



Stability and Security in Africa: The Role of Hard and Soft Power



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Editor:

Sara Hasnaa Mokaddem

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Legal Deposit : 2019MO2501

ISBN : 978-9920-37-660-0

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About Al Akhawayn University

Inaugurated in 1995 by His Majesty King Hassan II and Crown Prince Abdallah bin Abdel-Aziz of Saudi Arabia, Al Akhawayn University redefines the classic American liberal arts educational experience on an architecturally stunning modern campus amidst the beauty of Morocco's Middle Atlas Mountains.

It boasts:

- A uniquely international common core program for all undergraduate students, providing the basis for a well-rounded global education.
- Rich academics, in English, encouraging choice and experimentation, in all schools and programs of study.
- A comfortable, safe, exciting residential student life on campus, featuring hundreds of University student-run activities, with over 96 percent of undergraduates living on campus with roommates from around Morocco and the four corners of the world.
- The peace and pleasures of Ifrane, a center for outdoor exploration of mountains, streams, lakes, and more, with many entertainment options and easy access to major cities such as Rabat, Casablanca, Fez, Meknes, and more.

www.aui.ma

About The Policy Center for the New South

Policy Center for the New South, formerly OCP Policy Center, is a Moroccan policy-oriented think tank based in Rabat, Morocco, striving to promote knowledge sharing and to contribute to an enriched reflection on key economic and international relations issues. By offering a southern perspective on major regional and global strategic challenges facing developing and emerging countries, the Policy Center for the New South aims to provide a meaningful policy-making contribution through its four research programs: Agriculture, Environment and Food Security, Economic and Social Development, Commodity Economics and Finance, Geopolitics and International Relations.

On this basis, we are actively engaged in public policy analysis and consultation while promoting international cooperation for the development of countries in the southern hemisphere. In this regard, Policy Center for the New South aims to be an incubator of ideas and a source of forward thinking for proposed actions on public policies within emerging economies, and more broadly for all stakeholders engaged in the national and regional growth and development process. For this purpose, the Think Tank relies on independent research and a solid network of internal and external leading research fellows.

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Foreword

Defining power is complex and ambiguous but understanding its elements and implications on national and foreign policies remains central to the study of international relations. Both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ powers are employed to pursue political and strategic goals through military, economic, diplomatic and others ways of conquering hearts and minds, to create convincing incentives and exercise influence.

Introduced in 1990, the notion of soft power refers to a country’s ability to spread its influence and effectively persuade without the use of coercion and traditional force. However, while on the aftermath of the Cold War this concept exclusively referred to the cultural and economic force of persuasion of the United States in the international scene, nowadays, the use of soft power is no longer specific to US foreign diplomacy. In fact, emerging powers such as China and India are also using their soft power resources including investments, foreign aid and cultural products to bring forward their national interests and strategic goals abroad.

The use of military, economic or diplomatic tools to leverage diplomatic efforts continues to represent a perennial issue in the field of international relations. The dichotomy between hard and soft power has also been revisited and questioned as some argue that a “grey” area exists where both means are used by states to defend their interests. The growth of violent extremism and the challenge it represents to the existing international order has also called for an inclusive and comprehensive approach that combines hard and soft power tools into smart power strategies. These mechanisms have been increasingly taken into account within the African continent, where policy makers do not only rely on the effect traditional power can have in ending crises and conflicts.

The promotion of good governance practices, stronger economic cooperation and the availability of alternative narratives to the extremist discourse combined with relevant diplomatic tools to promote social justice and equality, quality education, better infrastructure, social empowerment and fair job opportunities for the youth is often going hand in hand with military means in order to find sustainable and effective solutions to security threats and conflicts.

The Policy Center for the New South in partnership with Al Akhawayn

University organized a call for paper on “Stability and Security in Africa: the Role of Hard and Soft Power”. Selected contributors were then invited to a seminar at the University’s campus in Ifrane (Morocco) on June 19th 2017 to present their findings before the scientific committee.

We are glad that this cooperation has been highly instructive on the topic and we would like to acknowledge the invaluable input of all the contributors. We also wish to thank all the participants at the Seminar at Al Akhawayn University.

