



# Situation Report

Date issued: 11 February 2009  
Author: African Security  
Analysis Programme (ASAP)<sup>1</sup>  
Distribution: General  
Contact: phandy@issafrica.org

## Africa 2008–2009: Retrospective look at the past year and forecast for the new year

### Introduction

As the year 2009 starts and the spectre of the global financial crisis is yet to reveal its full and likely devastating potential, it is time to reflect on the past year's security related developments in Africa and draw some lessons for 2009. In many ways, 2008 will be remembered as a year of contrasts. On the one hand, it will go down in history as the year of the biggest financial crisis since the great depression of 1929 with fears of pending unemployment and a global recession of incalculable consequences making the rounds. On the other hand, historians and analysts will look back at 2008 as the year Barack Obama was elected the first African-American President of the United States of America. The immense and, in some cases, unrealistic hopes raised across the world by this development are representative of widespread perceptions of a world in chaos. In Africa, violence around Kenyan and Zimbabwean elections were later challenged by other peaceful – even though not always free and fair – experiments in Angola, Swaziland, Rwanda, Guinea-Bissau, Zambia and Ghana.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, African countries have entered into a phase of transition that has profoundly transformed the fundamentals of post-colonial states. In addition to positive trends towards greater opening of autocratic systems throughout the continent, the severe economic crisis of the 1990s gave way to a remarkable period of economic growth that witnessed a strengthening of Africa's role in the global economy. Oil and gas producing states, in particular, have seen their revenues increase significantly due not only to buoyant commodity demand but also to remarkable progress in governance and conflict mitigation<sup>2</sup>. While the food crisis and the subsequent riots have underlined Africa's production gaps, and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals remain a distant prospect for the majority of African countries, the continent appears to be on a generally positive, though at times divergent, growth trajectory. During the last decade, about 18 African countries have maintained an average growth of 5.5 per cent. This figure increases significantly if we add oil and gas producing countries. The political economy of Africa's development since the 1980s, however, reveals the persistent fragility of the continent's socio-political fabric as attested by numerous protracted and ephemeral violent conflicts witnessed throughout the continent over the past two decades. Shaken by a dual economic and political reform process, many states have either imploded or lost their capacity to provide basic public goods and services to their citizens. As a result, various wars and violent conflicts have served to destabilise entire countries and regions with tremendous human, financial and social consequences. However, efforts of the AU

\* The opinions expressed in this Situation Report do not necessarily reflect those of the Institute, its Trustees, members of the Council, or donors. Institute research staff and outside contributors write and comment in their personal capacity and their views do not represent a formal position by the ISS.

to implement all pillars of the African peace and security architecture indicate the continued commitment of African leaders to come to terms with violent conflicts in the continent, even though the continuing Grand Debate on the African Union Government might divert much needed energy from other important endeavours.

The present Situation Report is an attempt to make sense of the various and contrasting developments that marked the year 2008 in Africa from a human security perspective<sup>3</sup>. It also provides some clues to understand the events that are likely to shape Africa's security debate in 2009. Although human security is a broad and sometimes contested concept, this Report considers it in its normative dimension as the absence of war and causes of war. The approach is voluntarily broad and such varied issues as armed conflicts, elections and other governance issues, as well as food security are analysed. We have chosen to analyse these developments on a sub-regional basis, while also addressing one particular cross-cutting issue that is of significance to the African peace and security agenda in 2009, namely the role of the African Union and other regional bodies. The report concludes with a prospective look into the New Year. But given its nature, it goes without saying that some salient issues remain unaddressed, which should not be taken to mean neglect or minimisation of those issues<sup>4</sup>.

As has been the case in previous years, contradicting processes of state consolidation and state erosion marked the year 2008. While successful transformation processes were recorded in Mali, Benin, Ghana, Zambia and Botswana, we witnessed crises in countries such as Chad, the Central African Republic, Kenya and Zimbabwe. Protracted conflicts in Somalia, the eastern DRC, Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire and Burundi have either worsened or been stabilised at a very low level of human security. Both the resumption of warfare (eastern DRC) and its perpetuation (Somalia) have strengthened the risk of creating sustainable pockets of war economies that have the potential to undo any regional peacemaking attempt. Principally, violent conflicts in Africa seem to move from open, full wars to diffused, low-scale but destructive conflicts with a strong potential for regionalisation. As the Niger Delta (Nigeria), Bakassi (Cameroon), eastern DRC and Darfur amply indicate, the militarisation – and often "*militianisation*" – of social discontent tests the capacity of African states to cope with their numerous situations of fragility<sup>5</sup>.

In 2008, regional developments varied in terms of governance, state stability, economic performance and poverty reduction. The sustained interest of emerging powers – China, India, Brazil, Turkey, Gulf countries – in Africa constitutes a factor that has the potential of either anchoring the continent in the global market or accentuating its economic marginalisation. It is still too early to speculate on the ultimate balance of costs and benefits that will result from the so-called scramble for Africa's resources. Economic imperatives and considerations of profit are not always a guarantee of commitments to good governance and the respect for human rights. Indeed, Africa's experience of colonial rule, and the neo-colonial age that followed it would suggest that autocratic government systems and foreign profiteering may be well-suited to each other in the short term, though they create untold structural damage in the long run.

By and large, the electoral violence experienced in some countries over the past year has generated concern over the emergence of deviant democratic experiments. Particularly in Kenya and Zimbabwe, contested election results and post-electoral agreements have prompted criticism about the degeneration of elections into widespread "electoralism" without democracy. While the military coup in Mauritania (6 August) that removed a president elected after a widely acclaimed period of transition may confirm the observations of *demosceptics*, it should not be forgotten that other countries, such as Rwanda, Angola, Zambia and Ghana witnessed calm and peaceful elections in 2008.

Even in the case of countries such as Kenya, Zimbabwe and Mauritania, it would seem that many observers misread the events and/or overstated their impact on the quality of governance in Africa. In the first place, it has been sufficiently

demonstrated that what happened in Kenya in the early months of 2008 was not necessarily related to the elections. They only served as a trigger to violence caused by deep-seated structural and socio-economic deficiencies in the Kenyan society<sup>6</sup>. Likewise, it should be pointed out that Zimbabwe was already in a crisis that was not necessarily related to elections, and what happened in Mauritania is not necessarily atypical to countries in transition. There are generally persistent residues and forces of the old regime that remain more or less obdurate in the first years after the demise of an authoritarian regime. These elements would always try to undermine the new order, including by sabotage and reversal, should they have the opportunity.

Moreover, there seems to be a commitment by African organisations (AU and regional economic communities) to peacefully settle post-electoral disputes and take a firm stance on leaders emerging from military coups d'état by excluding them and their countries until the return to constitutional order. Even though the position of the AU on unconstitutional changes of government should not hide major loopholes in African governance practices, there are clear indications of a slow but profound change of mentality at the continental level that will need to be consolidated in 2009 and beyond.

## **NORTH AFRICA**

Although widely consolidated and gearing towards a phase of sustained economic growth thanks to increased demand in commodities, North African states were still faced with some human security challenges, among which were constant insecurity in the region due to various reported bomb explosions; suicide attacks and hostage-taking that terrorised the citizens of most of the countries of the region and damaged the tourist industry; popular uprisings in much of the region in protest at high food prices; persisting human rights issues and governance; and, finally, the stalemate in the protracted conflict in Western Sahara.

### *Deepening urban insecurity*

For a number of reasons that can be traced back at least to the early 1990s, numerous North African countries have experienced almost chronic urban insecurity. This insecurity has been characterised by bomb explosions, indiscriminate suicide attacks and hostage taking. The suspected perpetrators of these crimes have usually been groups claiming to be engaged in a struggle for certain religious and/or political rights, claims that are questionable given the nature of some of their indiscriminate activities.

Of all the countries in the region, it is Algeria that seems to have borne the brunt of this insecurity, particularly in 2008. Most of the terrorist activities in Algeria – or even in the region at large – have been attributed to the so-called Al-Qaida Organisation in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI), formally known as the Salafist Group for Combat and Preaching (GSPC). The month of August 2008 was particularly bloody in Algeria, with car bombs causing many casualties in Algiers and the east of the country. Though the principal targets may have been connected with the security services, scores of bystanders were also killed and injured. Clearly, such criminal activities cause a great deal of harm to the countries in North Africa, especially the lucrative tourist industry. This compels the governments of these countries to seriously address the root causes of the rise of such groups, rather than attacking the symptoms or consequences of their activities.

### *Food and political insecurity*

In its *Crop Prospects and Food Situation* report released in February 2008, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) announced that as many as 36 countries around the world were in crisis as a result of higher food prices and would require external assistance. Although Mauritania was the only North African country on the list, the report noted that North African countries relied heavily on wheat imports from the international market to cover their consumption needs and pointed out that countries such as Egypt were expected to import about half

of their domestic wheat consumption during the year. The recent rapid rise in prices of food and many other basic commodities in the region, as elsewhere, caused unrest and popular protests in many countries of the region, particularly in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. These incidents also highlighted the huge gap between the elite and the working class in many North African countries. While they generally have a better infrastructure than their sub-Saharan counterparts, indicators are very similar in terms of levels of poverty and unemployment.<sup>7</sup>

In their attempts to handle this crisis, governments of affected countries have put in place a series of measures aimed at offsetting the sharp increase in world prices, including tariff exemptions, price controls, and subsidies. But at times, some governments resorted to what was perceived by target groups as state oppression, as protesters were faced with violence that resulted in fatalities.

The relative lack of freedom of expression is still one of the main areas of concern in relation to human rights in the region. The sensitivity of state authorities to press reports seen as unfavourable to the incumbent regime was especially notable in Egypt, where newspaper reports about President Mubarak's health led to the conviction of the journalists concerned. Algerian, Tunisian and Moroccan authorities also demonstrated a marked lack of respect for press freedom.

#### *Stalemate on Western Sahara*

In his 14 April 2008 report on Western Sahara to the Security Council, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted that the overall security situation in those parts of the territory under the control of the UN mission, MINURSO, remained generally stable. Ban observed that although the UN mission continued to enjoy good relations with both Morocco and the Polisario Front, the two sides refused to deal with each other directly.

The year 2008 began with worrying developments in the territory. At the Polisario Front's Congress in December 2007, the organisation warned that it would resume armed struggle against Morocco if negotiations on the future of the territory failed. This came only a few weeks before the third round of the Manhasset talks in mid-January 2008. There were also bitter disagreements between the two sides about the status of Tifariti, which is in a buffer area of Western Sahara near the northern border of Mauritania. The Polisario Front considers this area to be part of a "liberated zone" while Morocco considers it a territory under UN control.

