



AU NeTT4Peace

AFRICAN UNION NETWORK OF THINK TANKS FOR PEACE



African Perspectives on The New Agenda for Peace

POLICY PAPER 01

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Any views expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They should not be interpreted as reflecting the views of either the NeTT4Peace, African Union, or the African Union Commission (AUC).

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About the NeTT4Peace

On 8 February 2023, the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (DPAPS) of the African Union Commission launched the African Union (AU) Network of Think Tanks for Peace (NeTT4Peace) in Addis Ababa. The Network is an initiative of the DPAPS that intends to drive the much-needed strategic partnership between the research community (focusing on governance, peace and security) and the Department. The rationale behind the initiative is to create a structured and focused interface between AU DPAPS and African think and do tanks, in support of collaborative efforts needed to achieve African solutions to African problems.

Membership of the Network is voluntary, inclusive and open to all African think tanks that have a track record in the field. The initiative is expected to enhance the relevance and value of the contribution of African knowledge communities and allow the DPAPS to identify and better utilize evidence-based research to inform policy formulation and strategic decision-making. The Network's Strategy Group provides strategic direction for the Network and is composed of four members from each of the five AU geographic regions.

The Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCCPA) was designated as NeTT4Peace Chair, the Institute of Security Studies (ISS) and the Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR) -Rwanda as the Vice-Chairs and the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) as the Secretariat.

The Strategy Group of the NeTT4Peace

The Strategy Group of the NeTT4Peace includes: The Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping & Peacebuilding (CCCCPA), The Policy Center for the New South (PCNS), The Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Amani Africa, African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), The Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), IPAR-Rwanda, West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), Nkafu Policy Institute, Institut Interculturel pour la Paix dans la Région des Grands Lacs (Pole Institute), Centre de Recherche en Économie Appliquée pour le Développement (CREAD), Centre for Policy Research AFRICA (CPRA) and Groupe d'Études sur les Conflits la Sécurité Humaine.

Foreword

On 20 July 2023, United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, António Guterres, presented to the Member States his Policy Brief on “A New Agenda for Peace” (NA4P), which outlines his vision for multilateral efforts for peace and security for a world in transition, and an extensive and ambitious set of recommendations that recognize the inter-linked nature of many of the challenges the world faces today. It is framed around the core principles of trust, solidarity, and universality that are foundations of the UN Charter and a stable world.

Among these recommendations is the call for stronger cooperation between the UN and regional organizations, and the recognition of the need for the UN to support the African Union (AU) and sub-regional peace operations with the required resources to succeed, including assessed contributions where required, with requests related to such operations to be considered in a more systematic manner and no longer be considered exceptional. It is worthwhile noting that the AU is the only regional organization mentioned by name in the document.

Ahead of the launch of the NA4P Policy Brief, the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (DPAPS) drafted, in collaboration with the Network of Think Tanks for Peace (NeTT4Peace), an Advisory Note with nine key priority areas to voice how the NA4P can facilitate Africa playing an active role in global peace.

Following the launch of the Policy Brief, the DPAPS and the NeTT4Peace held a webinar titled “African Perspectives on the New Agenda for Peace” on the 3rd of August 2023, with the aim of providing insights and inputs on the recommendations featuring in the Policy Brief, and ensure that the NA4P is fully aligned with, and supports, the implementation of key AU programs and initiatives, including most notably Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and the Silencing the Guns initiative.

Building on the discussions at the webinar, the NeTT4Peace is pleased to present this Policy Paper, which includes short policy and research papers by NeTT4Peace members on selected aspects of the NA4P as an opportunity to share perspectives of African think tanks and provide further considerations to African policymakers and stakeholders on the NA4P.

The Policy Paper includes contributions from the following Network members **each reflecting the view of its respective authors/institution** on the selected topic:

- The Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCCPA) titled *“Recalibrating Responses to Africa’s Terrorism Challenge and the New Agenda for Peace”*.
- Centre for Policy Research AFRICA titled *“Effective Business Regulation: Solidarity for Peace”*.
- The Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), titled *“Political Responsibility or Expediency: Evolving Realities and the New Agenda for Peace”*.
- Institute of Policy Analysis and Research-IPAR-Rwanda titled *“Neo-Colonialism and Military Coups: A threat to Effective Implementation of the New Agenda for Peace in Africa”*.
- Institute for Security Studies (ISS) titled *“A New Agenda for Peace: An opportunity for recasting the future of preventing conflicts and peace enforcement in Africa?”*
- Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) titled *“Assessing the Impact of the ‘Silencing the Guns’ Initiative in Strengthening UN-AU Cooperation for Sustainable Peace in Africa”*.
- Nkafu Policy Institute, Cameroon, titled *“Adapting the New Agenda for Peace into Local Peacebuilding Initiatives in Africa”*.

Our sincere appreciation goes to all the organizations and individuals involved in the preparation of these pieces. We hope that they will contribute towards enriching the discussions on the NA4P which will take place towards the Summit of the Future.



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by The Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCPA)

Introduction

Within a rapidly changing global landscape, Africa is grappling with growing, interconnected challenges and threats that severely undermine its security and development prospects. Chief among them is a large-scale surge in terrorism, which combined with the protracted armed conflicts that continue to plague the continent, is destabilizing societies, shattering local communities, and intensifying existing humanitarian crises.

