

ANALYCA POLICY INSTITUTE



TOWARD SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND STABILITY IN AFRICA

We can all do our part in helping stop the war happening around the world affecting millions of innocent lives.

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Africa is renowned for its diverse array of human and natural resources, which hold tremendous potential for driving inclusive growth and eradicating poverty within the region. Through harnessing the vast opportunities afforded by the world's largest free trade zone and a market encompassing 1.2 billion individuals, Africa is forging an entirely novel trajectory of development. This trajectory revolves around maximising the potential inherent in its resources and its people (World Bank, 2023).

The region encompasses countries spanning a wide range of income levels, including low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high-income nations. However, it is

crucial to acknowledge that 22 of these countries presently confront fragility or conflicts, presenting additional hurdles to progress. Additionally, Africa includes 13 small states, each characterized by distinct attributes such as limited populations, constrained human capital, and confined land areas. These factors necessitate specialised attention and tailored approaches for their development.

However, Africa encounters a multitude of impediments that impede its development, including armed conflicts, political

instability, economic disparities, and environmental degradation. To fully unleash the complete potential of Africa and construct a prosperous future for its populace, it is imperative to accord paramount importance to the prioritisation of sustainable peace and stability across the entire continent

While the majority of conflicts within Africa historically have been confined to individual countries, there has been a discernible shift towards increased complexity and regional involvement in

recent decades. These conflicts now frequently involve non-State armed groups that maintain ties with criminal or terrorist networks, operating across national boundaries. Furthermore, the presence of self-

defence and militia groups, often organised along ethnic lines, contributes to intercommunity violence. Consequently, the attainment and preservation of peace have become increasingly challenging, resulting in prolonged and recurrent conflicts. This is partially attributable to an inadequate understanding and addressing of the underlying causes driving these conflicts. Peace agreements, which are seldom fully executed, typically concentrate on immediate triggers and neglect to address the deeply entrenched



factors that instigate or perpetuate hostilities. Furthermore, numerous African nations continue to grapple with a multitude of challenges to societal stability and national unity.

Instability and conflict remain significant obstacles in Africa, and data on active conflict and incidents of instability demonstrate a noticeable increase throughout the continent in recent years. Based on available records, there are at least 15 ongoing armed conflicts in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Mali, Burkina Faso, and South Sudan. Both government forces and non-state armed groups have been implicated in perpetrating abuses against civilian populations in these conflict.

According to Human Rights Watch, there has been some advancement in the pursuit of justice for serious crimes. Notably, trials have commenced in the Central African Republic and Guinea, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) has initiated proceedings against armed force leaders involved in grave offenses in the Central African Republic and Sudan. However, the conflict in the Tigray, Amhara, and Afar regions of northern Ethiopia has inflicted severe suffering on civilian populations. Furthermore, the repression of government opponents and critics extends beyond countries in transitional phases. Activists, opponents, and journalists in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe have faced detention and torture. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, there are growing concerns about attacks on media

freedom, increased intimidation by intelligence services against dissenters, and a general narrowing of democratic space ahead of the 2023 elections. Throughout various regions of Africa, armed conflicts, repression, communal violence, poverty, and environmental factors have uprooted internally displaced people, refugees, and migrants from their homes. In Eritrea and Cameroon, forcibly returned asylum seekers have endured arbitrary detention and abuse. In Nigeria, the government's closure of displacement camps has pushed thousands into even greater destitution.

In order to demonstrate the intricate and multifaceted nature of the causes and drivers of instability and violent conflict in Africa, the following points can be made:

- Within ethnically diverse polities, the absence of shared visions and the exploitation of identity for political purposes contribute to ongoing instability and conflict on the continent. This further fuel fear, mistrust, feelings of exclusion, and historical grievances, both real and perceived, which are amplified through the use of social media.
- Disputes over political power and resources among political elites often lead to intergroup competition and the mobilization of ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups. These disputes are frequently aggravated by flawed and contested political processes, weak institutions, biases based on ethnic or geographic factors, and the zero-sum nature of political rivalries, where the

loss of power equates to political marginalisation.

