US-China Law Review, January 2025, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1-23
doi:10.17265/1548-6605/2025.01.001

DAVID PUBLISHING

Jus ad Pacem: Ending the Beginning of War in Africa

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Africa remains a hotspot for armed conflicts, significantly impacting human rights, economic stability, and political governance across the continent. Although interstate conflicts have declined, intrastate violence continues to challenge efforts toward peace, security, and development. This article explores the legal and practical frameworks for addressing the persistent challenges of armed conflict in Africa, focusing on the principle of *jus ad pacem*—the right to peace. By analysing the interplay of *jus ad bellum* (laws governing the use of force) and *jus in bello* (laws governing conduct in war), the article emphasises the need for a holistic approach to conflict resolution that prioritises civilian protection, strengthens regional legal mechanisms, and promotes inclusive governance. It argues for greater adherence to International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the integration of peace education, and regional collaboration to address the root causes of conflict. The conclusion underscores the imperative of transitioning from reactive to preventive measures, advocating for strategies aligned with the African Union's Agenda 2063 to transform conflicts into opportunities for sustainable peace and prosperity.

Keywords: dispute resolution, *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, peacebuilding, conflict prevention, sustainable development

Introduction

Africa has long grappled with armed conflicts that have caused profound loss of life, immense human suffering, and widespread economic devastation, while perpetuating political instability (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2019). Although interstate conflicts have decreased, intrastate conflicts remain prevalent across the continent (De Waal, Twagiramungu, Duursma, & Berhe, 2019). Despite the concerted efforts of the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the broader international community, many of these conflicts persist, undermining socioeconomic development and civilian well-being. From civil wars and violent ethnic clashes to terrorism and insurgency, Africa faces an array of challenges that threaten human rights, peace, security, and development. Notably, nearly 60% of the UN Security Council's agenda on peace and security pertains to African conflicts, and over 70% of the world's active hostilities occur on the continent (United Nations Security Council, 2022; Council for Foreign Relations, 2014; International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), 2022). This underscores the urgent need to focus on effectively ending wars and protecting civilians in Africa.

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Pursuing peace in Africa is not merely a moral obligation but also a strategic necessity (Metz, 2017; Ntlama, 2017). The necessity of preventing the outbreak of war and addressing ongoing conflicts is vital for the well-being and stability of Africa and its people. Armed conflicts on the continent have resulted in countless civilian casualties, hindered economic growth, and perpetuated cycles of instability and poverty. These conflicts have far-reaching consequences, affecting not only the countries directly involved but also neighbouring states and the international community. The disproportionate impact on civilians in armed conflicts underscores the need for a multidimensional approach to conflict resolution that addresses both immediate humanitarian concerns and long-term structural causes of violence.

The nature of warfare has changed dramatically over the past century (Kuwali, 2024a). Today, conflicts are no longer confined to defined battlefields but are waged in cities and villages, often targeting schools, hospitals, and civilian populations as deliberate methods of war (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflicts, 2024). Consequently, the primary victims of contemporary armed conflicts are no longer combatants but innocent civilians—especially vulnerable groups such as children, women, the elderly, and the infirm (Khorram-Manesh, Burkle, Goniewicz, & Robinson, 2021). This paradigm shift in warfare endangers not only local communities but also global stability, necessitating a renewed focus on conflict prevention and the protection of civilians.

In this volatile global context, the primary objective of international cooperation should be the protection of human rights, prevention of armed conflicts, and the maintenance of international peace and security. Equally important is the preservation of humanity during conflicts, as envisioned by International Humanitarian Law (IHL) (*jus in bello*) and enshrined in the UN Charter's mandate to protect succeeding generations from the scourge of war (United Nations, 1945; Veuthey, 1998). Article 2(3) of the UN Charter obliges states to resolve disputes by peaceful means, safeguarding peace, security, and justice (*jus ad pacem*). Article 4(e) of the AU Constitutive Act mirrors Article 2(3) of the UN Charter, as it obliges peaceful resolution of disputes by AU Member States (African Union, 2000). Article 4(i) of the AU Constitutive Act specifically requires the peaceful coexistence of members and accords them the "right to live in peace and security" (African Union, 2000). Similarly, Article 2(4) of the UN Charter prohibits the threat or use of force against another state's territorial integrity or political independence (*jus ad bellum*). The principle of prohibition of use of force or threat of use of force is echoed in Article 4(f) of the AU Constitutive Act. Although interstate conflicts in Africa have decreased, intrastate conflicts persist, creating an urgent need for solutions grounded in these legal frameworks.

While *jus ad bellum* (the law regulating the resort to war) provides a framework for preventing armed conflicts, it cannot fully guarantee their avoidance. Similarly, *jus in bello* (the laws governing the conduct of war) has often been inadequately adhered to, particularly by non-state actors (NSA), failing to adequately protect civilians during hostilities (Bassiouni, 2008). Given the reality that armed conflict cannot be entirely eradicated, it is imperative to focus on resolving conflicts by enforcing the laws and customs of war (Rojas-Orozco, 2020; Mabutin, 2011).

While *jus ad bellum* aims to prevent the outbreak of war, its effectiveness is limited without strict adherence to *jus in bello*, which governs conduct during hostilities. Non-compliance with these laws, particularly by non-state actors, has magnified the suffering of civilians in contemporary armed conflicts. Given the inevitability of

some level of armed conflict, efforts must focus on resolving disputes, enforcing the laws and customs of war, and finding effective mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution. This raises the critical question: who bears the responsibility for maintaining peace? This paper explores the evolving concept of *jus ad pacem*—the right to peace—and examines its potential to break the cycle of violence and prevent the onset of war in Africa, offering a pathway toward sustainable peace and security on the continent (Freeman & Peña, 2023). Central to this discussion is Article 33 of the UN Charter, which provides a range of peaceful dispute resolution mechanisms within international law.

Evolution of Armed Conflict

The purpose of war has historically been the annihilation of the enemy (Echevarria II, 2007, pp. 61-83). However, since the adoption of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the focus has shifted toward weakening adversaries rather than outright annihilation.[1] The term "armed conflict" has replaced the traditional notion of "war", reflecting this evolution. According to the Commentary on the First Geneva Convention, the deliberate substitution of "armed conflict" for "war" aims to eliminate ambiguities. In the past, states could argue that hostile actions were merely "police actions" or legitimate self-defence, thereby circumventing the constraints of international law. The term "armed conflict" closes this loophole, ensuring that such actions are subjected to legal and moral scrutiny (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2024).

