




Chapter 16

Interrogating the AU's Silencing the Guns in Africa

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Introduction

The African Union (AU) is embarking on its second decade, and it is apt to assess the challenges that it has confronted in terms of efforts to promote peace, security, governance, and the improvement of the livelihood of its constituent peoples. According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), the African continent is afflicted by 35 conflicts, of variable intensity, which has led to the displacement of more than 40 million persons across the continent (ACLED 2023). The AU's Agenda 2063 identifies one of its objectives as the pursuit of “an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, driven by its citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena” (AU 2015).

The AU's Silencing the Guns by 2020 campaign emerged out of the deliberations marking the launch of Agenda 2063 and in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which subsequently became the AU. The Silencing the Guns campaign is the flagship initiative of the AU to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts in Africa. It was adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, to ensure that the continent's disputes are not bequeathed to the next generations of Africans. Despite these noble intentions, the guns across Africa were not silenced by 2020.



There was a net increase in violent conflicts across the continent, and to make matters worse, there was a resurgence of military coups, notably across the Sahel region, as well as in Gabon and Sudan. There are 12 peacekeeping and peace support operations across the continent, and a substantial number of national and communal peacebuilding interventions, which utilise a significant number of resources. Therefore, the AU's efforts to silence the guns have not fulfilled the required outcomes. On this basis, the AU reviewed the initiative and adopted a revitalised 2030 Roadmap for Silencing the Guns. This chapter interrogates the limitations of the Silencing the Guns campaign and makes the case for reframing and reorientating the initiative. In particular, the chapter motivates the adoption of a regionalised approach to addressing conflicts across the continent, through regional reconciliation initiatives.

Agenda 2063 and the Silencing of the Guns Campaign

In January 2015, the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted the Agenda 2063 Framework Document (AU 2015). This document outlined the organisation's forward-planning strategy for the next 50 years. In its Agenda 2063 Framework Document, the AU outlined a transformation programme for the next 50 years, including the following seven aspirations:

1. a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development;
2. an integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and
3. the vision of Africa's Renaissance;
4. an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice, and the rule of
5. law;
6. a peaceful and secure Africa;
7. an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics;

8. an Africa where development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people,
9. especially its women and youth, and well-cared-for children; and
10. Africa as a strong, united, and influential global player and partner (AU 2015:2).

The intention is to implement Agenda 2063 through a series of successive phases, intermediate benchmarks, and time-bound targets of achievement, in partnership with the regional economic communities (RECs), civil society, international partners, and the private sector. A key flagship initiative that was adopted by the AU was the Silencing the Guns campaign, a programme to prevent and resolve conflicts. In this regard, Agenda 2063 is a forward-looking document, and it is therefore timeously designed to provide a roadmap and the pathway for the pursuit of an “integrated, peaceful and prosperous” continent, which is driven by its citizens.

The African continent is afflicted by a crisis of identity and is still plagued by deep-seated Euro-centric civilisational agendas, which infiltrated its governance, economic, educational, and societal systems, and which were uncritically adopted by a sector of Africa’s political and economic elite. The majority of African countries are more aptly defined by the degree of colonial continuity, which prevents the guns from being silenced. The imposition of the nation state presaged its subsequent malformation and failure to deliver on the public goods, which are expected of state constructs (Davidson 1992). Specifically, African nation states were, and remain, programmed with the colonial logic of control, dominion, dehumanisation, subjugation, oppression, exploitation, and manipulation. In alignment with global trends, there was a resurgence of ethnic nationalism, xenophobia, gender-based violence, and religious extremism in several countries across Africa.

The pursuit of political integration as stipulated in Agenda 2063, through the internalisation of a commitment to constitutionalism, democratic governance, cross-border trade and the free movement of people is a necessary corrective to

the legacy of the colonially imposed state structures. Political integration can be achieved through the coalescing of RECs such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the East African Community (EAC). Both of these RECs have issued passports for their citizens, thereby creating an important vehicle for promoting regional integration and transcending the constraining straight-jacket of state sovereignty, which is hampering Africa's efforts to silence the guns.

