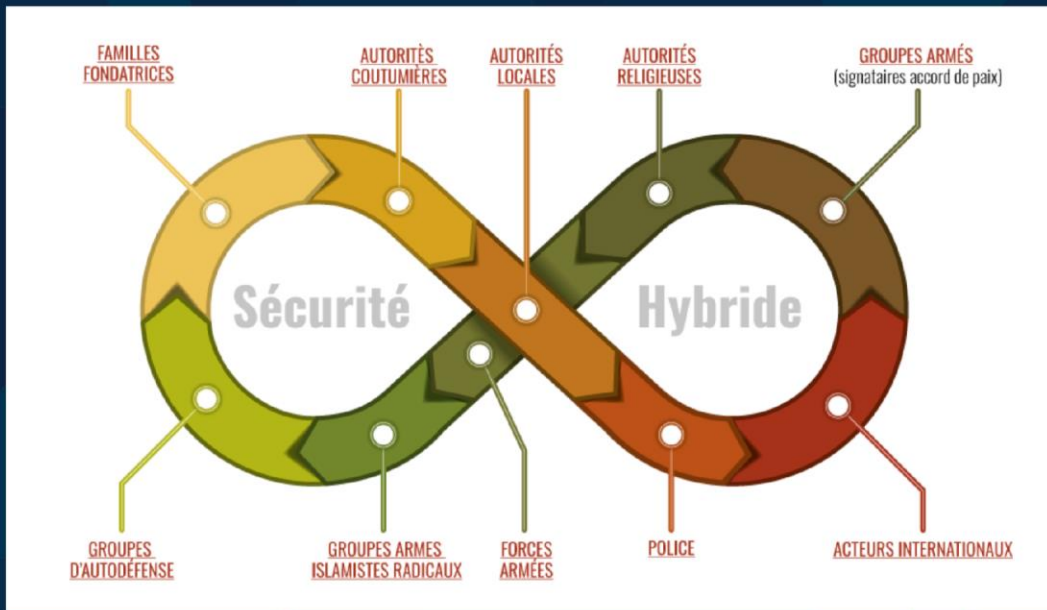


CONCEPT NOTE

HYBRID SECURITY GOVERNANCE OBSERVATORY



HSGO



Hybrid Security Governance Observatory
(HSGO)

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ASSN	: African Security Sector Network
AU	: African Union
CSO	: Civil Society Organization
DCAF	: Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
DPKO	: United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
ECOWAS	: Economic Community of West African States
HSGO	: Hybrid Security Governance Observer
IDRC	: International Development Research Centre
NGO	: Non Governmental Organization
OGN	: Operational Guidance Note
OGS	: Observatoire de la Gouvernance de Sécurité
PSDP	: Public Security Data Platform
PSI	: Public Security Index
REC	: Regional Economic Communities
RESDAL	: Latin American Security and Defence Network
SSG	: Security Sector Governance
SSGO	: Security Sector Governance Observatory
SSR	: Security Sector Reform
SSRG	: Security Sector Reform and Governanc
UN	: United Nations
UNDP	: United Nations Development Programme

Rationale

African states tend to suffer from a lack of reliable and up-to-date data and sources of information on security-related matters. In particular, there is presently no single source of data on security and security governance in Africa which would allow national authorities, decision-makers, citizens, civil society organizations, researchers and international partners to access basic, updated and integrated data on a matter that impacts the lives and rights of entire populations in the region, not to mention its potential implications for international security. This inhibits the formulation and implementation of effective security policies by AU member states, as well as resulting in reduced transparency, and consequently greater barriers to public and civil society engagement in issues of public security.

This “data gap” has become all the more apparent (and urgent) as changing political and security circumstances have led some African governments to consider some degree of reform to the way security institutions operate, are governed or relate to civilian constituencies. On the other hand, following a series of coups d’état since 2020, a number of countries have been placed once again under military rule. Yet, in both contexts, there tends to be a lack of reliable and actionable information on existing security governance architectures to respond to increasingly deteriorating security situations, with challenges such as violent extremism, transnational crime, community-based violence, proliferations of local and political militias, trafficking, piracy and maritime insecurity,

The “Hybrid Security Governance Observatory” (HSGO) is designed to address these gaps by documenting and sharing top-down and bottom-up information on security governance in Africa. The HSGO thus aspires to be an electronic reference resource, the first of its kind in the region. It is articulated around the concept of “Hybrid security governance” which is “characterized by the coexistence and interaction of multiple state and non-state providers of security, as the state shares authority, legitimacy and capacity with other actors, networks and institutions across the formal/informal divide”.¹ This concept provides a foundation for developing a more informed and realistic understanding of decision-making processes and power distribution in African security sectors.

