

A decorative graphic consisting of a grid of dots in various shades of gray and red, arranged in a pattern that suggests a map of Africa.

Overcoming APSA's challenges through new approaches to collective security

UELI STAEGER

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Abstract

For two decades already, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) has guided African and external stakeholders engagement for peace and security in Africa. Over time, a double crisis of lacking political will and low adaptedness to new forms of conflict challenged APSA implementation. Overcoming these challenges will require a concerted effort by all APSA stakeholders. This policy brief provides a succinct, policy-relevant summary of FES's *New Approaches to Collective Security* project roll-out, based on an extensive scenario-building and consultation process with stakeholders in numerous AU member states and multilateral hubs, including Addis Ababa, Brussels, and New York. This policy brief summarizes key findings and formulates actionable policy recommendations on principles, activities and priorities that African and European stakeholders could pursue.

INTRODUCTION

With its report *"The APSA We Want: Scenarios for the African Peace and Security Architecture in 2040"*,¹ the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) successfully embarked on a large-scale participatory project on the potential futures for collective security in Africa. Consultative roll-out events in different countries on the African continent, in Brussels, Berlin, and New York provided feedback on the reports and calls to action. Participants hailed from diverse backgrounds, including civil society organizations, academia, military and police, international organizations, and diplomacy.

This report summarizes the key findings of this consultative process, which added nuance and confirmed a key finding of FES's work on APSA over the past years. To make APSA fit for purpose, it will require adapta-



tion of its instruments and principles to new security challenges and modes of conflict that were not as prevalent when the framework was initially designed. For example, APSA has yet to learn how to deal with the compounded challenges of climate change, new forms of cross-border crime, human trafficking, the circulation of small arms and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Additionally, the best instruments are of limited use if implemented inconsistently. APSA will require more political will among member states to fully use the framework for African collective security.

This policy brief first illustrates the new challenges that APSA faces today. These challenges combine substantive security issues and governance challenges, including cooperation problems among and beyond African APSA stakeholders. Based on these challenges and the discussions of FES's APSA 2040 report, the policy brief then makes a set of specific policy recommendations for African and European APSA stakeholders.

APSA'S SUBSTANTIVE AND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Since its inception, APSA has enabled cooperation for collective security. Besides much progress, today's APSA framework is out of tune with security challenges on the African continent. Its challenges are due to instruments and insufficiently adapted policies to current security challenges and the lack of political will among states to fully implement and use APSA instruments, norms, and policies.

■ **New types of security challenges:** The current APSA is often not fit 'by design' to respond to new security challenges. Transnational non-state actors challenge the state-centric membership of APSA through new asymmetrical security challenges. A second-order challenge arises from governance challenges, including failing democratic transitions and weak political institutions, both in the rule of law and basic service provision. Instead of 'good governance', stakeholders often settle for 'good enough governance', which in the long term exacerbates conflict roots.

■ **Increased geopolitical competition:** New actors from the Gulf and West and East Asia, such as the

Gulf countries, China, Russia, and Turkey, have decisively changed the field of external actors in Africa. Their partnerships often complicate the achievement of Western goals through short-term, transactional interventions in conflicts. These new actors potentially undermine the coordinated engagement of the international community in APSA, even if new partners can also contribute additional resources to APSA.

■ **A growing divide between militarization and development:** African states address armed insurgency through the increased militarisation of collective security provision. This choice undermines the developmental, holistic response that is direly needed to address the roots of conflict, including youth unemployment and underdevelopment in peripheral regions. Governments might have a military presence in conflict zones but lack awareness of local security needs and development priorities.

■ **Continued disagreements over subsidiarity:** Subsidiarity and hierarchy stand in tension in APSA. Subsidiarity calls for intervention at the level closest to the field and at the most effective level. At the same time, APSA puts the AU above RECs in a hierarchical relationship, as the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) holds 'primary responsibility for promoting peace, security and stability in Africa' (Article 16 of the PSC Protocol). These two principles regularly clash. A pragmatic, solution-oriented approach between different APSA stakeholders is needed.

■ **Inconsistent compliance with AU norms:** Stark interpretational differences exist for the norm of non-indifference and unconstitutional changes in government, where AU member states tend to espouse opportunistic definitions that vary between different crises. Governments condition their support of non-indifference with whether intervention in an internal crisis challenges their sovereignty, which leads to inconsistent application of AU norms.

