TOWARDS A NEW AGENDA FOR PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA: NEW SECURITY THREATS AND THE FUTURE OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

AMANI AFRICA

Media and Research Services

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I. WHY THIS REPORT MATTERS?

Today's peace and security landscape and the regional and global socio-political context have substantially changed from the time of the establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) two decades ago. The nature of the issues that informed the peace and security agenda of the African Union (AU) at the time of its founding are different from those facing Africa today. Similarly, some of the assumptions that informed the structures and processes of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) no longer hold. The developments deriving these changes are both endogenous, hence relate to events and dynamics on the African continent, and exogenous, relate to events and dynamics globally.

The situation in Africa, after years of declining violence, exhibits a spike in both the number and geographic spread of conflicts.[1] The nature of these conflicts has also shifted, with non-state actors becoming major players in the continent's insecurity, driven by a web of socio-economic and governance challenges. While traditional security threats, such as inter-state conflicts and military coups, have reemerged, new and more complex security threats are now dominating the landscape. This evolution underscores the urgent need for new strategies, as these emerging threats risk reversing the developmental and democratic gains of recent decades.

On 25 September 2024, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) will hold a ministerial session on 'New Security Threats in Africa and the Future of the Peace and Security Council' on the sidelines of the 79th Session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. With May 2024 marking the 20th anniversary of the PSC's official launch, this is an opportunity to critically reflect on the emerging security threats in Africa, the impact of the emerging security threats on the AU's peace and security architecture, and how the PSC—a standing decision-making organ on peace and security issues—should reposition itself to address these challenges effectively.

This special research report seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate on the future of the PSC and AU's peace and security instruments in the context of Africa's evolving security landscape. It will highlight some of the key emerging security threats in Africa and their implications to the existing AU Peace and Security Architecture. The report will then propose adjustments in tools, approaches, and processes to ensure that the AU/PSC and its security architecture remain relevant and fit for purpose in the face of new and emerging security threat and changing geopolitical dynamics both continentally and globally.

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1   *Amani Africa, 'The Major Peace and Security Issues in Africa on the 20th Anniversary of the African Union,' Special Research Report No.11, (March 2022), p.2. Available at:* https://amaniafrica-et.org/the-major-peace-and-security-issues-in-africa-in-the-year-the-au-marks-its-20-years/

II. NEW SECURITY THREATS IN AFRICA

2.1 The emergence of parts of the continent as epicenter of terrorism in the world

Terrorism and other transnational organised crimes have become one of Africa's most significant emerging security threats. According to the Institute for Economics and Peace's 2024 Global Terrorism Index (GTI), the epicenter of global terrorism has shifted from the Middle East to Africa's Central Sahel region.[2] For the first time in 13 years, a country other than Afghanistan or Iraq has topped the GTI, with Burkina Faso now ranked first. Mali and Niger remain among the most affected by terrorism as well.

Data from multiple sources highlight three key trends in terrorism across Africa. The first is the alarming increase in the number of terrorist attacks over the years. The second, equally concerning, is the rising number of fatalities resulting from these attacks. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the Sahel region, where terrorism has surged dramatically over the past 15 years. The number of attacks has skyrocketed by 1,266%, while related deaths have surged by an astounding 2,860%.[3]

This trend shows no signs of slowing. By the end of 2023, data from the Africa Centre on the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), now known as the African Union Counter Terrorism

Centre (AUCTC), revealed a 99% increase in terrorist attacks and a 53% rise in terrorism-related deaths compared to the previous year.[4] On average, the data recorded eight terrorist attacks and 43 terrorism-related deaths per day during this period.

In terms of regional distribution, West Africa remains the most affected region on the continent, recording 1,455 attacks resulting in 8,409 deaths in 2023. This trend persisted into the second quarter of 2024, with West Africa accounting for 45% of all attacks and 62% of the total deaths in Africa.[5] East Africa ranks second, with 688 recorded attacks leading to 3,654 deaths. In contrast, North Africa was the least affected region in 2023.
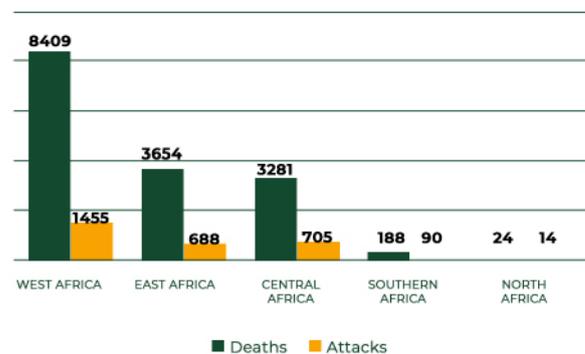
Terrorist attacks and deaths in Africa per region 2023 (Source: ACSRT, PSC's 1202th Session Briefing Note)

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2   Institute for Economics & Peace, 'Global Terrorism Index 2024: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism,' (February 2024), p.3. Available from: http://visionofhumanity.org/resources.

3   Ibid

4   See Briefing Note to the PSC's 1202th session on the 'Fight against Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa' (PSC/PR/BN.1202 (2024)), (February 2024), P.2. Available at: https://shorturl.at/TcqVc.

5   The African Union Counter Terrorism Centre, the Quarterly Africa Terrorism Bulletin, Second Quarter April-June 2024. Available at: https://papsrepository.africa-union.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/2151/AFRICA%20TERRORISM%20BULLETIN%20-%20Second%20Quarter%202024%20-%20Edition%2008-1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

According to the latest data from the AUCTC, the five most affected countries by terrorist attacks during the second quarter of 2024 (April-June 2024) were Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia, Mali, and Cameroon in decreasing order.[6] The most active terrorist groups on the continent include Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM), Al-Shabaab, Islamic State West Africa (ISWAP), Boko Haram, and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).

While no region of the continent is spared from conflicts involving terrorist groups, apart from the dire situation in the Sahel, particularly troubling, as noted by the President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission,[7] is the expansion of terrorism into the coastal states of West Africa, including Benin, Togo, and Côte d'Ivoire. Additionally, as these groups extend their reach towards the Gulf of Guinea, a dangerous convergence of piracy and terrorism is emerging, posing a significant new threat to the region.

Beyond the geographic spread and growing prevalence of terrorist activities, the threat has become increasingly complex due to the interplay of geopolitics, external actors, and the local dynamics of affected countries.[8] Adding to the complexity is the trend in the use of technological advancements by terrorist groups. They employ these technologies to spread ideology and propaganda, recruit members, fund operations, conduct surveillance, and launch attacks.

