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INSTITUTIONAL REFORM NEEDED TO DEAL WITH GLOBAL CHALLENGES

By Daryl Swanepoel

The panorama of peace and security across Africa is intricate and marked by many challenges, including armed conflicts, terrorism, and political volatility. The recent surge in coups across Africa shows we must address many political, social, economic and governance challenges.

These issues hamper Africa's advancement and have far-reaching implications for global stability. The colonial legacy has also left an indelible mark on the continent, shaping its social, economic, and political structures in ways that perpetuate inequality.

The inequality is exacerbated by global dynamics that disproportionately affect Africa. International corporations and governments continue to exploit the continent's abundant natural resources, often without adequate compensation or benefit to local communities. This form of neo-colonialism deepens existing inequalities and undermines Africa's ability to achieve sustainable development.

The militarisation of Africa has emerged as a critical issue that warrants immediate attention. The continent has seen a significant increase in domestic and foreign military presence, raising concerns about the long-term implications for peace, security, and sovereignty. The increasing presence of foreign military bases across the continent further complicates the situation. The presence of these bases often serves to protect the interests of the foreign powers rather than contributing to regional stability.

Adding another layer of complexity are non-state actors like the Wagner Group. The involvement of such entities in African conflicts operate in a legal grey area, often without the oversight or accountability.

Then: While the UN's role is undeniably crucial, its track record reveals a disconcerting pattern: a high failure rate in sustaining peace agreements, particularly in Africa. The UN's top-down approach often overlooks the complexities of local conflicts. It fails to adequately engage African institutions and communities with a more nuanced understanding of the issues.

Thus, as a response to situations where the UN is unable or willing to respond, the African Union has increasingly become a significant player on the global stage, particularly in matters related to peace and security. Its initiatives, such as the African Standby Force, demonstrate a commitment to proactive conflict resolution.

This is not without its challenges. This resource gap inevitably leads to a dependency on the UN and other external actors for support, particularly in peace operations and humanitarian interventions.

This interplay introduces its own complexities, often resulting in an imbalanced power dynamic between the AU and the UN.

The UN should acknowledge the AU's unique understanding of African issues and grant it a more substantial role in decision-making processes. In fostering a relationship grounded in mutual respect and shared responsibilities, the UN should heed the calls from African nations for more sustainable and predictable funding for peace and security initiatives. This is not a plea for aid but a call for the international community to proactively back regional responses to conflicts.

Turning to the international arena, the UN system is increasingly facing a crisis of legitimacy. The UN's inability to ensure that countries meet their commitments has eroded its credibility.

The shortcomings of the UN have paved the way for the emergence of alternative international groupings, such as BRICS, now expanded and to be further expanded. The countries will seek options if the existing global structures do not respond to their needs and interests. These alliances offer a different model of global governance, one that challenges the Western-centric paradigm. While the rise of such groupings may provide new avenues for cooperation, it also reflects a broader disillusionment with traditional multilateral institutions. This shift could have significant implications for how global challenges are addressed in the future.

Considering UN reform's slow and often frustrating pace, alternative solutions are being proposed. One such proposal comes from the Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability, which suggests the establishment of a Global Resilience Council. This body would focus on non-military existential threats such as climate change, pandemics, and economic instability. By concentrating on these pressing issues, it could serve as a catalyst for making the UN system more responsive and focussed on the long-term planning needs required to move countries from fragility to resilience. It could be a supplementary mechanism to address urgent global challenges more effectively.

We find ourselves at a pivotal moment in history. The challenges that confront us—be they inequality, climate change, or geopolitical tensions—are not confined to Africa; they are global in scope. As such, they require global solutions. The existing multilateral system, epitomised by the UN, should serve the interests of humanity rather than the narrow interests of a few. The urgency calls for reimagining the role and structure of the UN and other multilateral institutions.

We must seize this moment to create a more equitable, just, and resilient global governance system. Let us remember that the multilateral system should serve everyone, especially those in the Global South who are often most affected yet least heard.

Thank you for your attention.