The African Union Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the Search for Peace and Security: The Record over the Past Twenty Years

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ABSTRACTS

This article examines the 20-year record of the African Union's Department of Peace and Security (AU PSC). Founded as the premier institution for the advancement of peace and security, the AU PSC (renamed the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, PAPS) has faced widespread criticisms for underperforming in its mandate. The progress the AU PSC realized in the first decade of its existence in establishing the critical institutions for peace and security has stalled in recent years in the face of the resurgence of violent conflicts, unconstitutional changes of government, and the continued scourge of limited indigenous resources to enhance the objectives of African solutions to African problems. Overcoming these hurdles is the main puzzle in the next decades.

In diesem Artikel wird die 20-jährige Bilanz der Abteilung für Frieden und Sicherheit der Afrikanischen Union (AU PSD) untersucht. Die als wichtigste Institution zur Förderung von Frieden und Sicherheit gegründete Abteilung (umbenannt in Abteilung für politische Angelegenheiten, Frieden und Sicherheit, PAPS) ist weithin für die unzureichende Erfüllung ihres Mandats kritisiert worden. Die Fortschritte, die das AU PSD in den ersten zehn Jahren seines Bestehens beim Aufbau der entscheidenden Institutionen für Frieden und Sicherheit erzielt hat, sind in den letzten Jahren angesichts des Wiederaufflammens gewaltsamer Konflikte, verfassungswidriger Regierungswechsel und der anhaltenden Geißel begrenzter einheimischer Ressourcen zur Förderung der Ziele afrikanischer Lösungen für afrikanische Probleme ins Stocken geraten. Die Überwindung dieser Hürden ist das Hauptproblem der nächsten Jahrzehnte.

Two decades on, it is easy to wonder what the AU has accomplished and whether a United Nations-style governing body can succeed in Africa. The AU's track record does not inspire much optimism, but that does not mean such a body should not exist. Every similar multi-national organization from the UN to the EU has faced its own scandals of incompetence and corruption. The AU is not unique in the fact that it has been plagued by misconduct. – Joseph Dana, 2022[1]

The point of African unity has never been about rhetoric alone, but rather the practical need to work together to realize concrete improvements in the well-being and security of our citizens which would be unavailable working as individual entities. Nevertheless, the unfortunate truth is that Africa today is ill prepared to adequately respond to current events, because the African Union still must be made fit for purpose. – Kagame Report, 2017[2]

1. Introduction

Widespread scepticism abounds on the ability and effectiveness of African continental and regional institutions to achieve their objectives and mandates. This scepticism has hinged, for the most part, on the dilemma of managing expectations against the backdrop of enormous resource constraints, insufficient institutional capacities, and the inability of Africa to galvanize political will and resolve. This dilemma is demonstrated by the role the African Union (AU) has played in the promotion of peace and security since 2002. Consequently, perceptions of inefficacy and underperformance have vitally contributed to the erosion of the AU's legitimacy and stature.

In assessing the twenty-year record of how the AU has promoted peace and security through APSA institutions, this article contends that given both the complexities of conflicts in Africa and the novelty of the institutional frameworks tasked with managing them, there is need for a more nuanced perspective that appreciates the numerous obstacles to continental institution-building for peace and security (see also Tim Murithi's article in this volume). This is primarily because, in the larger scheme of institutional development, the AU's uneven performance has occurred alongside efforts to overcome the teething problems typically associated with new institutions. This article suggests that Africans who face tremendous threats and vulnerabilities from conflicts cannot afford to dismiss experiments to address these threats. Rather, meaningful improvements in these institutions should focus on whether some of them can be recalibrated to meet specific needs while others are accorded a low priority. In this regard, the AU could contemplate

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1   J. Dana, "Two Decades on, the AU Faces an Uphill Battle", The Arab Weekly [London], 14 March 2022, www.thearabweekly.com/two-decades-african-union-faces-uphill-battle (accessed 28 February 2023).

2   P. Kagame, The Imperative to Strengthen our Union: Report on the Proposed Recommendations for the Institutional Reform of the African Union, H.E. Paul Kagame, Addis Ababa, 27 January 2017, p. 2.

the reconfiguration of APSA institutions that draw from the 20-year experiences of what has worked and what has not worked.

This article first assesses the steps leading to the establishment of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and its premier institution, the AU PSC in 2003. The second section is a two-fold chronological analysis of the institutional landscape of the APSA over the two decades, focusing on achievements and shortfalls of the PSC, the Conflict and Early Warning System (CEWs), the African Standby Force (ASF), and the Panel of the Wise. The final section concludes with propositions for strengthening some of the APSA institutions in Africa's peace and security.

2. Towards the African Peace and Security Architecture

The impulse to create the APSA was inseparable from the broader efforts to build Africa's ability to solve its own problems, reversing decades of external meddling in African affairs, and feeble initiatives that had marked three decades of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). At heart, these efforts pivoted around the determination of Africa to own its security as a prerequisite for prosperity and development.[3] Peace and security issues took prominence at the founding of the AU, in large part, to address the gaps in the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (CPMR), which the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) established in Cairo in June 1993. The OAU Mechanism sought to bring a new institutional dynamism to dealing with conflicts in Africa, enabling speedy action to prevent, manage and ultimately resolve conflicts wherever they occurred.[4] Despite these laudable objectives, the framers of the AU saw the OAU Mechanism as falling short of the comprehensiveness required to meet the emerging challenges of security, particularly mass killings, and genocide.