2.2. Emerging technologies, peace and security

Various sessions of the PSC, including the 627th, 850th, and 1148th, have raised alarm over the growing global cyber threats, recognising them as a serious challenge to national, regional, and international peace and security. Africa's rapidly evolving digital landscape, combined with inadequate cybersecurity measures, weak legislative frameworks for information security, and low preparedness for cyber risks, has contributed to the rising number of cyber threats on the continent.

The 2024 Africa Cyber Threat Assessment Report by the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) underscores the alarming rise of cybercrime across Africa, identifying it as one of the continent's most rapidly emerging threats.[9] The same report indicates that in 2023, Africa experienced a 23% year-on-year increase in the average number of weekly cyberattacks per organisation. The increasing frequency and complexity of cyberattacks in the continent threatens the security of critical information infrastructure and demands urgent action as failure to address the threat can have serious consequences for individuals, businesses and socio-economic development, and the overall peace and stability of the continent.

6   Ibid

7   Amani Africa, 'The Peace and Security Council in 2023: the Year in Review,' (February 2024), p. 2. Available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/the-peace-and-security-council-in-2023-the-year-in-review/

8   Amani Africa, Insights on the PSC, 'Fight against terrorism and violent extremism', (February 2024). Available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/fight-against-terrorism-and-violent-extremism/

9   INTERPOL, 'INTERPOL Africa Cyberthreat Assessment Report 2024,' (April 2024), p.11. Available at: https://t.co/Sn2XoCBN5C.

It is worth noting that while there are specificities to the impact of cybersecurity threats in Africa, the challenge that cybersecurity poses is not unique to the AU and the PSC. As the UN Secretary-General observed, one of the issues that needs to be addressed within the framework of his New Agenda for Peace is tackling the extension of conflicts and hostilities to cyberspace.

In response to this growing challenge, the AU has been developing cybersecurity architecture, including the AU Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention); the 2020-2030 Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa; the AU Data Policy Framework and the AU Interoperability Framework for Digitial ID. At its 1196th session held on 29 January 2024, the PSC also adopted the Common African Position on the Application of International Law to the Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Cyberspace. In addition, during its 1148th session of April 2023, the PSC requested the AU Commission to expedite the establishment of a Unit within the Political Affairs Peace and Security Department, which will work together with all other stakeholders in monitoring and reporting on cybersecurity issues within the continent.[10]

However, despite these initiatives, current efforts to address cyber threats are largely disproportional compared to the scale of the challenges facing Africa. Greater attention and action are required to effectively counter the growing cyber risks.

Another area of concern in relation to emerging technologies is the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). There are increasing concerns particularly associated with generative AI linked to disinformation, cybersecurity threats, hate speech targeting women and minorities, and fomenting or inciting violence in times of crises and conflicts. Perhaps the most worrying aspect of the application of AI concerns the proliferation of AI applications for military uses.[11] The use of AI for military purposes carries serious ethical, international humanitarian law and security implications. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 'AI and machine-learning systems could have profound implications for the role of humans in armed conflict, especially concerning: increasing autonomy of weapon systems and other unmanned systems; new forms of cyber and information warfare; and, more broadly, the nature of decision-making.'[12] While there is no data to suggest the widespread use of AI applications for military purposes, particularly lethal autonomous weapons systems, the increasing use of drones both for combat and reconnaissance could evolve into weapons systems with AI-driven capabilities for autonomous action.[13]

11   *Amani Africa, Insights on the PSC, 'Looking into the Future: Artificial Intelligence and its Impact on Peace and Security in Africa,' (12 June 2024). Available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/looking-into-the-future-artificial-intelligence-and-its-impact-on-peace-and-security-in-africa/*

12   *ICRC, 'Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in Armed Conflict: A Human-Centered Approach'. Available at: https://www.icrc.org/en/document/artificial-intelligence-and-machine-learning-armed-conflict-human-centred-approach.*

13   *Amani Africa, Insights on the PSC, 'Looking into the Future'*

10   *See the PSC Communiqué adopted at its 1148th session, held on 13 April 2023.*

2.3.   Foreign powers vying for influence

In recent years, Africa has become a battleground for renewed power rivalries, reminiscent of the 'Cold War' and the 'Scramble for Africa'. Global powers are vying for influence, driven by the continent's vast natural resources and the pursuit of diplomatic leverage. The Russia-Ukraine war, which erupted in February 2022, has further intensified these geopolitical tensions, drawing Africa into the crossfire with significant repercussions for its peace and security.

Amani Africa, in its Special Research Report on 'Major Peace and Security Issues in Africa on the 20th Anniversary of the African Union,' identifies four major forms through which the securitisation of foreign intervention on the continent is manifesting.[14] First is the broad spectrum of security cooperation, which includes training, technical assistance, expert deployments, and the provision of military supplies. Second is the establishment of military bases; Africa now hosts nearly 50 foreign military outposts, including China's and Japan's first bases in Djibouti since World War II. Third, as seen in Libya, the Sahel, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia, the militarisation of foreign intervention is reflected in the increased use of drones and military aid in African conflicts, with significant monetary and human costs. Finally, governments with weak security infrastructures are increasingly relying on foreign private military and security companies, particularly in their fight against militant insurgent groups.

The ramifications of foreign power intervention in Africa are multifaceted. As seen in Libya and, more recently, in Sudan, such interventions have made conflicts and political transitions increasingly complex and difficult to resolve, often resulting in humanitarian disasters. More conflicts and fragile transitions are becoming arenas for proxy wars, where foreign powers seeking influence assert themselves to shape the course and outcome of these struggles in line with their own interests. These dynamics are also weakening the effectiveness of continental mediation and peacemaking efforts. In some contexts, power rivalries have entrenched military rule, diminishing hopes for a swift return to constitutional governance in countries that have experienced coups, while reversing the democratic gains achieved over the past decade. In other cases, foreign influence has diverted critical resources and political attention away from addressing the structural causes of security challenges in the continent to a narrow military strategy, further entrenching the cycle of violence across the continent.