Africa's Shifting Terrorism Landscape

According to the 2022 Global Terrorism Index, Sub-Saharan Africa recorded the largest increase in terrorism deaths globally, with the Sahel region alone accounting for nearly half of global terrorism-related deaths¹. The global epicenter of terrorism has shifted away from the Middle East and South Asia towards Sub-Saharan Africa, making the continent the latest battleground for contestation between competing global terrorist groups striving to assert their dominance. The most notable groups include the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda, who have infiltrated various regions on the continent through networks of local affiliates— with local populations caught in the crossfire.

Furthermore, the interplay between terrorism and other threats such as organized crime, climate change, forced displacement, and health crises has further compounded violence dynamics and offered new avenues for terrorist groups to sustain themselves, gain foothold and control territories. It has also exacerbated competition over dwindling resources, fueling conflict and providing terrorist groups with unique windows of opportunities to expand their geographic footprint.

In light of these shifts in the terrorism landscape across Africa, it is important to take stock of regional and national responses to this destabilizing threat, and analyze lessons learned emerging from the continent, specifically those related to leveraging the role of AU-led peace support operations as well as African regional arrangements in countering terrorism.

Numerous regional initiatives to counter terrorism in Africa have been put in place. They involve reclaiming areas occupied by terrorists and stabilizing them against further insecurity. Such initiatives include the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) fighting Boko Haram and the G5 Sahel Joint Force, which have contributed to efforts to stabilize the Lake Chad and Sahel regions by combating trans-border terrorism and organized crime. Similar efforts to combat terrorism include the deployment of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM/ATMIS) with a mandate to confront Al-Shabaab, as well as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), deployed within the framework of the African Standby Force as a regional response to the rising threat of terrorism and extremism in Cabo Delgado.

Pre-dominantly Security Focused Responses are not Sufficient

Although these efforts have in some cases restored control over territories held by terrorist organizations, relatively diminished their operational capacity, and contained the situation, the terrorism threat in Africa continues to worsen and expand with devastating consequences; terrorist organizations continue to take advantage of socio-economic, humanitarian and ideological factors and grievances to further

¹ Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). "Global Terrorism Index 2023 - World | ReliefWeb," March 14, 2023. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-terrorism-index-2023>.

mobilize new recruits and radicalize youth population. This threat is compounded as responses remain pre-dominantly security focused, relatively reactive, and inconsistent, while also being fragmented due to limited financial resources– thereby affecting the long-term planning of operations for sustainable and durable solutions.

In this regard, Africa's response to the growing threat of terrorism cannot solely rely on security-based measures; they need to be complemented by preventative efforts, as well as adopt a humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus lens that addresses the structural drivers of radicalization and extremism².

Concurrently, more attention and resources must be dedicated towards supporting African governments in designing and forging sustainable pathways out of extremist groups by incentivizing defections and voluntary surrenders of individuals associated with armed and terrorist groups as well as ensuring their adequate screening, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration (SPRR)³. This process not only creates viable alternatives for individuals formerly associated with terrorist groups to reintegrate into society and resume their roles as active contributors to social, economic, and political life, but it also serves the critical strategic objective of weakening and dismantling these organizations' operational and structural capacities and, as a result, their capacity to carry out attacks against either states or civilians⁴.

The New Agenda for Peace (NA4P)

The NA4P acknowledges current realities and challenges that the world is contending with, including the interconnectedness between terrorism and other emerging risks, as well as the importance of adopting a holistic approach with preventative action at its core⁵. Equally important, the NA4P underscores the pivotal role played by the AU and other regional bodies in achieving sustainable peace on the continent, including by strengthening coordination and complementarity based on competitive advantages, while also stressing the importance of scaling up efforts for holistic and comprehensive strategies to face terrorism in Africa. With national and community resilience-building placed at the core, a number of key considerations must be emphasized.

Recalibrating Responses to Africa's Terrorism Challenge

In this regard, and to effectively address the growing terrorism threat in Africa, responses need to:

- Be holistic and effective across the HDP nexus, while identifying the interplay of the different factors leading to terrorism to inform the design of effective and appropriate responses;
- Promote a shift from crisis response and relief towards peacebuilding and longer-term sustainable development and reconstruction, with a view to address the structural drivers and root causes of extremism and terrorism in Africa;
- Prioritize building of, and providing support to, national and regional capacities to better address violent extremism leading to terrorism, including in developing and implementing counter terrorism strategies and action plans;
- Enhance coherence and complementarity between UN and AU counter terrorism efforts, by leveraging comparative advantages of each institution, while strengthening the institutional relationship between the UN Security Council, and the AU Peace and Security Council;
- Support the implementation of the outcomes of the AU 16th Extraordinary Summit of Heads

2 Aswan Forum I (2019). "Aswan Conclusions." Available at <https://www.af1-2019.aswanforum.org/aswan-conclusions>.

3 CCCPA 2022: Advancing Holistic and Comprehensive Efforts to Confront Africa's Growing Terrorism Challenge: A Nigerian Case Study on Developing Sustainable Pathways Out of Extremism for Individuals Formerly Associated with Boko Haram and ISWAP, Cairo, June 2022. Available from: <https://www.cccpa-eg.org/publications>

4 UNDP (2017). Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment. Available at <https://journey-toextremism.undp.org>

5 United Nations. "New Agenda for Peace." Our Common Agenda: Policy Brief 9 - A New Agenda for Peace, July 2023. [our-common-agenda-policy-brief-new-agenda-for-peace-en.pdf](https://www.un.org/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-new-agenda-for-peace-en.pdf) (un.org)

of States and Government on Terrorism held in May 2022, including the development of a comprehensive Continental Strategic Plan of Action on countering terrorism in Africa;

- Leverage the significant advantage of African-led peace operations and regional security arrangements authorized by the AU that are specifically mandated with countering terrorism efforts, while ensuring, predictable and sustainable funding for them, including guaranteed funding through assessed contributions;⁶
- Strengthen coherence and coordination mechanisms within and between national, regional, and international frameworks with regards to terrorism financing, illicit financial and arms flows, and organized crime, including cooperation on border-control and information and intelligence sharing across African states;
- Encourage locally-owned, inclusive and context-specific responses, while prioritizing the specific needs of the communities most affected by the threat.

