by the AU troika.

SADC's Solidarity Conference

SADC organised a 'Solidarity Conference' with the peoples of Western Sahara from 24–25 March 2019. The meeting was attended by more than 20 African countries, political parties and civil society organisations. The heads of state of Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Uganda attended the meeting, while others were represented at lower levels.

If the AU wants to remain relevant, it is crucial that the PSC meet at the level of heads of state

The final declaration of the conference raised a number of important issues. As has been the case in AU documents in the past, the declaration describes Western Sahara as 'the only territory in Africa under colonial rule, and [subsequently expresses] support for the self-determination and decolonisation of the region whilst urging Morocco to respect colonial borders, as they existed at the time of independence, as enshrined in the AU Constitutive Act'.

The meeting further emphasised the centrality of the AU to the resolution of the conflict and reaffirmed the right of member states to participate in AU negotiation efforts concerning Western Sahara. The declaration

also established SADC's support for United Nations (UN) efforts led by the UN secretary general's personal envoy for Western Sahara, and for AU efforts as per AU Assembly Decision AU/Dec.693 (XXXI) of July 2018, which highlighted the need for a mutually acceptable political settlement.

Concurrent ministerial conference in Marrakech

At the same time as the SADC meeting in Pretoria, Morocco organised a meeting in Marrakech under the theme 'African Ministerial Conference on the African Union's support to the United Nations'. The meeting attracted representatives from 36 African countries, including Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tunisia and Zambia.

Like the SADC declaration, the meeting adopted a statement expressing support for the implementation of AU Assembly Decision AU/Dec.693 (XXXI) of July 2018. It also recognised the UN framework for seeking a 'mutually acceptable, realistic and lasting political solution' to the Western Sahara issue.

Unlike the SADC declaration, however, the Marrakech conference pushed for the exclusion of AU organs from negotiations, except the AU troika, comprising the current chair of the union (Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi), the previous chair (Rwandan President Paul Kagame) and the incoming chair (South African President Cyril Ramaphosa), supported by the chairperson of the AU Commission. The troika is tasked with 'accompanying' the UN process for Western Sahara. Its exact role within that is not clearly defined.

Polarising views of the two blocks

The two meetings, in and of themselves, have no legal bearing on AU decisions and actions. However, they do underline the deep divisions over the role of the AU in the conflict. While the SADC meeting prescribes a

central role for the AU in the processes leading to a referendum on the self-determination of Western Sahara, the Marrakech meeting restricts the AU's involvement to the troika, which should support the UN process.

Talks are currently underway, mediated by UN Special Envoy Horst Koehler, but the two parties are still set on their positions: while supporters of Western Sahara want independence for the territory, Morocco has put forward a plan that proposes political autonomy for Western Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty.

Historically, Morocco has accused the AU and its member states of siding with Western Sahara, since the Organization for African Unity (OAU) recognised the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic as a member state in 1984. Morocco subsequently withdrew its membership and boycotted further mediation efforts by the OAU. The readmission of Morocco in 2017, however, raised questions as to how the AU would engage in the Western Sahara dispute.

Historically, Morocco has accused the AU and its member states of siding with Western Sahara

Member states that support Western Sahara's referendum for self-determination, such as South Africa, have called on the AU to enforce the normative and legal principles laid out in the AU Constitutive Act. These include the sovereignty and equality of member states and respect for those borders existing at the time of independence.

Some AU member states, particularly Algeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe, insist on the AU's involvement in Western Sahara because they question the UN's ability to resolve the dispute on its own, arguing that UN interventions over the last 50 years have failed to resolve the issue.

A divided SADC

Some AU member states, such as Angola, Burundi, Burkina Faso, the DRC, Eswatini, Malawi, Tanzania, Central African Republic, Ghana and Nigeria, attended both conferences.

At the same time, SADC members such as the Comoros and Madagascar sent representatives only to the Morocco conference. This attracted strong criticism from other SADC members, notably from Namibian President and current SADC Chairperson Hage Geingob, who saw this as a threat to the unity of SADC.

The division within the AU over this issue is also likely to be evident in the AU troika. While Kagame is perceived to support Morocco, both South Africa and Egypt have expressed support for the self-determination of Western Sahara.

The role of the PSC

The polarising viewpoints expressed in the SADC and Marrakesh conferences could have a serious effect on the PSC in 2019. This is because staunch supporters of Western Sahara such as Algeria, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Lesotho and Nigeria (historically) are current members of the PSC – as is Morocco.

If AU member states, particularly those in the PSC, decide to focus on their divergent views, the conflict in Western Sahara may remain unresolved for many years to come. However, if member states focus on their points of convergence, such as mutual support for the UN process, which was also evident in the SADC statement, they could make headway in resolving the dispute.

