

11TH TANA HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON SECURITY IN AFRICA

Overarching theme: Africa in an Evolving Global Order

Background

Africa is a region of increasing strategic importance on a global scale. At the same time, the world is experiencing shifting power dynamics, technological advancements, and geopolitical rivalries in a complex evolving world order. In these fluxes, Africa stands at a critical juncture, facing both opportunities and challenges as it adapts to this changing landscape. One of Africa's biggest challenges is economic inequality, with some of the world's vulnerable countries and the fastest-growing economies found on the continent. This inequality creates social tensions and political instability, making it difficult to achieve socio-economic development. Another challenge for Africa is security, with conflicts, terrorism, organized crime, and climate change causing instability and discouraging investment.

Furthermore, the process of democratisation and integration in Africa faces significant obstacle including the growing prevalence of pro-coup and anti-democracy narratives, particularly influenced by the democratic governance experience of citizens in West and Central Africa. Simultaneously, some countries are withdrawing from Regional Economic Communities (RECs) due to concerns about the responsiveness, priority alignments, consistencies and inconsistencies of these RECs which negatively affect the willingness of military administrations to engage and cooperate toward a return to democratic and constitutional order, the perception of the RECs among the people, and raise doubts about whom the RECs truly represent and whose interest they prioritize. These challenges directly impact the Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the role of RECs, with further potential threats to regional integration observed in ongoing conversations surrounding recognition and access to the sea in East Africa. Overall, it is crucial for African governments and institutions to recognize and address the issue of fragmentation as it undermines the African agency, weakens the unity and influence of the continent, and hampers its renegotiation within the international economic and political systems.

Despite these challenges, Africa has significant opportunities, including its rich natural resources, growing and dynamic youthful population, and avenues for innovation. In this mix, the question is whether Africa can overcome its obstacles and reach its full potential or be left behind in the evolving global order. Against this backdrop, overall discussions at the Tana Forum seek to:

- 1) Assess the evolving dynamics of contemporary global order and its implications for Africa, including vulnerabilities, challenges, and opportunities.
- 2) Examine Africa's unique assets, resources, and capabilities that can be leveraged in this evolving global context.
- 3) Highlight strategies and initiatives that can empower Africa to navigate and shape the global order to its advantage.
- 4) Explore modalities for encouraging dialogue and partnerships to maximize Africa's potential in a rapidly changing world that recognizes and respects Africa's unique perspectives.

Sub-themes:

1. Situating Africa in an Emerging Multipolar Order

The contemporary international system is characterized by multipolarity which arises from nation-states

challenging the status quo, striving to maintain it, or seeking to demonstrate their influence in pursuing various foreign policies. This multipolarity is further shaped by the reconfigurations resulting from cooperation (or the lack of it), multilateral moves of states with aligned interests, as well as anti-multilateralism policies and actions preferring bilateral arrangements on a *quid pro quo* basis. The global political space is characterized by complex power dynamics, diverse interests, competing ideologies, and efforts to foster cooperation among actors with different perspectives, methods and goals. While the quest for cooperation and collaboration has spurred competition with various actors vying for spheres of influence and supremacy, some have pursued foreign policies that challenge liberal internationalism and the idea of multilateralism altogether; as others try to save it. This complex dynamic presents both vulnerabilities and opportunities for Africa.

Africa must pursue its own development, peace, and security agendas to ensure internal stability and progress. It needs to define its interests and what it wants from the current upsets and overall prevailing configuration of the international system. To achieve this, Africa can leverage the strength and effectiveness of the African Union (AU) to speak and act on how to (re)invent itself and influence its rising strategic and geopolitical importance. Overall, the discussion should revolve around Africa's position, agency, and how its leadership is navigating the dynamic and complex realities and upsets of the multipolar world, including identifying the strategic policy choices the continent has to shape the emerging order, with development, peace, and security at its nexus.

2. Redefining Pax Africana in an Evolving Regional and International Security Landscape

The concept of Pax Africana – *a peace that is protected and maintained by Africa herself*– is drawn from Ali Mazrui's seminal 1967 study. Pax Africana embodies the call for African responsibility and ownership over collective security, including the relevant frameworks, institutions, and mechanisms at APSA's core. Recent trends across the peace and security landscape, including the prevalence of hybrid security threats, the intractability of armed conflict fuelled by a range of political, socio-economic, and cultural drivers, and the internationalization of armed conflict have significant ramifications for conflict management and resolution initiatives in Africa. The changing patterns of foreign intervention on the continent, drawing in various actors with their interests and imperatives, raise crucial questions about the impact of geopolitics and geostrategic imperatives on the peace and security agenda. These developments call for a deeper examination and review of Pax Africana's progress, pitfalls, and prospects amid far-reaching changes across the regional and international security contexts.

