



DANSK INSTITUT FOR INTERNATIONALE STUDIER
STRANDGADE 56 • 1401 København K
32 69 87 87 • diis@diis.dk • www.diis.dk

DIIS Brief

Strengthening African Security Capacities A brief on the DIIS conference 16. August 2004

Louise Mørup
October 2004

Abstract

In preparation for the expected Danish membership of the UN Security Council in 2005 DIIS organised a conference to discuss how to strengthen African conflict prevention and management capacities and make the most of Denmark's Africa Programme for Peace. This brief sums up some of the main ideas which were presented at the conference. The discussion bore witness to the complexity of the issue and the tremendous tasks ahead facing the African regional organisations, and made it clear to this author that Denmark has to prioritise its efforts to a few areas where it can make a difference in the two years of its expected UN Security Council membership.

Louise Mørup is Research Assistant at Department of Conflict and Security Studies,
DIIS

Table of Content

Introduction	3
Africa Programme for Peace.....	4
Where can Denmark make a difference in the short term?	5
Challenges facing African regional security	6
Private military companies as complementary to the regional organisations	7
The need for a comprehensive approach to African security.....	7
HIV/AIDS as a security threat	9
Conclusion	10
References.....	11

Introduction

Since the US withdrew their troops from Somalia in the spring of 1994 the international community has been reluctant to intervene in conflicts on the African continent. Thus, despite the recent boost in UN-peacekeeping troops employed in Africa there is a growing gap between the reluctance of the Western community to employ its troops in Africa and the need for military intervention in the region.¹ Consequently, it has been generally recognised that there have to be African solutions to African problems.² In line with this approach, the G8 countries have just launched a substantial initiative to strengthen the capacity of the African regional organisations to engage in conflict prevention and conflict management operations.³ In this context the Danish Foreign Ministry has committed itself to strengthen the African capacity to maintain regional security over the coming five years in its *Africa Programme for Peace* (APP) tied to a budget of 248 million DKK.⁴ This constitutes a major initiative by the Danish government and has a potential to make a positive difference for the African regional security capacity. The APP focuses on the regionally based African security structure launched with the creation of the African Union (AU) and supports the four major African regional organisations which are expected to be at the centre of the UN Security Council's work to handle African conflicts, namely the African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The expected Danish membership of the UN Security Council (UNSC) in 2005-2007 makes it urgent to find out how and where Denmark can make the most of this potential and thereby profile itself strengthening African security. The conference was convened with experts from various fields to discuss this issue and evolved around the following questions:

- What challenges do these African regional organisations face in implementing conflict prevention and management operations on the African continent?
- What can the international community do to strengthen these African organisations' security capacity?
- Where does Denmark have a comparative advantage in strengthening the organisations' security capacity?

This brief will sum up some of the main ideas which were presented at the conference. The discussion bore witness to the complexity of the issues and the tremendous tasks ahead

¹ International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2004.

² International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2004.

³ Chiahemen, 2004.

⁴ See Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004.

facing the African regional organisations. Thus, the issues raised here do not cover the full spectrum of challenges confronting the African security structure, yet they point to some of the key concerns which donors have to take into consideration to make the most of their support for African regional security.

The conference discussion reflected the difference in background of the discussants as civil or military servants, representatives of civil society or academic researchers, all of whom offered different perspectives on what are the key challenges facing the African regional security structure. The panellists included:

- Rolf Holmboe, Head of Section, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and principal author of the APP
- Maria Pade Lange, Programme Officer, International Alert
- Kurt Moesgaard, Colonel, Commander, Jutland Dragoon Regiment, Holstebro
- Roger Kibasomba, Head of SADC program at the South African based International Institute of Security Studies
- Eric Berman, Managing Director of the Small Arms Survey in Geneva
- Bjørn Møller, Senior Research Fellow, DIIS
- Louise Mørup, Research Assistant, DIIS.

This brief will first introduce the APP and thereafter present the key points related to the discussion of how Denmark can strengthen the African security capacity within the next two years of its UNSC membership as presented by the different discussants.

Africa Programme for Peace

In the spring of 2004 the Danish Foreign Ministry launched the APP with a detailed list of initiatives for a five-year plan to strengthen the African security structure through the main African regional organisations counting AU, IGAD, ECOWAS and SADC.⁵ The programme ambitiously aims to operationalise the security mechanisms of these regional organisations. Thus, the APP sets out to strengthen the conflict prevention capability; to support the security architecture focusing on African Standby Force (ASF) establishment; enhance the institutional capacity of the regional organisations; increase access to funding; and finally promote relations between civil society and regional organisations.

⁵ See Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004.

The overall budget of the APP is 248 million DKK. The budget is allocated such that that AU receives 72 million DKK which is the equivalent of 29.0% of the budget, ECOWAS 66 million DKK equal to 26.6% , SADC: 80 million (32.3%) and IGAD: 20 million (8.1%). The support for the SADSEM which is to be phased out accounts for the higher amount allocated to SADC compared to ECOWAS.