Also, following press reports that the Polisario Front was planning to populate and build infrastructure in Tifariti, the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs in February 2008 issued a statement saying that "Morocco reaffirms its clear will to preserve, by all means, its territorial integrity on the entire Sahara, and legitimately safeguard its national security." The communiqué further called on all the parties supporting or encouraging such actions, to bear responsibility for the insecurity ensuing from what it deemed an unacceptable development. In a number of media interviews and in a declaration before the Security Council in April, the UN Secretary General's Personal Envoy to Western Sahara, Peter van Walsum, declared that the territory's independence as advocated by the Polisario Front was not a realistic solution. The Front reacted by arguing that this statement disqualified him as an impartial mediator in the talks and suggested he be replaced. Eventually, Van Walsum's mandate expired on 21 August and was not renewed, very likely because of this.

But beyond this declaration and the reaction of the Polisario Front, this incident has the potential to compromise the whole process of dialogue and negotiations between the two parties. For after the fourth round of negotiations on 16–18 March 2008, the parties reiterated their commitment to continuing the talks at a date to be determined by common agreement. Given this state of affairs, the least one could say is that the process was at a serious impasse at the time this report was completed, although the appointment, in January 2009, of veteran American diplomat, Christopher Ross, to replace Van Walsum offers a glimmer of hope.

## *The Way Forward*

Most of the issues highlighted above are likely to remain or recur, to some degree, in 2009. But in order to move on some of them, prevent or mitigate their effects, the governments and political actors in the region will be well-advised to put certain measures in place. All the control mechanisms notwithstanding, the North African region has a sizeable intellectual community, both at home and abroad. A number of civil society organisations and professional movements have also emerged in the last few years. With regard to governance issues, governments of the region should show a willingness to engage sincerely with these actors in their various fields of specialisation with a view to broadening the political space in the region. This can only be of advantage to the human security of the people of the region.

With regard to political instability, one may argue that the only way to effectively deal with this is to address the root causes rather than to attack the symptoms. Therefore, while the activities of such movements as AQMI are largely criminal, and even though one may question their claims of concern about inequality and social injustice in their countries, these issues do exist and governments should address them.

Finally, with regard to Western Sahara, it is worth noting that this issue is largely responsible for the stagnation of regional integration projects in North Africa. It also accounts for Morocco's withdrawal from the OAU in 1984 and its stay out of the African Union since its inception. It is therefore high time that the two parties to this conflict, Morocco and Algeria, engaged in a serious dialogue in view of reaching a compromise solution to the conflict.

## **THE HORN OF AFRICA**

During the year 2008, the Horn of Africa witnessed an escalation in violence against civilians, leading to the displacement of large numbers of people in Darfur and south/central Somalia; the dual problem of attempting to enforce peace agreements and fighting insurgencies (in Somalia and Sudan); additional territorial disputes that could derail any form of previously achieved stability, as seen in Abyei (Sudan), the border skirmishes between Djibouti and Eritrea and that between Somaliland and Puntland; and the challenges posed by the withdrawal or deployment of the United Nations Mission in Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE), the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

In essence, most of the violent conflicts that characterised the region in previous years persisted, with some showing new dynamics such as the phenomenon of piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the use of suicide bombings by insurgent groups in Somalia. The region has also been affected by a devastating humanitarian crisis caused by the recurring displacement of already vulnerable populations fleeing from conflict zones<sup>8</sup>, as well as security impediments to UN aid and World Food Programme (WFP) assistance. This was further compounded by other factors such as cyclical droughts, the collapse of coping mechanisms, and the rise in global food prices. The region continues to see the interplay of the nationally driven interests of neighbouring countries through the waging of proxy wars and in the name of the US-led global "war on terror". The interdependence of each country's security in the region is as much a reality now as ever, with the constant possibility of interstate and civil wars reigniting.

### *Worsening security situation and issues of war crimes in Sudan*

The year began with a positive development in Darfur when the first troops of the joint AU-UN peacekeeping mission (UNAMID) were deployed in January. However, despite a Chapter VII mandate allowing it to take all the necessary (military and non military) actions against any security threat, by January 2009, the force which remained at just over one-third of its projected 26,000 personnel, has been consistently attacked and occasionally disarmed by the warring factions and has failed to provide effective protection for the civilian population or the humanitarian community in Darfur. One event in particular showed that the conflict was far

from being peacefully resolved. In May 2008, the Darfuri rebel movement, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), launched an attack on Omdurman. This was the first time the rebels had come this close to the capital, Khartoum, and were eventually pushed back just before reaching the city's west Nile bank.

A week after the JEM raid on Omdurman, Sudanese forces launched an attack on the disputed oil-rich region of Abyei. Located between the North and the South (and potentially rich in oil), Abyei remains the most contentious and unresolved issue with the potential to unravel the North-South peace agreement. In mid-2008, both the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM) agreed to refer the case to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague charged with resolving the dispute over Abyei's borders prior to determining whether the oil-rich area falls within the north or south of the country.

On 14 July 2008, and following the UN Security Council's Resolution 1593 of 31 March 2005, which referred the situation in Darfur to the International Criminal Court (ICC) with a mandate to investigate claims of genocide, alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur, the chief prosecutor of the ICC, Luis Moreno Ocampo, finally indicted the Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir on ten counts of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. He had already indicted two Sudanese officials in 2007 and arrest warrants had been issued against them. However, at the time this Report was completed, the arrest warrant that Ocampo requested in July 2008 to be issued against the Sudanese leader was still awaiting a decision from the Pre-Trial Chamber. A consequence of Al-Bashir's indictment was the creation of a Crisis Committee within Sudan, headed by Salva Kiir, leader of the SPLM, to find a way of addressing the ICC issue. This special committee has remained sharply divided, but it would seem that the indictment has produced, for the first time within Sudan, a serious and real national debate about Darfur.

Likewise, on 20 November 2008, the Prosecutor made a request to Pre-Trial Chamber I for the issuance of a warrant of arrest for three rebel commanders, for war crimes they allegedly committed in an attack against African Union peacekeepers in Haskanita, Darfur, on 29 September 2007. On 9 December 2008, however, the Pre-Trial Chamber requested the Office of the Prosecutor (OPT) to submit additional information and supporting materials in relation to the Prosecution's request for a warrant of arrest for the three rebel commanders. The OPT was expected to submit this information by 26 January 2009, but it had not done so by the time this Report went to press, nor had the names of the three indicted rebel commanders been disclosed.

On the ground, however, there has been a continued deterioration in the security and humanitarian situation following attacks on Internally Displaced People's (IDP) camps in late August. Rebel movements alleged that these attacks were carried out by Sudanese armed forces and a report jointly released on 23 January 2009 by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNAMID confirmed these accusations and blamed the attack on the Sudanese forces.<sup>9</sup> Some 18 SPLM members withdrew from executive and legislative bodies in Khartoum in protest at this attack. It would seem that the populations of these camps have become increasingly militarised and politicised.

Rifts within the Government of Unity have since become apparent, as the rhetoric of disagreement between the NCP and the SPLM has increased. Sudan faces a period of uneasy peace, particularly as both the SPLM and Khartoum are reportedly rearming, and the South's parliament recently voted to double its military budget, the North having spent 20 percent of its national budget on the purchase of military equipment.

#### *Continued violence in Somalia*

In Somalia, violence continued to escalate as the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) struggled to save the July 2008 Djibouti Agreement, the 11-point accord that provides for the cessation

of hostilities, the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops, and the deployment of a UN stabilisation and peacekeeping force. Although the Djibouti agreement remains the best hope for peace in Somalia, internal rifts within the TFG, the rejection of the agreement by hardliners of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) and the so-called *Al-Shabaab* (or youths, in Arabic) militia, and the creation of additional interest groups with overriding economic motives, make implementation very difficult.

The five coordinated suicide car bombs that struck Somaliland's capital, Hargeysa, and Puntland's port of Bosasso in October, killing nearly 30 people, were blamed on such hardliners, although no group has claimed responsibility. These terrorist attacks occurred at a time when the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD), the regional grouping in the Horn, was once again pushing for a solution to the intractable conflict in Somalia and attempting to address the Transitional Federal Government's ineffective role in bringing peace and stability to the country. Insurgent groups, opposed to the TFG and Ethiopian military presence, sent a clear message of who controls events on the ground, and that any international efforts to end the chaos in Somalia would be met with a violent show of force. It is also a message that these groups are now capable of reaching any target in Somalia in a highly coordinated manner. Indeed, as they had been promising, Ethiopian troops finally began their withdrawal from Somalia at the end of December and completed the operation at the end of January 2009. This decision was largely due to the hostile environment in which they found themselves vis-à-vis these groups.

The IGAD-sponsored talks that began in Nairobi late October have added additional pressure on the TFG to achieve the mandate it was entrusted with: to resolve its internal differences (which have only served to weaken it), and become a viable government of unity for Somalia. A timeframe was established whereby the TFG would have to draft a Constitution, prepare conditions for a national census, among other things, before its mandate expires in mid-2009.

Recent events in south and central Somalia, which is now largely under the sway of insurgent forces of various persuasions and assorted clan-based militias, suggest that a post-TFG period would be one of continued disruption, as rival groupings struggle against each other for influence. In many ways this would represent, at best, a return to the conditions prevalent in 2005 and 2006.

However, it would seem that the hard line stance of the TFG president Abdullahi Yusuf with regard to his opponents was a major stumbling block to the implementation of the Djibouti Agreement. Yusuf did not seem ready to embrace any all-inclusive settlement plan in the country; yet this is what Somalia needs if there is to be peace anytime soon. The Somali president finally resigned at the end of December after a dangerous standstill between him and the Transitional Parliament following his dismissal, a few weeks earlier, of the reconciliatory Prime Minister. Parliament had overwhelmingly rejected this dismissal. Thus, the combination of Yusuf's departure, the Ethiopian withdrawal and the election of Barack Obama in the USA and the election, in January 2009 of the reconciliatory leader of the ARS as the new President of the TGG open a new window of opportunity for peace in Somalia.

#### *Deteriorating humanitarian situation in Somalia*

Since June, the security and humanitarian situation in Somalia has deteriorated significantly. The intensified fighting in mid-September between AMISOM, Al-Shabaab, Ethiopian and TFG forces further exposed the population to existing vulnerabilities. According to UN agencies, an estimated 15,000 people were displaced following the fighting, in addition to the 700,000 that remain unable to resettle. Overall, the country had by January 2009 3.2 million inhabitants who depended on international aid (43 per cent of the population), a 77 per cent increase in the number of those in need since January 2008. The humanitarian community is now a target, and several aid workers and even senior agency officials have lost their lives in targeted assassinations.

