



**AFRICA CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES**

Emerging Security Sector Leaders Seminar

SYLLABUS



AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

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ABOUT THE AFRICA CENTER

Since its inception in 1999, the Africa Center has served as a forum for research, academic programs, and the exchange of ideas with the aim of enhancing citizen security by strengthening the effectiveness and accountability of African institutions, in support of U.S. - Africa policy.

VISION

Security for all Africans is championed by effective institutions accountable to their citizens.

Realizing the vision of an Africa free from organized armed violence, guaranteed by African institutions that are committed to protecting African citizens, is the driving motivation of the Africa Center. This aim underscores the Center's commitment to contributing to tangible impacts by working with our national and regional African partners – military and civilian, governmental and civil society.. All have valuable roles to play in mitigating the complex drivers of conflict on the continent today. Accountability to citizens is an important element of our vision as it reinforces the point that in order to be effective, security institutions must not just be “strong,” but also be responsive to and protective of the rights of citizens.

MISSION

To advance African security by expanding understanding, providing a trusted platform for dialogue, building enduring partnerships, and catalyzing strategic solutions.

The Africa Center's mission revolves around the generation and dissemination of knowledge through our research, academic programs, strategic communications, and community chapters. Drawing on the practical experiences and lessons learned from security efforts on the continent, we aim to generate relevant insight and analysis that can inform practitioners and policymakers on the pressing security challenges that they face. Recognizing that addressing serious challenges can only come about through candid and thoughtful exchanges, the Center provides face-to-face and virtual platforms where partners can exchange views on priorities and sound practices. These exchanges foster relationships that, in turn, are maintained over time through the Center's community chapters, communities of interest, follow-on programs, and ongoing dialogue between participants and staff. This dialogue – infused with real-world experiences and fresh analysis – provides an opportunity for continued learning and catalyzes concrete actions.

MANDATE

The Africa Center is a U.S. Department of War institution established and funded by Congress for the study of security issues relating to Africa and serving as a forum for bilateral and multilateral research, communication, exchange of ideas, and training involving military and civilian participants. (10 U.S.C 342)

Introduction

The complex and turbulent security environment in Africa makes the need for leadership development in the security sector a matter of urgency and strategic importance. Beyond this rapidly changing security environment, the rise of military coups in Africa calls for a re-examination of the state of security governance and the role of political leadership in addressing security threats through strategies, policies, and practices that are people-centered. The demand for continuous coaching and training of security leaders in Africa has been echoed by Brigadier General (ret.) Daniel K. Frimpong, former Commander of the Ghana Military Academy, who once said “[g]ood leaders develop through a never-ending process of self-study, education, training, and experience.”¹ In the 2021 African Union (AU) Africa Governance Report, adaptive, inclusive, accountable, and ethical political leadership has been recognized as one of the key drivers for the accomplishment of the African Union’s Agenda 2063.² This seminar provides a collaborative and trusted problem-solving platform for emerging African security sector leaders. It seeks to support the next generation of principled and professional public servants in the security sector in their efforts to adequately adapt and proactively respond to the unprecedented security challenges the African continent faces. The seminar accordingly provides them an opportunity to learn from their peers and other African security experts to advance their acquisition of attributes and skills for effective leadership. This will help them lead with empathy to address citizens’ basic security and safety needs and proactively prepare to confront complex and changing security threats.

Why Conduct This Program?

Cumulative evidence shows that a well-designed executive training program enhances effective leadership. There is also a consensus among African leaders, scholars, and practitioners that effective, strategic, and ethical leadership is central to the continent’s success. You have already received a considerable amount of training on professionalism, ethics, and decision-making through formal military education and non-academic experiences. Furthermore, your government or institution's nomination to attend this program indicates that your past performance and leadership potential in these areas are highly regarded. We will honor these accomplishments and seek to build upon them in a meaningful and useful way.

This two-week (one week virtual, one week in-person) seminar is designed to facilitate participants’ engagement in interdisciplinary peer learning about strategic and adaptive leadership and its implications for the effective management of African security challenges. This entails accurately analyzing the security environment to design and implement inclusive security strategies that can forge new civil-military relations and enhance professionalism in the security sector; judiciously managing security resources to ensure accountability and transparency; and leveraging partnerships with regional, continental, and international stakeholders to collectively confront transnational security threats. Participants will consider these topics in relation to their own context as well as in comparative regional perspectives. This will enable participants to reflect on lessons learned at home, in neighboring countries, and across Africa and the world.

The overarching goal of the program is to provide participants with practical, effective tools and

¹ Brigadier General Daniel K. Frimpong, “Appendix Two,” *Leadership and the Challenges of Command*, AFRAM Publications, Accra, 2003, p. 156.

² African Union, *Africa’s Governance Futures for the Africa We Want*, The Africa Governance Report 2021. <https://au.int/en/documents/20220328/africa-governance-report-2021-africas-governance-futures-africa-we-want>

skills to contribute to their nation's security, development, and governance. To this end, there are five program objectives:

Program Objectives

Strengthen the capacity of emerging security-sector leaders to exercise strategic and adaptive leadership by enhancing their ability to analyze complex threats, develop actionable strategies, and build resilient security networks that advance shared U.S.–Africa security interests.

1. Enhance Strategic Analysis and Decision-Making: Strengthen participants' ability to assess evolving security threats and apply critical-thinking tools to develop effective, context-specific strategies.
2. Develop Practical, Country-Specific Security Strategies: Enable participants to translate national priorities into actionable plans through guided strategy development, peer exchange, and iterative refinement.
3. Strengthen Leadership and Resource Management Skills: Equip participants with leadership approaches and tools to optimize resource utilization, coordinate across government institutions, and drive policy implementation.
4. Promote Collaborative Problem-Solving and Partnerships: Foster a trusted environment for sharing experiences and lessons learned while strengthening participants' ability to leverage regional and international partnerships.
5. Apply Strategic Concepts to Real-World Scenarios: Reinforce learning through practical exercises that challenge participants to make decisions in complex, resource-constrained environments.

Program Overview

The Emerging Security Sector Leaders Seminar Workshop is designed to enhance strategic, adaptive leadership among emerging security-sector professionals by emphasizing critical thinking, ethical and evidence-based decision-making, and effective resource management. The program focuses on developing practical, country-specific strategies and the ability to respond effectively to complex and changing security environments. Delivered over two weeks in a hybrid format, the program combines conceptual learning with hands-on application. The first week, conducted virtually, introduces core concepts in threat analysis, strategic planning, and whole-of-government coordination. During this phase, participants start developing a country-specific security strategy, using critical-thinking tools to evaluate threats and identify actionable priorities.

The second week, held in person at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C., deepens the application of these concepts through interactive seminars, peer learning, and a capstone tabletop exercise. This simulation challenges participants to make strategic decisions in realistic, resource-constrained scenarios, reinforcing their ability to lead, collaborate, and respond effectively under pressure. The curriculum is organized into three interrelated and mutually reinforcing modules: (1) analyzing security threats; (2) developing national responses to security challenges; and (3) strengthening regional and international partnerships. Across these modules, participants explore emerging threats and opportunities while refining their leadership approaches to deliver sustainable security outcomes and improve citizen safety.

Topics are introduced in plenary sessions by a guest speaker or a panel of experts, followed by discussion group sessions. The group discussions will be moderated by highly qualified, experienced facilitators. The role of a facilitator is not to lecture or insist on any "correct"

solutions, but to create a conducive environment for candid dialogue and sharing of experiences. Take advantage of the facilitators' expertise and experiences, though do not hesitate to challenge them.

Academic Approach

Given the variation in the level of experience and understanding among participants about security threats and the level of response to these security threats, this seminar will seek to capture important lessons and sound practices through:

- Academic content in this syllabus focuses on evidence-based analysis supported by practical examples, with less focus on theory.
- Plenary sessions that will be led by seasoned experts on the subject matter, focusing on collaborative, two-way learning as opposed to one-way, traditional classroom-based learning.
- Small group discussions that provide a trusted platform for participants to share their experiences and lessons learned and to prioritize peer-to-peer learning and teamwork, with participants serving as experts on the context of their countries and regions.
- A scenario-based simulation exercise that allows participants to put key concepts into practice, enhance decision-making and problem-solving skills, and work collaboratively to apply evidence-based insights to real-world challenges.

The seminar will be conducted in English and French. A strict policy of non-attribution will apply during discussion group sessions as well as during the question-and-answer portion of plenary sessions. Plenary sessions will be recorded and posted to the Africa Center website after the close of the program.

Academic Material

The Africa Center utilizes academic tools to promote frank and open dialogue on critical issues and to lay the foundation for the development of effective peer networking. To facilitate our discussions, we have provided this academic syllabus and recommended readings. We encourage you to critically consider the analyses and content in all the materials provided. In this regard, the readings are intended to foster a healthy dialogue on the security challenges under discussion, which, in turn, will enable you to forge realistic and effective strategies to address these challenges.

As with all Africa Center academic programs, this seminar's strict policy of non-attribution is binding during and after the seminar. We encourage you to share the insights you gain from this seminar with your colleagues, but not to quote the specific comments of your fellow participants. We hope that this will allow you to address the sensitive issues under discussion freely. The views expressed in the readings, case studies, and presentations do not represent the official policy or position of the National Defense University, the Department of War, or the U.S. Government. All program documentation will be posted on the Africa Center website.

The Syllabus

This syllabus is an educational document intended to expose participants to various perspectives and help them take full advantage of the program. This syllabus provides an overview of academic material and key policy questions about strategic leadership in Africa's security sector. The document is organized sequentially to guide participants through the program's three modules. For

each plenary session, the syllabus gives a brief introduction and frames questions for discussion to be answered by participants in the discussion group meeting. We provide selected readings intended to prepare participants for the plenary sessions and discussion groups; they should be read prior to the sessions for which they are listed. We recognize that the syllabus covers more issues and materials than can be sufficiently discussed in the available time. We hope that you use these materials as resources even after the program concludes.

We encourage you to share questions and suggestions about the materials and the seminar, as it will enhance the quality of our programs. Much expertise and knowledge about these topics comes from you, the participants. We encourage you to read the assigned materials and actively participate in your discussion groups and to freely share your experiences and knowledge. The syllabus content does not reflect the views or official position of the Department of War or the U.S. Government.

The benefits of this program should continue after you have returned home. The discussions and written materials, as well as the friendships formed over the next two weeks, should help you respond to the often-unpredictable challenges you will face in your profession.

