



TANA HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON SECURITY IN AFRICA

2016 Background Paper “Africa in the Global Security Agenda”

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Executive Summary

- The framing of the global security agenda since the past four decades, or more, has enabled major global powers to set their security priorities as if they should also be the primary concerns of the rest of the world. Africa has not successfully extricated itself from this dominant paradigm often couched in the framework of the liberal peace agenda. Rather, the continent has had to routinely align with the strategic desires of dominant powers, with the implication that it is unable to define and/or articulate a standalone agenda for peace, security and development.
- The past decade has, nevertheless, witnessed fundamental and even irreversible changes in the global security arena. To give one basic example with very broad ramifications, new non-state actors have now emerged to contest the primary role of the state in managing peace and security issues. More than any time in the past, also, it is expedient to reflect on the implications of the growing reluctance of major global powers to be the first on the scene when conflict breaks out in Africa, and whether Africa could seize the moment to amplify its voice and presence in the global security arena.
- Global security is often defined through several prisms within which a state-centric and military conception of security is prevalent. More often than not, the global security agenda tends to be aligned to the strategic interests of the dominant powers in the international system; with far-reaching implications for the rest of the world, including Africa. Although some security threats are global in nature and ramifications, others are best defined and addressed locally within a regional and/or continental framework.
- The understanding of global security has shifted from a state centric perspective to a more human-centred conception. Even at that, global peace and security issues are determined and imposed by the dominant powers whose calculations are mostly driven by self-serving geo-strategic imperatives.
- Although Africa has been a direct recipient of- and testing ground for- the dominant peace paradigm, the continent continues to struggle to reposition itself in the global security agenda, operationally and normatively, by giving vent to the idea of *African Solutions to African Problem* in its peace and security affairs.
- While Africa is seeking to reposition itself in the global security arena, several legitimate questions linger; for instance, in relation to who legitimately represents the continent, but also those on ownership, authenticity and sustainability of the concept of *African solutions to African problems* in its peace and security affairs.



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- The African Union (AU), has come up with different models for responding to and managing peace and security issues on the continent. Several aspects of these models are new, but they mostly point to innovations in peace operations in Africa; with premium placed on multidimensionality and hybridity. Yet, most of the models are inherently reactive in the short run and unsustainable in the long run. There is now an urgent imperative for the AU to come up with more pro-active models that place greater emphasis on prevention and early action than costlier conflict management.
- Recent peace operations in the continent are organized on the rough basis of a division of labour; with the understanding that Africans take the first charge until the United Nations (UN) come in as a 'neutral' force while the European Union comes in to provide for training, logistics and financing support. The problem with this model, at least in the long run, relates to that of sustainability, legitimacy, and effectiveness.
- In its different peace missions, the AU strictly follows the principle of subsidiarity vis-à-vis its relation with the UN. However, this is not often the case when it comes to similar engagements with Regional Economic Communities (RECs). What are the implications of such contested engagements for the effectiveness of peace missions on the continent? How might outstanding issues linked to finance and local ownership impact, for good or bad, on the capacity of African Governments and institutions to exercise autonomous agency?
- The dominant peace paradigm advocates for democratization, economic liberalization, institution building and the rule of law as the basis for maintaining a viable global peace architecture. Every now and again, however, Africa has challenged this orthodoxy by mobilizing and deploying traditional institutions and resources as seen in Rwanda, Ethiopia and to some extent South Africa.
- The role of the AU as well as regional mechanisms in peace building is worthy of a robust, holistic and organic discussion. Whilst the continental body has made modest progress in certain key areas, its track record of failed or short-lived peace building in Africa is a major concern in view of broader ramifications for peace, security and development. Indeed, there are still many proverbial rivers to cross before the AU can adequately mobilise and invest in peace building at the national, regional and continental levels.
- Peace building activities in Africa involve a spectrum of multiple actors- state and non-state alike. Still, the elitist notion of peace building dominates (sometimes, even choke) the capacity of non-state actors, including civil society organisations, to play a significant role in peace missions.
- Because peace building is often presented as apolitical, critical African actors at different levels (AU, elites, states, local actors, private sector and RECs) are reluctant to become involved in the process in view of the myriad strategic interests involved at different stages.