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UNDP (2017). Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment. Available at <https://journey-toextremism.undp.org>

⁶ Action 10 in the NA4P Policy Brief calls for a new generation of peace enforcement missions and counter-terrorism operations, led by African partners with a Security Council mandate under Chapters VII and VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, with guaranteed funding through assessed contributions.

Introduction

A core tenet of the UN Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace is 'solidarity', which effectively means that achieving a peaceful, secure, and prosperous Africa for all needs a new level of thinking, engagement, and strategic partnerships. Globally and in Africa, businesses are an invisible force for or against good.

Against this backdrop, this paper seeks to bring insight on how the interaction between state and corporate power have failed to prevent the seeds of war from sprouting in Africa or could be a viable solution to preventing it. The paper uses peer-reviewed academic literature, public reports, government legislation and communication materials, and media releases to articulate how partnerships between governments, businesses and think tanks can foster inclusive development and peace in Africa. Recommendations on the way forward to building the Africa We Want and "silencing the guns" are presented.

The African Context: Development Trajectory and Vulnerability to Conflict

The persistent challenges of youth poverty and unemployment in particular, have necessitated a renewed commitment to industrialization by African governments (Lopes and Te Veld, 2021). In the past four decades, African governments have failed to convert their human capital into wage employment in local manufacturing. This dearth of manufacturing in Africa, which contributes only 1.5 percent of global manufacturing, is a threat to peace (good governance, anticorruption and inclusive development). Misdirected investments are a challenge for preserving peace on the continent. Evidence indicates that only 2 percent of foreign direct investment is invested in the agricultural sector, which employs a significant number of women and youth in Africa. This undermines improving human development and further compromises peace. Women constitute half of the African population yet represented 56% of the labor force in 2019 compared with 72% men, with over 90% women working in the informal economy (IMF, 2023). Women and youth hardly ever transition from the agriculture sector and informal economy into manufacturing. Evidence suggests that women's equality could grow the world GDP by \$12 trillion by 2025 (APRM, 2021).

Africa is at the dawn of a new awakening or her youth demand transformation, as observed by Ambassador Davisha L Johnson from the African Diaspora Collective, USA. Africa must attack her blind spots to silence the guns and achieve peace and prosperity for all (<https://open.spotify.com/episode/1v0V5f3AYwZMYuzOBCbfSU>).

Business/State Relations and Inclusive Growth for Peace

States are ultimately responsible for the welfare of their citizens through the policy and regulatory frameworks that enable or hinder effective participation, transparency and accountability (PAT) in the economy to promote social cohesion, sustainable development and peace. However, in Africa poor governance and corruption have hindered this critical development. In Uganda, the government forcibly evicted people from their land to make way for a tree plantation run by New Forests Company. In Mozambique, the gas development project reinforced existing divisions attributed to renewed armed conflict which led to thousands of deaths and forcibly displaced over a million people. In Sierra Leone, exclusion of certain groups in the private sector's post-civil war reconstruction plan led to prewar discrimination and economic marginalization. This situation thrived on political and ethnic elites who

received business opportunities from the private sector to give them access to the resources they needed. In Guinea, the private sector leveraged on corrupt officials and the weak policy and regulatory framework to avoid compliance with environmental regulations on mining activities and overlooked community concerns on the matter. This resulted in protests that were brutally quelled by the government and sparked a coup.

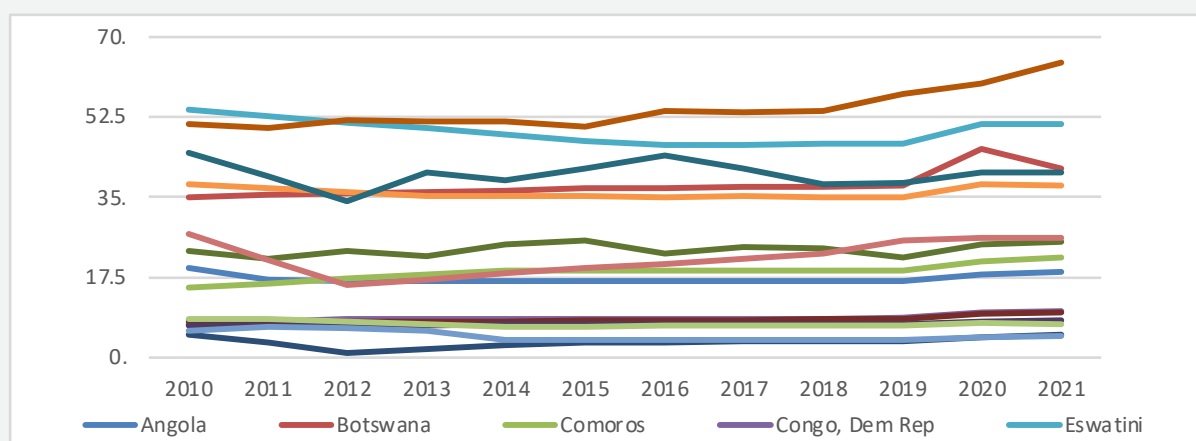
In the foregoing discussion it is evident that poor governance and lack of private sector regulation are primary enablers of conflict through complicity (OHCHR, 2008), or deliberate exploitation of war for profit (Drohan, 2004).