The PSC has been cautious about foreign involvement in Africa since at least 2016. During its 601st session, the Council expressed 'deep concern' over the presence of foreign military bases and the establishment of new ones in some African countries, highlighting the inability of these states to effectively monitor the movement of weapons to and from these bases. In response, the PSC emphasised 'the need for Member States to be circumspect when entering into agreements that lead to the establishment of foreign military bases in their countries.' [15] More recently, the PSC

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14   Amani Africa, The Major Peace and Security issues in Africa, p.8.

15   See PSC Communiqué adopted at its 601st session, held on 30 May 2016. Available at: https://

has moved beyond merely condemning foreign involvement in African conflicts. In the context of the Sudan conflict, it tasked its Sanctions Sub-Committee with identifying all external actors supporting the warring parties.[16] However, tracking this growing trend and devising strategies to shield the continent from the worst manifestations of power rivalry remains a formidable challenge for the Council.

2.4. Climate Change, Peace and Security

Climate change has become a growing variable in peace and security in Africa. Despite its limited contribution to global warming, Africa is significantly affected by this phenomenon. In this regard, sources indicate that 17 out of the 20 countries most threatened by climate change are located in Africa and climate change already impacts 2 to 9% of the national budgets across the continent.[17]

While it is difficult to establish a direct causal link between climate change and violent conflicts, the PSC has recognized the complex intersection of climate change, peace and security on several occasions. For instance, during its 1051st session, the PSC emphasised the wide-ranging risks of climate change, as a threat multiplier, to the peace and security landscape in the continent

www.peaceau.org/uploads/auc-601st-psc-meeting-on-early-warning-30-may-2016.pdf.

16   See PSC Communique adopted at its 1218th session, held at Heads of State level on 21 June 2024. Available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/PSC-1218-HoSG-Communique-Sudan-EN.pdf

17   UN Economic Commission for Africa, concept note for the expert group meeting, 'Transition to Renewable Resources for Energy and Food Security in North and West Africa,' (November 2023). Available at: https://shorturl.at/qj8RX.

including on food and water insecurity, loss of livelihoods, failure of management of natural resources, the scarcity of water resources, climate-induced displacements, and possibly aggravating existing vulnerabilities, tensions and conflicts.[18]

As pointed out in a statement on the climate-security nexus in preparation for COP27,[19] while the causal links between climate and conflict remain a subject of increasing interest and debate, there is mounting consensus and evidence that the climate crisis carries adverse consequences for political stability and peace and security. The 2022 UN report, which gave the starkest warning yet that any further delay in effective climate action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future, confirmed once again that the climate crisis will have particularly dire consequences in Africa.

Climate change presents numerous challenges to peace and security in Africa. One key issue is the exacerbation of pressures on natural resources, including land, water, and forests. In regions with a history of conflict, social or ethnic divisions, and weak resource management institutions, competition over these resources can escalate into violent confrontations. For example, in areas where nomadic and sedentary communities coexist, the growing scarcity of water and pastureland due to climate change has intensified conflicts between pastoralists and farmers.

18   See para. 2 of the Communiqué adopted at PSC's 1051st session, held on 26 November 2021.

19   Amani Africa, Statement on the climate-security nexus in preparation for COP27, 1 November 2022. Available at https://amaniafrica-et.org/amani-africa-statement-on-the-climate-and-security-nexus-in-preparation-of-cop27/

Additionally, climate-induced shocks—such as droughts that increase livestock mortality and depress livestock prices—further contribute to tensions. As such, the first climate-security nexus thus relate ' 'climate induced scarcity of natural resources on which vast majority of people on the continent depend for their livelihood and survival leads to violent competition over control and access to such ever depleting resources in the face of climate change.'

It is however worth noting that it is not the rapid depletion of resources such as pasture that on its own lead to instability or inter-communal violence. It is the fact that competition over such depleting resources takes place in the absence of mechanisms for managing such competition. In the Sahel region, for instance, conflicts between farmers and herders are often fueled by weak governance systems and discriminatory policies that disadvantage some communities.

Climate-related security risks also provide opportunities for non-state armed groups, including militias, terrorists, and criminal organizations, to exploit the vulnerabilities arising from climate induced stresses. Here we have a case of 'climate change induced whether events' operating 'as multiplier of conflict factors, through their interactions with existing national and local political, social and environmental stresses.'

The other side of the equation in the climate-security nexus is how conflict situations aggravate vulnerabilities to the adverse impacts of climate induced extreme whether events. Conflict situations aggravate environmental challenges through facilitating illegal activities such as illicit resource extraction, poaching, and trafficking—key sources of revenue that are used for financing the activities of non-state armed groups and criminal organized entities. The environment often becomes both a cause and a casualty of conflict, and in some cases, it is even weaponized. Beyond obstructing development, conflicts, coupled with governance failures, divert critical attention and resources away from maintaining infrastructure and investing in and delivering early warnings to vulnerable communities. This diversion undermines disaster preparedness and response efforts, limiting the capacity of affected countries to address threats and provide timely assistance. The impacts of such failure was observed last year in Libya, where intense rainfall from Tropical Storm Daniel triggered the collapse of two (unmaintained) dams in Derna, causing flooding that devastated several areas of the city.[20]

Related to but separate from the above is how climate change 'interferes with and undermines peace processes and transitions.' As noted in the statement, a 'case in point is South Sudan, where the devastating flooding it experienced in 2021 has added a layer to various political and security factors that are delaying the implementation of the 2018 revitalized peace agreement.'

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20   See Tefsehet Hailu and Solomon Ayele Dersso, Conflict and fragility turn climate induced extreme weather events into catastrophe: The lesson from the tragedy in Derna, Libya for COP28, Amani Africa Ideas Indaba 29 November 2023; Amani Africa, How conflict aggravate climate disasters: The flood in Derna, Libya, Amani Africa Dispatch 23 November 2023.

Finally, 'climate change in causing disasters and humanitarian emergencies leads to not only displacements that could undermine social cohesion but also impedes development efforts and resilience of societies for averting and managing political tensions and conflicts. It has thus become abundantly clear that climate change is a fast-growing security challenge that requires urgent and sustained policy attention.'

2.5. Health security threats

During its 742nd session, the PSC acknowledged the rapid evolution of the global health landscape, with Africa facing increasing challenges from both emerging and recurring infectious diseases. These threats stem from various factors including fragile national health systems, rapid population growth, urbanization, heightened human mobility, climate change impacts, and intensified human-animal interactions.[21] The session also highlighted the imperative for the AU to mainstream Africa's public health security into the overall framework of its Peace and Security Architecture.

