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**Interrogating Regional Security Arrangements in Africa:  
The Case of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)**

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The concept of a peace and security architecture refers to structures, norms, capacities and procedures that are employed to avert conflict and war, to mediate for peace where a conflict has broken out as well as to ensure the general maintenance of peace and security in a given setting. These instruments and norms may be well set up by way of a blueprint, with clearly defined inter-relationships or they may be in the process of growth and definition where there is a framework of the architecture that is continually evolving and adjusting to changing circumstances. As a continental master plan for peace and security the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) falls more in the latter than in the former category. While the general layout is in place, its implementation is still in the process of growth and refinement so that it can ultimately and holistically respond to the peace and security requirements of the African continent.

APSA has its origins in the formative years of the now defunct Organization of the African Union (OAU). The OAU divided the continent into five regions, aligned with a number of existing Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and prompting the establishment of others. While Africa's regional organizations were originally designed as centre points for regional economic development, regional bodies and leaders quickly acknowledged that the insecurity and instability endemic in the regions were major impediments to integration and development (Mwanasali, 2003; Olonisakin and Ero 2003). With the exception of the Arab Magreb Union, all of Africa's RECs have subsequently developed security mechanisms with varying competencies to operate within the context of a broader regional integration agenda (Powell, 2005).

The OAU became engaged in conflict resolution in Africa almost from its inception in 1963, but restricted its efforts to settling border disputes and adjudicating ideological differences resulting from the Cold War (Amoo, 1993). The OAU Charter recognized the peaceful settlement of disputes through mediation, conciliation and arbitration. A Commission for Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration was established, but the protocol prescribing optional jurisdiction and mediation was limited to inter-state disputes. These restrictions eventually made the commission redundant (Francis, 2007). In response to the security challenges and threat perceptions of the 1960s, the OAU proposed the establishment of An African High Command as a collective security and defence framework. The aims of the high command were: to ensure protection of territorial integrity, to help guard political sovereignty, to set up a defence against external aggression, to prevent the balkanization of Africa and to assist liberation fighters against colonial domination. Proposals for the creation of sub-regional defence and security

mechanisms were made in 1972. Although nothing concrete came from these proposals, they became the blueprints for the formation of sub-regional security and peacekeeping mechanisms. In this way the OAU laid the foundation for a new regional architecture for peace and security (Ibid).

With the end of the Cold War, and the inevitable reduction of Africa's strategic importance on the world stage coupled with the crises of the 1990s, OAU felt the need to change its conflict resolution approach in the continent. This led to the establishment of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Cairo in 1993 with the following functions:

- to anticipate and prevent situations of potential conflict from developing into full-blown wars;
- to undertake peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts if full-blown conflicts should arise;
- to carry out peacemaking and peacebuilding activities in post-conflict situations (Powell, 2005).

While the mechanism comprehensively addressed the entire spectrum of conflicts, nothing much by way of implementation was achieved and it therefore met the same fate that had befallen the earlier instruments.

Generally, the OAU was criticized as being ineffective in establishing peace and security within Africa. Perhaps the only mechanism that was relatively successful was the Commission for Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration in its dealings with issues of decolonization and the eradication of racist regimes (Francis, 2007). This commission played a role in helping to end apartheid in South Africa and decolonization in Namibia and Zimbabwe, but could not end colonial domination in both Western Sahara and Eritrea. The major obstacles contributing to the dismal performance of the OAU in the field of peace and security had less to do with the lack of institutional frameworks and mechanisms but more to do with its commitment to the principles of sovereignty and non interference, as well as respect for established borders and territorial integrity. The cause of the organization's failure to act effectively in this area (i.e. peace and security) was because, with few exceptions, the organization was not legally or operationally equipped to intervene in either inter- or intrastate conflicts.

As a response to the ineffectiveness of the organization's mechanisms, the African leaders decided in May 2001 to devise a new security regime to operate within the framework of the nascent African Union (AU) (Kioko, 2003). This transformation ushered in substantive

normative and institutional changes representing a move away from strict adherence to non-interference by giving the AU the right to intervene. Human rights and democracy were also given prominence in the AU Constitutive Act and were repeated without fail in almost all of the major instruments subsequently adopted. Among other fundamental principles, the Constitutive Act of the AU gives primacy to the intention to develop closer collaboration with the many and diverse sub-regional economic communities and security defence systems in the pursuit of continental development, peace and security objectives (Francis, 2007).