The Case for Effective Business Regulation

The AU Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) initiatives have set the tone in averting conflict and promoting inclusive social and economic development in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The establishment of the AU NetTT4Peace (by PAPS) is a testament that the AU wants to do things differently to preserve peace and advance human development in Africa. A global review of how state and business relations reinforce civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights as preventive measures of conflict refers to the role played by think tanks: Think tanks unpack the key factors that reinforce conflict, undermine attempts towards peace, and recommend entry points for effective business inclusive strategies for peace.

The Centre for Policy Research AFRICA asserts that the link between state and business relations is critical for peace. Africa's quest for inclusive development and peace rests on the solidarity between the private sector and government. Effective regulation of businesses must ensure that the private sector directs its impact investment into growing local industries to boost Africa's manufacturing capabilities and create inclusive development. There is no middle ground. Businesses must finance Africa's industrialization towards peace. As SDG 16 asserts, developing countries need institutions to be effective, inclusive and accountable for peace. The UN Global Compact underscores the need for businesses to be committed to 'peace' in their daily operations (UNGC & PRI, 2010). Africa can create inclusive, sustainable, and profit-generating ecosystems of youth innovation districts through impact investment to address unemployment and silence the guns.

Figure 1: Youth unemployment rate over the last decade - SADC member states



Source: Analysis of WDI, 2022

Implications for Policymakers and Partners

The next four decades of the development research and policy discourse in Africa must focus on how businesses can lift up inclusive and sustainable development to silence the guns. Catalyst organizations, such as think tanks, must collaborate with the private sector to ensure proper accountability, transparency,

and participation in disruptive innovation; scale up socially inclusive corporate strategies; and remove cultural barriers to inclusive growth systems to ensure peace (Lopes and Te Veld, 2021). The AU must have a Social Justice Commission towards building the Africa We Want in partnership with the Diaspora.

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Background

Peace is vulnerable when democratic values are lacking. This reiterates a significant convergence between Africa's Agenda 2063 and the NA4P. It is against this backdrop that the upsurge of military coups within the last three years and their popularity with the civilian population remains a threat to the future of peace and security in Africa.¹ Within the context of investing in strengthening international foresight and capacities for conflict prevention, peacebuilding, identifying and adapting to new risks, therefore, enhancing democracy's prognosis in Africa requires prioritization and concrete action(s).

ACDEG Under the Spotlight

Political behaviors constantly evolve and crystalize, and institutions whose mandate are within the peace-development-security nexus in Africa are expected to demonstrate responsiveness in this regard, unilaterally, bilaterally or multilaterally. Without this responsiveness, the pursuit of peace will remain a "goose chase" because preparedness will remain weak. For example, limitations of the provisions of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) and the limiting definition(s) it assigned to Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCG) have proven to be a loophole that has so far served the disadvantage of democratization in Africa (Genyi, 2015). In an ongoing study at IPSS titled "Legitimising the Illegitimate" In Africa: Unconstitutional Changes of Government In Disguise? IPSS found that the ACDEG is weak on how to prevent or respond to the manipulation of electoral laws and frameworks which, not only in itself serve as an UCG in an inconspicuous manner, but it may also trigger the occurrence of coup d'états (Mbaku, 2018).² Latest developments in West and Central Africa are a testament to this fact. The following complaints have remained consistent in five African countries that have witnessed the takeover of military juntas or an attempt of it within two years of elections:

- How votes are counted (especially the alleged disparities between what is perceived to be popular by the electorate and the final result that is announced)
- Credibility of the election and election fraud
- Repression and intimidation via the threat or actual use of force by the incumbent
- Disenfranchisement
- Distrust in the electoral umpire and judiciary (in case of election petitions)

These complaints are not new in Africa's electoral context. However, the trend since the 2000s suggests that AU/Regional Economic Communities' response to these issues, from either a prevention or response perspective, is one that has given more advantage to political expediency rather than responsibility. This partly explains why these situations have either remained the same or gotten worse, especially that many African countries are now at a huge risk of state capture – thereby undermining democratic institutions (Onapajo & Muhammad, 2022 and Smith & Kelley, 2018). These observations by IPSS in an observatory publication were instrumental to flag the following issues for further interrogation:

- Key concerns of the elections do not receive the deserved attention at AU/RECs level (with the ACDEG and other related frameworks in view) as a significant number of citizens of countries that have witnessed a coup within the last three years would prefer.

¹ See <https://www.idlo.int/what-we-do/peace-and-democracy>. The growth and development of democratic institutions and the progress made so far on the continent is under existential threat.

² See Chapter 8, Article 23 of the ACDEG.

- Perceptions of AU/RECs concerning their response to, and prevention of problematic elections have been increasingly negative, as questions on whom and whose interests they represent have emerged and seem to be growing in popularity.³
- There has been minimal or no resistance to the coups, little or absence of bloodshed (compared to the pre-2010s coup era), and civilian support for juntas. The responses of the international community and relevant institutions, particularly the AU/RECs, suggest that the depth and spread of anti-democracy narratives were/are underestimated.
- While successful military coups have proven popular in some countries, enhancing the capacity of state institutions towards true democratization and elements of conflict prevention remain unaddressed or have worsened – based on further reflection on African history since the independence era.