Restrictions in aid delivery contributed to this growing humanitarian crisis. UN aid shipments were to receive an element of protection from foreign warships, though short of a convoy system in the cluttered Gulf of Aden. But even these expensive efforts seemed unlikely to curb the activities of Somali-based pirates who became bolder and more ambitious by the week.

#### *Crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea*

Any account of the Somali crisis must include reference to the continuing squabble between Ethiopia and Eritrea over their common border. This issue should have been resolved by arbitration, but the refusal of Addis Ababa to accept a politically humiliating settlement, and the insistence on unilateral action by the authorities in Asmara have frustrated attempts to achieve closure on this potentially dangerous border dispute. Eritrean obstruction has led to the withdrawal of UNMEE observers and the ending of the mission's mandate, so that tens of thousands of troops now face each other across a disputed no-man's land, with the constant danger that war could reignite over even a minor incident. There is even the danger of regionalising this conflict. This danger was highlighted in 2008 by an apparent Eritrean incursion into Djibouti, which led to a number of deaths and the threat of formal hostilities. It is scarcely surprising, then, that Eritrea has often been blamed for taking advantage of the Somali crisis to destabilise Ethiopia from the south, offering covert assistance to insurgent groups in Somalia and to Ogadeni and Oromo rebels inside Ethiopia itself.

Meanwhile, the Ethiopian government's counter-insurgency campaign in the Ogaden has drawn harsh criticism from elements in the international community, and a new administration in Washington may prove unwilling to maintain what has been an uncritical alliance with a state that has presented itself as an anti-terrorist bulwark in the region.

But the Ethiopian government seems disinclined to risk the very real political threat that manifested itself in the elections of 2005. A mixture of repression and political ambition has split the forces of the opposition, some of which are now in exile. Nevertheless, the ruling alliance's easy victory in local and regional elections in 2008 might not be a clear indication of the government's actual popularity, especially in Amhara, Oromo and Somali dominated areas.

#### **WEST AFRICA**

Developments in West Africa in 2008 continued to illustrate the difficulties faced by countries attempting the transition from armed conflict to peace or from authoritarian rule to some sort of liberalised order. Such problems were further complicated by stresses emanating from the global economy, as the wild fluctuation of oil and food prices revealed West Africa's exposure to a dependence on petroleum exports and food imports. It is evident that the governments of the region will have to demonstrate great skills and political vision if they are to navigate the troubled political waters ahead. Those attempting a serious transition to state reconstruction after armed conflicts, such as Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau, will also require the continued commitment of both regional and international actors if they are to avoid a lapse back into chaos. The spread of drug trafficking or the use of the region by South American drug cartels as a transit destination for their drug shipments en route to Europe was also another source of concern in the year 2008<sup>10</sup>. But despite all this and some challenges with regard to governance, West Africa seems to be one of the fastest democratising regions of the continent, a promising sign for the future.

#### *No war, no peace in Côte d'Ivoire*

Postponed three times since October 2005, the people of Côte d'Ivoire expected to eventually have an opportunity to go to the polls and elect a new leader or renew the mandate of President Laurent Gbagbo by October 2008. Many were disappointed to learn that they had to wait for at least another year when the elections were again postponed at the eleventh hour, to be held sometime in 2009. Yet much depends on

the holding of these elections in order to return the country to normalcy, which it has lacked since the outbreak of a civil war in September 2002 that has split the country into a rebel-held North and a government-controlled South. Agreements between President Gbagbo and elements of the northern rebels have not yet opened the way for a definitive resolution of the crisis, and the north-south competition remains unaddressed. The issues of voter registration and nationality are still creating difficulties and obstructing the way to elections, with many deadlines unmet. In the meantime, obduracy and a hardening of positions on the part of youthful militants make a “soft landing” difficult in an atmosphere of mutual distrust. Signs of discord within the presidential camp add to a sense of unease.

#### *Contained but worrying instability in Mali and Niger around the Tuareg*

The year 2008 saw renewed waves of rebel attacks in the north of Mali and Niger. Generally known as the “Tuareg” rebellion, although caution must be taken as to whether the insurgents represent all Tuaregs, the first phase of this insurgency broke out in Mali in June 1990 and a year later in neighbouring Niger. Peace agreements signed between the governments of both countries and their respective rebels had apparently put an end to the insurgency in the mid-1990s.

In Mali, Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, a former rebel in the 1990s who had been integrated into the Malian army as per the Algiers agreement, led the attacks of 2008. A group called the Niger Movement for Justice (MNJ) spearheaded the attacks in Niger. Both justified their actions by claims of marginalisation of their regions in government development projects, with the latter calling for a bigger share in the profits from the uranium mines in the north of the country. Ag Bahanga operated mainly in remote desert areas around Kidal, in northeastern Mali near the Algerian border. Throughout the year, rebels engaged with government troops in sporadic fighting that claimed lives on both sides.

For example, fighting broke out on March 20 in the town of Tin-Zaouatane between Malian soldiers and rebel elements that led to the capture of 30 government soldiers and the death of three of them in addition to five civilians. The rebels also seized eight government vehicles. The months of May and June were particularly bloody and eventful in both countries. On May 22, rebels attacked an army camp in Abebara, some 150 km from Kidal during which 17 rebels and 15 Malian soldiers were reportedly killed. The following month, 26 government soldiers and seven rebels were killed in clashes between the MNJ rebels and the armed forces of Niger.<sup>11</sup>

Such attacks continued until the last quarter of the year. In August, the rebel movement of Ibrahim Ag Bahanga decided to release 21 Malian soldiers and handed them over to the Malian authorities through the Algerian ambassador to Mali, who serves as the main facilitator of dialogue and negotiations between the Malian government and the rebels. These soldiers were among a total of 92 Malian soldiers taken hostage by the rebel movement over the previous few months. This was one of the provisions of a new Algiers Accord signed between the rebels and the Malian government on July 21.

There was, however, a contrast between the approaches of both governments. Whereas the authorities in Bamako seemed more reconciliatory and open to dialogue with the rebels with tangible results, the government of Niger and President Mamadou Tanja tended to favour a military solution, notwithstanding the clear limitations of this approach that has often proven counter-productive. As we enter the year 2009 and look beyond, it must be stressed that durable stability in this crisis clearly lies in dialogue and diplomacy and not in any show of military might and certainly not in the (mis)use of the terrorist rhetoric.

#### *Challenges to democratic consolidation*

Efforts at democratic transition and consolidation faced a number of challenges in the region. The re-election of Senegal's aging President Abdoulaye Wade in 2007 was followed by constitutional amendments that contributed to political polarisation of an unusual nature. There is now considerable speculation that

the president might be preparing a dynastic succession in which his son, Karim, would take over in 2012. Should this be confirmed, it will be bound to exacerbate tensions between the country's political forces and within the ruling party itself, as experienced politicians see their career ambitions curtailed. The dismissal in November of the Speaker of the National Assembly and former Prime Minister Macky Sall was only possible because of a recent constitutional amendment and his sour relations with President Wade, evidenced by his resignation from the ruling party soon afterwards. This might be an early shot in what could be a protracted and damaging political conflict, unless wiser counsels prevail.

There were similar challenges facing Niger as President Tanja approaches the end of his final term. There were calls by some of his supporters to amend the constitution in order to allow him to stand for a third term in mid-2009, or at least extend his tenure for a few years. But the composition of the National Assembly and the constitutional provision with regard to presidential terms are such that it would be almost impossible for him to succeed in this design. But given that other African countries have done it before through both orthodox and non-orthodox means, this is a cause for concern.

One of those leaders who amended the country's constitution to stay in power, General Lansana Conté, the long-term ruler of Guinea, died after a long illness on December 22. A military junta seized power a few hours after the announcement on state radio and television of the passing away of President Conté. A middle-ranking army officer called Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, until then barely known outside military barracks, who called his group the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD), led the junta. In a first move common to almost all military coups d'état, the CNDD announced the dissolution of the government and parliament and suspended the Constitution. In justifying their move, the coup leaders cited the failure of the dissolved state institutions to fulfil their responsibility vis-à-vis the Guinean people who have been reduced to poverty and despair despite the countless riches with which nature has endowed their country.

The scenes of jubilation seen throughout the country and by Guinean nationals living abroad, welcoming the new rulers and saluting their move, was in sharp contrast to the reaction of the international community, particularly the African Union (AU) which strongly condemned the coup. By mid-January 2009, Guinea had been suspended by the AU, the ECOWAS and the Permanent Council of the Organisation of Francophone countries (OIF). Both the US and European Union added their voices to this and suspended their financial assistance to the country. While most of these organizations would agree with the claims of the junta about the corrupt and despotic nature of the former regime, their main concern seemed to be the need to restore constitutional order in the country, which is also in line with the wishes of almost all Guineans, whose jubilation was only for the end of the Conte era and not for a prolonged stay of the military in power. The challenge is therefore to ensure that the military junta does not hang on to power and that it swiftly organises credible and transparent parliamentary and presidential elections and returns to the barracks.

Meanwhile, whatever reservations one might entertain about the details of the April 2007 presidential elections in Nigeria, it does appear that the management style and the personality of the new president may have contributed to a move towards greater government accountability. The year 2009 will however be crucial in determining whether President Umaru Yar'Adua is able to consolidate his position against the continued ambitions of members of the old political order. This will not be easy, especially as his health remains a source of concern. Yet Nigeria's democratic consolidation and the maintenance of an effective state are vital to the region's prospects as a whole. In the meantime, the continued unrest in the Niger Delta constitutes a major threat to the authority of the state and the solvency of the exchequer, reducing as it does Nigeria's oil output at a time of plummeting prices. Finding a durable solution to this crisis will tax the imaginations of all concerned and any successful resolution will require unprecedented diplomatic flexibility and a willingness on all sides to make politically difficult concessions.

### *Cause for hope and optimism*

Political developments in Togo were encouraging and suggested that President Faure Gnassingbé intends to move his country steadily away from the authoritarian past of his father's time. Here the difficulties of opening the political space in a relatively poor country and in the face of popular demands for an improvement in living standards will be played out in the immediate future. Neighbouring Benin, whose democratic experience over the last twenty or so years has set a standard for the continent as a whole, faced a degree of political turbulence at the turn of the year. But this crisis seemed to be more reflective of the difficulties associated with the period of democratic consolidation rather than the symptom of a return to autocracy. The widely praised presidential election of December 2008 in Ghana – which saw the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) party return to power after an exemplary poll – adds to this sense of optimism.