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I. Africa's Role in the International Security Realm

Conceptualising International Security

Regardless of the prisms through which it is viewed, international (or global) security is still predominantly based on state-centric and military conceptions of security. More often than not, the international security agenda- and the web of relationships it generates- tends to be aligned more with the geo-strategic interests of the dominant powers in the international system, with far-reaching implications for the rest of the world, including Africa.

For the most part, the framing of the global security agenda during the past four decades, or more, has principally enabled major global powers to set their security priorities as if they should also be the primary concerns of the rest of the world. Africa has not successfully extricated itself from this dominant paradigm often couched in the framework of the liberal peace agenda. Rather, the continent has had to routinely align with the strategic desires of dominant powers, with the implication that it is unable to define and/or articulate a standalone agenda for peace, security and development.

The past decade has, nevertheless, witnessed fundamental and even irreversible changes in the global security arena. To give one basic example with very broad ramifications, new non-state actors have now emerged to contest the primary role of the state in managing peace and security issues. More than any time in the past, also, it is expedient to reflect on the implications of the growing reluctance of major global powers to be the first on the scene when conflict breaks out in Africa, and whether Africa could seize the moment to amplify its voice and presence in the global security arena.

Although some security threats are global in their nature and systemic ramifications, others are best defined and addressed locally, within a regional and/or continental framework. However, the scope for Africa - even for matters that gravely affect the continent - is still considerably limited. Thus, even as the continent is connecting itself to the rest of the world through a complex web of alliances, such attempts raise critical questions around ownership of its peace and security initiatives.

Recent global security trends suggest a new, and self-evident, reluctance on the part of key global powers to intervene in African conflicts. It would seem therefore that there is no better time than now for Africa- through the agency of the African Union (AU) as well as those of its Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs)- to conceive of and own innovative solutions to peace and security. Yet, to fully achieve a 'home-grown' agenda for peace and security requires scaling-up the role and agency of the African citizenry in building sustainable peace on the continent.

Emerging Trends in Global Security



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In the urgent task of rethinking Africa's role in the global security agenda (architecture), therefore, some of the key questions that the Fifth Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa seeks to answer are as follows: What is the state of knowledge about "global security" beyond the dominant state-centric and militarized conceptions of security? Is there a common understanding of the notion; and, if yes, what are its common denominators or specificities? If there are several (competing) notions of global security, is there is an African strand different from those applicable in other parts of the world?

While we contemplate those questions and their consequences, there are no doubts that the past decade has witnessed fundamental - perhaps even irreversible - changes in the global security arena; including those resulting from the shift from a state-centric perspective to a more human-centred conception of security. Indeed, one of the most important changes in the global peace and security landscape has been the emergence of new actors that contest the primacy of the state in the management of peace and security issues. The activities of these new actors, many of them with vast- and increasingly vicious- transnational networks, are challenging, the *raison d'être* of the state. Even more, they are also contesting the legitimacy and political relevance of mainstream global security actors that seems to privilege the military element of security to the detriment of interventions linked to sustainable peace and development.

With the rise and proliferation of these new actors, new domains of security threats have emerged and become writ large in Africa- such as those linked to violent extremism and terrorism, mass migration, climate change and the so-called youth bulge. Invariably, these changing security challenges also call an overhaul of existing intervention measures and the underlying ideas that produced them. It is already clear, for instance, that some of the new security issues linked to human security cannot be tackled using singular state-centred military interventions. Instead, multilateral and multi-sectoral approaches involving a wide range of actors; including grassroots Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), religious leaders and government institutions, should be the rule rather than the exception. In the evolving dispensation, also, Africa's model of regional security and traditional approaches to conflict resolution are likely to gain greater salience and relevance.

Africa's Voice and Agency

Africa has been a direct recipient of and testing ground for the key ideas and frameworks generally pursued under the broad umbrella of the liberal peace paradigm. Given, in particular, the nature of its incorporation into the global order, Africa has become "a net recipient" of norms and practices relating to the broad spectrum of interventions in conflict cycles, from conflict prevention to management and resolution.

