



## The Destabilizing Stability Doctrine

**OE Watch Commentary:** For much of Africa the question is “At what price stability?” For the author of the accompanying article, that price could be the rule of law, democracy, or free and fair elections. The main example the article provides is that of the 2017 elections in Kenya. The incumbent won the contested vote, and the opposition turned to the courts to challenge the outcome. The Supreme Court, to the surprise of many, ordered a do-over, but the hurried process with which the new round of voting ensued, along with an opposition boycott, resulted in more than 15 million people refusing to participate in what was regularly described as an illegitimate election. Even with the Kenyan electoral commission declaring that the second vote was a shambles, foreign ambassadors, according to the article, emphasized stability, essentially placing it above credible elections. It should be noted, however, that nowhere in the article does it mention that any foreign ambassadors were interviewed or given an opportunity to refute such an assessment.

The article intimated that much of this foreign diplomatic attitude is ascribed to corporations needing stability before risking significant investments in a country. This is occurring at the same time as many foreign governments, because of economic limitations or frustration with past efforts, are trying to extract themselves from becoming involved in the governance and government of individual African nations. The result is that foreign governments, in order to provide a stable milieu for investing, tend to favor the existing power, thus bolstering the status quo even if it means overlooking discontent and state abuses.

While such an approach may yield stability now, in the long run it could actually be counterproductive as people become increasingly frustrated that their desire for liberal democracy is being subjugated to elites and corporations. Thus, that push for stability could paradoxically be increasing instability.

The author relates that it has not always been this way. Back in the Cold War era there was an emphasis on creating long-term allies. What has changed, especially in the last ten years, is the rise of China, Turkey, and other non-Western economic countries that have challenged the West’s economic dominance of the African continent. According to the author, foreign policymakers, including Westerners, have weakened their insistence on good governance not just to push stability, but also in order to enable their corporations to compete in this new environment where not all players are going to follow the old rules. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“In the name of this ‘Stability Doctrine’, foreign governments tip the political balance in favor of existing power and the state.”*

**Source:** Nanjala Nyabola, “Will the Stability Doctrine in Africa destabilise the world?” *African Arguments*, 23 January 2018. <http://africanarguments.org/2018/01/23/will-the-stability-doctrine-in-africa-destabilise-the-world/>

*In the name of this “Stability Doctrine”, foreign governments tip the political balance in favour of existing power and the state. They bolster the short-term status quo, even if that means disregarding visible discontent and overlooking state abuses. They pick power over protesters, and privilege the interests of others over those of the citizens in the countries at hand.*

*The Stability Doctrine treats Africa as a place to make as much money as quickly as possible, not a place where people live, love and exist. It ensures African countries continue to play a position in the periphery of global politics, providing raw materials, markets, and an acquiescent labour force for multinational corporations.*

*The reality, however, is that while outsiders are tipping the scales in favor of wealth and the status quo in the corridors of power, African countries are growing increasingly inhospitable for many of their citizens, particularly the youth.*

### When a River Runs Through It: Riverine Operations in Contemporary Conflict

By LTC (R) Lester Grau, LTC (R) Leroy Denniston

Waterways and population centers will be factors in future war. Frequently they will be collocated and will become operational key terrain. Riverine operations will be a part of future military actions and will be an Army problem. The best way to prepare for a future problem is through study, training, and equipment design and development.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/195094>