The Elements of Silencing the Guns

Despite its initiation in 2013, the Roadmap for Silencing the Guns was only adopted following a retreat of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) in Lusaka, Zambia on 7 November 2016, which left only a mere four years in the lead-up to the 2020 designated date for its fulfilment. This was not a practical timeframe, which led to claims that the Silencing the Guns campaign was more of a marketing gimmick to assuage the lack of action by the AU's leaders in taking on the responsibility for genuine action to promote peace. The AU PSC retreat acknowledged that Silencing the Guns was not just the act of collecting and disposing of physical guns but more about the creation of a culture of peace across the African continent. The AU roadmap enumerated 54 practical interventions that focused on political, social, economic, environmental, and legal issues (Nshimbi 2020). They also included the need and the case for funding the African Standby Force (ASF), which is a core pillar of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). However, in the intervening years, there has been a lacklustre approach to operationalising and strengthening the institutions of APSA, which are required to effectively pursue and achieve the silencing of the guns.

Key Policy Developments Relating to Silencing the Guns

To mark the end of the initial time frame designated for the Silencing the Guns initiative, the 14th Extraordinary Summit of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, was convened in December 2020. The summit instituted a biennial periodic review of the achievements towards Silencing the Guns by 2030.

Subsequently, in May 2021, the 13th Retreat of the AU Peace and Security Council requested the development of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for Silencing the Guns. The AU Silencing the Guns Unit developed the M&E and operationalised the framework which will guide the efforts to gauge the trajectory of developments towards the next extended timeframe of 2030.

Interrogating the Infrastructure for Silencing the Guns

Africa has endured the debilitating effects of cyclical violent conflict for several decades. Despite the existence of well-intentioned policy frameworks and the utilisation of significant resources to stabilise countries, conflicts in the region have remained resistant to resolution. The United Nations (UN) defines peacebuilding as “a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict” and laying “the foundations for sustainable peace and development” (UN Peacebuilding Support Office 2022). Peacebuilding includes the dimension of promoting reconciliation, which is a future-oriented process, even though it seeks to remedy the violations of the past; it is predicated on the construction of a new future for the victims, perpetrators, and the wider community.

From the outset, the AU elaborated a robust policy framework to address a broad range of continental challenges, including those relating to security, governance, and development. For example, the Principles of the Protocol establishing the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union of 2002 stipulate a commitment towards promoting the “peaceful settlement of disputes and conflicts” as well as ensuring the “respect for the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedoms” (AU 2002). Subsequently, the AU PSC was established in 2004, with the mandate to co-ordinate peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding efforts on the continent. The PSC Protocol enumerated APSA, which includes a Panel of the Wise (PoW), composed of eminent African personalities. As part of APSA, the AU authorised the establishment of an African standby force (ASF)

and a Military staff committee (MSC) which will provide advice on deployment and security requirements.

The PSC protocol also established the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) and an AU peace fund. Specifically, as the over-arching co-ordinating institution, the PSC, has the mandate to authorise AU interventions in member states. In its period of operations, the council has demonstrated its ability to draw attention to the crises in Africa and will continue to function as one of the most important, powerful organs of Africa's evolving peace and security architecture. However, the council still has a lot to do to adopt a culture of prevention and proactive interventionism in situations of potential mass atrocities.

A security approach is necessary, but not sufficient, for Silencing the Guns and the gradual stabilisation of societies and regions across the continent. The challenging work of winning the hearts and minds of local populations through the transformation of societies through governance is an equally vital element of Silencing the Guns in these war-affected regions. The cyclical nature of conflict points to the critical need to move beyond temporary stalemates and ceasefires, peacekeeping deployments and military operations that are so common in this era, towards a regional policy informed by intentionally confronting the underlying grievances that have fuelled decades of animosity and violence on the continent.

