

Operational coordination within the National Security System in ensuring internal order in Angola

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Executive Summary

This policy paper analyzes the architecture of Angola's National Security System, with emphasis on how the country structures and coordinates the integration of institutions and sectors responsible for ensuring internal order. The analysis highlights the need to strengthen operational coordination between the defense forces and internal security bodies, so as to ensure more effective responses to hybrid threats and emerging social crises. The study also examines the evolution of the concept of national security, which has moved beyond a predominantly military perspective toward a multidimensional approach that incorporates political, social, economic, and institutional dimensions. Several studies identify significant challenges to internal order in Angola, linked to the worsening and spread of conditions such as the limited capacity to control the circulation of illegal firearms among civilians; the growing number of socially vulnerable children, adolescents, and young people; the unregulated proliferation of churches and religious sects, sometimes associated with abusive practices and the manipulation and trafficking of vulnerable people; rapid population growth combined with expanding pockets of disorderly urbanization; and educational, moral, civic, and legal deficits among part of the population, which constrain the exercise of informed citizenship. These factors pose significant risks to internal order and point to the need for coordinated action among the different actors responsible for national security. Structural problems, however, including institutional fragmentation, weak integration among different levels of government and sectors, and overlapping functions among some entities, undermine coordinated action and weaken the capacity to respond to the growing complexity of threats to internal order. Critical issues affecting interoperability, cooperation, and tactical-operational alignment are also identified. The paper is based on a literature review and documentary analysis, allowing for an understanding of the main theoretical and conceptual aspects and of the functioning of the

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National Security System. In this context, it recommends the clear definition of institutional coordination strategies, as well as the establishment of effective mechanisms for sharing information and resources, both of which are essential to operational coordination.

Keywords: operational coordination; defense; internal order; national security; governance.

1 NATIONAL SECURITY GOVERNANCE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNAL ORDER

In 2013, the African Union's Common African Defence and Security Policy adopted a multidimensional definition of national security, covering both the traditional notion centered on a nation's survival and protection against external aggression by military means, and a broader approach (African Union Commission, 2013). Fjäder (2014) understands national security as an integrated protection system involving several dimensions and different material-military, economic, political, and social conditions that ensure the absence of significant dangers, with the aim of preserving a country's stability, development, and fundamental interests.

National security is therefore not limited to the military defense of territory. It also includes the protection of the economy, the environment, and strategic infrastructure, forming a system of integrated prevention, protection, and response actions against the various threats that may compromise a nation's stability and progress. Many countries use the term national security to refer to measures designed to protect national sovereignty, citizens' rights and freedoms, and the nation's strategic values, assets, and resources.

Table 1 illustrates the purposes and different domains involved in ensuring national security. Each of these spheres has specific but complementary functions. One of the main domains is national defense, which refers to the protection of territory and the preservation of border integrity. Buzan et al. (1998) explain that military security remains one of the traditional pillars of national security, especially with regard to defense capacity against external aggression. Another key dimension shown in the table is internal security, which concerns the maintenance of public order and tranquillity, crime prevention, and the protection of citizens and their property. Wæver (1995) argues that internal security is directly linked to social stability and the normal functioning of institutions.

Table 1 – Purposes and Domains of National Security Assurance

Purposes	Domains
Protection of the nation and the population, ensuring sovereignty, state stability, and the safeguarding of national interests.	National Defense: protection of the state's territory, sovereignty, and territorial integrity against external threats.
	Internal Security: maintenance of public order and tranquillity, prevention and combat of crime, and protection of citizens and their property.
	Economic Security: protection of the economic and financial system against illicit practices, such as money laundering, corruption, fraud, and financial speculation.
	Environmental Security: protection of the environment and natural resources, including prevention and response to pollution, deforestation, and other threats.
	Cybersecurity: protection of digital infrastructure, computer networks, and information against cyberattacks and other threats.

Source: adapted from *African Union Commission* (2013).

The other domains described in the table above are economic security, environmental security, and cybersecurity. Economic security seeks to protect the financial system against practices that undermine economic stability and trust in institutions. Environmental security involves preventing and responding to phenomena that may affect sustainability and people's quality of life. Cybersecurity, in turn, has become increasingly important in the information society (African Union Commission, 2013). Its main concern is the protection of information systems, ensuring the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of data against attacks, digital espionage, data theft, and other threats.

Together, these domains of national security help preserve constitutional and legal order, public order, stable access to electricity and information resources, national unity and identity, environmental protection, and other core values (Jing, 2023). National security also depends on a specific governance condition, strengthened by the joint action of military and civilian, state and non-state functions (Koh *et al.*, 2005). Broadly speaking, four core tasks can be identified in national security governance (Baldwin, 1997, p. 32):

1. Threat identification (internal or external): depending on the object of concern and the expected impact. Threats must be clearly named and signaled.