Noting that the scourge of conflicts in Africa constitutes a major impediment to socio-economic development, the inaugural summit of the AU in July 2002 stressed the need for "establishing an operational structure for the effective implementation of the decisions taken in the areas of conflict prevention, peace-making, peace support operations and intervention, as well as peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction, in accordance with the authority conferred in that regard by Article 5(2) of the Constitutive Act of the African Union".[5] Subsequently, the AU adopted Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (PSC Protocol). The Peace and Security Council (PSC) was "established […] as a standing decision-making

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3   O. A. Touray, The Common African Defence and Security Policy, in: African Affairs 104 (2005) 417, pp. 635–656; T. K. Tieku/K. Powell, From the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution to the new Security Agenda of the African Union: Is Africa any Closer to a Pax-Africana?, in: International Journal 60 (2005) 4, pp. 937–952.

4   OAU, OAU Declaration on a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution (The Cairo Declaration). Organization of African Unity: Cairo, June 1993.

5   African Union, Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, Durban: African Union, 9 July 2002, Preamble.

organ for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts".[6] It was to "be a collective security and early-warning arrangement to facilitate timely and efficient response to conflict and crisis situations in Africa."

Thus, with a view to strengthening the institutions around peace and security, the PSC was capacitated "by the Commission, a Panel of the Wise, a Continental Early Warning System, an African Standby Force and a Special Fund".[7] Following the ratification by 27 of the 53 AU members, the PSC Protocol came into force in December 2003. At its formal launch in May 2004, Africa's leaders hailed the PSC's future significance, noting that its establishment "marks an historic watershed in Africa's progress towards resolving its conflicts and the building of a durable peace and security order."[8]

The PSC Protocol embraces the APSA, a comprehensive set of institutions, legal instruments, norms and structures aimed implementing the peace and security agenda contained in Articles 3 and 4 of the PSC Protocol. The framers envisaged the PSC to be the apex body in the APSA, compromising five members (one from each of the continent's five official regions) elected for three-year terms plus ten other members elected for two-year terms. The other stakeholders within APSA are the United Nations (UN), the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs); AU bodies (Pan-African Parliament and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights) and civil society organizations.

3. The First Decade of the APSA

As the critical APSA institution that obtained the far-reaching mandate to end wars, the PSC has evolved as the most visible organ of the AU. This visibility and responsibility invariably produced enormous expectations about what it could achieve. Given the broad mandate encapsulated in the Protocol on the PSC and the enormity of the tasks entailed, the AU devoted the first decade of the PSC in building and empowering the APSA institutions. In this respect, the AU recognized that while an elaborate strategy for conflict prevention and management would spur the momentum toward continental ownership of Africa's peace and security, the process of building institutions for peace and security would be gradual and incremental, dependent primarily on resources, capacities, and mobilization of political will. At the same time, as the continent embarked on energizing these institutions, it had to deal with conflicts that required its immediate attention, most of which were the lingering legacies from the civil conflicts of the 1990s. As a result, with limited experience and resources, the PSC had to learn quickly through innovation and experimentation.

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6   See Article 2 of the PSC Protocol.
7   See Articles 2(2), 10, 11, 12, and 13 of the PSC Protocol.
8   AU, Solemn Launching of the Peace and Security Council: Statement of Commitment to Peace and Security in Africa, Issued by Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the Peace and Security Council, Addis Ababa, May 2004, p. 2.

Through its rotational membership, regular meetings, and communiques, the PSC established a consultative framework for its operation. Nonetheless, the process of institution building was slow from the outset. Although the PSC Protocol provided for a secretariat, it took approximately 15 months for the AU to recruit the first person and nearly two years for it to hire the head of the division who started in September 2006.[9] More vital, as the premier institution in peace and security, the PSC established relations with the United Nations and RECs/RMs via memoranda of understanding in the quest for a predictable distribution of labour. To underscore its growing significance in peace, the PSC authorized peace support operations alongside the UN in Darfur (2006–present) and Burundi (2003–2004) as well as Africa-led missions in Somalia (2007) and Comoros (2008). In resource terms, the largest items on the PSC agenda were the four peace operations conducted by the AU Mission in Burundi (AMIB, 2003–2004) the combined UN-AU Mission in Darfur (UNAMID, 2004–2021); the AU Mission for the Support to Elections in the Comoros (AMISEC, 2006), and in AU Military Operation in Anjouan in 2008, and the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM, 2007-2021). Together, these operations involved approximately 13,500 uniformed personnel (troops, military observers, and police). Of these peace operations, only Burundi and Comoros produced measurable results in stabilization while the rest remained inconclusive.[10]

The PSC also focused on the implementation of the OAU's 1998 Unconstitutional Change of Government provision that outlaws military coups by sanctioning several African states including Côte d'Ivoire (2010–2011), Comoros (2007–2008), Guinea (2008–2010), Guinea-Bissau (2009, 2012–2014), Mauritania (2005–2007, 2008–2009), Madagascar (2009–2014), Niger (2009–2011), and Togo (2005). The PSC took a stern position on the implementation of the sanction's regimes. In two publicized cases, the PSC prevented AU ambassadors from Mauritania in August 2005 and Togo in February 2005 from AU meetings because of sanctions triggered by the unconstitutional changes in government.[11] Between March 2004 and March 2011, the PSC convened more than 300 meetings and issued many communiques and statements relating to conflict situations in Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mauritania, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, and Togo.[12] As regards the institutionalization of the CEWS that would give timely information to policymakers to enable them to pre-empt conflicts, the PSC adopted a framework for the operationalization of the system in December 2006 that included data collection and analysis; engagement with decision makers; and co-ordination and collaboration with RECs. Part of these efforts involved refurbishment of the Situation Room that the OAU

9   A. S. Bah/E. Choge-Nyangoro/S. Derso et al. (eds.), The African Peace and Security Architecture: A Handbook, Addis Ababa: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2014, p. 36.

