Retrospecting to Prospect : Quo Vadis Africa?

Text of the 11th Thabo Mbeki Africa Day Lecture, delivered on 25th May 2021 with commentary from H.E. Thabo Mbeki, Former President of the Republic of South Africa *(see page 14)*

Funmi Olonisakin
Professor of Security, Leadership and Development
Vice-President and Vice-Principal – International
King's College London

Programme Director, Professor Puleng Segalo;

Chancellor of the University of South Africa, H.E. President Thabo Mbeki;

Principal and Vice-Chancellor of UNISA Professor Puleng LenkaBula;

Executive Dean of the Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs, Prof Sibusiso Vil-Nkomo;

Distinguished guests, colleagues, all daughters and sons of Africa, watching and listening today, I send you warm greetings.

Preamble: Tribute to Africa's peoples on Africa Day

I wish to begin on a note of remembrance; remembering those who left us on Africa Day in years past and not least during the pandemic of the past year. I especially remember Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, a brother, friend and great Pan-African who left us under such tragic circumstances twelve years ago today, on his way to Kigali to celebrate Africa Day.

To echo the text of the 1999 Algiers Declaration:

> I bow to the memory of all the martyrs of Africa whose supreme sacrifice has paved the way for the continent to regain its freedom and dignity. [I] pay tribute to the sons and daughters of our continent who laid down their lives for its political and economic emancipation, and for the restoration of its identity and civilisation, under conditions of extreme adversity. (OAU 35th Assembly of Heads of State and Government, Algiers, 12–14 July 1999)

Introduction

As we mark this year's Africa Day, amid a fight against a pandemic, Covid-19, and against the backdrop of the African Union (AU) Silencing the Guns agenda, the evidence today suggests that the guns are far from being silent. From Mozambique to Tigray and Chad, the guns continue to blaze amid snippets of lighter developments.

The time has come for some honest stocktaking. The theme highlighted in the announcement of this lecture—'Retrospecting to Prospect: Quo Vadis Africa?'—is indeed apt. It is this that led me to frame a central question for this lecture. In looking back to look forward, to ask where Africa may be heading, it is also important to ask the question: 'What will sustain Africa's peace?' One might ask, 'Does Africa have peace?'. What do I mean by Africa's peace? To be sure, Africa is not without its measure of peace. The vast majority of African citizens are peaceful while aspiring to live well, live long and live in dignity. Contrary to what is often claimed, the majority of Africa's young people, average age 19.5 years, are peaceful. Only a tiny proportion are involved in violence, as confirmed by the UN Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security. In the main, the people of Africa are peace-loving.

But more significantly, I speak of Africa's peace because Africa has a peace agenda— a blueprint for peace—which consists of the things we said would sustain peace, nearly a generation ago. Africa has well-developed norms, supported by a well-defined peace and security architecture, as well as an integration agenda. I recall how the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) caught the imagination of many of my colleagues at the United Nations in New York in 2001, and similarly, when the African Union's Constitutive Act broke new ground.

It is therefore sobering for me to convey this key message at the start of this lecture: Africa's peace agenda is profoundly insecure as a result of deep flaws in its leadership infrastructure. The peace agenda is in crisis. The transition from non-intervention to non-indifference, which characterised the move from the OAU to the Afri-

can Union, may be dead. There is a dire shortage of the quality of leadership that would secure and develop Africa. Had we proceeded on the trajectory that was planned, we might have managed to secure African peoples and moved significantly in the direction of silencing the guns. Nationally and internationally, the weakness of leadership and the non-rootedness of national leaders, their disconnection from citizens, has severely weakened institutions at all levels.

With this message in mind, I wish to make five inter-related arguments:

> **First**, Africa is not short of sound norms, many of which remain relevant for today's conditions. As such, we do not need new norms. But the existing norms are under attack and face severe contestation from several sources.
>
> **Second**, many of the situations for which these norms were developed remain unaddressed, and in some cases, we are witnessing a reversal of the progress realised towards securing the norms that were designed to secure Africa's peace—all due to leadership action or inaction.
>
> **Third**, the institutional architecture that supports Africa's blueprint for peace is not underpinned by an appropriate leadership software (which I describe later), and it is severely challenged by new threats that might render the African peace and security architecture unfit for purpose.
>
> **Fourth**, Africa is fast becoming a site in which external vultures (of both state and non-state extraction) feast, sometimes cloaked in the image of messiahs coming to rescue Africa from the scourge of terror. New and old actors add to the complexity.
>
> **Fifth** and last, for Africa's peace to be secure, it must stand on three equal and interconnected pillars in a relationship that places people at the centre of the nation and the supra-nation project for the realisation of Africa's peace and development.

