



King's Africa Debates at ALC, Nairobi- June 2022

Simulation Seminars relating to the African Leadership Centre Fellowships Programme

Title: Africa and Its Response to Continental and Global (in)security Dynamics

Is Africa seizing the 21st century? Optimists think so pointing at the gains made in managing conflicts, synchronizing and entrenching the AU's peace, security and governance architectures as well as enhancing these institutions' implementation capacity and increasing Africa's bargaining position with the outside world. Pessimists think otherwise: the geopolitical dynamics of the world is fast changing, and yet neither the AU nor the member states manoeuvre this immensely important development for the benefits of Africans and their people. Neither did the AU and the RECs make progress in durably addressing conflicts nor did they register results in curtailing elites' appetite for circumventing constitutional processes.

This year's simulation debate of the African Leadership Centres focuses on this timely issue of how Africa is dealing with its internal problems and how it is interacting with the evolving global geopolitical and (in)security dynamics. The debate is organised into two panels: the first questions the extent to which the AU is fit for purpose for the evolving (in)security dynamics of the continent; and the second focuses on how Africa is reacting and should have reacted to the Russia-Ukraine crisis. In these debates, panellists and the audience, expressing the voices of various African and non-African actors, will be brought forward and will be engaged.

Panel 1: Is the AU still fit for purpose?

The African Union (AU) was launched in 2002 to realise the pan-African vision of a united, peaceful and prosperous continent that controls its own destiny. A key component of this continental vision is to enhance the peace and security of Africans. This is done through structures such as the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA), which are currently being synchronised and integrated under the oversight of the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS). The two architectures were envisioned to address governance issues and prevent the outbreak and escalation of conflicts on the continent. Observers argue that there is notable progress in institutionalising the Peace and Security and Governance Architectures. The AGA's normative framework repudiating unconstitutional change of government has been effectively implemented and the APSA instruments related to protracted conflict, early warning and peace keeping operations are being increasingly institutionalised.



These achievements notwithstanding, other observers doubt the progress made in enhancing the governance practices of African states and the peace and security dynamics of the continent. The much-touted strong stance against unconstitutional change of government have been undermined by a combination of leaders extending their terms of office and a recent rise in coups d'état. Many of the African states still remained hybrid regimes that combined elements of authoritarianism with a few democratic practices. The institutionalization of AU APSA has not been on par with the evolving shift in the conflict dynamics of the continent. New insecurity landscapes related to violent extremism have become increasingly common requiring timely responses and often, in the absence of timely AU responses, inviting extra-continental actors and ad hoc coalitions to take charge of these new type threats. Other less recognized insecurity threats such as organised crime, drug smuggling and outbreak of pandemics like Ebola and COVID-19 have littered the security landscape of the continent. Moreover, the recent fast-shifting dynamic in global geopolitics and on the continent might have the potential to divide member states' position on key continental agendas.

While the insecurity landscape of the continent is evolving, the AU, as the Kagame report underscored, has been extremely lethargic in the implementation of decisions and agreements needed to respond to extant challenges. Rhetoric notwithstanding, many of the measures suggested to enhance the peace and security of the continent remain unimplemented and much is desired to enhance the relations between the AU and RECs. Probably due to this failure of implementation, deadly insurgencies in Cameroon's English-speaking northwest and southwest regions as well as in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region have not abated, upending the lives of millions and deepening humanitarian crises. At the same time, countries such as the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan, Sudan, Mali and Libya remain trapped in intractable cycles of armed violence.

Given all these failures of the continental body, which in the year 2022 marks 20 years of its existence, it is an opportune time to reflect and question the extent to which the AU and its mechanisms, structures, and instruments are fit for purpose. Is its governance architecture in general and its provision of unconstitutional change of government (UCG) in particular of any use? Does this provision make any difference to the governance practices of the continent? What evidence is there to show that the Union promotes democratic principles and institutions, as well as popular participation and good governance? What is the AU Peace and Security Architecture good for, if its instruments are not adapted to changing dynamics of conflict? Is it not undermining the evolution of other potential responses to crisis? What is the purpose of the AU, if its basic principles and declarations are not implemented?

Panellists include:

- Amb. Bankole Adeoye - Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security
- Col. Mamady Doumbouya- Guinea coup leader- interim President
- A representative from Organization of African Youth



- A representative from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France, African Affairs Department
- A representative from African Security Sector Network

Panel 2: The Russia-Ukraine War and Africa's Position

Russia has expanded its influence in Africa over the past decade. It continues to secure strategic positions within the continent, and is increasingly becoming the preferred military partner for many African countries. A number of African countries signed military cooperation agreements with Russia: in 2021, for example, Russia signed a military cooperation agreement with Ethiopia and Nigeria; in mid-April 2022, it signed a military cooperation agreement with Cameroon; and in the Central African Republic and Mali, Russia has already become the preferred military partner in the fight against insurgents. In the Gulf of Guinea, the Wagner Group - the Russian government-linked private military company - is fast becoming the preferred military support option for political elites. Moreover, the Russian Federation has also been a key source of wheat and fertiliser for African countries while also serving as a key ideological ally in the international fora often preventing Western punitive measures targeted at African states and leaders.

Therefore, when the current Russia-Ukraine crisis broke out, African countries were expected to take positions weighing in the aforementioned influences of Russia, the potential effect of the conflict for Africa, and the normative framework governing inter-state relations. Indeed, out of these competing considerations emerged divergent responses of African countries to the crisis. While a majority of them called for the withdrawal of Russia from Ukraine, a sizable number of African countries either abstained or were not present in the room when voting was cast. The AU commission, on its part, expressed concern for 'planetary peace' and called for ceasefire and the resolution of the crisis through dialogue. Some of these moves seem to be inspired by the interpretation of the evolving crisis as manifestation of re-emergence of Cold War type of politics and therefore the need for non-alignment. This interpretation also informs the observation that resource rich energy exporting African countries might have a good time ahead as Western countries are pressured to reduce their reliance on Russia's oil and natural gas.

Since then, the effects of the conflict continue to ripple across the world in general and Africa in particular raising a question on the normative justifiability and pragmatic utility of the different positions reiterated by African states and the continental body. Africa has been negatively affected by the crisis as the prices of key goods imported from Russia and Ukraine have significantly risen. This is evident in the spiked price of agricultural inputs and operating costs - including fuel and fertilisers - raising serious concerns on the deteriorating food security situation on the continent. Moreover, the rising international sanctions imposed on Russia by the UK, US and EU among other aligned states complicates African trade and investment deals with Russian enterprises even as the volume of Africa-Russia trade remains small.



Given all these, how justifiable was the position of the various African states and the African Union to the Russia-Ukraine crisis? What should African states and the AU have considered in taking a position on the crisis? Are we seeing the re-emergence of some version of Cold War politics and the associated non-alignment movement due to the crisis? Are African states and the AU failing to play a legitimate role in shaping the emerging new world (dis)order? How well-informed or guided were African states' and the AU's assessment of the potential effects of the conflict on Africa in taking positions on the crisis? Why has the AU failed to garner a unified voice and position on the crisis? How do the various African countries and the AU view the crisis and its causes? According to these states and the AU, who is to blame for the outbreak of the crisis and why?

Panellists:

- Joseph Borrell- EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
- H.E. Osman Salah- Minister of Foreign Affairs of Eritrea
- Amb. Martin Kimani - Kenya's ambassador to the UN
- Jessica - African student fleeing Ukraine