10   P. D. Williams/A. Boutellis, Partnership Peacekeeping: Challenges and Opportunities in the United Nations-African Union Relationship, in: African Affairs 113 (2014) 451, pp. 254–278.

11   "African Union demands that Togo's Army-Installed Leader Resign", New York Times, 26 February 2005, and Al Jazeera [Doha], AU Members in Mauritania for Talks, 9 August 2005.

12   Bah et al., The African Peace and Security Architecture, p. 41.

had created as part of the CPMR to monitor threats to peace and security and report to several institutions for action. At the same time, the PSC encouraged RECs to establish their own early warning systems to complement the AU's CEWS. Similarly, in 2007, the PSC launched the Panel of the Wise, the group of five eminent African personalities from each of the regions to assist the AU Commission and the PSC. As El-Abdellaoui points out, it took the AU five years from the conception of the idea of the Panel of the Wise to its launch because the "Commission was initially not able to provide the Panel with the required support structures."[13] Nonetheless, after its launch, the panel embarked on various diplomatic initiatives to help identify potential future conflict situations and undertook field missions in support of the AU Commission Chairperson and the PSC. For instance, in 2008, the Panel of the Wise organized a fact-finding mission in Kenya in the aftermath of the electoral violence. In addition, when the Panel of the Wise met in Algiers, Algeria, in October 2008, its deliberations were dominated by the deterioration of the security situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe.[14]

Despite the centrality of the ASF in the APSA, its institutionalization faced significant obstacles from the outset. Conceived originally as a rapid intervention force of 15,000 troops drawn from five regional brigades, the ASF has been slow in meeting its aspirations for providing collective continental security. While the AU adopted a policy framework that anticipated the implementation and operationalization of the ASF between 2005 and 2008, meeting the road maps and timelines was stymied by a host of operational and resources constraints, particularly the unpreparedness of most RECs to establish military standby forces. The Military Staff Committee tasked with assisting the PSC in questions related to the promotion of peace and security faced a similar fate because of lack of adequate coordination with the PSC.[15]

As the most important institution to mobilize resources to fund operational activities related to peace and security, the Peace Fund began on a promising note, with a six percent budget allocation from AU's assessed contributions plus contributions from AU member states, the private sector, and individuals. Nonetheless, as the AU Audit Report of 2006 revealed, the peace fund:

> *remains small and precarious. The assessed contributions to finance peacekeeping have not been done and the reimbursement within six months of States contributing contingents to peace support operations, as provided in the PSC Protocol, has not always been honoured within the stated period. Over-reliance on external sources to fiancé peace op-*

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13   J. El-Abdellaoui, The Panel of the Wise: A comprehensive introduction to a critical pillar of the African Peace and Security Architecture (Institute for Security Studies, paper 193), Pretoria 2009, p. 2.

14   J. Gomes Porto/K. Y. Ngandu, The African Union's Panel of the Wise: A Concise History, Durban 2015; and Bah et al., The African Peace and Security Architecture, p. 36.

15   L. Darkwa, The African Standby Force: The African Union's Tool for Maintaining Peace and Security, in: Contemporary Security Policy 38 (2017) 3, pp. 471–482; H. Romer Reitman/A. Leijenaar, The ASF will Work if Redesigned, If Africa's Big Powers Commit and If African peacekeepers are Properly Trained and Equipped, ISS Today [Pretoria], 24 January 2014.

erations remains a concern as the six per cent budget allocated to the Peace Fund cannot cover the needs of the peacekeeping activities of the continent.[16]

To remedy some of these resource deficits, the AU's Special Summit in Tripoli in 2009 pledged to increase the Peace Fund allocation to 12 percent by 2012.

Inadequate resources also slowed the operationalization of the AU's Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) that the AU proposed in 2005 as the flagship framework for assisting peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction and sustainable resilience to prevent the relapse into conflicts. The policy also sets out six indicative elements that represent the pillars upon which all PCRD efforts should be developed and sustained: a) security; b) humanitarian/emergency assistance; c) political governance and transition; d) socio-economic reconstruction and development; e) human rights, justice and reconciliation; and f) women and gender.[17] Despite the policy articulation, the PCRD unit in the Peace and Security Department which was supposed to articulate the policy framework was only created in 2011, leading to significant delays in its operationalization.[18]

The PSC's quest for African solutions to African problems was dealt a severe blow by the Libyan crisis of 2011 when the Muammar Gaddafi regime faced tremendous pressure from protesters inspired by the North African uprisings. From the outset, the AU had limited leverage over Gaddafi who was one of its largest funders. Thus, when the Libyan government responded violently to protesters demanding change, the AU was hamstrung because it could not influence Gaddafi's actions. Similarly, although the AU intervened to mediate the conflict through a High-Level Panel of Heads of State, these efforts were too little and too late. In the end, the decision of the North Atlantic Organization (NATO) alliance to intervene militarily to oust the Gaddafi government at the behest of the UN Security Council dramatized Africa's failure in the crisis. As Apuuli remarks: "The Libya crisis demonstrated that beyond rhetoric, the AU does not have the capacity to respond effectively to the crises facing Africa. The crisis rendered the notion of 'African solutions to African problems' moot and demonstrated that at the moment the AU lacks the requisite functional tools to actually operationalise the notion."[19]

Despite the Libyan debacle, the PSC had at the end of its first decade, embarked on an incremental path to realize the AU's commitment to own its security by proactive conflict management, prevention, and resolution efforts. Through the policy of non-indifference, the PSC had also tried to streamline the modalities of intervention to stop wars, manage armed conflict by constructive engagement with warring parties, and sanction against undemocratic practices. Although the PSC still struggled with unevenness in

16   African Union, Report of the High-Level Panel of the Audit of the African Union, Addis Ababa 2007.

17   African Union, Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD), Addis Ababa 2006.

18   K. P. Apuuli, The AU's Peace and Security Architecture: The African Standby Force, in: T. Karbo/T. Murithi (eds), The African Union. Autocracy, Diplomacy and Peacebuilding in Africa, London/New York 2018, pp. 142–189, at 161–162.