Preparation for the Seminar

Before the virtual and the first in-person week of the seminar, we ask that you:

1. Skim this syllabus.
2. Review the virtual and in-person sessions of the syllabus and read the recommended readings.
3. Spend some time thinking about the in-person discussion questions and considering what experiences from your work you might share in discussion groups.
4. Be ready to participate in discussion groups and learn from other participants.

Virtual Sessions

Session 1: African Security Landscape: Conflict Trends & Security Mega Trends

Format: Plenary session

Objectives:

- Analyze major megatrends shaping Africa's security environment, including demographic change, urbanization, technological advancement, and public health risks.
- Assess the implications of these megatrends for security governance and leadership.
- Examine the drivers and evolving patterns of violent conflict in Africa and their relationship to broader structural trends.
- Explore the strategic implications of these dynamics for national, regional, and international security responses.

Background:

The term "megatrends" was widely popularized by John Naisbitt, a political scientist who published a bestseller in 1982 on the trends transforming our lives. Many variations on the definition exist but put simply, megatrends are "long-term driving forces that are observable now and will most likely have a global impact".³ Often used in forecasting, they can inform policy decisions to realize a desired future.

Some of the major megatrends seen in Africa include:

- Population growth: While all other continents will see a decline in population by 2100, Africa's population will triple in the same period.⁴ As the population was estimated at 1.4 billion people as of 2022, that is over 4 billion people.⁵ This is in part due to the current "youth bulge" as 77% of the population is under the age of 35.⁶
- Urbanization: By 2050, more than 60% of the population of Africa will be living in cities.⁷
- Enabling technology: Increased digitization and technological infrastructure is transforming labor and production, while also serving to connect people to each other and

³ European Commission, "The Megatrends Hub," 28 November 2022.

https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight/tool/megatrends-hub_en

⁴ Yomi Kazeem, "Africa's Population Will Triple by the End of the Century Even as the Rest of the World Shrinks," *World Economic Forum*, 23 July 2020. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/africa-population-triple/#:~:text=Every%20global%20region%20could%20see%20their%20populations%20decline,or%20faster%20than%20birth%20rates%20in%20several%20countries.>

⁵ Statista, "Total Population of Africa from 2000 to 2030," 2024.

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1224168/total-population-of-africa/>

⁶ Bandar Hajar, "The Children's Continent: Keeping Up With Africa's Growth," *World Economic Forum*, 13 January 2020. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/01/the-children-s-continent/>

⁷ Aimée-Noël Mbiyozo, "Climate Change will Strain Africa's Already Congested Cities," *Institute for Security Studies*, 20 October 2021. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/climate-change-will-strain-africas-already-congested-cities>

the international community.⁸

- Emerging middle class: If economic growth continues, there will be a rise of a young, entrepreneurial, technologically savvy middle class.⁹
- Pandemics: As the world becomes increasingly interconnected and without adequate advances in prevention, infectious diseases can spread quickly from country to country.

These trends are inevitable, but their outcomes will depend on African leaders' strategies and policy responses. African governments have no choice but to proactively plan for and respond to these megatrends so as to mitigate anticipated challenges and harness potential opportunities.¹⁰ Megatrends will have profound impacts on security outcomes and on how security is planned, managed, and delivered to citizens. These trends create new opportunities for African governments to review their existing security policies, capacities, and institutions to better respond to these complex threats and build trust with citizens by including them in security governance and strategy development.¹¹ Effective response to these trends requires coordinating and collaborating across multiple government agencies and nation-states; developing flexible, agile, iterative, and adaptive policy responses and mechanisms; leveraging external partnerships; and developing foresight capabilities. As these trends are mutually reinforcing and cannot be addressed in isolation, African countries (and their external partners) must think strategically about how to address them through national, regional, and continental policies and strategies that are feasible, proactive, creative, coordinated, and comprehensive.

Megatrends are also closely linked to the patterns of violent conflict observed across the continent. In recent years, Africa has seen an increase in both the frequency and complexity of conflicts, including the spread of violent extremist groups and persistent civil wars in regions such as the Sahel, coastal West Africa, northern Mozambique, Somalia, and countries like Sudan and Libya. The nature of conflict has evolved, with rising violence against civilians, greater involvement of non-state armed groups, and fragmentation of armed movements, often driven by demographic pressures, governance challenges, social exclusion, and competition over resources. Addressing these dynamics requires integrated and forward-looking responses that combine diplomatic, defense, and development efforts, strengthen coordination across institutions and regions, and emphasize strategic leadership and long-term planning to enhance resilience and improve security outcomes.

Discussion Questions:

- Which megatrends are most significant in your country or subregion, and how do they shape the security environment?

⁸ Njuguna Ndung'u and Landry Signé, "The Fourth Industrial Revolution and Digitization will Transform Africa into a Global Powerhouse," *Brookings*, 8 January 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-fourth-industrial-revolution-and-digitization-will-transform-africa-into-a-global-powerhouse/>

⁹ Nafisa Akabor, "The Rise Of African Tech Hubs: How They Are Becoming The Silicon Valleys Of The Continent," *CNBCAfrica*, 2 November 2023, <https://www.cnbcfrica.com/2023/the-rise-of-african-tech-hubs-how-they-are-becoming-the-silicon-valleys-of-the-continent/>

¹⁰ Olli Ruohomäki, "Africa Megatrends: Looking over the horizon into the future." *FIIA Briefing Paper* 305. Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2021. https://www.fia.fi/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/bp305_african-megatrends.pdf

¹¹ Luka Kuol and Joel Amegboh, "Rethinking National Security Strategies in Africa." *Journal of International Relations and Diplomacy*, Vol. 9 (1): 1-17, 2021. <http://www.davidpublisher.com/Public/uploads/Contribute/60a72058556ba.pdf>

- How do megatrends and conflict dynamics interact in your country or subregion?
- What role can leadership play in responding to these challenges, and how can citizens contribute to improving security outcomes?
- How should regional security institutions and mechanisms respond to the evolving link between megatrends and conflict?
- What influence do international actors have on these trends, and how does this affect security on the continent?

Recommended Readings:

Raymond Gilpin. "Unpacking the Implications of Future Trends for Security in Africa." Brookings 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2020/02/03/unpacking-the-implications-of-future-trends-for-security-in-africa/>

Africa Center for Strategic Studies. "Africa's 2024 Security Trends in 10 Graphics." Infographic. Washington: Africa Center for Strategic Studies. 17 December 2024. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-2024-security-trends-graphics/>

Matthias Basedau, Charlotte Heyl, and Eckart Woertz. "Population Growth and Security in Africa: Myth or Underestimated Risk?" German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Hamburg. 14 January 2021. https://assets.ctfassets.net/jlhgjubhhjuo/4NjHjVvw3biOA3lQ5SvHIz/2c19465df7f608cf3b2e2cc8ef033046/GIGA_Population_Growth_Security_in_Africa_PDF.pdf

Kristian Hoelscher, Nick Dorward, Sean Fox, Taibat Lawanson Jeffrey Paller and Melanie Phillips. "Urbanization and Political Change in Africa." *African Affairs*, 122 (488): 353–376. 2023. <https://academic.oup.com/afraf/article/122/488/353/7233788>

Velomahanina Razakamaharavo. "Implications of Emerging Technologies on Peace and Security in Africa". *Conflict and Resilience Monitor*. Accord. 2, 2021. <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/implications-of-emerging-technologies-on-peace-and-security-in-africa/>

Guy Lamb. 2023. "Revisiting Human Security in Africa in the Post-Covid-19 Era". Policy Paper No. 86. Afrobarometer. February 2023. <https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/PP86-Revisiting-human-security-in-Africa-in-the-post-COVID-era-Afrobarometer-policy-paper-20feb23-1.pdf>

Laura Kokko, « L'Afrique de l'avenir : les tendances clés d'ici à 2025, » dans L'Afrique : un continent sur la voie de l'intégration. Centre Universitaire Francophone, p. 173-193. 2018. http://acta.bibl.u-szeged.hu/63619/1/010_francophone.pdf#page=173

Session 2: Terrorism and Violent Extremism Dynamics

Format: Plenary session

Objectives:

- Analyze the key drivers and underlying conditions that contribute to the emergence, proliferation, and persistence of terrorist organizations.
- Assess national and regional counterterrorism strategies, including both security-based (“hard”) and prevention-focused (“soft”) approaches, and identify lessons learned.
- Examine the role of strategic leadership in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism, including the responsibilities and coordination of national and local security actors in implementing counterterrorism frameworks.

Background:

Terrorism and violent extremism remain one of the most pressing challenges to peace and security in Africa. Despite the extraordinary sacrifices made by African countries and their international partners, including significant investments of lives, resources, and political will, terrorist organizations continue to demonstrate resilience and adaptability. Even in contexts where such groups were considered defeated or significantly weakened, they persist as a serious and evolving threat.

The endurance and expansion of terrorist groups are particularly striking given the disconnect between their violent ideologies and the populations they claim to represent. Evidence consistently shows that the vast majority of Africans reject terrorism. Yet groups affiliated with al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and other terrorist networks continue to recruit members and secure financing by exploiting structural vulnerabilities such as weak governance, political exclusion, and unresolved local conflicts. In some contexts, terrorist organizations have entrenched themselves by exercising territorial control and positioning themselves as alternative authorities. For example, groups like al-Shabaab have provided basic governance and limited social services in parts of Somalia, thereby strengthening their local influence. In other regions where they do not control territory, terrorist groups fuel instability by deepening intercommunal tensions, aggravating political crises, and capitalizing on socio-economic grievances. Their spread across the Sahel, coastal West Africa, the Lake Chad Basin, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, northern Mozambique, and East Africa underscores that their strength lies not only in violence but also in their ability to embed themselves within fragile local systems and exploit governance gaps.

Addressing the evolving dynamics of terrorism requires a critical reassessment of existing counterterrorism approaches. There is growing recognition among African policymakers and practitioners that effective responses must go beyond purely security-driven measures. Population-centered strategies that prioritize community engagement, trust-building, and inclusive governance are increasingly seen as essential components of sustainable counterterrorism efforts. This includes closer cooperation between security forces and local actors such as traditional leaders, service providers, civil society organizations, and community-based groups. Ultimately, countering terrorism effectively demands a balanced approach that integrates military and law enforcement efforts with broader initiatives to strengthen governance, address grievances, and build resilient communities. These community-oriented approaches are now widely understood as a strategic necessity for confronting the complex, adaptive nature of terrorist threats.

