



HELMUT SCHMIDT  
UNIVERSITÄT

Universität der Bundeswehr Hamburg

Helmut-Schmidt-University

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INSTITUT FÜR THEOLOGIE  
UND FRIEDEN

Institute for Theology and Peace

### **Fourth International Workshop on Germany's West Africa Policy:**

Berlin, November 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Katholisches Militärbischofsamt

*Europe must learn to accept a common world without european leadership instead of wanting always to go first. European people must listen to the experiences of other people. They should not preach everywhere their ideas of democracy and liberalism, they must learn from other people and share the experiences. There is a cultural arrogance, that is deeply rooted. Europe is always considered as succession of successes, sciences, Technology, Expansionism, this is the fact since the 15 th. Century. This behaviour is also found by people, who consider themselves as advanced.*

*Europe is based on individualism, Africa on the community. According to the slogan : I am, because we are. Africa has a lot of experiences in integrating of other people. If people from Ghana or Mali go to Senegal, there are mechanisms there to receive and integrate them. They can bring their gods and they will be received in the Pantheon.*

***Felwine Sarr in Talk/Conversation with the Newspaper DIE ZEIT, Juli 25th 2019***

## **Program**

### **Friday, November 19<sup>th</sup> 2021**

13:00: **Opening remarks**

Prof. Dr. Heinz Gerhard Justenhoven and Prof. Dr. Michael Staack

### **13 :30-15 :30: Session I: European solutions to african challenges?**

Input: Prof. Dr. Therèse Samake, Bamako

Commentary I: Elisabeth Kaneza, M.A., Berlin

Chair: Prof. Dr. Heinz-Gerhard Justenhoven, Hamburg

15.30-16.00: **Refreshment break**

### **16:00-18:30: Session II: Can lessons be learned from the failed international intervention in Afghanistan for Mali or the Sahel region ?**

Input: Prof. Dr. Michael Staack

Commentary I: Marcel Maiga, Fokus Sahel

Chair: Jonas Schaaf

**19.00 Dinner together**

### **Saturday, November 20<sup>th</sup> 2021**

### **9.00-11.00 Uhr: Session III: What is «african» about conflicts in Africa ?**

Input: Prof.in Dr. Bettina Engels, Berlin

Commentary: Germaine Tesch-Ntad

Chair: Maria Klatte, Aachen

### **11.15 -12.30 Uhr: Session IV: ECOWAS and East African Community – A comparison**

Input: Chris Omola, Tansania

Commentary: Paul Sedzro, Hamburg

Chair: Benjamin Akoutou, Bonn

## **Concluding remarks and next activities**

**13.00: Lunch together**

### **Workshop-Report**

#### **Fourth International Workshop on Germany's West Africa Policy: *Peace, Development and Cooperation in West Africa: (new) challenges and solution approaches***

Berlin, November 19th and 20th, 2021

#### **Session I: European solutions for African challenges?**

Based on Felwine Sarr's call for a reversal of development thinking that implements African local and regional ways of solving problems that arise there, reference was first made to value-based traditions of negotiating points of contention. Such mechanisms are already set out in the Kurukan Fuga (Manden Charter) dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, traditional negotiation and reconciliation mechanisms in West African societies are increasingly being disrupted by the transgression of values and norms by terrorist groups, which have been on the rise in recent years. Today, it is difficult to draw lessons from the Kurukan Fuga, as there are no references to the jurisdiction of the (Malian) state. Mali, once known for its 'Djatiguya' hospitality, is now plagued by fear and inter-communal and inter-religious conflict. It is thereby noted that neither religion nor ethnicity are reason for conflict but the interest of mobilisers behind. It is emphasised in the commentary that the value of hospitality is highly important since it incorporates the values of acceptance and tolerance, both representing entry points for conflict resolution. The example of the Gacaca Courts in Rwanda is cited here, which builds on pre-colonial approaches to reconciliation and, after the genocide, represents a system of transitional law for communal healing that places the value of reintegration of offenders (there: human rights violators) above their exclusion from society (imprisonment).

Two ascriptions of Africa are facing often, firstly, that the continent cannot be saved or developed, and secondly, that the potentials of economic growth can make this possible, are both not African views. Philosophical and political approaches to endemic solutions, on the other hand, are numerous, e. g. Nyerere or Sankara. Their inward-looking approach to dealing

with their own conflicts and implementing their vision is exemplary – and should be seen as a blueprint when it comes to voice them: once voiced, the Global North must accept these visions. At the same time there is a danger of (building on) over-romanticising traditional values. A further pitfall that was pointed out is that one has to be careful not to relate all problems back to colonialism by using argumentation structures of post-colonial theory: thus, there is a need for African solutions for post-colonial problems, as well as post-colonial approaches to African problems. In order to change the narrative, as Sarr calls for, it requires great joint efforts by African societies so that "African" solutions prevail. One critical question to be asked in this regard is: What exactly are the interests of the Global North in changing the narrative and initiating real change that takes into account traditional and indigenous culture?