As the PSC can only be involved in the issue of Western Sahara at the level of heads of state and government, it is crucial that it meets at this level more than once a year, as is currently the norm. The fact that most of the current members of the PSC are invested in the resolution of the conflict makes this a possibility.

In addition to members of the PSC, members of the AU troika are also keen to see the Western Sahara conflict resolved. Ramaphosa has been very vocal on this issue. This promises to make it easier for the PSC at the level of heads of state and government to meet at regular intervals to follow up on the progress made by the troika and the AU chairperson. Strong political will, however, will be needed for any successful resolution of this longstanding dispute.

Why the PSC should discuss Cameroon

Cameroon is currently facing multiple threats. Attacks by Boko Haram have plagued the extreme north since 2014, and over the past two years the country has also been forced to deal with the escalating crisis in its so-called anglophone north-west and south-west regions. Both issues are weighing heavily on peace and stability in Cameroon and have serious regional implications.

Linked to that is a highly polarised political climate, as evidenced by the contested October 2018 presidential polls. The 86-year-old incumbent Paul Biya, in power since 1982, was re-elected with 71% of the vote. Given his advanced age and that this is probably his last term in office, the question of succession should also be of concern.

Combined with the ongoing challenges, a succession battle could further complicate Cameroon's fate. Yet despite these alarming signs, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) has not once looked into Cameroon. This is regardless of the fact that the protocol establishing the PSC states that it is a 'collective early warning arrangement', mandated to 'facilitate timely and efficient response to conflict and crisis situations in Africa'.

Given the silence on the part of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the PSC should step in to prevent further escalation and having the growing instability spill over into the region.

Fighting on two fronts

The threat of terrorism in Cameroon is not really a new phenomenon, even though Boko Haram has proven a different and particularly resilient menace. Similarly, the crisis in north-west and south-west Cameroon has obvious historical underpinnings.

While Boko Haram attacks in Cameroon have been curtailed, the terrorist group still has the capacity to strike – contrary to claims by the Cameroonian and Nigerian governments that it has been crushed.

As a transnational problem, Boko Haram in Cameroon will only be defeated if it is driven out of its other strongholds, particularly in neighbouring Nigeria. The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) – formed by Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria – has been trying to eliminate the extremist group across the borders of affected countries. However, Institute for Security

Studies senior researcher Akinola Olojo believes that 'dealing with the propaganda driving extremism is as important as addressing its socio-economic and political drivers'.

Two regions gravely destabilised

The crisis in the south-west and north-west is even more daunting for the government of Cameroon. It has destabilised both regions and affected the lives of thousands of people. There are competing narratives and a war of numbers among the different stakeholders, particularly the government, the various groups opposing the regime, and international and civil society organisations.

The crisis in the south-west and north-west is even more daunting for the government of Cameroon

In late 2016 the government's initial reaction to strikes by lawyers and teachers was to deny that there was a problem, after which it deployed the army to quell the protests. The situation subsequently worsened because the government's response crystallised the positions of south- and north-westerners between those in favour of federalism and those advocating separatism, including the fighters now known as the 'Amba boys'.

What thus began as civil unrest over feelings of marginalisation has subsequently turned into an armed insurrection that has completely destabilised those parts of the country.

Reports suggest that both separatists and government forces have committed human rights abuses, including school and hospital burnings, summary executions, kidnapping for ransom, and arbitrary arrests. The resulting insecurity badly affected the October 2018

presidential polls in the anglophone regions, with very low voter turnout as people feared for their lives.

The crisis has had a major impact on the daily lives of people. Children in the area have been unable to attend school for months. The number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the north-west and south-west is estimated at 437 513, while registered Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria are believed to number 32 601, of whom 50% are under the age of 18. These figures are conservative, given the fact that many refugees are unregistered.

Economic impact of the crises

The economic cost of the protracted fighting is also increasingly being felt. A study by *Groupement Inter-Patronal du Cameroun*, a federation of Cameroonian business leaders, shows that the coffee–cocoa sector recorded losses of 56 billion CFA francs (US\$96.5 million or 20%) in the 2017–2018 financial year, as south-western Cameroon produces 45% of the country's cocoa. Coffee production in the north-west has also been severely affected, especially since the region accounts for about 70% of the national Arabica production.

The Cameroon Development Corporation, the country's largest private employer, is also affected by the insecurity. The company recorded material losses of more than 1 billion CFA francs and a shortfall of 12 billion CFA francs in the period 2017–2018.

In the end, the Cameroonian government, in prioritising regime security over national security and stability, has caused the so-called anglophone crisis to deepen. The imprisonment of Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe, Cameroon's separatist leader, and his comrades has hampered the possibility of dialogue. Currently, the government claims there is no credible spokesperson in the separatist camp, only bandits and looters.