Clarifying concepts

I have used the phrase leadership infrastructure several times already and I think it is important to say what I mean by this. Leadership infrastructure has two key components—the hardware and the software (Olonisakin 2020: 4). The hardware is the tangible aspect of the infrastructure, which can include buildings, laws that confer power to institutions, and staff. It symbolises the existence of those institutions.

While these symbols can exercise powerful influence because they project an image of power and possibly sophistication, it is the way that the power conferred to them is exercised that determines their continued relevance. This is the software element of leadership, which is perhaps more important than the hardware (Olonisakin 2020: 4). It includes the way that power is organised and exercised as well as the kind of relationships that it builds with the broader society over time.

Outside the formal realm, that software is also the shared expectations and interests that form across society at all levels. Uncovering the nature of the software of the leadership infrastructure requires an understanding of the leadership process. A process-based approach to leadership focuses on how leaders and the communities they serve exchange influence within a given context. That interaction is the lifeblood of leadership. This brief conceptual glimpse provides us with the necessary tool to understand the failure of the existing leadership infrastructure and, by the same token, the way forward.

Over-reliance on the hardware elements of the leadership infrastructure at the expense of the software renders governance at national, regional and global levels unfit for purpose when confronted by challenges, such as a political or security crisis, or a health crisis as we have seen with Covid-19. The crucially important software dimensions of leadership must be refitted to the leadership infrastructure at all levels (Olonisakin and Murday 2021).

Evidence of commitments made by African leaders

Normative Frameworks

Let's now look at some of the evidence supporting these arguments. Africa has a sound normative framework for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. We have seen the adoption of important instruments to address the root causes of conflict and promote conflict prevention. This provides important evidence of what African leaders committed to when the transition from the Organisation of African Unity transitioned to the African Union:

- Condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of government
- Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the establishment of an African Court of Human and People's Rights
- African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance
- Guidelines for African Union Electoral Observation and Monitoring Missions
- The Protocol to the African Charter on Human Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa
- The Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa.

The Constitutive Act of the African Union and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)

It is also worth highlighting several aspects of the AU Constitutive Act and the APSA. It is nearly twenty years since the formation of the African Union. The Constitutive Act establishing the African Union embedded a number of the norms that existed independently. The commitments were clear in the principles articulated under Article 4 of the Act, which include:

(a) participation of the African peoples in the activities of the Union

(b) establishment of a common defence and security policy for the African Continent

(f) prohibition of the use of force or threat to use force among Member States of the Union

(h) the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to the decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity

(j) the right of member states to request intervention from the Union in order to restore peace and security

(p) condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of governments.

And in other articles:

- Article 17: provides for the Pan-African Parliament – ;…to ensure the full participation of African peoples in the development and economic integration of the continent ...
- Article 18: provides for the Court of Justice of the Union
- Article 20: provides for the Commission of the Union, which shall be its Secretariat.
- Article 23: provides for imposition of sanctions for a) Member States that default on payment of their contribution to the Union budget; and b) for failure to comply with policies of the Union.

The Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council in the African Union, ratified in December 2003, led to the establishment of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in 2004 and the rigorous pursuit of its implementation thereafter (AU 2003). Article 2 established the Peace and Security Council as a 'standing decision-making organ for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts', and as a 'collective security and early warning arrangement to facilitate timely and efficient response to conflict and crisis situations in Africa.'

The PSC would be supported by:

- The AU Commission
- The Panel of the Wise
- A Continental Early Warning System
- An African Standby Force
- A Special Fund.

Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are a building block of the APSA, as are Regional Mechanisms (RMs) for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (AU 2008).

Several strategic plans were also developed, among them, the Institutional Transformation Programme (ITP). Some progress was realised at first, but things began to dip as the term of the first Chairperson of the AUC, Alpha Oumar Konaré, was ending. In an article in International Affairs, which sought to assess the progress of APSA after its first ten years, Alex Vines stated:

> the initiators of continental projects such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the African Peer Review Mechanism, among them Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, are no longer in office as national presidents, and their successors lack the visionary drive for a pan-African project. (Vines 2013; Murithi 2012)

While this was acknowledged in several quarters, it might be said that many of us tend to romanticise the idea of the good old days and might not appreciate the good that is being done in front of us today.