Discussion Questions:

- What terrorist groups are operating in your country and region? How have these organizations affected the security environment in which you work?
- What are the main weaknesses or gaps in current counterterrorism responses in your country or region?
- What concrete and practical measures can African countries take, working at the national, regional, and international levels, to better counter terrorist groups on the continent?
- What should be the role of strategic leadership and security sector leaders in countering terrorism?

Recommended Readings:

The Africa Center for Strategic Studies. "Militant Islamist Groups in Africa Sustain High Pace of Lethality." Infographic. Washington: Africa Center for Strategic Studies. 18 February 2025. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/mig2025-militant-islamist-groups-in-africa/>

Anouar Boukhars. "Thwarting Nascent Insurgencies in Coastal West Africa." Sahel and West Africa Club (OECD/SWAC) West African Papers no. 44. October 2024. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/thwarting-nascent-insurgencies-in-coastal-west-africa_25885e9c-en.html

Daniel Eizenga and Amandine Gnanguênon. "Recalibrating Coastal West Africa's Response to Violent Extremism." Africa Center for Strategic Studies Africa Security Brief no. 43. 22 July 2024. <https://africacenter.org/publication/asb43en-recalibrating-multitiered-stabilization-strategy-coastal-west-africa-response-violent-extremism/>

Wendy Williams "Reclaiming Al Shabaab's Revenue." Spotlight. Washington: Africa Center for Strategic Studies.. 27 March 2023. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/reclaiming-al-shabaabs-revenue/>

The Africa Center for Strategic Studies. "Expanding Al Shabaab-Houthi Ties Escalate Security Threats to Red Sea Region," Africa Center for Strategic Studies. 28 May 2025. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/al-shabaab-houthi-security-red-sea/>

Daisy Muibu and Yayediior Mbengue "Somalia at a Crossroads: Resurgent Insurgents, Fragmented Politics, and the Uncertain Future of AUSSOM." Combating Terrorism Center Sentinel. May 2025. <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/somalia-at-a-crossroads-resurgent-insurgents-fragmented-politics-and-the-uncertain-future-of-aussom/>

Daisy Muibu "Somalia's Offensive Against al-Shabaab: Taking Stock of Obstacles." Combating Terrorism Center Sentinel. February 2024. <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/somalias-stalled-offensive-against-al-shabaab-taking-stock-of-obstacles/>

Daisy Muibu "Islamic State in Somalia: A Global Threat and Efforts to Counter the Militants" Policy Brief Orion Policy Institute 6 March 2025 <https://orionpolicy.org/islamic-state-in-somalia-a-global-threat-and-efforts-to-counter-the-militants/>

Journey to Extremism in Africa: Pathways to Recruitment and Disengagement. UNDP. February 2023. <https://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/content/v2/downloads/UNDP-JourneyToExtremism-report-2023-english.pdf>

Session 3: Transnational Organized Crime Dynamics

Format: Plenary session

Objectives:

- Describe the trends and levels of various forms of transnational organized crime and the relevant criminal networks operating in Africa.
- Understand the drivers of transnational organized crime in Africa, as well as its consequences for governance, stability, and economic development.
- Assess the merits of potential elements of state response to transnational organized crime, particularly the roles of security sector leaders in fostering citizen/community community-centric approaches, interagency cooperation, and regional collaboration.

Background:

Transnational organized crime (TOC) is a growing security challenge in Africa. There are many forms of TOC in Africa perpetrated by state and non-state actors with varying degrees of linkage. Human trafficking, arms trafficking, and non-renewable resource crimes are the three most widespread criminal markets, and overall, the COVID-19 pandemic increased the ability of those state-embedded actors who facilitate TOC to do so with less restrictive measures for accountable governance in place.¹² Furthermore, TOC and political instability remain mutually reinforcing, and the commercial, criminal, and corrupt elements of TOC foster a parallel political economy that undermines economic development and state legitimacy.¹³

There is no single definition of organized crime, but the UN's Palermo Convention – which most African countries have ratified – defines “organized criminal groups” as three or more people, existing for a period of time, that act together with the aim of committing at least one crime punishable by four years’ incarceration. TOC is committed to obtaining a direct or indirect financial/material benefit.¹⁴ Organized crime is transnational when activities and their effects cross national borders. Devising responses can be challenging, as some states are ill-equipped to counter and prevent criminal network activities or have certain high-level officials who are politically unwilling to combat crimes from which they benefit. The coordination of security, justice, and other institutions on the inter-agency, cross-border, and subnational levels is warranted, but inherently complex.

Security sector actors in African states are well aware of the challenges of countering TOC, but also face the difficult task of devising responses that fit local contexts. Political economy frameworks can help emerging leaders understand where to start. Political economy is “the study of rational

¹² Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, “Africa Organized Crime Index 2021: Evolution of Crime in a Covid World,” <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ENACT-Organised-Crime-Index-2021.pdf>

¹³ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. 2015. *Illicit Financial Flows: Report of the High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa*. Addis Ababa, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. <http://hdl.handle.net/10855/22695>

¹⁴ UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto, <https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf>

decisions in the context of political and economic institutions,” which shape various actors’ incentives to behave in certain ways.¹⁵ Taking a political economy approach involves understanding who the different actors are, identifying the strategies they may adopt based on African states’ criminal markets and vulnerabilities, and assessing how resilience factors can change organized criminal actors’ incentives to pursue TOC in particular places. Many factors shape people’s incentives to participate in illicit economies. Some key ones are the availability of alternative livelihoods, how legitimate the state and its laws are, and how the transparency and accountability of the security and justice sectors affect such legitimacy.

One example of a political economy framework is the ENACT Consortium’s Organized Crime Index (released in 2019, again in 2021, and updated for 2023).¹⁶ It examines the roles of five primary criminal actors: state-embedded actors, criminal networks, foreign actors, mafia-style actors, and private sector actors, and tracks the presence and intensity of fifteen different criminal markets in all African countries. The Index shows a considerable increase in TOC over this timeframe, with state-embedded actors playing key roles in facilitating such activities. To influence state responses to TOC, the Index analyzes twelve factors affecting resilience to TOC: political leadership and governance, government transparency and accountability, international cooperation, national policies and laws, judicial capacity, law enforcement capacity, anti-money laundering, economic regulatory capacity, victim and witness support, prevention, non-state actor involvement in response, and territorial integrity.¹⁷

Ultimately, the ENACT research concludes that the most successful efforts to counter TOC are likely to involve security responses that feed into broader efforts to address the development- and governance-related drivers of organized crime. In particular, the 2023 Index provides empirical evidence over the last five years of “the crucial role of effective rule of law, accountability mechanisms and a transparent civil society in combating organized crime.”¹⁸

Discussion Questions:

- How much is transnational organized crime a security concern in your country/region, and what kinds of criminal actors and criminal markets are involved?
- Which forms of organized crime have the greatest impact on security and governance in your country or region? Why?
- What factors allow transnational organized crime to flourish in your country/region? To what extent are issues of development, governance, and rule of law linked to transnational organized crime?
- What kinds of efforts to counter and prevent transnational organized crime are underway in your country/region? Do they use the twelve resilience factors mentioned in the ENACT Organized Crime Index?
- What roles can security sector actors play in responding to transnational organized crime

¹⁵ Allan Drazen, *Political Economy in Macroeconomics* (Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 4, citing James Alt & Kenneth Shepsle, eds. *Perspectives on Political Economy* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹⁶ Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, *ENACT Global Organized Crime Index 2021*, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/GITOC-Global-Organized-Crime-Index-2021.pdf>; ENACT *Organized Crime Index Africa 2019*, <https://enact-africa.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/2019-09-24-oc-index-2019.pdf>

¹⁷ *Organised Crime Index Africa 2019*, op.cit.

¹⁸ Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, *ENACT Global Organized Crime Index 2023*, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/GITOC-Global-Organized-Crime-Index-2023.pdf>, p.8.

on the cross-border, national inter-agency, and subnational levels?

Recommended Readings:

Catherine Lena Kelly, "[An Introduction to Coordination of Security and Justice Responses to Countering Transnational Organized Crime](#)," Africa Center for Strategic Studies

- EN: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gORTFAb1ILw&t=1s>
- FR: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGeziZFrwgl>

Lusaka Agreement Task Force, "[Cross-Border Cooperation and Coordination to Combat Illegal Wildlife Trade: A Case Study of the Lusaka Agreement Task Force \(LATF\)](#)," 2022.

"[Déclaration de Kinshasa sur le renforcement de la coopération judiciaire dans la région des Grands Lacs](#)," Réunion des Ministres de la Justice des Etats Membres de la Conférence Internationale sur la Région des Grands Lacs, 16 juin 2022.

Additional Africa Center Resources: Enhancing Security-Justice Coordination to Counter TOC, Western and Southern Africa program videos, February 9 - March 3, 2021:

- EN: <https://africacenter.org/programs/security-justice-transnational-organized-crime/>
- FR: <https://africacenter.org/fr/programmes/renforcer-coordination-securite-justice-criminalite-transnationale-organisee/>
-

Enhancing Security-Justice Coordination to Counter TOC, Central, Eastern, and Northern Africa program videos, October 19 - November 10, 2021:

- EN: <https://africacenter.org/programs/2021-ctoc-sj-2/>
- FR: <https://africacenter.org/fr/programmes/2021-ctoc-sj-2/>

Professional Development for Countering Transnational Organized Crime webinar series videos, 2021-2022:

- EN: <https://africacenter.org/programs/2020-ctoc-webinar-series/>
- FR: <https://africacenter.org/fr/programmes/2020-ctoc-webinar-series/>

Session 4: Maritime Security Threats

Format: Plenary session

Objectives:

- Examine key trends in maritime safety and security across Africa, including piracy, illegal fishing, trafficking, and other transnational threats, and their implications for economic and regional stability.
- Assess the effectiveness of national, regional, and international collaboration frameworks in safeguarding Africa's maritime domain, with a focus on coordination and information sharing.
- Analyze the role of strategic leadership and security sector actors in strengthening maritime security through policy direction, coordination, and capacity building.