Taken as a whole, Africa's biggest sub-region by the size of the population and the number of countries is representative of the continent's diverging trajectories. In fact, blocked democratic transitions (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau) do border consolidating countries (Ghana, Mali, Benin). More generally, from the perspective of power alternation and peaceful turnover of leaders, West Africa seems to be on the right path. Of the 15 member states of ECOWAS in January 2009, at least five (Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana, Mali and Senegal) were more or less firmly on the path of democratic consolidation, having successfully passed the two alternations' test identified by some theorists of democratic transition as the start of democratic consolidation. The average Freedom House political and civil liberties score for the five countries in 2008 was 1.60 (political rights) and 2.2 (civil liberties), with Cape Verde securing the impressive one (highest level of liberty) score in both categories. They were all ranked free (Cape Verde, Ghana and Mali) or partly free (Benin and Senegal) on the index of the Freedom of Press of the same year and three of them ranked in the ten best governed African countries on the Mo Ibrahim Index for African governance 2008<sup>12</sup>.

Five other countries, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau (which have just emerged from armed conflicts), as well as Niger and Togo were ruled by leaders who had come to power through elections that were generally praised as free and fair. And although there were some criticisms about their elections, Burkina Faso, the Gambia and Nigeria were under elected leaders. Only Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Conakry constituted the odd ones in the crowd. But on the whole, taking note of the regime change in Conakry in December 2008, apart from Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso (since 1987), and Yaya Jammeh of the Gambia (since 1994), none of the leaders of the region was in power before the year 2000. This discards the first incarnations of Pedro de Verona Rodrigues Pires (1975–1990) of Cape Verde and of Joao Bernardo (Nino) Viera (1980–1999) of Guinea-Bissau.

### **EAST AFRICA**

The most important security related developments that happened in East Africa in 2008 occurred in Kenya and Uganda. Probably no country in Africa was more in the international spotlight this year than Kenya. Here was a country regarded for some time as among Africa's putative success stories, now pulled apart in bloody discord over the results of the presidential elections held in December 2007. On the other side of the border in Uganda, 2008 started with high expectations and hopes in peace talks between the Ugandan government and representatives of the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) of Joseph Kony under the auspices of the Government of South Sudan. The signing of a definitive peace accord was even scheduled three times, with specific dates, only for the talks to collapse in the middle of the year. Thus, from the high hopes of the first quarter of the year came a sentiment of almost total hopelessness in the peace process when the Ugandan government decided in mid-December to launch a military operation on the LRA in the DRC. This operation had not yielded any positive outcome by the time this Report was completed.

### *Post-electoral violence in Kenya*

In some respects, the outburst of January 2008 reflected the feelings of an electorate that already felt cheated of the victory won in the polls of 2002. Then, the rule of former President Daniel arap Moi had been brought to an end by an unusually strong coalition of opposition figures in 2002, in the country's fairest and most peaceful election since independence. President Mwai Kibaki's victorious alliance soon splintered after 2002, however – largely, it seems, on the question of dividing the spoils of victory. Proposed constitutional reforms were manipulated by the government in favour of the retention of strong presidential powers, and subsequently rejected by the electorate, a sure signal of trouble in store for the incumbent.

At the end of 2007, and despite a massive macro-economic success during his time in office, Kibaki faced defeat, which he staved off in a highly dubious poll, leading to massive violence instigated and perpetrated by supporters of both the incumbent and the main opposition Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), led by the current Prime Minister, Raila Odinga. More than a thousand people were left dead and perhaps half a million displaced. The outside world was shocked and shaken at the socio-political implosion of a seemingly stable and relatively successful country. Yet the signs had been there for those less willing to be taken in by GDP growth and surface stability, and had been identified by the international experts involved in the country's African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) process.

This was not a case of a return to atavistic tribalism, as some media tried to make out; this was a very modern phenomenon, not limited by any means to Africa. This was the consequence of a thoroughly cynical political elite playing the dangerous zero-sum game of identity politics in a country where, the statistics notwithstanding, abject poverty remained the lot of the average citizen. Mobilisation of this sort is easy to achieve, made all the easier, ironically, by access to modern media and the spread of rumour and fear. What is particularly interesting about the Kenyan case is the complex interaction of rural and urban, of marginalised folk in the countryside and their equally marginalised kin in the shanties surrounding the capital. This is one of the warnings that the Kenyan experience conveys.

Only after the violence had threatened the very survival of the state did sanity begin to prevail among a political class wary of forfeiting the very rich prizes they had won. The patient and persistent mediation of Kofi Annan and his colleagues managed eventually to pull Kenya back from the abyss, though the power-sharing agreement they achieved may eventually be seen as an elite compact, the structural implications of which remain untested.

In any case, by virtue of this agreement, President Kibaki's victory has been recognised by his principal opponents, whose leader, Raila Odinga, has been elevated to the newly created post of Prime Minister. A number of technical commissions were also set up to look into the root causes and circumstances of the violence and make recommendations as to how similar crises can be avoided in the future. By January 2009, two of those commissions, namely the Kenyan Commission of Inquiry into Post-election Violence (CIPEV or the Waki Commission), and the Independent Review of Elections Commission (IREC or the Kriegler Commission) had submitted their reports with recommendations, some of which were already being implemented<sup>13</sup>. Attention now shifts to the next electoral test, in 2012. The Constitution needs to be revised, but though President Kibaki – who cannot be a candidate next time because of constitutional provisions, having served the maximum two terms allowed – has little interest in preserving the powers of an "imperial" presidency, the same may not be true of Odinga, despite his vociferous advocacy of a dilution of the presidential prerogative.

In the meantime too, Odinga's camp has undergone a transformation and differences have emerged between his Luo support base and his erstwhile allies in the Rift Valley, the Kalenjin, whose leaders fear they will be made to pay for their part in the violence.

Whether the culture of impunity will once again prevail, or the pursuit of justice will be tempered by the demands of political expediency, it is too soon to say. A truth and reconciliation commission may provide a way out, especially if it covers the political violence, fraud and officially sanctioned theft that has marked much of Kenya's history for the last 40 years.

But this must not lead to a complacent belief that all will be well. There are wise warnings coming out of a Kenyan civil society that refuses to be corralled into ethnic pens. Without steps that begin to address the issues of structural violence within Kenyan society, any stability will remain superficial, and at odds with the achievement of real security for Kenya's people.

#### *Elusive peace in Uganda*

On the whole, Uganda and Tanzania enjoyed a peaceful year compared with the mayhem in their richer neighbour. They were both badly affected by the Kenyan violence, as refugees crossed borders, and regional markets and transport routes were severely interrupted for months.

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) of Joseph Kony still featured large on the Ugandan political landscape, as efforts to bring about a ceasefire in the long-running civil war in the north of the country continued to yield temporary results while the anticipated conclusion of a deal remained elusive. The year started on a rather promising note. In February, the Ugandan government and the rebel movement signed the sixth in a series of documents expected to eventually lead to a final peace agreement to end the conflict. They fixed dates in March, April and May 2008 for this signing that never happened. Speaking on Ugandan radio in October 2008, the Acholi Paramount Chief, David Acana II, claimed that Joseph Kony called him the previous month and apologised 'for not meeting the Acholi cultural leaders, for switching off his phone and for his failure to sign the final peace deal'.

But at the time Kony is reported to have said this, the peace process had all but collapsed. The chief facilitator of the talks, South Sudan vice-President Riek Machar had decided to 'close the chapter' on the painstaking Juba peace talks. But even with this apparent change of heart by Kony, the main sticking point seems to be the LRA's demand that the International Criminal Court (ICC) withdraws its arrest warrants issued in 2005 against five top leaders of their movement, including Kony.

This being the situation, Kony and particularly the Ugandan government each seem to have had a Plan B all along – the military option. Throughout the year, Kony's military operations tended to shift their focus from Uganda to Sudan, the DRC and the Central African Republic, and his mercurial approach suggested that he was less than committed to a negotiated settlement, especially if he could not be guaranteed immunity from prosecution. And with the failure of the peace process, the Ugandan government decided to resort to its Plan B. On 15 December, allegedly with the support of the governments of South Sudan and DR Congo, the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) began aerial attacks on suspected LRA bases in the Garamaba forest, located in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Ugandan infantry and other support troops were later deployed to hunt down rebel fighters. But by mid-January 2009, the "Operation Lightning Thunder" had not yielded any positive result. To the contrary, it had drawn severe criticism from northern Uganda leaders who insisted that it was premature and that dialogue should be given a chance. More preoccupying was the fact that it had led to the merciless killing of scores of innocent civilians in the DRC and an apparent new drive from the LRA to enlist and abduct more child soldiers<sup>14</sup>.

On the home side, President Museveni further consolidated his hold over the domestic political sphere during 2008, not least because of discontent in the ranks of the opposition. The country's old ethnically-based parties appeared to

be on the wane, though identity politics may still make an appearance in disquiet among the old kingdoms about proposed reforms to the country's various systems of land tenure.

A campaign has already begun within the ranks of the ruling party to call on Museveni to stand for yet another term in office, which may not be popular with others harbouring presidential ambitions, but may also prevent a split in the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM).

#### *Good leadership qualities*

In Tanzania, President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete has managed to make the most of his tenure as chairperson of the African Union to impress with his diplomatic skills, as he proved in Kenya and Zimbabwe. This has provided a welcome respite from domestic problems. A spate of unusually serious corruption scandals forced the resignation of the Prime Minister and other cabinet members, some of them close political allies of the president. Zanzibar and Pemba also added their usual quota to the problems besetting the Tanzanian union, established in 1964. Negotiations to establish a unity government on the islands, which retain a good deal of autonomy, have come to naught.

As the year came to an end, President Kikwete seemed to be reasserting his authority within the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party, which still remains ossified by the interests of long-serving party barons, and as Kikwete's attentions focus more fully on domestic politics in 2009, the revitalisation of CCM is likely to be among his principal concerns.

### **CENTRAL AFRICA**

Events in Central Africa during 2008 were driven largely by the continuing crisis in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo. They were characterised mainly by serious political instability and humanitarian crisis in the DRC; fragile peace in Burundi, Chad and Rwanda; and efforts at political reconciliation in Congo-Brazzaville and the Central African Republic.