The just war tradition distinguishes between the principles governing the decision to resort to war (*jus ad bellum*) and those governing conduct during war (*jus in bello*). These principles are not mutually exclusive; rather, they provide a moral framework for waging war that balances restraint with necessity (Moseley, 2004; McCoubrey, 1998, p. 1). Although it is not the role of combatants to resolve conflicts, ending hostilities is in the best interest of both belligerents and civilians. This aligns with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which calls for peaceful and inclusive societies and a significant reduction in all forms of violence.[2] Achieving this goal requires not only the protection of civilians but also the resolution of ongoing conflicts and the prevention of future hostilities.

Compliance with IHL, also known as the Law of Armed Conflict (LoAC), should serve to protect civilians, secure peace, and prevent a relapse into violence. However, widespread non-compliance by both state and non-state actors (NSA), often driven by political, security, and economic interests, weakens accountability for violations and exacerbates the humanitarian consequences of conflicts (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 2004, pp. 1-3). This undermines global peace and security and highlights the necessity of upholding international legal norms in contemporary conflicts.

Article 2(3) of the UN Charter: The Legal Framework for *Jus ad Bellum*

The principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes encapsulated in Article 2(3) of the UN Charter is a

[1] Geneva Conventions, a series of international treaties concluded in Geneva between 1864 and 1949 for the purpose of ameliorating the effects of war on soldiers and civilians. Two additional protocols to the 1949 agreement were approved in 1977 and the third one in 2005. See International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), https://icrc.org/ (accessed on 2 December 2024).

[2] United Nations, "17 Goals", Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, https://sdgs.un.org/goals. See also United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, June 26, 1945, 59 Stat. 1031, T.S. 993, 3 Bevans 1153, entered into force 24 October 1945 (the UN Charter), Article 1.

cornerstone of the international legal order, reflecting its foundational commitment to the prohibition of the use of force embodied in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter.[3] This principle has achieved the status of customary international law, binding all states regardless of its codification in the UN Charter. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) affirmed this status in the *Nicaragua* case, explicitly recognising the principle of peaceful resolution of disputes as a customary norm.[4] Article 2(3) of the UN Charter enshrines this principle, which is further elaborated in the 1974 Friendly Relations Declaration (FRD) (United Nations, 1970, pp. 121-124). This declaration emphasises the obligation of states to seek early and equitable settlements of international disputes. The 1982 Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes supplements the FRD by stressing the need for states to act in good faith and with a spirit of cooperation, underscoring that peaceful conflict resolution ultimately serves the best interests of all parties involved[5] (United States General Assembly, 1982).

The literal meaning of Article 2(3) of the UN Charter also covers disputes with subjects of international law other than States. Standard practice has been for the UN Security Council or the UN General Assembly to call upon the States concerned to seek a peaceful solution in negotiations with their non-state opponents. Therefore, Article 2(3) of the UN Charter extends its scope beyond disputes between states to include conflicts involving other subjects of international law, such as NSAs[6] (Simma et al., 2002, p. 108). This reflects the understanding that the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes (*jus ad pacem*) complements the prohibition of the use of force (*jus ad bellum*). However, where the use of force is legally permissible, the obligation to settle disputes peacefully does not apply. By this logic, the duty of peaceful settlement must also extend to NSAs involved in conflicts[7] (Dinstein, 1995, pp. 92-93). This interpretation effectively grants NSAs a degree of recognition as subjects of international law, without which the prohibition of force would lack practical utility (*effet utile*) (Sassòli & Bouvier, 1999, p. 215).

The prohibition of the use of force under Article 2(4) of the UN Charter is one of the most direct mechanisms for preventing war (Gray, 2008, p. 589). Nevertheless, the international legal framework does not impose a comprehensive obligation to submit disputes to peaceful resolution, nor does it mandate substantial disarmament (Simma et al., 2002, p. 114). Historical efforts, such as the Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907, failed to

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[3] See Article 2(4) of the UN Charter.

[4] *Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua* (*Nicaragua* v. *United States of America*), Merits, Judgment, ICJ Reports, 1986, p. 14.

[5] The annex to the General Assembly Resolution 37/10, also known as the Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes, reaffirms the principles set out in the Charter that all States shall settle their disputes by peaceful means and listed, *inter-alia*, negotiation, mediation and good offices as means to seek a peaceful settlement. United States General Assembly, "the Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes", A/37/10, Thirty seventh session, November 1982, https://peacemaker.un.org/documents/ares3710-manila-declaration-peaceful-settlement-disputes.

[6] Similar appeals were recently made to the situation in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Georgia and Sierra Leone; see Bruno Simma et al. (Eds.), *The Charter of the United Nations: A Commentary* (2nd edition, Vol. 1), Oxford: University Press, 2002, p. 108.

[7] It should be remembered that States are the original and primary subjects of international law; Simma, *The Charter of the United Nations*, pp. 108-109; cf. that Article 2(4) itself forbids the use of force by UN Members against "any state", viz. either a fellow Member or non-Member. Compare Article 2(6) of the UN Charter, which is a revolutionary stipulation, in that it imposes on non-Members the legal regime of Article 2(4). However, this is based on customary law; see Yoram Dinstein, *War, Aggression and Self-Defence* (2nd edition), Cambridge, 1995, pp. 92-93.

establish a system of compulsory arbitration for disputes threatening peace[8] (Collier & Lowe, 2000, pp. 31-39). However, the 1919 Covenant of the League of Nations represented progress in this regard, with Article 12(1) requiring members to submit disputes likely to lead to conflict to arbitration, judicial settlement, or inquiry by the League of Nations' Council (League of Nations, 2024). Under Article 2(3) of the UN Charter, states, and by extension NSAs, are unequivocally obligated to settle disputes exclusively through peaceful means (Malanczuk, 2001, p. 308).

Consequently, any measures inconsistent with the prohibition of force in Article 2(4) cannot be characterised as peaceful. This raises questions about the compatibility of countermeasures with the obligation to resolve disputes peacefully. Countermeasures risk escalating conflicts through retaliatory spirals, undermining the very principle of dispute resolution. In this context, Article 60 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT) provides a legal mechanism to suspend or terminate treaties in cases of grave violations. Similarly, Article 48 of the International Law Commission (ILC) Articles on State Responsibility outlines procedural safeguards for states implementing countermeasures, requiring them to negotiate with the target state and fulfill dispute resolution obligations. The precise timing for recourse to available mechanisms remains undefined, yet compliance with these procedural guarantees is essential to maintaining the integrity of international legal norms.