Even if we take such observations at face value, it is important, eight years after this assessment, to take a critical look at the evidence before us and then ask ourselves very frankly, whether the normative framework set up two decades ago remains intact, and whether the architecture that was designed to implement it is credibly still fit for purpose.

In examining the progress made, let us take a sample of situations on the continent in the last year or two, and subject them to a test of norm integrity and architectural safety to see what we will find.

Bringing the evidence to bear (*I*)*: Elections and unconstitutional changes in government*

Let's look at the AU's handling of elections, which are typically seen as the barometer of countries' progress toward democratisation. One of the best-established African norms in this respect is the one relating to unconstitutional changes of government, particularly through military coups. From a time when military coups were the order of the day, we have come to expect that any take-over of government by the force of arms will be met by the suspension of that Member State and by sanctions. Invariably, however, the affected Member State is supported to return to the Union.

Thus far, no Member State that was suspended by the AU for reasons of unconstitutional change in government has resigned from the Union.

The more challenging situation is that of the extension of presidential term limits, either through the 'front door' or 'back door'. Those who have chosen to extend their stay in power are rarely sanctioned. The continent is clearly suffering a reversal in this respect as outlined in the examples below:

Where the African Court of Human and People's Rights makes a judgment that an attempt at extending a presidential term limit is illegal or unconstitutional: On at least three occasions in the last couple of years, some states have defied the ruling of the African Court. Côte d'Ivoire is a case in point (Abebe and Adem 2020). The regime of Alassane Ouattara failed to honour the demands or implement the judgment of the African Court. In essence, the regime committed an illegality by ignoring the judgment of the African Court, which specifically requested that: a) The Ivorian Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) should be reconstituted before the presidential elections; and b) various Ivorian leaders (including the country's former president Laurent Gbagbo) should be permitted to participate in the elections. The African Court made similar rulings in Guinea and Benin. The AU had no say in any of this. Côte d'Ivoire has since sought to 'withdraw its declaration of jurisdiction' arguing that the African Court 'violated Côte d'Ivoire's national sovereignty' (Jeune Afrique 2020).

The action or inaction of the AU Commission has tended to cement a pattern that weakens the integrity of the normative instrument and thus undermine the legitimacy of the African Court: The AU Commission proceeded to monitor the elections in Côte d'Ivoire, when it could have taken other decisions, including making a statement that necessary conditions did not exist for elections in the Member State, and refusing to deploy election monitors as a result. To be clear, the RECs are not without a role. ECOWAS, for example, did not challenge presidents Alpha Condé in Guinea and Alassane Ouatarra in Côte d'Ivoire. This underscores the vital importance of collaboration between the AU and its RECs, at least on the question of implementing the AU norms.

In the recent case of Chad, following the death of Idriss Deby, we are seeing a reversal of even the aspect of unconstitutional changes of government, which the AU has traditionally been better at condemning and rejecting. Failure by the AU to suspend Chad and impose sanctions, even if only symbolically, is further confirmation of a reversal for our Union.

While the Regional Economic Communities are not necessarily faring better overall, the ECOWAS Commission has a better record in terms of resisting unconstitutional change in government. For example, ECOWAS, in 2011, refused to monitor elections in the Gambia, arguing that conditions were not right (BBC Gambia 2011), and following the most recent coup in Mali, sanctions were imposed, notwithstanding external interests to the contrary.

What must we make of these developments? While the AU Commission has many gaps, the task of suspending a Member State or imposing sanctions is not the responsibility of the Commission but of AU Member States. The question of the motivation of Member States will be discussed later. However, regarding the AU Commission, any observer would be justified in drawing any of the following conclusions: a) that the AU Commission lacks confidence and is thus self-censoring in relation to the powers accorded it under AU protocols for fear of offending powerful heads of state even when their actions undermine AU established norms; b) that the AU Commission is, in part, lacking in competence; or c) that there is a deliberate anti-norm behaviour in the Commission.

It is difficult to know which of the above plausible conclusions is the real issue. This notwithstanding, nearly twenty years after the establishment of the African Union, one must raise concerns about why the AU Commission is not playing the critical role that is expected of it. The expected self-confidence of the Commission seems lacking at the moment.

In sum, Africa does not lack normative instruments. The challenge is with their effective implementation and the sheer absence of sanctions for non-compliance. And when sanctions are effected, they are done selectively. The norms of the continental and sub-regional organisations are valid. But the abject lack of enforcement of these norms in addition to leadership gaps are problems that are not easily surmountable.