Despite having been operational for more than 20 years, there is a persistent and recurring challenge relating to the troubled nexus between peacekeeping, peacebuilding, governance, and socio-economic transformation at the institutional level within the AU. This phenomenon also replicates itself at the UN, so it is not unique to Africa. Specifically, there is a lack of effective institutional interface at the level of decisionmaking. While all AU staff members were 'singing from the same song sheet' of interdepartmental collaboration, and despite efforts to initiate concrete activities to operationalise this rhetorical harmony, the effects on the ground in terms of APSA and African Governance Architecture (AGA) interventions did

not translate into a co-ordinated strategy to deliver as one to the victims and survivors of war and injustice.

This lack of effective APSA and AGA interface revealed the perils of actualising effective collaboration on the ground. Well-intentioned platitudes at the policy and decisionmaking levels about the urgency of promoting synergy between peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and governance processes became routine and banal. Consequently, this created a silo effect when it came to the interventions, with the AU peacekeepers, peacebuilders, governance, and development practitioners virtually operating in isolation from each other, even when they were in the same in-country mission. The merger of the AU Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (CPAPS) will serve to address some of these issues. Still, it will take time to turn around the cultural barriers within the continental body to achieve this harmonised approach to address violent conflicts and their aftermath across the continent to achieve Silencing the Guns. The AU has come to the recognition that implementing effective peacebuilding and transitional justice processes is a necessary prerequisite to any exit strategy for a military intervention, which is at the heart of Silencing the Guns.

Unconstitutional Changes of Government and the Need to Operationalise the ASF

In 2021, it was evident that a culture of complacency had afflicted the APSA institutions. It is evident that the much-lauded AU APSA Roadmap 2016–2020 and the campaign to Silence the Guns by 2020 did not materialise as anticipated by the continental leadership. The key problem underlying this is linked to the internal leadership, operational challenges within the AU Commission, the AU member states' collective failure, and the continued outsourcing of Africa's peace and security processes and systems. The AU's slow pace in taking over the financing and implementation of APSA processes and institutions is at the heart of the failure to achieve Silencing the Guns, a stated policy objective of the AU.

The AU's Accra Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa, which was adopted on 17 March 2022 in Accra, Ghana, in paragraph 8 committed the union and all member states to:

strongly reject any form of internal or external interference on peace and security matters in Africa and warn those who finance coups, foreign fighters and mercenaries in member states that their nefarious actions will not be tolerated; encourage member states to address peace and security challenges through mutual support within the continent as well as ... underscore the need for the full operationalization and deployment of the African Standby Force (ASF) to effectively undertake its mandate" (AU 2022).

The epidemic of unconstitutional changes of governments exposes the self-evident weakness of African states, which is partly due to a failure to buttress and strengthen the continental and regional institutions that are mandated to protect and sustain peace and security across the continent. Corrosion of the structural integrity of states across the continent in this regard is a function of the weakness of intergovernmental institutions, which have been established to guide countries and their societies. In this regard, it is necessary to deploy the ASF to implement its mandate in contributing towards stabilising these crisis-ridden societies across the African continent.

The Politics of the Operationalisation of ASF

To reinforce this right to intervene, the PSC Protocol also stipulated the establishment of an African Standby Force, which was initially due to be operationalised in 2010. The ASF comprises five brigades from Africa's sub-regions: South, East, Central, West, and North. In addition, the initial intention was for the AU to operationalise its own Pan-African Standby Rapid-Response force composed of 15 000 troops by 2010. The ASF's Rapid Deployment Capability (RDC) concept was developed to frame how the AU would intervene in situations that required urgent attention, notably situations of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and

genocide, which would contribute towards Silencing the Guns. However, the further development of the ASF-RDC concept would require the development of a broad range of modalities so that the force could tailor itself to address the peacekeeping and peace-enforcement demands of the African continent. These barriers and obstacles relating to the process have hampered and continually accounted for the postponement of the official pronouncement of the full operational capability (FOC) of the ASF.