Article 33 of the UN Charter: Peaceful Means of Dispute Resolution

Article 33 of the UN Charter requires the parties to any dispute likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, to first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice. Article 33 constitutes a detailed elaboration of Article 2(3), although it refers only to disputes, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, whereas Article 2(3) refers to international disputes in general. The discrepancy would mean that Article 33 describes disputes as a preliminary stage before the seizure of the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly, whereas, under Article 2(3), the institutional responsibility of the UN materialises only if international peace and security are threatened (Simma et al., 2002, p. 534). Generally, therefore, Article 33(1) can be characterised as a fundamental policy rule that divides the areas of responsibility of the parties to a dispute and of the UN. The primary responsibility rests with the parties, which means that the competence of the Security Council and the General Assembly is subsidiary (Simma et al., 2002, p. 534).

Thus, the parties to a conflict are explicitly enjoined to deploy active efforts with a view to settling the dispute existing between them. As a result, it becomes clear that the obligation of peaceful settlement is not subsumed by the prohibition of the use of force but is autonomous and possesses a specific substance of its own. The Security Council can make an appeal to the parties to a dispute in accordance with Article 33(2) of the UN

[8] Although the Conferences adopted the conventions defining the laws and customs of warfare and declarations forbidding certain practices, including the bombardment of undefended towns, the use of poisonous gases and soft-nosed bullets; see Fact Sheet No. 13, International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, available at https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FactSheet13en.pdf, 3, visited on 9 December 2024; see also Stanslas Jeannesson, "The International Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907", Digital Encyclopedia of European History, Sorbonne University, https://ehne.fr/en/encyclopaedia/themes/international-relations/europe-and-legal-regulation-international-relations/international-hague-conference-1899-and-1907, visited on 9 January 2025. but see John Collier and Vaughan Lowe, The Settlement of Disputes in International Law, Oxford, 2000, pp. 31-39, relating to the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

Charter. In this respect, Article 35 of the UN Charter grants far-reaching opportunities to the parties, which, pursuant to Article 37 are even under an obligation to refer their conflict to the UN Security Council (Simma et al., 2002, p. 592).

According to Article 33 of the UN Charter, the peaceful means for dispute resolution include negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or any other peaceful means of their choice. Below is an explanation of each of the concepts, which arguably constitutes the backbone for the concept of *jus ad pacem*, illustrating how each contributes to the broader goal of promoting peace and preventing conflict in Africa and beyond.

Negotiation

Negotiation means discussions at different levels of authority with a view to achieving common understanding or agreement (Hakapää, 2024). Negotiation involves direct discussions between parties in conflict to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. It is often the first step in dispute resolution. In the context of *jus ad pacem*, negotiation emphasises dialogue as a tool for preventing violence. By encouraging parties to communicate openly, negotiation fosters understanding and helps address grievances before they escalate into armed conflict. This approach aligns with the right to peace, prioritising peaceful dialogue over military solutions. For instance, Kenya and Ethiopia settled their dispute along their shared border, particularly in the Turkana and Moyale regions, through negotiations. These negotiations led to agreements on boundary demarcation and the establishment of joint commissions to address recurring issues (Shikuku, Okoth, & Kimokoti, 2020).

Mediation

Mediation is a facilitated negotiation process where a neutral third party assists the conflicting parties in reaching an agreement (Bercovitch, Zartman, & Kremenyuk, 2008; Moore, 2014, pp. 555-570). Mediation is a vital mechanism under *jus ad pacem*, as it introduces an impartial perspective that can help de-escalate tensions. The impartiality of the mediator and inclusivity of all key players, the strategy and leverage of the mediators, and the duration of the conflict are key to the success of mediation (Hinnebusch & Zartman, 2016, pp. 1-32). By providing guidance and fostering communication, mediators can help clarify issues, identify common ground, and propose solutions that honour the interests of all parties involved (Ali, 2023). This mechanism promotes sustainable peace by emphasising cooperation over confrontation. For example, Malawi and Tanzania have engaged a High-Level Mediation Team (HLMT) under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to resolve a long outstanding boundary dispute between the two neighbouring countries over Lake Malawi. Further, after a bloody war between Ethiopia and Eritrea (1998-2000), the boundary dispute was resolved through mediation led by the AU, the UN, and the government of Algeria. Consequently, the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) was formed to demarcate the border (Tulu, 2019).

Conciliation

Conciliation is a peaceful method of resolving disputes where a neutral third party helps the disputing states reach an agreement without imposing a binding decision (Bercovitch et al., 2008). Conciliation involves the intervention of a third party who, after studying the dispute, offers suggestions or recommendations for resolution without imposing a solution. In the context of *jus ad pacem*, conciliation can help prevent conflicts from escalating by providing a structured framework for dialogue. The conciliator's role in recommending solutions

encourages parties to explore options they may not have considered, thus promoting a culture of peace (Moore, 2014, pp. 299-325). This method underscores the importance of dialogue and understanding in maintaining harmony (Moore, 2014, pp. 435-476). For example, Tunisia and Algeria resolved their dispute through conciliation in 1983. The two countries had disagreements over certain stretches of their border following Algeria's independence in 1962. The dispute was resolved through bilateral conciliation efforts supported by the Arab League and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) (Aidli, 2019). The final settlement included agreements on joint development and management of resources along the border (Aidli, 2019). Also when boundary and border control issues arose between Gambia and Senegal, despite their historical and cultural ties, the dispute was resolved through conciliation led by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and bilateral negotiations. The two countries eventually formed the Senegambia Confederation (1982-1989) to improve cooperation (Opoku-Aikins, 2019).

Arbitration

Arbitration is a binding process in which a neutral third party, the arbitrator, makes a decision on the dispute after hearing arguments from both sides. While arbitration results in a decision that parties are obligated to follow, it aligns with *jus ad pacem* by offering a peaceful resolution mechanism that avoids the escalation of disputes into armed conflict. By agreeing to arbitration, parties demonstrate their commitment to resolving their issues constructively, thereby reinforcing the principles of justice and peace. A classic example of arbitration is over the maritime boundary between Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. The two countries had conflicting claims over maritime zones in the Atlantic Ocean, an area which is rich in potential oil and gas reserves (Tian, 2023). The dispute was submitted to an Arbitration Tribunal under the auspices of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).[9] The tribunal issued its decision in 1989, delineating the maritime boundary. Both countries accepted the ruling and have cooperated on resource management since.[10] Another example relates to the ownership of the oil-rich Abyei Area, which was contested between Sudan and South Sudan. The dispute was referred to the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague after mediation efforts failed.[11] The PCA redefined the borders of the Abyei Area, granting some contested regions to Sudan and others to South Sudan. Both parties accepted the decision (Beatens & Yatova, 2011).

Judicial Settlement

Judicial settlement refers to resolving disputes through established legal mechanisms, such as international courts or tribunals, where a legal ruling is issued based on law (Collier & Lowe, 2000, pp. 1-7; Merrill, 2017, p. 9). In the framework of *jus ad pacem*, judicial settlement underscores the importance of legal frameworks in addressing conflicts. By relying on judicial bodies, parties can obtain impartial and legally binding resolutions.