Paradoxically, Africa's marginalization has occurred- and intensified- precisely because the continent continues to work and engage, even on matters that directly affects it, within a framework and agenda mostly determined from outside. Until recently, six decades after many African countries gained independence, the continent has yet to mobilise alternative



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and sustainable models of engagement that fully takes into account its aspirations and needs. In the past two decades, however, the continent has struggled- with a mix of success and forlorn hope- to reposition itself in the global security agenda, operationally and normatively. In doing so, Africa has struggled against myriad odds to find its voice and role among the global peace and security activities with a minuscule resolve to tackle its own future through inwards-looking and self-help initiatives.

The normative repositioning that Africa is pursuing received a boost with the creation of the African Union and its adjunct institutions and processes, such as the Peace and Security Council (PSC) as one of the five pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). In operational terms, on the other hand, Africa is witnessing what might be described as the 'demonstration effect' of mobilising and building requisite capacities, capabilities and expertise from within rather than have to rely on non-African development partners with different interests and priorities. This is evident, in part, with the growing salience of political and strategic decision making as well as the contemplation of several new responsive mechanisms under the umbrella of finding *African Solutions to African Problems* (AfSol).

The growing reluctance of major global powers to be the first on the scene when conflict breaks out in Africa now offers a window of opportunity for Africa to seize the moment; first, to amplify its voice on key issues of concern, and second, to establish its presence and relevance in the international security realm. A key question to ask, then, is: what are the alternatives provided by and available to Africa in terms of the global agenda for peace?

Still, in terms of the alternatives provided by Africa some of the critical questions to consider should include (but not limited to): who should legitimately represent the continent, and provide innovative solutions to its myriad security challenges? Who should amplify Africa's voice in the global arena- the AU/RECs/member states? In what ways are these institutions representing the continent, and what are the recurrent limitations from such representation? What needs to change? How is the African citizenry being heard within these political settings, and what should be done to further scale-up their involvement in shaping the continent's future priorities? From CSOs to academic and research institutions, private sector, the media and the diaspora, a growing spectrum of African actors are now playing incredibly important roles in shaping public policy in many African countries. They should be acknowledged and taken into account at the regional, continental and global levels where their role and importance is increasingly recognised but far too limited.

With regard to the global security architecture, the AU and RECs/RMs have undoubtedly taken major steps, especially with the creation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). In recent times, also, there has been a major boost at the continental and regional levels in terms of policy formulations and agenda-setting; even though existing regional and continental bodies have still not been able to fully translate their own



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agenda into concrete and desirable outcomes as proposed in Agenda 2063.¹ It remains to be seen how the continent and its constituents will deal with substantive disconnects that occur at the national, regional, continental and global levels in terms of ideas, cultures, and frameworks.

Legitimacy, Ownership and Resourcing African Solutions

With the AU as its arrowhead, Africa is keen to position itself in the global security agenda by aspiring to own, and take the lead in, its peace and security affairs under the broad narrative of finding *African Solutions to African Problems (AfSol)*. As attractive as the proposal might be, however, there are concerns as to its ownership, authenticity and sustainability in practice.

In the first instance, the conception of AfSol throws up several contradictions that deserve more nuanced interrogation. For instance, to what extent is the notion really African, even though it is couched within the dominant liberal peace framework and its contradictions? Second, and by extension, to what extent can the issue of ownership be pushed, if the continent does not own its own solutions or its people are only tangentially involved in the search for solutions? How, then, can the continent mobilise a common interest and agenda which is not dominated by particular global actors, state and non-state alike?

Finally, if it is agreed that the degree of political ownership is mostly reflected in the means made available for policy implementation, it is important to reiterate the obvious - that the implementation of African aspirations is, more often than not, hindered by the continent's inability to adequately resource its own ambitions without external help. This is apparent in the on-going debate within the AU on what to be done to address perennial problems associated with the refusal of member-states to pay their membership fees. In recent times, the AU and its member states have become net-recipients of external sponsorships of events that they only attend as junior partners. This growing trend, without doubts, might have far reaching implications; including that of the delegitimization of Africa's voice in the global peace and security agenda.

II. Africa and Peace Operations

From political missions to actual military interventions or peace support operations, Africa's myriad contributions to and involvements in a spectrum of peace operations have only modestly changed global perception of the continent's role in shaping global security peace and security agenda. While it started- perhaps even continues to be-primarily a recipient of global security assistance, Africa is finding its own voice, and undertaking its own actions, in the task of maintaining peace and security on the continent. In this regard, the development of an African capacity to implement the decisions of member states

¹ Article 72 (j) of Agenda 2063 on "Silencing the Guns" is of particular importance for peace and security agenda setting.