19   K. P. Apuuli, The African Union, the Libya Crisis, and the Notion of "African Solutions to African Problems", in: Journal of Contemporary African Studies 3 (2013) 1, pp. 117–138.

institutional operationalization, there was growing optimism that despite the difficulties of mobilising political will and resources, it had established the foundations for peace and security.

Contributing to the positive trajectory in peace and security was the economic progress Africa witnessed in the first decade of the 2000s, popularly captured in the "Africa Rising" narrative. Spurred by booming commodities prices and deepening economic reforms, African economies grew by over five per cent per year during this decade, substantially producing gains in poverty reductions from 58 per cent in 2000 to 43 percent in 2012.[20] This record of economic growth was also bolstered by growing democratic trend, improvements in governance, and human rights observance.[21]

4. The Second Decade of the APSA

The optimism engendered by economic progress, democratic consolidation, and conflict reduction was reflected at the conclusion of the first decade of the APSA in 2013 when the AU celebrated the 50th anniversary of the founding of the OAU. More vital, as part of Agenda 2063, the AU recommitted to a comprehensive strategy for conflict prevention and management that would spearhead the transition to "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena".[22] With regard to peace and security, AU Member States committed to continue to strengthen the norms of non-indifference and peaceful, democratic transitions of power.

Equally germane, in addition to the pledge to further institutionalise and implement the APSA, the AU introduced the initiative of "Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020," regarded as a flagship project of Agenda 2063.[23] In 2016, the PSC developed a roadmap to guide member states towards silencing the guns. The roadmap laid out guidelines for tackling political, economic, social, environmental, and legal factors that contributed to conflicts, ranging from poverty and environmental degradation, illicit arms trafficking, cyber threats, and the erosion of democracy.[24]

As the roadmap recognized, there were several threats that were looming on the horizon and would challenge the efficacy, resolve, and solidity of the APSA as the guardian of the AU's peace and security. Countering new security threats such as violent extremism, resource wars, environmental degradation, climate change and health pandemics increas-

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20   T. Bundervoet, Is Africa Still Rising? Taking Stock Halfway through the Decade, Washington DC: The Brookings Institute (Briefing), 18 January 2016.

21   T. Mkandawire, Can Africa Turn from Revery to Development?, in: Current History 113 (2014) 763, pp. 171–177.

22   African Union, Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, au.int/en/agenda2063/overview (accessed 28 February 2023).

23   African Union, Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development, au.int/en/flagships/silencing-guns-2020 (accessed 28 February 2023).

24   African Union Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020 (Lusaka Master Roadmap 2016), 4 February 2020, https://au.int/en/documents/20200204/african-union-master-roadmap-practical-steps-silence-guns-africa-year-2020-lusaka (accessed 28 February 2023).

ingly tested the strategies for promoting and building peace. Moreover, these threats build upon, and in most cases, exacerbated the old fissures of political and economic fragility, inter-state conflicts, and regional instabilities. Putting additional pressures on the APSA were the new spates of military, economic, and political intrusions by external powers that compromised consensus on the wisdom of indigenous solutions. In the second decade of the APSA, therefore, while the operationalization momentum continued, the implementation of various peace and security agendas became sketchy and sporadic. The escalation of civil conflicts in the Central African Republic (CAR), Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, and South Sudan and the growing French military intervention in conflicts in the Sahel, the AU Assembly decided in May 2013 to establish a transitional arrangement for a rapid reaction force, the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC). Promoted by South Africa, the ACIRC envisioned a standing force of 5,000 composed of tactical battle groups of 500 troops that could be deployed in conflict situations in less than ten days, pending the operationalization of the ASF. The ACIRC sought to fill the capability gap and provide more African ownership in crisis management and response situations. Nonetheless, it faced many challenges ranging from opposition from some member states, funding gaps, and poor conceptualization.[25] Additionally, although the architects of ACIRC sought to complement the ASF, French military intervention in CAR (2013–2014) and Mali (2012–2021) rendered ACIRC increasingly superfluous. Due to these constraints, the AU did not operationalize the ACRIC and it has remained a pipedream.

In the absence of ACIRC, the AU endorsed ad hoc security arrangements funded by external actors and the UN in some of Africa's sub-regions.[26] In East Africa, for instance, the United States supported the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA) and its military arm, the Regional Task Force (RTF), a multi-national operation composed of the CAR, the DRC, South Sudan, and Uganda. In November 2011, the PSC gave the RTF the mandate to "strengthen the operational capabilities of the countries affected by the atrocities of the LRA, create an environment conducive to the stabilization of the affected areas, free of LRA atrocities, and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to affected areas".[27] After making contributions to degrading the strength of the LRA, the RTF military operations effectively ended in mid-2017 with the withdrawal of Ugandan and US troops. The PSC officially ended the RCI-LRA in September 2018.[28]

25   M. Brosig/N. Sempija, The African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC): Advice for African Policy Makers, Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs (Policy Insight), July 2015; R. Esmenjaud, The African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises: Conceptual Breakthrough or anti-Imperialist Phantom?, in: African Security Review 23 (2014) 2, pp. 172–177.