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[9] The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was opened for signature at Montego Bay, Jamaica, on 10 December 1982. It entered into force on 14 November 1994, see United Nations, www.un.org/depts/convention_agreements/texts/unclos-e.pdf (10 December 2024).

[10] Case Concerning the Arbitral Award of 31 July 1989 (*Guinea-Bissau* v. *Senegal*): Provisional Measures, Merits, 12 November 1991, ICJ Report 1991.

[11] Final Award in the Matter of an Arbitration before a Tribunal Constituted in Accordance with Article 5 of the Arbitration Agreement between the Government of Sudan and The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army on Delimiting Abyei Area and the Permanent Court of Arbitration Optional Rules for Arbitrating Disputes Between Two Parties of Which Only One Is a State, Between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (July 22, 2009), at http://www.pca-cpa.org/showpage.asp?pag_id=1306.

This approach not only fosters accountability but also upholds the rule of law, which is essential for sustainable peace and conflict prevention. Several African countries have resorted to judicial settlement of their disputes, relying on international arbitration, regional courts, or domestic judicial processes.

For example, Nigeria and Cameroon went to the global court over territorial ownership of the Bakassi Peninsula, rich in oil and fisheries. In Land and Maritime Boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria (Cameroon v. Nigeria: Equatorial Guinea intervening), the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled in favour of Cameroon. Nigeria agreed to comply, and the Green Tree Agreement (2006) facilitated a peaceful handover of the disputed territory.[12] Nigeria fully withdrew from the peninsula in 2008, demonstrating compliance with international legal mechanisms. Likewise, Botswana and Namibia had a dispute regarding the sovereignty over Kasikili/Sedudu Island in the Chobe River, the ICJ ruled in 1999 that the island belonged to Botswana based on colonial-era treaties and river boundaries.[13] Namibia accepted the ruling, and both countries maintained friendly relations. When Mali and Burkina Faso had a border conflict over the Agacher Strip, the ICJ ruled in 1986, dividing the disputed territory between the two countries. Both countries accepted the ruling, preventing further conflict.[14] These cases demonstrate the growing reliance on legal mechanisms by African states to address disputes, contributing to peace and stability on the continent. However, the downside is that supranational judicial institutions do not have enforcement mechanisms for their judgments.

Other Peaceful Means

Although the catalogue of Article 33(1) of the UN Charter lists nearly all mechanisms of dispute settlement that are known in international practice, it has deliberately left open-ended "other peaceful means".[15] Parties are consequently free to combine different types or to modify them in such a way as may seem most appropriate for the solution of a pending dispute. This category includes various other methods not specifically listed in the Charter, such as diplomatic efforts, public advocacy, or engagement through regional organisations. Emphasising "other peaceful means" aligns with the overarching goal of *jus ad pacem* by encouraging innovative and diverse approaches to conflict resolution. These methods can adapt to the unique contexts of disputes, allowing for tailored solutions that reflect local dynamics and values, ultimately fostering a culture of peace. For example, at the end of the apartheid regime at the dawn of democratic government in South Africa, the new Government led by Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, the parties resorted to have a truth and reconciliation commission (TRC) (A. Allan & M. M. Allan, 2000).

Good Offices

Good offices refer to a conflict resolution method where a third party facilitates dialogue between disputing countries, without directly mediating or making binding decisions (Hume, 1994). Good offices involve the facilitation of dialogue and negotiation between conflicting parties by a third party, often a neutral state or international organisation, without imposing any solutions. Although Article 33(1) of the UN Charter does not

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[12] *Land and Maritime Boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria* (*Cameroon v. Nigeria*; Equatorial Guinea Intervening), International Court of Justice, October 10, 2002 (Int'l Ct. Justice Oct. 10, 2002).

[13] *Kasikili/Sedudu Island*, *Botswana v. Namibia*, Judgment, Merits, [1999] ICJ Rep 1045, ICGJ 57 (ICJ 1999), 13th December 1999, International Court of Justice [ICJ].

[14] *Frontier Dispute* (*Burk. Faco v. Mali*), 1986 I.C.J. 3 (Order of Jan. 10).

[15] *Frontier Dispute* (*Burk. Faco v. Mali*).

explicitly refer to good offices as a means of settlement, it may not be read in an exhaustive manner (McDougal & Gardner, 1951, p. 258; Johnstone, 2003). The objective of good offices is to create a conducive environment for communication and understanding, allowing parties to explore options for resolution independently (Johnstone, 2003). This mechanism is particularly useful in situations where direct dialogue may be challenging due to mistrust or hostility. Several African countries have successfully resolved disputes through good offices with the help of international or regional organisations and respected figures.

For example, regarding the territorial dispute between Egypt and Sudan over the Halaib Triangle, a region along their shared border, the AU and Arab League have provided good offices, encouraging dialogue and cooperative agreements (Houlihanm, 2018). While still unresolved, tensions have eased, and both parties have engaged in negotiations facilitated by external mediators. Similarly, when tensions related to the support of rebel groups during the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Mano River Union used good offices to create dialogue and peace initiatives (Okere, 2015). The peace processes contributed to the end of the conflicts in Liberia (2003) and Sierra Leone (2002) and paved the way for regional cooperation (Essuman-Johnson, 2009). The presence of a neutral party helps maintain communication channels and reduce tensions. For many African countries, good offices have proven effective in fostering dialogue, promoting mutual understanding, and preventing conflicts from escalating, contributing to regional peace and stability.

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding refers to comprehensive efforts to address the underlying causes of conflict, promote social cohesion, and establish conditions for lasting peace after a conflict has ended (Tschirgi, 2004, pp. 1-5). It includes political, economic, and social initiatives to support recovery and reconciliation. Peacebuilding seeks to create sustainable frameworks for peace by strengthening institutions, promoting good governance, and fostering community engagement. It often involves local populations and addresses grievances that could lead to future conflicts. In Sierra Leone, for example, following the civil war that ended in 2002, the UN and various nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) engaged in extensive peacebuilding efforts. These included disarmament and reintegration programmes for former combatants, community reconciliation processes, and initiatives to rebuild infrastructure and promote economic development (Tschirgi, 2004, pp. 9-10, 17-19). The establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was also a critical component, facilitating dialogue and healing among communities (Hirsch, MacKenzie, & Sesay, 2012).