- Limited access to and competition over scarce and often diminishing natural resources in rural communities, including farmland, grazing land, and water, combined with weak or unequal land and resource governance, can contribute to tensions between communities, particularly exacerbated by the impact of climate change on cohabitational arrangements, such as transhumance.
- Weak state presence, particularly in peripheral regions, can contribute to conflict and instability. Insufficient infrastructure, essential services, and security weaken the legitimacy of governments and create favourable conditions for instability, criminal activities, violent extremism, and terrorism.
- Widespread lack of access to justice, prevailing impunity, perceived partiality of justice systems, nepotism, corruption, and restrictions on freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly frequently give rise to social unrest and instability.
- The absence or weakness of remedial mechanisms, such as formal ombudsperson services, national human rights institutions, or complaint and conflict resolution mechanisms, can exacerbate the situation.
- Lack of clarity and inclusivity in peace agreements, their inadequate implementation, fragmentation of signatory parties, and incomplete

transformation of conflict economies tend to perpetuate or reignite conflicts.

- The active engagement of young people and women is crucial in the effective implementation of peace agreements, with specific attention to the youth, peace, and security agenda, as well as the women and peace and security agenda.
- Inequalities in opportunities and livelihoods resulting from scarcity, unequal distribution, or lack of access to financial resources and assets can be exploited by discontented segments of political elites, extremist and terrorist groups, leading to reinforcement of divisive ethno-regional and rural-urban dynamics.

Embracing ‘Africa Rising’: A Call for Inclusive Structural Change and Poverty Reduction:

In the 21st century, Africa’s image evolved significantly from being associated solely with endless famine, disease, and dictatorship. The emergence of the ‘Africa Rising’ narrative dispelled previous stereotypes, painting a picture of a continent experiencing growth in its urban middle class market with new consumer demands. Africa’s youthful population was seen as an asset in an aging global society, and the concept of a ‘demographic dividend’

promised prosperity for the continent's future. Investing in education and skills development for Africa's youth was recognised as a means to yield substantial returns to the overall economy. Moreover, Africa's abundant mineral resources and untapped agricultural land provided opportunities for economic expansion. Notably, foreign direct investment surpassed development aid in Africa for the first time since the colonial era.

Structural change, involving shifts in the proportions of manufacturing, services, and agriculture in output and employment, can greatly impact people's livelihoods. Employment is a critical income source for the majority of the world's population, either directly through labour market participation or indirectly through household earnings. Emphasising employment-centric growth and redistributive policies is key to inclusive structural change. Such strategies should address class, gender, and ethnicity-based labour market inequalities, including casual, irregular, and unprotected employment, long working hours, and low pay. Integrating individuals, groups, and communities into dynamic economic sectors can help alleviate poverty and foster social inclusivity.

Ethnic and regional inequalities must be considered in understanding poverty. These

inequalities may cause conflict and adversely affect well-being, requiring measures to mitigate them. Correcting horizontal inequalities through redistributive policies and regional development strategies can promote inclusivity and social cohesion. Gender inequalities also demand attention, necessitating both redistributive and regulatory measures. Over the past few decades, positive changes in the economic and social status of women have been driven by state reforms and social movements. However, persisting gender disparities and economic challenges call for comprehensive efforts.



Social policy plays a pivotal role in poverty reduction and social welfare. Countries that have experienced significant structural change and poverty reduction have

adopted welfare policies, challenging the notion of specific policy prerequisites based on income levels. Transformative social policy must address economic, social, and political goals while upholding both intrinsic and instrumental values. Such policies can contribute to economic growth, enhance social cohesion, and stabilize economies during downturns.

Power relations are central to development, and successful poverty reduction strategies must consider the exercise of power and active citizenship. Effective states that mobilise.

A Call for Change:

The best way to ensure effective African solutions to African problems would be for leaders to efficiently deploy the strong instruments at their disposal to protect victims of human rights abuses, promoting dialogue, and supporting peaceful negotiations. It would be necessary to encourage regional cooperation and mediation efforts, besides fostering collaboration between local and international actors to build sustainable peace and foster social cohesion.