Bringing the evidence to bear *(II): The Ethiopian-Eritrean military offensive against Tigray*

The Tigrayan war has been instructive. This case stands out. It is the situation in which all the threats to the AU normative framework come together, completing the unravelling of the AU peace architecture. The war, which broke out in November 2020, revealed

an alliance between the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea, the second of which has reportedly deployed thirty-six divisions in the Tigray attack since the outbreak. Eritrean troops have been accused of many atrocities, in effect crimes against humanity, in Tigray (Walsh 2021). There is no official count of just how many Tigrayan lives have been lost, but it is estimated that some 5.2 million people need humanitarian assistance in Tigray (Walsh 2021). If large-scale relief is not forthcoming, that region of Ethiopia might be plunged into famine in another three months' time. Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers are currently blocking aid to the region. Indeed, for much of the nearly six-month war, blockage of humanitarian access and communication blackout have been recurring features.

The scale of the devastation against civilians in Tigray is of great concern and has raised questions from the international community outside Africa. We might be watching, with our arms folded, the largest humanitarian crisis and disaster developing on our continent in a while. It is one thing not to act, but it is another to be indifferent when the world tries to help. Thus far, there is no credible or legitimate African institution dealing with the international community, even informally, on the question of the humanitarian crisis in Tigray.

We also hear very little about the cost of this war to all the people of Ethiopia, or to Eritrea, which has committed so many of its men and women to this war. How many lives have been lost? How many body bags have been taken back to Asmara and how many have been returned to their families in the rest of Ethiopia? Who is counting the costs? All of this needless loss of lives is occurring at a time when the rest of the world is preparing for better development for their people post-pandemic.

The claims of ethnic profiling have also been greeted with silence. One of its manifestations has been in African and UN peacekeeping operations, from Darfur to South Sudan and Somalia, where Ethiopian soldiers of Tigrayan ethnicity have been forcibly withdrawn from the missions and repatriated to Ethiopia often without the knowledge of the missions (Lynch and Gramer 2020). The UN has tried to provide asylum through the UNHCR where possible.

We are therefore seeing a crisis of norms. It is a setback for the move from non-intervention (under the OAU) to non-indifference by the African Union. The foundations of APSA are being short-shrifted. IGAD is side-lined and the principle of subsidiarity seems non-existent in this regard.

In addition, some of the dynamics of the Tigray war confirm new threats to Africa. We are seeing a militarisation of the Horn. We are also witnessing a renegotiation of the African state (I will come to this shortly). The Tigray war broke out on the back of a wounded international system. Actors who do not subscribe to the normative instruments, humanitarian law or conventions, including the AU norms, have gained an upper hand. Non-African powers did a lot of damage, with reports that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) introduced drones to the conflict with devastating effect. Despite initial denials of this external involvement there has been subsequent confirmation of the UAE's involvement (Solomon 2020; DW.com 2021). The backing of actors from the Gulf has contributed to the erosion of AU norms.

What aspects of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) could have responded to Tigray?

The Tigray conflict is an internationalised conflict and not an internal conflict, as has been portrayed. Even if it were an internal conflict, non-interference would not be an excuse. It is an international conflict. One could ask therefore why AMISOM is in Somalia. While this is not about proactively deploying a mission, it is clear that African ownership and leadership is glaringly missing on the question of Tigray. Whatever happened to Article 4(h) of the Constitutive Act of the Union? Not even a statement on it or the threat of invoking it is anywhere on the radar! All the normative instruments were not invoked. It is difficult to challenge an argument that says that the AU abdicated its role completely here. The fate of APSA may have been sealed by the conflict in Tigray.

In one of my research interviews several weeks ago, preceding this lecture, I captured this statement from one of my respondents, which I want to repeat verbatim to avoid much being lost in translation:

> The African continent has betrayed the people of Africa—when one people or political community [referring to the people of Tigray] feel so betrayed by Africa. They may not have expected the AU to support or oppose; but they were expecting the AU to cooperate for establishment of a humanitarian corridor. What happened to the African Union and the African media? Africa is silent and indifferent… How can a continental organisation keep silent in the face of the suffering of the very African people it claims to exist for? The African Union is complicit…