26   M. Brosig, Africa in a Changing Global Order: Marginal but Meaningful?, New York 2021, pp. 61–91.

27   World Peace Foundation, AU Regional Task Force against the Lord's Resistance Army Mission, sites.tufts.edu/wpf/files/2017/07/Lords-Resistance-Army-Mission.pdf (accessed 28 February 2023).

28   Ibid.

Similarly, the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2098 of 2013 authorized the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) under chapter VII of the UN Charter to neutralise and disarm Congolese rebels and foreign armed groups in the DRC. Under the leadership of South Africa, Tanzania, and Malawi, the FIB has supplemented the stabilization efforts of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO).[29] With the continued escalation of insecurity in the eastern DRC in 2022, the East African Community (EAC) proposed another military force made of member countries to intervene in the region.

The Burundi crisis in 2015–2016 further underscored the limits of the PSC in influencing security outcomes in sub-regions. In response to civil violence precipitated by former President Pierre Nkurunziza to change the constitution to permit a third term in 2015, the PSC working closely with AUC reached a decision in December 2915 to deploy a 5,000-strong African Prevention and Protection Mission in Burundi (MAPROBU) to protect civilians and help create conditions for a credible inter-Burundian dialogue. Amidst strident opposition from Burundian authorities, however, the AU Heads of State and Government summit in January 2016 reversed the PSC on MAPROBU. As the International Crisis Report noted, the reversal

> *seriously damaged AU credibility and showed that its ambition to prevent and resolve conflict does not match its capabilities, in part due to uncertainty about the extent of the AUC's role. It also exposed procedural flaws in the PSC's decision-making process. The incoherent response illustrates the limits of AUC and PSC freedom to act without the full support of leaders and the lack of coordination between Addis Ababa and the African UN Security Council members.*[30]

In the aftermath of the Burundi intervention, the EAC, as the REC charged to lead continental responses to the crisis, continued its lacklustre bids to mediate the conflict.

In most regional trouble spots, the PSC has adhered to the principle of subsidiarity that devolves security roles to RECs/RMs. As part of the APSA, RECs/RMs have assumed the burdens of security in their domains because of proximity to these conflicts and their consequences on stability. Except for AMISOM in Somalia that has combined stabilization roles and counterterrorism against the Al-Shabaab, RECs/RMs have increasingly assumed counterterrorism measures. In the Sahel/Sahara region, Islamic insurgent groups have become dominant since the early 2000s, driven primarily by poverty, youth marginalization, weak state presence, intercommunal violence between herders and farmers over land rights, and separatist claims. These conflicts are exacerbated by the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation. The presence of Islamic insurgent movements such as the Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Ansar al-Din, and Movement

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29   P. Fabricius, Reinventing the Force Intervention Brigade, ISS Today [Pretoria], 4 December 2020.

30   ICG, The African Union and the Burundi Crisis: Ambition versus Reality, Brussels: International Crisis Group (= ICG Briefing Report), 28 September 2016.

for Oneness Jihad in West Africa have ignited regional responses through ad hoc military arrangements funded primarily by external actors.[31]

In the Lake Chad Basin, sub-regional states created the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in April 2012 to respond to the growing threats from the Boko Haram, an affiliate of the Islamic State (ISIS). Funded largely by France and the European Union (EU), the MNJTF obtained the authorization of the PSC in March 2015. With over 8,000 troops, the MNJTF has established an important counter-insurgency framework that has made some progress to combat Boko Haram, leading to the splintering of the movement into several groups.[32] In February 2020, the annual summit of the AU requested the AUC to develop a framework for a possible six-month deployment of a force composed of the MJNTF and 3 000 troops to assist in fighting Boko Haram. Although the question of troop contributors has not been resolved, some EU countries made some commitments in 2021 to help in the initiative.[33] In West Africa, however, some countries have expressed scepticism about deployment of additional troops in a conflict that is already saturated with many military forces.[34]

Further north, another ad hoc security arrangement, the G5 Sahel Joint Task Force was launched in February 2017, comprising Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. Even though France and Germany have funded the G5 Sahel Joint Task Force as a way of reducing their military engagements, the multiplicity of extremist movements and the many foreign forces in the region have weakened the effectiveness of the G5 Joint Task Force.[35]

In the northern Mozambican conflict, there was a significant increase in violent attacks since October 2017 attributed to an insurgent movement, the *Al-Sunna wa Jamma* (ASWJ), locally known as al-Shabaab (yet not related to the Somali group). Drawing from the socioeconomic and political grievances of the marginalized Muslim youth in the Cabo Delgado province, the ASWJ insurgency increased following major exploration of natural gas reserves in the region.[36] But even as the insurgents grew stronger and more sophisticated in its operations, Mozambique was reluctant to ask for AU's and

31   N. Wilén/P. D. Williams, What are the International Military Options for the Sahel? Brussels: Egmont Institute, 12 April 2022; M. Sandnes, The Relationship between the G5 Joint Task Force and External Actors: A Discursive Interpretation, in: Canadian Journal of African Studies, 57 (2023) 1, pp. 71–90; J. Thompson/C. Doxsee/J. Bermudez, Tracking the Arrival of Russia's Wagner Group in Mali, Washington DC: US Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2 February 2022.

32   I. O. Albert, Rethinking the Functionality of the Multinational Joint Task Force in Managing the Boko Haram Crisis in the Lake Chad Basin, in: African Development 62 (2017) 3, pp. 119–135; ICG, What Role for the Multinational Joint Task Force Fighting Boko Haram, Brussels: International Crisis Group (=ICG Briefing Report 291), 7 July 2020.

