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## FOREWORD

It is my pleasure to introduce the special edition policy brief series published by the Institute of Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) of Addis Ababa University in collaboration with the New Zealand Embassy in Addis Ababa.

The publication of this volume comes at a critical time of multiple intersectional crises for the African continent and the world at large – underpinned by peace and security challenges, climate change, emerging technologies as well as threats in various aspects of governance.

The implications are on a scale and complexity not seen for generations, if ever. In our complex world, the space has shrunk between global events and their consequences for any individual

nation's prosperity and security. There is no "opt out" from the strategic trends we all face, regionally or globally. Now more than ever, we must remind ourselves of the value of collaboration as we seek to rebuild multilateralism to ensure collective prosperity and security.

We are proud to have supported the production of this policy brief as it puts the spotlight on New Zealand's strategic areas of engagement with our partners in Africa, particularly around multilateral engagements, the effect of climate change on peace and security and how ongoing conflicts disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, including women and children.

We hope policy recommendations outlined in this volume will be of use to governments, decision makers, as well as multilateral partners in Africa, and serve as a basis to reinforce the ongoing strive to achieve the Africa Union's Agenda 2063 of silencing the guns and building a prosperous Africa.

**"Naku te rourou; nau te rourou; ka ora ai te iwi"**

"With your basket and my basket, the people will live" - Māori Proverb

**H.E. Michael Upton**

New Zealand Ambassador to Ethiopia and the African Union



## PREFACE

The Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) of Addis Ababa University is a prominent Institute for higher education, research and policy dialogues on peace and security in Africa. Established in 2007 with the vision of becoming a premier African institute for knowledge production and dissemination in the field of peace and security, it ranks among the top 46 educational establishments and think tanks in Sub-Saharan Africa according to the Global Go to Think Tank Index Reports. The institute runs the Africa Peace and Security Programme (APSP), a joint initiative with the African Union, which is mandated by the African Union's Executive Council to take up the intellectual challenge of finding African-led solutions to peace and security challenges in Africa. IPSS equally serve as the Secretariat of the Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa that has been organised since 2012 and was selected as the Centre of Excellence for Post Conflict Societies by the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) in 2017.



In line with our mandate and commitment, we are delighted to produce, with the support of the Embassy of New Zealand in Ethiopia, this policy brief series, aimed at offering policy recommendations and solutions to the continent's myriad peace and security challenges. The selected policy briefs sought to identify issues that are critical but evade our attention. They serve as a timely tool for the African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities (RECs)/Regional Mechanisms (RMs) and AU member states to assess institutional and structural issues towards forging a more conducive policy environment for peace and security.

### **Fana Gebresenbet (Ph.D.)**

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# EDITORS' INTRODUCTION: PROTECTING AND ENHANCING AFRICA'S PEACE AND SECURITY PROSPECT

Jesutimilehin O. Akamo & Happi Cynthia

This introductory section provides an overview of all the policy briefs in Volume I of this special edition of our policy brief series, supported by the government of New Zealand (through the Embassy of New Zealand in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia). The section is divided into three (3) sub sections, each aimed at serving as a starting point to enhance Africa's peace and security prospects. The first sub-section focusses on the Horn of Africa. In this sub section, the private security industry is discussed against the backdrop of a growing demand for the services they offer. The second piece on the Horn of Africa focusses on the climate-security nexus, and in the same context offered a gendered perspective to the discourse. The second sub section focusses on multilateralism discussing intra- and inter-RECs challenges that require urgent redress. The last sub section goes beyond physical security and developmental issues. It presents perspectives on digital development and security.

## The Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa has experienced varying degrees of inter- and intra-state violent conflicts, secessionist and irredentist claims, constitutional crises, border challenges and cross-border communal conflicts, high corruption rate, weak or no democracy and government high-handedness, flawed electoral processes and conflict resolutions, inter-ethnic tensions, shrinking civic spaces, heightened poverty and social inequality gaps, drought, environmental degradation, and the rise of multiple centres of violence and power, among others. Amidst this, the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war exacerbated the food crisis in the region which was already at a worrying degree due to drought and famine. Regional

fragmentation and intra-regional contestations are at the vanguard of undermining the region's effort to forge a common regional identity and a common security objective to respond and remain responsive to security challenges.<sup>1</sup> External actor dynamics involving countries from Europe, the Middle East, the Gulf, Asia and the Americas converge on the coastline of the Horn of Africa to consolidate power, influence, and protect and advance their interest in the region. These actors play various roles in the political dynamics of the region to aid and sometimes undermine the ability of the region to handle the complex challenges it faces. Over the decades, unfortunately, the capacity of the States (individually and collectively) has remained inefficient and insufficient to handle the region's security needs. This complexity offered a fertile ground for the growth of the private security industry in the region.

### *Private Security Assistance Activity and Oversight in the Horn of Africa* by Whitney Grespin (Ph.D.)

presents an overview of the landscape of private security activities (and actors) in the Horn of Africa. Reiterating that despite the public scrutiny and valid concerns by state actors and inter-state institutions, they continue to find clients in the Horn of Africa, and it is sometimes considered essential and a viable alternative to what States offer. **Grespin** attempts to improve our understanding of the nature and scope of private security outfits in the region, demonstrate why "strategic monism" must be avoided, and prove why these private security does not solve the broader strategic security challenges in the region, and Africa at large. The

1 Caruso, F., & Akamo, J. O. (2023). Ethiopia and the Tigray War: Limits and Challenges of EU Policy in a Fragmented and Contested Region. JOINT Research Papers, (16). Accessed at <https://www.jointproject.eu/2023/02/20/ethiopia-and-the-tigray-war-limits-and-challenges-of-eu-policy-in-a-fragmented-and-contested-region/>. This paper also contains what regional fragmentation means in this context.

author argues that these private security outfits may create more vulnerability in the absence of (efficient) oversight. Seeing that this industry has become an integral part of the region's security landscape as they fill the void created by the weak capacity of States in the region, the author presents policy recommendations that can help mitigate the risks and vulnerabilities associated with the proliferation of private security outfits, highlighting improved scrutiny, better state-state coordination, and a lessons-learned approach.

Although the Horn of Africa region suffers from fragmentation, **Darlington Tshuma (Ph.D.)** in ***Regionalisation of Insecurity: Climate Change, Conflict and the Gendered Dimensions of Insecurity in the Horn of Africa*** acknowledged that food security and environmental protection, socioeconomic development, regional integration and cooperation, peace and security have been important points of convergence for states in the region. **Tshuma** further doubled down on the humanistic and human security dimension as it concerns the vulnerability of the people. The author highlights how climate change is a threat multiplier the region must contend with. This additional layer of stress further complicates the region's peace and security landscape as it is also proven to add to the numbers of deaths and displacement. To advance that individual dimension, **Tshuma** presents the gendered dimensions effectively arguing that we must not lose sight of the importance of the roles and contributions of women and girls to Africa's peace and security agenda. In this regard, the author made a case for gender-responsive approaches that enhance the agency and participation of women and girls in decision-making processes. The author's recommendation revolved around targeted interventions in specific regards, data and knowledge gathering enhancement, gender mainstreaming, partnerships and cooperation between and amongst key stakeholders.

## Multilateralism

Regional Economic Communities (RECs) was promoted in the 1960s by stakeholders in Africa's governance, development, peace and security to enhance economic development

and facilitate the pursuit of other key objectives shared by the continent's newly independent states. Through the 1980 Lagos Plan of Actions for the Development of Africa and the 1991 Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, member states of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) opted to establish several RECs the regions of the continent, which would, ideally, serve as building blocks towards the consolidation of a wider continental integration process and a wider African Economic Community (AEC). Over the years, various RECs — with uneven endowments, scopes and membership size — have been established in Africa, and have developed their own distinct structures, cultures, and procedures.

With the transformation of the OAU to the African Union (AU) in 2002, the relationship between the RECs and the newly revamped continental organisation was further clarified by the AU Constitutive Act, by a 2008 Protocol on Relations between the RECs, and by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security between the AU and the RECs. The AU officially recognises eight RECs, which, according to the blueprint of the Abuja Treaty, are meant to set the stage towards incremental continental integration. However, the achievement of the Abuja Treaty vision of incremental integration between the RECs is currently hampered by various challenges such as chronic institutional fragmentation; uneven capacity and performance of the RECs; overlapping memberships; legal gaps; financial deficits; and a perennial lack of political will by some member states.

Among these challenges, the issue of institutional fragmentation is arguably the most urgent to overcome — if the Abuja Treaty vision of incremental integration is to be realistically implemented. Indeed, although the Abuja Treaty provides for the establishment for eight RECs within Africa's five sub-regions, the number of regional economic organisations operating across the continent today stands at about fifteen. This results in unnecessary duplication, competition for resources, and makes it much more challenging to coordinate and eventually integrate these institutions into a coherent, overarching framework at the

continental level. Overcoming such challenges and moving towards the swift implementation of the Abuja Treaty blueprint requires more rigorous assessments and analyses of the current state of affairs, followed by concrete recommendations to address the major challenges.

On this premise, **Ndubuisi Christian Ani (Ph.D.)** in *Fragmentations within APSA and the Imperative of Cooperation among Regional Economic Communities (RECs)* looked into the modalities of cooperation and criticised the siloed working approaches of RECs and turf politics that undermine greater coordination and cooperation for effective delivery in terms of peace and security. **Ani** reiterated one of the key importance of the Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA): a platform for coordination and cooperation. Here, fragmentation describes a situation where coordination, cooperation and a common objective (and the strategies to achieve them) are weak or absent. This weakness or absence of coordination, cooperation and a common objective leaves room for intended or unintended competition between and among member states who sometimes possess multiple RECs membership, member states' selection of which RECs to work with based on favourability to their cause often to the disadvantage to other parties, and creation of ad hoc coalitions (instead of joint strategies). All of these weaken the APSA alliance. The key takeaways of this brief are applicable to all eight (8) RECs recognised by the AU. Also, peace and security challenges are evidently transcending intra-regional scopes to becoming inter-regional items. Thus, APSA and its stakeholders must adapt in a way that it does not undermine itself and this includes inter-RECs cooperation and coordination, particularly the need to stop working in silos.

While RECs may complement each other, the weakness or vulnerability of one may either affect the other or undermine the collective interest at inter-RECs level. Therefore, you will see why **Abraham Ename Minko's** presentation in *Enhancing Multilateralism in Africa: The Role and Impact of Regional Economic Communities (RECs)* is important. RECs play a vital role to enhance multilateralism in Africa. This has proven key to promoting cooperation,

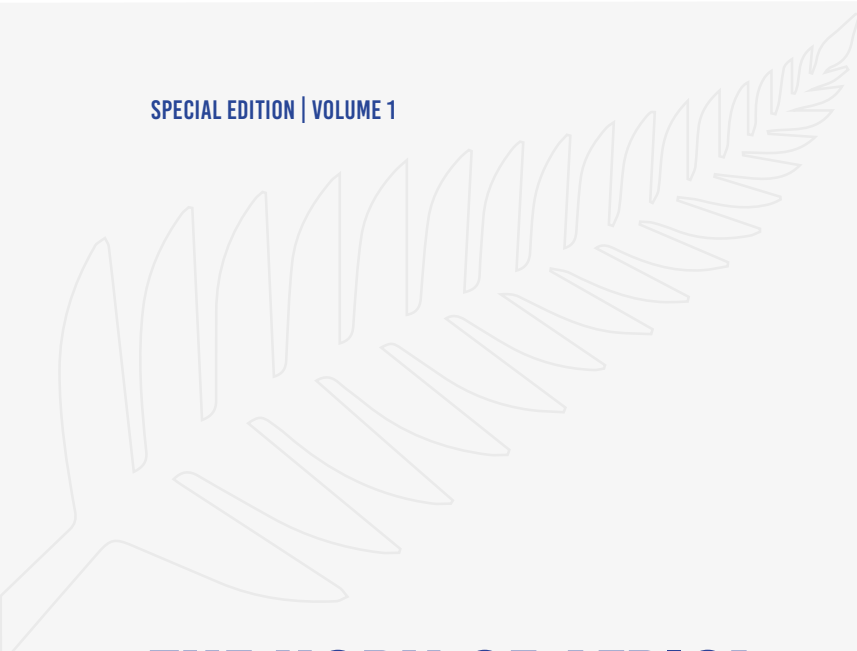
economic integration, and political dialogue which are all important to address the root causes of conflict and improved the output of various conflict response initiatives in the various regions. Furthermore, they help to enhance the diplomatic capacity and global image of their member states and the region at large. To therefore bolster the impact of RECs on African multilateralism, **Minko** highlighted specific recommendations to the identified challenges that undermine their value.

## Digital Development and Cyberspace Governance

**Dmitry Erokhin** focussed on digital development indices in *Comparative Analysis of Digital Development in African Countries and Security Implications* to reiterate the importance of digital development to national security and economic growth. The key policy considerations include encouraging and creating a conducive and rewarding environment for innovation, academia-industry collaboration, and promoting a developmental, inclusive, and knowledge-driven approach to cybersecurity and governance. To arrive at these policy suggestions, the author looked into some key digital development indices like the Global Innovation Index (GII), World Digital Competitiveness Ranking (WDC), E-Government Development Index (EGDI), Telecommunication Infrastructure Index (TII), Network Readiness Index (NRI), and Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI).

While digital development is important for national security (a fluid and evasive concept) and economic growth, **Jesutimilehin O. Akamo** in *Beyond Securitization's Legacy: Inclusive-Friendly Perspectives To Governing Africa's Cyberspace* advice a reasonable degree of caution especially with respect to securitisation and its impact on inclusivity. Securitization has a history of driving an exclusionary approach to policy and **Akamo** argues that governing the virtual space requires inclusion-friendly policies. The exclusion of key stakeholders in the decision-making processes that contribute to the governance of cyberspace undermines the anticipatory needs of policy. In this regard, **Akamo** suggests three (3) normative

considerations for governments/institutions and policy makers to serve as underpinnings that guide decision-making processes.



## **THE HORN OF AFRICA**

Private Security Assistance Activity and Oversight in the Horn of Africa

**Whitney Grespin (Ph.D.)**

# Issue 1

## Executive Summary

The evolving security environment across the Horn of Africa has garnered attention not only from state actors, but also from a myriad of private entities participating in the security sector. Although the private contracting industry has faced intense scrutiny from scholarly research, the public and press in the past decade, clients continue to find that the services provided by the broader security contracting industry are both essential and viable alternatives to many of the services once provided (or aspired to) by governments. For this reason, it is important to understand the origin, activities and likely intentions of these private sector stakeholders.

This Policy Brief will summarise the current landscape of private security activities (and actors) across the Horn of Africa. This will include stakeholder mapping of entities active in the security space, identification of sponsors (to the extent possible) and the scope of activities that are being pursued for both public and private interests. This policy brief will conceptualise a holistic picture of security environments, civilian-military dynamics, oversight mechanisms and recourse in the instance of misbehaviour.

The growth of the security contracting industry due to increasing instability across multiple vectors of security dynamics (human security, physical security, environmental security, etc.), is an ideal opportunity to educate consumers of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies scholarship by acquainting them with the oft-sensationalised but widely used private security industry.

## Key Points

Private security assistance providers have long been active across the African continent.

Sponsors must avoid what Samuel Huntington identifies as “strategic monism”, which occurs when a sponsor views a specific geographic environment, threat or capability (such as employing non-state/private security actors) as the main driver of strategy. In short, contracting out services is not a panacea for broader strategic security challenges.

This is a timely issue given the recent stated intent of the Nigerien regime to retain Wagner Group services, thereby linking together private capabilities across multiple sovereign states.

While there is rich and valuable opportunity for further interrogation of secondary and tertiary interest misalignment between the principals and agents of these interactions, for the purpose of this Policy Brief, this work will offer a brief overview on the nature and scope of the use of non-state security assistance/actors across the Horn of Africa.

## Introduction

Private security providers have become a key fixture of the international system. Over recent decades, private providers of security services and training have become embedded into the ecosystems of national security and have become an integral part of international pursuits for stability. It is clear that personnel who are integral to mission success are no longer uniformed or even direct government hires. Therefore, the expanding use of non-state security actors poses both challenges and opportunities to their sponsors as well as other actors in their operating environments. The dynamics between principals (e.g. states) and agents (contracted service providers) can affect the initiation, duration and severity of conflict.<sup>2</sup>

The drawdown of the United States Government's (USG) presence in Iraq and Afghanistan – both prominent theatres of contractor utilisation – only heralded changes within those particular operations, and not shifts in the overall trend of government reliance on contracted services. Despite the industry's shortcomings and public scepticism about perceived legitimacy and concerns about the use of force, demand for security services continues to grow in traditional areas such as physical security.<sup>3</sup> Contingency contracting firms are service providers with operational experience and contextual knowledge,<sup>4</sup> and the USG (a leader in the practice but surely not alone in it) continues to utilise the private sector to support national security objectives. In line with this, China has increased the use of its own private security companies to protect Belt and Road Initiative projects around the globe.<sup>5</sup> While the fate of the Wagner Group's trajectory is unknown, its prominent role in the execution of Russian foreign policy is indisputable. The

United Nations (UN) is also well-practised in hiring firms to provide a range of services, including operational and life support.<sup>6</sup>

By understanding the accurate categorisations within an organised typology of actors in this space and differentiating their designations (even when their activities superficially appear to be similar), consumers can better understand how the different entities can be engaged to retain and improve their work in support of the collective goals of the sponsor states. Relevant actors can be viewed on a spectrum ranging from less formally engaged outfits that are distanced from representing a state's interests, to the highly regulated companies that perform work which is designed, directed and overseen by the state within well-established legal structures and communities of practice.<sup>7</sup>

The author's previous work provides a typology to understand the spectrum of contracted actors engaging in the security sector work, and the regulatory frameworks (or lack thereof) under which they operate. The typology differentiates the non-state security actors ranging from un(der)regulated actors (who do not hold themselves accountable to state oversight or international legal frameworks) to highly professionalised industry actors concerned with the credibility of their work.

2 Petersohn, U. (2021). Onset of new business? Private military and security companies and conflict onset in Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia from 1990 to 2011. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 32(8), 1362–1393. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2020.1866404>

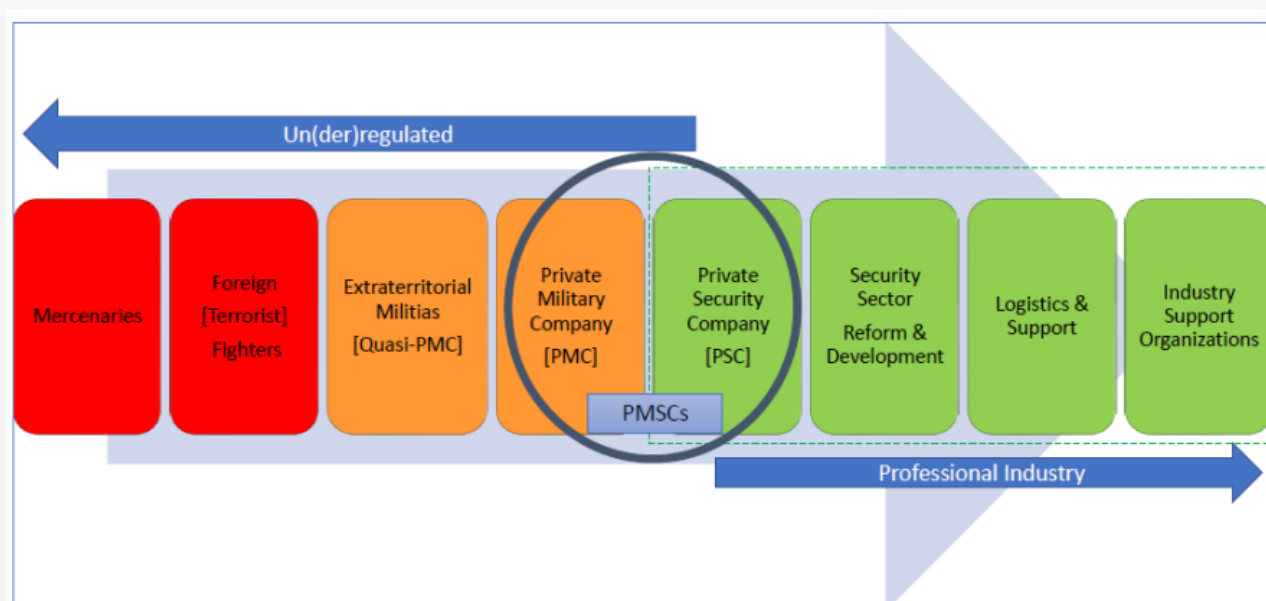
3 Verghese, S. (2022, October). Private Security Market Outlook (2022 to 2032). Future Market Insights. Available at: <https://www.futuremarketinsights.com/reports/private-security-market>

4 *Ibid*

5 Markusen, M. (2022). A Stealth Industry: The Quiet Expansion of Chinese Private Security Companies. *JSTOR.ORG*. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep39403> *Guardians of the Belt and Road | Merics*. [online] *Mercator Institute for China Studies*. Mercator Institute for China Studies. Available at: <https://merics.org/en/report/guardians-belt-and-road>.