Conclusion and Recommendation

On this premise, IPSS concludes and recommends that responding to the limitations that constrain AU/RECs in electoral matters of its Member States in view of their “internal political affairs” must commence from the framework’s responsiveness to the evolving political behaviors of political actors. Acknowledging that this may be too sensitive for AU Member States to accept, the contentious nature of political competition and how it undermines democratization and peace can be a starting point for the AU Commission to begin to look into evolving realities of Africa’s electoral landscape (such as what was presented earlier) for empirical evidence to support the proposal of a revision of the ACDEG in the interest of its Silencing the Gun agenda. By this, the AU Commission can redefine its response to longstanding and emerging electoral issues from expediency to responsibility.

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³ This is an aggregation of result(s) from conversations with civil society actors within the context of the 2023 elections in Nigeria and Zimbabwe and recent coup in Niger.

Neo-Colonialism and Military Coups: A Threat to Effective Implementation of the New Agenda for Peace in Africa

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Introduction

In the declaration on the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the UN, heads of State and Government undertook to promote peace and prevent conflicts. However, many countries have not lived to the promise and have continually failed to deliver (NA4P Policy Brief 9, 2023). Sources of disappointments include hunger, violence, inequality, wars and displacements, which have continued to give rise to grievances and conflicts in most African states. Other sources of conflicts and wars include limited economic growth, low-income levels, and a lack of democratic institutions, which have continuously fueled grievances and conflicts between democratically elected leaders and citizens. An African Development Bank (AfDB) publication (2012) highlights that more than 200 military coups have been staged since the post-independence era of the 1960s, with 45% of them being successful. Major causes of these coups, as highlighted in literature, are due to the political and economic reasons prevailing in these countries, but more specifically foreign influence at work, poor quality of governance, and weakness in democratic institutions by corrupt officials, autocratic regimes, inequality, and extreme poverty of citizens resulting from low levels of national development. In his paper, Nana Amoateng (2022) notes that “military coups in Africa are best understood in the lens of colonialism.” According to Amoateng, despite the achievement of independence from colonizers, the post-independence African heads of states obtained only political but not economic controls of their states. As such, unless African leaders promote strong economic institutions across all development levels, and transition from autocratic to democratic governance to foster good levels of economic growth, coups will continue to prevail on the continent and the NA4P strategies will only remain a good agenda on paper.

Neo-colonialism and Military Coups on the African Continent

Neo-colonialism has been defined as ‘the practice of granting a sort of independence with the concealed intention of making the liberated country a client-state and controlling it effectively by means other than political ones (Nana Amoetang, 2022). This is visible in how former colonizers have continually undermined most of Africa’s political stability through aid and coups. The continued resurgence of coups in West Africa and recently in Central African states also attests to this. In theory, neo-colonialism is where a state is independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty, but in reality, its economic system and political policy are directed from outside. This is commonly affected through development aid by bargaining for economic (and political) influence of the low-income receiving countries. According to Dambisa Moyo (2018), this creates corruption issues, dependency, and limits exports, which negatively affect the economic growth and development of most African countries and other low-income countries across the globe. African leaders must recognize that foreign control over Africa’s political and socioeconomic interests-- made possible by development aid--is one of the main causes of all the political issues the continent is currently facing. As a result, wars, coups, terrorism, and political assassinations have been continuously perpetuated on the continent. Heavy dependency on external support in the form of military aid and financial support by most sub-Saharan African countries will continue to propel neo-colonial tendencies.

Causes of Military Coups on the African Continent

The major factors that have led to military coups in most of the West and Central African states include weak political leadership to contain valance and insurgencies, widespread perceived actual and corruption tendencies by elected leaders and incessant power abuse, careless leadership and

less thought-out political decisions. These factors have frequently resulted in democratically elected presidents being ousted using their own military forces. Nana Amoateng (2022) states that all factors that distance political leaders from the plight of citizens increases the chances of a military coup happening. He gives examples of West Africa, where the political system “works for the political class that are well paid, enjoy a lot from state resources, and who display arrogance and complete lack of concern about the welfare of citizens,” thereby creating conducive conditions for military coups. Military coups result in conflicts, lack of peace, displacement, disrupted implementation of national development strategies, all of which equally threaten realization of the NA4P agenda on the continent.

Recommendations

Achieving full political and economic independence for African countries would help in leveraging sovereignty, respect, and strategic positioning of Africa as an equal and valid partner in the global peace agenda. Bodies including the Economic Community of West-African States (ECOWAS), the East-African Community (EAC secretariat and the parliament), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and others must strive for self-sustenance for effective implementation of the NA4P agenda on the continent. To live to the promise of the NA4P, African countries need to strongly support Pan-African spirit and movement that would liberate Africa and lead it to full political and economic independence.

Other recommendations include:

- Building strong economic institutions across any level of Africa development.
- Building strong support to address corruption and reduce vulnerabilities to corruption.
- Respecting the rule of law and property rights - These calls for ensuring respect for human rights, security and peace, good governance, and political stability for African citizens and building integrated and harmonious democratic societies, where all aspects of the concept of democracy are fully mainstreamed.
- Providing citizens with access to information and means to hold their governments accountable.
- Establishing and ensuring a form of democratic government that is based on the empowerment of ordinary citizens. This includes investing in youth and women, economic governance, democratic governance, justice and human rights, and finally strong local governance and efficient delivery of public services across all levels of national development for the effective implementation of both continental strategies such as Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030, as well as different national development strategies.

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United Nations (2023) Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace

by Dawit Yohannes, Andrew Atta-Asamoah, and Paul-Simon Handy
Institute for Security Studies (ISS)

The NA4P in Context

UN Secretary-General António Guterres's policy brief on the NA4P came as the world was reeling from the compounding effects of multiple crises. Geostrategic competition, superpower rivalries, regionalized conflicts, inequality, climate change, and other challenges have together undermined global peace and security – despite decades of regional and global response efforts.