33   B. Stanicek/M. Betant-Rasmussen, Jihadist Networks in Sub-Saharan Africa: Origins, Patterns, and Responses, Brussels: European Parliamentary Research Service (= Briefing), September 2021.

34   D. Y. Wondemagegnehu, Peace and Security, in: U. Engel (ed.), Yearbook on the African Union. Vol. 1 (2020), Leiden/Boston 2020, pp. 148–176, at 154–55.

35   Sandnes, The Relationship between the G5 Joint Task Force and External Actors; M. Dieng, The G5 Joint Force for the Sahel was set up Four Years ago: Why Progress is Slow, The Conversation [Melbourne], 14 September 2021.

36   E. Estell, The Islamic State Resurges in Mozambique, in: Foreign Policy, 16 June 2021; M. Demuynck/G. Weijenberg, The Upcoming SADC Intervention: A New Way Ahead to Combat Terrorism in Mozambique?, International Centre for Counterterrorism [The Hague], 22 July 2021.

regional assistance, opting instead to use private military groups from Russia. It was not until the ASWJ took control of the strategic port of Mocimboa da Praia in October 2020 that the authorities in Maputo invited US and EU special forces detachments to train its armed forces. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) also launched a diplomatic initiative to appeal for acceptance of a regional force. In July 2021, Mozambique invited Rwanda to send 1500 troops to assist in combating the insurgency. This was followed shortly afterwards by the deployment of SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) of about 2000 troops. The combination of these efforts has allowed the gradual return to stability in the region, even though the insurgent threat has not been eliminated.[37]

Subsidiarity in security cooperation between the PSC and RECs/RMs and the proliferation of donor-funded ad hoc mechanisms emanates largely from the failure to capacitate the Peace Fund which is imperative for upholding the principle of "African solutions for African problems". Despite the recommendations of many high-level panels and commissions since the mid-2000s, the problem of dependence on donor funding for African security has persisted. For instance, building on the 2006 Audit Report of the AU, the January 2017 Kagame Report on the AU underscored the severity of the situation:

> *The African Union's programmes are 97 per cent funded by donors. By December 2016, only 25 out of 54 member states had paid their assessment for the financial year 2016 in full. Fourteen member states paid more than half their contribution and 15 per cent have not made any payment. Penalties for failure to honour assessed contributions should be reviewed and tightened, in line with the new enforceable sanctions regime. In particular, membership could temporarily lapse after failure to meet full obligations within 18 months, and resuming members required to pay outstanding arears plus additional charges.*[38]

Furthermore, the report suggested that:

> *External funding should not exceed levels established by the 2015 African Union Assembly decision. This calls for African Union members to finance 100 per cent of the operating budget, 75 per cent of the programme budget and 25 per cent of the peace support operations budget.*[39]

To remedy the funding shortfalls, the AU High Representative of the Peace Fund, David Kaberuka, proposed to endow the Peace Fund with money raised through a 0.2 percent levy imposed on all eligible goods imported into Africa. From this levy, the Peace Fund would obtain USD 325 million and USD 400 million in 2020 for institutional capacity, conflict prevention, and peace support operations. These recommendations echoed the

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37   Ibid.; ICG, Stemming the Insurrection in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado, Brussels: International Crisis Group (= ICG Briefing 303), 11 June 2021.
38   Kagame, The Imperative to Strengthen Our Union, p. 13.
39   Ibid.

proposals made by the AU summit in July 2015 that remained unfulfilled. But the levy proposal faced resistance from several leading SADC countries because of its potential impact on trade; this resistance led to the AU to reframe the levy as voluntary. As a result, at the end of 2018, only 45 percent of the AU member states were at various stages of implementing the levy. The Peace Fund has also confronted delays in establishing the modalities for disbursements. Thus, although by 2018, member states had contributed USD 231 million, the money has yet to be used.[40]

In the second decade, the PSC made visible steps in the operationalization of the PCRD, despite capacity and resource constraints. Following the articulation of the PCRD framework and the establishment of a unit within the PSC to manage policy implementation, the AU set up liaison offices in countries emerging from conflict. By 2016, the PCRD had liaison offices in Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, CAR, Guinea Bissau, South Sudan, and Madagascar.[41] Breaking new ground, the PCRD unit established an AU Technical Support Team to the Gambia (AUTSTG) in 2018 to assist in the reconstruction following the demise of the authoritarian regime of Yahya Jammeh.[42] Before the AU closed the AUTSTG in December 2020, it provided expertise to the government on the rule of law, democracy, transitional justice, and security sector reforms. In a bid to mobilize African resources for the PCRD, the AU launched the African Solidarity Initiative in July 2012 that would encourage African contributions toward the PCRD. In February 2014, then South African president Jacob Zuma hosted the first conference of the ASI at which African countries pledged a paltry US $3 million for the PCRD activities, reflecting the lack of political will for the PCRD.[43] In response to the financial and human capacities deficits facing the PCRD, the Egyptian government agreed to host an AU Center for PCRD in Cairo that was officially launched in December 2021 as the AU's specialized technical agency for the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of PCRD programmes and projects in post-conflict countries.[44]

Progress on the operationalization and empowerment of institutions within the rubric of APSA's conflict prevention and early warning has dependent on leadership dynamics, PSC commitments to these institutions, and the broad AU reform processes that have occurred since 2020. Regarding the Panel of the Wise, the three-year term limits of its members have adversely affected operational continuity and institutional memory. In its

40   Peace and Security Council Report, As the AU turns 20, it must speak with one voice, ISS Today [Pretoria], 10 January 2022. See also U. Engel, The State of the Union, in: U. Engel (ed.), Yearbook on the African Union. Volume 2 (2021), Leiden/Boston 2022, pp. 20–27.