6 Bures, O., & Cusumano, E. (2021). The Anti-Mercenary Norm and United Nations' Use of Private Military and Security Companies: From norm entrepreneurship to organized hypocrisy. *International Peacekeeping*, 28(4), 579–605. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2020.1869542>

7 Grespin, W. (2023). "U.S. Contingency Contracting in the Total Defence Force: Framing the Industry." in Eds. Joakim Berndtsson, J., Goldenberg, I., von Hlatky, S.. *Total Defence Forces in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. McGill-Queen's University Press. [https://www.mqup.ca/total-defence-forces-in-the-twenty-first-century-products-9780228019299.php?page\\_id=&](https://www.mqup.ca/total-defence-forces-in-the-twenty-first-century-products-9780228019299.php?page_id=&).



## Activity of Private Security Assistance Across the Horn of Africa

The provision of military and security advising across complex environments is not new.<sup>8</sup> In the African context, the use of private security actors can be seen to have surged when the security forces of South Africa dissolved in 1994, and tens of thousands of military personnel found themselves unemployed at the end of the apartheid state. As with today – where the cessation of certain large-scale military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq has left large labour pools available for engagement in other conflicts – many individuals turned to the employment opportunities provided by private entities.

Specific to the Horn of Africa, Somalia has seen a proliferation of private actors arrive – primarily in Mogadishu and Kismayo but also further afield – over the last two decades.<sup>9</sup> A drive around Mogadishu’s airport compound gives a snapshot of some of the players active in Somalia such as: African Skies, DFS, GardaWorld, RA International and SKA International amongst

others. Recent scholarship and public media reporting<sup>10</sup> have called out the “bunkerisation” of diplomacy while pointing out that many contractors enjoy greater mobility and access to information than many government and international organisation employees supporting bilateral or multilateral efforts with the Federal Government of Somalia.

A research memo from the London School of Economics and Political Science's (LSE) Conflict Research Programme highlighted that, “Even the small national military contingents contained within the green zone are often on six-month rotations and are restricted by overly stringent force protection protocols that often do not allow them to leave the compound or access local knowledge circuits.”<sup>11</sup> This has driven up the demand not only for life support services of those personnel, but also access to opportunities to interface directly with Somali nationals through contracted training and advising efforts funded by a variety of international donors.

Kenya has also seen an increase in similar capacity building efforts for its military and border forces to contain the nefarious influence

8 Boutellis, A. (2019, February 7). *Are Mercenaries Friends or Foes of African Governments and the UN?* IPI Global Observatory. <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2019/02/are-mercenaries-friends-foes-africa-un/>

9 Majid, N., & Norman, J. (2020, August 27). *Private Military and Security Companies in Somalia*. Conflict Research Programme Blog. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/crp/2020/08/27/private-military-and-security-companies-in-somalia/>

10 Gramer, R. (2021, March 10). *New Bill Takes Aim at State Department's "Bunker Mentality."* Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/10/state-department-congress-security-benghazi-conflict-zones/>

11 Norman, J. (2023). Porous bunker: Private security contractors and the plasticity of Mogadishu's international 'green zone.' *Security Dialogue*, 54(3), 290–309. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09670106231158890>

of al Shabaab's activities. Djibouti also reaps significant monetary benefits in return for their willingness to host international troops supported by contractors, including "the largest U.S military contract in Africa" at Camp Lemonnier.<sup>12</sup> The Wagner Group, categorised as an extraterritorial militia rather than PMSC on the spectrum above given their role as a quasi-state agent of influence, has been active in Sudan, as well as further afield in the Central African Republic, Libya and Mali.<sup>13</sup> While a more comprehensive accounting of private security assistance efforts is beyond the scope of this policy brief, it is important to acknowledge the ubiquity of privately delivered state-sponsored interventions in the region.

## Direction and Oversight of Contracted Activities

However, well-behaving contractors rarely make the news.<sup>14</sup> The entities who employ these actors must also provide sufficient oversight of their activities to ensure that they are in line with the aims of the contract sponsor. Scholars Avant and Neu document that abuses have been perpetrated by private contractors on nearly every continent.<sup>15</sup> The Blackwater Nisour Square massacre of 2007,<sup>16</sup> and more recent widespread abuses of the Wagner Group<sup>17</sup> have deservedly generated denunciations. Despite these challenges to the practice, sponsors

continue to hire out these sensitive services to private actors.

Subsequently, calls for improved transparency and regulation emerged following the extensive use of private security providers in contingency operations by the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>18</sup> Working groups were formed amongst industry stakeholders, most notable of which is the Montreux Document, which emerged from Swiss-led efforts to coordinate the creation of a code of conduct for contracting firms.<sup>19</sup> The Montreux Document establishes guidelines for signatory companies, and while it is non-legally binding, the agreement recommends best practices for stakeholders. This is due to the fact that fundamentally, sponsors want to maximise services while contractors want to maximise profits—a tension that underlies the principal-agent relationship between contractors and their sponsors.

Many private entities voluntarily join the International Code of Conduct Association<sup>20</sup> (ICoCA), which monitors industry activity and works to set industry behavioural standards. Both ICoCA and the Washington-DC based trade organisation- International Stability Operations Association<sup>21</sup> (ISOA), have public complaint mechanisms through which questionable practices can be flagged for investigation. There has been extensive private sector regulation of human trafficking efforts,<sup>22</sup> as well American National Standards Institute/ ASIS International (ANSI/ASIS) standard of quality creation.<sup>23</sup>

12 KBR (2016). *KBR | We Deliver*. Available at: <https://www.kbr.com/en>.

13 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (2021, October 27). CAR: Russian Wagner Group harassing and intimidating civilians – UN experts. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/11/car-russian-wagner-group-harassing-and-intimidating-civilians-un-experts>

14 Grespin, W. (2016, April 21). *Well-Behaved Defense Contractors Seldom Make History*. War on the Rocks. <https://warontherocks.com/2016/04/well-behaved-defense-contractors-seldom-make-history/>

15 Avant, D., & Neu, K. K. (2019). The Private Security Events Database. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 63(8), 1986–2006. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002718824394>

16 Snukal, K., & Gilbert, E. (2015). War, law, jurisdiction, and juridical othering: private military security contractors and the Nisour Square massacre. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 33(4), 660–675. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775815598077>

17 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (2021, October 27). CAR: Russian Wagner Group harassing and intimidating civilians – UN experts. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/11/car-russian-wagner-group-harassing-and-intimidating-civilians-un-experts>; US Department of the Treasury. (2023, November 29). Treasury Sanctions Illicit Gold Companies Funding Wagner Forces and Wagner Group Facilitator. U.S. Department of the Treasury. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1581#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20has%20sanctioned>

18 See Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan. (2011). Transforming Wartime Contracting Controlling costs, reducing risks. <https://Cybercemetery.unt.edu/Archive/Cwc/20110929213815>.

19 The Montreux Document reaffirms the existing obligations of States under international law, in particular international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law, relating to the activities of private military and security companies (PMSCs). [https://www.montreuxdocument.org/about/montreux-document.html#:~:text=The%20Montreux%20Document%20reaffirms%20the.and%20security%20companies%20\(PMSCs\).](https://www.montreuxdocument.org/about/montreux-document.html#:~:text=The%20Montreux%20Document%20reaffirms%20the.and%20security%20companies%20(PMSCs).)

20 Ariane Lüthi. (2023, March 23). How a Swiss-based organisation is regulating military contractors. SWI Swissinfo.ch. <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/how-a-swiss-based-organisation-is-regulating-military-contractors/48374752>

21 International Stability Operations Association (n.d.). *ISOA - International Stability Operations Association*. [online] stability-operations.org. Available at: <https://stability-operations.org>.

22 Grespin, W. (2016). *The Evolving Contingency Contracting Market: Private Sector Self-regulation and United States Government Monitoring of Procurement of Stability Operations Services*. U.S. Army War College. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/AD1004033>

23 "This Standard builds on the Montreux Document and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Providers

In addition to these private sector organisations which seek to promote best practices from within the industry, the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)<sup>24</sup> is also an active contributor to the study of relevant activity and policy development. For example, DCAF, in its capacity as Montreux Document Forum Secretariat, has launched an “Advisory Support in Private Security Regulation” scheme for States to regulate the private military and security sector. These services range from legislative and policy reform to capacity building, and are guided by the principles of neutrality, impartiality, local ownership, inclusive participation and gender equality.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, member companies of ISOA can self-select to earn certifications on Women, Peace and Security<sup>26</sup> in support of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

These good faith efforts build on existing legal frameworks. As many early private security services came through the activities of less-regulated groups with mercenary characteristics, the Organisation of African Unity (replaced by the African Union in 2002) developed the Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa about five decades ago in 1977.<sup>27</sup> A decade after this, the United Nations International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries was adopted in 1989.<sup>28</sup> The mandate for the Special Rapporteur on the

use of mercenaries was succeeded in 2005 by the United Nations Working Group on Mercenaries.<sup>29</sup> They remain active and recently released a report to call to attention the “Recruitment, of mercenaries and mercenary-related actors,” in recognition of the rampancy of this phenomenon in current events.<sup>30</sup> The call for attention to this matter on the part of the United Nations tracks with concerns raised the prior year when “The African Union (AU) has been discussing ways to expel private military contractors, mercenaries and foreign fighters from conflict zones in Africa.”<sup>31</sup>

## Conclusion

It is the responsibility of the hiring government to understand the true nature of the entity that they are engaging with and allowing to operate within their borders. It is of utmost importance that an understanding of which spectrum these actors belong to and their limitations in engagement be known in order to comprehend not only what activities these entities might undertake, but how they can be expected to interact with other security actors.

The importance of contractual dynamics affects state actors, as well as international organisations such as the United Nations and multinational corporations. In addition, individual citizen interests are also affected by the expanding footprint of non-state security providers. Furthermore, an ever-increasing number of conflict-affected areas face challenges that are exacerbated by climate change<sup>32</sup> and other drivers of instability. If consumers focus their contracting procurement on tactical military capability enhancement but do not pay attention to operational and

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to provide requirements and guidance for a management system with auditable criteria for Quality of Private Security Company Operations, consistent with respect for human rights, legal obligations and good practice s related to operations of private security service provider companies in conditions where governance and the rule of law have been undermined by conflict or disaster. It provides auditable requirements based on the Plan-Do-Check-Act model for third-party certification of private security service providers working for any client.” See ANSI-ASIS. “Management System for Quality of Private Security Company Operations – Requirements with Guidance.” 2012. <https://www.acq.osd.mil>

- 24 DCAF (n.d.). *Home | DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance*. [online] [www.dcaf.ch](http://www.dcaf.ch). Available at: <https://www.dcaf.ch>.
- 25 Montreux Document Forum (n.d.). *Advisory Support in Private Military and Security Regulation*. [online] Montreux Document Forum. Available at: <https://www.montreuxdocument.org/services-for-states/private-military-and-security-regulation.html>.
- 26 International Stability Operations Association (n.d.). *Women, Peace, and Security Working Group - ISOA - International Stability Operations Association*. [online] [stability-operations.org](http://stability-operations.org). Available at: <https://cdn.ymaws.com/stability-operations.org/resource/resmgr/docs/white-papers/2022-11-13-wps-white-paper.pdf>.
- 27 Organisation of African Unity (OAU). (1977). *OAU Convention on the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa*. Available at: <https://au.int/en/treaties/convention-elimination-mercenarism-africa>
- 28 Avant, D. (2005). *The Market for Force: The Consequences of Privatizing Security*. Cambridge University Press.

- 29 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (n.d.). Working Group on the use of mercenaries. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-mercenaries>
- 30 See United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2023). Predatory recruitment of mercenaries must end: UN experts. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/09/predatory-recruitment-mercenaries-must-end-un-experts>
- 31 Tessema, S. (2022, February 6). Foreign military contractors, mercenaries, fighters “should get out of Africa”: AU official. [www.aa.com.tr](http://www.aa.com.tr). <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/foreign-military-contractors-mercenaries-fighters-should-get-out-of-africa-au-official/2495536>
- 32 Krampe, F., Van De Goor, L., Barnhoorn, A., Smith, E., & Smith, D. (2020). Water security and governance in the Horn of Africa. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *SIPRI Policy Paper (54)*. Accessed at [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/sipripp54\\_0.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/sipripp54_0.pdf).

strategic capacity development paired with other critical government approaches to nation building, they will never achieve long-term success through the goal of confronting threats to stability.

## Policy Recommendation(s)

- Thoughtful and deliberate state consultations with industry experts and good faith actors during strategic and policy development related to the use of contractors can mitigate problematic engagements.<sup>33</sup>
  - ◇ Given the different interests between state and non-state security actors and the risk of agency loss and reputational damage, the alignment of state permissions to private actors is critical.
- Improved industry standards, free speech protections for investigative media reporting and required past performance histories in bidding procedures reduce the uncertainty about hiring specific firms.
  - ◇ Transparency reduces the likelihood of adversely selecting a poor performing agent. Indeed, in many solicitations for services, the USG requires comprehensive “past performance” narratives and references to allow for vetting of firms prior to contract award. Requiring these components improves the sponsor’s bargaining position throughout the contracting process.
  - ◇ Efforts to improve selection, management and evaluation of PMSCs requires sponsors, industry and international organization collaboration.
- Identifying “lessons learned” to address shortcomings in the contracted assistance is a necessary and ongoing process.
  - ◇ This is complementary to, but not necessarily the same as, improving contract oversight or management practices through upgraded monitoring


and evaluation.

- ◇ Increased restrictions imposed on the agent by the principal might also address asymmetries by ensuring that contracted entities do not misunderstand the permissions allowed and responsibilities delegated to them by the state.<sup>34</sup>
- ◇ Principals seeking to limit potentially negative consequences of contracting may restrict the types of services they procure/authorise.

*The views expressed in this article are those solely of the author and do not reflect the policy or views of the Defense Security Cooperation University, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, Joint Special Operations University, or Department of Defense.*

33 *Ibid*

34 Grespin, W. (2022, January 28). *The Problem is the Contract, Not the Contractor*. Inkstick. <https://inkstickmedia.com/the-problem-is-the-contract-not-the-contractor/>



Regionalisation of Insecurity: Climate Change, Conflict and the Gendered Dimensions of Insecurity in the Horn of Africa.

**Darlington Tshuma (Ph.D.)**

Issue 2

## Executive Summary

While complex security challenges continue to occur in the Horn of Africa, mutual vulnerability to climate change adds stress layers to a region already burdened by internecine wars and conflicts. Successive droughts have led to large-scale displacements and the death of millions of livestock. Armed conflict, rising food prices, the impact of Covid-19 and the disruption to international trade brought by the war in Ukraine contribute to insecurity, making people more vulnerable to the impact of the current drought. Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires a comprehensive understanding of regional dynamics and its implications on peace and security. This policy brief examines how the climate conflict nexus contributes to regional insecurity in the Horn of Africa, with focus specifically on the unique vulnerabilities of women and girls. By exploring the complex interplay between these factors, this policy brief sheds light on the gendered dimensions of insecurity while highlighting women's roles and contributions to Africa's peace and security agenda. Key recommendations include the need for coordinated peace efforts, regional cooperation and targeted interventions to mitigate climate threats and promote peace and stability.

## Key Points

The Horn of Africa faces a range of interconnected security challenges that transcend national borders. Regionalisation of insecurity will have implications far beyond the region, therefore, understanding these dynamics is crucial for securing long-term peace and development.

Climate induced insecurity exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, deepening gender and economic disparities that fuel insecurity. Policy interventions should prioritise region-specific approaches that support women and girls' agency and promote their participation in decision making.

Enhancing regional cooperation is vital for addressing the regionalisation of insecurity. This requires fostering trust and building effective mechanisms for information sharing, intelligence cooperation and joint security operations.

Addressing the regionalisation of insecurity requires holistic approaches that encompass political, socioeconomic, environmental and humanitarian dimensions. It involves preventive measures, conflict resolution mechanisms, institution building and development initiatives that promote inclusive governance, promote peace and foster social cohesion.

Strengthening regional institutions such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU), can facilitate coordination and collaboration among member states, civil society and international partners.

## Introduction

The Horn member states' collective vision is to enhance regional cooperation in priority areas namely: food security and environmental protection, socio-economic development, regional integration and cooperation, peace and security.<sup>35</sup> In spite of the region's enormous resource base and its geostrategic importance, it is one of the poorest and most fragile regions in the world. In the last 30 years, the region has seen numerous conflicts ranging from interstate wars between Ethiopia and Eritrea to internal conflicts in Uganda, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. The region is currently home to three international peacekeeping missions. Vulnerability to climate induced shocks add stress layers to a region already burdened by protracted conflicts. Successive droughts have displaced 2.7 million people and killed over 13 million livestock across the region.<sup>36</sup> For a region dependent on agriculture, low agricultural output, poor economic conditions and conflict have adversely affected residents by being drivers of hunger and food insecurity. The impact of Covid-19 on international trade coupled with the war in Ukraine have exacerbated household food insecurity by driving up the cost of food imports and key commodities like fuel and fertilizer. Conflict webs in the region continue to challenge normative approaches to peace and security. Most conflicts are interconnected through complex inter-ethnic group alliances, transnational enmity and grand opportunism designed to exploit illicit trade and trafficking of goods and people across borders. Ongoing instability in Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan and a shaky transition in South Sudan is aggravating regional insecurity and humanitarian crises. For example, military clashes between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in Khartoum have already displaced approximately two million people.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Sudan and civil society groups have documented multiple cases of sexual violence and human

rights violations against women and girls.<sup>38</sup> In the context of insecurity, women and girls face disproportionate hardships and vulnerabilities. Limited access to resources and decision-making further hinders their adaptive capacities, while traditional gender roles confine them to domestic responsibilities, limiting their adaptive capabilities.

## Regionalisation of insecurity: Implications for peace and security in the Horn of Africa

Regionalisation of insecurity in the Horn of Africa is a result of a compendium of factors, including colonial history, land disputes, ethnic and tribal conflicts, geopolitical dynamics and environmental factors. Environmental processes are interacting with conflict dynamics in complex ways to create conditions conducive to chronic insecurity. In 2021, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change cautioned that climate change impacts will be most severely felt in poor and conflict ravaged regions of the world.<sup>39</sup> The 2023 Global Report on Food Crises ranked the Horn of Africa as most vulnerable to extreme weather events. According to the report, frequent heatwaves, floods, cyclones, droughts and disease outbreaks impact food production, household food security and livelihoods.<sup>40</sup> Numerous studies have identified climate change as a threat multiplier, and when combined with socio-political factors like poverty, gender inequality, state fragility and weak governance, exacerbate existing societal vulnerabilities and intensify conflicts.<sup>41</sup>

35 IGAD. (2021, May 20). About - IGAD. <https://igad.int/about/?tab=aims-and-objectives>

36 UNFPA. (2023, July 14). Crisis in the Horn of Africa. UNFPA ESARO. <https://esaro.unfpa.org/en/news/crisis-horn-africa>

37 Operational Data Portal. (n.d.). Situation Sudan situation. Data. unhcr.org. Accessed at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/sudansituation>

38 UN Women. (2023, July). Sudan: UN condemns spike in violence against women and girls. Africa Renewal. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/july-2023/sudan-un-condemns-spike-violence-against-women-and-girls> See also, Sudan's women unit reports surge in sexual violence cases linked to RSF elements. (2021). Sudan Tribune. <https://sudantribune.com/article274786/>

39 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). (2021). The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/>

40 Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) on. (2023). Global Report on Food Crises 2023, Regional Focus on IGAD Member States| ReliefWeb. In reliefweb.int. <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/global-report-food-crises-2023-regional-focus-igad-member-states>

41 Abshir, S. (2020). Climate-Fragility Policy Paper: Climate Change and Security in the Horn Of Africa: Can Europe Help to Reduce the

For instance, in Sudan's southern Kordofan region, decline in precipitation is contributing to an ecological crisis, pushing nomads to move further southwards and bringing them into conflict with farmers.<sup>42</sup> In Somalia, the loss of livelihood due to climate change is a contributing factor to why young men join armed militia groups like al Shabab.<sup>43</sup>

Today, the Horn of Africa region is at the epicentre of the world's worst food disaster in recent memory. More than 20 million people need urgent food assistance in Ethiopia, 1.2 million face acute emergency levels of need in Kenya and 6.6 million in Somalia suffer from food insecurity.<sup>44</sup> Across the region, approximately 11.5 million children face the risk of severe and acute malnutrition.<sup>45</sup> Women and young girls, who often bear the responsibility for food production and resource management, are disproportionately affected. Climate change further increases risks faced by women and girls since it exacerbates water scarcity and sanitation challenges. Women are more likely to suffer from food insecurity, inadequate access to clean water and increased health risks during climate-related disasters like cyclones. Experts warn that gender disparities contribute to heightened levels of insecurity.<sup>46</sup> In fragile regions of the world, climate change induced environmental degradation, resource scarcity and extreme weather events disproportionately affect women and girls, exacerbating existing gender inequalities and vulnerabilities. For instance, climate change induced resource scarcity, including competition over water and land in many parts of the Horn, has intensified localised conflicts and heightened risks of sexual and gender-based violence. In South Sudan, insecurity is preventing farmers in Upper Nile, Jonglei and Warrap from cultivating the land. Similar reports have been documented in

Kenya's arid and semi-arid counties. In northern Kenya, for instance, climate change-induced resource scarcity, including competition over water and land has intensified localised low level communal conflicts.<sup>47</sup> Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of violent conflict and involuntary displacement since conflict heightens risks of sexual and gender-based violence.