In 2005, the UN established the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) as an intergovernmental advisory body that supports peace efforts in conflict-affected countries (United Nations Security Council, 2022). The PBC is a key addition to the capacity of the international community in the broad peace agenda[16] (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2024). On 18 September 2018, the PBC and the AU Commission signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to provide a framework and strengthen cooperation to support peacebuilding and sustain peace efforts in Africa (United Nations, 2017). The PBC is currently supporting several African countries emerging from conflict in building sustainable peace and preventing the recurrence of violence, including Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and Sierra Leone (United Nations, 2017). On its part, the

[16] The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) was established in 2005 with the passage of both A/RES/60/180 and S/RES/164.

AU established the Peace and Security Department (PSD), which focuses on conflict prevention, management, resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction, which are central components of peacebuilding (African Union, 2024a). The 2006 Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) Framework provides guidelines for African-led post-conflict recovery efforts (African Union, 2006).

Peacemaking

Peacemaking refers to the process of resolving conflict and establishing peace, often involving diplomatic efforts, negotiations, and mediation (Solomon, 2007, pp. 7-9; Zartman, 2007, pp. 3-7). Peacemaking aims to address the underlying issues of a conflict, building relationships, and creating frameworks for lasting peace. Examples of peacemaking initiatives in Africa include: The 1984 Nkomati Accords, which was a significant peacemaking effort between *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO), translated as Mozambique Liberation Front and *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (RENAMO), literally meaning Mozambican National Resistance. The Nkomati Agreement was facilitated by the then South African President Pieter Willem Botha (Emerson, 2014). The Agreement was signed on 16 March 1984. In the Nkomati Agreement, South Africa agreed to stop supporting RENAMO, while Mozambique agreed to stop allowing the African National Congress (ANC) and other anti-apartheid groups to operate from its territory. The goal was to reduce cross-border hostilities and destabilisation efforts between the two neighbouring countries (Ofosu-Amaah, 1982). Another prominent peacemaking initiative in Africa is the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in 2005 between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). The CPA brought an end to over two decades of civil war. It paved the way for the peaceful secession of South Sudan (Grawert, 2010).

Peacekeeping

Pursuant to Chapter VI of the UN Charter, peacekeeping involves the deployment of international forces to maintain peace and security in conflict areas, usually following a ceasefire or peace agreement (Bellamy, Williams, & Griffin, 2020, pp. 11-12). Peacekeepers are typically unarmed or lightly armed and are tasked with monitoring and reporting on the situation. Peacekeeping operations aim to create a secure environment, protect civilians, and assist in implementing peace agreements. They are intended to prevent the resurgence of hostilities and provide a stable atmosphere for political dialogue. The first UN peacekeeping operation in Africa was the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC), established in 1960. The UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) established on 29 April 1991 by UN Security Council Resolution 690 remains the longest peacekeeping operation in Africa (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2024).

The AU's first peacekeeping force was the AU Mission in Burundi (AMIB), established in 2003 (Badmus, 2017). AMIB marked the AU's initial foray into peacekeeping operations. Today, peacekeeping is becoming more multidimensional and multifaceted. For example, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is a peacekeeping operation established on 25 April 2013, by UN Security Council Resolution 2100 to support the transitional government, protect civilians, and promote stability in the aftermath of conflict. The UN Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is one of the largest and most complex peacekeeping operations ever undertaken by the UN. MONUSCO was established to address ongoing

instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) following decades of conflict and humanitarian crises.[17]

United Nations Sanctioned Coercive Dispute Resolution Mechanism

Peace Enforcement

Peace enforcemnent is not purely peaceful because it entails the use of military force, even if the ultimate objective is to establish peace. Based on Chapter VII of the UN Charter, peace enforcement involves the use of military force by an international organisation or coalition to compel parties in conflict to comply with peace agreements or to restore peace in situations where no consent from the conflicting parties exists (Findlay, 2002, pp. 3-9). Peace enforcement involves using military force to protect civilians or restore peace and security, often in situations where ceasefires or agreements have not been reached or are not respected. Inasmuch as it involves the use of force, peace enforcement is more robust than peacekeeping.

Peace enforcement is typically conducted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which allows for action against threats to international peace. The AU has undertaken peace enforcement missions in various conflict zones in Africa. For example, the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) (2004-2007) was tasked with monitoring ceasefires and protecting civilians under imminent threat of attack, using force where necessary (FOI, 2008). Further, in the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) (2007-2022), the continental body authorised the mission to use all necessary measures to protect the Federal Government of Somalia; neutralise Al-Shabaab and other armed groups, and create conditions for stabilisation, reconciliation, and reconstruction.[18] Similarly, the AU Regional Task Force (AU-RTF) against the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) (2011-2021) was authorised to use force to eliminate the LRA, protect civilians, and support the stabilisation of affected areas (African Union, 2013).

The African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) (2013) was deployed to combat insurgent groups in northern Mali, protect civilians and state institutions, and facilitate the restoration of Mali’s territorial integrity (United Nations, 2012). The African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) (2013-2014) was authorised to protect civilians and restore security, stabilise the country and disarm armed groups, and facilitate humanitarian aid (African Union, 2014). The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) Against Boko Haram (2015-Present), although not exclusively an AU mission, it operates under AU endorsement to neutralise Boko Haram and Islamic State affiliates and protect civilians and stabilise affected regions (Zabala, 2023). The efforts of the MNJTF have contributed to a decline in the number of terrorist attacks and fatalities in the region (Zabala, 2023).

Article 52 of the UN Charter: Dispute Resolution by Regional Arrangements

Article 52 of the UN Charter establishes a framework for collaboration between regional arrangements and the UN in maintaining international peace and security. It encourages regional organisations to pursue the pacific settlement of disputes before escalating them to the UN Security Council. Specifically, Article 52(1) emphasises that regional arrangements must align with the purposes and principles of the UN; Article 52(2) urges regional

[17] For more information on the UN Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), visit https://monusco.unmissions.prg/en/resolutions-security-council (14 December 2024).

[18] For a detailed history and operations of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), visit: https://amisom-au.org.

parties to exhaust efforts toward peaceful resolution within their mechanisms; and Article 52(3) obligates the Security Council to promote regional dispute resolution.

The drafting history of the UN Charter suggests that the purpose of integrating regional organisations into the UN was to use local solidarity and cooperation to strengthen the world security system (Krezdorn, 1954, p. 46, cited in Simma et al., 2002, p. 52). The Article 52 framework allows regional organisations, such as the AU, to play a central role in fostering peace within their respective regions. In Africa, the AU is regarded as the continental body, whereas regional organisations are couched as regional economic communities (REC) such as the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States Community (ECCAS), ECOWAS, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and SADC (African Union, 2024b). The integration of regional efforts into the global security framework is meant to harness local solidarity and cooperation, bolstering the broader peace and security agenda.