The comprehensiveness of the APP constitutes an innovative advance in donor assistance to Africa. Its focus on the four major regional organisations together with its targeted support for different states of the peace operation capacity makes it the most ambitious and integrated Danish initiative in the field so far. The strengths of the programme lie according to its architect, Rolf Hombøe, in the following aspects:

- The APP aims to build synergy between the different donor programmes and thereby overcome the problems of coordination or even contradictory aims of different donor programmes, which has been prevalent and inhibited development.
- The APP is based on African ownership which is essential for the sustainability of the individual projects of the programme. As part of the initiative to strengthen African ownership, the programme allocates a number of funds for the African organisations themselves to decide where and how to use.
- The APP focuses on different aspects of conflict prevention and includes multiple small prevention operations to stop the conflict instead of one single measure. The aim to create or strengthen the linkage between the regional organisations and civil society actors constitutes an important component in this overall focus.

Where can Denmark make a difference in the short term?

While Rolf Holmboe presented the comprehensive focus of the APP as a strength, the main argument of Louise Mørup was that Denmark has to narrow the wide scope of the APP significantly in order to profile itself within the next two years of its expected membership of the UNSC. Thus, she argued the APP has to be limited to the organisations and the areas where it can make the most difference in the next two years.

The analysis of the Danish assistance to African regional organisations was consequently centred around these two criteria so that the first part included an analysis of the relative capacities of their respective security mechanisms to engage in conflict prevention and management operations established by the following indicators: the *political willingness* to undertake the operations, *the institutional strength* to organise and implement them and the

resources available for the operations. This second part gave an account of the areas where Denmark can make a difference for African security in comparison with other donors.

The main conclusions from the presentation were as follows:

- The Danish assistance to African regional organisations should give priority to ECOWAS as the most efficient of the organisations and IGAD as the organisation with most undeveloped potential. These two organisations both operate in unstable environments with several active conflicts making assistance urgent. SADC, on the other hand, will not be able to make any significant progress in the near future due to the institutional deadlock caused by Zimbabwe. The AU will, as the pinnacle of the African security structure, rely heavily on the sub-regional level, which should consequently be given priority relative to the regional level.
- The comprehensive focus of the APP should be narrowed down to a few areas where Denmark can make a real difference. Thus, instead of supporting the operationalisation of the security mechanisms in all its aspects, the assistance should focus on *conflict prevention* as a less expensive and more effective tool to create stability than the costly *peacekeeping and -enforcement operations*.

Challenges facing African regional security

While the first section of the conference included a presentation of the APP and suggestions for how to make it more effective in the short term within the premises established in the programme, the discussion of the second part turned to some of the key challenges to the African security structure with implications for policies that goes beyond the current framework of the APP.

An issue of central concern was the organisational makeup of the planned African security structure. While the AU charter states that the African security structure should be build on five African sub-regions, it is not yet established which sub-regional organisations the African security structure should rely on. In practice the sub-regional organisational structure is complex, and there is an organisational overlap of members and agenda between competing organisations. The problem is that it is easy to create an organisation but difficult to dismantle it. Thus, there is a variety of different African regional organisations – eight of which, Eric Berman counted, are involved in peacekeeping operations in Africa. The organisational overlap, it was argued, is often resulting in an interlocking – or even blocking of the individual

organisations' security efforts. On the other hand, Bjørn Møller added, there seems to be no correspondence at all between the need for and the availability of security- and conflict-related organisations, as those sub-regions most in need of strong organisations (the Great Lakes, for instance) have none. Thus there are areas not covered by a sub-regional organisation and conflicts such as the Rwandan conflict where the international community does not want to intervene.

Private military companies as complementary to regional organisations

As a way of solving the conflicts where democratically elected governments will not send in troops Bjørn Møller raised the controversial suggestion to consider using private military companies (PMCs). This suggestion was supported as a last resort by Eric Berman, arguing that there have been plenty of good examples of successful engagement by PMCs.

The advantages of the PMCs Møller listed as follows:

- The PMCs are - if paid the right price - willing to intervene in conflicts where nobody else wants to get involved neither UN nor the African regional organisations.
- The PMCs, unlike local actors/sub-regional organisations, are not themselves involved in the conflicts and therefore not parts to the conflict.

The deployment of PMCs in Africa is not a new phenomenon, Møller argued, but has been used in several conflicts on the African continent, primarily where intra-state conflicts have become extremely violent and in the countries with a clear concentration of natural resources. Thus, despite their controversial character, he pointed out, there has been an increasing interest by the international community for a possible constructive deployment of PMCs in peace-enforcement and peacekeeping operations. In this context, Denmark should consider whether to include the possibility of funding PMC missions where nobody else wants to get in harms way.

The need for a comprehensive approach to African security

Also Maria Pade Lange and Roger Kibasomba addressed the shortcomings of the African regional organisations security capacity, but pointed in a different direction for their solution. Thus, the APP focus on the regional organisations was criticised by both for being too limited. Roger Kibasomba criticised donors for doing too little to support civil society interventions and suggested that donors instead should support local efforts for conflict prevention and peace-

building. He further added that the APP focus on state security was too narrow and should be widened to include personal security as well.