More broadly, the HSGO seeks to provide a valuable and potentially transformative contribution to understanding African security governance through the provision of reliable and actionable data on security sector structures, deficits and trends in Africa, identifying

¹ Niagale Bagayoko, Eboe Hutchful & Robin Luckham (2016) *Hybrid security governance in Africa: rethinking the foundations of security, justice and legitimate public authority*, *Conflict, Security & Development*, 16:1, 1-32,

through this the foundation of state (in)capacity to provide security on the African continent. The information produced by the HSGO would:

- Aid in monitoring member state compliance with AU and REC SSRG guidelines (see below) and resulting outcomes, identifying unmet needs and challenges, and assisting in the sharing of best practices;
- Contribute to increased transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and confidence-building; and
- Target an extensive list of beneficiaries, including national governments, regional and international organisations and civil society and the wider public.

The HSGO has been under development as part of the work of the Just Future Alliance,² and is now ready to launch for Mali, Niger, the DRC, and South Sudan, incorporating as well sections for African regional organizations.

Objectives of the HSGO

Overall objectives

- To develop a tool that aids understanding of the security architecture and modes of security governance in the African region, and their capacity to respond to security needs of both states and populations.

Specific objectives

- Provide a comprehensive mapping of hybrid security structures in African countries;
- Develop an integrated analysis of the different components of hybrid security governance in Africa;
- Target the needs of actors involved in the provision of security for actionable information and analysis;
- Provide an inclusive platform for dialogue and shared understandings between security duty-bearers and national stakeholders (particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups) around improved provision and governance of security;
- Contribute to decision making processes and opening-up of security issues to researchers, NGOs and the general public; Enable citizen access to and familiarization with bespoke security governance tools (such as SSPERs³, National

² Information on this 5-year Dutch-funded initiative is available at <https://justfuturealliance.org/en/>

³ Bernard Harborne et al., Editors, *Securing Development: A Guide to Public Expenditure Reviews in the Security and Criminal Justice Sectors: Overview*, World Bank/United Nations, 2017;

Security Drafting Toolkit,⁴ Government Defence Integrity Index,⁵ security budgeting analysis,⁶ Police Oversight audits,⁷ as well as the various ‘how-to’ handbooks and toolkits); and finally

- Offer a useful resource for researchers and others working on conflicts, peace, and security at a national, regional and international level.

Outputs

- A comprehensive database and information resource mapping security actors and institutions (both formal and informal) in African countries, their operational modalities and normative standards.

The database would encompass the following:

- Regular (formal) security sector actors and agencies (armed forces, police, border guards, relevant elements of criminal justice sectors, private and community security, oversight actors, etc.);
- The legal-institutional setting within which these actors operate, including legislation and legal frameworks, ministries and departments, etc.;
- Informal security actors and institutions (customary structures, religious leaders, self-defence organizations, private security companies, armed groups, and the like), norms (peace agreements as well as traditional conflict resolution mechanisms) and standards (international legal frameworks for Human Rights as well as local and secular Charters such as the Kurugan Fuga), pointing to the manner in which practices rooted in local customs, traditions, and kinship may deeply influence how security governance functions and/or is regulated in African contexts;
- Analysis of the most salient public security and SSR challenges; as well as
- Dedicated thematic sections on issues such as gender and youth.

Information will be presented in an accessible, attractive and dynamic format, designed to transform otherwise complex and disparate data into actionable and practical information, while at the same time enabling wider dissemination and impact. The media would include:

- Graphs, maps and infographics;
- Electronic postings;

⁴ *National Security Strategy Development in Africa: A Toolkit for Consultation and Drafting*, Washington DC: African Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS), January 2021

⁵ Transparency International, <https://ti-defence.org/gdi/>

⁶ Wuyi Omitoogun and Eboe Hutchful (eds), *Budgeting for the Military Sector In Africa: the Processes and Mechanisms of Control* (Oxford University Press, 2006)

⁷ *An Audit of Police Oversight in Africa*, Cape Town, South Africa: African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF), 2008

- Country-specific and subregional data sets;
- Along with occasional print versions on specific thematic

Outcomes

- Allow governments, CSOs, think tank/academics and international partners to access actionable information to support evidence-based policy formulation, cooperation projects, and civil society engagement in the security sector;
- Increased transparency and accountability of the security sectors in Africa;
- Increased public and civil society engagement with the security sector;
- Enhanced confidence building measures; and
- Improved sharing of best practices.

Is there indeed demand for such an Observatory or database?

