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African Developments: Continental Conflict Management – a glass half full or half empty?

The emergence of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is one of the most important recent developments in Africa. The institutional setting for fostering peace and security on the continent has been created by the efforts of African governments to engage in comprehensive continental integration. These endeavours date back to the late 1990s and culminated in the establishment of the 'African Union' (AU) as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 2002.

The APSA is among the AU's most prominent features and includes a Peace and Security Council, an African Standby-Force and a Continental Early Warning System. Together with the AU's Charter, which supports innovative legal doctrines such as human security and responsibility-to-protect, these institutions provide a significant conceptual, meaningful and practical advance.

However severe institutional and financial shortcomings within some of the APSA features remain. Hence, the international community, and in particular the European Union, which is the most important donor to the AU, should increase its capacity-building commitments to both the continental as well as the regional pillars of inter-African cooperation. More importantly, they should seek to strengthen the dialogue with the member states of the AU, in particular those who are members of the Peace and Security Council. Overcoming three shortcomings is of critical importance: First, the lack of capacity of AU institutions; second the absence of sufficient political will by a majority of Africa's States and third changes in international support. Yet, for the time being the APSA provides for some legitimate actors on the continent and is Africa's best bet thus far for improved continental cooperation in the area of conflict management.

News coverage of ongoing atrocities in Sudan, Somalia and Nigeria, the 2009 coups in Guinea-Bissau and Madagascar as well as the reverberations of the electoral scandals in Kenya and Zimbabwe continues to nurture a bleak image of Africa. There is, however, another side to the African story, which is told less often. It is a story of renewed efforts of African states to forge cooperation in the sphere of peace and security under the umbrella of the African Union (AU), the building of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) (see DIE Briefing Paper 4/2010).

Pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture

The APSA is a unique organisation taking up institutional features from different organisational models. The APSA is being built into the AU's institutional set-up including the Peace and Security Council, two advisory bodies (both civilian and military), a fund for peace-building, the African Standby Force, the Continental Early Warning System and the Peace and Security Department of the AU Commission.

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) is modelled along the lines of the UN Security Council, and is the AU's backbone as a standing decision-making organ for the

prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. The PSC comprises fifteen members elected by the AU Executive Council, which is composed of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs or designates of AU member states' governments: Five elected for terms of three years and ten elected for terms of two years.

In January 2010, all 15 members of the PSC were up for replacement or reelection at the 16th ordinary session of the AU Executive Council. The Council elected Equatorial Guinea (Central Region), Kenya (Eastern Region), Libya (Northern Region), Zimbabwe (Southern Region), and Nigeria (Western Region) for a three-year term and Burundi and Chad (Central Region), Djibouti and Rwanda (Eastern Region), Mauritania (Northern Region), Namibia and South Africa (Southern Region), Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali (Western Region) for a two-year term. Nigeria is the only country that has continuously been represented on the Council since its inception in 2004.

According to the PSC Protocol, the Council's membership should be chosen on the principle of 'equitable regional representation and rotation' as well as an assessment of whether the state in question is in good standing (i.e. has it paid its dues, does it respect consti-

2010 is an important year for Africa. The year is marked by the 50th anniversary of independence for 17 African countries, including heavyweight Nigeria. It is also a decade since the Millennium Declaration and around a decade since steps towards creating the AU and NEPAD were taken. The world's attention will be on the first football world cup on the continent. In a series of Briefing Papers, the DIE looks into African Developments a decade after the revival of the African Agenda.

Box 1: Examples of AU-led missions and other activities		
Name, Location	Time	Actions
AU-led missions (including peace operations and electoral missions)		
AMIB, Burundi	April 2003 – May 2004	First AU peace-keeping mission (became a UN mission in 2004)
AMIS, Sudan	2004-2007 and December 2007 – ongoing	AMIS merged into UNAMID (not AU-led): Difficulties in troop deployment; UN aspires for 90 percent of 26,000 troops to eventually be on the ground by the end of 2009
AMISOM, Somalia	February 2007 – ongoing	Deployment of 2650 (Uganda: 1800; Burundi: 850) troops
Electoral and Security Assistance Mission, Comoros	May 2007	followed by
Operation Democracy, Comoros	March 2008	Intervention in capital (Anjouan)
Electoral Mission, Rwanda	September 2008	AU and South African observers endorse elections (while EU election observation mission to Rwanda remains critical)
Threat of sanctions/suspension of AU membership		
Mauritania	August 2005, August 2008	Country suspended following coups
Togo	February 2005	AU protest forced Gnassingbé to hold elections; he was officially elected President in May 2005 – under suspicion of electoral fraud
Guinea	December 2008	Country suspended following coup
Madagascar	March 2009	Country suspended following coup
	March 2010	Sanctions enter into force, namely travel ban, freezing of funds and other financial assets and economic resources, as well as diplomatic isolation, against government
Eritrea	May 2009	AU urged the UN Security Council to impose sanctions against Eritrea for supporting Islamist insurgents in Somalia
Niger	February 2010	Country suspended following coup
Source: Own compilation		

tutional governance and the rule of law etc.) and whether it is willing and able to shoulder the responsibilities that membership would place upon it. The selection of states to the PSC in 2010 puts the rigour of applying the principle into question: Equatorial-Guinea and Zimbabwe, for instance, are clearly not respecting the rule of law, while others have at least a questionable reputation and some have recently been subject to peace and security deliberations themselves (Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire, to name but two). The PSC covers a vast mandate which – inter alia – seeks to prevent conflicts, promote and implement peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction activities, develop a common defence policy for the Union, and encourage democratic practices, good governance and the rule of law, as well as protect human rights.