At the institutional level, this transformation most notably saw the emergence of the current African Peace and Security Architecture (Dersso, 2010). The architecture is premised on several norms which emanate both from the OAU Charter as well as the AU Constitutive Act. These norms include the sovereign equality of member states (Article 4a), non-intervention by member states (Article 4g), devising African solutions for African problems, non-use of force in the peaceful settlement of disputes (Articles 4e, 4f, 4i), condemnation of unconstitutional changes of government (Article 4p) as well as the right of the AU to intervene in the affairs of a member state in grave circumstances (Article 4h) (Aning, 2008).

### **Components of APSA**

APSA is anchored within the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC). The Protocol establishing the PSC came into effect in January 2004. According to Article 2 of the PSC protocol, the PSC is central to APSA and is 'a standing decision-making organ for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts' which operates as 'a collective security and early warning arrangement to facilitate timely and efficient response to conflict and crisis situations in Africa'. Article 2 lists the components of APSA as: i) the AU Commission, ii) a Panel of the Wise, iii) a Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), iv) an African Standby Force (ASF) and v) a Special Fund. These different components of APSA come into play sequentially in the process of the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

i) The AU Commission is the Secretariat of the Union entrusted with the executive functions. It has several portfolios including the Peace and Security Department (PSD). Within this department are core divisions including Conflict Management, Peace and Support Operations, Defence and Security as well as the Secretariat to the Peace and Security Council. As the central organ of the AU, the Commission plays the important role of being the driving force behind the Union's activities including those of peace and security. It implements, coordinates and

documents PSC decisions as well as facilitates networking and linkages between the PSD and other relevant departments and programmes. The Commission also helps member states to implement various programmes and policies and it takes on the strategic role of mobilizing resources for AU financing, including for peace and security. However, the Commission faces various challenges, one of them being the inadequate staffing which impacts negatively on inter-departmental coordination and collaboration. This hampers the overall effectiveness of the Commission and that of PSD (PSD, 2010).

ii) Article 11 of the PSC protocol establishes the Panel of the Wise in order to support the efforts of the Council and those of the Chairperson of the Commission, particularly in conflict prevention. The Panel is composed of five highly respected African personalities on the basis of regional representation. They are appointed to serve for a three-year term, renewable once, with the following mandate:

- The Panel shall advise the Council and the Chairperson of the Commission on all issues pertaining to the promotion and maintenance of peace, security and stability in Africa.
- The panel shall undertake all such actions deemed appropriate to support efforts of the Council and those of the Chairperson of the Commission for the prevention of conflicts.
- As and when necessary, the Panel may pronounce itself on any issue relating to the promotion and maintenance of peace, security and stability in Africa, in the form it considers most appropriate (AU, 2007).

The current Panel members appointed in 2007 include:

- Brigalia Bam, Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa (Southern Africa Region)
- Ahmed Ben Bella, former President of Algeria (North Africa region)
- Elizabeth Pognon, Former President of the Constitutional Court of Benin (West Africa region)
- Miguel Trovoada, Former Prime Minister and President of Sao Tome and Principe (Central Africa region)
- Salim Ahmed Salim, Former Secretary General of the OAU (East Africa region).

The Panel, an idea borrowed from African tradition defining the role and place of elders in peacebuilding, is one of the most innovative structures of APSA. As a non-threatening

instrument, it can be used to handle issues that are too politically sensitive to be undertaken by the other components of APSA.

However, the Panel is one of the least developed instruments of APSA. It was among the last to be operationalized and was officially inaugurated in December 2007 (Heinlein, 2007). Its role as a preventive strategy needs to be further elaborated, especially in terms of engagement. Further, the Panel should be included in the AU Commission's structure so as to give it greater visibility, and most crucially, to ensure that it is supported from the AU regular budget. The current reliance on partner support does not bode well for the sustainability and ownership of this instrument (PSD, 2010).

iii) Article 12 of the PSC Protocol gives rise to the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS). The early warning system is intended to 'facilitate the anticipation and prevention of conflicts.' When fully operational, the system is expected to connect the AU headquarters and the headquarters of regional organizations through a feedback process of relaying information and interventions. The observation and monitoring centre, the 'Situation Room' located in Addis Ababa, is expected to be in continuous communication with other early warning centres within the regional organizations. Beginning 2006, with the adoption of the *Framework for the Operationalization of the CEWS*, important achievements have been registered especially in setting up and equipping the Situation Room, developing data collection and analysis tools as well as in the continuous news monitoring and summarization of the *Africa News Brief* and *Daily News Highlights* that are circulated by the AU Commission to a wide network of subscribers, including RECs by email (PSD, 2010).