Recent events such as the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa and the COVID-19 pandemic underscore that these diseases transcend mere social and economic implications, posing significant political and security risks. Apart from the human security threat that they pose, epidemics can exacerbate existing security vulnerabilities and stoke social tension and instability.

Over the years, the AU has launched various institutions and strategies to tackle the continent's health challenges. In fact, this is one of the areas where the AU and its PSC have demonstrated adaptability. A key milestone in this effort was the establishment of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), aimed at supporting Member States' public health initiatives and bolstering their ability to detect, prevent, control, and respond swiftly and effectively to disease threats. [22]Moreover, in an unprecedented move in the history of the Union, in August 2014 at its 450th session, the PSC also authorized the deployment of an AU-led Military and Civilian Humanitarian Mission, comprising medical doctors, nurses and other medical and paramedical personnel, as well as military personnel to address the Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

While the initiative to enhance its health security architecture is commendable, the continent still faces recurring disease outbreaks. The COVID-19 pandemic starkly exposed the 'weaknesses and inequities' inherent in the global health ecosystem, where Africa found itself largely neglected as wealthier nations monopolized doses for their own citizens and refused the request for TRIPS waiver to allow the generic production of COVID-19 vaccine. This underscores the critical imperative for Africa to prioritize investments in its health system and enhance its preparedness for future outbreaks.

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21   See Communiqué of the PSC adopted at its 742nd session, held on 11 January 2018.

22   In a significant move in February 2022, the Assembly (Assembly/AU/Dec. 835(XXXV)) elevated Africa CDC to an autonomous public health institution.

III. NEW SECURITY THREATS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

The prominence of new security dynamics in Africa poses significant challenges to the PSC and its security architecture. Africa's security landscape has evolved dramatically since the establishment of the AU and the creation of African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) 20 years ago. Initially, inter-state conflicts and civil wars dominated, with little anticipation of asymmetric warfare involving terrorist groups becoming primary security concerns. Consequently, many AU tools, like those of the United Nations, such as mediation and peace support operations, were primarily tailored for addressing civil war scenarios. Notably, the current framework for the deployment of the African Standby Force (ASF), a key element of APSA designed for rapid crisis response across the continent, did not envisage conflicts involving terrorist organizations as the major peace and security threats in its six scenarios for deployment. Thus, scenario five involving AU peace operation for complex multidimensional mission only envisages low level spoilers.

Shifts in Africa's security landscape, particularly the rise of asymmetric warfare, coupled with the lack of preparedness of APSA structures for a speedy response to the emergence of such threats as the major conditions undermining peace and security in Africa and the resultant vacuum this produced, have led to the emergence of 'improvised' and vacuum or gap filling security responses, characterized by the proliferation of ad hoc security arrangements and regional deployments such as the Multinational

Joint Task Force (MNJTF), G5 Sahel Joint Force, SAMIM, and SAMIDRC.[23] **This growing reliance on ad hoc security arrangements has led to the increasing marginalisation of the AU and the PSC. Additionally, it also risks fragmenting the collective security system anchored on the APSA, as more peace operations are undertaken outside, and without the application, of the APSA norms and policies**.[24] It is also rendering the ASF increasingly obsolete, even before its full operationalization.

Indeed, the emergence of terrorism as the dominant peace and security crisis with parts of the continent becoming epicenter of terrorism in the world has at least three strategic implications for the PSC and its conflict prevention, management and resolution tools. The first is the increasing demand for approaches that involve a mix of stabilization, peace enforcement and peacebuilding capacities. The other is growing need for protection of civilians and equally growing demand for crisis management involving strong component to expand and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Third, it necessitates that consideration is given for the use of mediation in such unconventional conflicts. Additionally,

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23   *For detailed discussion on ad hoc security arrangements and what this means to the APSA, see Olawale Ismail and Alagaw Ababu, 'Ad-Hoc Regional Security Arrangements and APSA: A Case Study of ACL-GLR, MNJTF, and G5 Sahel Force,' (July 2021). Available at:* https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/fes-ua/18182-20210805.pdf

24   *Amani Africa, Special Research Report No.20, 'The African Union Peace and Security Council at 20: From a Promising Past and a Challenged Present to a Less Certain Future?' (May 2024), p.21. Available at:* https://amaniafrica-et.org/the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-at-20-from-a-promising-past-and-a-challenged-present-to-a-less-certain-future/

considering the transnational and trans-regional nature of the growing terrorism threat, management responses or approaches that are premised on or confined to the boundaries of one state would also prove to be inadequate.

Other security threats such as emerging technologies and climate changes, also present unchartered challenges that existing continental security frameworks struggle to address. How these issues intersect with peace and security on the continent remains unclear, and the current security architectures are ill-equipped to manage or keep pace with such complex, rapidly evolving threats.

Moreover, the rising prominence of geopolitical rivalries on the international stage, notably in the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine war, has intensified foreign involvement by both old and emerging powers in conflicts in Africa. **This growing interference by foreign powers is not only shaping conflict dynamics and political behavior but also undermining the agency of regional and continental policymakers in addressing conflicts and political crises, further straining continental conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms.** As highlighted in Amani Africa's 2023 annual review of PSC activities, this trend is making a 'mockery of the already deeply misunderstood and misused mantra of African solutions to African problems.'[25] The conflicts in Libya and Sudan exemplify how deep foreign interference has complicated mediation efforts while sidelining the AU as a key player in these processes.

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25   *Amani Africa, 'The Peace and Security Council in 2023: the Year in Review,' (February 2024), p.7.*

IV. THE FUTURE OF THE PSC: TOWARDS A NEW AGENDA FOR PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

Despite the significant strides made by the PSC over the past 20 years in addressing and managing the threats towards peace and security, the rise of these emerging security threats now presents the Council with novel challenges that cast uncertainty on the continent's future peace and security landscape. Without adapting to these new security threats and the changing geopolitical context both within Africa and globally, the PSC and the AU broadly face the risk of reversals of all the gains made in advancing peace and security. The growing complexity of Africa's security issues and the evolving nature of these threats necessitates that the PSC adjusts itself and its tools and approaches to remain fit-for-purpose.