Background:

Africa's blue economy – including fisheries, minerals, hydrocarbons, tourism, and trade from thirty-eight coastal countries and six islands -- is estimated to be worth US \$1 trillion per year.¹⁹ In addition to this economic potential, over 90% of African exports and imports are transported by water.²⁰ While there is much potential, there is a tendency towards “sea blindness”, or to ignore the maritime domain and its centrality to African economic growth as well as its security and defense. The maritime space has been a theater of criminal activities and is host to a web of interconnected security threats. Some of the most pressing threats include Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and other natural resource theft, as well as piracy and armed robbery at sea. The COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated security threats in Africa's maritime domain, particularly by disrupting supply chains and increasing the risk that ports will become targets of attack.

The protection of Africa's maritime space and resources is a strategic security concern for both coastal and landlocked countries and requires effective maritime security measures. The maritime domain has become one of the main focuses of the AU Agenda 2063 and 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy).²¹ Both recognize the maritime domain's pivotal role as a catalyst for Africa's economic resurgence and socio-economic change.²² The Lomé Charter was adopted by the AU in 2016 as a binding maritime security and safety charter, focusing on the security provisions of the 2050 AIM Strategy.²³ These AU commitments are aligned and linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14, which promotes the sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources, including for development.

¹⁹ Ifesinachi Okafor-Yarwood. “Review of nine African “blue economy” projects shows what works and what does not work”. The Conversation, August 11, 2020.

²⁰ Henrietta Nagy and Siphesihle Nene, “Blue Gold: Advancing Blue Economy Governance in Africa.” Sustainability 13, 7153: 1-11. 2021. <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/13/7153>

²¹ Nagy and Nene, op cit.

²² Richard Wetaya, “Blue economy seen as a catalyst for Africa's economic resurgence.” Alliance for Science. 2022. <https://allianceforscience.cornell.edu/blog/2022/02/blue-economy-seen-as-catalyst-for-africas-economic-resurgence/>

²³ Pieter Brits and Michelle Nel, “African maritime security and the Lomé Charter: Reality or dream?” African Security Review 27 (3-4): 226 – 244, 2018.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329326511_African_maritime_security_and_the_Lome_Charter_Reality_or_dream

This collaborative international approach finds its concrete expression at the regional level, where nations sharing a maritime region have worked together, often through the Regional Economic Community structure, to develop practical agreements and frameworks for operational cooperation. For example, the Yaoundé Code of Conduct established cooperation between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) member states on a variety of maritime security issues and created a jointly staffed Inter-regional Coordination Center to organize cooperation. These frameworks have helped facilitate the harmonization of maritime laws on issues such as hot pursuit, evidence sharing, and extradition, as well as providing for tracking and even operational coordination between navies. Although joint capacities are still in development, there have been several notable successes. One is the recapture of the Hailufeng 11 in May 2020, after it was seized by pirates off the coast of Côte d'Ivoire. Through information sharing across the region and operational cooperation between Benin and Nigeria, the vessel was successfully recaptured, and the pirates were tried in Nigeria under a new anti-piracy law.

African states' ability to collectively govern their maritime domains and sustainably manage their resources determines their capacity to deliver an array of benefits to their citizens and to improve the provision of security and development. Improving governance and security in the littoral communities most affected by IUU fishing and other forms of natural resource theft can also help diminish threats by enhancing their interest in cooperating with law enforcement and limiting community member engagement in maritime crime.²⁴ There is also more work to continue to ensure that national laws and practices are in place to facilitate the prosecution of maritime criminals, especially when cross-border and regional cooperation is required. Many littoral African nations are still developing chain-of-custody procedures for handling maritime criminals and criminal evidence; prosecution can also be challenging due to the complexities of the law of the sea, or low levels of maritime legal expertise or law enforcement authority within navies.²⁵ Updating national law and procedure and harmonizing it regionally are both essential.

Discussion Questions:

- What is the economic potential of the maritime space of your country/region, and do you think this potential is being fully realized? Why or why not?
- Can you share some of the key maritime security threats in your country/region, and whether they have been adequately addressed?
- Given the transboundary nature of threats facing maritime space, what is the level of cooperative, coordinated, and collective responses of countries in your region to maritime insecurity? Can you share some examples of such collective responses and what can be done better?
- What roles can security sector leaders play in fostering maritime safety and security?

Recommended Readings:

Christian Bueger, Timothy Edmunds and Jan Stockbrugger. "Securing the Seas: A

²⁴ Ifesenachi Okafor-Yarwood, "The cyclical nature of maritime security threats: illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing as a threat to human and national security in the Gulf of Guinea." *African Security*; Vol. 13 (2): 116-146, 2020.

²⁵ Ian Ralby, "Learning from success: Advancing maritime security cooperation in Atlantic Africa." CIMSEC, 2019. https://cimsec.org/learning-from-success-advancing-maritime-security-cooperation-in-atlantic-africa/?fbclid=IwAR0qlr2I3Vn_wQhTc_Gu-JsuDjiTrZl8DYr5cQT3fsr4I1DqDa0jYQr5Xzg

Comprehensive Assessment of Global Maritime Security.” (Geneva, Switzerland: UNIDIR, 2024).

Ian Ralby, “Trends in African Maritime Security.” *Africa Center for Strategic Studies Spotlight*, 2019:

- EN: <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/trends-in-african-maritime-security/>
- FR: <https://africacenter.org/fr/spotlight/tendances-en-matiere-de-securite-maritime-en-afrique/>

United Nations, “Africa’s Blue Economy: A Policy Handbook.” 2016.

- EN: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/30130/AfricasBlueEconomy.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- FR: <https://repository.uneca.org/handle/10855/23073>

Ifesinachi Okafor-Yarwood, Oliver Eastwood, Noleen Chikowore, and Lucas de Oliveira Paes, “Technology and maritime security in Africa: Opportunities and challenges in the Gulf of Guinea.” *Marine Policy* vol. 160 (2024).

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X23005092>

Lucas De Oliveira Paes and Ifesinachi Okafor-Yarwood, “Techno-optimism versus techno-reality: an analysis of internationally funded technological solutions against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in Ghana and Guinea-Bissau.” *Environmental Politics* (2024),

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09644016.2024.2419800>

Ifesinachi Okafor-Yarwood, “Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and the complexities of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for countries in the Gulf of Guinea.” *Marine Policy*, vol. 99 (January 2019), p. 414-422.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0308597X17303445>

Pieter Brits and Michelle Nel, “African maritime security and the Lomé Charter: Reality or dream?” *African Security Review* 27 (3-4): p. 226-244, 2018.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329326511_African_maritime_security_and_the_Lome_Charter_Reality_or_dream

Thierry Vircoulon & Violette Tournier, « Sécurité dans le golfe de Guinée : un combat régional, »

Politique Etrangère 3, 2015. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-etrangere2015-3-page-161.htm>

Darshana M. Baruah, Nitya Labh, and Jessica Greely, “Mapping the Indian Ocean Region,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 15, 2023,

<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/06/mapping-the-indian-oceanregion?lang=en>

Christian Bueger, “Who Secures the Western Indian Ocean? The Need for Strategic Dialogue,” Center for Maritime Strategy, September 19, 2024,

<https://centerformaritimestrategy.org/publications/who-secures-the-western-indianocean-the-need-for-strategic-dialogue/>

Carina Bruewer, “Africa’s ocean of organised crime,” Institute for Security Studies, October 09, 2023, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/africas-ocean-of-organisedcrime>

Session 5: Cyber & Emerging Technology Threats

Format: Plenary session

Objectives:

- Explore the nature of cybersecurity in Africa: what is it and why is it relevant? Then discuss its implications.
- Explore how emerging technologies are changing Africa's security landscape.
- Assess national, regional, and international approaches to addressing the security implications of technological change.
- Discuss the challenges faced by African security actors in responding to emerging technology threats.

Background:

With the rapid spread of digital technology across the African continent, cyberspace is becoming an increasingly important security domain. A growing number of African citizens are falling victim to online fraud, theft, and extortion perpetrated by organized, and increasingly globalized, cyber-enabled criminal networks. Africa's critical infrastructure, essential to the continent's future prosperity, is becoming vulnerable to cyber sabotage. Social media, artificial intelligence, and unmanned systems are increasingly being deployed by nation-states and non-state actors in Africa's armed conflicts, changing the character of warfare.

The policy response in many African countries is struggling to keep up with the rapid growth of digitally enhanced threats. Deficits in human and organizational capacity mean that many cyber incidents go unreported and unaddressed. Though the number of states with cybersecurity policies and strategies is rising, even Africa's most cyber mature countries often fail to establish key interagency coordination mechanisms or anticipate and respond to the latest threats. At least 31 African countries have acquired military drones, even as these systems struggle to effectively address guerrilla tactics and are becoming increasingly entangled in proxy wars.

The African security sector has a critical role to play in leveraging digital technology to respond to its most pressing security threats and in responding to how terrorist groups and armed criminal networks are increasingly leveraging digital technology themselves. Yet because information technology is an enabling technology with a broad array of applications, key sources of expertise lie in the private sector. This era of open technological revolution is fundamentally different from previous eras and requires the security sector not only to quickly adapt to the rapid spread and advancement of digital technology but also to pursue partnerships with the private sector and civilian government institutions to stay ahead of the threat.

Discussion Questions:

- What are the cyber-related security challenges in your country or region?
- How are emerging technologies changing the security landscape in your country or region?
- How are digital capabilities and other emerging technologies being leveraged to address security threats in your country or region?
- What measures are being taken by countries with existing cybersecurity policies to improve interagency coordination? Are there best practices that can be shared?
- What practical steps can security sector actors take to address the threats posed by the spread of emerging technology?

Recommended Readings:

Nate D.F. Allen, "Military Drone Proliferation Marks Destabilizing Shift in Africa's Armed Conflicts." *Spotlight*. Washington: Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2025:

- EN: 26_0100_ACSS

Nate D.F. Allen, "Africa's Evolving Cyber Threats." *Spotlight*. Washington: Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2021:

- EN: <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-evolving-cyber-threats/>
- FR : <https://africacenter.org/fr/spotlight/lafrique-a-lepreuve-des-nouvelles-formes-de-cybercriminalite/>

Africa Center for Strategic Studies, "Topic in Focus: Foreign Information Manipulation." Washington: Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2025.

EN: <https://africacenter.org/in-focus/fimi/>

FR : <https://africacenter.org/fr/focus-sur/fimi/>

Africa Center for Strategic Studies, "Artificial Intelligence and Africa's Security Landscape." *Webinar*. Washington: Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2023.