#### *Political instability in the DRC*

In the DRC, attempts to secure agreement on the disarmament of irregular and renegade forces have so far been without success, and the fighting in the Kivus has been severe enough to generate speculation that a more generalised regional war could be in the offing. At the heart of the matter lay the difficulties in getting General Laurent Nkunda's National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP) forces to disarm and join the process of integration into the Congolese army (FARDC). This proved even more difficult as Nkunda started to widen his previous objectives of defender of the Tutsi minority in north Kivu towards a more national struggle for the liberation of Congo. By the end of the year Nkunda's movement, though restricted to the North Kivu had set up a sophisticated military and administrative apparatus (with taxes and social facilities like hospitals) that displayed the characteristics of a state. The continued presence in eastern DRC of Rwandan rebels of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), most of them Hutu and some still wanted for their part in the genocide of 1994, is a source of constant complaint. This situation has been exacerbated by the evident collaboration of FARDC and FDLR forces, notwithstanding Kinshasa's undertakings to disarm and repatriate the latter.

At the turn of the year, the FARDC was in no condition to mount effective military operations, and was still dependent on the support of the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUC) in the country, who seemed reluctant to be drawn into a civil war in which they will have to bear the brunt of the fighting. As a consequence, MONUC is reviled by the civilian population of the Kivus for its presumed failure to protect them from the depredations of Nkunda, other irregular groups, and the FARDC itself. At the time this Report was completed, efforts were under way to secure direct talks between President Joseph Kabila and General Nkunda. An

appeal by Kinshasa to its ally Angola to send military assistance seemed to have been put on hold for now, and it is believed any foreign intervention of this sort would risk resistance from Rwanda, and possibly Uganda.

In the meantime, the implementation of the Nairobi and the Goma agreements seemed to have reached an impasse as direct talks between President Kabila and General Nkunda stumble on the irreconcilable personal differences between the two leaders. As the final report of the UN Group of experts on the DRC, released on 10 December, suggests, both the DRC and Rwanda are supporting, through more or less explicit channels, their respective rebellions<sup>15</sup>. Even though the extent of this support shouldn't be overestimated on both sides, this evidence brought by the UN indicates the necessity for both Rwanda and the DRC to cooperate seriously on security related issues. The arrest of General Nkunda, in mid-January 2009, by a joint Rwandese-Congolese force might be a promising sign of this future cooperation.

In the north east of the DRC, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continued making serious inroads, particularly after the military operation that the Ugandan, forces directed against it at the end of the year, with the support of the Congolese and South Sudanese governments (*see* the section on East Africa). All these military operations relate directly to a highly lucrative war economy in which Congolese resources are pillaged for private gain. Undoing the infernal logic of this situation is not the least of the negotiators' problems, along with the physical impossibility of some of the signatories to peace agreements to live up to their commitments.

In the south west of the country, the government dealt harshly with a rebellion by a millenarian BaKongo movement, evidently seeking the restoration of a historic Kongo kingdom incorporating parts of present-day Angola and Congo (Brazzaville).

President Joseph Kabila's administration has thus far been unable to extend state authority over the national territory, and there is little certainty that the process of state creation will gather momentum soon. Kabila himself has been relieved of one domestic opponent by the arrest in Europe of Jean-Pierre Bemba who faces charges at the International Criminal Court in The Hague in relation to atrocities allegedly committed in the Central African Republic in 2003. But apart from cabinet reshuffles involving the replacement of the octogenarian Antoine Gizenga as prime minister, and the formal reorganisation of the provincial system, there is little to show for a year of political manoeuvring in Kinshasa. In the meantime, the controversial deal with China, which provides the DRC government with a US\$9 bn credit line in exchange for access to minerals, continues to provide some insulation against foreign critics, who are also at a loss to decide what system could replace the present imperfect arrangement.

#### *Business as usual in Chad*

In Chad, the government had an uncomfortable time in 2008. In February, rebel forces fought their way into the capital N'Djamena, and President Idriss Deby Itno's rule appeared (once again) in imminent danger of being overthrown. He was saved by his own determination, by the oil-financed purchase of tanks and attack helicopters and by the benign "neutrality" of the French garrison, which provided logistical support, intelligence and advice and, most importantly, protected the airfield from which his air assets deployed.

In the aftermath of the failed assault on N'Djamena the rebel alliance fractured, though its component parts remained strong enough to launch further incursions from the Sudanese border into Chad's eastern reaches. Efforts to counter these reel forays led to a deepening of ties between the Chadian government and the Darfurian rebels of the JEM. As a consequence of this military activity on both sides of the border, the Chadian and Sudanese governments engaged in mutual recriminations which threatened at times to develop into a direct, as opposed to proxy, conflict. President Deby Itno obviously hoped that the deployment of a

European force into eastern Chad as a military contribution to a multi-dimensional UN mission (MINURCAT), with part of its mission being to provide protection against raids on the thousands of displaced, would also act as a buffer against armed rebels. In this expectation he seems to have been disappointed, though it can be argued that the presence of these forces obviated the desperate need to engage meaningfully in debate with his domestic political opponents. Nonetheless, the regime's survival in the long term will require a broadening of the political base, especially as the erosion of oil receipts is likely to make it more difficult to sustain the current tactics of co-option and military repression.

By the end of the year, Chadian rebels seemed to have gained momentum again and were preparing for a new attack on N'Djamena. The chronic political instability in Chad seems unlikely to find a negotiated solution as the main political actors rely more on guns than on norms and institutions. As the end of the EUFOR deployment nears (15 March 2009) and despite UN Security Council resolution 1861 of 14 January 2009, authorising the deployment of a follow-up military operation to replace EUFOR, it appears that the relative success of the European force in providing security according to its mandate (securing refugee camps and their humanitarian supply) has been mitigated by the failures of the other components of the UN mission. Particularly the MINURCAT and the DIS components have failed to be fully deployed and have so allowed for banditry and criminal operations to thrive in the region. Without a full deployment of the police and gendarmerie components of the mission and in absence of a global solution to the problem of impunity in Chad (including the rule of law), the whole UN mission is not likely to have more than a symbolic character.

#### *Fragile peace in the region*

Although the Rwandan government has proven itself adept at justifying some unorthodox tactics against its political opponents by invoking the continued genocidal threat posed by the FDLR rebels in the Congo, its domestic position currently seems unassailable, however untenable in the long term. The ruling party won an overwhelming victory in the legislative elections in 2008, and President Paul Kagame seems virtually assured of securing re-election in the presidential contest of 2010. A continuing war of words with France over its role in the events of 1994 and, more recently, over who was responsible for the shooting down of the aircraft carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, which precipitated the mass killings of that year will sustain the battle for the moral high ground. Kigali seems to enjoy the almost unconditional support of the US and UK governments, and the continuing sympathy of South Africa. However, Kigali's moral authority was seriously affected by the UN Report on the DRC as Rwanda is portrayed as part of the problem and not necessarily as a victim in the Great Lakes conflict.

In Burundi, the government of President Pierre Nkurunziza has managed to beat off the threat from a sizeable element within the ruling National Council for the Defence of Democracy – Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) led by Hussein Radjabu, who now continues his political career from a prison cell, where he will possibly stay for the next 12 years. Marginalising Radjabu and his followers was facilitated by some blatant manipulation of the courts, but President Nkurunziza still faces a number of challenges in the run up to elections due in 2010. The factionalisation of Burundian politics and the apparent impossibility of forming stable cross-party alliances add to the uncertainties and the likelihood of unanticipated realignments of an essentially opportunistic nature.

The integration of Palipehutu-FNL in the peace process also featured large in 2008, with aborted negotiations accompanied by sporadic outbreaks of fighting. At the heart of the problem is the government's apparent reluctance to allow the erstwhile rebels to take up positions in Parliament before the elections. But a political standstill was overcome when leaders of Palipehutu agreed to register their political party under a different name, as they had been insisting on maintaining this name seen by others as ethnically defined. At the centre of the matter was the issue of which party can convince the electorate that it provides

the best protection for the interests of the majority Hutu. However, due to a strong commitment of the international community and South Africa, in particular, the year ended on a rather positive note in Burundi. The integration of the FNL into the political game opens new opportunities that in the best case might even allow for the emergence of cross-ethnic alliances.

#### *The quest for national reconciliation*

Congo (Brazzaville) seems to have emerged from years of political turmoil into a period of relative calm. President Denis Sassou-Nguesso's policy of reconciliation seems to have borne fruit and has convinced even some of his most bitter opponents to join him in government. Rebel forces have been persuaded to lay down their arms and enter a peaceful political contest, and the country enjoyed a year in which the principal political debate was over the broadening of the presidential alliance, a move necessary to assure Sassou-Nguesso of nationwide support that is resisted by hardline elements within his northern dominated ruling party. The success of the broader alliance in the local government elections of 2008, however, bodes well for the future, as it may betoken a move away from the narrow ethnic and regionally based politics of the past.

To the north of Congo (Brazzaville) the picture was not so favourable. In the Central African Republic (CAR) the regime of President François Bozizé struggled to extend effective rule across most of its extensive and impoverished territory. It was challenged by a number of rebel movements, which signed a number of agreements during the year only to break off and return to combat over matters of implementation. Moreover, conflict in Chad, Sudan and even eastern DRC continued to impact heavily upon the security of many of the country's citizens. Even in the absence of political motives, the tenuous hold of the authorities provides ample scope for violent banditry, an occupation that comes more easily to those caught up on the fringes of war economies.

The year, however, ended on a positive and a promising note. While the force of Central African peacekeepers were deployed and UN and European forces were attempting to bolster the country's security forces, the political leaders of the country succeeded in launching the much-needed comprehensive political dialogue, brokered by President Bongo of Gabon and chaired by the former Burundian President Pierre Buyoya. In fact, Ange-Félix Patassé, the former Head of State that was overthrown by the current one in March 2003, returned to the country in early December after five years of exile in Togo to take part in the dialogue. In January 2009, the process remained serious and promising, even though the hearings of the ICC on the case of Bemba might dramatically change the course of events. In general, the weakness of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to create community values at the most basic levels remains the biggest challenge for the countries of the region<sup>16</sup>.

### **SOUTHERN AFRICA**

The year 2008 was an eventful year in the Southern African region. Parliamentary and presidential elections were held in four countries: Zimbabwe, Angola, Swaziland and Zambia though not all enjoyed the same amount of public attention. And despite his achievements as chief mediator in a SADC-brokered power-sharing deal in Zimbabwe, South Africa's Thabo Mbeki was asked by the ANC to step down as president of the country in September 2008.