As envisaged in Chapter VIII, particularly Article 52 of the UN Charter, regional organisations focus on collective security and peaceful dispute resolution within their jurisdiction. In contrast, under Chapter VII, especially Article 51 of the UN Charter, collective self-defence alliances prioritise external defence (see for example, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), 2024). While the lines between these functions can sometimes blur, the AU's primary mandate is rooted in conflict prevention, management, and resolution through peaceful means (for a detailed discussion of the subject, see Simma et al., 2002, pp. 807-853). Regional organisations do not necessarily have to consist of sovereign States since even federal units of a federation or other international organisations may become members of a regional organisation or arrangement (Walter, 1995 quoted in Simma et al., 2002, p. 828). RECs play a crucial role in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa. The AU's Peace and Security Council, mediation efforts, and peacekeeping missions have helped mitigate conflicts and promote stability across the continent. Similarly, international partners, including the UN and regional powers, can provide support and resources to facilitate peace processes and build sustainable peace in Africa (Rupesinghe, 1998, p. 59).

Established on the principle of state sovereignty and non-interference in Member States' internal affairs, the UN is limited in its ability to maintain public information regarding the level of risk or instability that any of its Members may be facing.[19] As such, the AU and its RECs as regional arrangements under the UN Charter, are uniquely positioned to address disputes in Africa through peaceful mechanisms. The AU's emphasis on peaceful dispute resolution aligns with Article 33 of the UN Charter, which outlines methods such as negotiation, mediation, inquiry, and arbitration. The AU's peacemaking efforts, such as mediation in Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia, exemplify its active commitment to preventing and resolving conflicts (Okorie, 2024; Forti & Singh, 2022).

Guided by its African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the AU employs tools such as mediation and negotiation by facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties; early warning and preventive diplomacy through the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the AU monitors potential conflicts and advises on preventive measures; post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) by supporting reconciliation,

[19] See Article 2(7) of the UN Charter.

governance reforms, and socio-economic recovery; and collaboration, especially by partnerships with RECs to strengthen peace initiatives (Desmidt, 2019). Central to the APSA's role is forecasting the potential for conflict escalation in order to develop contingency plans for victim prevention. A few conflicts emerge without warning. In most cases, conflicts develop gradually, and their progress can be monitored. For this reason, preventive measures deserve more attention from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) as well as governments (The International Council on Human Rights Policy, 2002, p. 35).

The proposed UN's Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat (EISAS) would have a vital role in coordinating early warning mechanisms with regional institutions of this nature for preventive initiatives to reduce tension and avert conflicts.[20] Thus, having constructed early warning mechanisms, a corresponding early response system must be developed to ensure timely resolution of disputes. Closer co-operation and co-ordination of the activities of various parties could improve early responses (Rupesinghe, 1998, p. 82).

Prioritising Conflict Management, Resolution, and Prevention in Africa

Conflict duration is determined by the number and motives of actors, biases of intervention, and the balance of power between the actors (Crahan, 2020, p. 11; Balch-Lindsey & Enterline, 2000). The intervention of third parties is a major determinant of conflict duration because it changes the capability of the supported actor (Crahan, 2020, p. 12). The conflict-handling mechanisms outlined in Article 33 of the UN Charter can be broadly categorised into three key approaches: conflict management, conflict resolution, and conflict prevention (Savitri, 1997; Bredel, 2003). Each approach reflects distinct strategies aimed at addressing disputes and fostering sustainable peace.

Conflict management primarily focuses on mitigating or controlling the destructive consequences of a conflict, often without directly addressing the underlying root causes. Its primary aim is to contain the escalation of violence or harm, ensuring that conflicts remain manageable rather than resolved. In contrast, conflict resolution goes beyond managing symptoms and seeks to address the fundamental causes of the conflict, aiming to achieve a lasting settlement that ends hostilities (Ramsbotham, Miall, & Woodhouse, 2011). While both conflict management and resolution are inherently reactive, responding to conflicts after they have surfaced, conflict prevention takes a proactive stance. It seeks to anticipate potential conflicts and implement measures to avoid their occurrence, thereby averting the negative consequences before they emerge (Assefa, 1999).

Long-term conflict prevention requires a comprehensive, multidimensional approach that goes beyond reactive measures like military interventions. While immediate peacekeeping efforts can stabilise volatile situations, achieving sustainable peace necessitates addressing the root causes of conflict, including poverty, poor governance, and human rights violations. These issues are often interlinked and require coordinated responses. Preventing conflicts demands a strategic framework where peace, the rule of law, and respect for human rights are embedded within broader development goals. It also requires creating conditions that make recourse to violence an unviable option. For instance, strengthening institutions, promoting inclusive governance, and addressing economic inequities are critical to reducing the appeal of armed conflict. Military forces, traditionally associated with conflict management, must adapt to this evolving paradigm. Their roles should extend beyond

[20] The Brahimi Report, United Nations General Assembly Security Council A/55/305/2000/809, p. xi.

traditional combat functions to supporting a culture of peace and non-violence. This integrated approach ensures that peacebuilding efforts are sustainable, fostering a synergistic relationship between development, security, and human rights (Møller, 2001, p. 16).

Development, security, and human rights share a symbiotic relationship, which is encompassed in the concept of human security. The APSA should not be seen through the prism of military force. The focus should instead be on the entire spectrum of preventive strategies at the disposal of the AU for conflict prevention: a vigilant early warning and corresponding early response, and timely and decisive action. Since the causes of conflicts are complex, they need to be addressed in a comprehensive and coherent manner. The APSA should have a structure that focuses on timely and adequate prevention. Prioritising conflict management, resolution, and prevention in Africa demands a shift from fragmented, reactive strategies to proactive, comprehensive frameworks. By addressing both immediate and structural challenges, stakeholders can establish a foundation for lasting peace and development.

Jus ad Pacem: Towards Ending Wars and Building Sustainable Peace in Africa

International law provides a structured framework for addressing conflicts and fostering peace, primarily through *jus ad bellum* (regulating the use of force) and *jus in bello* (regulating the conduct of warfare). However, the principle of *jus ad pacem*—the right to peace—offers an essential yet underexplored dimension. This concept focuses on preventing violence, addressing the root causes of conflict, and promoting peaceful dispute resolution. The persistent conflicts in regions such as the DRC, Libya, Somalia, and Sudan, among others, highlight the urgency of implementing a comprehensive *jus ad pacem* framework to mitigate the devastating human and societal costs of war.