The question must be asked, 'Where is African leadership and ownership?', particularly when Africa's representatives at the UN have not projected their voice on this issue. The three African members of the UN Security Council—Kenya, Niger and Tunisia—have not provided clear leadership on the question of Tigray. Rather, they seemed to go along with the position of China and Russia, who delayed the UNSC decision, arguing that Tigray was an internal conflict and that Africa should take the lead on this issue (AFP 2021). Interestingly, it was the new US Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, who organised the first public discussion to draw attention to the humanitarian situation in Tigray, 'to assess conflict-induced starvation …' (Nantulya and Charbonneau 2021). And it took Lisa Thomas-Greenfield to challenge the rest of the UNSC membership on the Council's silence on the situation in Tigray. At the meeting on 22 April 2021, following which the Council eventually issued its first public statement on Tigray, Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield asked: 'Do African lives not matter as much as those experiencing conflict in other countries?' (Nichols 2021). Thus, in reality, we must ask, 'Where is African leadership on this Tigray issue?' Why are we hearing only the voices of external actors—the US and the European Union—on this? Can we avoid a repeat of Libya, where Africa was a tad too slow to raise its voice? By the time African political action came in response to Libya, it was too late.

There is more to come in Tigray. It seems the war is far from over. If recent reports are correct, and the balance is shifting in favour of the Tigray People's Liberation Front, the full implications for the Horn must be considered, beyond the humanitarian crisis. There can be no doubt that we are seeing a renegotiation of the African state, and the landscape of the Horn of Africa is likely to change profoundly. The nature of the African state is what this conflict is about. The underlying issue is about the state in the Horn.

This is fundamentally an unfinished ideological conflict between those who seek a centralised unitary system and those who argue for a multinational ethnic federation. Whichever way this war ends, we will see a domino effect in the Horn of Africa. The AU or at least the rest of Africa will be confronted with the question of how to structure the African state. A few decades ago, the leaders of Africa agreed an arrangement to preserve colonially inherited borders as part of an effort to prevent a raft of conflicts by states seeking to return to pre-colonial boundaries. Where are the leaders to lead a new conversation if the current landscape of the Horn faces severe and imminent contestation? Sadly, the militarisation of the Horn has already begun and so this ideological conflict might not be settled without wars of unprecedented proportions unless African leaders take full cognizance of the evolving situation.

Implications for peace and security in the Horn of Africa and role of external actors

If the silence of African leaders in relation to the humanitarian situation in Tigray is this deafening, what hope have we that our leaders will respond in their collective (which is the key strength of the Union) to escalating crisis situations elsewhere, from Mozambique and Cameroon, to Chad and the Sahel? Perhaps it is already too late. African leaders may have already ceded much of the continent to all forms of external actors who have both seemingly benign and harmful intentions. The militarisation of the Horn of Africa is already in process, if not significantly advanced. Imagine the fate of the Somali regions, Djibouti and Somaliland.

Avoiding a situation in which Africa becomes the place where vultures feast certainly requires a kind of collective and strategic leadership that is thus far missing. The geopolitical interests in Africa are not likely to subside anytime soon. The strategic location of the Horn, its abundant natural resources and raw materials, and concerns around terrorism, piracy and migration in a young continent, are all tied to external military presences in Africa. All powers in the world are using hybrid warfare, including private military companies tied to the activities of their establishment. Chad's important role as a country is to be an instrument for hybrid warfare. We are seeing a changing conflict environment due to asymmetric warfare with changing and new technologies.

In addition to the Horn, there is enormous international involvement in the Sahel. It is the threat area for Europe, and the priorities of Europe do not always coincide with those of the people of Sahel, even when their governments align themselves with European priorities. Indeed, there is significant foreign military presence in Africa and it is noteworthy that it is not only the forces of the former colonisers, like France and the UK, who are present in Africa (Neethling 2020). The US and France have the most significant presence. There are also now third-level forces who are building bases in Africa. From China and Russia, to the Qataris and Emiratis, India and Turkey, among others, the scale of foreign military

presence is unprecedented and it is an issue about which the AU has raised concerns (AU 2016).

Clearly, the AU is unable to bring any influence to bear on this matter given the range of bilateral agreements between its members and various foreign powers and actors. A number of leaders and governments have already outsourced their own security to external forces (Smith 2021). In my own country of origin, Nigeria, for example, our president was compelled by the situation of growing insecurity to ask US AFRICOM for help to deal with the security challenges (Reuters 2021). Not only is this a reversal of Nigeria's position on the question of US AFRICOM military presence in Africa, this request is also coming from a country that prided itself as the keeper of peace in the region and the only one that could stand up to foreign powers like France.

So, what are we to make of our continental peace agenda?