It gradually became self-evident that the African Standby Force could only be effective if there were the political will to operationalise it, which would require ensuring harmonised frameworks to ensure the close co-ordination and co-operation between the AU's defence and foreign affairs ministries. There is also a need to mobilise for a stable source of funding for the force. The slow pace of achieving this integrated approach is partly why the efforts to silence the guns have faced serious constraints and limitations. The intention was that the ASF would co-operate, where appropriate, with the UN and other international partners to enhance the deployment capability within the African continent.

In October 2010, the operational readiness of the ASF and the decisionmaking process utilised by the PSC were tested through the first of a series of command post exercises (CPX) called the AMANI Africa (AA) II Exercise. AMANI¹ conducted a simulation exercise on how the various pillars of APSA would interact with each other, including incorporating early warning information from CEWS to the decisionmaking processes of the PSC and, ultimately, the processes that lead up to the deployment of the ASF.

As of 2021, despite multiple 'dress-rehearsal' events, the ASF remained a work in progress. Whether the deployment of the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) constitutes an *ad hoc* activation of the Southern African Development Community Brigade (SADCBRIG) as the Southern African component of the ASF still needs to be clarified. Nevertheless, it is significant that the eight troop-contributing countries from the SADC region,

1 'Amani Africa' is a Kiswahili phrase that means 'peace in Africa'.

who compose SAMIM, would constitute the core of a SADC/BRIG element within the framework of the ASF.

Despite the reluctance of AU member states to fully embrace the ASF, due to fears of its potential use to infringe upon their sovereignty, the policy arguments against such short-sightedness and political self-indulgence must continue to be made as the reason why the first iteration of the Silencing the Guns initiative was not successful across the continent. The insecurity in most crises in African countries, such as the civil war in Sudan which escalated in April 2023, the Tigray-Ethiopia conflict between 2020 and 2022, and the scourge of violent extremism in Mozambique, has had spill-over effects into neighbouring countries such as South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Eswatini and Lesotho, as well as to other parts of the continent. There is an absence of a dedicated framework for intervening and robustly securing countries and regions, as stipulated in the roadmap to Silencing the Guns. The AU Commission, in partnership with African civic society organisations, needs to scale up its advocacy agenda on the operationalisation of the ASF as a pathway to Silencing the Guns, notwithstanding efforts in states to place the issue on the back burner in the AU Commission perpetually.

Silencing the Guns through Regional Reconciliation: Mapping a Different Approach

An overriding challenge in Silencing the Guns is the need to recognise that Africa's conflicts tend to spill across borders, affecting communities in more than one country. These cases challenge the reductionist understandings of traditional interstate and intra-state wars across the continent, which remains a blind spot in the continuing framing of the revitalised 2030 Roadmap for Silencing the Guns. The regional nature of conflicts means that the notion of civil war is anachronistic, with increasingly limited descriptive utility if the guns are to be ultimately silenced across the African continent. Intra-state conflicts, more often than not, have an interstate and regional dimension in the way that they are resourced and executed. Studies show that more than half of violent conflicts in Africa can be linked to conflicts in

neighbouring states. Conflicts do not stop at the border, but spill over, and these linkages are evident in a range of “interconnected political, socio-economic and cultural factors” (Maina & Razia 2012:20).

Historically, interventions to promote peacebuilding and reconciliation have been overly state-focused and unable to address the cross-border dimensions of conflict in Africa. State-centric security interventions – such as conflict management and peace enforcement operations – merely address the symptoms rather than the deeper causes of Africa’s conflicts. Even more self-defeating, cross-border and joint peace and security operations focus resources on military operations – such as those targeting Boko Haram, Al Shaabab, or the South Sudan conflict system. These state-centric and over-militarised approaches overlook the structural origins of the conflicts that manifest themselves so violently across borders (Maina & Razia 2012:20). Military operations are only a temporary stopgap measure for containing violence and are ultimately doomed to fail, which is why the first iteration of the Silencing the Guns campaign failed within the designated time frame.