#### *The intractable crisis of Zimbabwe*

In Zimbabwe, the year 2008 witnessed a deepening of the political and economic crisis, aggravated by what ensued after the controversial presidential and parliamentary elections of March and the presidential run-off in June. For the first time since independence in 1980, the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) lost its majority in parliament to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). With MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai winning 47.9 per cent of the total votes compared with Robert Mugabe's 43.2 per cent in the first

round, the country was geared for a run-off on 27 June 2008. A few days prior to the event, however, Tsvangirai announced his withdrawal from the race, citing the increased violence against his supporters as cause for his decision. The election went on, however, with Robert Mugabe being declared the winner. After much wrangling, the key stakeholders in the political crisis signed a Memorandum of Understanding, outlining the issues to be addressed in order to reach a negotiated settlement. This finally led to the signing of a power-sharing arrangement on 15 September, but its implementation had not materialised at the time this paper was completed. The struggle to form a cabinet between the parties to the power-sharing agreement has been particularly worrisome. Following what some have called a disappointing resolution on Zimbabwe after an emergency SADC Summit held on 8 November 2008, it appears that the key stakeholders, observers and policymakers are at a loss to identify a way out of this political impasse.

If one were to estimate the potential for the current transitional arrangement to craft truly innovative institutions, one must consider the speed at which the transition was initiated. In other words, for innovation to be well-considered takes time; rapid decisions – as is the case in Zimbabwe in terms of allotting cabinet positions for example – may mean that policymakers, regardless of the party they affiliate with, rely on well-known foreign or post-independence models instead of crafting new innovative institutions. As for the stakeholders to the power-sharing arrangement, one needs to ask whether the new dispensation is comprised of “recycled” or “replaced” elites, as this has an impact on the types of institutional arrangements one might expect to see in the future. If the elites are replaced, policies might be more innovative; if they are merely recycled, policies tend to be more conservative.

In Zimbabwe, the mixture of replaced and recycled elites implies that the originality of future policies and their potential to effect real change, particularly economic recovery, depends very much on which ministries are awarded to which party. Zimbabwe is but at the beginning of a long process of recovery and the political leaders will be hard pressed to relay the new message of a cooperative partnership to their supporters. Clearly, the signing of this agreement does not signify an agreement on the well-known contentious issues between longstanding enemies, but rather reveals the willingness of the rivals having finally agreed to disagree. It is a treacherous road towards democracy, and a transitional arrangement that can easily be overthrown – premature calls for transitional justice for example, arguably a necessary long-term objective, could serve to rock the boat. By year-end, the outbreak of a cholera crisis added a humanitarian adjective to the long list of Zimbabwe’s crises.

#### *Peaceful parliamentary elections, but only for independents*

The Kingdom of Swaziland held parliamentary elections on 19 September 2008, with candidates standing in their individual capacity only, as political parties are banned due to the new Constitution that came into effect on 8 February 2006. Though it introduced a Bill of Rights which included freedom of association, it did not allow parliamentary candidates to stand for election as members of political parties. Thus, once elected, Members of Parliament cannot form a “party voting block” in the house that might challenge the current government. Although reforms implemented in 1993 have allowed Swazis to vote, the parliament does not set national policy nor does it write legislation. These remain the privilege of the king, whose palace appoints cabinet ministers that implement the national policy, effectively reducing parliament to a rubber stamp institution.

Amid mounting protests against the political system, Swaziland has attracted increasing criticism from regional bodies, though not as much attention has been awarded to the monarchy as in the case of Zimbabwe. In addition, celebrations of the 40th national birthday of the King attracted significant domestic and international criticism for the lavish public expenditure involved, which could have been spent on the country’s development priorities. For 2009, it appears that the downward spiral of political repression and socioeconomic decline that has characterised King Mswati III’s 20-year reign will continue.

### *A smooth transition*

In Zambia, unscheduled presidential elections were held on 30 October 2008 following the death of President Levy Mwanawasa about two months earlier due to complications from a stroke he suffered on the eve of the African Union Summit in July. Article 38 of the 1996 Zambian constitution stipulates that, should a serving president die in office or become incapacitated, “an election to the office of President shall be held in accordance with Article 34 within ninety days from the date of the office becoming vacant”. Thus, on 30 October 2008, Zambians went to the polls to elect a new president. Four candidates contested in the presidential elections: acting President Rupiah Banda ran for the ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), while Michael Sata was the candidate for the lead opposition party, the Patriotic Front (PF). Haikande Hichilema from the United Party for National Development and Godfrey Miyanda from the Heritage Party were also presidential hopefuls.

The contenders fought a brief yet highly charged battle for the presidency, and in the wake of the recent experiences of electoral violence in Kenya and Zimbabwe, observers were anxious about a repeat of what had come to be known as the Kenya syndrome. Sata’s aggressive rhetoric gave credence to arguments around the likelihood of violent post-electoral disputes. However, unlike many of its neighbours, Zambian political history has been relatively stable since it gained independence in 1964. Despite a number of failed attempts to overthrow the government by the military, conflicts have usually been resolved by non-violent means, mostly through the courts, whose decisions are generally accepted.

However, Zambian politics is based on systems of patronage. Leaders reward their supporters with jobs and contracts to secure their loyalty and power base, thus public funds are used for private purposes. Moreover, political insecurity ensues whenever there is a change of government since new patronage networks are then created whilst old ones are torn apart. Fearing prosecution, those on their way out are reluctant to leave. The looting of state assets by the political elite has resulted in electoral apathy, visible in low voter turnouts in past elections; and even the anti-corruption campaign spearheaded by Levy Mwanawasa upon his assumption of office in 2001 has not curbed public discontent. Thus, the current political stability rests on a fragile foundation. If left to escalate, widespread poverty and social inequalities that characterise present-day Zambian society could pose deep-seated structural threats to the future of democracy and economic development in the country.

### *A successful launch of the post-civil war era?*

In neighbouring Angola, legislative elections on 5 September 2008 saw the ruling MPLA win a landslide victory with 82 per cent of the vote, reducing the opposition to a residual political force. UNITA won a mere 10.5 per cent of the vote, the PRS 3 per cent, and FNLA only 1 per cent. President Jose Eduardo dos Santos’s party is now able, should it so desire, to change the constitution and govern without having significantly to engage in political debate with the opposition or civil society. The composition of the legislative branch will, therefore, experience a radical transformation compared with the situation after 1992, when the MPLA obtained 125 seats, UNITA 70, the PRS 6, FNLA 5 and a number of smaller parties secured one parliamentary seat each. The result of the latest elections gave the opposition an estimated total of only 40 seats out of the 223 available. From a theoretical perspective, a victory on this scale is hardly conducive to the promotion of democracy in a country whose past has been marked by repressive governance, corruption, social and economic exclusion, mismanagement of natural resources and political marginalisation.

As one of the two top oil-producers in Sub-Saharan Africa, Angola and, by extension the ruling MPLA, have considerable diplomatic clout related directly to its economic power, its pragmatic approach of diversifying its development partners, and the strength and size of its military. The government’s strategy

to ensure its survival and international relevance revolves around its pragmatic approach of normalising relations with countries it previously did not engage with, as in the case of the US, France and others. The country's main bargaining power resides in its natural resources. The power of oil, diamonds, and other resources has allowed Luanda to broker significant cooperation agreements with donors as diverse as China, Brazil, India and Europe. China in particular, with its liquidity and willingness to invest in infrastructure projects and extend credit lines without political conditionalities, has increased Luanda's new assertiveness.

Regionally, Luanda aims to play a larger role in defining the political, economic and security landscape of Southern (and Central) Africa, in a direct bid to secure its interests and as an alternative to South Africa's "hegemony". With the legitimacy that this electoral victory gives to the MPLA, Angola, which previously flexed its diplomatic and military muscle, is likely to further entrench its influence in Sub-Saharan Africa through military and economic agreements. Apart from the training of the armed forces in the two Congos, it has signed military agreements with several countries including Zimbabwe and Guinea Bissau. Luanda will gladly fill the vacuum left by South Africa's perceived temporary weakness created by its internal power-struggles, and has already volunteered to deploy troops to the DRC's border with Rwanda to help stabilise the Kivu provinces.

Even though the Angolan elections failed to meet international standards of transparency, credit has to be given to the population and all the political actors for the peaceful manner in which they were conducted. The signal sent to the ruling party by the population is that they want peace, security, and economic participation. The MPLA now has all the leverage to deliver on the main area of concern in Angolan social life: poverty alleviation. It will be judged by its ability to substantially widen the circle of beneficiaries of the impressive growth rates the country has experienced in the last decade.

#### *When a party decides for a whole Nation*

Much has happened in the region's southernmost country. But the year 2008 in South Africa will be most remembered for two important events: xenophobic attacks on foreigners and the recall and subsequent resignation of President Thabo Mbeki.

Starting from mid-May, townships in the Gauteng province (where both Pretoria and Johannesburg are located) erupted into sporadic violence and looting in which locals targeted foreigners, primarily Zimbabweans, killing many people with scores more injured. Most of the victims sought refuge at police stations and shelters. At first, the response of the South African police was sporadic and disorganized, as they acted like fire fighters rather than having a well-planned response strategy in place. However, politicians across the board strongly condemned it and the government later took decisive action by deploying more security forces, including armed forces. In his address to the Nation on Africa Day (25 May), the then President Thabo Mbeki described the attacks as "shameful" and apologized to Africa.

Perhaps more important than this narrative is the explanation of factors that led to these attacks. Records show that similar attacks had happened in the country, of which Somalis and Mozambicans had borne the brunt. In search of answers, some explanations were that social constructs of national and ethnic identity and its interplay with socio-economic conditions (and competition for scarce resources that these conditions generate) constitute important factors<sup>17</sup>. In fact, high unemployment rates in South Africa and massive African immigration into the labour market (including illegal) of a booming economy have created perceptible resentments between foreigners and mainly uneducated locals. Another fact that came out during the attacks was the issue of social housing whose manipulation both by some corrupt government officials and some beneficiaries has created the perception that foreigners were given better treatment than South African nationals.

But in mid-June, the head of the South African government's communications department, Themba Maseko, reported that at least one-third of the deaths, 21 out of 62, arising from the attacks were in fact South Africans. The information came from a report by the inter-ministerial task team, which was set up by government to investigate the cause of the attacks. This was a significant and interesting finding about the xenophobic attacks, which seemed to have tarnished South Africa's image internationally, particularly in the rest of Africa. This finding seemed to give credence to the assertion of some government officials that the attacks on foreign nationals were at best driven by criminality and at worst organised and orchestrated by 'hostile forces'. It is a fact, however, that many conspiracy theories were brandied about to explain the crisis.

The second important development in the country was the resignation of President Mbeki on 21 September 2008 after bowing to an African National Congress (ANC) ruling to step down. This act drastically altered the political landscape of South Africa. His replacement, ANC deputy president Kgalema Motlanthe, is expected to step down after the 2009 elections, with the top position most likely to be filled by ANC president Jacob Zuma should he be the candidate of the party.

