

African Regional Security Complexes

The African continent presents several policy puzzles and dilemmas with respect to the relationship between military spending and development. Home to some of the world's poorest states, Africa has also borne witness to some of the most protracted and destructive conflicts in the past two decades. The civil wars in Uganda, Sudan, Angola and Mozambique, the genocide in Rwanda (and the similar conflict in Burundi), the internecine struggles in Liberia, Somalia and Sierra Leone, and the many smaller-scale struggles have resulted in millions of deaths and displaced persons. Repressive and/or military rule in states such as Zaire and Nigeria has also stifled political and social development, and a predatory elite in many states has siphoned off scarce resources for personal enrichment.

On the other hand, if measured by formal indicators, Africa possesses a relatively low level of militarization: its total spending of 11.5 billion dollars represents only 1.3 percent of the global total, and only 3.1 percent of the continent's GNP (it should be noted, however, that this is more than double the levels in Central and South America). Given the region's pressing development needs, however, the opportunity cost of even a low level of military spending is probably high, and recent international attention has hence focused on how to divert resources away from the military sector towards more productive investments in infrastructure, education and basic services.¹

Huge difference across the continent make a single analysis of its situation impossible. Likewise, the continent does not make up one undifferentiated security complex. Instead, three sub-regional analyses are presented here for illustration: North Africa, Southern Africa and West Africa. Central and East Africa have been omitted, but some states that are not included in the analysis of the three sub-regions above will be discussed in passing.

North Africa and the Sahel

North Africa and the Sahel encompasses ten states, and stretches from Mauritania to Sudan. States such as Mali, Chad and Mauritania are among the world's poorest, ranking 167, 168, and 158 respectively (out of 173) on the UN's Human Development Index. By contrast, oil-rich states such as Algeria and Libya are relatively well off. The entire region has been subject to a complex range of internal and inter-state conflicts, although domestic instability and civil war remain by far the most important security problems. Recent regional conflicts include a conflict between Morocco and Algeria over the Western Sahara (and

¹ This is especially the concern of a recent joint World Bank/IMF panel. See "Joint IMF/World Bank Panel Urges Support for Poverty Reduction Plans," *BNA International Business and Finance Daily*, 11 October 1995. See also "UNICEF Regrets Failure of Peace Dividend to Materialize," *Inter Press Service*, 11 June 1996.