One of the key weaknesses is that the AU has not been able to build consistent and stable relationship with the RECs. The tension between the centre and the periphery has never been resolved. There is inconsistency with regard to when to prioritise the concept of subsidiarity and comparative advantage and thus cede action to the regions with support from the centre. In fact, at the level of the AU there is sometimes preference for subordination rather than subsidiarity. The reality, however, is that the AU does not control troops, while regions can mobilise troops. Between the regional organisations, too, there are sometimes tensions and envy. ECOWAS was seen as a model for a long time. This is now not the case.

Interestingly, in contrast, for the first time the AU is now financing most of the political offices for peace and security across the continent. This is a good trend. The Peace Fund has secured more than half of the targeted USD 400 million. The dependence on external funders for project funding remains, even though there is a gap between commitment and actual funding. The new sanctions regime on non-payment of dues has made a difference. The PSC for the first time will have its own funds to allocate to its identified priorities, be they mediation, preventive diplomacy or engagement in Somalia and the Horn. It is an irony that this progress is being realised when the political leadership to address difficult crisis is missing.

Overall, the AU peace architecture is not only facing a problem of implementation and leadership, it is also not dynamic in response to new threats. The AU is neither living up to expectation in relation to new threats nor is it able to deal with the impact of a wounded international system, part of which is manifested in the monetised approach of the Gulf States and involvement of third forces.

Reflecting on the gaps and the reversal

These flaws cannot be overcome if there is no rethink of the leadership infrastructure. There has been overwhelming focus on the leadership hardware at many national levels and at regional and continental levels, without corresponding focus on the software, the relationships with people across African societies represented by organised or associated groups of people in civil society broadly.

It is difficult to get mechanisms to work if we do not build a relationship with societal organisations. The success of the OAU/AU two decades ago cannot be divorced from the growth of vocal civil society networks after the Cold War. We have since seen a gradual co-optation of people's power. The substance has been hollowed out in many contexts with the leadership of civil society organisations co-opted or decapitated.

Looking back, the effectiveness of ECOWAS, AU, SADC, etc., was related to the level of internal pressure from civil society on bad governance. Starting in the early 1990s, this reached a peak in the early 2000s. The ruling elite has in many cases taken a backward step and retreated from liberal democratic practices, where leaders were in tune with civil society organisations that gave rise to some of the interventions. The success of ECOWAS and AU was built on this. The relationship between people and continental leaders that we saw in the 2000s has all but disappeared. ECOWAS connected with people's call for change in West Africa. The AU also moved in this direction, making important pronouncements on its normative instruments, and on more than a dozen occasions the AU deployed sanctions against Member States for non-compliance with its norms. All of this is now under threat.

The flicker of hope

To be certain, Africa is not without hope. Whenever we have seen a flicker of hope in recent times, it has been from ordinary Africans, rising up for the sake of their own fundamental freedoms, for the pursuit of their aspirations to live well and live long. The mass movements—people's protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Niger, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and of course Sudan—speak

to the commitment and dedication of the people of Africa to take their destiny into their own hands, when leadership at all levels fails and when their leaders remain disconnected from their realities.

Sudan is worthy of a brief mention in this regard. African leaders rejected the International Criminal Court's indictment of Sudan's President Bashir (and others), accusing the ICC of bias against Africa; but they failed to empower their own justice mechanism. So, the people of Sudan stood up and took to the streets against all odds. Mass movements cannot be discounted. Sudan offers a good example, but with a caveat. Although former president Bashir was removed, the military structures are still intact. There are other experiences to learn from, whereby transitions remain militarised and the civil society valve can be shut—as we saw in Egypt. Citizens in such contexts cannot yet sleep with both eyes closed. One eye must be open and watchful. In Tunisia, for example, the citizen movement has resisted counter-revolutionary actions on several occasions.

We seem to come full circle every generation. Beneficiaries of the mass movements and even liberation movements often end up on the other side. And they do not always remember where they have come from. Now, another generation is confronting its old heroes. Overall, citizens' movements are not in vain, nor must they be regarded as unconstitutional, but they are often prone to being hijacked by the very elite forces that failed them in the first instance. On rare occasions, the elite forces fail. In Senegal, Wade flouted all the norms and the subregions made a noise about it. But the electorate in that country was so powerful that Wade was defeated at the ballot box.