Besides the Boko Haram threat and the now armed insurgency, the general political climate is gloomy. Maurice Kamto, who was the official runner-up in the October 2018 presidential polls, and 145 other members of his party have been detained in Kondengui prison since January 2019. They are accused of incitement to insurrection and hostility against the state, among other charges, and could face the death penalty.

In addition, legislative elections are scheduled for November 2019. All of these issues have obvious implications for national and regional stability.

The PSC should consider Cameroon

Notwithstanding the impact of the above issues on the stability of Cameroon and possibly the region, the country is yet to be discussed at the PSC. Currently, the increasing complexity of these issues warrants that the PSC consider Cameroon as a matter of concern. This is the council's duty, as it is the primary entity tasked with ensuring 'early responses to contain crisis situations' on the continent 'so as to prevent them from developing into full-blown conflicts'. However, the politics around getting a particular country on the PSC's agenda have prevented Cameroon from featuring.

The increasing complexity of these issues warrants that the PSC consider Cameroon as a matter of concern

There has been a debate about the gap between early warning and early action by the PSC. Cameroon is a good illustration of that. The country is gradually sliding into an instability that is being poorly managed by the government. Often the African Union (AU) or the PSC struggles to determine when to intervene; the question is how bad a situation must get before action is taken. It appears from all indications that the situation in Cameroon is worsening.

At the regional level, ECCAS, the body to which Cameroon belongs, seldom makes pronouncements on its member states' internal issues. It is therefore the responsibility of the PSC to step in.

As the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, remarked in a 2017 address to the United Nations: 'Neglected local crises gather pace and become transnational with broader implications.' The situation in Cameroon fits this categorisation and, if left unchecked, might become another crisis in an already unstable region with which the continent will struggle to deal.

PSC Interview: Sudan's uncertain transition

After four months of non-violent street protests, Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir was deposed in a coup on 11 April 2019, putting an end to his 30-year rule. The AU termed the move a 'military take-over'. Uncertainty looms over the future of Sudan and the implications for its neighbours. Professor Atta El-Battahani of the University of Khartoum, Sudan unpacks the situation for the *PSC Report*.

What are the main reasons for the protests that led to the fall of Omar al-Bashir?

In brief, there are two sets of reasons for the protests: structural reasons, and triggers. Structural factors stem from the 30-year rule of an Islamic autocracy that imposed harsh Sharia rule, suppressing civil and political rights, enforcing an archaic code of ethics on women and youth and interfering in the way of life of ordinary Sudanese; transformed civil war into holy war and jihad, leading to the secession of South Sudan in 2011; implemented aggressive structural adjustment policies benefiting crony capitalism and the ruling party leadership; and involved the country in foreign policy adventures.

The trigger of the December 2018 protests was a government decision to remove subsidies on wheat and electricity. Sudan's economy has been struggling over the past decade, with inflation spiking at around 70% over the past year alone. The austerity measures adopted by the government are part of larger economic reforms proposed by the International Monetary Fund. This has caused the price of bread to double, and has led to cash shortages and salaries being left unpaid. All over the country people spend hours in long queues in gas stations, bakeries and banks.

Sudan's economy has been struggling over the past decade, with inflation spiking over the past year

Unlike the usual pattern of anti-government protests, this time demonstrations did not begin in Khartoum but in the regions, where people chanted slogans expressing discontent with economic grievances that soon developed into political calls for regime change. Protests then gained momentum when the Sudanese Professionals' Association organised youth and women's movements that rapidly turned into larger protests against the rule of the 75-year-old al-Bashir.

How can the transitional authorities address the grievances that caused the protests in the first place?

The transitional authorities' ability to address the grievances depends on, firstly, credible measures to deal with the deteriorating economy, by shifting

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from rent-based, speculative interests to productive sectors. This necessarily entails taking drastic measures against corruption, crony capitalists and rent-seeking formal and informal warlordism.

Secondly, it depends on transferring power to a mixed civilian–military government for an agreed-upon transition period before general elections. And lastly, taking steps to ensure transitional justice and national reconciliation. This is essential if members of the current Military Council are to prove that they are not, in any way, a re-invention of the deposed al-Bashir regime.

Given the fluidity of the political situation, each one of these conditions is a formidable challenge. A lot depends on how the current transitional authorities will navigate through the intricate and complex post-al-Bashir context, involving various competing power coalitions.

What are the potential implications of the unfolding situation in Sudan for the broader Horn of Africa, and for neighbouring South Sudan, which is facing its own challenges?