In this section, the special research report outlines some of the key areas where the PSC should take concrete steps to address the emerging security threats effectively. However, it is necessary to emphasize that **while instruments like the PSC Protocol and the AU Constitutive Act may not be perfect, effective responses to these new security threats and changing geopolitical dynamics in Africa neither depends on nor requires perfecting the PSC Protocol and the Constitutive Act.**

4.1. Prioritize conflict prevention

Despite the cost-effectiveness of prevention and the emphasis on its prevention mandate in the PSC Protocol, the PSC has often taken a reactive approach, engaging in crisis management only after situations have escalated into full-blown security crises. While the

rhetoric and normative recognition of the importance of conflict prevention are well established, the PSC's actions have not consistently reflected this commitment.[26] Its track record in anticipating and preventing crises before they fully erupt leaves much to be desired.

Many of the conflicts now dominating the continent's security landscape did not emerge suddenly; they are the result of long-simmering tensions stemming from interconnected factors such as governance deficits, political marginalization, environmental pressures, and socio-economic challenges. Yet, the PSC's focus has remained predominantly on conflict management, with persistent gaps in early warning and early action hindering its ability to proactively address emerging threats.[27]

While technical and operational limitations exist that hamper the PSC's ability to scan early warning signals and translate them into timely actions, political challenges are also a significant barrier. The notable challenge in this regard is 'culture of denialism' by Member States and Regional Economic Communities/

Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), who often downplay credible early warning reports of looming crises and invoke sovereignty to resist timely intervention.[28] A case in point is the terrorism crisis in Cabo Delgado of Mozambique, where it took more than four years for the situation to feature on the agenda of the PSC after the crisis erupted—far too late to prevent it from escalating.

Another key area for improvement is the integration of emerging security threats—such as public health emergencies, climate-induced risks, and the impact of emerging technologies on peace and security—into the AU's early warning system to facilitate more timely and effective responses to these evolving challenges.

In relation to conflict prevention, the following measures should be prioritized:

- Rationalize PSC activities to focus on enhancing early warning and early response mechanisms.
- Mainstream public health emergencies, climate change, and emerging technologies into the continental early warning system.
- Leverage digital technology and Artificial Intelligence to detect early signals of escalating tensions or potential conflict.
- Address the recent institutional setback that weakened the AU's Continental Early Warning System by restoring the dedicated division for conflict prevention and early warning.
- Establish clear and objective standards for identifying crisis that warrant PSC attention.

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26   Amani Africa, Special Research Report No.3, 'The Reform of the AU: Towards the Peace and Security Council 'We Want'' (August 2018), p.7. Available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/the-reform-of-the-au-towards-the-peace-and-security-council-we-want/

27   See Amani Africa, 'The African Union Peace and Security Council at 20', pp.17-18; and Oita Etyang, Taye Abdulkadir, Claudia Masah and Tatenda Mapiro, ACCORD Policy and Practice brief, 'Evaluation of the African Union Peace and Security Council: Lessons from 20 years of intervention and recommendations for the future', pp.6-7, available at: https://www.accord.org.za/publication/evaluation-of-the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-lessons-from-20-years-of-intervention-and-recommendations-for-the-future/

28   The PSC recognized the challenge of denialism on several occasions, including its 1208th session, held on 16 April 2024.

- Strengthen regular interaction between the Chairperson of the Commission and the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security with the PSC for timely early warning dissemination.
- Enhance AU-RECs/RMs engagement on early warning.
- Develop a clear early response strategy that emphasizes discreet and non-intrusive measures in the initial stages of a crisis to address the political challenges of denialism.

4.2. A shift from security-heavy approach to a comprehensive strategy underpinning the primacy of politics

Over the years, a noticeable trend in the PSC approach to the surge in conflicts across the continent has been an increased emphasis on hard security measures to address peace and security challenges, particularly in relation to the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism.

This highly securitized approach, some times referred to as the 'militarization' of the AU's peace and security response,[29] can be counterproductive and may even reinforce the very dynamics it seeks to resolve, as the far-reaching consequences of such approach—such as human rights violations and abuses—can be powerful drivers for recruitment into terrorist groups, perpetuating the cycle of violence.[30] Moreover, by prioritizing military solutions, critical human, technical, and financial resources are diverted away from addressing underlying issues such as governance deficits and development

challenges.[31]

While security measures are undoubtedly critical in addressing the immediate threat posed by terrorists and in creating an enabling environment for non-military measures, it has become evident that no amount of force alone will fundamentally alter the terrorism landscape in Africa. Without tackling the structural socio-economic and political deficiencies on which terrorism thrives, sustainable peace will remain elusive.

Mali offers a stark example: despite a 'security jam' of various military interventions, the situation has deteriorated, with terrorism escalating rather than subsiding. In this respect, Amani Africa's special report argues that the political and socio-economic governance pathologies, and the grievances and vulnerabilities these produce within affected communities, are the core conditions that open the space for the emergence and growth of terrorist groups.[32] Given the inadequacy of a security-heavy approach to counterterrorism, it is crucial that the PSC and RECs/RMs invest as much, if not more, in addressing the socio-economic, development, governance, and humanitarian drivers of terrorism as they do in security operations.

The **Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for areas affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region** provides a valuable lessons on what a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy should entail, which puts the limelight on the governance, development, environmental

29   Amani Africa, 'The Reform of the AU', P.10.
30   United Nations, Policy Brief 9, 'Our Common Agenda: A New Agenda for peace,' P.13

31   Amani Africa, 'The Growing Threat of Terrorism in Africa', p.7.
32   Ibid, p.10

and humanitarian dimensions of conflict and insecurity in the region, while still recognizing the necessary role of security tools.[33]

There are also countries in the continent whose experience can offer valuable lessons in countering terrorism. Notable example in this regard is the Kingdom of Morocco, which is presented as a success story in the fight against terrorism. The first lesson is the multidimensional nature of Morocco's counterterrorism strategy. According to Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2022 report, Morocco ranked 76th among countries impacted by terrorist threat globally, making it one of the safest countries in the Maghreb.[34] What contributed for Morocco's positive performance is not because the country is less targeted by terrorists, but because of its blend of counterterrorism efforts often described as 'tri dimensional counterterrorism strategy' —largely aimed at addressing terrorism threats through security, socio-economic development policies and religious education—adopted following the 2003

Casablanca bombings.[35] The same report attributes Morocco's success in fighting terrorism to the 'country's understanding of the threat; the interconnectedness of its counterterrorism methods; the application of combined soft and hard measures; the facilitation of information sharing practices; and the promotion of international cooperation as the sine qua non of counterterrorism.'[36]

Equally important is the use of negotiation and national reconciliation as tools to facilitate the surrender and rehabilitation of fighters, as well as to achieve political settlements that address the underlying conflict dynamics enabling the rise of terrorist groups.

