Peace and security in Africa

Book review of
Gopal N. D., Chetty D., Hlalele D. J., & Kruger G. (Eds.). (2022).
Peace, Safety, and Security: African Perspectives. **Peter Lang.**

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Abstract. In this book, speaking from Afrocentric viewpoints and theoretical approaches, the authors ask the universal and most important questions of our time about peace, social security, protection of people and the environment from physical damage, and the institutional guarantees necessary for this. These questions are necessarily linked to guarantees of justice. The African perspective is important in order to transform our position, which is guided by Eurocentric thinking and the »rich north« perspective, into a universal perspective. According to the authors, Africa is characterized by uniform continental challenges. So far, none of the Western powers have been able to offer a lasting solution to these challenges. The West lacks the original experience of the anti-colonial struggle and the pursuit of independent African development.

Introduction

In this book, the authors raise universal and essential questions of our time regarding peace, social security, the protection of people and the environment from physical harm, and the necessary institutional guarantees for these aspects. They inquire: "How can global human goals be achieved worldwide, especially in Africa, and implemented using authentically African methods? What corresponding policies and social changes are necessary?"

These questions are inherently linked to guarantees of justice. Without appropriate guarantees and mechanisms, other global issues cannot be resolved, and the very existence of civilization and the preservation of life on our planet become permanently unattainable. The African perspective is crucial in transforming our stance, which has been guided by Eurocentric thinking and the view of the "rich North," into a universal perspective.

The authors start from their Afrocentric viewpoints and theoretical approaches. In their view, Africa is characterized by unified continental challenges. Western powers have not been able to offer lasting solutions to these challenges. They lack the authentic experience of anti-colonial struggle and the pursuit of independent African development. This volume builds upon a previous publication by György Széll and Dasarath Chetty (2018),[1] which also includes my own contribution on this topic.

According to the authors, the West is still guided by postcolonial thinking. Encouraged by similar African problems transcending borders, appropriate "African" solutions must be found. These solutions cannot solely rely on "Best Experience" insights from Westerners. Often, solutions based on Western suggestions have led to "wrong and unsuitable approaches." Africans are increasingly learning to recognize and address the problems and challenges of their continent on their own.

Most misjudgments in Africa, despite good intentions, have been made based on the traditional cognitive and functional roles of Northern industrialized countries. Novel solutions centered on African issues must deviate from Western mindsets and policies.

Universal questions of Africa and the globalized world

In the 2015 UN General Assembly, the agenda of sustainable development and "global issues of all humanity" were discussed. Seventeen goals for the sustainable development of humanity were defined. Goal 16 includes ensuring peace, security, and social justice, which are also crucial in Africa. This guarantee requires robust, peacekeeping, functional institutions. However, the creation of necessary social, economic, and political justice is disrupted by numerous intra-African and intercontinental conflicts. In the current era of neoliberal globalization policy, conflict resolution in Africa, as elsewhere in the world, primarily seeks to use violence across various areas of conflict.

Conflicts in Africa mostly stem from postcolonial conditions in the region. Policies primarily focus on preserving the post-colonial status quo and ensuring the unimpeded exploitation of African resources by industrialized countries. The resurgence of tribal thinking also hampers national and international pan-African developments.

The new report by the Club of Rome, "A World for All," published in 2022, argues about five necessary transformations to eliminate growing social inequality. The political, climatic, and ecological emergency threatening the future of all life on our planet thus requires a reversal of human behavior. These transformations include:

1) ending poverty,
2) eliminating glaring inequality,
3) empowering women,
4) establishing a healthy food system for humans and ecosystems,
5) and using clean energy.

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[1] Széll, G., & Chetty, D. (Eds.). (2018). *Making Popular Participation Real. African and International Experiences*. Peter Lang.

The preservation of world peace as a fundamental condition for these necessary transformations is not mentioned by the authors in this context. Perhaps, it is a compromise to facilitate the creation of such a joint publication with a programmatic and symbolic character at all?