If the revitalised 2030 Silencing the Guns roadmap is to succeed, it must be anchored, among other interventions, in processes that address the violations of the past as a prerequisite for laying the foundation for future coexistence necessary for promoting stability. Specifically, as the African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP) stipulates, Silencing the Guns will only be able to achieve traction if “transnational conflicts that form mutually reinforcing linkages with each other across state borders” are addressed directly. This suggests that these regional linkages are so strong and interdependent that a change in dynamics in one conflict often affects neighbouring ones (Ramsbotham 2012:32). Specifically, networks of interdependence are evident in the cross-border supply routes for arms, illicit trade, and human trafficking. In some instances, ethnic groups living in different countries can serve as networks for this illicit trade, which can contribute towards fuelling conflicts.

Case studies from across the continent have provided insights into the regionalisation of violent conflict and how this can generate new disputes and enflame pre-existing tensions and forestall Silencing the Guns. For instance, the 1994 Rwandan genocide, often viewed in isolation, is a contributing and exacerbating factor to the conflicts and violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the tense security situation in Burundi's borders (Zounmenou & Kok 2012). Similarly, the conflict system generated by the crisis in Tigray in northern Ethiopia also drew in Eritrea and implicated Sudan. South Sudan has had a spillover effect into northern Uganda and Kenya, as well as affecting the Horn of Africa in terms of the displacement of victims and survivors. The military coup crises in the Sahel region harm the countries that have been affected, including Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Guinea. The protracted political tension in Zimbabwe, as well as the emergence of violent extremism in Mozambique, has precipitated refugee flows into neighbouring countries, which has implications for the regional stability of Southern Africa.

In effect, Africa's conflicts function through regional conflict systems, and the Silencing the Guns strategies deployed to confront them need to adopt a regional approach. As discussed above, in the Great Lakes, Horn of Africa, and Sahel areas, regional conflict systems are notoriously difficult to stabilise because state actors do not adopt co-ordinated regional strategies to promote and consolidate peace (Ramsbotham 2012:32). Since conflicts, atrocities, and violations straddle borders, regional reconciliation processes must be convened across borders to achieve Silencing the Guns. This would require implementing processes of truth recovery, accountability, and redress across borders as preliminary processes to the pursuit of regional reconciliation (Murithi & Opiyo 2014). In addition, this includes processes that provide transboundary psychosocial support and trauma processing among war-affected victims and survivors of gender-based violence, as a pathway to healing and the improvement of their wellbeing. These are cross-border processes without any precedent at the level of Africa's international relations, particularly about the implementation of Pan-African transitional

justice and reconciliation interventions. Therefore, we also need to consider which actors may be best placed to implement such processes.

Formal regional reconciliation processes tend to be facilitated by state actors. Typically, it will be necessary to utilise continental and regional institutions, including the AU and RECs, to promote regional reconciliation across borders. These institutions would derive their legitimacy, and hence formality, from the authority of the sovereign states that constitute them. Formal regional reconciliation processes could be facilitated by the state or by intergovernmental bodies, such as ECOWAS, the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), SADC, the East African Community (EAC), and the continental body, the AU.

Informal regional reconciliation processes would operate outside state structures. This would include civil society and social movement interventions in regional reconciliation. In addition, the Pan-African diaspora can also play a role in actively participating in and supporting regional reconciliation initiatives. Typically, informal regional reconciliation processes can complement the more formal processes, and ideally, they should proceed without the sanction and imprimatur of the affected states. In practice, state actors will want to be informed of potential informal regional reconciliation processes due to their claim of sovereignty over the territories.