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relating to the maintenance of peace and security at the continental (AU) and regional (REC) levels should be given due cognisance.

In any case, whatever claims to *AfSol* becomes meaningless unless decisions taken by member states are fully implemented. Even if they are now widely acknowledged, some of the efforts to remedy the continent's capacity deficits are already on stream as evident in the significant efforts put into the development of the African Standby Force (ASF), the continental peace support operations capability, the development of mediation and peacebuilding capacities, the deployment of political missions, and establishment of liaison offices in post-conflict countries, to name a few. What is perhaps required now, and in the near future, is to amplify and build upon those efforts and initiatives, as well as the salient lessons learnt from exercising them.

Major Shifts in Peace Operations

The investments made in the design, creation and deployment of these capabilities following the establishment of the AU have made Africa a major global player with respect to peace operations. Four key shifts are particularly worthy to be considered here: (i) Africa increasingly able to independently mobilise capability to conduct its own peace operations; (ii) Africa has hugely increased its contributions to UN peace operations; (iii) Africa has become a driving force for innovation and change in peace operations; and finally (iv) African contributions to peace operations, and the continent's own peace operations, are not only contesting and changing the UN role but also the overall legitimacy of the global body.

First, Africa has developed an independent capability to conduct peace operations, which did not exist previously. Prior to the establishment of the AU, peace operations on the continent were conducted primarily by the UN; and, on rare occasions, by regional coalitions, such as the ECOWAS-mandated deployments in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the late 1990s. Since the establishment of the AU and the investments which have been made towards the development of an African peace operations capability under the framework of the ASF, African peace operations mandated by the AU have been deployed in Burundi (AMIB), Darfur (AMIS, UNAMID), the Comoros (MAES), Somalia (AMISOM), Mali (AFISMA, MISAHEL) and the Central African Republic (CAR) (MICOPAX, MISCA, MISAC). In addition, regional coalitions of affected countries have also been mandated to undertake operations in the Central African region (LRA Regional Task Force) and the West African region (Boko Haram Multi-National Joint Task Force).

Whereas in 2002 no personnel were deployed in AU-mandated peace operations, an average of 30,000–40,000 uniformed personnel were deployed in African peace operations between 2013–2015; in addition to those deployed in UNAMID, the hybrid AU-UN operation in Darfur. This number dropped to around 22,000 uniformed personnel in early 2016, with the handover of the African operations in Mali and the CAR having been completed in previous years. This strong deployment demonstrates, to a large extent, that



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Africa has indeed developed a capability to undertake peace operations, despite the countless challenges and shortcomings that may have dogged these experiences. This is important in two respects, in that Africa has both developed the capability to back up its decisions with action, and in that new intervention options that were previously not available have now become a reality.

Second, Africa has hugely increased its contributions to UN peace operations. In 2003 the contributions of African states to UN peacekeeping operations in terms of personnel amounted to approximately 10,000 uniformed personnel per annum. In 2013, this amounted to approximately 35,000 uniformed personnel, or about one third of all uniformed personnel required for UN peacekeeping operations.

Third, and in light of the two realities above, Africa has become a driving force for innovation and change in peace operations. For one, the creation of a hybrid operation was first attempted in Darfur through an AU-UN partnership, which led to the establishment of UNAMID. For another, transitions from AU operations to UN operations in Mali and the CAR have laid the foundation for a useful model of cooperation between intergovernmental organisations in relation to peace operations. Other innovations, such as the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) which was deployed to the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and became a game changer for the UN, originated as a proposal for an African parallel operation in the DRC, first pushed by the Inter-governmental Authority on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), then subsequently by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and by the AU. It was only after those initial steps were taken that the UN adopted it as a concept to be deployed as part of its presence in the DRC. Other innovations relate to how partnerships and co-operation on peace operations have evolved, with the UN establishing innovative support operations such as the United Nations Support Office to AMISOM (UNSOA) to provide a dedicated logistical support package to an AU peace support operation, or the establishment of UN Trust Funds to achieve the same objectives in other settings.