Maria Pade Lange called for a more comprehensive focus including local, national and other regional actors to strengthen an African security capacity. She questioned whether the APP can strengthen African regional security by looking at the operational factors only and limiting the focus to conflict prevention and peacekeeping and -enforcement. The short term focus characteristic for the APP and other donor programmes, she argued, merely seek to remedy the symptoms. Instead, she advocated for the necessity of a security strategy where the structural causes of conflict were addressed as part of a long term process to strengthen the African security capacity.

As a consequence the limited approach to conflict prevention inherent in the APP as a form of crisis management, should be widened to include broader peace-building efforts aiming to address the root causes of conflict by using political, economic, military and social means. Thus, she proposed, peace-building should be viewed as the overarching element of a security strategy for Africa.

The peace-building she recommended involves four elements:

- *Security* – including the disarmament of the warring parties.
- *The political framework* – relating to issues such as democratisation, good governance, institution-building, human rights etc.
- *The socioeconomic foundations* – involving the physical reconstruction, economic infrastructure, repatriation and food security.
- *Reconciliation and justice* – including dialogue between leaders and civil society, truth and reconciliation commissions etc.

The problem of peace-building as a security strategy is that it, more than operational capacity building for conflict prevention and peace-enforcement and peacekeeping, is a slow process with no tangible results in the short term. As such it does not have the same appeal to international donors, who want to see results of their assistance. The question is, however, whether it is possible to build African regional security in the short term without addressing the roots of the conflict? - And consequently whether in the long term it will not prove more efficient to include peace-building as central to an African security strategy? Here Denmark could take the lead in redirecting the focus from operational capacity building at the regional level to peace-building as a broader effort linking local, national and regional levels.

HIV/AIDS as a security threat

Finally, the issue of HIV/AIDS among the armed forces was raised at the conference as a cause of concern for the operational capacity of the African regional organisations. It is a known fact that the HIV/AIDS infection rate is higher among the armed forces in Africa than among the general population.⁶ Thus it was mentioned that the official HIV/AIDS rate among the armed forces is 23% in South Africa, although the unofficial figure appears to be much higher. Independent sources estimate the actual figure to be approximately 40% HIV infected among the armed forces in South Africa and 60% in Angola.⁷

The high rate of HIV/AIDS infection in Africa, it was argued, constitute a ticking bomb under African security. This threat primarily comes from the following three areas:

- First of all evidence suggests that HIV/AIDS can both worsen conflicts as well as making it harder to end them as AIDS thins the ranks of trained and experienced personnel required to create a stable basis for peace i.e. school teachers, police, civil servants etc.⁸
- Secondly, it was pointed out that peacekeeping with HIV positive soldiers potentially cause a bigger threat to the involved population than the conflict itself.
- Finally, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among the armed forces inhibits the military capacity building in African states. The resultant high death rate among the armed forces will make it difficult to build a sustainable military capacity in Africa. Thus, recent reports indicate that the South African National Defence Force could loose 25% of its middle rank personnel from AIDS.⁹

While it is a known fact the high HIV/AIDS rate among the armed forces potentially inhibits the African security capacity, this is not reflected in international donor programmes which do not take the difference in infection rate between the armed forces and the general population into account when designing their programmes.¹⁰ Denmark could make a significant difference by channelling assistance to alleviate this problem through education about HIV/AIDS, provision of free condoms to soldiers and drug treatment of already infected soldiers.

⁶ ICG, 2004.

⁷ ICG, 2004.

⁸ ICG, 2004.

⁹ ICG, 2004.

¹⁰ ICG, 2004.

Conclusion

The conference discussion bore witness to the complexity of the challenges facing the development of an African security capacity and was reflected in the diversity of suggestions for how Denmark can profile itself strengthening African security capacity.

While it is tempting as a donor to spread the effort and confront the variety of challenges facing the African security capacity, the APP's comprehensive effort to strengthen African security capacity leaves, however, Denmark, with little chance of making a visible difference in any area. In order to profile itself for its expected UNSC membership, Denmark will, therefore, have to make the difficult choice between the various challenges and limit its effort to a few areas where it can make a visible difference within the next two years.

References

Chiahemen, Fanen (2004): "G-8 Countries to Train 50,000 African Peacekeepers", U.N. Wire, 9 June 2004, online, available HTTP: <http://www.unwire.org/News/328_426_24708.asp> (accessed 10 September 2004).

Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2004): *Denmark's Africa Programme for Peace 2004-2009*, Copenhagen: Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

DIIS Conference (2004): "Strengthening African Capacities for Conflict Prevention and Management", Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen, 16 August 2004. Conference Programme online, available HTTP: <<http://www.diis.dk/sw4367.asp>> (accessed 10 September 2004)

International Crisis Group (ICG) (2004): *HIV/AIDS as a Security Issue in Africa – Lessons from Uganda*, ICG Issues Report no. 3, Kampala/Brussels: International Crisis Group.

International Institute of Strategic Studies (2004): "African Peacekeeping – Revival or Relapse?" *IISS Strategic Comments*, 10:5, June 2004.