2. Definition of strategies: development of policies aimed at minimizing or eliminating threats through military or non-military means, including coercion, survival, or deterrence.
3. Institutionalization of entities: definition of the types and levels of actors responsible for achieving security objectives, with clear assignment of roles and obligations.
4. Determination of means: identification and mobilization of the resources to be used to increase security, including personnel training, budgets, and technical, technological, and logistical equipment.

These processes define governance and may be categorized on the basis of objective conditions (Baldwin, 1997). Such baseline conditions in the security approach depend on the context in which the expression national security is used. In Angola, the Constitution establishes that:

National security aims to ensure the safeguarding of national independence and sovereignty, territorial integrity, the democratic rule-of-law state, freedom, and the defense of the territory against any threats and risks, as well as cooperation for national development and contribution to international peace and security” (Angola, 2010, art. 202, translated from Portuguese).

In accordance with Law No. 15/24 (Angola, 2024, art. 3, item h), national security is a condition in which the citizen, society, and the state are protected against internal and external threats and risks. In this context, the subject of national security is the state, understood as a political entity with a permanent population, a defined territory, and a government. National security is therefore a condition of protection against threats and risks that safeguards the exercise of citizens’ constitutional rights and freedoms and supports the country’s sustainable socioeconomic development.

In Angola, the National Security System is organized into sectors, institutions, bodies, and services. The sectors, more specifically, comprise a range of activities and services aimed at protecting people, property, and information. The system is made up of three sectors: national defense, maintenance of internal order, and preservation of state security. Each has specific objectives, its own mechanisms of operationalization, and responsible actors. Table 2 provides a concise description of the objectives, forms of operationalization, and key actors in each sector.

Table 2 – National Security Sectors

Sectors	Objective	Operationalization	Actors
National Defense	Defense of national sovereignty and independence, territorial integrity, and the regular functioning of constitutional powers and, at their initiative, the law; protection of the freedom and security of the population against aggression and other internal and external threats; and performance of missions of public interest.	Coordinated set of political, economic, military, social, legal, and other measures and actions.	President of the Republic (Commander-in-Chief), Ministry of National Defense and Homeland Veterans, Angolan Armed Forces (FAA), and the National Security Council.
Maintenance of Internal Order	Defense of public security and tranquillity; protection of institutions, citizens, and their property; guarantee of the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms; crime prevention and combat, as well as criminal investigation; civil protection; control of migration flows; and enforcement of criminal sentences.	Coordinated set of political, economic, police, sociocultural, legal, and other measures and actions.	Ministry of the Interior, National Police of Angola (PNA), Criminal Investigation Service (SIC), Migration and Foreigners Service (SME), Civil Protection and Fire Service, justice bodies, and other competent public entities.
Preservation of State Security	Safeguarding of the democratic rule-of-law state against violent or organized crime, as well as other threats and risks, in compliance with the Constitution, laws, and international conventions to which Angola is a party.	Coordinated set of intelligence measures and actions.	State Intelligence and Security Service (SINSE), military intelligence bodies, National Security Council, and other entities responsible for producing and coordinating strategic intelligence.

Source: adapted by the author from the CRA (2010) and the National Security Law (Angola, 2024).

As shown in Table 2, the national defense sector focuses primarily on protecting the state's sovereignty and territorial integrity against external threats, relying mainly on military and strategic capabilities. The sector responsible for maintaining internal order, in turn, centers on public security and social stability within the country, mainly involving police forces. The preservation of state security focuses on protecting institutions and the democratic rule-of-law

state itself against structural threats such as organized crime, terrorism, espionage, and other forms of subversion.

Coordination among these three sectors makes it possible to ensure a more integrated and comprehensive approach to security, combining instruments, means, and intelligence resources. With regard to internal order, the Constitution of the Republic of Angola (2010, art. 209) establishes that

the maintenance of internal order is intended to defend public security and tranquillity, as well as to protect institutions, citizens, and their property, guaranteeing fundamental rights and freedoms against violent or organized crime and other types of threats and risks” (Angola, 2010, art. 209, translated from Portuguese).

The internal order sector in Angola is closely linked to the architecture of the National Security System. In general, most of the agencies – or key actors – responsible for maintaining internal order are subordinate to the Ministry of Home Affairs or the Ministry of the Interior, as is the case in several countries, including Angola. In short, internal order is ensured primarily through public security forces and specialized executive services responsible for safeguarding rights and freedoms.