The policy brief recognizes the increasing threat to current collective peace and security originating from 'emerging risks and dangerous trends for which traditional forms of prevention, management and resolution are ill-suited' (UN, 2021). It highlights the need to strengthen international multilateral security cooperation as a means to deliver peace as a global public good.

This paper focuses on the implications of the NA4P's recommendations for the future of conflict prevention and peace enforcement in Africa. It focuses on exploring the opportunities, added-value and implementation prospects of specific proposed actions and recommendations – i.e., Boost preventive diplomacy in an era of divisions (Action 2) and Support AU and subregional peace support operations (Action 10).

Africa and the NA4P

Against a backdrop of resurging insecurity, the policy brief's insights have clear ramifications for Africa. This is particularly so as conflicts continue to become more regional, violent extremism expands, political transitions protract, contestation for the political space worsens, and unconstitutional changes of government spike.

Reversing these trends depends on the extent to which response efforts can accommodate a fundamental shift as part of the 'new deal' the NA4P seeks to forge at the global level. This aligns with the AU's affirmation that Africa's dire security situation calls for 'a real new approach that should question the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and its correlation with the new destabilizing factors in Africa' (AUC, 2022). The Institute for Security Studies has reiterated this imperative through its analyses and advocated for a new approach to addressing insecurity (Yohannes, 2023).

Despite these calls, however, peace efforts are stymied by the limited effectiveness of existing instruments and the dynamic nature of threats (Handy and Djilo, 2023). The NA4P puts forward specific recommendations for enhancing the peace and security efforts of the AU and its subregional counterparts.

Reshaping Current Paradigms and Approaches

The NA4P offers Member States proposals for solutions in creating the opportunities and momentum lacking in the current collective security structures. The policy brief contains 12 sets of proposals in 5 priority areas pertinent to addressing the continent's insecurity.

One of the key recommendations is preventing conflict and violence and sustaining peace. The NA4P proposes that 'groups of Member States and regional organizations develop prevention strategies with cross-regional dimensions to address transboundary threats, collectively harvesting and building on the wealth of knowledge and expertise existing at the national level on effective conflict prevention measures' (UN, 2023). Likewise, Action 2 of the NA4P focuses on boosting preventive diplomacy in an era of divisions. The NA4P further recommends that 'diplomacy at the global level must both reinforce and be bolstered by regional frameworks that build cooperation among Member States' (UN, 2023).

These recommendations help generate momentum around an inter-African process that recommits

African states to a continental conflict prevention agenda. Prioritizing conflict prevention requires bold political measures and institutional transformation. Beyond reaffirming commitment to conflict prevention, genuine political will is needed to make use of the AU's early warning and response structures, such as the Panel of the Wise, among others.

The AU must also initiate a review of existing operational approaches and working methods on conflict prevention, most notably on early warning and its mediation capabilities. It is also important to consolidate institutional competencies and improve inter- and intra-organizational interactions.

Better understanding and more investment are crucial for structural conflict prevention to address the root causes of conflict. This also ensures that direct and operational conflict prevention tools such as early warning, preventive diplomacy, and mediation extract their mandates from a sound understanding of root causes. The new deal that the NA4P seeks to advocate should be leveraged for better domestication and buy-in of the different architectures and frameworks at Member States level.

The NA4P also recognizes the pivotal role of regional organizations in peace enforcement and suggests ideas for boosting peace enforcement in Africa, lending the UN's political support to such processes and backing them with resources. Its call for the systematic consideration of support requests for AU and subregional deployments offers the opportunity for resourcing African peace efforts.

The NA4P proposes this, considering the unique roles of African partners under the new generation of peace enforcement and counter-terrorism operations to address the proliferation of non-state armed groups and other interlocking threats.

To realize these recommendations, the AU and subregional entities should clarify discussions around the mechanisms for deploying peace support operations and interventions under Articles 4 (h) and 4(j) of the Constitutive Act to restore peace and security and protect human rights. The African Standby Force (ASF) is one key instrument for peace enforcement, but its effective use remains limited. The decision-making process for mandating the force needs to be revisited to interrogate why Member States are not authorizing the use of this framework. Considering the growing use of ad hoc security mechanisms, the AU must also interrogate and rationalize these mechanisms' roles within the ASF framework (Yohannes et al., 2023).

Realizing the NA4P's Aspirations

While the NA4P is not a binding document with an enforcement mechanism, it is a vital opportunity to ignite debates on the shape of global and regional collective security mechanisms. As the UN prepares to convene the Summit of the Future, the AU must spearhead a similar regional process that feeds into the global discussion and overhaul its capabilities for preventive diplomacy and peace enforcement. Stocktaking, assessment and review of the APSA is a vital stepping-stone for Africa's productive engagement in the Summit of the Future (Handy and Djilo, 2023).

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Assessing the Impact of the ‘Silencing the Guns’ Initiative in Strengthening UN-AU Cooperation for Sustainable Peace in Africa

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Introduction

In May 2013, AU leaders adopted the “Silencing the Guns” initiative¹, envisioning an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa. However, the challenge of achieving this vision led to an extension of the initiative’s timeline in December 2020, setting the new goal to silence guns across the continent by 2030. Despite this extension, the task at hand remains formidable. This paper embarks on a meticulous examination of the ‘Silencing the Guns’ initiative and aims to provide practical recommendations for enhancing UN-AU cooperation in the pursuit of sustainable peace in Africa.