Fundamental positions and statements of the African authors of the book

The book presented by the African authors is based on empirical research, providing deep insights into the real African situation and addressing all the recommended transformations proposed by the Club of Rome. It primarily focuses on the theme of "peace" and its connection with social inequality as the root cause of violence. Successful approaches to African peacebuilding and violence prevention are presented.

The authors' insights into internal, national, often cross-border African conflicts are linked to local situations, wars, and violent confrontations. These conflicts are associated with increasing crime, the waste of social and ecological resources, vital raw materials, poverty, and inequality, as well as significant tribal issues. Previous attempts to solve these conflicts in Africa have increasingly led to civil wars and tribal disputes, followed by hesitant peace initiatives. These attempts have not resulted in lasting peace but rather spawned new derivative problems.

The contributions deal with general African peace and security solutions. They describe the role of the Southern African Development Community and the Economic Community of West African States in maintaining peace and security, the private military and security firms in civil war scenarios, the successes and failures of UN peacekeeping missions, as well as the influence of globalization on labor protection and safety in Africa. Furthermore, the significance of the actions of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union in solving the problems of the "Libyan Spring" is discussed.

African conflicts are mostly linked to xenophobia, struggles for food and housing security, cyber-security, student, and labor struggles, as well as various old and new tribal conflicts. The corresponding African insights provided in the individual chapters may initially appear somewhat disjointed. However, upon closer examination, their internal consistency becomes apparent.

The representatives of the younger generation also make logically stimulating contributions. Their chapters specialized in South African issues complement the predominantly globally oriented analyses of their internationally experienced colleagues. This enriches the content significantly. The analysis of all problems' completeness and holistic solutions was not achieved or aimed for.

The publication was painstakingly produced over the past years. Its development and publication were hampered by the conditions of the global Covid-19 pandemic (Kreissig, 2020).[1]

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[1] Kreissig, V. (2020). Limits of growth and the Corona virus pandemic. In D. Chetty (Ed.). *Reflections during Pandemic* (pp. 27–30). ISA RC 10.

Current situation of peacekeeping in Africa

Since World War II, the absolute number of people killed in conflicts has decreased globally, as noted by the authors, both worldwide and in Africa. Present African conflicts have predominantly become intrastate, with fewer interstate conflicts. Many conflicts are waged by non-state players such as international terrorist groups, criminal organizations, resistance groups, and political supporters.

In North Africa, the Sahel states, East, West, and South Africa, as well as the former front-line states of the anti-apartheid struggle, the massive consequences of colonialism such as resource scarcity, corruption, dysfunctionality of state institutions, lawlessness, unresolved territorial issues, and exacerbations of climate change are apparent. These are new factors driving intra-African conflicts.

Muslim-oriented terrorist groups like Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaida, Nusrat-al-Islam, and the Islamic State, as well as groups operating with Christian-ideological motives like the Lord's Resistance Army, have emerged. Growing technical knowledge and data technology skills are used by African youth groups for criminal and terrorist purposes. Globalization creates global crime, for which globally applicable countermeasures are often lacking.

Security trends in Africa show increasing terrorism and military coups. Resurging tribal conflicts are becoming more frequent, and actions such as data hacking and cyber-attacks create new avenues for crime and violence. At the same time, killings and murders in most African states, as well as gender- based violence against children, are on the rise.

Multinational corporations, not only Chinese ones, are engaged in the constant search for new sources of energy and raw materials and their exploitation. Non-equivalent transfer of fossil fuels to industrialized countries contrasts with the lack of investments from industrialized countries in utilizing extensive solar and other energy resources. Profits from resource exploitation end up in the pockets of multinational corporations and African comparators. These so-called major 'players' in the commodity, energy, food, and pharmaceutical industries are omnipresent in almost all African states.

Habermasian 'uncertainties' become particularly tangled when examining the 'modern Africa.' New conflicts have emerged and intensified after formal state independence. Tribal conflicts have resurfaced under new conditions and have become politicized. Political conflicts have been fueled, focusing on the appropriation of vital resources. This significantly hampers a socially balanced African sustainable development.