Recently, the deposed Khartoum government played a leading role, with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the AU, in stabilising South Sudan and the Central African Republic; working with the European Union in policing the flow of migrants crossing the Mediterranean; collaborating with the United States in tracing and combating terrorist networks; sending Sudanese soldiers to fight in Yemen, etc. Thus, Sudan stands as an Achilles' heel at the centre of a regional geography of violence in East-Central Africa, the collapse of which will threaten the stability of an already security-fragile region. Some press reports have already hinted that the outgoing regime of al-Bashir poses challenges to South Sudan as a guarantor of the peace agreement signed in 2018.

Do you see a role for the AU and/or IGAD in assisting Sudan in the transition? What could it look like?

Showing remarkable resilience, the Sudanese people marched peacefully for about four months, leading to regime change. This poses a test for both the AU and IGAD to rise to the challenge and show viable African

agency in endorsing the march of the Sudanese people to overcome the combination of long-running stagnation and crisis, i.e. 'stagcrizatoin' [referring to stagnation and crisis combined in a state of retrogression], and render the critical support needed to ensure sustainable peace and democratic reforms. After gaining the trust of the opposition and young change agents (youth and women) and proposing a successful way out of the Sudan conundrum, one hopes that the AU and IGAD interventions in Sudan will have far-reaching consequences and send positive signals for the capacity of African institutions to challenge and fix authoritarian state-building.

Sudan stands as an Achilles' heel at the centre of a regional geography of violence in East-Central Africa

Before the wave of current events in Sudan, the AU played a facilitating role in mediating between the Khartoum government and rebel groups and the civilian opposition, in what was known as the 'roadmap' from conflict to peace, with a grand objective to 'silence the guns and ensure sustainable peace'. However, the last round of talks broke up due to accusations by both rebel groups and civilian organisations that the AU was not an honest broker. It was seen as taking the side of the Sudanese government.

What are the prospects/scenarios for the future of Sudan?

It is hard to speculate at this point in time, but a lot depends on how the Military Council that deposed al-Bashir deals with four major power coalitions.

The first is the armed groups, including the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), Rapid Support Forces (RSF), National Intelligence and Information Service, People's Defence Forces, and other militias that favoured the ruling party. Of course, there are also the rebel groups fighting the government – the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North – and the Darfur rebels – the Sudan Liberation Army (Abdelwahid), Sudan Liberation Army (Mini-Minawi) and Justice and Liberation Movement (Jibriel Ibrahim). The SAF and

RSF are leading the transitional authority, but the position of the other groups is not clear.

Secondly, there are the civilian political forces, at the top of which stands the Freedom and Change Coalition (FCC) led by the Sudanese Professionals' Association and which includes other opposition parties and associations. Though the FCC seems to command the support of the streets, its overarching leadership is becoming increasingly contested by other civilian and political groups, some of which defected recently from the al-Bashir government and are now talking the language of change.

Thirdly, the National Congress Party (NCP), the defunct ruling party, is still in control of economic and financial institutions, the judiciary, universities, civil service, etc. Whether we call this 'clientelist' or 'deep state', the NCP cadres are not going to stay idle and will do whatever it takes to disrupt a peaceful transition.

Lastly, there are the regional and international actors who have interests in Sudan and regard peace and stability as their top priority, not democratic transformation.

There are international actors who have interests in Sudan and regard peace and stability as their top priority

These four power coalitions have divisions in and among them, and it is going to be a tall order to forge a consensus acceptable to all.

Each one of these power coalitions has an edge to use in the process of negotiating political goods. The military authorities can use brutal force, while the civilian opposition commands the streets, the defunct regime has sleeping cadres and armed cells, and regional and international actors can use foreign patronage to finance and protect their clients. I feel, as things stand now, actions and choices by outside actors are likely to play a considerable role in shaping the calculus of choice in Khartoum. At this stage, negotiations and mediation are taking place inside and outside the country, but in case of a failure to produce an amicable solution, the law of naked power would set in.

David Landes writes in *The wealth and poverty of nations* that in unsettled conflict situations, three factors cannot coexist: a marked disparity of power; access of one group to the instruments of power; and equality among groups or nations. This means that if one group has access to power and is able to deliver a decisive strike and hold the balance of power, it will do so. While al-Bashir's rule is over, Sudan's current political deadlock bears all the hallmarks of an uncertain transition.

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About the PSC Report

The Peace and Security Council Report analyses developments and decisions at the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC). The monthly publication is the only one of its kind dedicated to providing current analysis of the PSC's work. It is written by a team of ISS analysts in Addis Ababa.

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The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) partners to build knowledge and skills that secure Africa's future. Our goal is to enhance human security as a means to achieve sustainable peace and prosperity. Using its networks and influence, the ISS provides timely and credible analysis, practical training and technical assistance to governments and civil society.

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