2 OPERATIONAL COORDINATION AMONG BODIES OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY SYSTEM

In defense and security, coordination may be understood as the set of mechanisms through which forces and services coordinate, cooperate, and integrate their actions. These processes take place in an organized manner and are aimed at pursuing shared objectives and interests (Marcella, 2008). Coordination involves joint decision-making, information exchange, and the conduct of actions over varying periods, usually until the identified risks or threats have been fully neutralized.

The purpose of coordination is to: (i) prevent and respond to hybrid threats; (ii) ensure internal stability; (iii) protect borders and strategic resources; and (iv) respond to crisis situations, such as terrorism, natural disasters, community conflicts, and organized crime (Borges, 2017). The sectors that make up Angola’s National Security System cooperate through the reciprocal exchange of information and data not subject to special confidentiality or protection regimes. Although this information is not intended exclusively to serve the specific objectives of each force or service, it is necessary for achieving the shared purposes of the different bodies. Under Law No. 15/24 of September 10, the National Security Law, the institutions responsible for ensuring national security in Angola are the Angolan Armed Forces

and the National Police (Angola, 2024, art. 17). These institutions coordinate actions at several levels to ensure internal order.

One example occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, when a State of Emergency was declared in Angola on March 25, 2020. Exceptional measures were then imposed to contain the spread of the disease, including strict control over the movement of people and other health and social restrictions. Coordination between the National Police and the Angolan Armed Forces therefore became indispensable, particularly in operations to control mobility, ensure compliance with the restrictions imposed, and maintain public order throughout the national territory. This experience highlighted the importance of interinstitutional coordination within the National Security System, especially in crisis situations that require integrated and multidimensional state responses.

Objectively, coordination seeks to integrate forces, strategies, communication systems, and operations. It is therefore an essential component of the system's functioning, reflecting its capacity to coordinate responses to internal threats (OECD/DAC, 2001). One central and advantageous pillar of coordination among the sectors, institutions, and bodies of Angola's National Security System is command. Supreme authority over these institutions rests with the same figure: the President of the Republic, who serves as Commander-in-Chief.

Coordination takes place among ministries and high national commands and includes the definition of shared priorities, such as counterterrorism, border control, protection of critical resources and infrastructure, and the sharing of strategic intelligence (Cafala, 2025). As for the instruments used, the proposed typology identifies two dimensions of coordination: technical-tactical and operational (Garcia; Ostronoff, 2008). Technical-tactical coordination focuses on harmonizing forces, means, and resources in order to implement strategy on the ground. It may occur among regional commands, provinces, and operational units (Marcella, 2008).

Law No. 15/24 of September 10 – the National Security Law – establishes that, in carrying out previously coordinated missions, the sectors, institutions, bodies, and services that make up Angola's National Security System must cooperate with one another by promoting the sharing of material, technical, and operational resources (Angola, 2024, art. 30).

This cooperation is intended to ensure greater efficiency and response capacity in the face of the various threats and risks that may affect the security of the state and society. In this regard, the law provides that resource sharing may include, among others, the following means (Angola, 2024):

- a) communication and interaction means, in real time and on a periodic basis, through a specially created integrated communication platform;
- b) means of transport;
- c) educational institutions and specialist training centers;
- d) other means and resources which, by their nature, may be used jointly by the institutions of the system (art. 30).

These institutional cooperation mechanisms are fundamental tools for strengthening interoperability within the National Security System, allowing coordinated and integrated action in the fulfillment of its responsibilities (Angola, 2024, art. 30). Examples include the transition process of former members of the Angolan Armed Forces into the National Police; the formalization of memoranda of understanding among institutions and bodies of the National Security System; personnel training to strengthen the forces' operational capacity; and the sharing of strategic plans for the control of sensitive areas, such as oil platforms, coastlines, mines, and borders (Cafala, 2025).

Operational coordination takes shape at the level of operations, with a focus on direct and immediate action (Marcella, 2008). It includes the creation and operation of command-and-control centers, such as joint operations rooms, unified communication systems, and real-time information sharing or integrated intelligence systems. This dimension of coordination is responsible for implementing joint operational plans for territorial defense, border control, civil protection, and the security of electoral processes, major events, and action in exceptional situations, including crisis, state-of-siege, or emergency scenarios.

At the operational level, coordination is guided by actions such as joint exercises and maneuvers aimed at strengthening interoperability through mixed patrols, integrated military and police training, and simulations of responses to attacks, disasters, or uprisings (Marta, 2001). Examples include joint operations between the Angolan Armed Forces and the National Police in patrolling land borders and areas of political-military instability, as well as actions against armed groups and cross-border crimes; and operations between the Navy and the Fiscal Police to protect the maritime coast and combat illegal fishing and piracy. The Angolan Armed Forces also act in support of public order forces in situations involving natural disasters, restoration of order, and the fulfillment of various missions of public interest (Cafala, 2025).