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Introduction

Rachid El Houdaigui

Africa is more relevant than ever in a constantly evolving global context driven by continuous reconfiguration of geostrategic balances and constant reshuffling of power dynamics. Since the turn of the millennium, Africa has embarked on a process of facing up to its own challenges and taking control of its economic, political and strategic destiny.

This process revolves around three main building blocks: (1) strategic resilience through consolidating the institutionalization of the African space via the African Union (AU) through sub-regional organizations on the one hand, and the establishment of a continental free trade area on the other; (2) the prioritization of South-South and triangular cooperation; and (3) the institutionalization of partnerships with international powers.

In the area of security, African leaders have adopted a new vision based on a common security and defense policy (African Union; 2004; 2005), the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and a Peace and Security Council.

This legitimate dynamic nevertheless comes up against structural hurdles particularly in the “self-pacification” capacity. As such and accounting for African specificities, this vector needs to be carefully thought out and implemented in light of factors relating to both Hard and Soft Power.

The Policy Center for the New South and Al Akhawayn University have done just that, in designing the program for the Ifrane seminar of June 19, 2017. Proceedings of the seminar constitute the substance of this book, entitled “Stability and Security in Africa: The Role of Hard and Soft Power”.

Discussions on this issue revolve around two major themes:

- (1) Advocacy for a new polemological paradigm; and,**
- (2) Contextualizing hard and soft powers in Africa.**

The major challenge concerning the first axis is to develop an uninhibited appropriation of “strategic thinking” at the African level. In this perspective, strategic thinking on the continent has opened up in recent years to two complementary intellectual visions. On the one hand, Africa has the capacity to mobilize its assets, culture and customary norms as a tool for crisis resolution. Strategic thinking in general on the other hand, particularly on questions of

security and defense, has gained in quality through a multitude of scientific approaches and readings adopted by African and non-African researchers.

For believers in the relevance of African soft power in crisis resolution, the context is right for reviving traditional modes of contribution to national, regional and continental security. This opportunity opens new paths that are more adapted to the challenges of our time.

As in any international framework, collective security evolves, seeks and attempts to find appropriate solutions to contain conflicts. In so doing, it should undoubtedly draw on the wealth of norms produced by different civilizations throughout history. In Africa, traditional modes of conflict management are seen as offering a complement, if not an alternative to international treaty mechanisms.

William I. Zartman demonstrates that conflict management methods developed through centuries of practice, derive their effectiveness from the use of “soft power” as a means to satisfy populations’ security needs. While avoiding the idealization of these mechanisms, the author provides a critical evaluation of their *modus operandi*, taking interaction with the requirements of modernity into account to better define appropriate development trajectories in the current context. Zartman concludes that it is possible to transpose “neo-customary conflict management methods” to the highest level of international disputes, provided however that African leaders re-appropriate traditional practices in the service of reconciliation and peaceful dispute-resolution. The conclusions of W.I. Zartman highlight the importance of traditional methods. These need to be fostered via research and dissemination based on the experience of each African region and can be effectively supported by research centers and organizational resources facilitating the flow of ideas and actors across Africa through research projects, conferences and knowledge-sharing platforms. The extent to which international actors present in Africa can or cannot rely on traditional mechanisms in their intervention framework must also be determined (N. Bagayoko and F. Koné; 2017). There is, however, one point where traditional conflict management mechanisms seem the most effective; that is the preventive aspect. This undoubtedly constitutes their main strength and could leverage a dual approach to prevention and stabilization as set forward by the AU.

In seeking to restore strategic studies in Africa at the turn of this century, African and Africanist researchers and experts agree on the need to deconstruct post-colonial¹ essentialist paradigms on the basis of a “contextualized” reading of conflict.

1 The term here refers to the period following colonial domination and not to postcolonial theory.

In this respect, **Abdelhamid Bakkali** pertinently argues for a paradigmatic rupture with what he calls an “epistemological drift, embodied by the depoliticization of conflicts in the post-Cold War African context”, arguing that these interpretation models reduce the genesis of conflicts to colonial heritage, ethnicity, religion and natural resources. He thus questions these arguing that post-Cold War internal wars are less political than cultural (M. Kaldor), fundamentally ethnic (Kegan J.; 1993) or essentially conducted for profit. He emphasizes the importance of taking into account political and social constructs of Africa’s own racist ideology (the Rwandan case) and the interaction of ethnicity and politicization of violence during elections (the case of Côte d’Ivoire in 2010-2011). In addition, along with some other researchers (Autesserre, S.; 2012), he qualifies geopolitics of natural resources as a capital *casus belli* (Democratic Republic of Congo). To break with this “irrationality”, A. Bakkali proposes three ideas: using soft power in conflict resolution in Africa based on an “assimilated” Clausewitzian conceptual framework; implementing a systemic approach combining required soft power and secondary yet not marginal hard power; and thirdly, enhancing African collective security.