In recent times, the PSC has demonstrated a notable shift in its approach to diagnosing and addressing the challenges of terrorism and violent extremism. A key milestone was reached during its 1182nd session, held on 27 October 2023, where the Council emphasized the need for comprehensive national, regional, and continental approaches to address terrorism and stressed the importance of prioritizing political solutions alongside military interventions.[37] Significantly, the PSC endorsed the use of dialogue and negotiations as part of its toolbox for combating terrorism, marking a breakthrough in the AU's policy approach toward terrorism and violent extremism.[38]

33   The strategy comprises nine pillars: political cooperation; security and human rights; disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation, reinsertion and reintegration of persons associated with Boko Haram; humanitarian assistance; governance and the social contract; socio-economic recovery and environmental sustainability; education, learning and skills; prevention of violent extremism and building peace; and empowerment and inclusion of women and youth. The Strategy is available at: https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/regional-stabilisation-recovery-and-resilience-strategy-rss-.pdf.

34   Amani Africa, Insights on the PSC, 'Development and deradicalization as levers to counter terrorism and violent extremisms' (October 2022). Available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/development-and-deradicalization-as-levers-to-counter-terrorism-and-violent-extremism/

35   Cesar A. Velasquez, 'Why Morocco's Counterterrorism Evolution Matters to Africa,' in Global Terrorism Index 2022: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism' pp:76-78. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-terrorism-index-2022.

36   Ibid

37   See para.7 of the Communiqué adopted at the PSC 1182nd session. Available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1182.comm-en.pdf.

38   See para. 16 of the communiqué adopted

While it is commendable that the PSC is increasingly acknowledging the importance of addressing the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism—demonstrated by its focus on structural issues and the promotion of holistic approaches—a considerable policy gap remains. It is also important to follow-up on the critical decisions made during its various sessions and at the AU Assembly, particularly the Malabo Summit in May 2022. The following measures should be considered:

- Adopt a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy that moves beyond a security-first approach and emphasizes a human-security-centered political strategy. This approach should address the structural causes of terrorism and violent extremism, combining security and law enforcement with socio-economic development, as well as counter-radicalization and de-radicalization programs for a holistic and sustainable solution.
- Leverage African governance and developmental institutions, such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), AU Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development (HHAS), African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), and the African Development Bank (AfDB), to address governance deficits and socio-economic challenges that fuel insecurity.
- Develop a strategy on negotiation and dialogue for peace in conflict situations involving terrorist groups. This strategy helps in providing guidance on how to pursue negotiation and dialogue with terrorist groups having regard to the

at the PSC 1182nd session.

delicate issue of de-radicalization, accountability for and reconciliation with affected member of communities. AU should also consider how some of the existing tools such as mediation unit could be leveraged by Member States while pursuing dialogue and reconciliation with terrorist groups.
- Focus on humanitarian assistance in territories affected by terrorism for those the displaced and those facing food insecurity and the creation of conditions including through the implementation of protection measures for the return and rehabilitation of IDPs as well as the provision of psycho-social support that is tailored to and in harmony with the traditions and practices of affected communities.
- Invest in rehabilitation of and providing support for the expansion of existing sources of livelihoods and making them more economically and ecologically sustainable and productive.
- Foster greater collaboration between the AU and RECs/RMs in implementing integrated strategies that address both the immediate security concerns and long-term peacebuilding needs.
- Expedite the implementation of some of the previous decisions of the AU/PSC, including the development of a comprehensive Continental Strategic Plan of Action on countering terrorism in Africa, as well as the establishment of the Ministerial Committee on Counter Terrorism (AU 16th Extraordinary Summit on terrorism and unconstitutional changes of government); the formation of counterterrorism unit within the African Standby

Force (PSC 960th session); the establishment of a PSC Sub-Committee on Counter-Terrorism (PSC 249th session); and the establishment of an AU Special Fund for Prevention and Combating of Terrorism and Violent Extremisms (27th Ordinary Session of the Assembly).

4.3. Restore the primacy of diplomacy as the main conflict management and resolution tool

The deteriorating security situation in Africa makes the AU and its standing decision-making organ, the PSC, more critical than ever. With rising global geopolitical tensions and a weakened multilateral system, the effective functioning of the PSC is now a strategic imperative. However, the AU's current performance falls short of its past achievements, with the PSC struggling to maintain its core functions and losing credibility.

To address these challenges, the AU must reinvigorate its proactive, robust and sustained peace and security diplomacy. As the continent faces complex and prolonged political transitions, the impending breakdown of regional orders in West Africa and the Sahel, and the threat of such breakdowns in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes regions, as well as rising inter-state tensions—such as those between the DRC and Rwanda, and Ethiopia and Somalia—along with their far-reaching consequences for regional peace and security, the PSC cannot remain passive but must restore its robust diplomacy as a major tool for conflict management.

In this respect, the PSC has rightly emphasized the importance of mobilizing robust diplomacy, particularly in countries undergoing complex political transitions, at its 1212th session. It stressed the need to demonstrate a clear determination in accompanying the countries and requested the Chairperson of the AU Commission to appoint 'a High-Level Facilitator at the level of a sitting or former Head of State' to galvanize the required political support and engage with the Transitional Authorities.[39]

- Reinvigorate the AU's robust diplomacy as the primary tool for managing the continent's security challenges.
- Appoint a High-Level Facilitator or Mediator at the level of Heads of State or Government to address high-stakes conflict situations and complex political transitions in the continent, ensuring strong diplomatic backing and influence in mediation efforts.

Apart from its role in reducing polarisation and establishing common ground between rival powers as highlighted in UN Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace,[40] in the African context, **the effective functioning of the PSC and the APSA and the mobilisation of collective action for peace and security depend on building of consensus and the political will of member states for supporting such collective action**.