Looking forward

So, where is Africa going? How can we pull back from the slide into a darker place? How can we reverse this trend and rebuild a better regional and continental infrastructure? It is sad to say that on this Africa Day, on the question of peace and leadership at official levels in Africa, there is no fully positive story and no power of example on the continent today. Our continent is crying out for leadership. Its people remain a strong pillar, but they have been neglected for too long.

Recalling President Thabo Mbeki's speech at the United Nations University more than two decades ago, the African Renaissance, in all its parts, can only succeed if its aims and objectives are defined by Africans themselves, if its programmes are designed by us and if we take responsibility for the success or failure of our policies (Mbeki 1998).

It is an important first step that Africa's leaders take responsibility collectively, and that they commit to re-taking ownership of Africa's security and development agenda. The missing pillar of the leadership infrastructure must be brought back and made stronger than ever. This software contains the lifeblood of leadership. And it is based on the relationship between leaders (managers of the hardware) and the rest of society. The experience of the last two decades tells us that we cannot just rely on a hollow leadership hardware. If there is commitment to the African peace agenda and to rebuilding a supporting continental peace architecture, every effort must be made to build a strong relationship with African people continentally.

Some proposals for doing this must include, among others:

1. A peace and security council that has non-state individuals who represent the voice of conscience (the same applies to the UN).

2. People's participation in the election of the members of the Commission, not least the Chairperson of the Commission. It should not be the case that at any point in time we do not have a pool of leaders from across society and government competing to lead the Commission. There is no shortage of expertise among African people and we should not be having candidates left unopposed.

3. The competency and commitment of those who will lead the Commission must be tested.

4. The African Parliament should be empowered to engage office-holders and people across the continent.

5. Ultimately, the question might even be asked whether a group of states committed to rebuilding the continental peace agenda might start on a clean slate and set the standards by which others join, a new form of peer review for continental peace.

Today's Africa Day is a moment of stocktaking—to revisit our common vision and the blueprint for the collective pursuit of prosperity, peace and the development of African peoples. In doing so, it has been necessary to highlight the painful reality of these times, but it is vitally important to look forward to the possibilities that the future holds if we commit to working together to rebuild our continent for the common future of Africa's peoples.

Bibliography

Abebe, A. K., 2020, Africa's Attempt to Abandon Practice of Presidents for Life Suffer Another Setback, The Conversation, 16 August. Available online at: https://theconversation.com/africas-attempts-to-abandon-practice-of-presidents-for-life-suffer-another-setback-144434; Republished by International IDEA, 17 August 2020 at: https://www.idea.int/news-media/news/africas-attempts-abandon-practice-presidents-life-suffer-another-setback.

AFP, 2021, UN Security Council to meet on Tigray, VoA News, 14 April. Available online at https://www.voanews.com/africa/un-security-council-meet-tigray.

African Union (AU), 2003, Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, 26 December. Available online at https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37293-treaty-0024_-_protocol_relating_to_the_establishment_of_the_peace_and_security_council_of_the_african_union_e.pdf.

African Union (AU), 2008, Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security between the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities and the Coordinating Mechanisms of the Regional Standby Brigades of Eastern Africa and Northern Africa. Available online at http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/mou-au-rec-eng.pdf.

African Union (AU), 2016, Press Statement following 601st meeting of the Peace and Security Council, 30 May. Available online at: http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/auc-601st-psc-meeting-on-early-warning-30-may-2016.pdf.

BBC Gambia, 2011, Ecowas Observers Boycott 'Unfair Poll', 23 November. Available online at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15851706.

DW.com, 2021, Fact Check: Are Other Nations Involved In The War In Tigray?, DW.com, 19 March. Available online at https://www.dw.com/en/fact-check-are-other-nations-involved-in-the-war-in-tigray/a-56891431.

Jeune Afrique, 2020, Côte d'Ivoire: Gbagbo To Be Reinstated For Polls, Says African Human Rights Court, The Africa Report, 30 September. Available online at https://www.theafricareport.com/43817/cote-divoire-gbagbo-to-be-reinstated-for-polls-says-african-human-rights-court/.

Lynch, C. and Gramer, R., 2020, U.N. Fears Ethiopia Purging Ethnic Tigrayan Officers from Its Peacekeeping Missions, Foreign Policy, 23 November. Available online athttps://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/23/un-ethiopia-purging-tigrayan-officers-peacekeeping-missions/.

Mbeki, T., 1998, The African Renaissance, South Africa and the World, South African Deputy President speaks at the United Nations University, 9 April, Available online at: https://archive.unu.edu/unupress/mbeki.html.