When the PSC was launched in May 2004, its creation was hailed as an historic watershed in building a durable peace and security order. Five years later, the PSC has held over 170 meetings, issued over 100 communiqués

and authorized sanctions against several African states as well as peace operations in Sudan, the Comoros and Somalia. Numerous problems remain – ranging from AU member states' lacking the political will to provide adequate financial contributions, occasional disregard for the council's procedures to delays in establishing a sufficiently staffed secretariat. And the AU proved unable to impose sanctions on the regime in Zimbabwe.

Yet, despite shortcomings, the PSC has the potential to develop into an increasingly effective centrepiece of the continental security architecture. Most obviously, the PSC has assumed key roles in some of the more positive recent examples of conflict management on the continent, notably in Burundi, the Comoros, and Kenya as well as in Mauritania and, less so, in Togo (see Box 1).

Beyond the PSC, there are two advisory bodies with much less leverage thus far: the Panel of the Wise and the Military Staff Committee. *The Panel of the Wise* has been designed to support the PSC's work in the area of conflict prevention and act as a 'politically independent'

advisory mechanism with the aim of forging “a culture of mediation”. It is meant to operate through personal mediation, discreet diplomacy and ‘good offices’ with a view of de-escalating conflicts and facilitating the conclusion of viable peace agreements. The Panel is an AU innovation, aspiring to be the institutionalisation of Africa’s often evoked tradition of high-level and personal mediation. However, since its inauguration in 2007, the panel has held seven ordinary meetings but has not engaged in mediation. The inaugural panel members are Salim Ahmed Salim, former Secretary-General of the OAU, Brigalia Bam, Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa, Ahmed Ben Bella, former President of Algeria, Elisabeth Pognon, President of the Constitutional Court of Benin and Miguel Trovaoda, former President of São Tomé and Príncipe.

The second advisory body established by the PSC Protocol is the **Military Staff Committee (MSC)**. According to the AU Charter, the MSC shall advise and assist the Peace and Security Council in all military and security aspects for the maintenance of peace and security in Africa. For this purpose, it is composed of senior military officers of the fifteen PSC member states. In addition to their advisory role, the members of the MSC also act as liaison officers between the PSC, the African Chiefs of Defence Staff and the regional conflict management mechanisms. Thus far – and despite regular meetings on going peace operations as well as the development of the African Standby Force and the Continental Early Warning System – the MSC has not been very influential.

As a financial mechanism for support to the AU’s peace and security operations, the AU has continued the **Special (Peace) Fund**. It is the continuation of the OAU’s Peace Fund which had been created in 1993 and remains one of the weakest points. The Special Fund is meant to be financed through an annual contribution from the organisation’s regular budget, by voluntary contributions from member states and donations from international partners. Yet, the total contributions to the fund have remained far below the required levels; the contributions of AU member states have never made up more than two percent of the fund’s total income. The overwhelming majority of funding comes from international donors.

An ambitious innovation is the **African Standby Force (ASF)**. It is designed to support the PSC’s responsibilities with respect to the deployment of peace support missions and military intervention in cases of genocide, severe war crimes and crimes against humanity, as provided for in the AU Charter (Art. 4h). It is envisaged to consist of five regionally-managed standby brigades of around 3,000 troops and civilian police, and one continentally-managed permanent body responsible for final oversight, coordination and harmonisation. However, despite progress with the Southern, Eastern and Western regional brigades, it seems unlikely that the ASF will be fully operational by the end of 2010 as planned. The Central and regional and, in particular, the Northern brigade, are lacking far behind.

The **Continental Early Warning System (CEWS)** is a mechanism established in order to facilitate the anticipation of conflicts. It consists of a situation room as observation and monitoring centre located at the AU’s Conflict Management Directorate and five regional observation and monitoring units which are linked directly to the situation room. Based on the data collected in the regions and a set of clearly defined and commonly accepted political, economic, social, military and humanitarian indicators, the situation room briefs the AU and its bodies on risks and trends. Similarly to the ASF, the implementation of the CEWS is progressing very unevenly. While Eastern, Southern, and Western Africa have already operationalised their mechanisms, the northern and central regions are not on track.

Overall, the AU’s security institutions despite their shortcomings, are a significant improvement on the structures of the OAU. African governments deserve most of the credit for this change. Yet, progress would not have been possible without the support of international partners.