In order to fully operationalize CEWS, however, the system faces a number of challenges, mostly emanating from the capacity constraints of both the AU and RECs. With the possible exception of the Economic Community of West African States Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) and Conflict Early Warning and Response Network (CEWARN) in Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the development of CEWS' basic operational capability in most of the other regional organizations, especially in Southern African Development Community (SADC), East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), is still in its infancy. This is as a result of inadequate staffing, lack of adequate attention given to its development and overreliance on external support, among other challenges. Another critical obstacle facing CEWS throughout the continent is the lack of effective collaboration between AU and other actors such as the civil

society and the UN, despite the importance given to these collaborative linkages by the CEWS Framework (Ibid). There also exist weak linkages between regional CEWS and the Situation Room in Addis Ababa.

iv) The ASF represents the peacekeeping capacity of the AU. Its formation was endorsed by the African Heads of state at a summit in Maputo in 2003 (Daley, 2006). Given that mobilizing troops for peace operations takes time, the ASF was envisioned to serve in a continental rapid-response capacity for peace support operations and interventions. It has the technical support and backing of a Military Staff Committee (MSC) whose role is to provide technical suggestions and solutions to military issues and to provide their expert opinion to the PSC before military decisions are made (Aning, 2008).

According to Article 13 of the PSC protocol, the ASF is to be prepared for rapid deployment in a range of peacekeeping operations, including the following:

- Observation and monitoring missions
- Other types of peace support missions
- Intervention in a member state in respect of grave circumstances or at the request of a member state in order to restore peace and security in accordance with Articles 4(h) and (j) of the Constitutive Act
- Preventive deployment in order to prevent (i) a dispute or a conflict from escalating, (ii) an ongoing conflict from spreading to neighbouring areas or states, and (iii) the resurgence of violence after parties to a conflict have reached an agreement.
- Peace-building, including post-conflict disarmament and demobilization
- Humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population in conflict areas and support efforts to address major natural disasters ; and
- Any other function as may be mandated by the Peace and Security Council or the Assembly (AU, 2002).

An integrated force made up of military, civilian and police components, the ASF consists of five regional standby capabilities representing North, East, West, South and Central Africa. Given its mandate, the ASF is one of the most critical elements of the architecture that will enable the AU to deliver on its promise of intervention to protect people who are caught in civil unrest and conflict and to provide prompt and robust response to manage and resolve African crises. It enables the PSC first, to prevent and manage conflicts by containing their spread or escalation;

second, to support its peace processes as a peace support mission; and third, to enforce its decisions in cases of grave circumstances or to intervene when necessary (Dersso, 2010).

Generally, the five regional components of the ASF have attained an initial operating capability in accordance with the ASF roadmap by 2010 (PSD, 2010). Most regions have conducted Level I (Map Exercise), Level II (Command Post Exercise) and also participated in Levels I and II Decision-making Exercises at the continental level (AU PSOD, 2010).

Despite the successes, however, ASF is faced with several challenges in its operationalization. The mandate of ASF needs to be further clarified and fine-tuned with regard to the different deployment scenarios, including the role of troop-contributing countries, regional organizations and the AU Commission itself to avoid overlaps and gaps. Legally binding agreements should be set up between RECs/AU and member states regarding troop contribution, since to date, no such agreement exists. The level of coordination and harmonization between the regional planning elements and the AU Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD) needs to be improved for the benefit of the overall effectiveness of the force. This should go hand in hand with improving the level of commitment, professionalism and leadership within the AU Commission. While the role of development partners remains central to the success of the ASF, its agenda, whether in training or overall development, should be driven by Africans in response to the continent's peace and security needs. However, this is not always the case and in some instances, decisions may be taken more to satisfy donor requirements than to answer to the needs of ASF or its components. Ultimately, troop deployment and associated logistics is a very expensive exercise and sustainable ways will have to be sought for the purpose of supporting these actions so as to mitigate challenges associated with overreliance on partners (Ibid; Dersso, 2010; PSD, 2010; Klingebiel, 2008).

v) According to Article 21, the Peace Fund was meant to provide the necessary financial resources for peace support missions and other operational activities related to peace and security. It is one of the AU organs inherited from the former OAU. Initially, the Fund was established in 1993 to support the work of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (AU, 2003). In theory, the Peace Fund is supposed to receive six per cent of the operative funds and voluntary contributions from donors and member states (Klingebiel, 2008). However, this has not been the case. Like the operative fund, voluntary funds are almost entirely provided by donors especially for those earmarked for missions, but these funds do not flow through the Peace Fund, thereby destabilizing it as a key component of



APSA. A further drawback is that the Peace Fund has no modalities in place on the use of the fund as well as no strong resource mobilization strategies and mechanisms (PSC, 2010).