At the core of the Pax Africana is the institutionalisation and consolidation of sustainable peace in Africa, which is fundamental for development, prosperity, and stability. A critical analysis of the status of Pax Africana also raises key questions about Africa's agency, autonomy, and capabilities in addressing the myriad peace and security challenges while navigating an increasingly complex, inter-connected, and multidimensional global peace and security landscape. Some of the key questions that will be addressed under this sub-theme include:

- 1) Is the concept of Pax Africana relevant to Africa's collective peace and security agenda?
- 2) Has the AU embraced a reinvigorated and pragmatic view of Pax Africana in a rapidly evolving peace and security landscape?
- 3) In an evolving and globalised system does the APSA provide the means through which a new Pax Africana can be realised?
- 4) How can Pax Africana be leveraged to enhance African agency, autonomy, and capabilities amid competing interests, geopolitical competition, and increased demand for effective and pragmatic solutions to complex peace and security challenges?

3. Megatrends: Threats Without End?

Africa has often been cited as the convergence point for several megatrends, including a web of complex and reinforcing dynamics such as demographic and social change, urbanization, climate change, and migration. Megatrends are powerful transformative forces that impact the globe in every facet of human endeavour. In an interconnected world, these megatrends create negative and positive shocks that exacerbate socio-economic, political, and security challenges and create new opportunities for the continent. Megatrends across the political, macroeconomic, societal, and technological dimensions are identified as the focus of the sub- theme.

- 1) Demographic change (a growing youthful population, with implications for labour productivity, potential for economic growth if harnessed proactively).
- 2) Urbanization trends/ growth of megacities and whether this can be harnessed as a catalyst for investment in infrastructure, job creation, and enhanced service delivery.
- 3) Climate change and its broader effects as a risk multiplier across various sectors, including mobility/migration, agricultural sector, and impact on livelihoods, biodiversity, etc.
- 4) Technological change (including Artificial Intelligence) and its role as a catalyst for innovation, impact on business models, impact on peace and security and enhanced connectivity, adaptability, digitisation, digitalisation, etc.

Megatrends can be positively transforming for the continent if concrete actions are taken.

Tana Pods¹

3.1. Leveraging AI and Big Data: Frameworks, Practice and Africa's Preparedness

Traditional means of data gathering, and analysis are, as Martin Wahlisch puts it in a 2020 practitioner brief, "becoming less suitable in generating instant situational pictures to plan and implement more timely development [peace and security] interventions"; and Big Data and Artificial Intelligence (AI) can effectively fill this gap by providing evidence-driven policy and programmatic responses. In addition to increasing productivity across agriculture, security, healthcare, finance, manufacturing, and transportation sectors, with positive impact on driving economic development. AI can also enhance service delivery solution aimed at addressing societal challenges such as poverty and infrastructure gaps. With regards to job creation AI could play a role in optimizing resource utilization, such as energy consumption, water, and waste management. AI can also enhance technological leapfrogging by bypassing infrastructure limitations, enabling access to cutting- edge solutions that bridge the digital divide and technological gap.

This session will focus on existing relevant frameworks at continental, regional, and national levels, along with policy practice in the context of AI. It will examine how these frameworks have positioned Africa to mitigate challenges and maximize opportunities related to AI and big data. The discussion will be premised on the need to achieve evidence-driven policy and programmatic responses to emerging megatrends, including demographic and social change, urbanization, climate change, and migration. Furthermore, this session will explore how sectoral efficiency can be improved for enhanced service delivery through a conflict prevention, developmental, and human rights/security lens. Particularly, this session addresses the need to improve situational pictures for early warning, planning and implementing timely development [peace and security] interventions using AI and Big Data. This will

¹ The Tana Forum Secretariat is introducing a new approach called Tana Pods to enhance conversations on key issues. These Pods will run simultaneously and allow participants to choose from two focused discussions on key issues within the sub-themes. The Secretariat hopes this will encourage greater stakeholder participation while providing an intimate and focused setting for discussions that foster a more collaborative approach to policy impact.

include what it means for existing frameworks and policies, especially regarding implementation challenges, modification of existing ones, and development of new ones. Africa needs a conversation about how AI and big data can address the challenges and opportunities of megatrends, and the time is now!