External activities fuelled by large scale acquisitions of prime land by international companies as part of climate offsetting schemes are leading to conflicts within local communities that depend on forest land for livelihoods. For instance, large financial investments in the form of 'bread baskets' in Ethiopia and Sudan driven by Gulf States' concern for their own food security is altering agrarian land ownership patterns, and placing communities at further risk of displacement, violent persecution and food shortages.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, conflicts over land and territorial disputes are reducing communities' capacities to adapt to climate change, while simultaneously undermining civil society efforts to protect the environment. For instance, borderland communities in the Karamoja cluster live in perpetual fear of raids by pastoralists and armed militia moving beyond their traditional routes. In Kenya and Somalia, conservation efforts by pastoralist communities, who for generations have applied local ecological systems to protect the environment, are being undermined by top-down conservation interventions, external activities and new conflict dynamics.

For a region heavily dependent on agriculture for livelihoods and economic sustenance, climate change and conflict have profound implications for agriculture, water availability, food security and general wellbeing. For example, 40% of Ethiopia's GDP is made up of agriculture, 80% of the country's export earnings is agriculture dependent and ¾ of the country's labour force is in agriculture.<sup>49</sup> In Sudan however, 60% of the country's labour

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Risks? [https://www.eip.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/csen\\_policy\\_paper\\_climate\\_change\\_and\\_security\\_in\\_the\\_horn\\_of\\_africa.pdf](https://www.eip.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/csen_policy_paper_climate_change_and_security_in_the_horn_of_africa.pdf)

- 42 Chavunduka, C., & Bromley, D. W. (2011). Climate, carbon, civil war and flexible boundaries: Sudan's contested landscape. *Land Use Policy*, 28(4), 907-916.
- 43 Van Baalen, S., & Mobjörk, M. (2018). Climate change and violent conflict in East Africa: Integrating qualitative and quantitative research to probe the mechanisms. *International Studies Review*, 20(4), 547-575.
- 44 Global Report on Food Crises 2023 Report, p. 14.
- 45 Global Report on Food Crises 2023 Report, p. 8.
- 46 Bob, U., & Babugura, A. (2014). Contextualising and conceptualising gender and climate change in Africa. *Agenda*, 28(3), 3-15.

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- 47 Global Report on Food Crises 2023 Report, p. 24.
- 48 Kaikati, J. G. (1980). The economy of Sudan: a potential breadbasket of the Arab world? *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 11(1), 99-123.
- 49 Gavin, M. D. (2022). Climate Change and Regional Instability in the Horn of Africa

force is employed in the agriculture sector.<sup>50</sup> Studies by Awiti and Ampaire et al demonstrate the gendered impacts of climate change and how the climate conflict nexus exacerbates gendered insecurities that emerge through multiple channels.<sup>51</sup> Their work unpacks how environmental degradation and land scarcity leads to conflicts over land that in turn directly affect livelihoods and household food security. The climate conflict nexus therefore not only intensifies existing gender inequalities, but simultaneously increases violence against women and girls. For instance, ongoing military confrontations and instability in Sudan has triggered intercommunal conflicts in West Darfur, further undermining food security as households are unable to engage in routine agricultural activities.<sup>52</sup>

Within the contexts of displacement and forced migration, women and young girls become targets of trafficking, physical and sexual exploitation. With over 4.5 million refugees and asylum seekers and a further 11.7 million internally displaced persons, experts warn that climate change and climate induced migration risk heightening insecurity across the region.<sup>53</sup> Climate change also has implications for women's reproductive health and rights. For instance, climate-induced migration can disrupt access to healthcare, including reproductive health services, and increase the risks of maternal mortality and morbidity. Often, these processes intermingle with rigid cultural norms and power imbalances that restrict women's ability to make decisions regarding their reproductive health and family planning, thereby exacerbating challenges faced by women and girls in the context of displacement and forced migration. Women in communities whose infrastructure has been destroyed by prolonged fighting find themselves in very precarious positions posed by climate change. They also find themselves in situations with the potential risk of disease outbreaks like cholera, measles and malaria. In Sudan, targeting of key

infrastructure like hospitals has resulted in a critical shortage of medical supplies and staff, putting further strains on an already fragile health system.<sup>54</sup>

## Women and civil society contributions to peace and security in the Horn of Africa

Despite facing various challenges and barriers, women are actively involved in facilitating climate change adaptation, peacebuilding efforts and continue to play crucial roles in promoting conflict resolution, peace negotiations and community stability. Women have participated in peace negotiations and mediation processes advocating for peaceful resolutions to conflicts and war. They have brought unique perspectives and approaches to the table, emphasising inclusivity, empathy and the importance of addressing the root causes of conflicts. Initiatives like the Horn Peace - a peacebuilding organisation led by women activists from different countries in the Horn of Africa have been pivotal in fostering dialogue, reconciliation and conflict prevention at community levels in Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and South Sudan.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, women-led civil society organisations like the Somali Women Development Centre (SWDC) have been instrumental in promoting women empowerment and leadership in peacebuilding and development. SWDC works to address the unique challenges faced by women and girls in conflict situations.

Through grassroots initiatives like the Women's Initiative for Gender Justice (WIGJ) in Uganda, women have been at the forefront of grassroots initiatives aimed at promoting peace and security at the community level. WIGJ advocates for gender justice and women's rights in conflict affected areas, with particular focus on supporting women's participation in

50 *Ibid* p. 4.

51 See for example: Awiti, A. O. (2022). Climate change and gender in Africa: A review of impact and gender-responsive solutions. *Frontiers in Climate*, 101 and Ampaire, et al (2020). "Gender in climate change, agriculture, and natural resource policies: insights from East Africa." *Climatic Change* 158, no. 1: 43-60.

52 Global Report on Food Crises 2023 Report, p. 33.

53 Global Report on Food Crises 2023 Report, p. 8.

54 Sudan's warring factions target doctors and activists (The Washington Post: 17 May 2023). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/05/17/sudan-rsf-doctors-military-bahri/>

55 Peace Direct. (2012). Horn Peace. Peace Insight. <https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/organisations/horn-peace/?location=somalia&theme>

peace processes and seeking accountability for crimes against women during conflicts.<sup>56</sup> WIGJ has organised peace rallies, dialogue forums and other events that foster understanding, trust and reconciliation among different ethnic or tribal groups. Also, initiatives like the Association for Women's Sanctuary and Development (AWSAD) in Ethiopia, works to empower women and the promotion of women's rights. The organisation's work also extends to advocating for gender equality, access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities, all of which contribute to building a stable and peaceful society. AWSAD also supports women and girls who are survivors of gender-based violence and works to empower them to become agents of change in their communities. Women's International Peace Centre (formerly Isis-WICCE), although headquartered in Uganda, has programs focused in the Horn of Africa region to amplify women's voices in peace processes, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction.

Addressing environmental insecurity in the Horn of Africa requires a multi-faceted approach. Civil society formations like the Sudanese Environmentalist Association (SEA) have been at the forefront of empowering women economically, promoting gender responsive climate policies and strengthening women's access to resources, education and decision-making spaces. This promotes women's participation and leadership in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction efforts. Similarly, women have played significant roles in identifying early signs of conflict and working to prevent its escalation. They have engaged in conflict-sensitive development programs, helped to address grievances and promote peaceful coexistence among communities. For example, women civil society organisations work collaboratively with institutions like the Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Mechanism (CEWARN) to identify emerging security threats in the region. Through Information Collection Networks who gather early warning data, CEWARN has been able to manage cross border pastoralist conflicts and other low intensity communal conflicts across the region.

On the humanitarian front, organisations like Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) have been supporting women-led organisations across the world, including those in the Horn to strengthen their role in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and post-conflict recovery by providing humanitarian aid and support to those in need. They are active in delivering food, healthcare, education services, ensuring the well-being of communities impacted by violence in countries like Ethiopia, South Sudan, Somalia and recently in Sudan. Although not exclusively women-led, both the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes in South Africa focus on research, training and advocacy for sustainable peace and reconciliation in various countries in the Horn of Africa. Similarly, women and girl activists are using their voices to advocate for policies and initiatives that prioritise peacebuilding and conflict resolution. They are working to influence government decisions and international organisations to consider gender-sensitive approaches in peace and security efforts. For instance, the Sudanese Professional Association (SPA), an umbrella civil society organisation, was instrumental in the 2018/19 Sudan revolution through its advocacy programs and policy influence. SPA played a pivotal role in securing political transition following al Bashir's removal from office in 2019. As the region faces security challenges, some countries have adopted security form programs that recognise the importance of including women in their security forces including the police, military and peacekeeping missions. This has contributed to a more diverse, nuanced and inclusive approach to security.

Despite these contributions, it is essential to acknowledge that women still face significant obstacles and discrimination in their efforts to participate fully in peace and security processes. Women continue to grapple with cultural, societal and structural hurdles that hinder access to political processes. For example, while Sudanese women constituted the majority of protesters who led protests that toppled al-Bashir in 2019, women and young people were increasingly marginalised and side-lined in the transitional process that ushered in a transitional caretaker government. Two of the

56 Women's Initiative for Gender Justice (2023). Latest news. [online] Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice. Available at: <https://4genderjustice.org/home/latest-posts>.

14 members who constituted the Supreme Council were women and only four out of the 20 members who made up the executive body were women.<sup>57</sup> These challenges demonstrate the need for continued support and recognition of women's contributions, and for greater gender mainstreaming in all peacebuilding and security initiatives, to ensure self-sustaining peace in the region.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The regionalisation of insecurity in the Horn of Africa poses significant risks and security challenges that require coordinated and multi-faceted responses. By assessing the implications of insecurity at a regional level, it is clear that strengthening regional cooperation, adopting a comprehensive approach to security, implementing targeted interventions and engaging regional and international partners such as IGAD and its institutions can address the interconnected security threats, promote stability and enhance the prospects for sustainable development. Effective regional security cooperation will contribute to peace, stability and prosperity in the Horn of Africa. This benefits not only the region but also the wider international community. Furthermore, addressing the linkages between gender, climate change and insecurity in the Horn of Africa is crucial for sustainable development, peace and resilience building in the region. By recognising the gendered dimensions of climate change and insecurity, and integrating gender perspectives into climate change, IGAD can build more inclusive and resilient societies that empower women and girls, promote peace and effectively respond to the challenges of a changing climate. Policy interventions should prioritise gender responsive approaches that enhance women's participation and support women's agencies in order to improve access to resources and services, and foster partnerships for effective implementation.

- To effectively mitigate security risks in the region, targeted interventions are necessary. Interventions can include capacity building programs for security forces, border management and surveillance, counter-terrorism initiatives, maritime security cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Donor countries and international partners should provide sustained support to such interventions.
- Enhancing data and knowledge gathering; improving data collection and analysis on the gendered impacts of climate change and insecurity is vital for evidence-based policymaking. Strengthening research, monitoring and evaluation efforts will contribute to a better understanding of the specific vulnerabilities and needs of women and girls in the context of climate change and insecurity.
- Mainstreaming gender in policy and planning: addressing the linkages between gender, climate change and insecurity requires mainstreaming gender considerations across all policy and planning processes. This includes mitigation strategies, conflict prevention, disaster risk reduction, peacebuilding initiatives and integrating gender responsive approaches into climate change adaptation.
- Strengthening partnerships and international cooperation: the multifaceted nature of gender, climate change and insecurity nexus necessitates collaboration among governments, regional organisations, civil society and international actors. Strengthening partnerships and cooperation can support the implementation of gender-responsive policies, facilitate resource mobilisation and enhance knowledge sharing and capacity-building efforts.

57 Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (June 2021: Report on Conference for Peace in the Horn of Africa. [https://www.vdc.org/fileadmin/franz/2021/report\\_conference\\_womenpeace\\_hoa\\_june10-12\\_6\\_2021\\_fin.pdf](https://www.vdc.org/fileadmin/franz/2021/report_conference_womenpeace_hoa_june10-12_6_2021_fin.pdf))



## **MULTILATERALISM**

Fragmentations within APSA and the  
Imperative of Cooperation among  
Regional Economic Communities  
(RECs)

.....  
**Christian Ndubuisi Ani (Ph.D.)**  
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Issue 3

## Executive Summary

One of the most overlooked aspects of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is the modalities of cooperation amongst Regional Economic communities (RECs). This oversight provides a reason as to why RECs rarely undertake joint assessments, mediation or peace support operations. Therefore, this policy brief shows that the lack of cooperation among RECs has led to siloed working approaches and turf politics amidst increasing security threats of cross-regional ramifications. Albeit APSA was established to provide opportunities for coordination and cooperation both at the African Union (AU) level and among RECs.

## Key Points

Lack of cooperation among RECs leads to duplicity and fragmented solutions as evident in the siloed EAC and SADC response to the crises in eastern DRC. This therefore requires that proximate RECs develop a modus operandi for cooperation in view of increasing trans-regional threats.

Efforts to address the crises of a member state should involve all RECs to which the member state belongs. This helps to avoid situations where state parties pick and choose which RECs will be favourable to their cause, at the disadvantage of other conflicting parties.

When two or more RECs fail to jointly respond to cross-regional security threats, affected member states resort to forming ad hoc coalitions such as the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and the G5 Sahel Force. This fragments and weakens the APSA alliance. Therefore, RECs should explore pathways to develop joint strategies with ad hoc security initiatives.

Pivotal states within RECs can either make or mar opportunities for cooperation between RECs due to turf politics.

## Introduction

Inter-African cooperation in peace and security became a reality following the establishment of APSA via the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) Protocol in 2003. The interlinkages between the AU and RECs are reflective of an Africa-wide grand alliance to maximise impact in line with the ideals of Pan-Africanism. In this alliance, RECs are the critical building blocks and anchors for African response.

Although the AU led various peace operations between 2003 and 2013, an emerging trend over the last decade shows that sub-regional organisations and coalitions are increasingly relying on their capacities to lead both mediations and peace operations in their respective regions. This is evident in the leading roles of sub-regions in the Lake Chad Basin, the Sahel; and in countries such as Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Gambia, Lesotho, and Guinea-Bissau. As such, the AU seems to be shifting towards endorsing sub-regional decisions and initiatives. While this approach is in line with the principle of subsidiarity, the increasing role of sub-regional groupings in peace and security raises concerns over APSA's objective in ensuring synergy and maximising regional and continental capacities for effective response. Notably, the continuous application of the principle of subsidiarity has created a dynamic of turf politics. RECs on one hand are either hesitant or unsure about the extent to which they should intervene alone or coordinate their intervention with the AU, and on the other hand, coordinate with other RECs.<sup>58</sup>

Nevertheless, the dynamic of APSA-cooperation has been predominantly vertical between RECs and the AU, while horizontal cooperation between RECs remains largely undefined and neglected. It is evident that cross-regional effects of climate change and violent extremism, along with conflict spillovers are beyond regional groupings as envisaged during APSA's formation. This therefore provides an imperative for inter-REC

cooperation. Yet, most RECs resort to silo-solutions while staying clear of each other's crises. In certain cases, affected member states across two RECs establish ad hoc interventions to circumvent the bureaucracies of indecisive and non-cooperating RECs. Nonetheless, APSA was established to provide opportunities for an allied approach between all its traditional partners (AU and RECs) as a way of maximising African capacities for African-led solutions.

The recent establishment of the inter-RECs coordination and collaboration platform indicates the acknowledgment of this gap and a need to address it. RECs are also gradually initiating joint meetings to coordinate their responses, such as the 2013 and 2018 meetings between ECOWAS and ECCAS.<sup>59</sup> However, the uneven capacities of the two RECs and their lack of consistency in joint exchanges constrains their coordination.

## APSA Cooperation Framework: The Missing Element of Inter-RECs Cooperation

APSA is a multi-stakeholder cooperation framework involving the AU and eight (8) RECs. This includes the:

Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and Southern African Development Community (SADC).

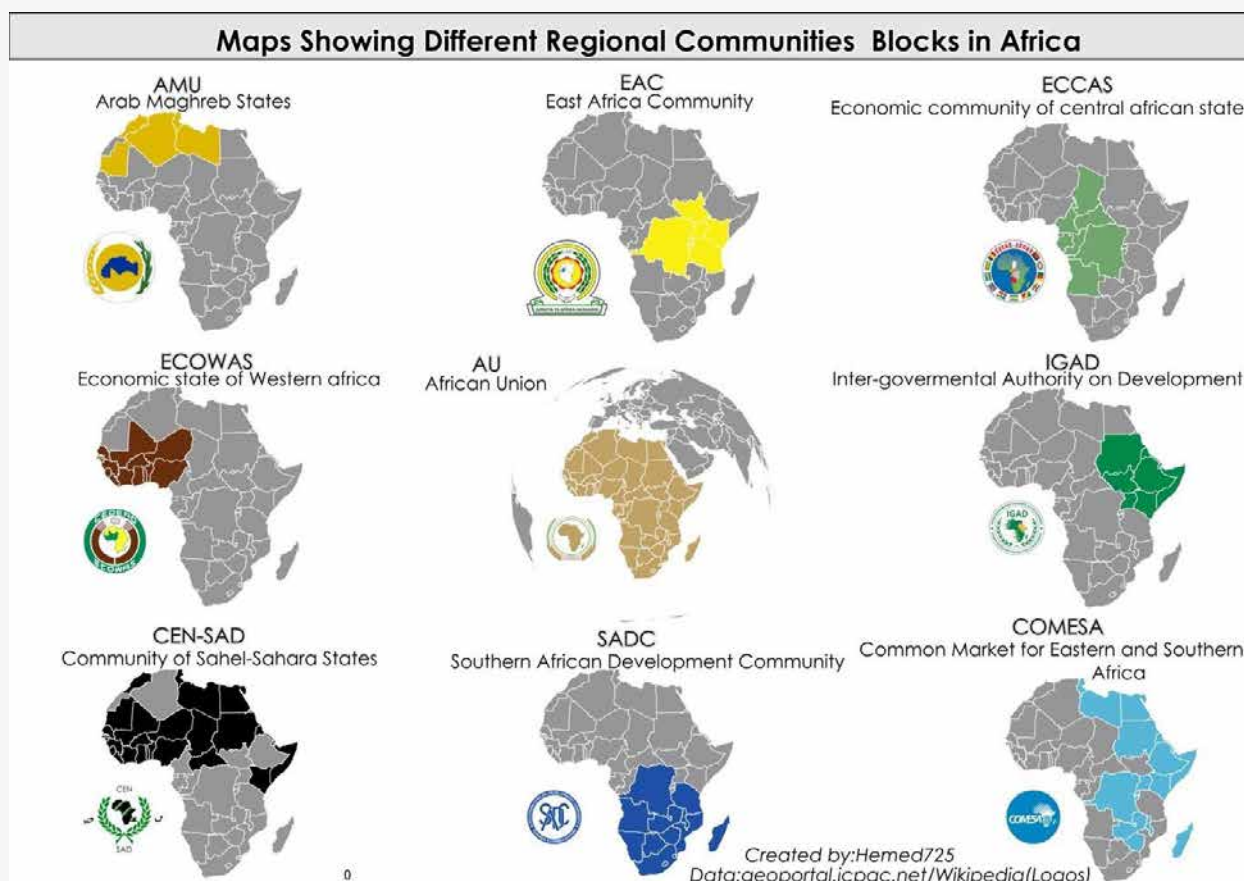
Irrespective of the AU's moratorium on recognising additional RECs (AU Assembly

58 Apuuli, K. (2016). Whither the Notion of "African Solutions to African Problems"? The African Union and the Mali Crisis (2012-2013). <https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/237/Mediation%20Arguments/7459-up-cma-apuuli-mediation-arguments-hr-zp81376.pdf>

59 ECOWAS/ECCAS Communiqué 2018. Final Communiqué of the Joint Summit of ECOWAS and ECCAS Heads of State and Government on Peace, Security, Stability and the Fight Against Terrorism and Violent Extremism', July 30, 2018. Available from: <https://www.eip.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Lom%C3%A9-Declaration-on-Peace-Security-Stability-and-the-Fight-Against-Terrorism-and-Violent-Extremism.pdf>

2006),<sup>60</sup> Article 3(l) of the Constitutive Act recognises other sub-regional mechanisms by enjoining the AU to 'coordinate and harmonise the policies between existing and future RECs for the gradual attainment of the union's objectives. The reference to future sub regional organisations is the basis for AU's coordination and engagement with ad hoc regional mechanisms including the G5 Sahel, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram and the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), amongst others.