Impact of ‘Silencing the Guns’

To carry out a comprehensive assessment, we must establish a baseline from which to gauge progress. This baseline necessitates a thorough analysis of conflict prevalence, root causes, and the efficacy of existing peace and security mechanisms across the African continent.

Understanding the roles played by donors, states, and development partners assumes paramount importance in this evaluation. Scrutinizing their contributions and commitments will reveal whether their involvement genuinely aligns with the pursuit of sustainable peace or if it has devolved into a mere cycle of projects with new target years. Moreover, it is imperative to thoroughly examine specific benchmarks, performance assessments, and mechanisms of accountability to ensure the utmost transparency and effectiveness.

Addressing the Persistence of Small Armed Groups

The enduring presence of small armed groups and the ready availability of weapons across Africa demand a profound inquiry into the effectiveness of the initiative. An exhaustive analysis is imperative to assess how ‘Silencing the Guns’ has tackled the underlying causes of conflicts, with particular emphasis on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Has it succeeded in curtailing violence and preventing the proliferation of weapons? The evaluation of the tangible impact on the ground is of utmost importance.

Assessing Financial Assistance and Funding Mechanisms

Another critical dimension of this evaluation revolves around the financial support and funding mechanisms that underpinned the ‘Silencing the Guns’ initiative. Identifying funding sources, values, and interests and critically appraising the efficiency of resource allocation in achieving desired outcomes are crucial. Given the gravity of the initiative, accountability for resource utilization cannot be overstated.

Documented Indicators and Achievements

As of 2023, three years beyond the initiative’s intended conclusion², it is undeniable that readily available

1 Ending all wars, civil conflicts, gender-based violence, violent conflicts and preventing genocide in the continent by 2020. See <https://au.int/en/flagships/silencing-guns-2020>

2 Staying on target to silence the guns by 2030, PSC Report. Retrieved from <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/staying-on-target-to-silence-the-guns-by-2030> on September 17, 2023.

and purchasable weapons continue to plague Africa. This necessitates a meticulous examination of documented indicators and accomplishments. The assessment should delve into whether these achievements align with the overarching objective of ending all conflicts, gender-based violence, and violent conflicts on the continent.

Recommendations

- **Reassess Objectives with Local Ownership** - African nations should lead the process of reevaluating peace initiative objectives. This should be a collaborative effort involving governments, civil society, and local communities. This calls for engagement in dialogues where stakeholders from all sectors provide input. Governments should facilitate this process, ensuring that objectives are collectively defined and tailored to each nation's specific context.
- **Enhance Oversight Mechanisms with UN-AU Collaboration** - The UN and AU are jointly responsible for establishing robust oversight mechanisms. Both organizations should conduct regular joint assessments, audits, and evaluations to monitor progress and ensure transparency and accountability in resource allocation and outcomes. These evaluations should guide any necessary adjustments.
- **Conflict Prevention through Multifaceted Approaches** - National governments, regional bodies, and international organizations, including the AU and UN, share responsibility for shifting the focus towards conflict prevention. They could explore developing early warning systems by pooling expertise and resources from both the AU and UN and invest in diplomatic and mediation capabilities through collaborative training programs and knowledge exchange among AU and UN personnel.
- **Strengthen Regional Cooperation with UN-AU coordination** - Regional organizations should take a proactive role in conflict resolution and peacekeeping, with guidance and support from the UN and AU. The UN should offer technical support to enhance the capabilities of regional organizations. Joint planning and decision-making mechanisms should be established to facilitate coordination between the UN, AU and regional entities.
- **Combating Illicit Arms Trade through International Partnerships** - The UN, AU, and other international bodies should collaborate closely to combat the illicit arms trade. They must develop and execute comprehensive strategies, including bolstering border controls, carrying out collaborative operations against arms trafficking networks, and exchanging intelligence. They should also encourage African nations to ratify and implement existing arms control agreements.
- **Community Engagement with Local Empowerment** - National governments, in partnership with the UN and AU, should empower local actors in peace processes. These entities must provide substantial support to local civil society organizations, traditional leaders, and grassroots initiatives; offer capacity-building programs, conflict resolution training, and funding for community-driven peacebuilding projects; and ensure that local voices are at the forefront of conflict resolution efforts.

A Path to 2030: The Way Forward

As we look ahead to the extended timeline of the "Silencing the Guns" initiative until 2030, we find ourselves at a juncture that offers an opportunity to reassess our strategies and correct past mistakes. The pursuit of sustainable peace in Africa is an arduous journey that demands a sober reflection on our path forward.

Firstly, it is imperative that African nations engage directly in the process of redefining the objectives of peace initiatives. This recalibration should be an inclusive effort that takes into account the unique contexts and challenges faced by individual nations. Our collective focus should be on setting attainable

milestones, devoid of the unrealistic optimism that has sometimes clouded our past endeavors.

Transparency and accountability must be at the core of actions. As such, robust oversight mechanisms, jointly administered by the UN and AU, are indispensable. These mechanisms will not only ensure that resources are allocated judiciously but also facilitate precise progress monitoring and timely adjustments, as and when necessary.

Conflict prevention, with a sharp focus on addressing root causes such as poverty and inequality, should become the cornerstone of our efforts. This paradigm shift necessitates harmonized actions across national, regional, and international levels. The UN and AU must work in tandem to develop early warning systems and enhance mediation capabilities, ensuring that conflicts are nipped in the bud.

Regional organizations should take up a greater role, with the UN and AU offering guidance and expertise in conflict resolution and peacekeeping. Combating the illicit arms trade must be waged comprehensively, with the support of international partnerships and the strict enforcement of arms control agreements.