EN: <https://africacenter.org/programs/2023-09-artificial-intelligence/>

FR : <https://africacenter.org/fr/programs/2023-09-intelligence-artificielle/>

INTERPOL, "African Cyber Threat Assessment Report 2024." INTERPOL 2024:

- EN: https://www.interpol.int/en/content/download/21048/file/24COM005030-AJFOC_Africa%20Cyberthreat%20Assessment%20Report_2024_complet_EN%20v4.pdf?inLanguage=eng-GB&version=14
- FR: https://www.interpol.int/fr/content/download/21048/file/24COM005030-AJFOC_Africa%20Cyberthreat%20Assessment%20Report_2024_complet_FR%20v3.pdf?inLanguage=fre-FR&version=14 AR: https://www.interpol.int/ar/content/download/21048/file/24COM005030-AJFOC_Africa%20Cyberthreat%20Assessment%20Report_2024_complet_AR_LR.pdf?inLanguage=ara-SA&version=14

Session 6: National Security Strategy Development Processes, Phases, and Elements

Format: Plenary session

Objectives:

- Objectives:
- Define the purpose and function of a National Security Strategy (NSS).
- Analyze the core processes and phases involved in developing an NSS.
- Identify the key elements that make a national security strategy coherent, actionable, and effective.
- Examine the role of strategic leadership and security sector actors in managing the strategy development process.

Background:

Developing a National Security Strategy is one of the most crucial responsibilities of sovereign leadership. A well-crafted strategy clearly articulates a nation's core interests, identifies main threats, allocates resources, and directs the strategic use of national power. It ensures consistency across government agencies and fosters a shared understanding of what needs to be protected, promoted, and defended. In a rapidly evolving and interconnected global landscape, African states face numerous security challenges. These include terrorism and violent extremism, unconstitutional regime changes, inter-communal conflicts, transnational organized crime, cyber threats, maritime insecurity, climate change, pandemics, food insecurity, economic shocks, and geopolitical rivalry. These risks extend beyond traditional military issues and increasingly affect political stability, economic resilience, social cohesion, and governance.

At the same time, many African countries are experiencing rapid demographic growth, urbanization, technological change, and economic transformation. These developments present significant opportunities for growth and integration, but they also create vulnerabilities that must be managed carefully. National security strategies should go beyond narrow military definitions and adopt comprehensive approaches that include governance, development, economic stability, and human security. A key challenge in strategy formulation is defining the national interest. National interests are not fixed; they evolve with domestic realities, regional dynamics, and global shifts. Effective strategy formulation requires clarity about what constitutes vital, important, and peripheral interests. It also involves balancing immediate threats with long-term structural priorities. Without clear priorities, national security strategies risk becoming broad declarations of intent rather than effective policy frameworks.

Strategic leadership is essential for clearly communicating and translating national interests into actionable priorities. Security sector actors must align operational planning and resource distribution with strategic guidance while ensuring accountability, professionalism, and adherence to constitutional principles. A credible and sustainable national security strategy depends on strong civilian oversight, interagency coordination, and continuous review processes to respond to evolving threats. As African states refine and update their national security strategies, they need to carefully match national interests with available capabilities, institutional capacity, and fiscal realities to ensure the strategy is both realistic and attainable.

Discussion Questions:

- How does your country define its core national interests, and who participates in that process?
- What are the most urgent security priorities shaping your national security agenda today?
- How can governments ensure that national security strategies are practical, prioritized, and aligned with available resources?
- What role should strategic leadership and security sector actors play in the development, execution, and periodic review of national security strategies?

Recommended Readings:

- Africa Center for Strategic Studies, [“National Security Strategy Development in Africa: Toolkit for Drafting and Consultation.”](#)
- U.S. National War College. A National Security Strategy Primer. Edited by Steven Heffington, Adam Oler, and David Tretler. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2025. https://nwc.ndu.edu/Portals/71/Documents/Publications/NWC-Primer-FINAL_for%20Web.pdf?ver=HOH30gam-KOdUOM2RFoHRA%3d%3d
- Republic of South Africa. National Security Strategy 2024–2028. Pretoria: Government of South Africa, 2024. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202507/redacted-national-security-strategy2024-2028.pdf
- Republic of Kenya. 2023 Report on the State of National Security. Nairobi: Government of Kenya, 2023. <https://parliament.go.ke/sites/default/files/2024/02/2023%20REPORT%20ON%20STATE%20OF%20NATIONAL%20SECURITY.pdf>

Session 7: National Security Strategy Development: National interests, Threats, and Risks Assessment

Format: Plenary session

Objectives:

- Analyze how national interests inform the identification and prioritization of threats, risks, and vulnerabilities in national security strategy development.
- Distinguish between threats, risks, and vulnerabilities, and examine their interrelationships within a national security framework.
- Evaluate how threat, risk, and vulnerability assessments support strategic decision-making, policy formulation, and resource allocation.

Background:

National Security Strategy development begins with a clear understanding of national interests and the systematic assessment of threats, risks, and vulnerabilities that may undermine them. Without this integrated approach, strategy formulation can become reactive, fragmented, or influenced by short-term pressures rather than long-term national priorities. A rigorous analytical foundation enables governments to align security objectives with core national interests while making informed decisions about priorities and resource allocation.

Threats, risks, and vulnerabilities are distinct but interrelated concepts within national security planning. Threats refer to actors, events, or conditions with the intent and capability to harm national interests. Risks capture the likelihood and potential impact of those threats materializing, while vulnerabilities represent the internal weaknesses that can be exploited. Understanding the relationships among these elements is essential for developing a coherent and realistic security strategy.

At the national level, governments employ a range of methodologies and analytical frameworks to conduct comprehensive assessments. These may include risk matrices that map likelihood against impact, scenario planning to explore plausible future threats, and capability-based assessments to evaluate national preparedness. Frameworks such as enterprise risk management, all-hazards approaches, and intelligence-led analysis integrate inputs from multiple agencies and sectors. Additionally, tools such as horizon scanning, red teaming, and vulnerability mapping help identify emerging risks and systemic weaknesses. The effectiveness of these methodologies depends on data quality, interagency coordination, and the ability to continuously update assessments in response to a dynamic security environment.

In an increasingly complex and interconnected security environment, effective national security strategy development depends on structured and coordinated assessment processes. These assessments must draw on reliable intelligence, data analysis, and interagency collaboration to ensure they remain objective, comprehensive, and regularly updated. When effectively integrated, threat, risk, and vulnerability assessments strengthen strategic foresight, support sound policy decisions, and enhance national resilience in the face of evolving challenges.

Discussion Questions:

- How do national interests shape the identification and prioritization of threats, risks, and

- vulnerabilities in your country?
- How are threats, risks, and vulnerabilities currently assessed in your country, and which institutions and methodologies are used?
 - How do assessment outcomes influence national security decision-making, policy development, and resource allocation, and what gaps exist in this process?

Recommended Readings:

- Africa Center for Strategic Studies, [“National Security Strategy Development in Africa: Toolkit for Drafting and Consultation.”](#)
- U.S. National War College. A National Security Strategy Primer. Edited by Steven Heffington, Adam Oler, and David Tretler. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2025. https://nwc.ndu.edu/Portals/71/Documents/Publications/NWC-Primer-FINAL_for%20Web.pdf?ver=HOH30gam-KOdUOM2RFoHRA%3d%3d
- Republic of South Africa. National Security Strategy 2024–2028. Pretoria: Government of South Africa, 2024. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202507/redacted-national-security-strategy2024-2028.pdf
- Republic of Kenya. 2023 Report on the State of National Security. Nairobi: Government of Kenya, 2023. <https://parliament.go.ke/sites/default/files/2024-02/2023%20REPORT%20ON%20STATE%20OF%20NATIONAL%20SECURITY.pdf>

Session 8: National Security Strategy Formulation: Ways and Responses

Format: Plenary session

Objectives:

- Analyze how strategic “ways” and policy responses are crafted within a National Security Strategy framework.
- Examine the alignment between national interests, perceived threats, and chosen strategic actions.
- Evaluate the importance of strategic leadership and security sector actors in executing and adjusting national security measures.

Background:

Once national interests are defined and threats, risks, and vulnerabilities are assessed, the next essential step in developing a national security strategy is to determine the “ways” and responses needed to reach strategic objectives. In strategic planning, “ways” refer to the methods, approaches, and courses of action selected to safeguard national interests and address identified threats. These ways must be coherent, practical, and aligned with available national resources. Effective responses go beyond military solutions. Today’s security challenges are complex and require integrated approaches that combine diplomatic, informational, military, economic, financial, intelligence, legal, and developmental tools. A comprehensive National Security Strategy, therefore, explains how these instruments of national power will be coordinated to achieve clearly defined goals. A key challenge in strategy development is ensuring alignment between ends, ways, and means. Ambitious objectives that lack realistic resources can create implementation gaps. Conversely, underusing national capabilities can hinder strategic effectiveness. Strategic leaders must therefore balance ambition with practicality, ensuring responses are prioritized, sequenced, and sufficiently resourced.

National responses may include prevention, deterrence, disruption, stabilization, resilience-building, and recovery mechanisms. Some threats require immediate operational action, while others demand long-term structural reforms. For example, countering terrorism may require both kinetic operations and governance reform alongside community engagement. Addressing cyber threats may involve legal reform, technical capacity building, public-private partnerships, and international cooperation. Interagency coordination is essential to ensure unity of effort. Ministries and agencies must operate within a shared framework, guided by clearly defined responsibilities and accountability mechanisms. Without coordination, overlapping mandates and institutional competition can undermine national responses.

Strategic leadership is crucial in turning policy into action. Leaders need to clearly communicate priorities, allocate resources, oversee implementation, and establish monitoring and evaluation systems. Security sector actors must coordinate their operational plans with strategic guidance, while respecting constitutional principles, the rule of law, and civilian oversight. In a rapidly changing security environment, national responses must be flexible as well. Strategies should include review mechanisms that enable governments to modify policies as threats, technologies, and geopolitical conditions evolve. Flexibility and strategic learning are vital for sustainable national security governance.