The ANC may have hoped that Motlanthe's appointment would prevent a split in the ruling party, given that the new president has enjoyed a reputation as conciliator between the left and the centre since entering the cabinet in July. However, despite the bulk of the cabinet having been reappointed, several Mbeki loyalists under the leadership of former defence minister, Mosioua "Terror" Lekota, and former Gauteng premier, Mbhazima Shilowa, resigned in sympathy and have formed a breakaway party called the Congress of the People (COPE). The party was officially launched on 16 December. While the new political formation is unlikely to replace the ANC, it will certainly impact significantly on the electoral support for the ruling party, as proven by the result of bi-elections in the Eastern Cape shortly before its official launch, as many of its members won seats as independents.

There is no doubt that, if the new formation achieves an electoral support of approximately 20 per cent or more in the general elections, this will be a setback for the new ANC leadership and the ANC generally. Questions have been raised about the likely support-base of the new party, and this is important given where the ANC's traditional support lies, namely the rural areas, within the black communities and amongst the poor. Although the new political party is likely to draw much of its support from the young professionals and the emerging black middle-class, it will also draw some support from the traditional ANC support base. Indeed, the leadership of the new formation has been at pains not to project their party as driven by class interests. Rather, they are likely to tap into the prevalent discontent at the local levels, including from within the poor and rural communities that are unhappy with the poor or lack of delivery of basic services by the ANC-led government.

The mixed state of peace and security in the continent continued to challenge the African Union throughout the year 2008. Efforts to establish all pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) were matched by the several latent and full-blown crises that still affect the continent. The deterioration of conflict situations such as Darfur, Somalia, the DRC and the Central African Republic as well as the stabilisation of structural instability in countries like in Cote d'Ivoire, Chad, Burundi, Ethiopia-Eritrea and Mauritania have called for varied arbitration mechanisms, which strain the AU's capacities. Particularly in Darfur and Somalia the unclear division of labour between African and UN duties in terms of responsibility for peacekeeping has tested the meagre but voluntarist capacities of nascent AU institutions.

Two major trends can be identified with regard to the AU's conflict management in the year 2008. The first relates to institutional developments of the African peace and security architecture and the second relates to the challenges emerging from instability in the continent. Another important development, which is however not considered in this report revolves around the Grand Debate about the African Union

Government. The symbolism and emotionalism of this discussion has so far only allowed for a debate between so-called radicalists (those who want an immediate establishment of the Government) and gradualists (those who advocate for a slower pace). Fairly little attention has been given to the nihilists, those who think that a Union government will achieve nothing less than symbolic goals. In fact it is still not clear what problems will be better solved within the framework of a super union government than within the current local and national state formations.

#### *Institutional developments of the APSA*

Regarding the development of the AU's peace and security architecture, organs like the Peace and Security Council of the AU (PSC) have gained more visibility and influence as envisaged by the Protocol creating it. The PSC has become a central organ within the AU whose decisions and arbitration enjoy growing respect in member states and beyond the continent. This is not only the consequence of the regularity of its consultations but also of its principled and balanced approach to finding lasting solutions to African conflicts. In this respect, one of the most important issues the PSC was confronted with during the year 2008 was certainly the application on 14 July 2008 by the Prosecutor of the ICC for an arrest warrant against Sudan's President Omar Al-Bashir. The mostly passionate discussion that followed the indictment revealed two almost irreconcilable sides, namely the proponents of justice on the one and those of peace on the other side. Bridging this perceived peace/justice divide, the PSC called for an approach that reconciled the needs for justice and the interests of peace negotiations. In accordance with Article 16 of the Rome Statute, the PSC requested the UN Security Council to defer the process initiated by the ICC to ensure that ongoing peace efforts are not jeopardised. In doing so, the PSC was taking into account the fact that in the current circumstances, a prosecution might not necessarily be in the interest of justice and the victims. Concretising its approach, the PSC even went further and requested the AU Commission to set up a high level panel to examine the situation in-depth and submit recommendations on how best the issues of accountability and combating impunity, on the one hand, and reconciliation, on the other could be effectively addressed. The former South-African President will be chairing the Panel<sup>18</sup>.

Other pillars of the APSA also made some significant progress during the past year amid persisting logistical and operational problems: A new roadmap was adopted in July for the African stand-by Force (ASF), which includes a strong civilian and police component. In addition, the Northern brigade, saw the beginning of its formation with the establishment in Tripoli, in December 2008, of the Executive Secretariat and the PLANELM of the Northern Brigade, as well as the adoption, by the Defence Ministers of the region, of the Table of Organization and Equipment (TOE) and the Regional Training Plan during their meeting held in Tripoli from 21 to 23 December 2008. Late in the year, the launch of the EURORECAMP/AMANI AFRICA programme aimed at facilitating the operationalisation of the ASF through the support of the EU, indirectly indicated the over-reliance of African capabilities on external resources and funding.

As far as the Continental early-warning system (CEWS) is concerned, efforts to enhance the coordination with regional mechanisms were made as well as important steps towards the finalisation of the data collection and analytical instruments of the system. However, it remains to be seen if an over technical and indicators-driven system will be sustainable for the entire continent. Another important development took place at the level of conflict prevention with the acceleration of the establishment of the panel of the wise. Due to a troubled electoral agenda in 2008, this consultative body mainly focused on election-related conflicts in the continent.

#### *Coups d'état and the need for an African governance architecture*

The other major security related trend in Africa was certainly the *coups d'état*. In fact, the second half of the year saw what many analysts refer to as the resurgence of the scourge of *coups d'état* in Africa. In fact two successful coups (Mauritania,

6 August and Guinea, 24 December) and one coup attempt (in Guinea Bissau) took place at a time when civil and political liberties are on the rise in the continent. In an attempt to civilise the production of politics in Africa, the AU firmly condemned these coups and urged the new authorities to restore constitutional order in Guinea and Mauritania. However, a closer analysis of the AU's reaction to the two countries displays differences that reflect the different national trajectories. Whereas the AU clearly adopted a firm stance against Mauritania, it seemed to accord the benefit of the doubt to the new Guinean authorities<sup>19</sup>. Far from reflecting any preferential treatment of Guinea, this situation is representative of the fact that the coup in Mauritania put an end to a widely acclaimed and exemplary transition period with model character. In fact the toppled president Abdallahi was duly elected at the end of a transparent process and was enjoying the full legitimacy requested for his functions. The justified firm reaction of the AU (followed by the entire international community) is also due to the fact that the *de facto* authorities of Mauritania – led by former head of the presidential guard, General Ould Abdel Aziz – seem to plan the establishment of an electorally legitimised military power that will perpetuate the overwhelming influence of the military over the country's institutions.

Unlike Mauritania, the coup perpetrated in Guinea came as a relief to many Guineans and many observers<sup>20</sup>. In fact the regime of President Conte had led the country to the brink of socio-economic chaos. Sick and incapable of managing the country for the last 5 years, President Conte was the *de facto* ruler over a country whose real power lay in the hands of the different clans that surrounded him with the support of the high ranks of the army. Only interested in the survival of his regime as attested by constitutional amendments aimed at extending presidential terms, President Conte violently repressed numerous social upheavals, during which the population attempted to express its frustration. From a technical point of view, Guinea was in a situation of vacancy of power, as there was ample evidence of the President's inability to perform his constitutional duties. In this respect, the coup prevented an eventual reproduction of the – legal but certainly barely legitimate – Conte's regime, which would have been the case if constitutional provisions were respected after his death.

The AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have a series of sometimes very sophisticated mechanisms aimed at modernising political habits in Africa and preventing coups d'Etat as a mode of access to power. Among them, the Lomé Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes and the – largely unratified – Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance figure prominently. However, the implementation of these mechanisms seems to follow rather symbolic than effective objectives. In fact, they are mostly invoked when a coup d'etat has been perpetrated and not when other grave violations of the Lomé Declaration and the Charter are committed. Constitutional changes aimed at extending the President's term in office have been organised in several countries in the last 10 years, very often in violation of the country's own legal arrangements without any substantive reaction of the AU. Such manipulations generally lay the foundations for social unrest and instability, which sometimes create the conditions for coups. It appears the AU is in need of a comprehensive governance architecture that will address governance failures at the very moment they take place and bear the risk of destabilising the country. Such an architecture could rely on the existing mechanisms with important implications of RECs for subsidiary purposes<sup>21</sup>.

The recent shocks emanating from the banking sub-prime crisis serve as a timely reminder of the dangers inherent in attempting forecasts. Africa in general is likely to experience little direct damage to its banking sectors as a result of this crisis, though the knock-on effect of growing risk aversion and the immense fiscal commitments made by governments across the world in an attempt to mitigate its effects will undoubtedly be felt in Africa and elsewhere. Foreign direct investment in emerging markets and areas regarded as politically challenging will be reduced, and aid budgets cut. This will put pressure on the balance of payment positions of many African countries.

Compounding these problems has been the descent into recession of the major industrial economies with the concomitant and precipitate fall of commodity prices. The contraction of consumer markets in Europe and the Americas will be felt badly in China, a major importer of African raw materials, and although Beijing has announced a massive financial package to stimulate domestic growth by way of compensating and avoiding the worst effects of trade contraction, this will take time to realise. Many African states might therefore see an alarming fall not only in exports by volume but especially by value. This would have a considerable effect on governments' ability to meet their revenue requirements, and continued volatility in the markets will make for difficulties in budgeting. Social expenditure, already under pressure in many states, will be especially vulnerable to austerity policies, with obvious consequences for human security.

Countries such as Zambia, with its excessive dependence on copper exports, and oil producers such as Nigeria and Angola might find their budgets thrown into turmoil if commodity prices remain low. In some countries the difficulties of paying civil service and security forces' salaries may be aggravated with potentially dangerous political consequences. There is some good news, however, in that food and fuel prices have declined from their historic highs, and this creates a breathing space for more sustainable policies to be introduced in these sectors.

On the political front it is very likely that a number of current crises will remain at a high level of human insecurity. The Democratic Republic of Congo is likely to continue to resist attempts to consolidate anything resembling a democratic state with effective administrative control over the national territory. It is also likely to continue to experience difficulties with regard to the establishment of law and order or an officially sanctioned tax system. This will prolong dependence on external agents eager to lay hands upon the country's resources at bargain prices, to the detriment of the Congolese people. In the east, the political crisis appears intractable, failing a major reconsideration of diplomatic positions recently adopted. However, the recent publication of the UN report on the DRC that openly addresses (known but untold) triggers to the conflict is likely to bring a new dynamic between the DRC and Rwanda, both of which have more to gain in cooperation than in conflict.