Various state divisions have also emerged (Sudan and Libya). Tribal elites form parties that often make unsustainable election promises. Therefore, democratic elections, due to the lack of real alternatives, often result in violent unrest and conflicts of new kinds. Military coups are also on the rise.

Democratic development in Africa is often seen as obsolete in the mass consciousness. Many African states are led by dictators or by governments that are democratically legitimized only to a limited extent. If it is not possible to create adequate solutions for Africa's internal problems through a fair, sustainable development and investment policy that meets Africa's needs, the refugee flow caused by economic and social factors across the Mediterranean to Europe is more likely to swell than to stop someday.

Africa dominated by violence, corruption, tribal feuds, unstable institutions, and regimes — ungovernable?

Africa is not a politically, economically, culturally, and linguistically homogenous continent. Its states have been formally independent for about half a century. Its population is significantly young. The formation of civic nations is still in its 'infancy.' However, like Europe, America, and Asia, the continent is shaped by different historical developments, traditions, ethnic groups, religious influences, etc. States that have centuries of colonial past, influenced by missionary work and slave trade, dominate. Since the abolition of colonial and semi-colonial regimes, only three–five new African generations have grown up in formally independent states in the 20th and 21st c. They are slowly beginning to define themselves as nations and unite, partly through sporting achievements (Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa, Morocco), individual leaderships of larger and smaller tribes.

However, tribal and religious ties are still or again predominant. New elites have emerged. Formerly scarce, now rapidly growing young intellectual offspring has been raised in independent African education systems. National and regional ruling classes, however, are still characterized by centuries-old tribal affiliations, conflicts, and differences as well as postcolonial influences.

Bourgeois-democratic government systems, economic and scientific structures, are often copies of parliamentary and other institutions of the former 'mother countries.' These institutions still show extensive cultural dependencies on these countries and continuing ties.

Profits reinvested in Africa from the export of resources to industrialized countries — including China — are not sufficient to solve economically the diverse development-related problems of the politically young continent. Corruption of ruling elites adds to the significantly inhibiting factor of development. Ending poverty, eliminating blatant inequality, empowering women, building a healthy food system for humans and ecosystems, and transitioning to clean energy, as advocated by the Club of Rome, have made slow progress in Africa for various reasons mentioned here only in part. Even African political research institutions that propagate the 'best governance,' conduct workshops, or so-called 'gender projects.' 'Good will' initiatives such as the return of stolen cultural artifacts, development programs in various sectors and regions only help to solve the existing problems and conflicts to a limited extent. Escalating violence, corruption of tribal elites, crime, lack of productive investments, oversized prestige construction projects (e. g., for the World Cup in South Africa and for transportation infrastructure in Kenya), starving people, inadequate healthcare, and ongoing loss of agricultural land, as well as lack of drinkable water and energy are results of mismanagement, the visible, centuries-old legacy of colonialism, and ecological destructions.

The 'South African rainbow nation' is supposed to unite people from various tribal communities, with black, brown, and white skin colors, as well as predominantly African, Indian, British, and Dutch roots. It is supposed to allow the next generation to grow peacefully together beyond apartheid-induced, racial divisions, and long South African struggles for independence.

The internal and external migration pressure caused by the rapidly growing young African population, ecological problems (lack of drinking water, due to extensive oil extraction and profit transfer, insufficient environmental protection), tribal conflicts, and the highest crime rates could not be effectively combated.

The Western-recommended model of bourgeois democracy, which was schematically implemented after the dissolution of direct colonial status, is increasingly proving obsolete. New government forms anchored in grassroots democracy, stable institutions, and political elites that effectively combat the legacies of colonialism are not in sight.

On the individual contributions, analyses, and conclusions

The first four chapters of the book deal with pan-African problems and perspectives. The empirical results are presented in connection with the selected research methods. For example, in the first fundamental chapter "Peace and Security Issues in Africa: Unearthing the Trajectories in the 21st Century" G. C. Mbara and D. Chetty present a critical analysis of existing discourses.