International support for African Peace and Security

International partners have become increasingly engaged in capacity-building activities over the last decade. On the bilateral level, the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Germany are the biggest providers of funds with the latter – inter alia – paying for the construction of a new building for the AU’s Peace and Security Department and supporting the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center in Ghana. China has also made a contribution to the AU’s capacities by contributing more than US\$ 100 million to the construction of new office buildings on the AU compound in Addis Ababa.

The EU is an important partner in financial terms (see Box 2). Beyond financial support, it devises a uniquely comprehensive approach in the context of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy which was adopted at the EU-Africa Lisbon Summit in 2007. The EU is also a body for coordination amongst its member states – and is, in this role, increasingly, playing a pivotal role in coordinating with ‘new actors’ in Africa, such as China, and in driving the international policy agenda for global development.

The African Union Partner Group (AUPG), for example, is a place where the EU, through its Delegation to the AU, is particularly active. The AUPG acts as a loose network of donor countries, established in 2006 and including Brazil, China, EU member states, India, Russia and the USA as well as other countries accredited at the AU. Thus far, however, the relations between the EU and the AU are very much focussed on the AU Commission, less so on key AU member states.

Another international network for coordination is the ‘Africa Clearing House’ which came into existence in 2005 and offers a platform for representatives from the G8, the AU, the UN and other donors including Scandinavian countries, Russia, China, India. This is an inclusive framework in which partners to Africa can share information on their respective activities to improve coordination, so as not to overburden the AU with disparate partner agendas.

Box 2: EU support to the African Peace and Security Architecture

The EU's two most important financial instruments for funding activities in the realm of the APSA are the African Peace Facility (APF) and – to a much lesser degree – the Instrument for Stability (IfS).

The Peace Facility, set up in July 2003 in response to a request of the AU, is a significant EU financial support mechanism for Africa. Initially equipped with € 250 million for a period of three years, the initiative was subsequently replenished with an additional € 300 million for the period 2008–2010. The money was taken from the 9th and 10th European Development Fund respectively and can be used to finance expenses incurred by African countries deploying their peace-keeping forces in other African countries, including the costs of transporting troops, soldiers' living expenses and the development of capabilities. Although APF funding cannot be used to cover military and arms expenditure, most of its funding is not classified as official development assistance according to DAC standards. An innovative feature of the APF is that the EU Council bases its funding decisions on the suggestion of the AU Peace and Security Council.

In 2007, the Instrument for Stability was created in order to provide rapid assistance in cases of broadly defined (non-military) crises. Its rapid reaction component has an annual budget of around € 200 million until 2013. Africa, in particular peace-building measures and post-conflict reconstruction in DR Congo, Chad and the Central African Republic, has been one of its main targets to date.

Challenges ahead

While substantial capacity shortfalls and problems remain, the African Peace and Security Architecture should be considered a glass half full rather than half empty: it occurs against the backdrop of a long history of institutional set-backs – if not failures – as well as an enormous scarcity of resources. Notable progress has been made with respect to increasing African ownership of peace and security efforts, the institutionalization of cooperation and the consolidation of partnerships with the European Union. Yet, as demonstrated by its recent peace operations in Darfur and Somalia, the success of the AU's peace and security architecture still depends on the support of Africa's international partners.

Three core challenges will have to be addressed by both Africans and international partners:

Fostering Institutional Capacities: At the continental level, the AU's lack of institutional capacity remains a serious impediment. The AU Commission is plagued by severely understaffed departments and high staff turnover rate, widespread lack of training, cumbersome recruitment procedures and an inefficient top-down management structure. As a result, crucial parts of the AU are simply not able to cope with their workload and the organisation's absorption capacity for international support measures has declined accordingly.

Political Commitment by the Majority of Africa's States:

Quite naturally, African leaders have been among the most fervent advocates of an 'Africanisation' of Africa's security affairs. However, most of Africa's 53 states have been reluctant in substantiating their political and financial commitment vis-à-vis the AU and the continent's security affairs. The burden has come to rest on merely a few shoulders both in terms of troop contributions to African-led missions (e.g. Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda and South Africa) and financial support to the emerging security structures (e.g. Ethiopia, Kenya and Libya). Consequently, the AU finds it ever more difficult to staff, equip and sustain its growing array of security initiatives.

Improving the Quality of International Support:

With Africa's return to the geo-strategic agenda in the 21st century, the rationale for providing external support to conflict prevention and management has changed. A growing number of states are competing for political influence and access to raw materials on the continent. Support activities are thus often driven by strategic interests and are consequently selective. A related problem is the quality and suitability of the international capacity-building programmes. The most serious structural deficiencies in international support initiatives are (1) their heavy emphasis on peacekeeping training at the expense of the provision of badly-needed military equipment, (2) their greater responsiveness to immediate crises than to long-term measures, and (3) the insufficient harmonisation and coordination between the donor initiatives.

For the moment, the AU continues to be fully dependent on donors such as the EU to fund its institutional mechanisms and the running costs of its operations. While such an institutional emulation may yield positive effects with respect to the bureaucratic efficiency, political viability and international compatibility of the resultant African structures, the EU runs the risk of eroding African ownership. A way to escape this dilemma for the EU is to actively seek to strengthen institutional links with key AU member states on peace and security.

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