A key challenge in implementing regional reconciliation will be the persistent tendency to seek recourse and to retreat into the cocoon of state sovereignty. Despite the consistent rhetoric by Africa's leaders about the importance of regional integration, the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the pending adoption of the African Union Protocol on the Free Movement of People, and the prospective issuing of an African Union passport to all citizens means that a retreat into the shield of state sovereignty is a short-sighted posture. This will ultimately be self-defeating and a key reason why the initial Silencing the Guns initiative had limited outcomes. Evidentially, the notion of regional reconciliation needs to be further developed to advance our understanding of how to frame and operationalise

efforts to achieve sustainable peace and security in Africa and fulfil the objectives of Silencing the Guns.

Citizen Participation in Silencing the Guns

Silencing the Guns in Africa will not be achieved without active and continuous citizen participation. Africa can move beyond the fraught relationship between citizens and its states, to forge an optimal continental force that proactively influences and shapes the global agenda. At the continental level, African citizens will need to become much more actively engaged in pursuing Silencing the Guns. In this context, citizenship relates to the rights and obligations that individuals are entitled to in a defined political community (Bereketeab 2012). The imposition of the nation state on Africa has also rendered citizenship a source of division, fragmentation, exclusion, and exploitation. The progressive trend towards a deepening continental integration can contribute towards the deterritorialisation of citizenship, as cross-border processes of political and socio-economic exchange reduce the saliency of traditional exclusivist state-centric political configurations. It is, therefore, necessary to inculcate a notion of continental citizenship, based on the principles of Pan-Africanism, which through citizens' agency can promote and agitate for Silencing the Guns.

The divisions, fissures, and exclusions created by the state can be transcended by forging a regional or Pan-African citizenship. This should be encouraged because, "types of citizenship proliferate continuously that it is possible to identify dual citizenship and transnational citizenship, corporate citizenship and global citizenship" (Bereketeab 2012). If it is effectively managed, the overlap of identities between Africa's neighbouring countries can become a focal point for forging a peaceful, unified, prosperous, and integrated continent, in line with the Silencing the Guns initiative, rather than reinforcing the institutions and structures that fuel exclusion, division, and conflict. Citizen mobilisation, engagement, and participation can contribute towards mitigating the violence that is afflicting societies across the continent, as well as the democratic reversals that are currently threatening to undermine the progressive gains

that the continent has achieved, in terms of consolidating the rule of law and the pursuit of human rights and gender equality.

The requirement to consolidate continental responsibility also invokes the need for active Pan-African citizenship in confronting self-defeating practices where they persist, and for holding Africa's so-called leaders to account through the self-ascribed promotion of 'Civic Pan-Africanism' as a vehicle to mobilise continent-wide leadership to pursue Silencing the Guns. This can be achieved by forging and building of solidarity networks with other societal actors from the diaspora around the world.

The AU's Silencing the Guns Unit, under the leadership of the AU High-Representative for Silencing the Guns, Ambassador Mohamed Ibn Chambas, convened an expert roundtable entitled: "A Decade of Silencing the Guns in Africa" from 30 August to 1 September 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya, which brought together analysts, researchers, and practitioners from across the continent. The objective of the expert roundtable was to critically examine the achievements, gaps, and challenges of the Silencing the Guns initiative to identify the strategic efforts that should be the focus of the next iteration of the campaign. In addition, the roundtable generated insights that would be utilised by the AU high-representative for Silencing the Guns to refine his vision for initiative, by assessing the tangible gains made in the period 2013-2020, as well as identifying shortcomings and difficulties and enumerating the baseline indicators for gauging the transition towards the five broad areas of the master roadmap towards the 2030 timeline.

