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THEME:

Reimagining Peace Support Operations in Eastern Africa: Innovation, Regional Ownership, and Strategic Coordination

Eastern Africa's evolving security environment demands more adaptive, coordinated, and regionally driven peace support operations. Harnessing artificial intelligence can strengthen early warning, conflict prevention, and operational decision-making while ensuring ethical governance and human oversight. Greater regional ownership, supported by sustainable domestic financing and stronger institutional leadership, will enhance the autonomy and effectiveness of peace operations. Integrating innovative approaches to counter transnational organized crime can disrupt conflict economies and improve regional security. Strengthening regional governance will therefore require coordinated planning, institutional complementarity, and unified political and military responses. This will build a more coherent, resilient, and self-reliant peace and security architecture for Eastern Africa.

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Artificial Intelligence in Peace Support Operations: Strengthening Conflict Prevention in Eastern Africa

Eastern Africa continues to experience a complex and evolving security landscape shaped by violent extremism, political instability, transnational organized crime, and recurring humanitarian crises. These interconnected threats often emerge rapidly, making it increasingly difficult for conventional Peace Support Operations (PSOs) to anticipate and respond effectively. As conflicts become more dynamic and technology-driven, peace operations must also evolve. Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents a valuable opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of PSOs. This is by strengthening conflict prevention, improving decision-making, and enabling more proactive responses to emerging security threats.

AI-powered technologies can significantly improve early warning and conflict forecasting by analysing large volumes of data from diverse sources, including satellite imagery, social media platforms, climate data, and population movement patterns. By identifying trends, anomalies, and indicators of escalating tensions, AI can provide timely insights that enable peacekeepers to intervene before violence escalates. Such predictive capabilities are particularly relevant in Eastern Africa, where localized conflicts can quickly spill across borders and undermine regional stability.

Beyond early warning, AI can enhance situational awareness and operational planning during peace support missions. Machine learning systems can process intelligence more rapidly than traditional methods. This can help mission planners identify high-risk areas, optimize patrol routes, and allocate personnel and resources more efficiently. AI-enabled drones and remote sensing technologies can also support surveillance, border monitoring, and civilian protection, particularly in remote or inaccessible areas where conventional monitoring is difficult. These capabilities improve the ability of peacekeepers to respond swiftly while minimizing risks to both personnel and vulnerable communities.

AI also offers opportunities to strengthen humanitarian coordination during conflict situations. Predictive analytics can support the anticipation of displacement patterns, identify populations most at risk, and improve the delivery of humanitarian assistance. By integrating AI into broader peacebuilding and stabilization efforts, governments and regional institutions can better coordinate responses ultimately contributing to more resilient and sustainable peace.



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Despite these advantages, the adoption of AI in peace support operations must be approached with caution and responsibility. AI systems are only as reliable as the data on which they are trained. Biased or incomplete datasets can produce inaccurate assessments that may unintentionally reinforce inequalities or lead to poor operational decisions. Concerns relating to privacy, data protection, transparency, accountability, and cybersecurity must therefore be addressed through robust governance frameworks. Human oversight should remain central to all critical operational decisions, ensuring that AI serves as a decision-support tool rather than replacing human judgement. Eastern African states can harness AI as a force multiplier for

PSOs while safeguarding human rights and building public trust by adopting ethical AI standards and strengthening institutional capacity.

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Strengthening Peace Support Operations Through Regional Ownership in Eastern Africa

PSOs have become an indispensable component of Eastern Africa's collective efforts to prevent conflict, combat violent extremism, protect civilians, and support post-conflict stabilization. Missions deployed under regional frameworks have demonstrated the value of coordinated responses to shared security challenges. However, despite these achievements, many PSOs continue to depend heavily on external financial support. While international partnerships have been instrumental in sustaining operations, prolonged dependence on external funding can constrain operational flexibility. It can also delay mission implementation and limit the ability of regional actors to independently determine strategic priorities.

Strengthening regional ownership requires a deliberate shift towards sustainable and predictable financing mechanisms. Greater financial commitment from member states would enable regional organizations to plan, deploy, and sustain missions with increased confidence and reduced uncertainty. Stable

funding would also improve force readiness, logistics, training, equipment maintenance, and mission continuity. This would allow peace operations to respond more effectively to rapidly evolving security situations without waiting for external resource mobilization.

Regional ownership extends beyond financial contributions. It also involves ensuring that peace operations are designed around the region's unique political, social, and security realities. Local and regional actors possess a deeper understanding of conflict drivers, community dynamics, and cultural contexts. This places them in a stronger position to design interventions that are both context-sensitive and sustainable. Strengthening the role of regional institutions in strategic planning, command structures, and mission evaluation would enhance accountability while ensuring that peace operations reflect the priorities and aspirations of the populations they are intended to protect.