41   F. Butedi, The Work of the African Union Liaison Mission in Building Peace on the Ground in Madagascar, in: South African Journal of International Affairs 25 (2018) 1, pp. 99–116.

42   C. Mutangadura, Gambia: Will the Gambia be a Turning Point for the AU's Peace Efforts?, ISS Today [Pretoria], 19 May 2019.

43   A. Lucey/S. Gida, Enhancing South Africa's Post-Conflict Development Role in the African Union, Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies (= Paper no. 256), May 2014.

44   African Union, Official Launch of the African Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Centre, 30 December 2021, www.peaceau.org/en/article/official-launch-of-the-african-union-centre-for-post-conflict-reconstruction-and-development (accessed 28 February 2023).

formative years, the Panel was led by former OAU Secretary General, Salim Salim (East Africa), former Algerian president, Ahmed Ben Bella (North Africa), and former head of the South African Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), Brigalia Bam (Southern Africa). Given their stature and standing in Africa, these members influenced the direction of PSC diplomatic intervention and peace-making in conflict situations because of their knowledge of the inner workings of AU institutions. Moreover, their ability to manoeuvre depended on their close relations with the PSC commissioner and AUC chairperson. Under their leadership, the Panel's secretariat commissioned seminal reports on preventing electoral violence that continues to provide guidelines on AU deployment of electoral observers. Likewise, the report on women and children in wars has influenced some of the approaches in the PCRD while the report on transitional justice laid the groundwork for the AU transitional justice policy.[45]

In the succeeding years, the membership and leadership of the Panel has not been as proactive as previous ones, in part, because members do not have adequate access to the key corridors of power in Addis Ababa. The relative quiescence of the Panel has occurred against the background of bold initiatives to popularise the institution through the establishment in November 2015 of the Pan-African Network of the Wise (PanWise), a body that seeks to strengthen the collaboration among the AU, RECs, and RMs in conflict prevention and resolution. Likewise, the Panel can draw on the experiences of the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa), established in July 2017 and the Network of African Youth on Conflict Prevention and Mediation, bodies that advocate for the inclusion of women and youth in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. The PSC appointed the fifth Panel of the Wise in May 2022 with expectations that it would redouble efforts to tackle ongoing conflicts. But, as Shewit Woldemichael has observed, it faces multiple obstacles, including a vague mandate, lack of autonomy, and inadequate financial and human resources. Also, the Panel faces competition from a multitude of special envoys appointed by the AU Chairperson in conflicts such as Ethiopia, South Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, Sudan, and Mali.[46]

Ten years after the formation of the CEWS, one of the key pillars of APSA, CEWS became operational in 2012. In addition to the Situation Room that the OAU had established in the 1990s, the new CEWS had several pillars. First, a roster of experts that produced numerous analytical reports on potential conflicts that contributed to the decision-making of the AU Commission and PSC. The experts also helped the RECs in

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45   African Union, Election-Related Disputes and Political Violence: Strengthening the Role of the African Union in Preventing, Managing, and Resolving Conflict, Report of the AU Pane of the Wise, New York: International Peace Institute, 2010; African Union, Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges in the Fight against Impunity. Panel of the Wise Report, New York: International Peace Institute, 2013; African Union, Women and Children in Conflict Situations/Gender Mainstreaming, 22 April 2013, www.peaceau.org/en/topic/women-and-children-in-armed-conflicts-gender-mainstreaming (accessed 28 February 2023). See also U. Engel, The Panel of the Wise: Unfulfilled Promise?, The Conversation [Melbourne], 22 June 2022.

46   S. Woldemichael, New Panel of the Wise Faces Old Challenges, ISS Today [Pretoria], 13 May 2022.

developing regional early warning systems. Second, the early warning system commissioned long-term conflict vulnerability studies to assist countries to pre-empt potential conflicts and craft mitigation measures. In 2017, Ghana volunteered for the first conflict vulnerability assessment.[47] In the AU reforms recommended by the Kagame report, the AU merged the PSC and the Political Affairs departments into a new department, the Peace, Political Affairs, and Security (PPS) in 2021. The merger has resulted in the restructuring of the CEWs by hiving off the analytical capacity to three new regional desks in the PPS while retaining the Situation Room. Some observers have expressed concern that the new changes will potentially obliterate some of the core functions of the CEWS, particularly the coordination and harmonization with RECs.[48]

Since 2013, Africa has witnessed the gradual decline in the norms that prohibit military coups nd unconstitutional change of government. This has happened in large part because of the inability of the PSC to adhere consistently to the sanctions upheld since the articulation of the principle. In countries such as Egypt (2013), Sudan (2019), Mali (2012, 2021, 2022), Guinea (2020), Burkina Faso (2022), and Chad (2020), militaries have overthrown civilian regimes on the watch of the PSC and RECs.[49]

The PSC's inability to meet the commitments embraced in the agenda of Silencing of the Guns by 2020 led to the decision by an extraordinary virtual AU Assembly in Johannesburg in 2020 to postpone the deadline to 2030. Although reaffirming the commitment for a conflict-free and prosperous Africa, the postponement was a tacit acknowledgement of the obstacles to the achievement of one of the flagship programmes of the PSC's second decade.[50] However, is not clear why the AU came up with the new ten-year time frame when it had the opportunity to align this objective with the broad mandate of Agenda 2063. The adjustment coincided with widespread reports that more than 20,000 Africans were killed in high-intensity conflicts in 2020, an almost tenfold increase from a decade ago.[51] Additionally, during the AU Assembly, the PSC raised concern about the growing foreign influence in African peace and security matters, including granting foreign military bases in several countries. The Summit proposed prior consultations among member states, the PSC, REC/RMs, and neighbouring countries they take a decision to accept to host foreign military bases and urged the PSC to "name and shame" foreign

47   A. Gnanguenon, Pivoting African Conflict Prevention? An Analysis of Continental and Regional Early Warning Systems, Paris: European Institute of Security Studies (= Policy Brief no. 3), February 2021.