The legal basis for coordination is strengthened by a clear distinction of missions in normal times, combined with strong integration under a command structure and mechanisms that allow fluid cooperation in missions of public interest (Garcia; Ostronoff, 2008). Legislation should precisely define the missions of each force while also establishing the cooperation and subordination mechanisms required for joint action.

In this sense, operational coordination between defense and public security bodies is decisive for stability within a territory (Silva, 2014). Although each body retains its own missions, coordinated action makes it possible to address hybrid threats more effectively, ensuring integrated, proportional, and comprehensive responses to the different situations that affect internal security.

3 CHALLENGES IN OPERATIONAL COORDINATION FOR ENSURING INTERNAL ORDER

National security in Angola has evolved from a traditional view, centered solely on state survival and the military dimension, toward a multidimensional conception. It now includes the protection of citizens' rights and freedoms, socioeconomic development, and the safeguarding of strategic interests in areas such as the economy, the environment, and cyberspace. The effectiveness of the National Security System depends on the capacity for coordination, cooperation, and interoperability between defense forces and internal security bodies. This coordination is strengthened by unified command under the President of the Republic, which facilitates the definition of shared priorities, whether in border control, the fight against organized crime, or counterterrorism.

Technical barriers nevertheless remain, including the lack of interoperability among communication systems, which affects coordination strategies. Internal order should not be viewed as an isolated segment, but as a vital component of the country's development strategy. Responding to hybrid threats and managing social crises require operational coordination to function as a continuous process of adaptation and innovation. This process depends on moving beyond a purely militarized logic toward qualified service delivery, in which cooperation between defense and internal security bodies is fluid and based on clear protocols for sharing resources and information.

Challenges to security and public order in Angola stem from the intersection of structural, institutional, and social factors, including high unemployment, deep economic stratification, weakened social ties, feelings of marginalization among large social groups, the absence of effective firearm-control systems, frequent changes or gaps in legislation, and ineffective implementation of social programs (Feliciano, 2025). Understanding these challenges requires attention to the specific features of the Angolan context and to the diversity of threats and risks affecting national security.

Operational coordination between defense and public security structures strengthens sovereignty and the protection of strategic interests, playing a vital role in the country's

development and in citizens' well-being. It allows institutional capabilities to be integrated, resources to be optimized, and more coordinated and effective responses to internal threats to be delivered. It also creates an institutional environment that supports information sharing, strategic coordination, and the conduct of joint operations.

The lack of coordination, by contrast, can significantly weaken responses to security problems, especially when threats cut across different jurisdictions. Poor integration often produces fragmented efforts, unclear responsibilities, and delays in decision-making. Institutional and cultural barriers also hinder coordination, including the lack of interoperability among communication systems, resistance to change among actors, unequal logistical capacity across security institutions, technological limitations, outdated memoranda between forces and services, and overlapping jurisdictions (Garcia; Ostronoff, 2008). The level of technological modernization across sectoral bodies also directly affects the effectiveness of operational coordination.

Some strategic studies point to mechanisms for overcoming these challenges, including the need to foster an institutional culture of collaboration among the different forces (Marta, 2001). Where there is no unified strategic vision, especially in contexts marked by past rivalries between defense and security forces, coordination tends to become more difficult (Marcella, 2008). Budget constraints often limit the ability to invest in the technology and training required for effective institutional integration, making this another critical point for coordination (Garcia; Ostronoff, 2008).

Internal order is an integral part of the development strategy and is closely linked to the other elements of the National Security System. Coordination between internal order forces and the other sectors of the system is essential for effectively combating crime. Without such coordination, operational, informational, and strategic limitations tend to emerge.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Higher-level coordination bodies should define and establish command centers in which representatives of the different defense and security forces can operate in an integrated manner. Such centers are essential to ensure strategic coordination, rapid decision-making, and efficient cooperation;
- The institutions, bodies, and services of Angola's National Security System should establish memoranda and clear collaboration procedures to ensure the sharing of operational

information. The formalization of such instruments is essential to strengthen operational coordination;

- Angola should reinforce the standardization of military organizational models. The adoption of uniform models would help systematize procedures and establish clear standards of action among different defense and security bodies and forces, reflecting how the country understands security and the means required to preserve it;

- Angola should define levels of resource sharing that allow harmonious operational action among the different institutions or sectors of the National Security System. Clear levels of resource sharing are essential to ensure effective coordination among all institutions and sectors;

- The National Security System should align its approach to, and investment in, technical and technological defense and security resources, integrating continuous processes of adaptation and innovation. Strategic alignment of technical resources is essential to produce effective responses to current and emerging threats.

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