In addition, African operations have again brought to the fore the notion that regional states have a role to play in the stabilisation of conflicts and driving forward peace processes in their regions (such as in Somalia, Mali and the CAR), or that affected states can form coalitions of the willing to address threats to peace and security by non-state armed actors in their regions (such as the threats posed by the Lord Resistance Army or Boko Haram). African operations have also been instrumental in the evolving discourse on multi-national responses to threats posed by extremist groups, such as Al Shabaab, Al Qaeda, and Boko Haram. Further, African peace operations have been conducted outside of the traditional UN peacekeeping principles of impartiality, the non-use of force, and the consent of the parties to the conflict. Although these principles have increasingly also been called into question in relation to UN peace operations, they continue to provide alternative framework through which to understand the conduct of peace operations.



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And fourth, African contributions to peace operations, and the continent's own peace operations, are not only contesting and changing the UN role but also the overall legitimacy of the global body. Prior to the establishment of the AU, for instance, the primacy of the UN Security Council (UNSC) in the maintenance of peace and security in Africa was largely accepted. Today, this primacy is being redefined, increasingly understood not as primacy through hierarchy or exclusivity, but as primacy through partnership. Increasingly, the legitimacy of the UNSC is defined by the manner in which it consults African actors prior to taking crucial decisions affecting the continent, and by the manner in which the UN works in partnership with African actors, principally the AU but also regional organisations and states. The AU, through the development and utilisation of its own voice on peace and security as well as its ability to deploy peace operations to give operational meaning to that voice, has both enabled the UN to do things which it otherwise would not be able to do, but has also changed the manner in which the legitimacy of the UN in Africa is perceived. The deployment of a UN peace operation on the African continent without consultation with the AU and other African actors would seem entirely unthinkable today.

Challenges to the Sustainability of Africa's Peace Operations

While the four key shifts in peace operations in Africa described above have made African actors major players in relation to peace operations on the African continent, four significant challenges are also simultaneously working to undermine the gains which have been achieved; thereby calling into question the sustainability of those developments into question.

First, the AU, the five regions and African states have not developed the means required to substantially or fully finance African peace operations. Thus, a situation has developed in which African states take decisions on peace and security in Africa, whereas the implementation of those decisions are almost in their entirety financed by other actors, principally the EU and the UN. While numerous initiatives have been undertaken in previous years, and significant decisions taken in recent years (including the decision that AU member states will fully finance the regular budget of the AU Commission and its programmatic budget, as well as 25% of the cost of AU-mandated peace operations), the AU to date remains unable to fund its peace and security operations.

Second, far too little attention has gone into the development of the operational capacities required to plan for, deploy, manage and liquidate AU-mandated peace operations. As such, deploying and sustaining AU peace operations remains a herculean task, often undertaken in an ad hoc manner and guided by good fortune and the generosity of external partners as much as good planning and the provision of planned support. The AU's exit strategy is too often 're-hatting' as a UN operation, a procedure that results in the AU repeatedly losing its capacity to the UN.

Third, as much as a common African interest and agenda have guided the development



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and deployment of African capabilities for peace operations over the course of the past decade, there is no common interest or agenda in relation to how these are to be effectively utilised. For instance, Member States serving on the AU Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) are increasingly utilising the Council to advance their own national interests, as witnessed by the decreasing levels of rotation of Council membership and increasing levels of disunity within the Council, making its proceedings resemble those of the UNSC. Another challenge relates to the divisions between the AU and the RECs, such as those witnessed over Mali or the CAR, respectively. This fragmentation among regions and Member States continues to weaken the notion of 'African interests' or 'African positions', especially when African actors engage with external actors where a unity of purpose ought to or should be displayed.

Fourth, African responses to threats to peace and security are still primarily framed by dominant global discourses, especially in relation to peace operations. The African operations in Somalia and Mali, and the coalition operation against Boko Haram, are all predominantly informed by the discourse around the global war on terror. Foreign, predominantly Western, military advisors embedded within peace operations, headquarters planning cells and national military staffs still guide the development of forces, doctrines and the planning of operations. Africa is also increasingly becoming home to drone bases and operations, and to military, air force and naval installations of external powers. A strong militarisation of the African peace and security agenda continues, at the expense of other solutions that were strongly advocated for in the earlier days of the AU. There is a real danger that African peace operations are re-drawn within a framework governed by notions of counter-terrorism and stabilisation operations informed by the broader and dominant discourse of global powers.