Lastly, the empowerment of local communities is non-negotiable. Local actors, including civil society organizations and traditional leaders, should be entrusted with a leading role in peace processes. To achieve this, capacity building and financial support for grassroots initiatives are imperative.

In summary, the journey to 2030 offers us a chance to rectify our past mistakes and set a course that aligns with the extended timeline of the “Silencing the Guns” initiative. It is a journey that requires unwavering commitment, the humility to learn from past missteps, and the adaptability to embrace pragmatic strategies for sustainable peace in Africa.

Conclusion

The ‘Silencing the Guns’ initiative has seen its timeline extended, reflecting the enduring nature of the challenge. This paper, grounded in a critical examination rather than undue optimism, underscores the urgency of re-evaluating our approach to sustainable peace in Africa. The recommendations provided present a pragmatic path forward, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and an unwavering focus on conflict prevention. Achieving lasting peace on the African continent remains a formidable task, one that demands our unwavering commitment and an earnest resolve to learn from past endeavors.

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Introduction

World leaders have always developed great policies to shape the world with the hope of making a peaceful and livable one. The approach used has always been a one-size-fits-all. One of the greatest lapses of international policymakers has always been using this approach. Some of these policies are developed without taking into consideration the cultural affinity, economic viability, social standards, political advancement, stability, and security challenges of different contexts. Given the numerous multidimensional challenges Africa faces, the NA4P seems to be a praiseworthy commitment that Africans can explore to build sustainable peace and stability. Nonetheless, it is important to localize this agenda to meet with the present pressing issues in Africa, so that the continent is not left behind.

Context

At the end of the Second World War, the world saw that there was a dire need to develop policies that would prevent the world from experiencing another human catastrophe. This initiated the development and signing of different international agreements and conventions. These included the UN Charter, UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and a plethora of treaties and agreements to enhance peace and security in the world. Poor implementation of policies in Africa has occasionally been seen as both a mystery and a sign of the continent's resistance to adapt to change. Despite these numerous agreements and conventions, the African continent continues to face the challenge of establishing sustainable peace, security, and development.

Achieving peace and prosperity in Africa requires localizing universal approaches, including the NA4P. The world is unfolding, and we are in an epoch of fragmentation where polarization and global politics seem to unseat the present status quo. Economic uncertainties, climate change, increased terrorism, and proliferation of nuclear weapons and threats are rife. It is in this light that the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, in his report "Our Common Global Agenda", emphasized the need for a NA4P to confront the multifaceted challenges faced by the international community.¹ This New Agenda, which outlines the Secretary-General's vision to attain international peace, has six potential focus areas including: reducing strategic risks; strengthening international foresight and capacities to identify and adapt to new risks; reshaping responses to all forms of violence; investing in prevention and peacebuilding; supporting regional prevention and putting women and girls at the center.

Adapting the Agenda for Peace the African Way

The NA4P should not be a notion brought about by outsiders, nor should it be a concept entirely developed by Africans. Alternatively, the NA4P should be a set of concepts and practices, mediated by the interaction between local communities in Africa and international, regional, and national actors. The contest over peacebuilding is not only a contest for funds but also a contest over meanings and interpretations. In that light, the AU and other stakeholders in Africa should not replicate the NA4P notion but rather adapt it to the local circumstances to have a meaningful impact in addressing the continent's peace, security, and developmental challenges.

Adaptation of the NA4P, through the many indigenous peace-building traditions that highlight the value of social solidarity should equally be considered as an option. One such tradition is a philosophy called

1 United Nations. (2023). A New Agenda for Peace. <https://dppa.un.org/en/a-new-agenda-for-peace>

'ubuntu', which is followed by communities in eastern, central, and southern Africa. The idea behind Ubuntu is that all humans are interdependent.²

The AU should consider adapting the NA4P to Africa's progressive cultural principles that promote human dignity and well-being of the individual and society. These principles provide valuable insights into how Africa can be peacefully reconstructed by using its own indigenous value-systems which emphasize promoting social solidarity. The promotion of this social solidarity practically means tackling corruption and trying to ensure democratic governance, power sharing, and the equitable distribution of resources among all members of society. Africans believe that they are humans because they belong, participate, and share in their society. In Ubuntu societies, maintaining positive social relations is a collective task in which everyone is involved to develop the society and live in peace. The NA4P can draw lessons from the following fundamental ubuntu traditions for promoting peace and social solidarity:

- There is a need for public participation in the peace-building process because it promotes social solidarity and cohesion.
- It is essential to support both parties as they go through the difficult process of peacemaking.
- Subscribing to culpability and contrition, and accepting forgiveness, are valuable ways of attaining reconciliation and peacemaking.
- It is fundamental to refer constantly to the essential unity and interdependence of humanity. It is also vital that the NA4P encourages Africans to live out the principles that this unity suggests: empathy for others, sharing common resources and working cooperatively to resolve common problems.³

Conclusion

Local peacebuilding initiatives can be very efficient in addressing Africa's security challenges. This initiative should strive to be adapted to traditional African realities practice, promoting social solidarity means confronting corruption and promoting power-sharing, inclusive governance, and the equitable distribution of resources and not be replicated. This will enable indigenous or traditional approaches to play a momentous role in the reconstruction of Africa, based on African cultural values, which should be ingrained in government and civil society actors. All the same, it is crucial not to romanticize indigenous approaches; these approaches must be a concerted effort with modern or Western values, such as gender equality, in order to be inclusive and participatory in the sustainable peacebuilding of Africa.

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