### **Role of partners**

For APSA to become fully operational it will depend on the robust cooperation among various partners and stakeholders of peace and security in Africa, including the AU itself, as well as regional organizations, the civil society, the United Nations (UN) and other key members of the international community.

### **Sub-regional Organizations and APSA**

Sub-regional organizations are considered to be the essential building blocks and implementation agencies of the African Union's many programmes, including APSA. This cooperation ensures that the AU not only profits from the regions' comparative advantage in military and security matters, but also from their experience with peace operations in the case of Western, Eastern and Southern Africa. Further, their established frameworks and mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution grant them a significant stake and a central role in the AU peace and security processes. Under this approach, the primary responsibility for peace and security remains squarely with the regional economic communities, while the AU serves as an authoritative clearinghouse and framework for all initiatives (Oloo, 2008). Therefore, sub-regional organizations are expected to set up APSA structures at their levels which work in sync with equivalent structures at the AU level.

To solidify this relationship between the AU and sub-regional organizations and mechanisms, a Memorandum of Understanding defines relations between the two levels in peace and security.

The major objectives of this agreement include:

- Contributing to the full operationalisation of the Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA),
- Ensuring regular information exchange on the activities of the parties to the agreement, and designing ways by which peace/security-related activities can be implemented jointly, in keeping with the principles of the PSC protocol.
- Engaging in a regular review of the contribution of each Regional Economic Community and regional mechanism in the areas of the major components (as discussed earlier between pages 4-9) of APSA (AU, 2007).

In general, therefore, the development and implementation of APSA depends upon the regional organizations, without whose cooperation and commitment APSA cannot be implemented effectively at the continental level. This is dependent on intense cooperation and coordination between the AU Commission and the sub-regional organizations' decision-making organs. Currently, the level of coordination between the AU and RECs/RMs has registered some progress, especially in getting the ASF and CEWS operational as opposed to the other three components of APSA. This could be in part attributed to the existence of a roadmap for the first two components which provides a more structured basis for their becoming operational (PSC, 2010). While horizontal coordination is envisaged, especially among the regional organizations, there appears to be very little, if any, among the APSA structures. As a result, the AU Commission needs to provide more strategic leadership to the regional organizations in the continued institutionalization of APSA.

### **European Union and APSA**

A fully functioning APSA is also largely dependent on external multilateral and bilateral support. This support is delivered through frameworks such as the European Union's (EU) Africa Peace Facility (APF) and the UN ten-year Capacity-building Programme. To date, the EU has provided the most significant external financial support to APSA. In 2005, it adopted its African Strategy which partly aims to support the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) on the continent. This strategy recognizes the central role of peace and security in achieving development goals and commits the EU to supporting the development of APSA (Middleton, 2008). It is a strategy that also compliments the Joint Africa-EU strategy with its three pillars based on security: encouraging dialogue on challenges to peace and security, supporting APSA and funding AU-led peace support operations. As part of the Joint Africa-EU strategy, the EU established the Africa Peace Facility (APF) in 2004 in response to a request made by African leaders at the AU 2003 Maputo summit. Initially, the fund provided a grant worth Euro 250 million for a three-year period to support peace, security and development. Although the programme was intended to be a short-term measure when it ended in 2007, it was renewed until 2010 with a further infusion of Euro 300 million (Mpyisi, 2009). The EU support has greatly aided the operational aspects of APSA by providing funding and other non-monetary support to AU and the regional organizations.

## **The G8 and APSA**

The G8 leaders at successive summits have recognized that peace is an essential condition for sustainable development in Africa and pledged to support initiatives in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict on the continent. In support of APSA, the G8 have focused, in particular, on supporting the continent's efforts to develop its capacity to undertake peace support operations and peace building initiatives. Issues of peace and security have been a focus of various summits and of declarations adopted at these events.