Overall, then, the key set of questions facing African leaders and decision-makers today is the following: having developed an African peace operations capability, and having fundamentally changed the peace operations landscape on the continent, are African actors willing to truly own it and make the required investments to make this capability sustainable, and how should this available capability be used in future?

III. Peace building in Africa

Since the end of the Cold War, the peace building landscape in Africa has been one where the dominant liberal peace agenda is not only writ large but also the influence of pivotal Western states and key multi-national institutions such as the United Nations (UN), World Bank (WB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Indeed, the peace building enterprise in Africa best illustrates how the continent and its leading regional and intergovernmental institutions have been openly and surreptitiously co-opted into the global peace and security architecture. It is not by sheer coincidence, therefore, that the continent has struggled to find a voice or articulate a clear, coherent, consistent and predictable role and intervention strategies in peace building.



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Despite Africa's best efforts, the prominence of external interventions to end civil wars, reconstruct the state and generally build peace has generated intense and controversial debate amongst political leaders, policy practitioners and academics. The bone of contention, for the most part, is to question the efficacy, underlying assumptions and motivations driving peacebuilding interventions. At the root of the on-going interrogation is how fundamental political (liberal democratic politics) and economic (neo-liberal economics) philosophies that have influenced and framed the development of the global peace and security architecture in the post-Second World War period been applied in the context of Africa.

Because of the dominant agenda around which peace building intervention strategies have been framed, therefore, it is not surprising why- and how- emphases have been on the introduction of: democratisation (i.e., elections); rule of law; constitutional reform; marketization (neo-liberal free market economy) and public institution building. But, then, the task of peace building is immensely difficult, complex, large scale and resource-intensive that they should go beyond the usual international community's quick-fix, short-term and exit-strategy oriented post-war peace building and state reconstruction interventions scattered across Africa. It requires not only the rebuilding and reconstruction of physical, political, governance, economic and development infrastructures and institutions, but also psychological and emotional repair at individual, societal and national levels. The crucial question, then, is: was the Africa Union (AU) designed to lead or even be the main player or actor in peace building of transition countries in Africa?

Peace building and the African Union

The African Union Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is a continental peace building project based on the norm and practice of '*African Solutions to African Problems.*' It is instructive that APSA is much more than the development of continental capacity to build a more secure, peaceful and developed Africa; but importantly, it is a framework to exercise and influence normative, structural, and operational activities towards continental peace and security that link Africa to the wider global peace and security architecture. Paradoxically, the AU as the primary agency for peace and security on the continent has not made peace building a priority. Notwithstanding, to demonstrate its political will and presence in the peace-building arena, the African Union Commission (AUC) adopted a policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) in 2006.² The core priorities of the PCRD include peace building; post-conflict re-construction; humanitarian action and disaster management. The primary objective is to transform the AU agency in peace building into a timely, effective and co-ordinated actor. Since the establishment of the PCRD policy framework, the AU has made some modest gains in its peace building interventions. In 2003, the AUC supported the peace process in Sudan, in preparation for

² AU, Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) adopted in Banjul, The Gambia, 2006, published the Conflict Management Division, Peace and Security Department, AU Commission, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia).



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the anticipated independence of South Sudan. The Commission supported South Sudan throughout the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) from 2005 onwards.

Additionally, it facilitated multi-dimensional Peace Support Operation (PSO) missions in war-torn and post-conflict countries including Central African Republic (CAR), Sierra Leone, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire and in South Sudan, to assess the scale of their post-war peace building needs and state reconstruction priorities. Further, the Commission organised the first ever Africa Solidarity Conference in CAR on 17 October 2007 to mobilise international and continental support for post-conflict peace building and reconstruction. This was followed by a Roundtable in Brussels in 2007 to mobilise international development assistance from development co-operation partners. The Commission, in an effort to make the PCRDR policy relevant and practical, organised and raised funds to support Quick Impact Projects (QUIPs) in post-war countries such as Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and South Sudan. The Commission also established functional AU Liaison Offices with a designated AU Special Envoy in post-war conflicts such as Burundi and Comoros to serve as a mediation support structure and confidence building mechanism to build peace and prevent relapse into further armed violence and war.