The construction of the HSGO responds to long-standing as well as current policy needs:

- It coincides with and complements the Operational Guidance Note (OGN) for Security Sector Oversight and Accountability that the African Union is currently developing;
- As well, the ECOWAS SSRG Strategy (2016) specifically makes provision for “mapping of the security sector and analysis on SSRG for the entire ECOWAS region” and other basic data to aid in the implementation of its Action Plan (2018);
- The Observatory will make a crucial resource available to CSOs as they grapple with these two regional instruments, and seek to monitor state and security sector compliance with the AU/REC guidelines. In all the four states (Mali, Niger, South Sudan and the DRC) in which the HSGO is being launched, CSOs are already engaging robustly and collaboratively with the national and security authorities to advance national security agendas and strengthen people-centred security, with the support of ASSN and the Just Future programme. This includes successfully piloting a local-level Observatory in Niger (the *Observatoire de la Gouvernance de Sécurité* (OGS), that brings communities and the security authorities together in sharing quarterly reports (six so far) on security and security governance trends in the Just Future areas of intervention;
- The HSGO can also be expected to constitute a key resource to the *Peoples Coalition for the Sahel*⁸ (a regional and international coalition active in the three Sahelian states of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso) as it campaigns for civilian protection, an end to impunity, and engagement with the root causes of violent conflict in the Sahelian region;

⁸ In French, *la Coalition citoyenne pour le Sahel*

- Yet another source of potential demand for such a database stems from the growing interest in integrating “hybridity” into SSR programming among some of the multilateral organisations (such as the UNDP and DCAF), particularly as an avenue to enhance “people-centred security”.⁹

As a matter of fact, the UN occupies a special place in the evolution of the concept of an African Security Observatory, which originated as the brainchild of Dr. Adedeji Ebo and the UN SSRUnit that he headed at the time, in the form of an African security data platform (variously called or described as a “Security Sector Governance Observatory (SSGO)”, “Public Security Index” (PSI), and “Public Security Data Platform”) that would serve primarily the needs of the UN itself (principally the DPKO, UN missions, etc.) but would also be accessible to national governments and policy makers, researchers, and the like. RESDAL and ASSN were invited to come on board as technical partners, and ECOWAS subsequently agreed to pilot the project. Unfortunately, this project failed to materialize.¹⁰

ASSN and RESDAL have sought to carry forward this project on their own, tapping into RESDAL’s innovative work in the Latin American and Caribbean region,¹¹ though not without a number of important tweaks, namely:

- National HSGOs would be CSO-owned and operated, but independent, non-partisan and inclusive;
- The concept of “Hybridity” as the organizing framework for the Observatory (reflecting in part ASSN’s own previous research work on this concept in 2014-2017, supported by the IDRC);¹²
- The mandate of the Observatory has been expanded to cover other purposes consistent with the aims of Just Future: CSO lobby and advocacy (L&A), inclusive dialogue, advancement of people-centred security and justice, and tracking and assessment of security and security governance trends.

That said, placing “hybridity” at the heart of the HSGOs does not blind us to the fact that “hybridity” remains slippery both as concept and practice. On the conceptual level, there is a good deal of debate as to whether “hybridity” helps or hinders states and state-building. On the one hand, there is what one may dub as the ‘benign’ version of the discourse

⁹ Fairlie Chappuis et al., *Hybrid Security: Challenges and Opportunities for Security Sector Reform Insights from Burkina Faso, Colombia & DRC*, Geneva: DCAF (n.d.); “Key takeaways”, UNDP Advisory Group on the People-Centered Approach to Security, Third Meeting, 23 April 2024

¹⁰ The HSGO also benefits from a previous collaborative project by DCAF and ASSN on an “African Security Governance Index” intended to monitor security governance trends in the three Sahelian states of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso and compliance with the ECOWAS SSRG guidelines, subsequently inherited by the ASSN.

¹¹ See below and <https://www.resdal.org/ing/index.html>

¹² For some of the products of this project (“Hybrid Security Governance in Africa”), see Note 1 and <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/collections/special/new-approaches-to-ssr-in-africa/>

(associated with the works of Boege, Baker and others) that sees non-formal and customary mechanisms of security and justice as supplementing and supporting –but also competing with –the state in delivering services to vulnerable and excluded groups on the margins of the state, and—if anything—enjoying greater legitimacy and effectiveness. A second, less charitable, perspective (focusing mainly on the Middle East and North Africa) blames the proliferation of non-state armed and unarmed groups for contributing to ‘state fragmentation’ as they ‘directly challenge the formal state’s hegemony over legitimate violence’¹³ The two versions have been used (in their various permutations) to support or refute the ‘fragile state thesis’.