*An overview of APSA institutions in Africa (Hemed, 2023).*<sup>61</sup>



In the context of this multi-stakeholder partnership, one of the less understood aspects of APSA is the extent to which seemingly independent organisations are interwoven.<sup>62</sup> While sub-regional organisations are independently established, RECs formation was on the basis of recommendations from OAU processes, which called for gradual integration from the sub-regional level to a broader continental integration (AEC Treaty 1991).<sup>63</sup> This includes discussions leading up to the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980 and the African Economic Community (AEC) in 1991. The AEC for instance, requires the establishment of RECs in regions where it is absent, in order to foster a bottom-up approach for continent-wide integration. All the AU-recognised RECs, except AMU, have treaties that reference their establishment in the context of the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos, and the AEC, thereby recognising the coordination and central role of the OAU/AU.

While acclaiming its primacy for peace and security in Africa in line with Article 16 of the PSC Protocol, the AU integrates RECs as building blocks of the AU's APSA strategy, even though RECs have dissimilar

60 AU Assembly 2006. Assembly Decision - Dec.112 (VII). 2 July 2006, AU: Addis Ababa

61 Hemed 2023. Maps Showing Different Regional Economic Communities in Africa. Wednesday, January 4, 2023. Available from: <https://twitter.com/725Hemed/status/1609961863780909057/photo/1>

62 Suzuki, S. (2020). Exploring the roles of the AU and ECOWAS in West African conflicts. *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 27(2), 173–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2020.1767193>

63 AEC Treaty 1991. Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community. Available at: [https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37636-treaty-0016\\_-\\_treaty\\_establishing\\_the\\_african\\_economic\\_community\\_e.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37636-treaty-0016_-_treaty_establishing_the_african_economic_community_e.pdf)

and unequal capacities for intervention. The powers ascribed to RECs for peace and security are in recognition that RECs like ECOWAS, SADC and IGAD, have been prominent in peace initiatives in their respective regions at a time when the OAU was hamstrung.<sup>64</sup> Article 20 of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the AU and RECs requires RECs to 'anticipate and prevent conflicts within and among their member states, and to undertake peace-making and peacebuilding efforts-including the deployment of peace support missions.' When RECs intervene, they are expected to keep the AU fully informed on a regular basis and ensure that their activities are in line with the objectives of the Protocol of the AU PSC, which holds the primary responsibility for peace and security in Africa.<sup>65</sup>

Throughout the MoU between the AU & RECs/RMs (Regional Mechanisms), the terms 'work together', 'cooperate', 'combine their efforts', 'collaborate' were used to describe the rules of engagement for APSA (See AU & RECs/RMs MoU 2008).<sup>66</sup> This was also elaborated in the AU and RECs Protocol of 2008, which outlines opportunities for cooperation, joint programming, information sharing and coordination among RECs with or without the involvement of the AU (See AU & RECs Protocol 2008).<sup>67</sup>

However, since APSA's establishment, the AU continues to serve as the unifying element in the relationship between RECs. The AU reform recently created a Mid-year AU and RECs coordination meeting which brings together RECs and the AU to harmonise interests. The AU also launched the Inter-Regional Knowledge Exchange on Early Warning and

Conflict Prevention (I-RECKE) at the 4<sup>th</sup> mid-year coordination meeting in July 2022 to foster information and knowledge exchange for early warning and response. Yet, without the AU, there is no meaningful cooperation between RECs, thereby leading to significant shortfalls in African agency.

## The Multiplicity of Sub-regional Organisations and Complexities in Responsibility to Intervene.

The 8 RECs on the continent exceed the five geographical groupings in Africa – North, East, Central, West, and South. Sub-regions such as AMU, ECOWAS, SADC, ECCAS as well as IGAD and EAC exist within the five geographical regions, while COMESA and CEN-SAD include members beyond one specific region. Most African states belong to two or more sub-regional organisations, with some states making requests for membership even beyond their geographical regions.

While the growth in sub-regional organisations and overlaps in memberships highlight the quest for cooperation, the problem of silo working approaches and lack of inter-RECs coordination in the area of peace and security still persists. RECs/RMs rarely undertake joint mediation or peace support operations.<sup>68</sup> This creates a situation where member states cherry-pick which REC attends to its issues, while others form ad hoc mechanisms when none of the RECs address their interests.

### **Member State Interests on which APSA Institution Intervenes**

The multiplicity of RECs has led to a 'practice of forum shopping',<sup>69</sup> where states pick and choose

64 This includes ECOWAS intervention in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s as well as SADC's regular intervention in Lesotho. IGAD continues to play a key role in addressing the security threats in Somalia and South Sudan.

65 AU PSC Protocol (2002). Protocol relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. Addis Ababa: African Union. Available from [http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/Protocol\\_peace\\_and\\_security.pdf](http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/Protocol_peace_and_security.pdf)

66 AU & RECs/RMs MoU (2008). Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security between the AU, the Regional Economic Communities and the Coordinating Mechanisms of the Regional Standby Brigades of Eastern Africa and Northern Africa. Available at: <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/mou-au-rec-eng.pdf>

67 AU & RECs Protocol (2008). Protocol on Relations between the AU (AU) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Articles 15(1), Available at: [http://archive.au.int/collect/auacalan/import/English/Protocol\\_Relations\\_AU\\_RECs\\_E.pdf](http://archive.au.int/collect/auacalan/import/English/Protocol_Relations_AU_RECs_E.pdf)

68 PSC Secretariat 2018. Study on the Implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture From 2002 To 2018. "Towards The Africa We Want, To Be Built in the African Spirit and Practice". PSC/APSA. Study/1/2018. Conducted by the Peace and Security Council Secretariat in the Peace and Security Department, Commission of the African Union. Available from: <https://papsrepository.africa-union.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/1391/ENG%20APSA%20Study.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

69 Gnanquènon, A. (2019). A COOPERATION OF VARIABLE GEOMETRY The African Union and Regional Economic

which RECs intervene based on their individual interests, thereby causing further coordination challenges as shown by the DRC case. The DRC, which geographically belongs to ECCAS joined the SADC in 1998. A sub-regional body which played a key role in peace operations in the troubled eastern region, including deploying an intervention brigade of approximately 1000 forces since 2013 in parallel with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Recently however, the DRC joined the EAC and advocated for a mission to fight the M23 rebels which was approved.

When the EAC forces arrived in the DRC and were reluctant to engage the M23 rebels, the DRC threatened to terminate the EAC mission due to inefficiency.<sup>70</sup> DRC left with no choice resorted to SADC for assistance. On 8 May 2023, the SADC approved the deployment of additional troops to respond to the threats in the DRC.<sup>71</sup>

However, it is uncertain whether the EAC forces will remain on ground when the SADC forces are deployed, and even more uncertain on how they will cooperate with each other. Although there is an ongoing call for coordination between MONUSCO, ICGLR, EAC, and the SADC, there still remains a significant challenge in coordinating the forces on ground.

### **Role of Pivotal States in RECs Relationship**

APSA's internal relations and capacity for intervention are to an extent influenced by the whims of pivotal states. Most RECs are strongly driven by one or two strong member states who find it convenient to drive their agenda via the sub-regional level, as opposed to the continental process where they have to compete with other stronger member states.

For instance, the AU mediation in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010/2011 was led by former President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa – a hegemon in southern Africa. Mbeki was seen as a South African envoy and less of an AU mediator in view of his regional representation, and his quest for a power-sharing deal which the SADC was experimenting on in Zimbabwe between 2008 and 2013.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, SADC has over the years sought to address its member states' crises without inputs from other regions and even the AU. It is only in a few cases such as Comoros where the AU was involved, and the protracted conflict in DRC was discussed at the AU level.<sup>73</sup>

Additionally, the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) was never deployed despite its cross-regional membership and objectives. ACIRC, composed of 14 members, was developed in 2013 as a flexible intervention tool to circumvent the delay in developing the rapid deployment capabilities of the African Standby Force.<sup>74</sup> ACIRC excludes the RECs process and provides a platform for direct AU response through the willing and capable members of the framework. However, ACIRC was never deployed because of the issue of jurisdiction and tuff games between sub-regional powers who preferred to handle their challenges rather than letting in 'external players' from other regions.<sup>75</sup> ACIRC was eventually disbanded in 2018 to allow focus on the ASF mechanism.<sup>76</sup>

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Communities. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/15632.pdf>

70 The Independent. (2023, May 10). Tshisekedi threatens to expel EAC Regional Force from DR Congo. The Independent Uganda: <https://www.independent.co.ug/tshisekedi-threatens-to-expel-eac-regional-force-from-dr-congo/>

71 SADC Communiqué 8 May 2023. Communiqué of the Extra-Ordinary Organ Troika Summit, Plus Sadc Troika and Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) Troop Contributing Countries (TCCS) May 8, 2023. Available from: <https://www.sadc.int/latest-news/communiqué-extra-ordinary-organ-troika-summit-plus-sadc-troika-and-force-intervention>

72 Nathan, L. (2017). How to Manage Interorganizational Disputes over Mediation in Africa. *Global Governance*, 23(2), 151–162. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44861117>

73 Institute for Security Studies (ISS) (2019). Peace and Security Council Report. [online] Institute for Security Studies (ISS). Available at: <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/psc-113-2.pdf>

74 Tchier, A. Y., & Ani, N. C. (2022). Standby security arrangements and deployment setbacks: The case of the African Standby Force. Training for Peace. <https://trainingforpeace.org/publications/standby-security-arrangements-and-deployment-setbacks-the-case-of-the-african-standby-force/>

75 Cocodia, J. (2020). What works? The African Union's ad hoc approach, the African Standby Force or the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Conflict? ACCORD. <https://www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/what-works/>

76 Currently the ASF is being revised to, among other things, include some flexible and robust provisions contained in the ACIRC concept to enable the rapid deployment of pre-identified, trained and verified personnel within 14 days.

## **Rise of Ad Hoc Coalitions from Absence of Inter-RECs Cooperation**

The multiplicity of APSA institutions with similar modus operandi in intervention has created reluctance in African multilateral approaches, especially in the context of cross-regional security threats such as violent extremism and climate-related conflicts. The reluctance of RECs to address violent extremism leads to the formation of ad hoc coalitions to circumvent the bureaucracy of the traditional AU and RECs configuration. For instance, the Boko Haram insurgency affects states within ECOWAS (Nigeria and Niger) and ECCAS (Cameroon and Chad). However, ECOWAS and ECCAS failed to work together to address this terrorist threat. Instead, the affected countries formed a coalition via the MNJTF – within the framework of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), which was formed in 1964 primarily to regulate and control the use of water and other natural resources in the basin.

This situation is similar to the G5 Sahel Force which was established in 2017 to address the threat of violent extremism in the region. This terror threat specifically affected Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger (which belongs to ECOWAS), Chad (which belongs to ECCAS), and Mauritania (which pulled out of ECOWAS in 2000 but is a member of the non-functioning Arab Maghreb Union (UMA). Initially, the AU had initiated a Nouakchott Process on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalisation of the APSA in the Sahelo-Saharan region.<sup>77</sup> Eleven countries namely: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Chad, were part of the so-called Nouakchott Process which planned to address the Sahel threats with the option of deploying a force to Mali. However, members that were not affected by the crises were reluctant to commit to the mission. This pushed the affected countries of the G5 Sahel to establish the Joint Force of the G5 Sahel in February 2017 to address the security threats

77 AU PSC (2015). Communiqué of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 544th meeting on the situation in Mali and the Sahel region in general, 18 September 2015. Available at: <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communiqué-of-the-peace-and-security-council-of-the-african-union-au-at-its-544th-meeting-on-the-situation-in-mali-and-the-sahel-region-in-general>

with the support of France.

Although the AU should have some comparative advantage in coordinating interventions involving 2 or more RECs, the multiple interests and priorities of the organisation often hinders its swift intervention. The failure of cooperation between RECs continues to foster fragmentation and half-hearted measures within the APSA framework.

## **Conclusions and Policy Recommendations**

The major finding of this policy brief is that cooperation among RECs is rare. RECs' solutions to crises are often siloed due to the lack of political will and turf games between pivotal states of RECs. The absence of inter-REC cooperation has led member states to engage in 'forum shopping', which further exacerbates coordination challenges among APSA institutions. Additionally, when affected RECs fail to jointly respond to cross-regional security threats, affected member states resort to forming ad hoc coalitions to address their challenges. This response is largely driven by the unwillingness of unaffected members within the RECs to engage in resolving cross-regional security crises.

## **Key Recommendations**

- Proximate RECs should develop a modality for regular exchanges on opportunities for cooperation in view of increasing trans-regional threats. This includes consistent RECs participation in each other's meetings as outlined in relevant protocols and MoUs.
- Pivotal states within RECs should explore opportunities to work with each other by overcoming turf politics for the collective good.
- RECs should collaborate and support ad hoc security initiatives which are providing security support due to the indecisions and shortfalls of traditional APSA institutions (AU and RECs). This includes providing financial support to ad hoc mechanisms

involved in targeted interventions.

- Efforts to address the crises of a member state should involve all the RECs to which the member state belongs. Specifically, this requires:
- SADC and EAC to develop a joined-up approach to address the security threat in the eastern DRC.
- ECOWAS and ECCAS to elaborate a joint response to the trans-regional threat of violent extremism and climate-induced violence in West and Central African states.



## Enhancing Multilateralism in Africa: The Role and Impact of Regional Economic Communities (RECs)

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**Abraham Ename Minko**  
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Issue 4

## Executive Summary

RECs play a crucial role in promoting regional integration, fostering political and security cooperation, and facilitating social and cultural integration. Their impact on African multilateralism is significant as it leads to increased bargaining power on the global stage, enhanced regional economic growth and development, and strengthened capacity for sustainable development. However, certain challenges need to be addressed and remedied to maximize the potential of RECs- some of which include institutional and coordination challenges, limited inclusivity and participation, restricted capacity-building and resource mobilization, and stunted partnerships and collaboration. Solving these challenges will contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of RECs in driving regional integration and multilateralism. To aid in this, some recommendations have been made. Firstly, to strengthen the institutional framework and governance mechanisms of RECs. Secondly, to enhance coordination among multiple RECs and ensure the involvement of civil society and marginalized groups. Thirdly, to promote gender mainstreaming, and provide technical assistance and training. Finally, mobilize financial resources and foster partnerships with international organizations and donor countries. The continued support and investment in RECs are crucial for sustainable development and the strengthening of multilateralism in Africa. Therefore, collective action is required to foster multilateralism and regional integration, ensuring Africa's active participation and representation in global affairs.

## Key Points

Regional Economic Communities (RECs) serve as important platforms for harmonizing policies, removing trade barriers, and creating common markets, thereby driving economic development and cooperation among member states.

By leveraging collective resources and expertise, RECs have the potential to amplify African voices and interests in international negotiations and enhance Africa's bargaining power on the global stage. This enhanced bargaining power translates into a stronger ability to address pressing global challenges such as climate change, trade agreements, and peacekeeping efforts. African RECs serve as vital platforms for fostering regional cooperation, thereby facilitating greater unity and cohesion among African states.

RECs also contribute to regional economic growth and development by promoting intra-regional trade, economic diversification, and job creation. They also strengthen the capacity for sustainable development by coordinating regional strategies, addressing cross-cutting challenges, and advancing infrastructure development.

Challenges persist and need to be solved for RECs to maximize their potential. Institutional and coordination challenges such as strengthening governance mechanisms and enhancing coordination among multiple RECs require more attention. Additionally, promoting inclusivity and participation by involving civil society, and marginalized groups and promoting gender mainstreaming is crucial. Adequate support through capacity-building, resource mobilization, and fostering partnerships with international organizations and donor countries is essential to overcome these challenges and reinforce RECs' effectiveness.

## Introduction

Multilateralism is a cornerstone of global governance, promoting cooperation and collective action to address shared challenges and achieve common goals. In Africa, where diverse nations with unique socio-economic backgrounds and developmental priorities coexist, multilateralism is of utmost importance to fostering regional integration, sustainable development, and political stability. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have emerged as key actors in enhancing multilateralism in Africa by playing a vital role in promoting cooperation, economic integration, and political dialogue among member states<sup>78</sup>. This policy brief aims to delve into the role and impact of RECs in enhancing multilateralism in Africa. By examining the contributions of RECs in fostering regional integration, strengthening political and security cooperation, and promoting social and cultural integration, this brief aims to shed light on the significance of these regional entities in driving Africa's multilateral agenda. Furthermore, it will highlight the tangible impacts of RECs on African multilateralism by emphasizing the benefits derived from increased regional cooperation and collective action<sup>79</sup>.

RECs have been instrumental in promoting regional integration by facilitating trade and investments among member states, harmonizing policies and regulations, and creating a common market. These efforts have led to increased intra-regional trade, economic diversification, and enhanced economic growth within the region<sup>80</sup>. Additionally, RECs have played a crucial role in strengthening political and security cooperation, contributing to peace and stability within their region, facilitating conflict resolution, and addressing transnational threats. For instance, The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which consists of eight Eastern African

countries, namely: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda has played a vital role in addressing regional challenges. Notably, IGAD has been instrumental in mediating the long-standing conflict in South Sudan by facilitating negotiations between warring parties and contributing to the signing of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in 2018. This achievement demonstrates how RECs, in this case, the IGAD's regional cooperation efforts, have directly led to conflict resolution and peacebuilding within the East African region. In addition, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), comprising 15 West African nations, has been at the forefront of regional integration and peacekeeping in Africa. ECOWAS' intervention in the Sierra Leone Civil War in the late 1990s is a prime example of its commitment to stability. Through its military mission, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) organization helped restore peace and stability in Sierra Leone, a testament that RECs can effectively respond to conflict and transnational threats within their respective regions. These African examples vividly demonstrate how RECs have been pivotal in enhancing political and security cooperation, facilitating conflict resolution, and contributing to peace and stability on the continent. The success stories of IGAD and ECOWAS underscore the vital role RECs play in addressing regional challenges and advancing global security objectives. Moreover, RECs have fostered social and cultural integration by promoting people-to-people exchanges, and cultural cooperation and addressing common social challenges such as; health and education<sup>81</sup>. For instance, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has actively promoted social and cultural integration through initiatives like the SADC Arts and Culture Festival which brings together artists, musicians, and cultural enthusiasts from member states to celebrate their shared heritage. This cultural exchange not only strengthens bonds between member states but also promotes regional identity and understanding among diverse communities. Additionally, SADC's efforts in improving healthcare access and education across the region have addressed

78 Ali, A. (2009). The African commission on human and peoples' rights and the regional economic communities: the need for co-operation (Unpublished Dissertation). The University of Pretoria. <http://hdl.handle.net/2263/12467>

79 Affairs, African Union Commission Department of Economics. Rationalization of the regional economic communities (RECs): Review of the Abuja Treaty and adoption of Minimum Integration Programme. Addis Ababa: [African Union], Economic Affairs Dept., 2007

80 *Ibid.*

81 *Ibid.*

common social challenges. Through the SADC HIV and AIDS Programme, for instance, the organization has played a pivotal role in coordinating a regional response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, emphasizing the importance of collaborative action in healthcare. The East African Community (EAC) has also fostered social integration by facilitating the free movement of people across its member states, allowing citizens to travel, work, and study more easily within the region. This initiative has not only encouraged people-to-people exchanges but has also stimulated economic growth and cultural diversity. Furthermore, the EAC's commitment to improving education standards and aligning educational curricula ensures that member states can collaborate on addressing common social challenges such as quality education. This approach helps equip the region's youths with the skills needed for a more prosperous future. The interconnectedness of these efforts is of paramount importance. By promoting social and cultural integration and addressing common social challenges, RECs create a conducive environment for political stability and economic cooperation. This, in turn, enhances cooperation in political and security matters as well as trade and economic development. Moreover, addressing shared social challenges like healthcare and education collectively is more efficient and equitable, leading to improved living standards and human development across member states. Therefore, the interconnection between cultural integration, social challenges, and other key REC functions is vital for achieving comprehensive regional integration, stability, and prosperity.

The impact of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on African multilateralism extending beyond the regional level is rooted in their capacity to consolidate resources, knowledge, and voices. RECs serve as platforms where African nations unite and foster a sense of collective strength. This unity allows member states to pool their resources, both financial and human, thereby creating a more substantial presence when engaging with global partners and international forums. By doing so, African RECs amplify their collective voice which enhances Africa's ability to influence global decisions and policies. Through the collaborative efforts of

RECs, Africa leverages its diverse strengths and expertise more effectively on the global stage through the unique assets of different member states such as natural resources, strategic geographical positions, and market potential. RECs facilitate the coordination of these individual regional strengths, enabling African nations to partake from a position of greater advantage in international negotiations and agreements. This approach not only benefits individual member states but also collectively strengthens Africa's overall standing in global affairs.