Recommended Readings:

- Africa Center for Strategic Studies, “National Security Strategy Development in Africa: Toolkit for Drafting and Consultation.”
- U.S. National War College. A National Security Strategy Primer. Edited by Steven Heffington, Adam Oler, and David Tretler. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2025. https://nwc.ndu.edu/Portals/71/Documents/Publications/NWC-Primer-FINAL_for%20Web.pdf?ver=HOH30gam-KOdUOM2RFoHRA%3d%3d
- Republic of South Africa. National Security Strategy 2024–2028. Pretoria: Government of South Africa, 2024. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202507/redacted-national-security-strategy2024-2028.pdf
- Republic of Kenya. 2023 Report on the State of National Security. Nairobi: Government of Kenya, 2023. <https://parliament.go.ke/sites/default/files/2024/02/2023%20REPORT%20ON%20STATE%20OF%20NATIONAL%20SECURITY.pdf>

Session 9: National Security Strategy Formulation Exercise

Purpose of the Exercise:

This exercise aims to give each participant the opportunity to develop the core element of a National Security Strategy for their country. The goal is to apply the concepts discussed in previous sessions in a clear and practical way. Instead of producing a detailed policy document, each participant will produce a 10-page document that demonstrates clarity, prioritization, analytical rigor, and coherence among national interests, assessed risks, and proposed responses.

Exercise Objectives:

The exercise aims to strengthen each participant's ability to identify national interests, systematically assess threats and vulnerabilities, and develop realistic strategic responses. It is designed to reinforce disciplined strategic thinking and align ends, ways, and means within the framework of national security planning.

Exercise Instructions:

Each participant will work independently to develop a brief National Security Strategy outline for their country, structured around three key components.

First, participants will define their country's national interests and strategic priorities. They should identify three to five core national interests and distinguish between vital, important, and secondary interests. Participants should consider what the state must protect above all else, the long-term objectives necessary for national stability and prosperity, and how to rank competing priorities. The focus should be on clear prioritization rather than broad or aspirational statements. Second, participants will perform a threat, risk, and vulnerability assessment. This involves identifying the most significant internal and external threats facing their country and evaluating both their likelihood and the potential impact on national stability, sovereignty, economic resilience, and social cohesion. Participants should also identify key vulnerabilities that increase risk exposure, such as institutional weaknesses, economic dependencies, governance challenges, geographic factors, or technological gaps. The assessment should reflect analytical judgment about probability, consequence, and relative severity. Third, participants will develop strategic responses and actions. They should propose tangible, realistic, and prioritized measures that the government could implement to defend national interests and mitigate identified risks. Responses should reflect a whole-of-government approach and may involve diplomatic, military, economic, legislative, technological, or developmental tools. Participants must ensure their proposed responses align with national capacity, resources, and institutional constraints. Consistency between objectives, assessed risks, and proposed actions is crucial.

Deliverable:

Each participant will submit a concise strategic outline that aligns with national interests and priorities, includes a structured threat and vulnerability assessment, and presents coherent strategic responses. The outline should clearly show the logical connection between what the country aims to protect, the risks it faces, and the actions it plans to take

In Person

Session 10: Strategic Leadership in Africa's Security Sector

Format: Plenary session

Discussion group

Objectives:

- Understand the critical role of leadership in confronting the changing and complex African security landscape.
- Analyze the tenets of effective strategic leadership in an African context.
- Highlight the importance of adaptability for effective leadership in the ever-changing and complex security environment.

Background:

There is optimism that Africa can claim the latter part of the 21st century if its leaders are prepared to harness emerging global opportunities and address the continent's evolving security challenges. Depending on whether African leaders respond proactively or reactively to the challenges and opportunities they face, the interconnected megatrends discussed in Session 1 may lead to virtuous, mutually reinforcing cycles of stability, growth, and development or vicious cycles of instability, conflict, and poverty. The dynamic security landscape demands that security sector leaders move away from the old "business-as-usual" approach and provide much-needed strategic, proactive leadership to build resilient institutions over the long term and make decisive, evidence-based decisions in the face of crisis and uncertainty.

Although there are different approaches to the understanding of leadership, the focus here is on effective strategic leadership that is generally defined as "the unique abilities of anticipating, envisioning, maintaining flexibility, thinking strategically, and empowering employees to create new inventions that lead to organizational transformations or changes."²⁶ Beyond developing these abilities, strategic leadership is also about having the adaptive capacity to appropriately respond to the dynamism and complexity of the context.²⁷ With the rapidly changing and uncertain external environment, adaptive leadership gains ground and prominence.

Adaptive leadership is defined as "the ability to anticipate future needs, articulate those needs to build collective support and understanding, adapt your responses based on continuous learning, and demonstrate accountability through transparency in your decision-making process."²⁸ There are five key principles that are central to the application of adaptive leadership, namely: evidence-based learning and adaptation; stress-testing underlying assumptions and beliefs; streamlining deliberative decision-making processes; appreciating the significance of accountability,

²⁶ Alex Jaleha and Vincent Machuki, "Strategic Leadership and Organizational Performance: Critical Review of Literature." *European Scientific Review*. Vol 4(35): 127, 2018.

<https://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/view/11558>

²⁷ Paul Schoemaker, Steve Krupp and Samantha Howland, "Strategic Leadership: The Essential Skills." *Harvard Business Review*. 91(1-2): 131-134, 2018. <https://hbr.org/2013/01/strategic-leadership-the-essential-skills>

²⁸ Ben Ramalingam et al, "5 Principles to Guide Adaptive Leadership," *Harvard Business Review*, September 11, 2020. <https://hbr.org/2020/09/5-principles-to-guide-adaptive-leadership>

transparency, and inclusion; and mobilizing collective action.²⁹

The concept of leadership is well embedded in African values and cultures. For example, the concept of *ubuntu* is a South African leadership ethic, which means “a person is a person through others,” and it provides an understanding of ourselves in relation to the world.³⁰ A related doctrine, found in West Africa, is the *Kurukan Fuga*.³¹ or the Manden Charter, which established the Federation of Mande clans under one government and outlined laws by which the Mande people should abide by social peace, co-exist in diversity, and live with dignity. Some of the indispensable characteristics that most strategic leaders have in common include being a visionary, having high moral and ethical values, being a strategic thinker, investing in the development of social and human capital as well as future leadership, being a quick learner, being a change initiator, and exhibiting both sense giving and sense making.³²

Discussion Questions:

- What leadership approaches are most effective in addressing increasingly complex and dynamic security challenges? Please provide examples of where leadership decisions have had a measurable impact on security outcomes.
- What are the defining attributes of effective strategic leadership within your national or institutional context? How do these attributes influence organizational effectiveness and decision-making processes?
- How can indigenous cultural values and norms be leveraged to enhance leadership effectiveness, accountability, and collective action within the security sector?
- What measures can be undertaken at the individual and institutional levels to cultivate strategic leadership and strengthen the resilience and performance of security institutions?

Recommended Readings:

Ben Ramalingam et al, “Five Principles to Guide Adaptive Leadership.” *Harvard Business Review*, 2020. <https://hbr.org/2020/09/5-principles-to-guide-adaptive-leadership>

Regina Eckert and Simon Rweyongozwe, “Leadership Development in Africa: A Focus on Strengths.” *Center for Creative Leadership*, 2015. <https://www.ccl.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/leadershipDevelopmentAfrica.pdf>

Kwesi Aning and Joseph Siegle, “Deep Commitment, High Expectations: The Values of the Next Generation of African Security Sector Leaders.” *Africa Defense Forum*, 2018:

- EN: <http://adf-magazine.com/deep-commitment-high-expectations/>
- FR: <http://adf-magazine.com/engagement-profond-attentes-elevees/?lang=fr>

Sam Adeyemi, “Africa does not Need Charity, it Needs Good Leadership,” *World Economic Forum on Africa*, 2017. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/05/africa-doesn-t-need-charity-it-needs-good-leadership>

²⁹ Ramalingam et al, *op cit*.

³⁰ See <https://historyplex.com/ubuntu-african-philosophy>

³¹ See <https://en.unesco.org/mediabank/23135/>

³² Page 211, Asif, *op cit*.

Plenary Session 11: Security Governance and Civil-Military Relations

Format: Plenary session

Discussion group

Objectives:

- Discuss what rule of law is as a principle, its place in democratic and civilian security sector governance, and the ways it shapes drivers of security challenges affecting Africa.
- Discuss the key elements of Civil-Military Relations (CMR) and their link to the democratic governance of the security sector under the rule of law.
- Discuss how reforming the security sector and promoting sound institutions of security sector governance can contribute to forging a healthy CMR, and vice versa.

Background:

Addressing challenges related to delivering legitimate and accountable security services to the populace – especially in relation to a government’s strategy to address issues like terrorism, organized crime, armed conflict, maritime or cyber insecurity, or otherwise – demands a holistic, coordinated effort across the security sector and entities across the different branches of government authorized to oversee security. Rule of law and healthy civil-military relations are critical components of ensuring the security sector’s effectiveness in these endeavors.

Rule of law and justice are vital for peace and stability, which is the security sector’s job to provide. In its simplest form, the rule of law means that no one is above the law, including those in the security services; all people are treated equally under the law, regardless of who they are. Laws are clear, well-known, and applied transparently and evenly by an independent judiciary. Maximally, rule of law includes accountability, just laws, open government, and accessible justice for all.³³ The African Union’s Agenda 2063 further advances such a vision by calling for an Africa where people “enjoy affordable and timely access to independent courts and judiciary that deliver justice without fear or favor.” Thus, rule of law is not just about security officials enforcing the law; fostering the rule of law helps governments build a “social contract” with citizens.

Rule of law is also a core element of sound security sector governance, which facilitates the provision of security to citizens on the basis of democratic and civilian control of the security sector. Rule of law is particularly relevant to security governance in light of empirical evidence that some security threats, like violent extremist recruitment, tend to be exacerbated by state-perpetrated abuses of civilians and people’s perceptions of unfair treatment by state officials.³⁴ The professionalism of the security services, as well as citizens’ perceptions of it, hinges on a system of checks and balances that ensures everyone respects civil liberties and human rights. When there is accountable and people-centered security sector governance, these institutions and actors work in complementarity, within a robust system of checks and balances, to ensure that the defense and security forces who “hold and deploy the means of coercion on behalf of, and for the protection of the entire society,...do not

³³ World Justice Project, “What is the Rule of Law?” <https://worldjusticeproject.org/about-us/overview/what-rule-law>

³⁴ John Mukum Mbaku, “Strengthening the Rule of Law in Africa By 2030,” Foresight Africa, Brookings Institution, 2025, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/strengthening-the-rule-of-law-in-africa-by-2030/>

end up functioning as a threat to the same elements they were supposed to protect.”³⁵

There is, accordingly, a range of formal and informal institutions that must be engaged consistently and adaptively. Formal, national-level oversight institutions (like parliaments, inspectorates, military ombuds institutions, independent anti-corruption and human rights commissions) play key roles in monitoring security force activities and behaviors toward citizens; civilian leaders should also be subject to oversight by the same or similar institutions. The everyday practices that security officials exercise with citizens also matter, since every rights-bearing citizen is a key stakeholder in the rule of law. Local oversight in security sector governance and security governance as a whole also depends upon the work of civil society organizations, media, customary or religious authorities, women and youth groups, and non-state security providers.