## **Session II: Can lessons be learned for Mali or the Sahel region from the failed engagement in Afghanistan?**

The panel discussion was based on the VAD's (Association of Africa Sciences in Germany) demand paper to the German government and a thesis paper prepared for this panel, which outlined areas of comparability between the missions in Afghanistan and Mali and then drew conclusions therefrom. Most of the observations of recurrent shortcomings of Western interventions introduced by the panelist, and their attestation in the case of Mali, were bolstered by the whole group. This includes, firstly, little substantiated subject, cultural and language knowledge of the region of operation, whereby distinctions must be made between groups of actors and intervening states. Second, increased political whitewashing in the course of operations. Third, superficially impressive training successes for armed forces, but in reality, lacking motivation, equipment and leadership as a result of corrupt schemes. Fourth, patterns of Western interventionist policies that sustain corrupt elites as the first point of contact can also be perceived in Mali. Because of the latter point, MINUSMA is also not to be seen as an independent party in the conflicts.

Disagreement prevailed over the prioritization of the roles of the military and development cooperation. As in current debates on the effectiveness of comprehensive approaches, the primacy of the military is also attested in the case of Mali. Development organizations are not (or no longer) present in some parts of the country because of the security situation. Ownership and leadership of local actors must be prioritized in order to stabilize rural areas in particular. It was suggested several times that state-building should be approached differently than usual: from the periphery to the center. Since the state is often not present in peripheral regions, the local actors there play a particularly important role in the peace process. At present, there is already evidence that they are taking matters into their own hands. This must be supported - and the state, as it once was, must not be attempted to be re-established as it was. Local

societies are not asking for the police and the military, but for jurisdiction and administrative services. By fostering progressive, solution-oriented dynamics borne especially from the young population, it can be a point of entry for overcoming the strong entanglements of international actors with corrupt structures. It is important not to take Western forms of state as a model in the West African (or Afghan) context. From the German and Western perspective, one must now ask - at multiple levels - what they are doing there and what exactly is to be achieved with whom. This also includes the close ties with its neighbours from France. The Bundeswehr has followed the French narrative of the conflicts and its strategy. The Elysée Palace's high-stakes announcement that it would withdraw if Russian Wagner groups were deployed represents the latest challenge to the German government to find and implement its own position.

### **Session III: What is "African" about conflicts in Africa?**

Using the precarious security situation in Burkina Faso as an example, it is first shown that the instrumentalization of ethnicity and religion, a multitude of state and non-state violent actors (including self-defense groups), external military and civilian interventions, and "shrinking spaces" for certain civil society groups reveal patterns that can also be observed in (West) Africa. The role of state-created or legitimized self-defense militias that are themselves considered threats are highlighted here. Referring to the "African" nature of the conflicts, it is first argued that none of the following patterns observed in Burkina Faso and West Africa are exclusively African: external attributions and collective identities are present in all conflicts with instrumentalized ethnicity and religion. Non-state armed groups are not "African"; violent conflicts have a political economy and can be considered international conflicts through external intervention. Furthermore, inequality, poverty, and exclusion are understood as expressions of the antagonisms inherent in all societies. At the same time, it would not be enough to say that there are no "African" conflicts, as examples show that success stories can emerge from political will. Accordingly, it does not help to point to external disruptors alone. Especially in Western Africa, where French engagement is a driver that is not present in the rest of Africa, African states need to clearly show Paris what their vision is and needs to be different and not wait for French policy to change.

There were content-related points of contention regarding a statement that not only colonially drawn borders, but all other border demarcations, are artificial and thus do not represent an Africa-specific aspect of current conflicts. While the artificiality of border demarcation is generally agreed upon, the difference in African contexts is that those border demarcations are still perceived today as an experience of colonial trauma. This problematization is important, but civil society participation in border redrawing – as also suggested in the discussion - would not solve legitimacy issues.

To continue the debate around the panel's question in more depth, it is noted that first it should be asked what is "African," and only then what of it is conflict-driving.

#### **Session IV: ECOWAS and East African Community – A comparison**

In the last session of the conference, a comparison of the peace and security architecture of the regional organizations ECOWAS and EAS was carried out. The former is seen as a pioneer in regional conflict transformation among regional organizations, and the African Union now seems to be taking its architecture as a model. Likewise, ECOWAS has arguably the most robust peace and security framework in the world. ECOWAS legitimizes its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to intervene militarily in its member states in the event of violations of its own order. In doing so, it evades the authorization of the UNSC, which is viewed very critically, and is therefore the first subregional body that well-nigh neglects the principle of non-intervention.

EAC's peace and security architecture is at an inception phase still. The promise of a substantive conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanism (under the protocol) has not materialized yet. However, one can observe that its key pathway to conflict transformation has been mediation (e. g. mediation missions in Kenya 2008, Burundi 2017, as well as election monitoring missions frequently).

The role of election observation also plays a role in the most intensively discussed topic. The ECOWAS rules provide for sanctions in the event of unconstitutional seizures of power. Due to the large number of such cases in recent years, a certain discrepancy between the idea and the action has been observed at ECOWAS: there is simply a lack of a mechanism to bring about civilian governments. In the course of this, the issue of third terms (in Africa, usually not allowed under the constitution) was raised. The argument that third terms do not per se lead to instability was countered by the argument that power in the state should not be personalized, which is what abolishing the rule entails.

With regard to regional integration, the European Union serves as a model for the two regional organizations mentioned above, and their consolidation is largely financed by the EU, and in particular by the German government.

## Impressions from the Workshop