Africa's susceptibility to conflict is exacerbated by the proliferation of arms, weak governance, economic inequalities, and external interests (Musah, 2002). Arms suppliers often profit from the chaos of prolonged conflicts, as seen in the DRC and Libya. This underscores the importance of focusing on peace initiatives tailored to the continent's unique challenges, particularly in countering the exploitation of Africa as a dumping ground for weapons and ammunition. The AU must take a leadership role in advancing *jus ad pacem*. While the AU's Panel of the Wise has the potential to address conflicts proactively, it has underutilised its right of initiative. Establishing an autonomous AU institution dedicated to resolving and ending conflicts could provide a much-needed framework to link conflict prevention, resolution, and management. Additionally, RECs must be empowered to complement these efforts through localised strategies and rapid interventions. To advance *jus ad pacem*, the AU and its Member States should pursue the following.

Addressing Root Causes of Armed Conflict Through Comprehensive Conflict Analysis

Many of Africa's conflicts stem from deep-rooted grievances, including political marginalisation, ethnic tensions, socio-economic inequality, and competition over scarce resources. Addressing these root causes requires a comprehensive strategy that combines political, economic, and social reforms. Governments must work to promote inclusive governance, protect human rights, and create opportunities for all citizens. Additionally, efforts to address poverty, unemployment, and inequality are essential for promoting stability and reducing the risk of conflict (Kuwali, 2022, pp. 599-610; Regehr, 2011).

Conflict resolution must begin with a systematic analysis of the causes, dynamics, and triggers of violence. Frameworks such as the "Conflict Triangle" (root causes, proximate causes, triggering events) should guide interventions. This approach will enable policymakers to design tailored strategies that address the multidimensional nature of conflicts. Conflict prevention requires tackling deep-seated grievances such as: political marginalisation by promoting inclusive governance that ensures fair representation of all groups in political decision-making; addressing economic inequality by developing policies to bridge socioeconomic disparities through equitable resource distribution, employment creation, and poverty alleviation; and resource management by implementing sustainable and equitable management of natural resources, emphasising local ownership and benefit-sharing frameworks to prevent exploitation and resentment.

Promoting Accountable and Inclusive Governance

Accountable governance is essential for fostering trust and reducing conflict. African governments must prioritise strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law, combating corruption through robust oversight mechanisms, and building a strong social contract between citizens and the state to ensure political stability and economic prosperity. Accountable governance is key for Africa with political stability, deepened democracy, equity, justice, and economic prosperity. To achieve this, there must always be a robust social contract between society and the State. African governments should prioritise accountable governance, transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. Strengthening democratic institutions, combating corruption, and ensuring inclusive and equitable development can foster trust between governments and citizens and reduce vulnerabilities to external manipulation. On their part, African leaders should redefine their politics to focus not on power but on commitment to accountability, respect for the rule of law, and ethical values that make leadership a people-centred enterprise (Kuwali, 2024b).

Resource Management and Ownership

African countries should adopt policies that ensure sustainable and equitable management of natural resources, including land, minerals, and water. Prioritising local ownership and benefit-sharing frameworks in resource extraction projects can prevent exploitation by external actors and promote inclusive development (Lwanda, 2022, pp. 525-544; 2024).

Strengthening Oversight Institutions and Civil Society

Weak governance structures and institutional capacity constraints exacerbate the risk of conflict in Africa. Strengthening state institutions, promoting the rule of law, and combating grand corruption are essential for building resilient societies and preventing violence. Investing in education, healthcare, and infrastructure can also help address the underlying drivers of conflict and promote sustainable development (Mlambo, Zubane, & Mlambo, 2020). If the current trend of coup d'états on the continent continues unabated, unlawful military changes of government will continue to have reverberating ripple effects and weaken democratic control of the military. Africans need healthy civil-military relationships and strong social contracts between leaders and the citizenry. More so, civil society and the media should enhance diagonal accountability to amplify accountability (United Nations, 2023; Marcuardt & Merchkova, 2020). Weak institutions perpetuate fragility and violence. Building institutional resilience in Africa involves investing in education, healthcare, and infrastructure to address structural inequities, empowering civil society organisations to monitor peace agreements, promote

accountability, and enhance civil-military relations to uphold democratic control over armed forces (Kalyvas, 2003; Collier & Hoeffler, 2000).

Supporting National and Regional Frameworks

Articles 52(2) and (3) limit the jurisdiction of regional arrangements or agencies to the pacific settlement of disputes. According to Article 33 of the UN Charter, peaceful means of dispute settlement include negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their choice. The combined effect of these two essential provisions accords regional institutions a comprehensive right of initiative. The effectiveness of regional organisations depends on developing national frameworks for conflict prevention. To effectively discharge this task, the AU should develop national and regional capacity for information gathering and analysis to provide strategic options for preventive action punctuated with informed and appropriate responses (Rupesinghe, 1998, p. 59). To strengthen its peacebuilding efforts, the AU must work with governments and NGOs to ensure adherence to international instruments on peace and security. Reviewing national legislation, reforming frameworks to align with regional arrangements, and fostering cooperation among governments and civil society organisations are vital steps toward sustainable peace.

Promoting Local Peace Initiatives

Understanding local dynamics is paramount when addressing the complexities of civil wars. Conflicts often stem from a confluence of local grievances, political marginalisation, and socioeconomic disparities (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Policymakers must identify and address these underlying issues to craft effective strategies for conflict prevention. An approach that recognises the interconnectedness of local, national, and regional factors can help foster sustainable peace (Kalyvas, 2003; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004).

Promoting Dialogue, Unity, and Reconciliation

Sustainable peace requires inclusive dialogue that addresses the grievances of conflicting parties. Mechanisms such as truth commissions, transitional justice programmes, and inter-communal dialogues can help rebuild trust and foster social cohesion.

Incentivising Peace Through Negotiations

Negotiations with non-state armed groups (NSAGs) must combine credible deterrents (sanctions, military pressure) with attractive incentives (power-sharing arrangements, resource-sharing agreements) (Jackson & Morelli, 2011). This dual approach can encourage cooperation and pave the way for long-term peace. Establishing trust between negotiating parties is crucial, as it can prevent breakdowns in dialogue and ensure adherence to agreements. Offering transitional justice mechanisms, such as amnesties or truth and reconciliation commissions, can further facilitate the reintegration of NSAGs into mainstream political and social structures. International and regional actors can play a mediating role, ensuring impartiality and providing guarantees for the implementation of negotiated outcomes. Economic incentives, such as development aid or investment in regions affected by conflict, can address grievances and create a tangible peace dividend for communities (Boesche, 2003, p. 78). Moreover, empowering local leaders and civil society organisations to participate in negotiations can strengthen grassroots support for peace and increase the legitimacy of the process. A comprehensive negotiation strategy should also address underlying issues such as resource allocation, governance, and social inequalities to ensure

that peace agreements are both sustainable and inclusive. Negoatiators, mediators, or such other third parties should be unified to increase the cost of violation and act as guarantors of punishment to discourage actors from reneging on a settlement (Crahan, 2020, p. 13; Schelling, 2008).