Moreover, RECs play a pivotal role in building diplomatic capacity within their member states. By addressing regional challenges and conflicts jointly, African nations hone their negotiation and diplomacy skills. These capabilities extend beyond regional matters and become assets when engaging with international partners and institutions. The diplomatic expertise nurtured within RECs enhances Africa's ability to effectively communicate and negotiate on a global scale. Additionally, RECs often develop harmonized regional development agendas and strategies that align with the broader goals of the African Union. When Africa presents a united front with coordinated policies and priorities, it becomes more attractive and reliable for international cooperation and investment. This heightened level of coordination further reinforces Africa's influence in global economic and development dialogues. Furthermore, the promotion of regional economic integration by RECs contributes to stability within Africa. A continent characterized by stability is perceived as a more dependable and predictable partner by international communities. This in turn bolsters Africa's credibility and bargaining power in global negotiations, as it is viewed as a region with the potential for sustainable growth and collaboration. In essence, the impact of RECs on African multilateralism beyond the regional level is realized through their role as catalysts for unity, resource pooling, and diplomatic capacity building. This collective approach empowers Africa to interact more assertively with international partners and institutions, thereby advancing the continent's interests and priorities on the global stage. This has amplified African interests in international negotiations, enabling the continent to

effectively address its concerns and priorities<sup>82</sup>. Furthermore, RECs have propelled regional economic growth and development, unlocking the potential of intra-regional trade, facilitating economic diversification, and harnessing the demographic dividend<sup>83</sup>. They have also strengthened the capacity of member states to achieve sustainable development goals by coordinating regional development strategies, addressing cross-cutting challenges, and advancing infrastructure development and connectivity<sup>84</sup>.

Despite the significant contributions of RECs, various obstacles that hinder their full potential persist. Institutional and coordination challenges, including governance mechanisms and coordination among multiple RECs, need to be addressed to ensure effective functioning and coordination. Furthermore, promoting inclusivity and participation by involving civil society, the private sector, and marginalized groups, and mainstreaming gender perspectives are critical for comprehensive regional integration<sup>85</sup>. Adequate support through capacity-building, resource mobilization, and fostering partnerships with international organizations and donor countries is also essential to address these challenges and strengthen the effectiveness of RECs. On this premise, this policy brief puts forward recommendations to maximize the role of RECs in enhancing multilateralism in Africa. By addressing the identified challenges and fostering collaborative partnerships, stakeholders can contribute to the realization of Africa's multilateral agenda, regional integration, and sustainable development<sup>86</sup>.

## The Role of RECs in Enhancing Multilateralism

Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa play a crucial role in enhancing multilateralism by promoting regional integration, fostering political and security cooperation, and facilitating social and cultural integration. Through the promotion of regional integration and cooperation, RECs act as catalysts for economic integration by reducing trade barriers, harmonizing policies, and creating a conducive environment for trade and investment. Through regional trade agreements and customs unions, RECs promote the free movement of goods, services, and capital, leading to increased trade volumes and economic cooperation among member states. RECs also play a vital role in aligning policies and regulations across member states, fostering a harmonized regional approach to economic development. This harmonization enables greater coordination and consistency in areas such as trade facilitation, customs procedures, investment regulations, and monetary policies, thereby promoting a conducive environment for businesses and attracting foreign direct investments. RECs aim to create a single integrated market within their respective regions<sup>87</sup>. By removing trade barriers, such as tariffs and non-tariff barriers, RECs facilitate the free movement of goods, services, and factors of production. This integration enhances market access, boosts competitiveness, and encourages specialization, leading to increased intra-regional trade and economic growth<sup>88</sup>. RECs play a crucial role in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction efforts by promoting peace and stability within the Region. They facilitate political dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation processes among member states, contributing to the prevention and resolution of conflicts within the region. By addressing root causes and promoting sustainable peace, RECs create a conducive environment for political stability and economic development. It also facilitates conflict resolution and post-conflict

82 Arthur, P. (2017). Promoting Security in Africa through Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Union's African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). *Insight on Africa*, 9(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0975087816674577>

83 *Ibid.*

84 *Ibid.*

85 Chimhanzi, J. (2013). Regional Economic Communities. In T. McNamee, M. Peterson, & M. Peterson (Eds.), *Africans Investing in Africa* (pp. 35–62). Palgrave MacMillan.

86 Chisha, M., Al-Asfour, A., & Dana, Lă.-P. (2016). The role of regional economic communities in Africa: perspectives from stakeholders in urban Zambia. *International Journal of Business and Globalisation*, 17(1), 33–44. <https://ideas.repec.org/a/ids/ijbglo/v17y2016i1p33-44.html>

87 *Ibid.*

88 Chowthee, Nishi Lalmanie. "Regional economic integration in Africa: the importance of regional economic communities." Thesis, Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch, 2009. <http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/932>

reconstruction. RECs actively engage in conflict resolution initiatives, working towards peaceful settlements and the restoration of stability in conflict-affected regions. Through diplomatic efforts, peacekeeping missions, and support for transitional processes, RECs contribute to the resolution of intra-state and inter-state conflicts, thereby fostering lasting peace and post-conflict reconstruction and development<sup>89</sup>. This enhances regional security coordination and combats transnational threats while also playing a crucial role in strengthening regional security coordination to address common security challenges.

Furthermore, they promote information sharing, joint exercises, and capacity-building initiatives to combat transnational threats such as terrorism, organized crime, piracy, and illicit trafficking. By fostering collaboration and cooperation among member states, RECs contribute to a more secure and stable region. RECs actively promote people-to-people exchanges, cultural dialogue, and cooperation among member states by organizing events, festivals, and cultural programs that celebrate the diversity and heritage of the region<sup>90</sup>. Specifically, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have demonstrated success in organizing events, festivals, and cultural programs that celebrate the diversity and heritage of their respective regions. These initiatives have indeed fostered a sense of shared identity, cultural understanding, and social cohesion in the Southern African and West African regions, contributing to the strengthening of regional integration and enhancement of social development. However, it's important to note that addressing common challenges, such as drought and transboundary environmental issues may vary in effectiveness across different RECs, and the examples provided are primarily related to cultural and social aspects. These initiatives foster a sense of shared identity, cultural understanding, and social cohesion, which strengthen regional integration. RECs focus on addressing common social

challenges faced by member states, such as healthcare, education, poverty alleviation, and environmental sustainability. By sharing best practices, coordinating efforts, and pooling resources, RECs support social development initiatives, improve access to basic services, and work towards achieving sustainable development goals within the region<sup>91</sup>. Through these multifaceted roles, RECs contribute significantly to enhancing multilateralism in Africa. They facilitate regional integration, promote political stability, and foster social and cultural cohesion, which ultimately works towards the collective advancement and prosperity of the African continent<sup>92</sup>.

## Impact of RECs on African Multilateralism

Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have a tangible impact on African multilateralism by bringing about several key benefits and advancements<sup>93</sup>. They increase bargaining power on the global stage by amplifying African voices and interests in international negotiations. RECs, by representing a collective bloc of countries, provide a platform for African nations to coordinate their positions and present unified stances in international negotiations. This amplifies the voice of Africa, enhances its influence, and enables African countries to effectively advocate for their interests on global issues, including trade, climate change, and global governance. RECs enable member states to pool their resources, expertise, and capacities, which strengthens their position in international negotiations. By leveraging collective resources, African countries can address critical challenges, gain technical assistance, and engage in knowledge-sharing, thereby enhancing their effectiveness in multilateral forums. It enhances regional economic growth and

89 Fagbayibo, B. O. (2010, October 9). A politico-legal framework for integration in Africa: exploring the attainability of a supranational African Union. Repository.up.ac.za. <https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/28573>

90 *Ibid.*

91 Jobodwana, Z. N. (2016). Oil in the Gulf of Guinea States and South Africa in the Matrix of Overlapping Membership of African Regional Communities: An Impediment to Regional Integration? *Journal of Law, Society and Development*, 3(1), 6–30. <https://doi.org/10.25159/2520-9515/273>

92 *Ibid.*

93 Magu, S. M. (2023). Introduction—Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs). In *Towards Pan-Africanism: Africa's Cooperation through Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Ubuntu and Communitarianism* (pp. 1-17). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore. Accessed at [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-8944-5\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-8944-5_1)

development by promoting intra-regional trade and investment opportunities. RECs play a pivotal role in boosting intra-regional trade and investment. Through the elimination of trade barriers, the harmonization of customs procedures, and the establishment of regional trade frameworks, RECs create an enabling environment for member states to expand their trade and investment activities within the region. They facilitate economic diversification and industrialization as key components of their development agenda by promoting value addition, encouraging the growth of regional industries, and fostering innovation which ultimately contributes to the transformation of the African economy<sup>94</sup>. They also harness the demographic dividend and promote job creation. RECs recognize the importance of harnessing Africa's demographic dividend and creating employment opportunities for the growing youth population. Through regional integration initiatives, such as the free movement of labour and skills development programs, RECs facilitate the mobility of labour, boost entrepreneurship, and stimulate job creation, thereby contributing to poverty reduction and social stability. It also strengthens the capacity for sustainable development by coordinating regional development strategies and resource allocation.

RECs play a crucial role in coordinating regional development strategies, policies, and programs. By aligning national development plans with regional priorities, RECs ensure coherent and synchronized efforts toward sustainable development. This coordination enhances resource allocation efficiency, reduces duplication, and maximizes the impact of development initiatives<sup>95</sup>. It advances infrastructure development and connectivity. RECs prioritize infrastructure development as a means to foster regional connectivity and economic integration. By facilitating cross-border infrastructure projects, such as transport networks, energy grids, and digital connectivity, RECs enhance trade facilitation, promote access to markets, and strengthen

regional integration. In addition, improved infrastructure supports economic growth, enhances competitiveness, and facilitates the movement of goods, services, and people across borders<sup>96</sup>. RECs also collaborate in addressing common challenges faced by member states, including climate change, food security, public health, and environmental sustainability. By pooling resources, sharing best practices, and coordinating regional approaches, RECs enhance the collective capacity to tackle these complex issues which ensures a more coherent and effective regional response to shared challenges.

Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa have indeed demonstrated a tangible impact on African multilateralism, leading to several noteworthy advancements and benefits.

Firstly, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) serves as an exemplary case of how RECs amplify African voices and interests on the global stage. SADC has consistently coordinated its member states' positions, resulting in unified stances in international negotiations. For example, SADC countries have jointly advocated for the importance of climate adaptation and mitigation strategies tailored to the region's unique challenges during climate change negotiations. This collective approach has significantly enhanced Africa's influence on global climate discussions. Secondly, the East African Community (EAC) exemplifies how RECs enable member states to pool resources and expertise. For instance, the EAC has implemented joint healthcare programs to combat diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria by leveraging collective resources and expertise. By doing this, the EAC has not only improved healthcare outcomes but has also increased its credibility and effectiveness when seeking international support for health initiatives.

Furthermore, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) showcases how RECs enhance regional economic growth and development through the promotion of intra-regional trade and investment opportunities. ECOWAS has implemented policies that facilitate the movement of goods and services

94 Ibid.

95 Massoni, M. (2020). Integration dynamics between the African Union (AU) and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in light of a newly oriented Euro-African geopolitics. In *Africa-Europe Relationships* (pp. 140-156). ss. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781003030621-14>

96 Nita, S. (2013). Regional free movement of people: The case of African Regional Economic Communities. *Regions and Cohesions*, 3(3). <https://doi.org/10.3167/reco.2013.030302>

within the region, leading to increased trade and investment. These policies have attracted foreign investors and contributed to the economic growth in West Africa, thereby demonstrating the pivotal role of RECs in fostering regional prosperity.

Similarly, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) provides an illustrative example of how RECs promote intra-regional trade and investment. COMESA member states have worked together to reduce trade barriers and harmonize trade policies, resulting in increased trade volumes within their region. This collaborative effort has not only boosted economic growth but has also made the region more attractive to foreign investors seeking access to a larger market.

In summary, RECs in Africa such as SADC, EAC, ECOWAS, and COMESA, have shown evidence-based success in amplifying African voices, pooling resources and expertise, and promoting intra-regional trade and investment. These achievements underscore the significant impact of RECs on African multilateralism and contribute to the continent's overall development and global influence. By leveraging the collective strength of member states, RECs contribute to Africa's active participation in global affairs, fostering a more prosperous, integrated, and resilient continent<sup>97</sup>.

## Challenges and Recommendations

Despite the significant contributions of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to enhance multilateralism in Africa, several challenges persist. Addressing these challenges is crucial to maximize the potential of RECs and ensure their continued effectiveness. The following points highlight key challenges and provide recommendations to overcome them.

### **Addressing Institutional and Coordination Challenges**

In order to enhance the effectiveness of RECs, there is a need to strengthen their institutional framework, governance structures, and decision-making processes. This includes enhancing transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the operations of RECs, as well as, ensuring effective coordination between the secretariat and member states.

In addition, it is imperative that coordination and synergy among multiple RECs be improved. Africa has multiple RECs operating concurrently, which can lead to duplication of efforts and coordination challenges. It is therefore essential to foster greater coordination, harmonization, and synergy among RECs. The outcome of this will facilitate cooperation, information sharing, and joint initiatives which can be achieved through regular dialogue, the establishment of mechanisms for collaboration, and the promotion of joint projects and programs<sup>98</sup>.

### **Promoting Inclusivity and Participation**

RECs should actively involve civil society organizations, the private sector, and marginalized groups in their decision-making processes. This inclusivity ensures that diverse perspectives are considered and that the interests of all stakeholders are represented. Mechanisms for meaningful participation, such as public consultations, stakeholder forums, and partnerships with non-state actors, should be promoted.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are also critical for inclusive and sustainable development. RECs should prioritize gender mainstreaming by integrating gender perspectives into their policies, programs, and decision-making processes. This includes promoting women's leadership and participation in REC structures, ensuring gender-responsive policies and projects, and addressing gender-based barriers to participation and representation<sup>99</sup>.

97 Sibanda, Sr, O. S. (2021). The Advent of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement as a Tool for Development. *Foreign Trade Review*, 56(2), 216–224. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0015732521995171>

98 Sako, Soumana. Challenges facing Africa's regional economic communities in capacity building. Harare: African Capacity Building Foundation, 2006.

99 Tshimpaka, L. M., Nshimbi, C. C., & I. (2021). The Formal-

## Supporting Capacity-Building and Resource Mobilization

Building the capacity of RECs and their staff is crucial for effective regional integration. Development partners, international organizations, and member states should provide technical assistance, training, and knowledge-sharing opportunities to strengthen the skills and expertise of REC personnel. This support should focus on areas such as trade facilitation, policy harmonization, conflict resolution, and sustainable development.

In addition to this, adequate financial resources are essential for implementing regional integration projects and initiatives. Development partners, international financial institutions, and member states should increase their support for RECs by providing financial resources, grants, and concessional loans. This will enable the implementation of infrastructure projects, capacity-building programs, and other initiatives that drive regional integration and enhance multilateralism<sup>100</sup>.

## Enhancing Partnerships and Collaboration

RECs should forge stronger partnerships with international organizations such as the African Union (AU), United Nations (UN), and regional development banks, to leverage their expertise, resources, and networks. Similarly, establishing closer ties with donor countries and engaging them in cooperative initiatives will foster collaboration, facilitate resource mobilization, and support the implementation of regional integration projects.

Collaboration and cooperation between different RECs and regional blocs in Africa can lead to synergies, resource-sharing, and enhanced effectiveness. RECs should actively engage in inter-REC dialogue and explore opportunities for joint projects, knowledge exchange, and harmonization of policies and regulations. Such

collaboration can contribute to a more unified and integrated approach to regional integration in Africa.

By addressing these challenges and implementing the recommended actions, RECs can overcome institutional, coordination, and inclusivity barriers. This will enable them to operate more efficiently, promote inclusive decision-making, strengthen their capacities, and foster collaborative partnerships. Ultimately, this will enhance the role of RECs in driving multilateralism, regional integration, and sustainable development in Africa<sup>101</sup>.

## Conclusion

The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa have emerged as key drivers of multilateralism by playing a vital role in promoting regional integration, fostering political and security cooperation, and facilitating social and cultural cohesion. The impact of RECs on African multilateralism is evident in various ways including increased bargaining power on the global stage, enhanced regional economic growth and development, and strengthened capacity for sustainable development. Through their efforts to promote regional integration, RECs have facilitated trade and investment among member states, harmonized policies and regulations, and created common markets, leading to increased intra-regional trade, economic diversification, and growth. By strengthening political and security cooperation, RECs have contributed to peace, stability, and conflict resolution within the region. They have also fostered social and cultural integration by promoting people-to-people exchanges and addressing common social challenges.

RECs have empowered Africa with increased bargaining power on the global stage by amplifying African voices and interests in international negotiations. The pooling of resources and expertise within RECs has enhanced Africa's capacity to address global challenges and advocate for its priorities effectively. Moreover, RECs have also propelled regional economic growth and development, creating opportuni-

Alternative Regionalism Formal Interface: Interactions and Engagements of Southern African Civil Society Networks in SADC Regulatory Regimes. In: Springer eBooks. pp.115–151. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-9388-8\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-9388-8_5).

100 Uzodike, U. (2010). The Role of Regional Economic Communities in Africa's Economic Integration: Prospects and Constraints. *Africa Insight*, 39(2). <https://doi.org/10.4314/ai.v39i2.50997>

101 *Ibid.*

ties for intra-regional trade, economic diversification, and job creation. Through their coordination of regional development strategies and resource allocation, RECs have strengthened Africa's capacity for sustainable development and facilitated infrastructure development and connectivity. However, challenges remain that must be addressed to maximize the potential of RECs. Institutional and coordination challenges require attention, including strengthening the institutional framework and governance mechanisms of RECs and enhancing coordination among multiple RECs. Promoting inclusivity and participation by involving civil society, the private sector, marginalized groups, and advancing gender mainstreaming is essential. Adequate support through capacity-building, resource mobilization, and fostering partnerships with international organizations and donor countries is also crucial for the success of RECs.

In conclusion, continued support and investment in RECs are crucial for Africa's sustainable development and the strengthening of multilateralism. The collective action of member states, development partners, and stakeholders is necessary to address challenges, implement recommendations, and reinforce the role of RECs in driving multilateralism, regional integration, and the pursuit of a prosperous and united African continent. It is only by working together that Africa can realize its full potential and actively participate in shaping the global agenda.



## **DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT AND CYBERSPACE GOVERNANCE**

Comparative Analysis of Digital  
Development in African Countries and  
Security Implications

**Dmitry Erokhin**

Issue 5

## Executive Summary

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has created transformative opportunities worldwide, necessitating the assessment of a country's progress and its areas for improvement through digital development indices. This paper explores the relevance of key digital development indices for African countries in the context of national security. The findings reveal significant variations in performance among African nations in these indices, highlighting the need for focused efforts to enhance national security through digitalisation. To strengthen national security in African countries, the following policy recommendations are proposed: Fostering innovation ecosystems, requesting support for research and development, collaboration between academia and industry, and financial incentives for innovation-driven initiatives. In addition, improving digital competitiveness through investments in infrastructure, broadband connectivity and digital literacy will enable effective utilisation of digital technologies for security purposes across sectors. Furthermore, enhancing e-government services, developing robust and secure telecommunication infrastructure and promoting international cooperation in cybersecurity are also vital. Lastly, promoting cybersecurity awareness and education programs will empower citizens to adopt responsible digital behaviour and enhance overall security. By implementing these recommendations, African countries can leverage digitalization to enhance national security, protect critical systems and effectively respond to emerging security challenges in this digital age.

## Key Points

Rapid advancement of digital technologies necessitates assessment of progress through digital development indices.

There are significant variations in performance among African countries when it comes to digital development indices including: economic, technological and policy-related factors.

Enhancing e-government services, developing robust telecommunication infrastructure and promoting international cooperation in cybersecurity are crucial.

Promoting cybersecurity awareness and education programs empowers citizens and enhances overall security.

## Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has brought about significant changes and opportunities across the globe. As countries strive to embrace digital transformation and leverage innovation, the role of digital development indices becomes crucial in assessing their progress and identifying areas for improvement. This paper examines several key digital development indices, namely the Global Innovation Index (GII), World Digital Competitiveness Ranking (WDC), E-Government Development Index (EGDI), Telecommunication Infrastructure Index (TII), Network Readiness Index (NRI) and Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) and focuses on their relevance to national security in the context of African countries.

The digital development indices examined in this paper provide valuable insights into the progress and challenges faced by African countries in their digitalisation efforts. The findings underline the significance of digital development for national security. To enhance national security through digitalisation, African countries should prioritise fostering innovation ecosystems, improving digital competitiveness, enhancing e-government services, strengthening telecommunication infrastructure, fostering international cooperation and promoting cybersecurity awareness and education. By implementing these policy recommendations, African countries can enhance their national security capabilities, leverage digital technologies effectively and ensure a secure and resilient environment in this digital age.

## Discussion

**Global Innovation Index.** The Global Innovation Index (GII) is an annual report that assesses and ranks the innovation performance of 132 economies around the world.<sup>102</sup> The primary objective of the GI is to identify and highlight the most innovative economies globally, while also pinpointing their strengths and weaknesses in terms of innovation metrics. The index serves

as a valuable resource for countries seeking to develop new innovation and economic policy strategies. It provides insights and data that can be used to improve innovation metrics and drive innovation-led growth. Though digitalisation is an important dimension of this index, it goes beyond it by looking at institutions, human capital and research, market sophistication and so on.

In the Global Innovation Index 2022, African countries ranked lower compared to other regions. The top three countries in the ranking were Switzerland with a score of 64.60, followed by the United States with 61.80 and Sweden with 61.60. In contrast, the top three African nations were Mauritius with a score of 34.40, South Africa with 29.80 and Morocco with 28.80. These figures demonstrate a significant gap between the innovation levels of African countries and those leading the global ranking.