For his part, **Sergio Aguilar** highlights the difficulties encountered by researchers in their conceptual construction of conflict in Africa. He blames this on the complexity of situations analyzed, both by diversity of actors and by multiplicity of factors at play. He agrees for the most part with A. Bakkali that current paradigms need to be revised. He argues that African conflicts cannot be identified and understood through linear analysis because this is both simplistic and reductionist. Aguilar further notes that it is extremely difficult to explain all possible root causes and dynamics of complex conflicts from a factual point of view. As such, he suggests aggregating causalism into a broad notion of “regional dynamics of violence” and applying systematic conflict analysis to it. Aligning himself with the theory of conflict transformation (Lederach, J.P.; 2003), the author presents a reading of events that allows the peaceful transformation of conflicts in Africa. Illustration through case studies of regional systems in the Great Lakes and North Africa enable him to verify the relevance of his hypothesis. Sergio Aguilar also stresses that conflict analysis in Africa would gain in effectiveness with the adoption of an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach for a better inclusion of recurring factors that explain the emergence and spread of violence.

Oumar Kourouma is particularly interested in the central role of international law in the construction of collective security in Africa, notably within a “power mutualization strategy framework.” His paper examines the extent to which the law contributes to strengthening Africa’s capacity of self-pacification, and the effectiveness of the law in crisis regulation. Having noted that law has become the primary instrument through which integration

processes take place (Weiler Joseph H. 1995) particularly in security matters under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, Kourouma nevertheless observes a paradoxical dual use of the law in African geopolitics. International law is on the one hand, an instrument for formulating and implementing a collective security strategy in the name of principles of solidarity, pan-Africanism and efficiency, and on the other hand, a mechanism through which States, especially leading States, project their power, defend their own interests, and even, exert influence on other continental States under the pretext of acting in accordance with the law and on behalf of collective institutions. This, he considers, is not without consequences on both “stalling and even deadlocking the construction of a collective African security strategy.” Kourouma suggests a “neo-pragmatist use of international law” as a way out of this uncertainty of the law.

As for **the second axis**, one must immediately note that security threats on the continent have undergone significant transformation in recent years. A conjectural analysis indicates that “crisogenic” situations result from rational processes independent of each other in the order of causality, which eventually combine and reinforce each other to produce the final situation². It is indeed ill-advised to put both crises and conflicts on the same level; for while the occurrence of crises responds to an internal logic relating to the vicissitudes of democratic transitions or political rivalry, conflicts on the other hand often have exogenous causes, partly explained by armed rebellions against a State or by the irruption of new actors such as armed terrorist groups (notably in the Sahel and Libya, in Northern Nigeria with Boko Haram and in East Africa with the Al Shabab). Such crises and conflicts are today a perfect stage for a complex geopolitical game, both in terms of nature and number of actors involved and ambiguity of respective preferences: each actor having a multitude of possible strategies, each fraught with very uncertain risks and rewards.

The continent also faces problems related to nutritional, demographic, and environmental and piracy crises. The Global Peace Index noted a deterioration of the security situation in sub-Saharan Africa in June 2017³. This decline is mainly due to new threats outlined above. These have genuine consequences on the daily lives of African populations and on the future of the continent in years to come, particularly in the area of security.

The Sahel is a case in point in this regard. A strategic review of the area effectively brings three realities into line: 1) Ongoing political processes in the region reveal a failure of democratic transition. For, beyond the political game

² This is what natural sciences refer to as the “Cournot effect”.