48   U. Engel, The African Union's conflict early warning system is no more. What now?, in: The Conversation [Melbourne], 24 May 2022.

49   On the pressing issue of unconstitutional changes of government, see Chairperson of the AU Commission, Report on Unconstitutional Changes of Government presented at the 16th Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly held in Malabo, Equatorial-Guinea, on 28 May 2022.

50   African Union, Decisions of the 14th Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly on Silencing the Guns in Africa held in, Johannesburg, South Africa, on 6 December 2021, para. 5–6, https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/ext-assembly-au-dec-1-and-decl-1-xiv-e.pdf (accessed 28 February 2023).

51   H. Fofack, Africa's Development Depends on Regional Ownership of Security. Brookings Institute, Africa in Focus, 19 May 2022; H. Fofack, Dawn of a Second Cold War and the 'Second Scramble for Africa' Adopting a united approach to Security Cooperation is crucial if Continent has to achieve Economic aims. Brookings Institute, Africa in Focus, May 2022.

actors that interfere in the internal affairs of AU member states, or who sponsor illegal weapons, and provide covert military support to armed groups.[52]

5. Lessons and Recommendations

In twenty years, the APSA institutions have struggled to become credible mechanisms of peace and security. Nonetheless, in the difficult circumstances of persistent conflicts, problems of galvanizing collective consensus about appropriate approaches to these conflicts, and the perennial question of resource shortfalls, they have demonstrated the resolve to gradually build the capacity to contribute to reducing conflicts in Africa. During this time, against all odds, the PSC has gradually emerged to promote Africa's peace and security agenda, erecting vital institutions, and building norms around conflict prevention, management, and resolution. It has also established relatively functional relations with both RECs/RMs and external partners. Given the enormity and complexity of most African conflicts, it is vital to appreciate the record of achievements of Africa's ownership of its security. Yet, for the most part, the process of institution building on peace and security remains inconclusive, and in some respects, incoherent and inchoate.

Beyond the first two decades, there is need for further transformations of the APSA to make its institutions more agile, efficient, and relevant to most Africans. Realistically APSA reforms are inconceivable without equally meaningful changes in the wide infrastructure of the AU, but reflections on future trajectories points to some probable avenues that would respond to the Kagame's report's conundrum of "fit for purpose". First, despite the MoU that govern the relations between the AU and RECs, in the long-term, there is a need to devote more attention and resources to the RECs in matters of peace and security, providing more breathing space for the AU to engage in other continental affairs. The prevailing primacy of the AU in African security is no longer tenable, a relic of Africa's blind mimicry of UN institutions. Where they are more institutionalized such as in West, East and Southern Africa, RECs are adequately positioned than the AU to mobilize resources from within their regions and external actors. Although this shift will challenge the fundamental tent of AU's centrality in Africa's peace and security, RECs have effectively dominated in the past two decades, particularly with the proliferation of ad hoc security arrangements. Relatedly, as the RECs and RIMS manage their own security the objective of a continental military and defence force would become less relevant and salient.

RECs ownership of security would be important in reinforcing the broad norms on democracy and constitutionalism that the AU has addressed only sporadically. RECs and RIMS should learn to take up these important roles because the AU is unlikely in the future to emerge as a critical player in norm domestication. In this regard, it would be

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52   AU, Decisions of the 14th Extra-Ordinary Session on Silencing the Guns in Africa, 6 December 2020, Johannesburg, South Africa, 5-6, https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/ext-assembly-au-dec-1-and-decl-1-xiv-e.pdf.

more feasible to build compliance mechanisms that RECs can tailor to their distinctive political and socioeconomic conditions. One of the reasons the principle of unconstitutional change has collapsed in the Sahel is because the PSC has applied this principle without recognition of the structural conditions that prevent democracy-promotion in the region. In addition, if the RECs would emerge as the nerve centres of African security, this would expedite institution building in regions that has thus far lagged in these efforts. By this logic, shifting security responsibilities to RECs would contribute to long term attempts to deepen regional integration.

Second, there are potential reforms in the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) that would streamline its institutions while at the same time contributing to the gradual transition to RECs in peace and security. For instance, there is no reason why the African Union should continue to have the Panel of the Wise, an institution that the AUC has undermined by the multiplication of special envoys and emissaries. Moreover, it would be more cost-effective to strengthen the early warning systems that the RECs have established rather than additional investment in the Panel which is unlikely to emerge as a functional institution in the African Union. Third, despite the energies and resources the PSC devoted to the creation of the PCRD, the AU has been unable to compete with institutions such as the African Development Bank (AfDB), the World Bank, and other international organizations in making a difference in Africa's post-conflict reconstruction. Bold steps to get rid of suggested institutions would go further than the previous AU reform reports, which although critical of the overall performance of the AU, have nonetheless shied away from concrete solutions. The lack of courageous measures has invariably undercut the political resolve to make difficult choices.

Finally, conflict prevention and the full range of institutions that support it are unlikely to obtain significant priority if armed conflicts persist in Africa. The recent conflicts unleashed by extremist groups and irregular forces have almost obliterated the gains Africa made in peace and security in the first decade of the APSA. Regaining the momentum and capacity for conflict prevention thus requires the ending of wars and rising insecurity. Ultimately, building effective and relevant institutions for peace and security will also hinge on learning from the past while acknowledging the weaknesses facing the current institutional design.