Good performance in innovation is crucial for security due to several reasons. Firstly, innovation contributes to economic growth and prosperity. It also provides countries with the means to invest in security infrastructure, defence capabilities and emergency response systems. Economically robust nations can allocate resources to safeguard their borders, protect their citizens and counter potential threats effectively.

Secondly, innovation enhances technological advancements in various sectors including defence and security. Developing innovative solutions and technologies bolsters a country's ability to address emerging security challenges such as cyber threats, terrorism and unconventional warfare. Cutting-edge innovations in surveillance, intelligence gathering, and crisis management systems can significantly enhance a nation's security capabilities.

Moreover, innovation fosters resilience and adaptability, enabling countries to anticipate and respond to security risks more effectively. Innovation-driven approaches promote the development of strategies, policies and tools that can adapt to evolving security threats. This flexibility allows nations to stay ahead of potential adversaries and mitigate security risks

<sup>102</sup> World Intellectual Property Organization. (2023). Global Innovation Index, <https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/home>

before they escalate.

Furthermore, a strong innovation ecosystem attracts investment, encourages entrepreneurship and fosters research and development. These elements are vital for building a sustainable security infrastructure and nurturing a skilled workforce capable of addressing security challenges. By investing in innovation, countries can create an environment conducive to technological advancements, scientific breakthroughs and knowledge sharing, leading to enhanced security capabilities.

*Table 1. African countries performance in the GII (2011-2022)*

Country	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Mauritius	36,47	39,2	38	40,94	39,23	35,86	34,82	31,31	30,61	34,35	35,2	34,4
South Africa	35,22	37,4	37,6	38,24	37,45	35,85	35,8	35,13	34,04	32,67	32,7	29,8
Morocco	28,73	30,7	30,89	32,24	33,19	32,26	32,72	31,09	31,63	28,97	29,3	28,8
Tunisia	33,89	36,5	35,82	32,94	33,48	30,55	32,3	32,86	32,83	31,21	30,7	27,9
Botswana	30,51	31,4	31,14	30,87	30,49	28,96	29,97	28,16	27,43	25,43	22,9	23,9
Egypt	29,21	27,9	28,48	30,03	28,91	25,96	26	27,16	27,47	24,23	25,1	22,7
Kenya	29,15	28,9	30,28	31,85	30,19	30,36	30,95	31,07	31,13	26,13	27,5	22,7
Ghana	32,48	29,6	30,6	30,26	28,04	26,66		24,52	25,27	22,28	22,3	20,8
Namibia	30,74	34,1	28,36	28,47	28,15	28,24	27,94	28,03	25,85	22,51	24,3	20,6
Senegal	27,56	28,8	30,48	30,06	30,95	26,14	27,11	26,53	26,83	23,75	23,3	19,9
Tanzania	26,88	23,9	26,35	25,6	27	26,35	27,97	28,07	26,63	25,57	25,6	19,4
Rwanda	25,86	27,9	27,64	29,31	30,09	29,96	27,36	26,54	27,38	25,06	23,9	18,7
Madagascar	25,41	24,2	22,95	25,5	24,42	24,79	24,15	24,75	22,38	20,4	22,5	18,6
Zimbabwe	23,54	25,7	23,98	24,31	22,52		21,8	23,15	22,3	19,97	21,9	18,1
Cote d'Ivoire	24,08	22,6	23,42	27,02	27,16	25,8	23,96	19,96	25,55	21,24	21	17,8
Nigeria	28,15	24,6	26,57	27,79	23,72	23,15	21,92	22,37	23,93	20,13	20,1	16,9
Algeria	19,79	24,4	23,11	24,2	24,38	24,46	24,34	23,87	23,98	19,48	19,9	16,7
Ethiopia	22,88	23,3	24,8	25,36	24,17	24,83	24,16		24,16	18,06	18,6	16,3
Zambia	25,27	26,4	26,79	25,76	24,64	19,92	20,83	20,66	20,36	19,39	19,8	15,8
Uganda	26,37	25,6	31,21	31,14	27,65	27,14	26,97	25,32	25,6	20,54	20	15,7
Burkina Faso	23,14	24,6	27,03	28,18	28,68	21,05	21,86	18,95	23,3	20	20,5	15,3
Cameroon	26,95	25	25,71	27,52	27,8	22,82	22,58	23,85	23,9	19,98	19,7	15,1
Togo		20,5	23,04	17,65	18,43	18,42	18,41	18,91	18,54	18,54	19,3	15,1
Mozambique		26,3	26,5	28,52	30,07	29,84	24,55	23,06	22,87	18,7	19,7	15
Benin	23,81	24,4	25,1	24,21		22,25	23,04	20,61	20,42	18,13	18	14,6
Niger	21,41	18,6	24,03	24,27	21,22	20,44	21,18	20,57	18,13	17,82	17,8	14,6
Mali	26,35	25,4	28,84	26,18	28,37	24,77	22,48	23,32	24,03	19,15	19,5	14,2
Angola		22,2	23,46	23,82	26,2						15	13,9
Mauritania												12,4
Burundi		20,5		22,43		20,93	21,31		17,65			12,3
Guinea			25,7	20,25	18,49	17,24	17,41	20,71	19,5	17,32	16,7	11,6

Cabo Verde		29,69	30,09	28,59						23,86	25,7
Gabon	26,5	28,04									
Gambia	23,3	26,39	29,03	27,49							
Lesotho	25,7	26,29	27,01	26,97							
Malawi	25,96	25,4	26,73	27,61	29,71	27,26	23,45	23,09	23	21,44	22,9
Seychelles				38,56	36,44						
Sudan	20,36	16,8	19,81	12,66	14,95						
Swaziland	27,52	32	29,6	25,33	25,37						

**World Digital Competitiveness Ranking.** The World Digital Competitiveness (WDC) Ranking, compiled by the IMD World Competitiveness Centre, assesses the ability and preparedness of 63 economies to adopt and leverage digital technologies for economic transformation across various sectors including business, government and society.<sup>103</sup> This annual ranking combines objective data and survey responses from business and government executives. By evaluating the digital competitiveness of different economies, the ranking serves as a valuable resource for governments and companies seeking to allocate resources effectively and learn from best practices during their digital transformation journey.

The World Digital Competitiveness Ranking 2022 includes only two African countries, and their performance is relatively poor compared to the top-ranked nations. Denmark secured the highest score of 100.00, followed by Sweden with 99.81 and the United States with 81. In contrast, South Africa achieved a score of 51.24, while Botswana scored 48.25, reflecting their relatively lower digital competitiveness in comparison to the leading countries.

Digital competitiveness is crucial for security due to several reasons. First of all, digital technologies play a vital role in modern security infrastructure, including surveillance, intelligence gathering and data analysis. Advanced digital capabilities enable countries to enhance their situational awareness, detect and prevent security threats more effectively, and respond swiftly in emergency situations.

103 International Institute for Management Development. (2023). World Digital Competitiveness Ranking, <https://www.imd.org/centers/wcc/world-competitiveness-center/rankings/world-digital-competitiveness-ranking/>

A strong digital foundation empowers security agencies to gather and analyse vast amounts of data, enabling proactive security measures and prompt decision-making.

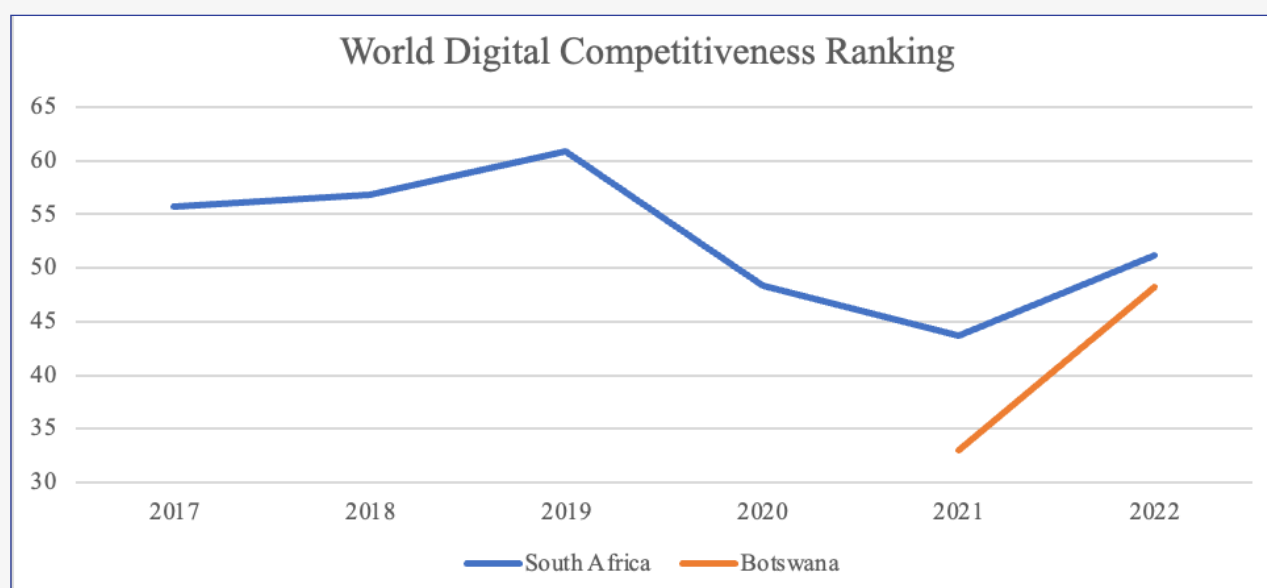
Secondly, digital competitiveness is essential for cybersecurity. As societies become increasingly connected and dependent on digital platforms and networks, the risks of cyber threats and attacks also escalate. A robust digital infrastructure, equipped with the latest cybersecurity measures, can better protect critical infrastructure, government systems and sensitive data. By continuously investing in digital competencies, countries can build cyber resilience, detect and mitigate cyber threats, and safeguard their national security interests.

Furthermore, digital competitiveness contributes to economic stability and national resilience. Digitally advanced economies are better positioned to withstand disruptions, whether they stem from physical or cyber threats. A strong digital ecosystem promotes economic growth, innovation and diversification, which reduces vulnerabilities associated with traditional sectors. By embracing digital technologies, countries can build a resilient and adaptable economy, which is crucial for maintaining security and stability in the face of evolving global challenges.

Moreover, digital competitiveness enhances international collaboration and information sharing in matters of security. Effective digital capabilities enable seamless communication, coordination and cooperation among nations, allowing for timely responses to transnational security threats. Digital platforms and networks facilitate the exchange of intelligence, joint

operations and coordinated efforts in combating terrorism, organised crime, and other global security challenges.

Figure 1. African countries performance in the WDC ranking (2017-2022)



**E-Government Development Index.** The E-Government Development Index (EGDI) is a measure that assesses the state of e-government development in United Nations Member States (United Nations, 2023). It considers factors such as website development, access characteristics (infrastructure and educational levels) and the use of information technologies to promote access and inclusion of citizens. The EGDI consists of three dimensions: provision of online services, telecommunication connectivity and human capacity. The EGDI is not meant to measure e-government development in an absolute sense, but rather to provide a performance rating of national governments relative to each other. It is based on a comprehensive survey of the online presence and e-government policies of all 193 United Nations Member States.

Denmark, Finland and the Republic of Korea are the best-performing countries in the E-Government Development Index (EGDI) with scores of 0.9717, 0.9533 and 0.9529 respectively. These countries have demonstrated strong e-government development and have effectively utilised information technologies to provide online services, improve telecommunication connectivity and enhance human capacity.

On the other hand, African countries show a

significant variation in their performance. The top-performing African countries in the EGDI are South Africa (0.7357), Mauritius (0.7201) and Seychelles (0.6793). These countries have made commendable progress in their e-government initiatives and have utilised digital platforms to improve service delivery and citizen engagement. However, there are also African countries that are lagging behind, such as the Central African Republic (0.1407), Somalia (0.134) and South Sudan (0.0852).

Good performance in e-government is crucial for national security due to several reasons. First, effective e-government systems enhance information sharing and coordination among different government agencies and departments. This seamless flow of information allows for better intelligence gathering, analysis and decision-making, which are critical components of national security efforts.

Second, robust e-government infrastructure and services contribute to the efficient delivery of essential services to citizens. This includes services related to law enforcement, emergency response, border security and critical infrastructure management. By leveraging technology and digital platforms, governments can streamline processes, improve response times and enhance overall security and public safety.

Furthermore, strong e-government capabilities facilitate secure and confidential communication channels between government entities, reducing the risk of unauthorised access or interception of sensitive information. This ensures the protection of classified data and sensitive government operations, which safeguard national security interests.

Lastly, a well-developed e-government ecosystem encourages citizen participation and engagement in security-related matters. Through online platforms, citizens can report suspicious activities, provide feedback and contribute to community safety initiatives. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of shared responsibility and strengthens the overall security fabric of a nation.

*Table 2. African countries performance in the EGDl (2012-2022)*

Country	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020	2022
South Africa	0,4869	0,4869	0,5546	0,6618	0,6891	0,7357
Mauritius	0,5066	0,5338	0,6231	0,6678	0,7196	0,7201
Seychelles	0,5192	0,5113	0,5181	0,6163	0,692	0,6793
Tunisia	0,4833	0,539	0,5682	0,6254	0,6526	0,653
Morocco	0,4209	0,506	0,5186	0,5214	0,5729	0,5915
Egypt	0,4611	0,5129	0,4594	0,488	0,5527	0,5895
Ghana	0,3159	0,3735	0,4182	0,539	0,596	0,5824
Cabo Verde	0,4297	0,3551	0,4742	0,498	0,5604	0,566
Algeria	0,3608	0,3106	0,2999	0,4227	0,5173	0,5611
Kenya	0,4212	0,3805	0,4186	0,4541	0,5326	0,5589
Gabon	0,3687	0,3294	0,3584	0,4313	0,5401	0,5521
Botswana	0,4186	0,4198	0,4532	0,4253	0,5383	0,5495
Rwanda	0,3291	0,3589	0,339	0,459	0,4789	0,5489
Côte d'Ivoire	0,258	0,2039	0,2185	0,2776	0,4457	0,5467
Namibia	0,3937	0,388	0,3682	0,4554	0,5747	0,5322
Zambia	0,291	0,2389	0,3507	0,4111	0,4242	0,5022
Zimbabwe	0,3583	0,3585	0,3472	0,3692	0,5019	0,4717
Nigeria	0,2676	0,2929	0,3291	0,3807	0,4406	0,4525
Cameroon	0,307	0,2782	0,2759	0,3997	0,4325	0,4498
Eswatini	0,3179	0,3056	0,3412	0,382	0,4938	0,4498
Senegal	0,2673	0,2666	0,3251	0,3486	0,421	0,4479
Uganda	0,3185	0,2593	0,3599	0,4055	0,4499	0,4424
Lesotho	0,3501	0,2629	0,277	0,2968	0,4593	0,4414
Benin	0,2064	0,1685	0,2039	0,3264	0,4039	0,4264
Togo	0,2143	0,2446	0,3096	0,3989	0,4302	0,4231
United Republic of Tanzania	0,3311	0,2764	0,3533	0,3929	0,4206	0,4169
Sao Tome and Principe	0,3327	0,2218	0,239	0,3424	0,4074	0,4138

Angola	0,3203	0,297	0,3311	0,3376	0,3847	0,3789
Congo	0,2809	0,257	0,2497	0,3024	0,3786	0,3675
Guinea	0	0,0954	0,1226	0,2348	0,2592	0,3608
Madagascar	0,3054	0,2606	0,2416	0,2792	0,3095	0,3565
Burkina Faso	0,1578	0,1804	0,1598	0,3016	0,3558	0,3476
Malawi	0,274	0,2321	0,2398	0,2708	0,348	0,3435
Mali	0,1857	0,1634	0,1817	0,2424	0,3097	0,3414
Libya	0	0,3753	0,4322	0,3833	0,3743	0,3375
Burundi	0,2288	0,1928	0,2277	0,2985	0,3227	0,3204
Mauritania	0,1996	0,1893	0,1734	0,2314	0,282	0,3157
Mozambique	0,2786	0,2384	0,2305	0,3195	0,3564	0,313
Gambia	0,2688	0,2285	0,2396	0,2958	0,263	0,3088
Democratic Republic of the Congo	0,228	0,1551	0,1876	0,2612	0,258	0,3057
Sudan	0,261	0,2606	0,2539	0,2394	0,3154	0,2972
Liberia	0,2407	0,1768	0,2338	0,2737	0,2605	0,2905
Ethiopia	0,2306	0,2589	0,2666	0,3463	0,274	0,2865
Djibouti	0,2228	0,1456	0,1337	0,2401	0,2728	0,2833
Comoros	0,2358	0,1808	0,2155	0,2336	0,2799	0,2778
Equatorial Guinea	0,2955	0,2268	0,2403	0,2298	0,2507	0,2746
Sierra Leone	0,1557	0,1329	0,1594	0,2717	0,2931	0,2633
Guinea-Bissau	0,1945	0,1609	0,1818	0,1887	0,2316	0,256
Niger	0,1119	0,0946	0,0593	0,1095	0,1661	0,2406
Chad	0,1092	0,1076	0,1256	0,1257	0,1557	0,189
Eritrea	0,2043	0,0908	0,0902	0,1337	0,1292	0,1709
Central African Republic	0	0,1257	0,0789	0,1584	0,1404	0,1407
Somalia	0,064	0,0139	0,027	0,0566	0,1293	0,134
South Sudan	0,2239	0,1418	0,1791	0,1214	0,0875	0,0852

**Telecommunication Infrastructure Index.** The Telecommunication Infrastructure Index (TII) is a composite index that measures the state of telecommunication infrastructure in a given country or region.<sup>104</sup> It is calculated by taking the arithmetic average of four indicators: estimated internet users per 100 inhabitants, number of mobile subscribers per 100 inhabitants, active mobile-broadband subscriptions and number of fixed broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants. The index considers data provided by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) as the primary source for each indicator. By incorporating these four indicators, the Telecommunication Infrastructure Index provides a comprehensive assessment of the availability and adoption of telecommunication services, particularly in terms of internet and mobile connectivity. It offers insights into the extent to which a country or region has developed and has accessible telecommunication infrastructure

104 United Nations. (2023). E-Government Development Index, <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/About/Overview/-E-Government-Development-Index>

to support digital communications and services. The index is useful for policymakers, researchers and industry professionals to compare and evaluate the telecommunication infrastructure across different countries or regions, track progress over time and identify areas that require improvement.

In 2022, the top three African countries in terms of telecommunication infrastructure performance were Seychelles with a score of 0.8198, Mauritius with a score of 0.7588, and South Africa with a score of 0.685. On a global scale, the best-performing countries were Liechtenstein ranked first with a score of 1, followed by Denmark with a score of 0.9795, and Iceland with a score of 0.9705. However, there was a significant variation in performance among African countries, with some ranking much lower.

Having a strong telecommunication infrastructure is crucial for security reasons. A robust telecommunication infrastructure enables effective emergency communication systems, allowing authorities to promptly respond to crises, natural disasters and other emergencies. Quick and reliable communication during emergencies can save lives and minimise the impact of such events. Furthermore, efficient telecommunication networks facilitate effective communication between law enforcement agencies, enabling them to coordinate their efforts in preventing and responding to criminal activities. It allows for the swift exchange of information, aiding in the investigation, tracking and apprehension of criminals.

In the realm of national security and defence, a strong telecommunication infrastructure plays a vital role. It enables secure communication channels for military operations, intelligence sharing and coordination among defence forces. Reliable communication networks are essential for maintaining situational awareness and executing strategic military operations. Moreover, with the increasing reliance on digital technologies and interconnected systems, a robust telecommunication infrastructure is essential for safeguarding against cyber threats. A strong infrastructure can support advanced security measures, such as encrypted communications, intrusion detection systems and secure data transmission protocols, which help protect against cyberattacks and unauthorised access to critical information.

A well-developed telecommunication infrastructure also contributes to economic stability and growth. It facilitates efficient communication and connectivity, enabling businesses to operate smoothly, attract investment and engage in international trade. A secure and reliable infrastructure is essential for financial transactions, e-commerce and the overall functioning of the digital economy.