Conclusion

This chapter assessed the AU's case for reframing and reorienting the African Union's Silencing the Guns initiative to achieve peace, security, and governance through transitional justice interventions. Looking ahead to the next two decades of the AU, the gradual implementation of the Silencing the Guns initiative and Agenda 2063 requires a more pronounced synergy between the processes of societal transformation through the effective

implementation of peace, security, governance, and trade policies that leverage the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). To achieve the spectrum of goals stipulated in Agenda 2063, it will be necessary to achieve or improve the trajectory towards Silencing the Guns across the African continent. The goals outlined in Agenda 2063 are mutually dependent and reinforcing because the absence of peaceful societies can lead to tensions which will systematically undermine the pursuit of the continent's aspirational goals.

This in effect means that it is crucial to pursue Silencing the Guns to enhance and strengthen efforts to attain the other spectrum of goals and objectives highlighted in Agenda 2063. In addition, a lesson emerging from the AU's 20 years of operations and efforts to operationalise Silencing the Guns is that the peace, security, governance, and transformation of any country on the continent can only be achieved by ensuring the security and governance of all. Thus, every African is a guardian of their fellow Africans, which reaffirms the notion of Pan-African solidarity. Without a genuine commitment across the entire AU system to facilitate and enable this synergy, the pursuit of the Pan-African vision of a peaceful and prosperous continent, as stipulated in Agenda 2063, will remain an elusive aspiration.

This chapter argued that, despite the growing acknowledgment of the regional nature of conflicts in Africa, there is still a lack of uptake of the AU Transitional Justice Policy and the promotion of regional reconciliation by AU member states. Therefore, during its first 20 years of operation, the AU's interventions relating to the promotion of peace and Silencing the Guns have only had a limited impact on the efforts to address the broad dimensions of regionalised conflict systems. This chapter assessed the case for reframing the Silencing the Guns approach and emphasised the need to implement the AUTJP through national ownership of transitional justice processes. It also involved identifying the role of RECs in leading and driving regional reconciliation through the enumeration of the practicalities and modalities of implementing cross-border redress and accountability processes. The self-sabotaging reluctance of nation states to devolve their sovereignty and

adopt processes that might be seemingly outside of their sphere of authority and control (through the establishment of cross-border institutions) will be the primary obstacle to implementing regional reconciliation and achieving Silencing the Guns. Indeed, this will ultimately further delay continental integration.

The chapter also assessed how, in the absence of a genuine belief in the intentions of neighbouring countries, it becomes difficult to achieve regional integration. This is currently the situation that bedevils Africa's sub-regions and undermines the continent's unity of purpose and the progressive fulfilment of the Silencing the Guns initiative. Regional integration requires a high degree of co-ordination and harmonisation of policy agendas, and the focused involvement of Africa's leaders and government co-operation as well as proactive citizen participation in engaging and supporting Silencing the Guns. The adoption of AfCFTA and the prospective implementation of the AU Protocol on the Free Movement of People are important vehicles that can guide the continent on its journey towards increasing peace through trade and an exchange of views.

As the AU continues its journey towards the next 20 years, it is evident that Pan-African consciousness will not emerge through wishful thinking, and it will still need to be proactively fostered through introspective work and processes which support African people to unlearn their propensity toward designating fellow human beings as the 'other'. Concretely, the work of building a Pan-African society and fulfilling Agenda 2063 needs to be further enhanced through open discussions in family settings, in schools, and at places of work, worship, and trade. Specifically, a degree of persistence will be required to continue to make the case for the Pan-African interconnectedness of the peoples of the continent, because centuries of confining Africans within Westphalian nation states has rendered the fictional nation state units 'real' in the minds of African citizens.

There are pockets of resistance to this statist straight-jacket, as citizens across the continent are already leading the charge of embracing their Pan-African identity. In this regard, the centrality of citizen participation in the shaping and framing of

an African future in which the guns are genuinely silent cannot be understated. African citizens are the essential and primary agents of the continent's state and regional structures, and the emphasis needs to be placed on their active engagement and participation in further deepening a revitalised sense of Pan-Africanism which will in turn serve as a key driver for transforming the African continent over the next 20 years, through Silencing the Guns.

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