The authors state: "The risk of violent conflict and political instability in Africa has been amplified by many structural pressures." (p. 7). According to Bello-Schünemann and Moyer — renowned governance and development experts from the Institute for Security Studies (South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Senegal) — the keys to conflict prevention, peace preservation, and, above all, social development in Africa lie in understanding their nature, drivers, and trajectories.

The authors of this introductory chapter draw on the knowledge that was predominantly acquired through research projects at the Zulu Natal University in Durban. Several authors from other South and West African universities supplement the explanations with the results of their research from Nigeria and Libya. However, especially the more experienced and internationally recognized authors have developed a perspective that goes beyond the sole South African perspective. Their contributions can be rightfully called African — or even international, Afro-centric perspectives. Several of these authors have worked at German, British, Vatican, and other international universities as postdocs or as visiting and honorary professors, or have also been engaged in political advisory services for South African and international political institutions.

Nevertheless, the predominantly South and partially West African perspective and handwriting are recognizable. North and East African problems are less represented, except for Libya. Mbara and Chetty assume in their analysis of the state of affairs that security can no longer be achieved primarily through 'peacekeeping' missions — i. e., solely through the deployment of internationally dispatched troops with UN mandate, as was the case during the Cold War. The authors describe the drivers of security trends. Since the founding of the UN 78 years ago, the number of African conflicts has changed. They are less deadly and interstate, and are more frequently fought between intrastate and regional groups. Human security must therefore be modernly defined as the "protection and empowerment of people

affected by extreme violence and underdevelopment" (Owens, 2012),[1] their adequate life and survival must be ensured and institutionally guaranteed.

The UN-D Program defines human security as both security and protection for the rapidly growing population, particularly in Africa, from chronic threats such as hunger, diseases, and oppression. Additionally, this definition includes additional protection from sudden and painful disruptions to normal daily life, such as those caused by climate change, increasing natural disasters, lack of clean drinking and usable water, insufficient land, energy shortages, and inadequate infrastructure. This definition represents more meaningful, comprehensive, and contemporary measures.

The authors do not provide their own definition of peace and do not engage in the philosophical and ethical debates of the past and present (Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, Galtung). They limit themselves to the quoted UN position.

The treatment of human security at the societal level currently encompasses the main long-term causes of international conflicts. In this introductory chapter, trends and scopes of peace and security solutions in Africa are discussed, based on Samuel Stouffer's relative deprivation theory (subjective experience of disadvantage).

According to the authors, the Boko Haram catastrophe is also associated with relative deprivation, as their sect members perceive the contrasts and similarities between civilian government elites and "ruling Christians" (Vybíralová, 2016).[2] These elites have already been privileged by past colonial practices. Chetty and Mbara note that the African Union (AU) has been working since its establishment in 2002 to promote sustainable development of peace and security, democracy, rule of law, and human rights in the long term.

The authors conclude:

"While armed struggle is more common in rural regions, riots and protests are primarily urban events, especially since the proportion of Africa's urban population living in slums continues to rise. Clearly, integrated urban development policies must handle issues over property rights, land, and services for urban people. Africa will continue to be tumultuous because it is growing and dynamic, subject to powerful external influences, badly governed, young, and poor. Many African countries are undergoing a political renaissance that is unusual for a region that has long suffered dictatorial exploitation by its own elites and silently at the hands of foreign intervention. Compared to other parts of the world, Africa is not facing a democratic retrogression, and protest has become more acceptable public behaviour in many nations as the number of elected democracies has grown. This is evident in the changing character of violence, with the ballot box increasingly replacing the bullet as the main source of political struggle, as well as a shift in emphasis to urban centres rather than the countryside" (p. 29).

S. Tembo (Chapter 2) provides an overview of the role of Southern and West African Development and Economic Communities in preserving peace and security in the regions. These communities have been significantly dominated by the leading regional economies

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[1] Owens, P. (2012). Human security and the rise of the social. *Review of International Studies*, *38*(3), 547–567.