Relatedly, the sheer heterogeneity of the non-formal, non-state sector, encompassing everything from traditional and customary security and justice actors and institutions to private armies, criminal gangs, vigilantes, militias, and other ‘irregular’ actors, as well as under-regulated private security companies, means that ‘hybridity’ can mean quite different things in different contexts. Not to mention that hybrid arrangements are subject to constant manipulation, and reinvention and recalibration over time. This implies quite a bit of sifting through this complicated landscape to determine which non-state actors are ‘legitimate’ (i.e., conducive to public security and order) or not, who makes that determination, as well as who benefits from or are penalized by hybrid security arrangements, and why. Some of these issues have been explored in ASSN’s previous work on that subject matter¹⁴. Our focus in the HSGO is in documenting the existence of such groups and actors, the manner in which they generate security and/or insecurity (often both), and the prospects for bringing them under the ambit of legitimate governance and accountability, as well providing pointers to the wider literature and debates.

Stakeholders

JUST FUTURE/JUST FUTURE ALLIANCE (JFA)¹⁵

Just Future is a 5-year programme funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and active in 6 of the world’s most fragile countries: Afghanistan, Burundi, DRC, Mali, Niger and South Sudan. It is motivated by a vision of a world in which all security and justice seekers benefit from changes that bring about more inclusive, constructive and legitimate power relations. The programme is implemented by a unique global alliance, the Just Future

¹³ Thanassis Cambanis, et al., *Hybrid actors: armed groups and state fragmentation in the Middle East*, New York: The Century Foundation Press

¹⁴ See note 1

¹⁵ <https://justfuturealliance.org/en/>

Alliance (JFA), consisting of two international CSOs¹⁶, three regional CSOs in sub-Saharan Africa,¹⁷ the SALAH Consortium of Afghan CSOs; three research partners;¹⁸ and a global network partner¹⁹, collaborating with 25 local implementing partners in the 6 countries. The key avenue to achieving programme outcomes is by strengthening the capacity of civil society in fragile contexts to demand more accessible, responsive and accountable security and justice institutions, and more inclusive political governance and peace-making processes, from the local and national level, to the regional and international arena.

ASSN

Formed in 2003, the African Security Sector Network (ASSN) has established itself as a reputable network of African security sector reform practitioners on the African continent and internationally. ASSN has two decades of experience and leadership in promoting democratic security sector governance (SSG) and security sector reform (SSR), with a wide and diverse membership of recognized professionals and academics.

ASSN owes its uniqueness as a network to its:

- pan-African coverage, as the largest Security Sector Reform and Governance (SSRG) specialist organization of its kind;
- its African-centered character, building and disseminating African expertise and best practices;
- multi-disciplinary competency and ability to pool expertise, thus permitting the network to deal with a wide range of security sector issues in an integrated manner;
- cross-cutting membership of researchers, analysts, civil society activists, parliamentarians and (active and retired) security practitioners;
- multinational networking, which facilitates south-south as well as south-north sharing of experiences and lessons, bridging as well regional, language and organizational (Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone) differences; and finally, its
- recognized strategic role in supporting the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) SSRG policy development and implementation as well as national reform processes.

¹⁶ Cordaid and Search for Common Ground

¹⁷ The African Security Sector Network (ASSN), West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), and Women's International Peace Centre (WIPC)

¹⁸ Rift Valley Institute (Kenya), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sweden), and the Van Vollenhoven Institute at Leiden University (The Netherlands)

¹⁹ The Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS)

LAAM

LAAM has supported ASSN in the provision of data, infographics, and mappings. Founded in 2023, LAAM is a West African consultancy firm which operates in the psychosocial support and peacekeeping sectors, offering support for research and project development, workshops and training, and crisis simulation. LAAM is committed to providing knowledge-based solutions to businesses, governments, interstate agencies, and non-governmental organizations.

RESDAL

Founded in 2001, RESDAL's mission is to contribute to the institutionalisation of security and defence within the framework of democracy, acting as a "clearinghouse" for the generation of projects and a space for advocating the democratic advancement of security and defence sectors both across Latin America and globally. RESDAL has supported ASSN and LAAM through the provision of technical assistance rooted in the expertise and practical experience gained through the delivery of the *Comparative Atlas of Defence in Latin America and Caribbean* (six editions, first published in 2005) and the *Public Security Index*. Through the delivery of these products RESDAL has attained years of experience working closely with governments from 18 Latin American and 12 Caribbean countries, as well as technical expertise in budgetary and legislative analysis, statistical management, definition of indicators and variables, and the transformation of disparate and complex data sources into practical, actionable information. RESDAL works continuously with ministerial officials as well as those from police bodies and armed forces, in addition to legislators and the media, including in the provision of products such as those noted above as well as on an advisory level.



HSGO
Hybrid Security
Governance Observatory