39   *See Para 11 of the PSC Communiqué adopted at its 1212th session, held on 20 May 2024. Available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1212.comm_en-political-transition-in-Burkina-Faso-Gabon-Guinea-Mali-and-Niger.pdf.*

40   *United Nations, Policy Brief 9, 'Our Common Agenda: A New Agenda for Peace'. Available at: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-new-agenda-for-peace-en.pdf.*

Reinvigorating diplomacy is a strategic imperative for the AU to contain the tide of these new and increasingly serious threats to peace and security and for adapting to the changing geopolitical realities. **This requires the reaffirmation of the commitment of member states to AU instruments and to work collectively** and **for the AU Commission to enhance close working relationship with and the trust of member states on the basis of the obligations that member states assumed under AU instruments.**

4.4. Enhance technological capabilities to seize opportunities and mitigate peace and security risks

As technology serves as a double-edged sword, the AU/PSC must not only mitigate the risks that emerging technologies pose to peace and security on the continent, but also strengthen its capacity to harness these technologies for the promotion and maintenance of peace and security in Africa. One key area where the PSC can effectively leverage technological advancements is in enhancing the continental early warning system, where the use of technologies including AI can significantly boost its predictive capabilities, accuracy, and analytical depth.[41]

At the same time, the AU/PSC must also advance its technological capabilities to monitor and address the peace and security threats posed by emerging technologies. While the AU has made commendable progress through initiatives like the Malabo Convention and the Common African Position on

the application of international law to information and communication technologies in cyberspace, more proactive and coordinated efforts are required to safeguard Africa's cyberspace.

The PSC should prioritize fostering collaboration among member states to accelerate the ratification and implementation of these frameworks.[42] Furthermore, member states must develop comprehensive national cyber strategies that align with regional and continental initiatives to ensure a unified and robust approach to cyber security. In terms of reinforcing international rules, the adoption, through PSC leadership, of the Common African Position on the Application of International law to the use of information and communication technologies in cyberspace is a commendable development.

Considering the increasing use of drones both for combat and reconnaissance could evolve into weapons systems with AI-driven capabilities for autonomous action, the AU needs to enhance the development of **the systems and infrastructure as well as the institutional guardrails for containing the threat posed by new technology including AI.** Similar to the leadership role that the PSC played in the adoption of common African position on applicability of international law to cyberspace, the PSC can also lead AU's charge, as proposed by the Report of the Joint Namibia-Amani Africa High-level Panel of Experts, in advancing international law rules 'that

41   This was noted during PSC's 1208th session, held on 16 April 2024. Communiqué Available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/peace-and-security-council-1208th-meeting/

42   As of September 2023, only 15 Member States ratified the Malabo Convention, highlighting the need to raise awareness. See the list of countries that have signed, ratified/acceded to the AU Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection on: https://shorturl.at/EboA2.

ensure that the use of lethal autonomous weapons should be subject to meaningful human control as essential condition for upholding legal and humanitarian standards and obligations.'[43]

Strengthening regional cooperation and intelligence sharing is vital for addressing cross-border cyber threats. The PSC should engage more with regional actors and member states to facilitate intelligence sharing, capacity building, and coordinated responses to cross-border cybercrimes. Enhancing the AU's Cybersecurity Expert Group and leveraging the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL) and the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA) is crucial in establishing a collective defense against cyber threats. This equates to the significance of broader international cooperation in combating cyber threats. Engaging with global partners can also provide the PSC with access to additional resources and expertise, further strengthening the continent's cybersecurity space.

Public awareness campaigns are crucial for educating the general population about cybersecurity threats and safe online practices. Through involving, for example the civil society, the AU can leverage on investment in research and development in order to stay ahead of emerging cyber threats by developing new technologies and methodologies for detecting and preventing cyberattacks.

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43   *Joint Namibia-Amani Africa High-level Panel of Experts, Africa and the reform of the multilateral system: The Summit of the Future and beyond (Amani Africa: August 2024), p 50. Available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/AFRICA-AND-THE-REFORM-OF-THE-MULTILATERAL-SYSTEM.pdf*

Beyond technical measures, it is prudent for the PSC to reconfigure its approach to the broader implications of digital transformation. The proliferation of technology and information increases the risk of misinformation and disinformation, which can destabilize security conditions. In this context, the PSC should consider promoting responsible technology use through regulations, education and early warning systems to detect and counter harmful narratives. Implementing early warning mechanisms to track and monitor misinformation can help address conflict situations and identify fabricated narratives before PSC convenings.

Another important aspect of cybersecurity for the PSC to consider is the use of emerging technologies, such as drones and unmanned aerial vehicles, in military strategies and tactics. To manage these developments effectively, the PSC should set the agenda for the AU to engage in developing clear policies and guidelines for the use of AI in military operations, ensuring that AI-powered technologies, including drones, are employed responsibly and in compliance with the international humanitarian law. Additionally, it is imperative for the AU Commission to develop a system within the Continental Early Warning System to track and report risks and threats to peace and security posed by emerging technologies in Africa, enabling a timely and coordinated response.

- Strengthen AU's institutional, legal, and policy framework on cyber security.

- Enhance collaboration with Member States, RECs/RMs, and international partners for intelligence sharing, capacity building, and coordinated response to cyber

threats.

- Urge Member States to ratify and domesticate the AU Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection, and to adopt the necessary national strategies and legal frameworks on cyber security that are compatible with human right norms.

- Strengthen the capacities of continental institutions such as AFRIPOL and CISSA and make full use of their existing capabilities.

- Develop clear policies and guidelines for the use of AI in military operations to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law.

- Develop a system within the Continental Early Warning System to track and report risks and threats to peace and security posed by emerging technologies in Africa.

4.5. Mainstream climate sensitivity into conflict prevention, management and peacebuilding efforts

The intersection of climate change, peace, and security is becoming increasingly significant in Africa. The PSC has over the years consistently addressed not only during its regular thematic sessions but also in country-specific discussions. Throughout its initiatives, the PSC has advocated for the integration of climate resilience into peace and security frameworks, urging Member States to tackle the root causes of climate-induced conflicts by promoting sustainable development, resource management, and adaptation strategies. The PSC has also supported environmental peacebuilding initiatives, acknowledging

the connections between climate change, food insecurity, displacement, and violent conflict and establishing a common position on climate peace and security.[44]

The ongoing efforts to develop a Common African Position on climate change, peace and security; the conduct of a study on climate change, peace and security nexus pursuant to the request of the PSC; and Africa's leadership in recognizing the intricate link between climate change and security, are commendable. However, there are opportunities for further improvement.