To achieve this objective, Eastern African states should explore diversified financing models that complement national budgetary allocations. These may include dedicated regional peace funds, assessed member-state contributions, public-private partnerships, and innovative financing instruments. Such approaches would reduce vulnerability to fluctuations in donor priorities while creating a stronger financial foundation for future missions. At the same time, transparent financial management, regular audits, and clear accountability mechanisms will be essential for building confidence among contributing states and ensuring that resources are utilized efficiently.

A stronger culture of regional ownership would also enhance policy coherence across peace-building, development, and security initiatives. Rather than viewing peace support operations as temporary crisis-response mechanisms, Eastern African governments can position them within broader strategies aimed at conflict prevention, institutional resilience, and sustainable peace.

Therefore, investing in home-grown solutions can build more autonomous, credible, and effective mechanisms for responding to present and future security challenges.



Thursday 2nd July 2026

Leveraging Regional Governance to Strengthen Coordination and Effectiveness of Peace Support Operations in Eastern Africa

Eastern Africa's security landscape is becoming increasingly interconnected. These challenges rarely remain confined within national borders, demanding coordinated regional responses that combine political, diplomatic, military, and humanitarian efforts. Yet, despite the growing need for collective action, PSOs in the region have often been weakened by overlapping mandates, fragmented interventions, and competing institutional initiatives. Rather than reinforcing one another, parallel peace processes can create duplication, dilute resources, and generate mixed political messaging. This reduces the overall effectiveness of regional conflict resolution efforts.

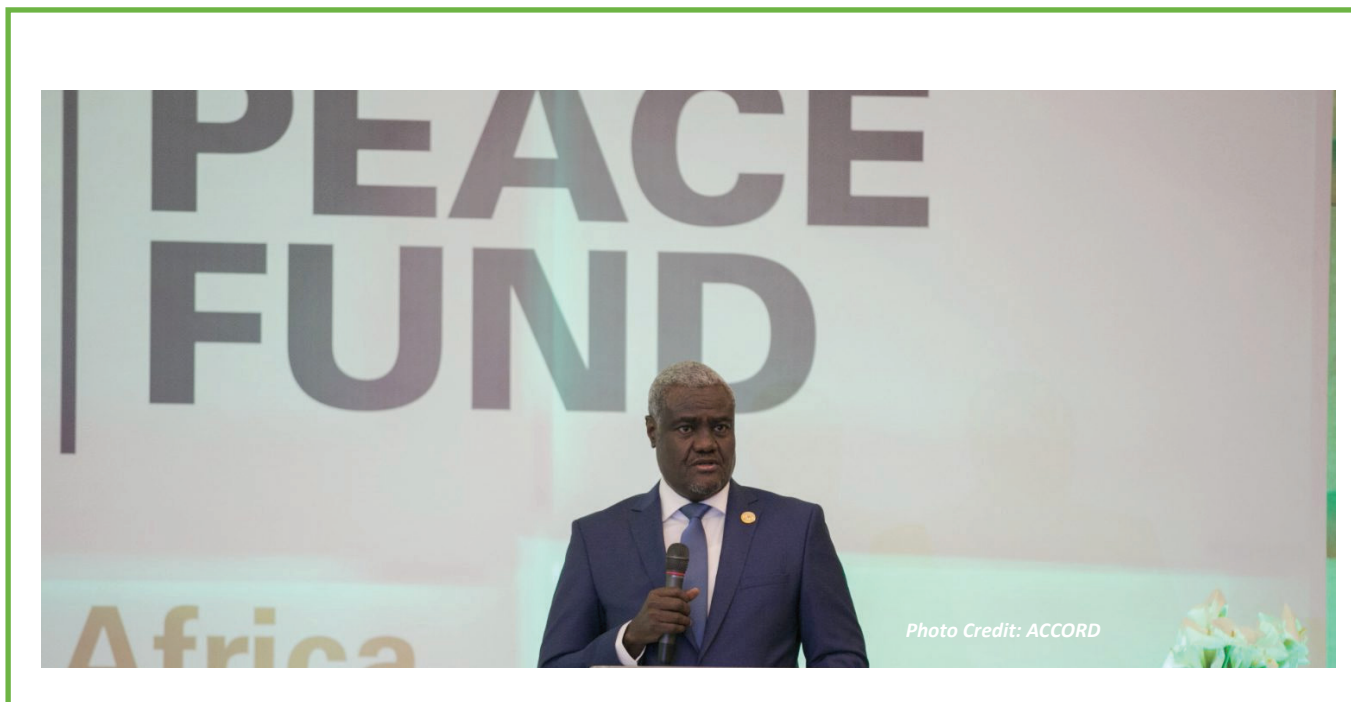
The experience of Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo illustrates the consequences of fragmented regional engagement. Multiple mediation initiatives, overlapping military deployments, and competing political interests have complicated efforts to establish a unified strategy for addressing the conflict. The coexistence of different regional mechanisms, each operating with distinct mandates and priorities, has created coordination challenges that have limited operational coherence. These lessons underscore the importance of ensuring that future peace support operations are guided by shared objectives, clearly defined institutional roles, and coordinated decision-making structures.