³ <http://www.agencecofin.com/gouvernance-economique/0206-47847-classement-des-pays-d-afrique-subsaharienne-les-plus-pacifiques-selon-le-global-peaceful-index-gpi>

that has taken shape, challenges of a transition are to redefine relationships between the three pillars of political identity: civil power, military power and multi-ethnicity. In the case of Mali, for example, this question was very poorly handled because of Malians' inability to build a political system based on alternation and integrating the country's various ethnic components. Over time, the status quo allowed for a gradual disintegration of the State's competences leading to both a very weak security presence in the north of the country and an acuity of Tuareg nationalism. 2) Mobility and deployment of sub-State (armed) actors in the extensive Sahelo-Saharan zone opened up a breach in the countries' security arrangements. It is not so much the immensity of the territory on which these groups evolve that makes it difficult to neutralize them, as their rooting and the absence of hostility of a large part of the population towards them (H. Plagnol and F. Loncle ; 2012.). Since it is enough for the authorities to control water points in a desert area to neutralize and kill a target. These groups derive their political legitimacy from social (marriage) and commercial ties and compete with the State for monopoly on legitimate violence. The cases of Mali, southern Libya, Niger and Nigeria illustrate this reality very well. The connection between various forms of insecurity (terrorism, organized crime and irregular migration) is also driven by a convergence of interests of sub-state actors. An informal financial war based on predation and crime has therefore taken shape and ensures the prosperity of network leaders, who in turn distribute dividends to their local and external allies. 3) Geopolitics of oil and raw materials in the region reveal a game for the control of deposits, supply and transport routes (oil pipeline). In this context, the quest for strategic autonomy through diversification of alliances exposes countries of the region to pressure from major powers, making the desire for autonomy contrast with the strategic weaknesses of all countries in the region (weak diplomatic influence, fragility of the military chain of command...).

Nigeria is another classic case of the interaction between hard and soft powers. **John Omale** is explicit in this regard in his argument for the relevance of both hard and soft counter-insurgency powers in the Nigerian context. As part of the national debate in his country between supporters of coercion and promoters of dialogue, Omale proposes a course of action based on three hypotheses: 1) In the case of the Niger Delta crisis and the Boko Haram insurgency, hard power is used by parties to the conflict; 2) Winning the war is certainly a prerequisite for stability, but winning the hearts of insurgents and their supporters is necessary to secure lasting peace; 3) A practical and constructive model to guide this process must include good governance and an effective application of soft power. John Omale concludes that "the final war against any terrorist act or violent conflict must happen in the minds of the people (soft power approach); and so 'hard power' should only be used as

ultimum remedium (the last resort).”⁴

The third enlightening case is the conflict in Southern Sudan. **Catherine Bartenge** questions the reasons for persistence of the conflict, despite three agreements signed and involvement of regional organizations and the AU. The author’s central idea revolves around the vicissitudes of building the Southern Sudan nation-state. Unmet needs of different actors in nascent political life contribute to dangerous polarization so; the challenge is to meet these “universal needs” as a precondition for resolving current crises. C. Bartenge builds on the work of John Buron (1987) to demonstrate the usefulness of “cooperative peace” involving all actors in building strategic consensus for conflict resolution. In practical terms, Southern Sudan requires a clear inclusive framework and roadmap, she emphasizes, with continued and sustained commitment from regional bodies such as IGAD.

On a different note combining both hard and soft powers, some authors use the concept of smart power to “elegantly” define foreign policy objectives. **Bruno Mve Ebang** develops a theory to explain the role of small African states in conflict resolution. This approach is rooted in the conviction of small states that possess the necessary resources to play a role on the global stage. Indeed, issues related to status and rank in the international system challenge the establishment of all States, whether small, medium, large or super large (Rachid El Houdaigui; 2010). B. Ebang recognizes that small African States have an essential role to play in resolving conflicts on the continent, providing they act in accordance with international law and within the framework of international organizations. This “intelligent way of acting on the international scene” comes up however against the centrality of world powers in the regulation of the global geopolitical game.

In light of the above, it appears that the present and future of collective security in Africa has no other main foundation than the need to go beyond the predominant classical conception of security. The latter being narrowly limited to military responses and based on hard power, it is necessary to emphasize soft power in all its dimensions, putting the individual at the heart of all approaches but this development cannot take shape without a harmonization of African perceptions of threat. The goal is to move towards a comprehensive, supportive and inclusive approach to security.

⁴ It is in the line, among others, with Nye J.S “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” *The Annals of the American Academy* 616, March 2008.