Rebooting the APSA

Despite the construction of the APSA and the adoption of myriad instruments on governance, human rights, and humanitarian law by African states, numerous conflicts and violations of human rights and international humanitarian norms have occurred on the continent. This points to the need to create a "climate of compliance" in Africa. The major defect in the APSA is the delinking of governance and human rights institutions (Kuwali, 2010). Based on Article 19 of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) Protocol, the PSC should utilise the human rights information and analysis emanating from the AU human rights and governance institutions as indicators for potential preventive action. The AU must enhance the APSA by integrating governance, human rights, and conflict prevention mechanisms. Strategic partnerships and collaboration should exist among sub-regional early warning capacities, human rights, humanitarian law, and governance monitoring.

Although the AU has set up the APSA with an early warning system, still to be constructed is an effective early response and, crucially, a mechanism for decisive and timely preventive action. This suggests the need to cultivate a culture of prevention on the continent. Timely and adequate responses to early warning will enhance the chances of preventing conflicts. To better protect civilians, it will be essential to further address the menace and supply of small arms on the continent, which have largely contributed to the commission of atrocities on the continent.[21]

A stronger early warning system, linked to effective early response initiatives, will enable timely action to prevent escalation. By its very nature, IHL is not a substitute for peace but maintains the necessary conditions for a return of peace even during a conflict. The AU should establish an independent compliance body to monitor adherence to IHL and complement the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Although the ICRC ensures compliance with IHL and the UN oversees human rights and refugee protections, no dedicated global institution exists to systematically promote peaceful conflict prevention and resolution. This gap is particularly glaring in Africa, where internecine wars and the lack of robust preventive mechanisms have deepened civilian suffering.

Own Pax Africana

Africa should take control of its peace and security agenda, which Europe has generally bankrolled and controlled (Vines, 2013). African States should avoid over-dependence on external actors for peace and security as they sometimes trigger proxy wars on the continent for their economic interests (Kuwali, 2024c; Akinyi, 2018). African militaries should periodically conduct regional training and exercises to achieve a critical mass of experts in the profession of arms to counter insurgency and coup-proofing on the continent. More importantly, African militaries should focus on confidence-building measures between and amongst themselves, given the diminished possibility of interstate armed conflict (Kuwali, 2018, pp. 45-64; Lumina, 2022, pp. 561-580).

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[21] See the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, available at: www.smallarmssurvey.org/files/portal/issueareas/measures/Measur_pdf/r_%20measur_pdf/Africa/20010309_sadc_declaration.pdf (15 March 2009).

Conclusion

Achieving lasting peace and ending the prevalence of wars in Africa necessitates a comprehensive and holistic strategy. The principle of *jus ad pacem* serves as both a moral compass and a pragmatic framework for fostering dignity, security, and prosperity across the continent. To pave the way for sustainable peace, African nations must prioritize addressing the structural causes of conflict, promoting inclusive governance, and reinforcing regional mechanisms. By adopting the principles of *jus ad pacem* and fostering collaboration at regional and international levels, African countries can surmount the barriers to peace and build a stable and prosperous future. The widespread destruction caused by armed conflicts underscores the urgent need to prioritize peace and invest in the welfare of Africa's populations. Conflict prevention not only preserves resources but also redirects them towards developmental objectives, facilitating the continent's growth and progress.

Peace Support Operations must focus on creating opportunities for peace negotiations by ensuring adherence to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and prioritizing conflict resolution and cessation of hostilities. IHL compliance is a means to achieve peace, not an end in itself. Disseminating knowledge about IHL should be paired with encouraging active citizenship to ensure accountability and oversight of warring parties. Community-centered strategies should be employed to cultivate advocates for IHL who can facilitate its integration into national frameworks and promote adherence. Dissemination efforts should also emphasize dispute resolution and conflict prevention methodologies, reinforcing the shared goal of *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, and *jus ad pacem*: the protection of humanity.

In cases where conflict prevention fails, African states must prioritize peaceful dispute resolution in accordance with Article 2(3) of the UN Charter and Article 4(e) of the AU Constitutive Act. Armed force should remain a last resort, limited to instances where it is absolutely necessary for self-defense under circumstances that are immediate, overwhelming, and leave no alternative means. However, the use of force often escalates conflicts, exacerbates tensions, and undermines efforts for peaceful resolution. It also frequently results in egregious human rights violations. As the global movement for a culture of peace and non-violence gains momentum, alternatives to armed force must be explored to safeguard the rights of vulnerable populations.

International law's prohibition on the use of force and its mechanisms for peaceful dispute resolution need to be complemented by a robust regional legal framework. Such a framework should compel states to submit disputes for peaceful settlement and promote substantial disarmament. Regional initiatives could ease the burden on the UN Security Council and foster greater participation, consensus, and democratization in international affairs. While the current human rights regime is often reactive, prevention is both more effective and less costly than responding to violations after they occur. Policymakers, human rights advocates, humanitarian actors, and military strategists must collaborate on a coherent conflict prevention strategy. Understanding causal logics of the conflict can help policymakers to design effective strategies toward dispute resolution (Parsons, 2007, p. 12; Blankshain & Stigler, 2020; Daigneault & Béland, 2015; Connolly, 2013).

Ending wars and silencing the guns in Africa requires a multifaceted approach that tackles the root causes of conflict, strengthens institutions, promotes good governance, and encourages inclusive dialogue and reconciliation. Active involvement from regional organizations, international stakeholders, civil society, and local communities is essential. The UN's Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace underscores the importance

of transforming conflicts into opportunities for cooperation.[22] African states should integrate these principles into their national policies, emphasizing conflict prevention, disarmament, and inclusive dialogue.

Sustaining peace involves a holistic approach that aligns conflict prevention with long-term development goals, such as the African Union's Agenda 2063, which envisions a prosperous, peaceful, and integrated continent. Concrete measures include education reform by introducing peace education and awareness programs to cultivate a culture of non-violence and cooperation; economic development; addressing poverty and inequality through initiatives such as job creation, access to quality healthcare, and affordable education; community-based peacebuilding by empowering local actors to develop solutions tailored to the realities of affected communities. These strategies can enable African countries to transform the current trajectory of conflict into one of sustainable peace and shared prosperity.

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[22] The UN General Assembly has taken initiatives for a culture of peace and adopted a Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace by consensus. The Declaration and Programme of Action was adopted following the adoption of Resolution 52/15 of 20 November 1997, proclaiming the year 2000 the "International Year for the Culture of Peace", and Resolution 53/25 of 10 November 1998, proclaiming the period 2001-2010 as the "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World". General Assembly Resolution A/RES/53/243B, 6 October 1999.

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