The health of a country’s Civil-Military Relations (CMR) also influences the state’s ability to deliver human security to citizens effectively. CMR is concerned with the manner in which the military and the society it is meant to protect interact, usually through some sort of negotiated bargain between citizens, civilian government authorities, and the military.³⁶ Arguably, the biggest challenge is to address the dilemma of “who guards the guardians”³⁷ and to craft pathways to reconcile the security sector’s desire to act on the wants of civilians with the ability to do only what civilians authorize.³⁸ A key challenge in most African countries is how to nurture healthy CMRs that will create a secure environment conducive to citizen security, job creation, justice, and rule of law. There is an alarming regression in democracy and a surge of coup d’états in Africa, combined with increased and unconstrained military spending, all without significant improvements in citizen security and safety.³⁹ The Ibrahim Index of African Governance shows a shrinking trust of citizens in security forces.⁴⁰ These indicators demonstrate increasingly problematic CMR, with increased military intrusion in politics and control of civilians. This regressive trend has been exacerbated by weak civilian oversight of the security sector and gaps in knowledge, experience, and attitudes.

Reversing such a grim trend in Africa is urgent and will require rethinking, re-negotiation, reform, or transformation of the CMR framework. Frameworks for not only security sector reform but also for sound security sector governance provide an opportunity for countries in developing or consolidated democracies, as well as those emerging from military dictatorship, to forge new CMRs that will consolidate democratic civilian control of the security sector and rule of law. It has been shown that democratic civilian control of the security sector is not sufficient by itself to nurture healthy CMRs, as the effectiveness and efficiency of the military in fulfilling their assigned roles and

³⁵ Adedeji Ebo, “Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector in West Africa: Addressing Democratic Governance Deficits,” in Adedeji Ebo and Boubacar N’Diaye, eds. *Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector in West Africa: Opportunities and Challenges*, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2008 :7.

³⁶ Mackubin Thomas Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations After 9/11: Renegotiating the Civil Military Bargain* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 13.

³⁷ Thomas Bruneau and Florina Christina Matei, “Towards a New Conceptualization of Democratization and Civil-Military Relations.” *Democratization*. Vol 15(5) pp. 909 – 929, 2008.

³⁸ See Feaver, Peter D. 1996. “The Civil-Military Problématique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control,” *Armed Forces and Society*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 149-178; Kuwali, D. “[“Oversight and Accountability to Improve Security Sector Governance in Africa”](#)”, Africa Security Brief no. 42, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, September 11, 2023.

³⁹ Nan Tian, “A cautionary tale of military expenditure transparency during the great lockdown.” SIPRI, 2020. <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2020/cautionary-tale-military-expenditure-transparency-during-great-lockdown>

⁴⁰ See <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/iiag/2020-key-findings#kf1>

missions are also important.⁴¹ Overall, what is needed are clearly defined roles and missions for the security forces, legal and practical mandates and resources for effective oversight institutions and practices, and a commitment to professional norms and ethics within the security services.

Discussion Questions:

- What practical measures can African countries take to promote the rule of law in the security sector?
- Do African security sector leaders have an interest in building democratic and civilian oversight institutions that facilitate rule of law? Why or why not?
- What are some of the limitations that civilians face in exercising democratic control over the military/security forces in your country/region, and how can you help to address such limitations?
- What specific roles can civil society organizations play in promoting rule of law and enhancing CMR?
- Who are the relevant stakeholders in improving the state of civil-military relations in your country/region, and why?

Recommended Readings:

“Letting Citizens, Constitution Lead the Way: Civilian Control of the Armed Forces Remains a Durable Model Despite Coups, Setbacks,” *Africa Defense Forum*, 1 January 2024.

- EN : <https://adf-magazine.com/2023/12/letting-citizens-constitution-lead-the-way/>
- FR: <https://adf-magazine.com/fr/2023/12/laisser-les-citoyens-et-la-constitution-montrer-la-voie/>

Christopher Day, Moses Khisa, and William Reno, “Rethinking the Civil-Military Conundrum in Africa.” *Civil Wars* Vol 22(2-3) pp. 156-173, 2020.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13698249.2020.1736808>

Catherine Lena Kelly, “Justice and Rule of Law Key to African Security.” *Africa Center for Strategic Studies Spotlight*, 2021:

- EN: <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/justice-and-rule-of-law-key-to-african-security/>
- FR: <https://africacenter.org/fr/spotlight/la-justice-et-letat-de-droit-pierres-angulaires-de-la-securite-en-afrique/>

“Security Sector Governance: Applying Principles of Good Governance to the Security Sector.” *Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces*, 2015:

- EN:https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/DCAF_BG_1_Security%20Sector%20Governance_0.pdf
- FR:https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/DCAF_BG_1_La%20gouvernance%20du%20secteur%20de%20la%20securite.pdf
- FR: <https://africacenter.org/fr/programs/msra-nssd-2021-alignement-ressources-strategies-nationales-securite-afrique/>

⁴¹ Bruneau and Matei, *op cit*

Session 12: Regional Responses to Security Challenges

Format: Plenary session
Discussion group

Objectives:

- Examine strategies and good practices for mitigating conflicts, including mediation, diplomatic engagement, and defense.
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of regional security and defense policies and regional mechanisms for peace support operations in addressing regional security challenges.
- Examine how to build consensus and strengthen partnerships between the RECs, the AU, and the United Nations in response to regional security challenges.

Background:

The predominant regional security challenges in Africa transcend national political boundaries. Issues related to transnational organized crime, violent conflict, terrorist insurgencies, migration, small arms and light weapons proliferation, and economic crisis have profound security implications. Given the transnational elements of these threats, they cannot be addressed by national responses alone, but through interstate coordination and cooperation.

For the past three decades, peace operations sponsored by the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have played large roles in addressing the regional dimensions of peace and security in Africa. In recent years, however, they have faced significant headwinds. Due to divisions in the U.N. Security Council, a perceived lack of success of recent multidimensional peacekeeping missions, and questions about the effectiveness of the U.N. in responding to Africa's cross-border and violent extremist threats, no major new U.N. mission has been sponsored in a decade. Though Africans themselves are taking on an increasing share of the responsibility for managing Africa's conflicts, concerns remain about the degree to which regional actors possess the resources, operational capabilities, and political will needed to grapple with Africa's most significant armed conflicts and crises. What is clear is that Africa's regional security architecture lies at a critical juncture.

Other means beyond peace operations include regional initiatives, for example, the East African Community (EAC)-led Nairobi Process launched in 2022, which seeks to use dialogue and negotiation with all relevant stakeholders to resolve the conflict in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Moreover, regional security and defense mechanisms, such as ECOWAS's Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN), launched in 2003, and from the Horn of Africa's experience, IGAD's Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Mechanism (CEWARN), established in 2002, are designed to preempt conflict.

However, regional institutions and mechanisms vary greatly based on leadership dynamics, political and cultural cleavages, and the depth of integration. Insufficient political incentives at the national level to mainstream regional commitments and agreements into state planning, or into action, limit their effectiveness. This has affected dedication to both UN and African-led operations, resulting in operational and expeditionary capabilities, poor integration with civilian-led efforts, and heavy dependence on external donors. Innovative regional approaches that adapt to the changing nature of conflict and new geopolitical realities will be critical for advancing security. For example,

the passage of UNSCR 2719 on assessed contributions is a watershed moment and could be the start of a deeper series of changes between the UN and African partners when it comes to communication and division of responsibilities.⁴²

Discussion Questions:

- Which strategies and good practices have been especially critical to mitigating conflict in your country or region?
- How can the AU and REC working relationship improve, both between the organizations and with international partners like the United Nations?
- How effective is your REC at mobilizing member states to collectively address regional security challenges? Please share some examples of successes and challenges.
- Do overlapping country memberships in the RECs help or hurt the RECs' ability to coordinate collective responses to security challenges?

Recommended Readings:

Nate D. F. Allen and Nicole Mazurova. "African Union and United Nations Partnership Key to the Future of Peace Operations in Africa," *Spotlight*. Washington: Africa Center for Strategic Studies. April 30, 2024. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/african-union-united-nations-peace-operations/>

"Eight Priorities for the African Union in 2025," International Crisis Group Briefing no. 205 (2025). <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/african-union-regional-bodies/b205-eight-priorities-african-union-2025>

"The Future of Peacekeeping, New Models, and Related Capabilities," United Nations Peacekeeping, November 01, 2024. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/study-on-future-of-peacekeeping-new-models-and-related-capabilities>

Sanae Suzuki, "Exploring the roles of the AU and ECOWAS in West African Conflicts." *South African Journal of International Affairs* 27:2, 173-191, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2020.1767193>

Bitania Tadesse, "The Role of African Multilateralism in the New Agenda for Peace," *International Peace Institute Global Observatory*, September 2023. <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2023/09/the-role-of-african-multilateralism-in-the-new-agenda-for-peace/>

Mark Whitlock and Robert Muggah, "Reflections on the evolution of conflict early warning." *International Journal of Security and Development*, 10 (1), 2022. <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.857/>

West African Network for Peacebuilding, "Annual Report 2021: Adapting Resilient Approaches and Synergies to Peacebuilding in the 'New Normal'." 2021:

- EN: <https://wanep.org/wanep/annual-report-2021-adapting-resilient-approaches-and-synergies-to-peacebuilding-in-the-new-normal/>
- FR: https://wanep.org/wanep/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Wanep-2021_French.pdf

⁴² Security Council Report, The Financing of AU Peace Support Operations: Prospects for Progress in the Security Council, Research Report, April 2023. <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/research-reports/the-financing-of-au-peace-support-operations-prospects-for-progress-in-the-security-council.php>

Session 13: Leveraging Bilateral Relationships

Format: Plenary session
Discussion group

Objectives:

- Identify the variation in external security assistance models.
- Explore the role of strategic leadership in using and leveraging external assistance to deliver better security to citizens in Africa.
- Investigate links between national security strategy development and effective security assistance coordination.