The PSC must adapt its strategies to address these growing challenges, as climate change exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and drives conflict across the continent. The future success of the PSC in managing these interconnected issues will depend on a multi-dimensional approach that incorporates climate peace and security into its conflict prevention, management, and post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

Indeed, in various sessions, the PSC emphasized the importance of the AU Commission to mainstream climate change in all its activities, particularly in early warning and conflict prevention efforts.[45] It also requested the Continental Early Warning System to include in its regular briefings to the Council, early warning on potential adverse effects of climate change, including related conflicts in the continent.[46] Nevertheless, translating these commitments into

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44   See, for instance, the communiqués adopted at the PSC's 1114th and 1184th sessions.

45   See PSC Communiqué adopted at its 585th session, held on 30 March 2016.

46   See PSC Communique adopted at its 774th session, held on 21 May 2018.

practical actions remains an ongoing challenge, as institutional implementation has yet to be fully realized.

Mainstreaming climate peace and security ensures that climate risks are integrated into conflict prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. In particular, the PSC should emphasize enhancing early warning systems within the APSA to effectively monitor and analyze information on climate-related security risks, thus preventing climate-induced conflicts. This enhancement should include tracking indicators such as droughts, floods, and other natural disasters, as these factors are increasingly linked to conflict and displacement. By improving climate monitoring and risk assessments, the PSC can proactively address emerging threats and prevent conflicts from escalating.

- Integrate climate change, peace and security nexus into conflict prevention, management and peacebuilding efforts.

- Incorporate climate change related risks into the regular early warning briefings to the PSC.

- Maintain the unity of Africa and speak in one voice in the global climate change negotiations, including through strengthening support provided to the African Group of Negotiators on Clime Change (AGN).

- Enhance AU's capacity to provide effective support for Member States as well as RECs/RMs in addressing climate related risks, including through strengthening its Climate Change Unit.

- Follow-up and implement the previous decisions of the PSC, including the appointment of AU Special Envoy for Climate Change and Security (774th session); and the establishment of an AU Special Fund for Climate Change (984th session).

4.6. When Peace Support Operations are required; they should be multidimensional focusing on stabilization, peacebuilding and expansion of legitimate structures of governance supplemented by use of development tools

While the primacy of politics and diplomacy in addressing conflicts on the continent is imperative, it does not diminish the relevancy of Peace Support Operations (PSOs). In many situations, PSOs are crucial not only for addressing immediate security threats but also for creating the conditions in which political and diplomatic efforts can lead to sustainable conflict resolution. Indeed, PSOs have long been a central component of the AU's conflict management toolkit. The AU's successful deployment of PSOs, particularly during the first decade of the PSC operationalization in 2004, demonstrated their value. However, in recent years, there has been a decline in AU-led PSOs, with ad hoc security arrangements, regional interventions, and bilateral security partnerships becoming more dominant in addressing conflicts on the continent.

Several factors contribute to the AU's diminishing role in timely PSO engagements, directly impacting its peace and security mandate. This signals the urgent need to 'reinvigorate AU-

led PSOs.[47] Furthermore, the evolving nature of conflicts and shifting peace and security dynamics in Africa call for a 'reconceptualization' of the AU's approach to PSOs. Encouragingly, the AU is taking steps in this direction, such as the ongoing strategic review of the African Standby Force (ASF) and the Abuja Lessons Learned Forum on AU PSOs and the ASF, which held its inaugural meeting in November 2022 in Abuja, Nigeria. The AU's adaptability has been also demonstrated in contexts like the Ebola outbreak, where the ASF was deployed during a health crisis.

A key shift in the reconceptualization of AU's PSOs must involve viewing military operations as one part of a broader, comprehensive strategy that goes beyond purely military solutions and encompass non-military approaches that address the root causes of conflict and violence. Given the complexity and fluidity of conflict situations on the continent, PSOs must incorporate a combination of peace enforcement, stabilization, and peacebuilding capacities with clear exit strategy. As noted earlier, integrating the climate change, peace, and security nexus into PSOs is also essential to address the climate change dimension of the conflict.

Moreover, ensuring sustainable and predictable funding for PSOs is crucial to their success, along with strengthening their compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law to ensure they effectively fulfill their role in maintaining peace and security on the continent.

- Restore AU-led PSOs as a collective mechanism for addressing security challenges across the continent and curbing the rising fragmentation of Africa's security architecture.

- Recognize PSOs as part of a comprehensive conflict resolution strategy that reinforces the primacy of political solutions.

- Adopt a multidimensional approach that combines peace enforcement, stabilization, and peacebuilding capacities.

- Integrate climate change and other emerging threats, such as pandemics, into PSO planning and operations.

- Ensure sustainable, predictable, and adequate funding for PSOs, leveraging UN Security Council Resolution 2719.

- Strengthen the AU's compliance and accountability frameworks to ensure PSOs adhere to international human rights and humanitarian law.

- Clarify the division of labor between the AU and RECs/RMs in the mandating, planning, and deployment of PSOs.

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47   *Amani Africa, 'The African Union Peace and Security Council at 20', p.27.*

V. CONCLUSION

Twenty years after its operationalization, the PSC is facing a new wave of security threats, while older challenges such as inter-state tensions, military coups, and internal armed conflicts are resurfacing with renewed intensity. Africa, particularly the Sahel region, has become a global epicenter of terrorism, witnessing not only a surge in attacks and fatalities but also an alarming geographic expansion of extremist activities. Meanwhile, emerging security threats—from new technologies and pandemics to climate change and increased foreign interference in African conflicts—are reshaping the security landscape, posing serious challenges to a peace and security architecture originally designed to address issues like civil wars and inter-state conflicts.

These evolving dynamics demand that the AU's peace and security architecture adapt to remain relevant and fit for purpose. As the PSC marks its 20th anniversary, this is a crucial moment to rethink its approach to Africa's peace and security challenges. While instruments like the PSC Protocol and the AU Constitutive Act are not perfect, the focus should be on updating and adapting the existing peace and security related tools, approaches and processes to the continent's current realities.

The upcoming PSC ministerial session, scheduled for 25 September 2024 on the sidelines of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly, presents a timely opportunity to critically reflect on the nature of these emerging threats, their implications for the existing peace and security architecture, and the necessary shifts in approach and tools. **A key step forward could be** to mandate the AU Commission to develop a **New Agenda for Peace and Security in Africa**, drawing inspiration from the UN's 'New Agenda for Peace.'

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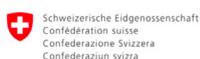**MEDIA AND RESEARCH SERVICES**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

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Confédération suisse
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