Based on the above, the AU, as an actor in peace building, has managed to find a voice, presence and profile in peace building, registering some modest gains in its peace building interventions, though not on the scale or magnitude by the external purveyors of the dominant peace building interventions across Africa. Though the continent's efforts in peace building have been caricatured and sometimes simply dismissed as one of failure, not much is known or publicised about the relatively modest successes that the continent and the AU have made in those regards. Even though this is not the case, the dominant view (and portrayal) in mainstream Western media is that African peace building is a failure. It is the responsibility of the AU to tell its successful stories in peace building, no matter how modest or the limitations it continues to face.

The AU has, in many ways, compounded this problem in that it has clearly indicated that despite its policy on PCRDR, peace building is not a priority simply because it lacks the political will and resources to match those of external actors. This perhaps explains why the AU PCRDR policy framework is not only symbolic and idealistic, but one driven largely by normative intentions. The policy is particularly ambitious in combining peace building, with a wide range of activities that should ordinarily stand alone: post-conflict reconstruction, humanitarian intervention and disaster management, none of which the organisation has adequate capacity to successfully deliver. Perhaps the trend might change in due course but presently, within the AU Secretariat, the PCRDR Unit is under-resourced, under-staffed and only recently, with the appointment of a new head, is in a better position to implement its mandate. What is more, the standing commission on PCRDR envisaged as an AU inter-departmental platform involving CSOs has not been established ten years after it was proposed. This sends a powerful, if symbolic, message to the



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international community that the AU needs to do more in order to be seen as a strong and credible interlocutor in peace building interventions in Africa.

Burundi and Libya: Contesting the Primacy of Politics in Peace building in Africa

The dominant approach to peace building is that it is a process that is apolitical, technical and managerial in nature. This perspective not only neglects the pivotal role and contribution of local actors in domestic and regional peace building, but also the primacy of politics in the context of peace building. Contrary to the dominant view, peace building is still primarily and inherently political; essentially about who does what, when and how. This, in large parts, explains the reluctance- sometimes, lack of willingness- on the part of Member States to become tangibly involved in post-conflict peace building and state reconstruction issues. The general reluctance has, in turn, led the AU and RECs to focus on the development and operationalization of the Conflict Early Warning Systems (CEWS) and their regional variations such as CEWARN (IGAD) and ECOWARN (ECOWAS).

To further underscore the primacy of politics in peace building, it is not only evident that political solutions are central to the contemplation of options and resources for lasting peace but also that such options and resources are challenged and persistently undermined by the lack of political will and the pursuit of strategic vested interests by Member States of the AU. The current crisis in Burundi instigated by the third-term bid of President Pierre Nkurunziza highlights three important peacebuilding lessons for Africa. Firstly, it provided the AU a unique opportunity to act, as a significant peace building actor in Burundi with the post-Arusha peace deal; although whether the Union realised this or fully exploited the situation, is still open to debate. In December 2015, the AU Peace and Security Council (AU-PSC) exercised its mandate in a symbolic; if not significant, way by authorising the deployment of a 5,000 strong peacekeeping and intervention force (MAPROBU) without the consent of the President of Burundi. This, no doubt, was a bold attempt by the AU-PSC to give teeth, and relevance, to its 'African Solutions' approach by evoking Article 4 of the Constitutive Act that authorises it to act in 'grave circumstances' to prevent genocide, mass murder and state collapse.

Secondly, the fact that the AU Summit in January 2016, with the support of the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, made a dramatic, but not unsurprising, reversal of its decision to deploy peacekeepers in Burundi illustrates that the AU's peace and security architecture will always be held hostage by the lack of political will and the pursuit of vested interests of Member States. The solution that the AU eventually settled for; a political mediation to resolve tenure elongation crisis, demonstrates again the primacy of politics in peace building activities across the continent. The lesson for other presidents with third-term ambition is very clear: the AU is powerless to prevent such bids even if it could potentially lead a country into civil war. The recent reversal has forced the new AU Chair, President Idriss Deby of Chad to boldly declare: 'Our organisation acts as it has for the past 20 or 30 years: we meet often, we talk too much, we always write a lot, but we don't do enough and sometimes nothing at all'.