At the Kananaskis summit of 2002, the G8 adopted an African Action Plan containing a detailed list of commitments including to "provide technical and financial assistance so that, by 2010, African countries and regional and sub-regional organizations are able to engage more effectively to prevent and resolve violent conflict on the continent, and undertake peace support operations in accordance with the United Nations Charter" (OECD, 2008). In 2003, the Evian summit followed up on the earlier pledge with the "Joint Africa/G8 Action Plan to enhance African Capabilities to undertake Peace Support Operations" (G8, 2004). At the Sea Island summit of June 2004, the G8 adopted an "Action Plan for Expanding Global Capacity for Peace Support Operations" (Ibid). Among several other action points, the Group pledged to train and, where appropriate, equip a total of 75,000 troops worldwide by 2010, in line with the commitments undertaken at the previous two summits. They further pledged that this effort would have a sustained focus on Africa and other nations that could contribute to peace support operations both in Africa and elsewhere. The Heiligendamm summit in 2007 agreed to strengthen the civilian component of the ASF including its police capabilities. Although there were no new pledges made at the Hokkaido summit of 2008 in northern Japan, the Group reiterated their commitment to promoting peace on the African continent by enhancing its peacekeeping capabilities through support offered to APSA and ASF (Hubbard, 2008).

Other partners that have helped to operationalize APSA include India, China and individual member countries of the G8 and the European Union. In recognition of its primary responsibility to maintain peace and security in the world the UN has variously supported AU peace and security endeavours, including APSA.

## Conclusion

In the face of the UN failure to act effectively in some of Africa's most serious security challenges - including the genocide in Rwanda, conflicts in the DRC, Burundi, Liberia, Ivory Coast and the ongoing clashes in Somalia - the AU is increasingly actively pursuing an agenda for continental peace and stability. This re-vitalization of the defunct OAU through AU also coincided with a paradigm shift on the continent, dubbed the 'African Renaissance'. In the ongoing peace and security discourse, the slogan 'African solutions to African problems' took centre stage. Among other leaders, this new thinking was popularized by Thabo Mbeki, the then President of South Africa, who actively supported institutions that advocated Pan Africanism. These institutions included *inter alia* the African Union, the Pan African Parliament and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

'African solutions to African problems' reflects the justifiable need for greater African responsibility, autonomy and the imperative to develop indigenous conflict prevention and management capacities in the face of international indifference or at times unhealthy interference in certain African conflicts (Ayangafec and Cilliers, 2009). However, African or local ownership in developing and implementing policy options is not synonymous with and should not be used as an excuse for international disengagement or desertion. After all, international actors and interests have been at the heart of Africa's conflicts through much of its history.

Within the context of 'African solutions to African problems', the current trend where there is a very high reliance financially on international partners to operationalize APSA is worrying. This trend is observable not just at the AU level but also within regional organizations and associated centres of excellence where training is undertaken. This overreliance invariably undermines the principle of ownership and also raises questions of sustainability, predictability and agenda setting. As is naturally expected and as part of lessons learnt from the past, no international assistance is ever interest free and rarely is the interest altruistic international peace and security.

As a way of ensuring that Africans own and drive the agenda to operationalize APSA for Africa's own interests, the AU must ensure that it develops mechanisms, not only by diversifying partner support, but also crucially, by ensuring that a sizeable proportion of its

budget is derived from its member states. In this regard, the case of ECOWAS is worth being replicated both by AU and at the level of other regional organizations. Through a resource mobilization strategy by members, ECOWAS has instituted a Community Levy, a percentage of which is dedicated to the ECOWAS Peace Fund. The West African economic community accounts for approximately 80% of the budget to support its conflict prevention and management endeavours. As such, it is not dependent on partner support for its programmes and only regards it (partner support) as value addition. This has made its peace fund flexible and even enabled it to respond to member states' national peace and security challenges, including anti-corruption activities (PSC, 2010).

The AU should also ensure that the conceptualization and operationalization of APSA is flexible enough to respond to current and emerging threats. Emerging security challenges such as terrorism, piracy and the need to improve governance of security forces in member states currently fall outside the ambit of the ASF. A related challenge which a fully functioning APSA has to contend with rests with the very genesis of the security challenges on the continent: the nature of the African state. The state still remains an alien entity to the majority of its citizens and is unable to guarantee the minimum requirements of statehood. While currently there is an overemphasis in terms of peace and security support on the components of APSA especially from the EU, the biggest partner, there should be the recognition that state weakness remains the biggest source of insecurity in Africa. Therefore, greater emphasis must be placed on nurturing and strengthening democratic institutions at all levels from national and regional to the AU level.

Ultimately, for peace and security to be a reality in Africa, Africans must set and own the agenda, with support of the international community to ensure proper functioning of APSA. Anything short of this roadmap will relegate APSA to the backwaters that several other well intentioned but inappropriately conceptualized and executed initiatives have suffered.

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