Sudan, too, will continue to exercise the imaginations of international diplomats and domestic politicians, in terms both of the Darfur conflict and the looming deadlines in the process initiated by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. On the latter score there are likely to be delays built into the election schedule, and possibly some slippage on the date for the South's referendum, though this would be preferable to the total collapse of the CPA. In any case, the possible issuance of an arrest warrant against President Al-Bashir by the ICC is likely to have far reaching consequences both on the political dynamics within the ruling party as well as the peace process in the South and the Darfur conflict.

Zimbabwe is another state that will continue to feature in the headlines. But whatever arrangement emerges from the political infighting between the main protagonists in that country, Zimbabwe is at best at the beginning of a long process of recovery, economic social and humanitarian, given even the most favourable of political contexts.

But there is reason for cautious optimism about the situation in Somalia, following the resignation of President Yusuf (opposed to the necessary inclusive dialogue in the country) and the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces, which seemed to have become part of rather than the solution to the problem. While it is true that the immediate future of the country will be determined by a new and even more complex balance of internal forces, the fact that there is a credible and reconciliatory Prime Minister keen to establish a peaceful order in the country and Parliament seems overwhelmingly appreciative and supportive of his efforts is a reassuring factor that opens new opportunities.

Some countries emerging from conflict will continue to deserve the international community's support: Sierra Leone and Liberia come to mind, but Chad and the CAR will certainly need further international attention. A number of elections are due to be held in 2009 (See annex). South Africa's general elections scheduled for April should be the most interesting in the continent since the advent of democracy in that country in 1994. A new party has emerged from within the ranks of the dominant ANC, and though its popularity remains untested, South Africa's system of proportional representation may see inroads made upon the existing majority.

Discussions at the African Union will be dominated by the progress made in the constitution of the African Peace and Security Architecture and the Union Government. As far as the latter is concerned, the debates will have to accommodate the conflicting views of the so-called gradualists and immediatists in order to buy time. In fact, the heavy-handed way in which Libyan President Muammar Al Gaddafi – leader of the immediatists – is pushing for this agenda, irritates a huge majority of other member states.

On the whole, the prospects for democratic consolidation seem rather promising but precarious, though characterised with regional disparities. While West Africa seems geared towards more democratisation, political liberalisation is likely to remain stagnant in North Africa, as a number of ageing leaders in this region seek either to prolong their stay in office or impose their choice of successor, often from the ranks of their own family. The constitutional change in Algeria that will allow President Bouteflika to run for a third term, following Tunisia and Egypt confirms this trend. Central Africa is also in a similar situation; with the accumulated number of years current leaders of Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Angola, Chad and Congo-Brazzaville have spent in power surpassing much more than a century.

The election of Barack Obama, an African-American, as 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States was hailed by many in this continent as heralding a possible upturn in Africa's global profile. A more sober assessment would remind us that he is the US President, not the President of Africa, or even Kenya. He takes office at a time of troubles virtually unmatched in the last half century. Not only does President Obama have to steer a policy course between the rocks of economic depression and heightened expectations of many who voted for him, he faces a foreign policy environment that would be daunting in even the best of circumstances. Israel-Peestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, the Russian "near abroad", and economic relations with China will dominate his international horizon as well as the need for international cooperation in the face of the threats to the banking sector.

Certainly we can look forward to a better-informed and more humane US policy towards Africa and a view that sees the continent less as a threat or a theatre of operations. Countries with poor human rights records may find it more difficult to trade support for the so-called "war on terror" against their treatment of their people.

- 
- 1 The Situation Report was authored in a concerted action by all the researchers and research interns of the Programme on the occasion of the programme's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008
  - 2 See Human Security Report 2007 and Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2007
  - 3 This is the first edition of what we hope to be a regular periodic report on human security related developments in Africa.
  - 4 One of those issues of paramount importance is certainly the climate change issue. More than any other development, the effects of climate change are likely to impact on governance choices in Africa and to shape the security debate on the continent for the next decades.
  - 5 The African Security Analysis Programme of the ISS has recently started a monograph series whose aim is to study the phenomenon of militarisation of social conflicts in Africa. See, for example, Robert Romborah Simiyu, *The Militianisation of Social Conflicts in Africa: The Case of Land-Based Conflict in the Mount Elgon Region of Western Kenya*. ISS Monograph No 152, October 2008.
  - 6 An important analysis of the deep seated social cleavages in Kenya was made by the NEPAD initiated APRM Review of the country. Even though this escaped the scrutiny of most analysts and policy makers, the APRM review made a crucial early warning about the potential for violence in the Kenyan society. But, as is often the case, the gap between early warning and early action was unfortunately not closed.
  - 7 See the Report for a detailed analysis of these indicators.
  - 8 See the Somalia page on the website of the World Food Programme at: [http://www.wfp.org/country\\_brief/indexcountry.asp?region=2&section=9&sub\\_section=2&country=706](http://www.wfp.org/country_brief/indexcountry.asp?region=2&section=9&sub_section=2&country=706)
  - 9 See OHCHR, "Eleventh periodic report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Sudan – Killing and injuring of civilians on 25 August 2008 by government security forces: Kalma IDP camp, South Darfur, Sudan", New York, 23 January 2009. For a UN press release and link to the 12-page report, see <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=29638&Cr=Darfur&Cr1=>
  - 10 See, for example, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Cocaine Trafficking in West Africa: The threat to stability and development (with special reference to Guinea-Bissau)*, (Vienna, UNODC, December 2007) at [www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/west\\_africa\\_cocaine\\_report\\_2007-12\\_en.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/west_africa_cocaine_report_2007-12_en.pdf).
  - 11 See "Tuareg rebels attack Mali army camp, 32 killed", *Mail & Guardian* (Johannesburg) online, 22 May 2008, at <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2008-05-22-tuareg-rebels-attack-mali-army-camp-32-killed>
  - 12 Despite all the reservations one might have regarding state rankings and indexes, the Freedom House Index is certainly one of the best in assessing the state of civil and political liberties in the world.
  - 13 See Tim Murithi, "Kenya – A Year after the Crisis: The Quest for Electoral Reform and Transitional Justice", *ISS Situation Report*, 14 January 2009.
  - 14 There are serious doubts about the quality of the planning and the execution of the Ugandan operation in the DRC. The deployment of ground forces 72 hours after the air strikes, the inability to properly surround the areas where rebels were suspected, and the subsequent atrocious killings of civilians allegedly carried out by the LRA indicate the poor management of the operation by the UPDF.
  - 15 See United Nations Security Council, *Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo*, S/2008/773, 12 December 2008.
  - 16 See Chrysantus Ayangafac (ed.), *The Political Economy of regionalization in Central Africa*. ISS Monograph 155, January 2009.
  - 17 See "South Africa: Xenophobic or Afrophobic attacks and what lies behind them", ISS Daily Briefings, 19 May 2008.
  - 18 See the Report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on the Activities of the Commission Covering the Period July to December 2008
  - 19 See the different Communiqués of the PSC regarding the situation in the two countries ([www.africa-union.org](http://www.africa-union.org))
  - 20 See Issaka K. Souaré, Guinea's Military Coup: A Blessing in Disguise? *ISS Today*, 6 January 2009.
  - 21 For a discussion of such an architecture, see Paul-Simon Handy, Issaka K. Souaré: *L'Union Africaine, la Guinée et les coups d'États en Afrique*. Forthcoming Situation Report.

## Annex I: Elections Calendar 2009

Country	Election	Month
Algeria	President (1st round)	April
Angola	President (1st round)	Not known
Botswana	National Assembly and local Government President (by National Assembly)	October Not known
Chad	National Assembly and local Government	Late 2009 (postponed from 2006)
Comoros	Island Assemblies Assembly of the Union	March April (two-round system)
Gabon	Senate (indirect)	January
Guinea-Conakry	Legislative and presidential	By December
Malawi	President (1 <sup>st</sup> round) National Assembly	19 May
Mali	Local Government	May
Mauritius	Local Government	Urban: October Rural: December
Morocco	Local Government	September
Mozambique	President (1 <sup>st</sup> round) Assembly of the Republic Provincial Assemblies	November/December
Namibia	President (1 <sup>st</sup> round) National Assembly Local Government	November
Niger	Local Government President (1 <sup>st</sup> round); National Assembly	August November
Republic of the Congo	President (1 <sup>st</sup> round)	Not known
South Africa	National Assembly; Provincial Legislature President (by National Assembly)	Before 15 June April
Sudan	President (1 <sup>st</sup> round) National Assembly Council of States Southern Sudan President (1 <sup>st</sup> round) Southern Sudan Assembly State Legislatures State Governors Local Government	Before July
Tunisia	President Chambers of Deputies	October

Source: Electoral Institute of South Africa

## **Annex II: ISS Situation Reports 2008**

- 14 January 2009: *Kenya – A Year after the Crisis: The Quest for Electoral Reform and Transitional Justice*, by Tim Murithi
- 17 Dec 2008: *Western Sahara: Understanding the Roots of the Conflict and Suggesting a Way Out*, by Issaka K. Souaré, Abdelhamid El Ouali and Mhamed Khadad
- 8 Dec 2008: *Ethiopia and Eritrea in Turmoil. Implications for Peace and Security in a Troubled Region*, by Jonathan Ewing
- 26 Nov 2008: *Assessing Security Sector Reform and its Impact on the Kivu Provinces*, by Henri Boshoff and Hans Hoebeke
- 07 Nov 2008: *Les Relations Franco-Africaines: Changement et Continuité?*, by Moussa Diaw
- 25 Sep 2008: *Sudan: What Implications for President Al-Bashir's Indictment by the ICC?*, by Issaka K. Souaré
- 16 Sep 2008: *Angolan Legislative Elections: Analysing the MPLA's Triumph*, by Paula Roque
- 15 Sep 2008: *The Eritrea – Djibouti Border Dispute*, by Berouk Mesfin
- 30 Jul 2008: *Peace in the Kivu's? An Analysis of the Nairobi and Goma Agreements*, by Henri Boshoff and Hans Hoebeke
- 15 Jul 2008: *Africa Aviation Security: Implications for Peace and Security*, by Mutali K. Se' Kapchangah
- 07 Jul 2008: *Managing Post-War Liberia: An Update*, by David Zounmenou
- 23 Jun 2008: *Egypt: The Political Process Between 'Opening Up' and 'Control'*, by Issaka K Souaré
- 05 Mar 2008: *Situation Critical: The Anjouan Political Crisis*, by Chrysantus Ayangafac