Murithi, T., 2012, Briefing: The African Union at Ten: An Appraisal, African Affairs, Vol. 111, No. 445, pp. 662–9.

Nantulya, C. K. and Charbonneau, L., 2021, UN Security Council needs A3's Leadership on African Crises, Mail and Guardian, 23 March. Available online at https://mg.co.za/africa/2021-03-23-un-security-council-needs-a3s-leadership-on-african-crises/.

Neethling, T., 2020, Why Foreign Forces Are Scrambling to Set Up Military Bases In Africa, The Conversation, 15 September. Available online at https://theconversation.com/why-foreign-countries-are-scrambling-to-set-up-bases-in-africa-146032.

Nichols, M., U.N. Security Council, For First Time, Declares Concern About Ethiopia's Tigray, Reuters, 22 April. Available online at https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/un-security-council-notes-concern-over-humanitarian-situation-tigray-2021-04-22/.

Olonisakin, 'F., 2020, Leadership in Crisis: Markers of Sustained Influence for Societal Mobilisation in Response to COVID-19, Framing Paper for ALC COVID-19 Research, African Leadership Centre Working Paper, April.

Olonisakin, 'F. and Murday, L., 2021, Leadership in a multipolar world: Why COVID has demonstrated the need to rethink global and national leadership infrastructure, Paper prepared for Global Build Better Report, School of Global Affairs, King's College London, May.

Reuters, 2021, Nigeria Urges US to Move Africa Command to the Continent, Reuters, 27 April. Available online at: https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/nigeria-urges-us-move-africa-command-headquarters-continent-2021-04-27/.

Smith, P., 2021, US/China/France: Africa's Security Woes Complicated by Foreign Boots, The Africa Report, 10 May. Available online at https://www.theafricareport.com/86537/us-china-france-africas-security-woes-complicated-by-foreign-boots/.

Solomon, S., 2020, Expert: No Evidence UAE Drones Are Being Used in Ethiopia's Tigray Conflict, VoA News, 10 December. Available online at https://www.voanews.com/africa/expert-no-evidence-uae-drones-are-being-used-ethiopias-tigray-conflict.

Vines, A., 2013, A Decade of African Peace and Security Architecture, International Affairs, Vol. 89, No. 1, p. 90.

Walsh, D., 2021, Changing Tack, US Sanctions Ethiopia over Abuses in Tigray War, New York Times, 24 May. Available online at: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/24/world/africa/ethiopia-us-sanctions-tigray.html.

Response/Intervention from the Patron of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation, President Thabo Mbeki to Africa Day Lecture

I want to say thank you very much to 'Funmi Olonisakin. I am really very moved by the honesty of this presentation, the frankness, the proper understanding of the challenges facing our continent, and the perspective of the presentation, that whatever our reverses, there is still hope for the future of our continent.

I think that 'Funmi has drawn attention to all the critical matters: what are the questions we need to pose, what sort of answers do we need and what kinds of actions do we take in order to make sure that we continue to define our destiny, to define our future and refuse to allow other people who are going to come from outside of the continent and pick on a country, and say, 'No, this country we will deal with it ourselves, we will sort it out without you, the Africans.'

I think that she also has drawn our attention to something critically important, in terms of the future that we need, which is the organisation and activation of the masses of the African people, so that they intervene to determine their own destiny, not delegate this matter to their leaders. It is they who must meet and sit and determine our future. Because I think we have seen the consequences of these negative things that we have been talking about, when you look at the suffering that is taking place, whether it is in the Sahel, in Tigray, in Somalia and the situation in South Sudan, which still continues today after a number of years.

When you look at all of that, it is clear that a very important intervention that is needed in order to sort out these challenges is the involvement of the masses of the African people. That is a principal challenge. What is it that you must do, to follow the examples that 'Funmi gave on engaging the masses, to demand the kind of change that Africa needs? That is the principal focus.

In that context, an assessment of the political formations on the continent also becomes important. What are they? What are they for? Do they relate to the people? If they say they represent our country and our continent, do they, in reality, represent our country and our continent?

In the end, we do indeed need to answer the question 'Funmi has posed—What next? I think what's next is that all of us need to use this extraordinary lecture she has given to engage with this reflection on the continent, so that we are able to pose the question, 'What is to be done?', and hopefully to find the right answers to that question.

As a Foundation, as UNISA and as the TM School, we make a commitment that we will use this lecture as an instrument to mobilise in the directions in which the lecturer has intervened. Thanks a lot to 'Funmi for this excellent intervention!