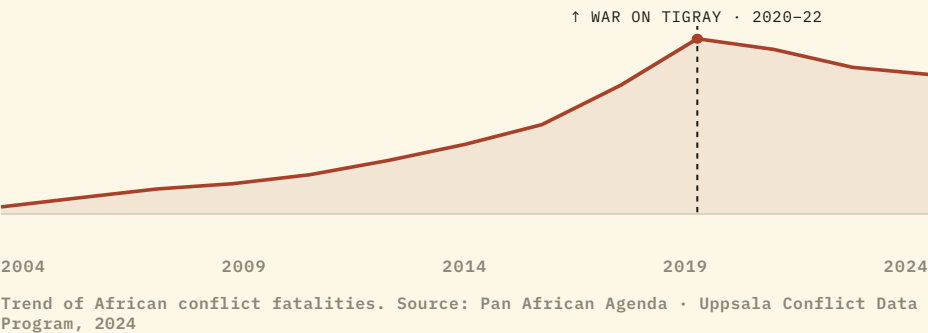


African Union :
Built for a World That
No Longer Exists

Thirty years after “never again,” Africa's conflict deaths have surged to their highest since 1994. The African Union and its security architecture — designed for a vanished unipolar order — are failing their core mandate to **prevent and halt atrocity crimes**.

FIG. 1 – A CONTINENT'S SURGING DEATH TOLL

Conflict fatalities have surged eightfold



+841%

RISE IN FATALITIES – 44,000
(2004–08) TO 414,000 (2019–23)

532,413

CONFLICT DEATHS 2014–24 – OVER
4× THE PRIOR DECADE'S 122,148

*The highest toll since the 1994 Rwandan
genocide – yet it drew little AU action.*

Key Observations

FIVE STRUCTURAL FINDINGS

01 GLOBAL ORDER · INTERREGNUM
A dangerous interregnum

The post-1945 order is dying and no new one has emerged.
Multilateral cooperation now collides with the national-interest
politics of a multipolar age.

02 PREVENTION · INTERVENTION
Zero effective new missions since 2015

APSA cannot prevent or end the wars in Ethiopia, Sudan and the
DRC — and depends on external backing it no longer commands.

03 STATE INTEGRITY
500M+ face high-stakes votes, 2026–29

Performative election observations for sham elections,
Damaged Integrity, Fractured legitimacy across the Horn, North
Africa, the Great Lakes and the Sahel. A widening gap with Gen Z
risks unrest at the ballot box.

04 MEDIATION · PRIMACY
Relegated to a PR role

External actors — Türkiye, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the
US — fill the vacuum, sidelining the AU and RECs in Ethiopia,
Sudan and the DRC.

05 FORUM SHOPPING
Bilateral deals displace the AU

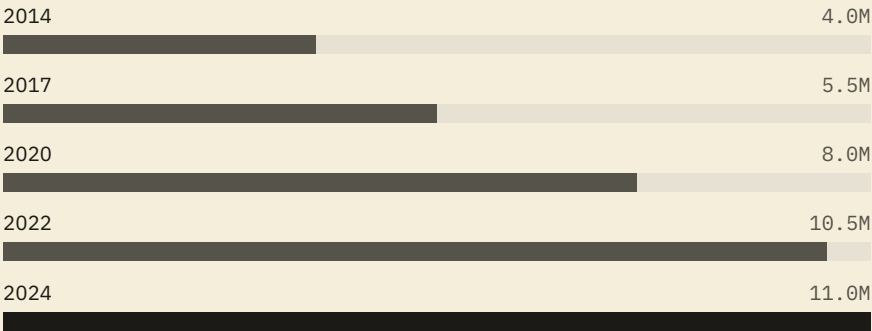
Belligerents now shop for sympathetic external mediators.
Mediation turns transactional, not transformative — short-term
deals over durable peace.

BY THE NUMBERS · 2022

+97% 55
global violent active state-based
deaths in one year conflicts recorded

237,000 killed — the highest toll since 1994. Source: UCDP.

FIG. 2 – INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN AFRICA (MILLIONS)
A near-threefold rise in a decade



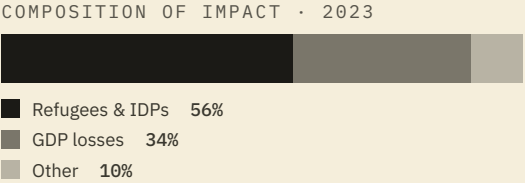
Approx. Sudan alone: 15M+ displaced – nearly ⅓ of its population. Source: PAAI · IDMC · UNHCR, 2024

50%

OF THE WORLD'S DISPLACED ARE AFRICAN
– 76.3M OF 153M, 2014–24

\$929B

ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF VIOLENCE IN AFRICA – 5% OF THE GLOBAL \$19.1T



Bold Proposals for Action

FOUR BOLD PROPOSALS

- 1

Transform the African Union

Recalibrate APSA's mandate and ambition to what member states will actually fund and staff – and formalise a clear division of labour with the Regional Economic Communities.
- 2

Transform the nature of states

Reimagine the state through ‘states with multiple systems’ – layered, hybrid governance and integrative (con)federalism that hold integrity while accommodating diversity.
- 3

Ensure the primacy of domestic politics

Resolve differences through domestic and local political processes, not external actors – with Gen Z, Africa's youngest-continent advantage, as the decisive constituency.
- 4

Employ a triple geopolitical strategy

Anchor sovereignty in responsibility to people; build agency through dynamic, pragmatic policy for continental collective action, beneficial partnerships and genuine strategic autonomy.

What is to be done: Viewed through an opportunity lens, the global interregnum is also an opening – for Africa to move from dependency to the long standing quest for self-reliance, anchored in accountability, inclusivity and **strategic autonomy**. This requires facing realities in Africa and beyond, and implementing the above four bold proposals.

METHODOLOGY A three-tiered framework measuring conflict's human and economic toll – fatalities, displacement and economic impact – compared across two AU decades, 2003–13 and 2014–24.	SCOPE Decadal and five-year comparative analysis of combatant and civilian fatalities, forced displacement, and the economic cost of violence across the continent.	SOURCES PAAI, 2025 · Uppsala Conflict Data Program · IDMC · UNHCR · Institute for Economics & Peace · Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance.
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