3.2. Unleashing Africa's Potential: Harnessing Demographic Transition through the AfCFTA

Africa's demographic transition offers significant opportunities for economic transformation and sustainable development. With a larger working-age population, Africa can experience increased productivity, consumer market expansion, innovation and technological advancements, and job creation. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) facilitates these advantages by creating a larger market and enabling knowledge exchange and collaboration. Africa can unlock its potential for growth and competitiveness by investing in education and promoting inclusive economic sectors. In this discussion, we shall explore the following questions:

- 1) How can African governments and stakeholders effectively leverage the demographic transition within the context of the AfCFTA to drive inclusive economic growth, job creation, regional integration and sustainable development across the continent?
- 2) What policies and initiatives should be implemented to ensure that the benefits of the demographic transition, such as increased productivity, expanded consumer markets, and technological advancements, are equitably distributed and contribute to poverty reduction and social progress in Africa?

4. Navigating Transition in an Evolving Global Order

The African continent, whether as individual states or regional entities, has undergone significant changes and transitions throughout its history. These transitions include moving from colonialism to independence and self-determination, military to civilian rule and back again, one-party states to multi-party democracies, fragmented economies to common regional and continental markets, from analogue to digital technology, and reliance on fossil fuels to exploring renewable energy, to name a few. The continent continues to navigate these transitions, which have varying implications for peace, security, and development.

The complex nature of these transitions underscores the importance of African people demanding for better governance and leadership in pursuit a more peaceful and secure future. However, navigating transitions has not always resulted in positive outcomes. Too often, they have led to violence, deepened poverty, contestation over political space, repression, and infringements of civil liberties. On the other hand, moments of transition and uncertainty also signal opportunities for innovation – for example, using mobile technology for peacebuilding in Kenya through the Ushahidi platform and many others. At the continental level, the AU has remained attuned to these questions demonstrated through the recent Malabo declaration/conference, which sought to address questions of extremism and unconstitutional government changes. What is clear is that for our continent, transitions are never linear and that, in spite of the most careful planning and preparation, the outcomes are never guaranteed.

As we grapple with Africa's place in a changing global landscape, this year's Tana Forum will consider how Africa navigates transitions. This panel will frame transitions in Africa from a historical and contemporary perspective and provide thought on navigating transitions in the evolving global order for better peace, security, and development outcomes. The discussion will focus on two dimensions:

Tana Pods

4.1. Political Transitions

This session will cover political transitions, failed democracies and protests facing African government, regime, or system of government to another. The principal questions that will be addressed include:

- 1) What lessons can be learned from all recent transitions, their outcomes, and implications for AU and RECs responses?
- 2) How can African states and institutions address existing and anticipated vulnerabilities to better manage transitions and navigate for a more secure and peaceful future for Africans?
- 3) What opportunities are there to achieve a more favourable outcome for the future of peace and security on the continent?

4.2. Energy Transitions

The global energy transition, which involves shifting from fossil fuel-based energy systems to renewable and sustainable alternatives, is critical due to its profound political, economic, and environmental impacts. This transition has the potential to reduce reliance on fossil fuel imports and increase energy security, giving countries greater control over their energy sources. Furthermore, it promotes innovation, job creation, and economic diversification, driving sustainable growth while reducing socioeconomic disparities. The transition is also essential for environmental sustainability, as it mitigates climate change, which exacerbates conflict in Africa and elsewhere, reduces pollution, and protects ecosystems, ultimately ensuring a habitable planet for future generations. In Africa, embracing this transition is especially significant given the continent's abundant renewable energy resources. It empowers Africa to utilize its potential, promote inclusive development, and emerge as a leader in sustainable energy while simultaneously addressing pressing socio-economic and environmental challenges. With sustainability at its nexus, this session will explore the following questions on energy transitions:

- 1) How can the global community foster international cooperation and collaboration to accelerate the energy transition while ensuring equitable access to clean and affordable energy for all regions, including Africa?
- 2) What policy frameworks and incentives can be implemented to attract investment, promote innovation, and facilitate the deployment of renewable energy technologies in Africa, considering the unique challenges and opportunities faced by the continent?
- 3) How can African nations enhance capacity building efforts, knowledge-sharing, and technology transfer to drive sustainable energy development, create local jobs, and maximize socio-economic benefits within the energy transition?