Strengthening regional governance is therefore essential to building a more coherent and effective peace and security architecture. The African Union (AU) should continue to serve as the principal continental coordinating body. It should provide strategic direction while ensuring that regional interventions complement broader continental peace and security objectives. At the same time, Regional Economic

Communities (RECs) and regional mechanisms should be empowered to lead context-specific preventive diplomacy and operational responses within their areas of comparative advantage. Clear institutional coordination frameworks can reduce duplication, promote information sharing, and enable more timely and unified responses to emerging crises.

Operational coordination must also be strengthened through institutionalized joint planning, interoperable command structures, standardized operating procedures, and integrated communication systems. Regular joint exercises, shared intelligence platforms, and coordinated training programmes would improve interoperability among regional forces while fostering greater trust between participating states. Such measures would enable peace support operations to respond more effectively to rapidly evolving security threats. They would also ensure that military, police, civilian, and humanitarian actors work toward common strategic objectives rather than pursuing parallel approaches.

Sustainable regional governance also depends on stronger political commitment and greater financial self-reliance. Predictable domestic financing from member states would reduce excessive dependence on external partners, enhance regional ownership, and provide greater flexibility in planning and sustaining peace operations. Coupled with transparent governance, robust accountability mechanisms, and sustained political dialogue, these investments would strengthen institutional credibility and long-term resilience. Through effective coordination and institutional complementarity, Eastern African states can build a more unified and responsive regional peace architecture.

Friday 3rd July 2026

Innovative Approaches to Countering Transnational Organized Crime Through Peace Support Operations in Eastern Africa

Transnational Organized Crimes (TOCs) has become one of the most significant threats to peace and security in Eastern Africa, increasingly intersecting with armed conflict, terrorism, and political instability. Criminal networks exploit weak governance, porous borders, and fragile institutions to facilitate TOCs. These activities not only generate substantial profits for criminal actors but also finance armed groups, prolong violent conflicts, and weaken public confidence in government institutions. As the links between organized crime and insecurity continue to deepen, PSOs must expand their approaches beyond traditional security interventions to address the criminal economies that sustain conflict.

Integrating innovative counter TOCs strategies into PSOs can significantly strengthen their ability to prevent violence and support long-term stabilization. Intelligence-led operations, supported by

modern technologies, enable peacekeepers to identify criminal networks, track illicit supply chains, and detect emerging threats. Establishing intelligence fusion centres that bring together military, police, customs, immigration, and financial intelligence agencies can facilitate coordinated responses across national and regional jurisdictions. Such collaboration is particularly important in Eastern Africa, where criminal networks frequently operate across multiple borders and exploit gaps in institutional coordination.

Emerging technologies also provide new opportunities to enhance operational effectiveness. Advanced border surveillance systems, unmanned aerial platforms, geospatial mapping, biometric identification, and predictive data analytics can strengthen monitoring of remote border areas and major trafficking corridors.

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Financial intelligence capabilities can help trace illicit financial flows, identify money laundering networks, and disrupt the economic infrastructure that enables organized crime and armed groups to operate. PSOs can contribute to weakening conflict economies by targeting the financial lifelines of criminal organizations.

However, these innovations should reinforce rather than replace the core peacebuilding objectives of peace support operations. Countering organized crime must remain firmly anchored in the principles of civilian protection, respect for human rights, the rule of law, and community engagement. Success depends not only on technological capabilities but also on building trust with local communities and improving inter-agency cooperation. Local populations often

possess critical information on criminal activities, making community partnerships an essential component of effective prevention and disruption strategies.

Institutionalizing these capabilities within regional peace and security frameworks will enable Eastern African states to build more adaptive, intelligence-driven, and resilient peace support operations. Investment in specialized training, interoperable information systems, and regional legal cooperation will strengthen the region's collective ability to combat TOCs. By adopting innovative, Eastern Africa can enhance the effectiveness of PSOs and contribute to lasting regional peace, security, and sustainable development.



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