*Table 3. African countries performance in the TII (2012-2022)*

Country	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020	2022
Seychelles	0,4037	0,4721	0,4624	0,5008	0,6925	0,8198
Mauritius	0,3296	0,4406	0,4596	0,5435	0,6677	0,7588
South Africa	0,2214	0,3466	0,3807	0,4231	0,5832	0,685
Botswana	0,1873	0,2969	0,4215	0,3982	0,5591	0,6814
Morocco	0,2772	0,335	0,3429	0,3697	0,58	0,6676
Tunisia	0,2886	0,3074	0,3476	0,4066	0,6369	0,6646
Gabon	0,1595	0,226	0,3068	0,425	0,625	0,6279
Algeria	0,1812	0,1989	0,1934	0,3889	0,5787	0,6133
Ghana	0,1111	0,2444	0,2594	0,3558	0,5596	0,5934
Egypt	0,2232	0,3571	0,3025	0,3222	0,4683	0,5579
Cabo Verde	0,2268	0,2966	0,3629	0,3926	0,5476	0,5507
Côte d'Ivoire	0,1019	0,1392	0,1711	0,2748	0,5034	0,5186

Namibia	0,1385	0,2719	0,2669	0,3299	0,5447	0,5133
Senegal	0,1283	0,1644	0,1958	0,224	0,4358	0,5025
Mauritania	0,1123	0,1626	0,1537	0,1878	0,3886	0,4648
Gambia	0,1344	0,1482	0,1959	0,2627	0,3967	0,4508
Mali	0,0645	0,135	0,2149	0,2074	0,3546	0,4398
Kenya	0,1212	0,1612	0,1808	0,1901	0,3402	0,4305
Burkina Faso	0,0454	0,0842	0,1232	0,1603	0,3117	0,3931
Zambia	0,0601	0,1247	0,1182	0,1853	0,3394	0,3909
Nigeria	0,127	0,1905	0,1958	0,1883	0,3534	0,3886
Zimbabwe	0,1099	0,2238	0,2167	0,2144	0,3688	0,3843
Lesotho	0,0499	0,1179	0,1787	0,2468	0,4497	0,3836
Cameroon	0,0649	0,0958	0,131	0,179	0,2299	0,365
Eswatini	0,1125	0,1629	0,1601	0,1772	0,3539	0,355
Guinea-Bissau	0,0511	0,0878	0,0828	0,1028	0,2037	0,3472
Guinea	0,0491	0,0504	0,0906	0,1513	0,3008	0,3448
Comoros	0,0436	0,0604	0,1073	0,0871	0,2511	0,33
Sao Tome and Principe	0,1374	0,1398	0,1547	0,3053	0,3015	0,3218
Rwanda	0,0614	0,0828	0,1084	0,1733	0,2931	0,3209
Sudan	0,0725	0,1847	0,1861	0,178	0,2844	0,3199
Benin	0,1118	0,1196	0,1471	0,1418	0,2595	0,3156
Togo	0,0744	0,0836	0,1044	0,1353	0,2532	0,2848
Djibouti	0,0488	0,0556	0,0698	0,0961	0,2531	0,276
United Republic of Tanzania	0,0839	0,0808	0,09	0,1403	0,243	0,2709
Sierra Leone	0,0395	0,0821	0,1216	0,1597	0,259	0,2639
Uganda	0,0732	0,1011	0,1129	0,1566	0,2278	0,2472
Congo	0,1275	0,1453	0,1713	0,1889	0,2361	0,217
Angola	0,0892	0,0978	0,1441	0,0972	0,1364	0,2004
Madagascar	0,052	0,0488	0,0514	0,0499	0,1096	0,182
Malawi	0,0321	0,0484	0,0485	0,0834	0,1394	0,1815
Libya	0,3743	0,3281	0,4291	0,3353	0,3459	0,1601
Mozambique	0,0443	0,0545	0,0993	0,1398	0,1293	0,1537
Ethiopia	0,0093	0,0266	0,0495	0,0976	0,1194	0,1501
Democratic Republic of the Congo	0,0183	0,0337	0,0788	0,0645	0,1144	0,1477
Niger	0,0293	0,0385	0,0558	0,0795	0,0737	0,14
Burundi	0,0173	0,0233	0,0331	0,0786	0,126	0,14
Equatorial Guinea	0,0883	0,12	0,1237	0,101	0,1327	0,1363
Chad	0,0291	0,0415	0,0476	0,0669	0,089	0,1191

Liberia	0,0477	0,0763	0,1041	0,1036	0,1411	0,1115
Somalia	0,009	0,0259	0,0665	0,0586	0,0939	0,1074
Eritrea	0,0132	0	0	0	0	0,0837
Central African Republic	0,0297	0,028	0,0381	0,0322	0,038	0,0833
South Sudan	0,0725	0,0141	0,0534	0,0262	0,0652	0

**Network Readiness Index.** The Network Readiness Index (NRI) is a composite index that measures the readiness of a country to participate in the network economy.<sup>105</sup> It is constructed using three levels of analysis. The primary level of the NRI consists of four fundamental pillars that capture the essential dimensions of network readiness. Each pillar further divides into sub-pillars at the second level. The third level comprises individual indicators distributed across the pillars and sub pillars of the primary and secondary levels. All indicators used in the NRI are assigned to specific pillars and sub-pillars. The first pillar of the NRI is Technology. This pillar focuses on assessing the level of technology within a country. This is crucial for its participation in the global economy. The second pillar is People. This pillar examines the accessibility, resources and skills of the population and organisations to effectively utilise technology and participate in the network economy. The third pillar is Governance. It encompasses aspects related to the safety and security of individuals and firms in the network economy. The fourth pillar is Impact. This pillar focuses on assessing the impact of network readiness in terms of economic growth, social development and overall improvement in people's lives. The NRI provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating the readiness of countries to leverage technology and participate in the network economy. It helps policymakers, researchers and stakeholders understand the strengths and weaknesses of a country's technological infrastructure, human capital, governance practices and the overall impact of network readiness on economic and social development.

The top three performing African countries in terms of network readiness are South Africa with

a score of 48.9, Mauritius with a score of 47.87 and Egypt with a score of 47.76. However, it is important to note that these scores still indicate relatively lower performance compared to global leaders. The best-performing countries in network readiness globally are the USA with a score of 80.30, Singapore with a score of 79.35 and Sweden with a score of 78.91.

Having good performance in network readiness is crucial for security due to several reasons. First, a strong network infrastructure enables robust cybersecurity measures, which protects critical infrastructure, government systems and private data from cyber threats. This includes implementing advanced security measures like firewalls, encryption and intrusion detection systems.

Secondly, network readiness facilitates efficient information sharing and intelligence gathering among security agencies. It allows for secure communication channels, real-time data exchange and collaborative platforms, which enhances the ability to identify and respond to security threats effectively.

In the context of emergencies, a well-prepared network infrastructure enables swift and effective emergency response mechanisms. It supports communication among emergency services, government agencies and the public, thereby facilitating the dissemination of critical information, coordination of rescue efforts and timely evacuation procedures.

Furthermore, network readiness enhances the ability to monitor and watch potential security threats. It enables the deployment of advanced surveillance technologies such as CCTV cameras, facial recognition systems and data analytics, aiding in crime prevention, threat detection and law enforcement.

In the realm of national defence, a technologically

<sup>105</sup> Portulans Institute. (2023). Network Readiness Index, <https://networkreadinessindex.org/>

advanced network infrastructure plays a vital role. It supports secure communication channels, facilitates real-time intelligence sharing and enhances situational awareness, enabling defence forces to coordinate their efforts effectively and respond swiftly to emerging security challenges.

*Table 4. African countries performance in the NRI (2019-2022)*

Country	2019	2020	2021	2022
South Africa	47,38	45,26	48,88	48,9
Mauritius	53,4	49,83	48,34	47,87
Egypt	38,58	42,56	47,56	47,76
Kenya	38,19	43,22	45,18	46,9
Morocco	41,38	39,71	46,06	46,5
Tunisia	42,04	41,3	44,33	45,46
Cabo Verde		42,01	42,33	41,68
Senegal	33,67	36,9	39,48	39,62
Cote d'Ivoire		31,23	35,69	39,56
Algeria	35,3	35,15	38,93	39,48
Rwanda	39,97	37,24	38,65	39,48
Ghana	37,07	36,97	40,86	38,89
Tanzania	30,73	33,92	35,83	37,84
Botswana	34,85	36,94	38,03	37,72
Nigeria	28,22	30,44	37,51	36,67
Benin		32,25		36,05
Zambia	26,2	30,54	33,93	34,02
Cameroon	25,94	29,86	32,76	33,72
Namibia	33,34	36,11	35,66	33,45
Uganda	29,7	31,4	31,51	33,33
Gambia		29,4	33,68	33,06
Zimbabwe	22,09	25,78	28,74	31,95
Malawi	22,9	25,23	29	31,3
Madagascar	22,73	25,84	28,8	30,53
Mali	24,29	27	30,4	30,02
Burkina Faso		25,79	30,54	29,76
Ethiopia	23,37	23,49	24,9	29,68
Guinea		28,42	28,5	28,92
Mozambique	22,07	24,18	26,55	28,18
Eswatini	25,19	27,21	28,76	27,95
Lesotho		27,72	28,56	27,9
Angola		20,96	25,99	27,4
Congo, Dem, Rep,		16,6	22,31	23,34
Burundi		22,62	22,48	21,11
Chad		14,8	21,85	20,12

**Global Cybersecurity Index.** The Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) is a reputable benchmark that evaluates a country's commitment to cybersecurity on a global scale.<sup>106</sup> It serves to raise awareness about the significance and various aspects of cybersecurity. Recognizing that cybersecurity encompasses a wide range of applications across industries and sectors, the index assesses each country's level of development or engagement in five key pillars: Legal Measures, Technical Measures, Organisational Measures, Capacity Development and Cooperation. These assessments are then aggregated to determine an overall score for each country. The GCI serves as a valuable tool for policymakers, researchers and stakeholders to assess and compare the cybersecurity readiness and initiatives of several countries. It helps identify areas that require improvement, promotes best practices and encourages international collaboration to address the evolving challenges in cybersecurity. Ultimately, the GCI plays a crucial role in promoting a secure and resilient digital environment on a global scale.

In 2020, there was significant variation in the performance of African countries in the Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI). While some African countries achieved commendable scores indicating their commitment to cybersecurity, others lagged behind. The top-performing African countries were Mauritius with a score of 0.9689, Egypt with a score of 0.9548 and Tanzania with a score of 0.9058. Conversely, the worst-performing African countries were Burundi and Eritrea, both scoring 0.0173, and Equatorial Guinea with a score of 0,0146. Globally, the top three best-performing countries in the GCI were the USA ranked first with a perfect score of 1, followed by the UK and Saudi Arabia, both with a score of 0,9954.

Good performance in global cybersecurity is crucial for national security due to several reasons. Firstly, it protects critical infrastructure such as energy, transportation, communication and financial systems, thereby safeguarding national security interests. Secondly, it strengthens a country's defence against cyber threats, including state-sponsored cyber espionage, cyberterrorism and cyberattacks; thereby protecting sensitive government information, military operations and national defence capabilities. Additionally, it helps safeguard intellectual property, preventing unauthorised access and theft of valuable technologies and defence-related research.

Furthermore, robust cybersecurity measures ensure the protection of government systems and services, preserving the confidentiality, integrity and availability of critical data. By mitigating economic risks, cybersecurity contributes to national security and resilience by preventing cyber-related disruptions, financial losses and economic instability. Moreover, good performance in global cybersecurity enables effective international collaboration and information sharing among nations, thereby enhancing collective defence capabilities and efforts to combat cybercrime and cyberterrorism.

*Table 5, African countries performance in the GCI (2015-2020)*

Country	2015	2017	2018	2020
Mauritius	0,588	0,83	0,88	0,9689
Egypt	0,588	0,772	0,942	0,9548
Tanzania	0,206	0,317	0,642	0,9058
Ghana	0,294	0,326	0,437	0,8669
Tunisia	0,529	0,591	0,536	0,8623
Nigeria	0,441	0,569	0,65	0,8476
Morocco	0,559	0,541	0,429	0,8241
Kenya	0,412	0,574	0,748	0,817

106 International Telecommunication Union, (2023), Global Cybersecurity Index, <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Pages/global-cybersecurity-index.aspx>

Benin	0,176	0,069	0,485	0,8006
Rwanda	0,529	0,602	0,697	0,7995
South Africa	0,382	0,502	0,652	0,7846
Uganda	0,559	0,536	0,621	0,6998
Zambia	0,147	0,292	0,436	0,6888
Cote d'Ivoire	0,235	0,416	0,456	0,6782
Botswana	0,176	0,43	0,44	0,5306
Cameroon	0,412	0,413	0,432	0,4563
Chad	0,029	0,072	0,098	0,4044
Burkina Faso	0,324	0,208	0,4	0,3998
Malawi	0,176	0,084	0,275	0,3683
Zimbabwe	0,088	0,192	0,186	0,3649
Senegal	0,176	0,314	0,305	0,3585
Sudan	0,441	0,271	0,294	0,3503
Algeria	0,176	0,432	0,262	0,3395
Togo	0,265	0,218	0,087	0,3319
Gambia	0,088	0,136	0,228	0,3212
Libya	0,294	0,224	0,206	0,2878
Ethiopia	0,029	0,267	0,278	0,2774
Sierra Leone	0,059	0,145	0,138	0,2531
Mozambique	0,059	0,206	0,158	0,2418
Madagascar	0,088	0,168	0,196	0,2333
Guinea	0,029	0,09	0,191	0,2053
Mauritania	0,147	0,146	0,107	0,1894
Swaziland	0,059	0,041	0,133	0,1823
Cabo Verde	0,029	0,058	0,051	0,1774
Somalia	0,029	0,034	0,07	0,1725
Sao Tome and Principe	0,059	0,04	0,064	0,1564
Congo, Rep,	0,059	0,04	0,167	0,1472
Seychelles	0,118	0,184	0,259	0,1323
Angola	0,088	0,078	0,097	0,1299
Namibia	0	0,066	0,127	0,1147
Niger	0,088	0,17	0,094	0,1138
Gabon	0,029	0,139	0,318	0,1136
Mali	0,088	0,06	0,085	0,1014
Guinea-Bissau	0,029	0,034	0,055	0,0985
Liberia	0,206	0,149	0,206	0,0972

Lesotho	0	0,094	0,051	0,0908
South Sudan	0,088	0,067	0,065	0,0575
Congo, Dem, Rep,	0,029	0,04	0,008	0,053
Comoros	0,029	0,04	0,015	0,0372
Central African Republic	0	0,007	0,036	0,0324
Burundi	0,118	0,12	0,087	0,0173
Djibouti	0,059	0,099	0,063	0,0173
Eritrea	0,029	0,076	0,02	0,0173
Equatorial Guinea	0	0	0,031	0,0146

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In conclusion, this study has examined the performance of African nations across critical indices that provide valuable insights into the digital development, innovation, e-government capacity, cybersecurity and telecommunication infrastructure of African countries.

Looking at the Global Innovation Index, it is evident that African countries generally exhibit lower performance compared to global leaders. The top-performing African nations such as Mauritius, South Africa and Morocco, still have room for improvement. There is a pressing need for policy attention to foster innovation and economic growth.

The World Digital Competitiveness Ranking reveals a similar trend, with only a few African countries included and their performance trailing behind top-ranked nations. Digital competitiveness is crucial for security due to its role in modern security infrastructure, cybersecurity, economic stability and international collaboration. Policymakers must prioritise investments in digital capabilities to enhance national security.

The E-Government Development Index illustrates a diverse performance landscape among African countries, with South Africa, Mauritius and Seychelles leading the way. Effective e-government systems contribute to information sharing, efficient service delivery, secure communication and citizen engagement

in security-related matters. Policymakers should focus on improving e-government initiatives to strengthen national security.

The Telecommunication Infrastructure Index highlights the importance of robust telecommunication infrastructure for national security. Such infrastructure enables emergency communication, law enforcement coordination, military operations and cyber resilience. African nations must continue to invest in telecommunication networks to ensure effective response to emergencies and safeguard national security interests.

The Network Readiness Index underscores that while African countries have made strides in technological advancement, there remains a substantial performance gap when compared to global leaders. The NRI reveals that even the top-performing African nations such as South Africa, Mauritius and Egypt, have room for improvement. Policymakers must therefore prioritise policy measures that foster innovation, enhance technological infrastructure and promote economic growth in this digital age.

The Global Cybersecurity Index sheds light on the diverse performance landscape of African countries in the realm of cybersecurity. While some nations like Mauritius, Egypt and Tanzania demonstrate commendable commitment to cybersecurity, others face challenges in this domain. The GCI findings emphasise the multifaceted role of cybersecurity in national security, including protecting critical infrastructure, defence against cyber threats, safeguarding intellectual property and

ensuring the confidentiality of government data. Policymakers must consider these aspects when formulating cybersecurity strategies to bolster national security and resilience.

In summary, there is a significant variation in performance among African nations in these indices. While some countries demonstrate commendable progress; others still lag behind global leaders. It is imperative for policymakers, governments and stakeholders to recognize the importance of digital development, innovation, e-government capacity and telecommunication infrastructure in strengthening national security and driving economic growth in this digital age.

To enhance national security through digitalisation in African countries therefore, African governments should:

- Foster innovation ecosystems by prioritising policies and investments that promote innovation and entrepreneurship. This includes supporting research and development, promoting collaboration between academia and industry, and providing financial incentives for innovation-driven initiatives. By nurturing innovation ecosystems, African countries can develop cutting-edge technologies and solutions that enhance their security capabilities.
- Improve digital competitiveness by prioritising digital transformation efforts to enhance their digital competitiveness. This includes investing in digital infrastructure, expanding broadband connectivity and promoting digital literacy and skills development among the population. By improving digital readiness and capabilities, African countries can effectively harness digital technologies for security purposes and ensure their adoption across various sectors.
- Enhance e-government services by focusing on the development of robust and user-friendly e-government services. This involves improving the accessibility and efficiency of online platforms for citizens to access government services, participate in decision-making processes and report security concerns. By leveraging digital platforms, African governments can enhance transparency, accountability and citizen en-

gagement in security-related matters.

- Strengthen telecommunication infrastructure by ensuring investments in the development of reliable and secure telecommunication infrastructure. This includes expanding broadband coverage, improving network resilience and implementing robust cybersecurity measures to protect against cyber threats. By ensuring a strong telecommunication infrastructure, African countries can enhance emergency communication systems, facilitate secure data exchange and support advanced security technologies.
- Foster international cooperation by prioritising international cooperation and information sharing in matters of cybersecurity and digital security. This includes establishing partnerships with international organisations, participating in joint exercises and training programs, and sharing best practices and expertise. By collaborating with other nations, African countries can leverage collective intelligence and resources to address global security challenges effectively.
- Promote cybersecurity awareness and education by investing in cybersecurity awareness programs and education initiatives. This includes promoting digital literacy, educating citizens about online threats, and fostering a culture of cybersecurity awareness and responsible digital behaviour. By building a knowledgeable and cyber-aware society, African countries can strengthen their overall security posture and mitigate the risks associated with cyber threats.

By implementing these policy recommendations, African countries can enhance their national security in this digital age. Strong digital infrastructure, innovation-driven approaches and effective utilisation of digital technologies will contribute to a secure and resilient environment, safeguard critical systems, protect citizens and enable effective responses to emerging security challenges specific to African contexts.

At the same time, while digital development undoubtedly plays a pivotal role in advancing

economies and societies, it is crucial to bear in mind the various threats it can bring with it. In the absence of proper consideration and mitigation strategies, these threats can potentially undermine national security.

The expansion of e-government services and digital infrastructure can inadvertently increase the attack surface available to external actors seeking to interfere with domestic governance. With more government functions and sensitive data going digital, the potential for cyberattacks targeting critical systems, data breaches and even cyber espionage becomes more pronounced. These threats not only jeopardise the confidentiality, integrity and availability of essential government services, but can also disrupt the stability of a nation.

The increased digital access and connectivity among the population can make them more appealing targets for malicious cyber actors. As individuals and businesses embrace digital technologies for communication, commerce and various daily activities, they become vulnerable to various cyber threats, such as phishing attacks, identity theft and ransomware. These threats can have severe consequences, ranging from financial loss for individuals to widespread disruption of essential services for entire communities.

It is worth emphasising that digital development cannot progress in isolation from robust cybersecurity measures. To harness the benefits of digitisation while safeguarding national security, governments and organisations must invest in cybersecurity infrastructure, personnel training and proactive threat intelligence. Only through these concerted efforts can we strike a balance between reaping the rewards of digital progress and protecting against the inherent risks it presents.



## Beyond Securitisation's Legacy: Inclusive Perspectives to Governing Africa's Cyberspace

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**Jesutimilehin O. Akamo**  
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# Issue 6

## Executive Summary

Securitisation of cyberspace focuses on what needs to be done to tackle vulnerabilities, threats, attacks and who takes on this responsibility. Identified vulnerabilities, threats, and attacks are framed in a way that justifies extraordinary approaches and actions by governments and institutions. These extraordinary approaches and actions are often non-inclusive. Therefore, securitisation based on the analysis of Buzan et al. in *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, does not favour inclusivity in cyberspace governance. It positions the government (securitising actor) as the body responsible for providing necessary security intervention to tackle identified vulnerabilities, threats and attacks, while other characters are positioned as recipients or beneficiaries of their actions. This lens encourages a top-down approach to policy making processes. This approach is not entirely suitable for cyberspace governance because the nature of cyberspace requires meaningful participation of non-state actors, most of which would have been excluded by design in a securitized setting. The risk of this top-down approach is that policy-making processes in relation to cyberspace will gradually become an exclusive preserve of the state, which is already the case in some African countries. This brief argues in favour of adopting certain normative views of cyberspace that may facilitate an inclusive approach to cyberspace governance.