Background:

Security provision in many African countries is shaped not only by domestic capabilities but also through strategic external partnerships. A key characteristic of Africa's current security landscape is the intensifying competition among global powers. Traditional partners such as the United States, the European Union, and China, along with emerging actors like India, Russia, Brazil, Vietnam, South Korea, the Gulf States, and Turkey, have significantly increased their engagement across the continent. These nations view Africa as both a critical source of natural resources and an expanding business market. Simultaneously, they seek to strengthen their diplomatic ties and influence within multilateral institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

Among these partners, China stands out due to the depth and breadth of its relationships in Africa. China's involvement spans numerous sectors and is primarily channeled through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a global infrastructure and foreign policy framework. As of 2022, 52 of 54 sub-Saharan countries have signed on to the BRI Memorandum of Understanding with China.⁴³ This engagement directly links the continent's security with China's own prosperity - a serious departure from its famed foreign policy of non-interference in domestic affairs. China's increased focus on security stems from needing to protect investments from the disruptions and damage caused by conflict, and the desire to strengthen its global reputation. Working towards these ends, the Chinese Ministry of National Defense hosted the inaugural China-Africa Defense and Security Forum in 2018 and has ramped up its participation in UN peacekeeping operations.⁴⁴ Of China's approximately 2,500 troops in UN peacekeeping missions, almost 85% are in Africa.

Russia, in contrast, has pursued a more unconventional strategy. The upsurge of violent extremism, terrorist activity, and coup d'états in West and Central Africa has given opportunity for Russia to deepen its influence through the Wagner Group, a shadowy mercenary company, that has gradually assumed traditional and strategic military and security partnerships with countries in West Africa. The 2023 Russia-Africa summit further showcased intentions to lay the foundation for deeper cooperation, coming at a sensitive time considering Russian withdrawal from the Black Sea grain

⁴³ Xuewu Gu et al., "China's Engagement in Africa: Activities, Effects and Trends," *Center for Global Studies*, June 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361589142_China's_Engagement_in_Africa_Activities_Effects_and_Trends/citations

⁴⁴ Niall Dungun, "The Expanding Role of Chinese Peacekeeping in Africa." *Oxford Research Group*, January 18, 2018, <https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/Blog/the-expanding-role-of-chinese-peacekeeping-in-africa>

initiative the week prior.

While external security assistance can bolster African countries, such support can be counterproductive if not aligned with national security priorities. To derive meaningful benefits, African leaders must clearly define their security threats, identify capability gaps, and articulate specific needs. Likewise, international partners must recognize that the success of their assistance depends on harmonizing with national strategies. A robust National Security Strategy (NSS) serves as a foundational tool for aligning external support with domestic goals. The development of a comprehensive NSS can help countries better identify their security priorities and align external assistance with domestic needs. Without such a national strategy, donor-driven agendas risk overshadowing national interests, undermining long-term security outcomes.

External security assistance should therefore be based upon genuine and enduring partnership (rather than patronage), mutual interests, the African Union's principles of sovereign equality and inter-dependence, the traditional African values of equal burden-sharing and mutual assistance, and the indivisibility of African security.⁴⁵ It is most effective when predicated on a national ownership and solid institutional framework and when tailored, aligned, and appropriate to national needs and interests. National Security Strategies is itself a tool for leveraging external security partnerships and domestic resource utilization for greater transparency, accountability, and sustainability in the African security sector.

Discussion Questions:

- How significant is external assistance, particularly external security assistance, in your country/region? Who are the new external security partners, and how effective are they in comparison with the traditional partners?
- Do you think external security assistance has helped in reducing and combating the security threats facing your country/region? Please give examples.
- How can African countries/institutions best coordinate multiple offers of partnership? Please give examples.
- How can your country/region address the increasing influence of great power competition? How can your country/region make better use of and leverage external security assistance to help achieve national/regional security priorities and objectives?

Recommended Readings:

Lina Benabdallah, "China-Africa military ties have deepened. Here are 4 things to know," *The Washington Post* Monkey Cage blog, July 6, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/07/06/china-africa-military-ties-have-deepened-here-are-4-things-to-know/>

Moderan, O. (2015). Political Leadership and National Ownership of Security Sector Reform Processes. Toolkit for Security Sector Reform and Governance in West Africa, 3. <https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/SSRG-West-Africa-Toolkit-Tool-1-EN.pdf>

Paul Nantulya, "Solidarity in Peace and Security: The Nordic-African Partnership," Africa Center for Strategic Studies, November 29, 2017, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/solidarity-peace->

⁴⁵ AU, 2004, Solemn Declaration on A Common African Defense and Security Policy, Addis: African Union.

[security-nordic-african-partnership/](#)

Paul Nantulya, “The Tokyo International Conference on African Development – Fostering Stability through Peace and Security,” Africa Center for Strategic Studies, August 22, 2022, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/the-tokyo-international-conference-on-african-development-fostering-stability-through-peace-and-security/>

Paul Nantulya, “Africa-India Cooperation Sets Benchmark for Partnership,” Africa Center for Strategic Studies, December 12, 2023, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-india-cooperation-benchmark-partnership/>

Watts, Steve. “Identifying and Mitigating Risks in Security Sector Assistance for Africa's Fragile States”. Rand Corporation 2015.
http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR800/RR808/RAND_RR808.pdf

Additional Readings:

Ismail, Olawale, and Elisabeth Skons, eds. Security Activities of External Actors in Africa. Oxford University Press, 2014.

<https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/files/books/SIPRI2014IsSk01.pdf>

Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2021. “National Security Strategy Development in Africa: Toolkit for Drafting and Consultation”. Pages 40-41 :

- EN: <https://africacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/National-Security-Strategy-Development-in-Africa-Toolkit-for-Drafting-and-Consultation-Africa-Center-for-Strategic-Studies-2022-01.pdf>
- FR : <https://africacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Developpement-dune-strategie-de-securite-nationale-en-Afrique-Centre-dEtude-Strategiques-de-lAfrique-2022-01.pdf>

Session 14: Introduction to American Institutions, U.S. Defense Policy and Strategy in Africa

Format: Plenary session
Discussion group

Objectives:

- Examine the objectives and mechanisms of U.S. security assistance to Africa.
- Assess the impact and effectiveness of U.S. security assistance.
- Explore the role of strategic leadership in using and leveraging external assistance to deliver better security to citizens in Africa.

Background:

The U.S. Department of State serves as the lead agency for coordinating U.S. foreign assistance and facilitates interagency collaboration through the Office of Foreign Assistance (OFA). This coordination reflects a commitment to partnership and shared responsibility, recognizing that lasting peace and security in Africa require cooperative efforts between the United States, African governments, and regional organizations. By integrating diplomatic, development, and defense efforts, the State Department manages a comprehensive portfolio of assistance programs to support African-led peace and security initiatives across the continent.

Through its regional and functional bureaus, including the Bureau of African Affairs, Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, and Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, the Department administers programs that build African security sector capacity. These efforts support peacekeeping missions, counterterrorism, conflict prevention, the combating of transnational organized crime, and the promotion of democratic governance, accountability, and the rule of law. By emphasizing African ownership and collaboration, these programs ensure shared responsibility and mutual accountability for sustainable outcomes. Recognizing that Africa's security challenges often cross-national borders, the Department employs both bilateral and regional strategies. Partnerships with African Union institutions, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and multinational security frameworks highlight a collective approach that leverages regional leadership and resources alongside U.S. assistance.

While the Department of State leads foreign assistance programming, including funding for security sector reform and training of foreign military personnel through initiatives such as the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program, the Department of War (DoW) serves as the primary liaison with foreign defense establishments. The DoW's military-to-military partnerships, joint exercises, and capacity-building programs complement the State Department's diplomatic and development efforts, reflecting a unified commitment to strengthening African security capabilities. This collaborative approach emphasizes transparency, accountability, and efficient use of resources. It acknowledges that sustainable security depends on strong African leadership and ownership, with the U.S. providing supportive assistance that respects national priorities and regional dynamics. Through this partnership, U.S. security assistance contributes to addressing violent extremism, organized crime, and emerging geopolitical challenges across the continent.

In 2007, the United States established the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) to consolidate and enhance its military engagement on the African continent. Before AFRICOM's creation, responsibilities for Africa were divided among three separate commands: European Command

(EUCOM), Central Command (CENTCOM), and Pacific Command (PACOM). The formation of AFRICOM reflected the increasing strategic importance of Africa to U.S. national security interests, including counterterrorism, regional stability, and protecting economic and geopolitical ties.

AFRICOM works closely with African nations and regional organizations to promote stability and security across the continent. Its efforts focus on strengthening national and regional security capabilities, fostering military professionalism, and encouraging principles of good governance within security institutions. Through various training programs, joint exercises, and partnership initiatives, AFRICOM supports African-led solutions to the complex security challenges facing the region.

Security Assistance Effectiveness:

Research on U.S. security assistance highlights that its effectiveness varies widely depending on the nature and approach of the support provided. There is increasing recognition that sustainable security in African countries depends not merely on operational and tactical training or the provision of military equipment, but on building defense and security institutions that are civilian-led, socially representative, merit-based, and capable of independent strategic decision-making.

Effective security assistance is characterized by several critical factors, including “regular, intensive contact between international advisers and the partner nation’s security personnel; a relatively long-term commitment; close oversight of the performance of security forces; and the integration of train-and-equip efforts into an overall political strategy.”⁴⁶ Historically, U.S. security assistance exhibiting these features has been most successful in reducing conflict, insurgency, terrorism, and abusive government practices. Notably, such comprehensive partnerships have often coincided with the presence of United Nations peace support operations, which provide an enabling environment for integrated security efforts.

Discussion questions:

- What are the elements of the U.S. security assistance and the U.S. Department of War’s policies toward Africa that are most meaningful to you and your work?
- Are perceptions in your home country different from what you learned today?
- How does the information you learned today change how you will do your work?
- How can strategic leadership and security sector leaders harness and leverage US security assistance to promote national security priorities and interests in Africa?

Required Readings:

Aline LeBoeuf, “La compétition stratégique en Afrique. Approches militaires américaine, chinoise, et russe.” *Focus stratégique* 91, Institut Français des Relations Internationales, p. 17-18, 33-43 et l’annexe, 2019. https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/leboeuf_competition_strategique_afrique_2019_0.pdf

⁴⁶ See Stephen Watts et al, “Reforming Security Sector Assistance for Africa,” RAND Corporation Research Brief RB-10028-OSD/AFRICOM, 2018, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB10028.html