[2] Vybíralová, L. (2016). *Nigeria and Boko Haram Insurgence — The Roots of Political Violence* [Dissertation]. University of Masaryk. https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2016/MVZ489/61907258/Essay.pdf

of the Republic of South Africa and Nigeria. They have initiated a series of activities to preserve peace and security. Although there were mistakes in regional activities, a lot has still been achieved. However, new regional security architectures should be reconsidered and introduced, which solidify these regions as units and centers for peace and security.

N. Mbhele and M. Mphatheni (Chapter 3) discuss the participation of private military and security companies in African civil wars and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the actions of such private actors for the preservation and creation of peace and security in Africa. They distinguish between mercenaries and private military and security personnel and describe the rules of this private personnel. The participation of private South African military companies in African conflict resolutions is discussed using the examples of Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In this context, the authors discuss the requirements of appropriate rules for participation in international civil wars. The crossing of the legal framework and the influence of private security forces on civil wars are analyzed based on the African Union Convention on the "Elimination of Mercenarism."

S. Singh and G. Sharma (Chapter 4) deal with comparing and analyzing the successes and failures of UN Peacekeeping Missions in some African states.

L. Nkosi, M. Mphatheni, and S. Mkhize (Chapter 5) call for a new "African victimology" that could play a special role in preserving security and peace in Africa.

C. Madlabana, S. Reuben, and R. Petrus (Chapter 6) deal with the negative impact of globalization on occupational safety and health in Africa.

S. M., T. Ojolo, and K. Majola (Chapter 7) address the changing understanding of cybercrime's morph from computer-based fraud to fetish-based spiritual victimization. The tale of Yahoo-Plus in Nigeria, its backgrounds, and possible ways out are presented.

H. Mgudlwa and K. Shai (Chapter 8) describe the work of the African Peace and Security Council in the Libyan uprising, its activities, mistakes, and weaknesses. They describe the disempowerment of this council, its contradictory attitudes, and the hindrance of its actions by the intervention of NATO from an African critical perspective.

S. Reuben, R. Petrus, and C. Madlabana (Chapter 9) describe the struggle to contain gender-based violence in South Africa.

E. Sibanyoni (Chapter 10) analyzes the cultural practices of violent genital mutilation/mutilation of girls in Africa.

N. Ngobo (Chapter 11) describes the official justification: gender-based violence against young women and its avoidability. She discusses discourses and avoidance strategies in so-called 'Sugar Daddy' relationships in the university environment.

L. Nguban (Chapter 12) presents xenophobia and violence against foreigners in contemporary South Africa, its causes, and possibilities for combating it.

S. Bhoola (Chapter 13) provides a critical overview of food and nutrition policies and the mistakes made in combating hunger and malnutrition in children in Zululand.

S. Bobat and F. Essak (Chapter 14) describe the insecurities and weaknesses as well as initial successes of the student movement 'Fees Must Fall.'

N. Mlamala, P. Hadebe, and K. Shumba (Chapter 15) discuss the ongoing violence in South African community accommodations and their potential for prevention.

N. Gopal, G. Mbara, and S. Olonfinbiyi (Chapter 16) analyze cyberspace as a security threat, based on a sample of South Africans.

György Széll (Chapter 17) writes an "Epilogue: Peace, Security, and Safety — A View from Outside." He describes his first visit to South Africa over 20 years ago. On that occasion, he observed the two main challenges to South Africa's security: HIV and crime. Building on these initial analyses and publications, he now describes further problems of South African security. The Covid-19 pandemic, the accumulation of traffic accidents, crime and violence in various forms, the still existing reactionary apartheid legislation, increasing emigration and the associated 'brain drain,' corruption, existing deficits in democracy, and the need to fight for democratic participation of African citizens, as well as the problems of growing inequality. In his view, the still existing 'social apartheid,' migration, and their conflict and insecurity potentials arise from social divisions that could be overcome through solidarity of the 'Rainbow Nation.' At the same time, he describes the ambivalence of prevailing religions and religiosity as well as the problems of existing capitalism in South Africa. He concludes his reflections with his own poem, dedicated to the 'African Renaissance' advocate Pitika Ntuli, which is characterized by hope and the dream at the Cape of Good Hope, the dream of security.