## Key Points

Predominantly focusing on security issues such as vulnerabilities, threats, and attacks po-tentially undermines inclusivity.

Cyber policies should not be designed from a position that neglects the meaningful participation and inclusion of key stakeholders in mainstream decision-making processes. An all-inclusive approach enhances policy processes by catering for the anticipatory needs required for success.

Policy makers need to approach policy design through a “with” lens. The “with” lens refers to a situation of togetherness (between and amongst equals and/or unequals), where the decisions and actions that concern an individual or group are made or taken with their input and participation in a systematic and meaningful manner. The emphasis of being systematic and meaningful is to ensure that tokenism is not framed and presented as inclusion.

Reflective and constructive approaches are required to encourage an all-inclusive approach to cyberspace governance.

The character of cyberspace encourages a robust and disaggregated approach to policy design in order to achieve comprehensive security.

## Introduction

Securitising cyberspace is a social process in which authorities frame cyberspace as an existential security issue that requires the government's special attention. Within the context of cyberspace governance in Africa, this approach ends up justifying more regulation and exclusion of key stakeholders in the mainstream decision-making process. Such is the case with the utilisation of misinformation and fake news as drivers of conflict, which governments use as justification to further shrink Africa's civic space through impeding freedom of speech, expression and the press. This approach results in a top-down approach without necessary consultation with key stakeholders to better inform the policy design to address misinformation and fake news.<sup>107</sup> It has also resulted in internet (access) restrictions and shutdowns, and arrests.<sup>108</sup> While making cyberspace safer for Africans is indeed a priority, policies should not be made from a position that neglects the meaningful participation and inclusion of key stakeholders. This is to avoid the security implications of exclusion.<sup>109</sup>

Cyberspace governance needs to enhance the anticipatory strength of policies which will require continuous interaction between and among various stakeholders to efficiently respond to current and prospective issues. Meanwhile, accounting for this requires an all-inclusive approach.<sup>110</sup> Inclusivity, within the context of policy and security, is not new in cyberspace discourse.<sup>111</sup> However, the direction of many policy debates deal with the technical and user dimension rather than the policy dimension.<sup>112</sup>

This brief therefore presents some normative considerations to contribute to existing policy discourse and for consideration by policy makers. The objective is that the application of these normative considerations will enhance the worldview of policymakers in view of encouraging an all-inclusive approach to cyberspace governance.

## Securitisation's Legacy

Securitisation can be defined as a speech-act process where a biased understanding of an issue is framed within a political community and presented as an existential threat that must be dealt with as a matter of urgency. This allows the state to take extraordinary measures when it deems it fit and, in such cases, the state is referred to as the referent object.<sup>113</sup>

Securitisation was not designed for conditions outside the European and North American context. It also does not account for the socio-political difference between these two continents and Africa, especially in the context of patronage politics.<sup>114</sup> What this means is that the formal legal bureaucratic model of authority is intertwined with informal political relations within the power structures that run the state. This is what is found at the root of security governance in the African context, which evidently still grapples with the operationalisation of democratic principles in governance. In addition, at the core of state approaches to emerging technologies, especially in Africa, lies the need to always be in control.

This significantly informs why cyberspace is approached as a security issue which the state has to respond to in a securitised manner. As a result, the foundational policy and legal frameworks hardly consider and encourage an inclusive approach. As a matter of fact, government institutions that led in the development of these frameworks were

107 Merchant, E., & Stremlau, N. (2019). Africa's Internet Shutdowns: A Report on Johannesburg Workshop. Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy (PCMLP), University of Oxford. Also see African Centre for Strategic Studies (2021). Domestic Disinformation on the Rise in Africa. *Spotlight*. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/domestic-disinformation-on-the-rise-in-africa/>

108 Garbe, L., Selvik LM, & Lemaire, P. (2021). How African countries respond to fake news and hate speech. *Information, Communication & Society* 1-18

109 Akamo, J. O. (2021). Security Implications of Exclusion from Cyberspace Governance in Nigeria (2012 - 2018)

110 Interview with an International relations Expert, April 14, 2021, Ile-Ife.

111 Renaud, K., & Coles-Kemp, L. (2022). Accessible and inclusive cyber security: a nuanced and complex challenge. *SN Computer Science*, 3(5), 1-14.

112 *Ibid*

113 Vultee, F. (2010). Securitization: A New Approach to the Framing of the "War on Terror". *Journalism Practice*, 4(1) 33-47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512780903172049>

114 Ezeokafor, E., & Kaunert, C. (2018). Securitization outside of the West: conceptualizing the securitization-neo-patrimonialism nexus in Africa. *Global Discourse*, 8(1), 83-99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23269995.2017.1412619>

security-oriented institutions. This has led to a streamlined and less-than-holistic policy document and legal framework that focuses on cybersecurity, and in its essence and coverage completely ignores cyberspace as a whole.

Examples include the African Union (AU's) Malabo Convention, Nigeria's national cybersecurity policy and strategy which was developed by Nigeria's National Security Adviser, Ghana National Cyber Security Policy & Strategy which was premised on responding to cyber threats, South Africa's National Cybersecurity Policy Framework (NCPF), Senegal National Cybersecurity Strategy, Kenya National Cybersecurity Strategy, Tanzania National Cybersecurity Strategy and Mauritania National Cybersecurity Strategy to name a few. Drawing from Graham Allison's work in "Essence of Decision" concerning the organisational process model and bureaucratic politics model, it can be seen that the direction of securitisation is predictable in view of the institutions that took/takes the lead in the development of these policies and the premise upon which the policy documents were developed and implemented. In the same regard, repressive-oriented actions like internet or social media shutdowns or restrictions are not far-fetched as some of these aforementioned countries either have a history of such or are at risk of internet and social media restrictions or shutdown.

For most if not all African states, there is no comprehensive policy framework that focuses on cyberspace and how to leverage the opportunity it presents in a coherent manner; that includes key stakeholders and brings together relevant industries. The primary lens through which cyberspace is understood is a securitised one; thus, the focus has always been on responding to possible threats, vulnerabilities and (possible) attacks. Arguably, Africa and African countries do not have an agenda for cyberspace that integrates security and development. While ensuring that the cyberspace is safe, developing policies which link all sectors and industries together to maximise and leverage the opportunities cyberspace presents is important for security and development, especially as it pertains the security complexes and interdependence in cyberspace.

Cybersecurity has so far been a growing concern for governments and institutions; while cyberspace has not been of growing interest in its entirety as observed in the nature and character of existing policy documents. Overall, this demonstrates how the focus on security may undermine a holistic approach to emerging issues which undermines both an inclusive approach to governance and in the long run, security.

## Anticipatory Needs of Policy

Azad Singh Bali, Giliberto Capano & M. Ramesh argued that satisfying the anticipatory needs of policy is key to having an effective policy in terms of design, execution and assessment.<sup>115</sup> These anticipatory needs are the required elements to guarantee the predictive capacity of a policy. It is crucial to the quality of a policy. It helps policy to (potentially) anticipate and respond to issues whose occurrences were unconfirmed at the point of policy making, as well as the negative outcomes of the policy. To satisfy these needs in view of a successful policy, a robust account of the problem and its root causes, as well as the most appropriate instrument that will cover the most gaps is required. This would also mean acknowledging that policies cannot attain total perfection, and the instrument to be used is based on what best achieves the political objective with minimal complications that can be easily resolved. This approach raises analytical, political and operational questions in terms of capacity and instrument. See the questions in the Table 1 below:

115 Bali, A. S., Capano, G., & Ramesh, M. (2019). Anticipating and designing for policy effectiveness. *Policy and Society*, 38(1), 1-13.

Table 1

		Elements of policy effectiveness	
		Instrumentality	Capacity
Dimensions of Policy Effectiveness	Analytical	Is/are the instrument(s) capable of solving the problem?	Does the agency know how to choose, adapt, and calibrate policy tools?
	Operational	Is the instrument operationally feasible?	Does the agency have the accountability mechanisms, coordination mechanisms, and trained bureaucracy necessary to use the tool?
	Political	Is the instrument socially acceptable and politically viable to use?	Does the agency have the legitimacy/ability to reconcile political differences? Or deal with political opposition?

Source: Bali, Capano & Ramesh (2019).<sup>116</sup>

In the event that certain key stakeholders are missing in a policy process that concerns them, or their participation is less than meaningful in the broader frame, it would be difficult to estimate the problems, operational feasibility, acceptability and political viability of the policy decided on. Furthermore, in terms of capacity, the knowledge of the agency developing and implementing the tool will be deficient without critical input from key stakeholders of concern. Absence of key stakeholders also impacts the mechanisms and bureaucracies at the stage of implementation and evaluation. Ergo, gaps that would have been otherwise prevented if key stakeholders meaningfully participated in the process will persist.

In addition, a process that lacks the meaningful participation of key stakeholders may suffer from a problem of relevance, legitimacy and public trust to varying degrees. This is because the outcome of a process that fails to account for the realities of those that will implement or be affected by the policy will fail to satisfy questions on relevance, legitimacy and practicability. A practice by the European Commission which can be cited as an example to demonstrate overcoming such problems is the use of interservice consultations and public consultations.<sup>117 118</sup> The use of both allows the meaningful contribution of stakeholders within and outside the system.

Another example that may be cited to capture

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>117</sup> Jeroen J. L. Candel, Sebastiaan Princen & Robbert Biesbroek (2023). *Patterns of coordination in the European Commission: an analysis of interservice consultations around climate change adaptation policy (2007–2018)*. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 30(1), 104–127.

<sup>118</sup> Lironi, E. & Peta, D. (2017). *EU Public Consultations in the Digital Age: Enhancing the Role of the EESC and Civil Society Organisations*. European Economy and Social Committee.

the crux of the above argument is the ban of cryptocurrencies in African countries. The essence of citing this example is neither to support cryptocurrencies nor oppose the ban. Rather, it is about the mode of response to cryptocurrencies which is bound to repeat itself and is anti-inclusive at its core. The potential advantage cryptocurrency offers illicit activities such as terrorism financing and various forms of trafficking, were overemphasised and cited as justification for the bans. Specifically, Nigeria banned commercial banks from dealing in cryptocurrencies which implied that commercial banks cannot facilitate cryptocurrency transactions by individuals or businesses. The ban on cryptocurrency heavily impacted many Nigerian youths who struggled to meet their economic needs.

The ban on cryptocurrency lacked acceptability, viability and legitimacy, and lacked adequate and holistic problem mapping. Why cryptocurrency was attractive was also left unutilised. There has not been an established link to affirm that the policy achieved the supposed objectives, one of which was curbing terrorism financing. Meanwhile, the ban resulted in the loss of investments for many young Nigerians who relied on cryptocurrency to meet their economic needs amidst their harsh economic conditions. In addition, the operational feasibility of that policy was also problematic in that cryptocurrency users sought alternative means outside Nigeria's official banking framework.

A broader example is digital repression which seems to have grown in popularity within the last decade. Policies (or a series of it) that culminate into digital repression seldom considers the interests of key stakeholders.

Political objectives are often deemed more important than the inputs of key stakeholders as they also often plough the securitisation path in terms of government delivering an intervention it has adjudged appropriate in its right. Digital repression fails to improve but rather threatens African security and contributes to the continent's economic losses and instability. Examples of this include Tanzania in the run up to the October 2020 elections, Algeria and Chad, where internet blackout cost each country an estimated \$100 million and about \$367 million in Nigeria.<sup>119</sup> In these instances, digital repression amplifies political and economic tensions. Despite the various justifications in relation to terrorism, organised crime and secessionist movements tendered to justify repressive policies, repression has been rather harmful as seen in the above examples.<sup>120</sup>

Against this backdrop, prioritising the anticipatory needs of policy as much as the security dimensions is preferable to encourage an inclusive multistakeholder approach to cyberspace governance.

## Normative Considerations to Enhance Inclusion in Cyberspace Governance

### "With" or "For"

Policymakers should engage the "With" approach in policy processes and mainstream it in their impact assessments and policy evaluations. This allows for progression which is vital for responsiveness to the evolving nature of cyberspace.

On the one hand, inclusion and meaningful participation in policy processes imply a rather partnership level approach to policy, meaning policy makers engage policy design "with" other stakeholders. On the other hand, exclusion implies the acknowledgement of the existence of these stakeholders whom those policies will impact, however, the policies are made without

them. Thus, policies are made "for" them/their benefit without necessarily engaging them. The latter is an offshoot of securitising cyberspace, where authorities justify taking policy action on behalf of stakeholders without their input. In this vein, you can see how in the context of human rights and freedom, digital laws and policies continue to contribute to the shrinking of civic space.<sup>121</sup> While some policies may be made in support of other aims that are deemed more important, the overarching decision-making structure should, more often than not, be influenced by the "With" approach. Thus, stakeholders should, as the term implies, have a stake in the decision-making process, instead of engaging them only to the extent of being beneficiaries of the policies and submissive actors.

### "Reflective" and "Constructive"

Policy processes should be reflective and constructive. This paves the way for efficient responsiveness to negative implications of technology and leverages the positive ones while exploring new areas that either resolve or improve the quality of human life and society.

The reflective approach focuses on understanding technology and its implication for human society; while the constructive approach is concerned with developing and implementing new technologies to resolve and prevent social challenges and improve the quality of society and human life. Therefore, cyberspace and its implication for society must be understood through the safety and developmental lens; and its utility should be channelled to resolve and prevent social challenges and improve the quality of society and life.

Cyberspace can serve as an instrument to achieve a myriad of objectives as it impacts both the physical space and the environment where the objective is pursued. Both roles can occur simultaneously. Examples can be drawn from social media. Two major examples include its role in #ArabSpring and Nigeria's

119 Allen, N. & Kelly, C. L. (2022). Deluge of Digital Repression Threatens African Security. *African Centre for Strategic Studies Spotlight*.

120 *Ibid*

121 Patuel, F. & Severen, I. V. (2020). *Civic space backsliding ahead of elections in Francophone West Africa - Case studies: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Niger and Togo*. CIVICUS; also see Allen, N. & Kelly, C. L. (2022). Deluge of Digital Repression Threatens African Security. *African Centre for Strategic Studies Spotlight*.

#EndSARS movement. In both regards, one could conveniently argue that social media was used as a tool to win public support locally and internationally, while also making the case that social media was in itself an environment where virtual protest occurred. Both cases fed into each other to produce the degree of attention it got physically and virtually. Cyberspace is indeed a tool that can be used to express grievances as well as the space where those grievances are expressed. In both cases, that is the #ArabSpring and the #EndSARS, the aim was ultimately a better living condition centred around freedom (political and/or economic), democracy, and the fidelity of institutions to democratic values.

A reflective approach, for example, should prioritise how social media works and its implications for human society. A constructive approach would prioritise developing and implementing technologies that can help resolve the root causes of both movements and improve the quality of the society and human lives where they occurred. This would expectedly provoke the meaningful participation of the concerned demography. It also encourages a holistic approach to mainstreaming the character of cyberspace (particularly the human layer) as discussed in the next point. On this premise, actions that result in shrinking the civic space through social media regulation, for example, are not expected to be the policy outcome.

## **The Character of Cyberspace**

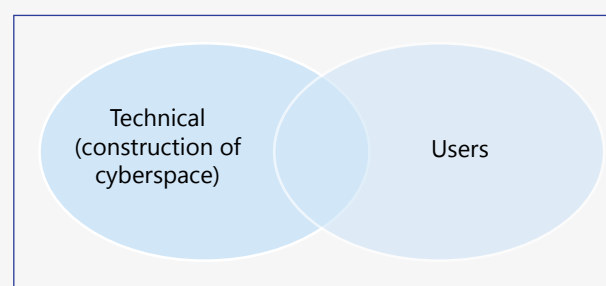
Mainstreaming the character of cyberspace (holistically) in cyberspace governance structures and processes is necessary to enhance inclusivity, and ensure policies remain fit-for-purpose.

The character of cyberspace is such that there are four layers: physical, logical, information and human.<sup>122</sup> The physical layer involves geographic and tangible features (physical infrastructure) that communicate to create what we know as cyberspace (the virtual infrastructure). Examples of the physical infrastructure include

computers and mobile phones, and the network infrastructure and cables that allow them to communicate, amongst other things. The logical layer is rather technical. It is the platform upon which new capabilities and the reasoning behind them are constructed. It is also the network/networking components where the rule of engagement is defined, and also the foundation for communication and creation.<sup>123</sup> The information layer involves the information and data that is being communicated within and between different devices and platforms. While all layers are very important, the human layer defines and shapes all three by the way they choose to construct and exploit it. Herein lies the opportunities and risks because the quality and quantity of engagement with the human layer is what will define security and development in the long run.

Overall, this provides the basis for why policy makers need to ensure meaningful participation in policy processes or consultation, representative enough to capture the different dimensions of the human layer. This includes the technical side, which is responsible for construction, the users who exploit it for various objectives, and everything in-between. Therefore, having a robust and disaggregated stakeholder mapping at the inception stage of policy design is crucial.

Figure 1:



122 Clark, D. D. (2010). *Characterizing cyberspace: Past, present and future* (ECIR Working Paper No. 2010-3). MIT Political Science Department.

123 Ikwu, R., & Louvieris, P. (n.d.) *Identifying Data and Information Streams in Cyberspace - A Multi-Dimensional Perspective*. Arxiv. org. <https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1906/1906.03757.pdf>

## Conclusion

Governance is impactful, productive and presents a developmental and progressive outlook if it is perceived and treated as a constant process premised on harmonising the continuous interaction between and among different stakeholders.<sup>124</sup> The anticipatory needs of policy for successful governance is a premise upon which the “with” reflective and constructive approach to policy processes should be encouraged. The fact that the human layer defines and shapes other layers (physical, logical and information) by the way they choose to construct and exploit it further reiterates why those approaches are necessary. Increasingly and away from the old norm, the link between people and policy is reiterated if the success of policy is a priority. Policy failures within the context of cyberspace exposes individuals and institutions to security vulnerabilities.<sup>125</sup> These perspectives are no doubt inexhaustive. However, they are a starting point upon which greater inclusion can be built.

## Policy Recommendations

- Governments and institutions should discourage the culture of predominantly focusing on vulnerabilities, threats and attacks, especially in the context of emerging issues to ensure a more holistic approach to the development of policies and strategies at national levels.
- The African Union (AU) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) need to be at the driver’s seat to develop a comprehensive, coherent and integrated national, regional and continental agenda, policy, and strategy for cyberspace. Such agenda, policies and strategies should neither focus on be driven by security issues. It should be holistic in content and character. This will enable a long-term responsive approach to

the intersection of security and governance of cyberspace. Convergence of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA) already provides a premise for such, as most security issues in Africa are closely related to or caused by governance challenges.

- The African Union Cybersecurity Expert Group (AUCEG) advises the African Union Commission (AUC) on cybersecurity issues and policies. Thus, as a starting point continent-wise, the Group may enhance its normative approaches with respect to the above presentation as per how it arrives at its submission to the AUC. The group is a viable starting point for more action in this regard because it is also tasked with developing ways for close collaboration among AU Member States and stakeholders.
- The AUCEG should have representation at the different RECs and the various member states to facilitate the operationalisation of friendly inclusive perspectives to policy processes within the context of cyberspace governance. This will also ease access to stakeholder pools.
- RECs need to mainstream inclusive perspectives such as proposed in this brief to their governance and security instruments, and secure buy-in from member states. This will encourage progressive policy approaches at member state level rather than the currently popular repressive approach.
- Civil society and pressure groups need to amplify inclusive views through which cyberspace governance can be approached. This is to ensure that policy processes in their respective countries take into cognizance the fact that developmental and progressive policies are near impossible if the government seeks to demonstrate responsiveness to the demands of the century without the inclusion of key stakeholders.

124 Keping, Y. (2018). Governance and Good Governance: A New Framework for Political Analysis. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 11(1), 1-8.

125 Savaş, S., & Karataş, S. (2022). Cyber governance studies in ensuring cybersecurity: an overview of cybersecurity governance. *International Cybersecurity Law Review*, 1-28. For AfCFTA context, also see Kopp, E., Kaffenberger, L. & Wilson, C. (2017). Cyber Risks, Market Failure and Financial Instability. *IMF Working Paper WP/17/185*.

## Editors' Final Remarks

As the above contributions posit, there are myriad interconnected issues that require further probation on how to effectively respond and progress. To successfully attempt such endeavour, these contributions reiterate the need for coordination and cooperation between and among key stakeholders, re-thinking/introspection of the ideals that inform our behaviours (as individuals and institutions), re-examination of existing systems and structures with respect to development, governance, peace and security, inclusivity and meaningful participation, targeted financial and non-financial investments, lessons-learned and forward-looking approaches, capacity building and evidence-based approach to policy processes.

The depth and scope covered in this volume are inexhaustive. We in fact consider them a starting point or build up on existing issues. We therefore invite you, the reader; policy makers, professionals, and experts to learn from it, critique it, and further the debate by giving us your feedback and contributing to the next volume (Volume 2). The conversation in Volume 2 will maintain the focus on The Horn of Africa, Multilateralism, and Digital Development and Cyberspace Governance. However, the spotlight will be on the inclusion and meaningful participation of women anchored on The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 – Women, Peace and Security.

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