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Thirdly, despite the current crisis, Burundi represents one of the rare success stories of AU peace building intervention. The Nelson Mandela facilitated Arusha peace deal in 2001 was very crucial in pulling the country from the brinks of a 'slow genocide' following the attempt to impose the liberal agenda of peace building in Burundi that privileged democratisation (i.e., elections), marketization, rule of law, constitutional reform and public institution building. The AU-led constitutional and power-sharing compromise, despite its obvious weaknesses, provided the best chance for Burundi to make the difficult and complex transition from war-to-peace and to embark on the equally challenging process of post-war peace building and state reconstruction. There is a real and imminent danger that the current crisis is unravelling the earlier gains made by the AU in facilitating post-conflict peace building.

When the AU adopted and promoted the primacy of politics, i.e., political solutions, to resolve the crisis in Libya, in 2011, the countervailing imposition of a different peace building agenda to serve the strategic interests of the West quickly relegated the AU to irrelevance in its ability to respond to peace and security issues. Indeed, the dust had still not settled before African members in the UN Security Council at that time were misled into supporting Resolution 1973 that was eventually used by the West to effect regime change. Following the agenda that was fixated with the removal of President Quadaffi, Libya is now a collapsed state with three rival governments and a new base for terrorist groups such as ISIS. The embattled country now poses a serious threat to regional peace and security in Africa but also to the Middle East and Southern Europe. The lesson for Africa is clear, until the continent and its Member States learn to perceive peace and security in terms of strategic interests and the primacy of politics, the continent will never be able to respond effectively to old and emerging threats to peace and security.

Pluralising Actors in Peace Building in Africa: The Primacy of African Agency

Peace building in Africa involves a range of actors including national governments, regional and continental organisations, external actors such as pivotal states and global governance institutions like the UN, as well as CSOs and locally-embedded community groups. Until recently, very little - if any attention - has been given to the role and contribution of CSOs, grassroots social movements involved in peace activities at the local level, to peace building challenges in Africa. Across the continent, there is a vast array of expertise, skills and knowledge as well as a repertoire of tried and tested traditional/indigenous approaches, cultural agencies and societal resources that have been used to advance peace building intervention across the continent.

The case of Rwanda is illustrative in that during the post-genocide period, the country faced the Herculean task of having to deal with the trial (and punishment) of those alleged to have been involved in the genocide. The government in Kigali adopted and implemented the traditional Gacaca Courts as a system of community justice based on restorative- rather than retributive- justice. The Courts system was used to prosecute more



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than 130,000 people accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Since 1994, the system has been used not only as a mechanism to address the culture of impunity, but most importantly, as a peacebuilding approach to establish the truth about what happened, accelerate the legal proceedings for those accused of genocide, reconcile Rwandans and reinforce national unity.

What is unique about Rwanda's approach to post-war peacebuilding is that it combined the traditional Gacaca restorative justice system with the UN-backed retributive justice system in the form of the Arusha-based International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). Despite the weaknesses and imperfections of Rwanda's community-based restorative justice system, the general view is that the hybrid peace building approach significantly contributed to sustaining peace and reconciling bitterly divided communities in the country. What, perhaps, is missing in this relatively successful peace building narrative is the voice and agency of the AU to promote the Rwandan peace building model elsewhere, given the striking similarities in different African contexts. Learning from this experience, the role and agency of the AU should have been to support and even encourage member states to utilise traditional/indigenous approaches, cultural agencies and societal resources as meaningful and locally owned peace building strategies towards a more peaceful, secure and developed Africa.

The AU and its Member States have to break free from orthodoxy in order to see the bigger picture (and opportunities) that peace building is not simply about projects, programmes and institutions but about building resilience and strengthening the capacity of countries and societies to prevent, manage and resolve conflict through non-violent processes. For it to be an inherently inclusive process, peacebuilding initiatives in Africa must privilege local, national, regional, external actors and institutions, based on local ownership, trust-building and long-term commitment. If it continues to opt for the usual 'short-term, quick-fix and exit strategy-oriented' peace building interventions, the AU might miss the opportunity to recalibrate Africa's response to this important initiative even it manages to transcend perennial resource constraints, lack of political will, and the dominance of external actors in the continent's peace building space.