1 Available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/fes-ua/16687-20201110.pdf>



- **Friction and inefficiencies in EU and UN partnerships:** The EU's and UN's partnerships with African states and organizations are as important as challenging. Procedurally, both have struggled to make space for African positions and interests in their decision-making processes to support APSA. Substantially, the EU and UN have inadvertently become external arbiters on several crucial political issues within APSA, such as the place of ad-hoc coalitions in APSA, rapid deployment capacity, or subsidiarity in AU-REC relations.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Much remains to be done for APSA to deliver fitting and implementable answers to collective security challenges. This section identifies potential actions for African and European stakeholders of APSA. The recommendations have the dual goal of enhancing APSA's adaptivity to contemporary security challenges and enhancing political will for Africa to avail itself of its adapted framework. Like the analysis of challenges facing APSA, these recommendations result from FES's participatory roll-out process.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO AFRICAN GOVERNMENTAL APSA STAKEHOLDERS: AFRICAN UNION, REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES, AND MEMBER STATES

For African APSA stakeholders, a substantive adaptation of APSA is a matter of financial resources and building capacities for contemporary peace-making and peace-building. It also requires a careful process of enhancing the willingness to move beyond a sovereignty-oriented conception of African integration. Early warning and conflict prevention are particularly promising for these institutional and substantive adjustments.

- **Clarify the role of ad-hoc coalitions in APSA**
In the face of transnational terrorism and other cross-border challenges, African states have introduced ad-hoc coalitions as a new type of regional military cooperation and the APSA framework. Collective security alliances between neighbouring countries have operated cost-efficient counter-terrorist operations in Western Africa, including

the G5 Sahel and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram. African states and regional actors should clarify the status of ad-hoc coalitions' mandates, command structure, and political role within APSA. They could also take a more explicit stance on the role of external partners supporting ad-hoc coalitions. New EU instruments such as the European Peace Facility, and requests for UN logistical support to ad-hoc coalitions, illustrate the need for a clear political framework for partner involvement in ad-hoc coalitions.

- **Enhance human rights compliance of AU and AU-authorized peacekeeping forces**

Providing security without human rights will not enable sustainable peace. The UN has conditioned its financial support of AU PSOs on progress with AU human rights compliance in PSOs, which has been problematic in the past. The upcoming signature of the AU-UN Framework on Human Rights and Accountability offers a window of opportunity for AU peacekeeping to embrace universal human rights in its activities fully.

- **Enhance national ownership of APSA**

Ownership is a process, not an event. While regional and continental stakeholders steadily support APSA, much can still be done to enhance national ownership of APSA. Governments support APSA instruments and principles only selectively. By enabling conversations on what APSA principles and instruments mean locally, governments can strengthen their role in APSA. Enhancing national ownership also requires including civil society and business organizations. Civil society organizations could seek more involvement, particularly in early warning and conflict prevention, and African governments could enable a heterogeneous debate across national borders on collective security.

- **Overcome division on subsidiarity**

Subsidiarity remains a crucial challenge between APSA stakeholders. The current renegotiation of the 2008 Memorandum of Understanding between the AU and RECs/RMs on cooperation around peace and security presents an opportunity to recalibrate subsidiarity. African states could improve the concrete operationalization of subsidiarity in the REC-AU relationship. Establishing the



appropriate level of intervention requires better Joint Situation Analysis to establish the most effective actor for intervention. Particularly in early warning, similar activities are being conducted by the AU, some RECs and member states' themselves. Through better-functioning subsidiarity, African APSA stakeholders can avoid duplication and strive for a collective intelligence gathering culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS MEMBER STATES

The EU has been an outstanding supporter of APSA's institutionalization. It has recently sought to enhance its significant financial role in APSA towards a more political-strategic orientation, and this effort has been received controversially by some African APSA stakeholders. Amidst this expanding toolbox, the EU and its member states should enhance the internal coherence and balance between different support modalities.

■ **Underscore support for democracy and regional integration amidst a wider field of partners**

Increased geopolitical competition in African security means that Europe could be more explicit in communicating their support as distinctly pro-democracy and pro-regional integration. European partners' comparative advantage over others is steadfast regional and continental integration support. In contrast, other partners often see these institutions as entry points to African states.

■ **Set new legal compliance standards in the provision of military support**

The EU and its member states are increasingly active in military bilateral and regional support to APSA stakeholders. When competing against actors less prone to a democracy and human rights-based approach to collective security, the highest human rights and international humanitarian law standards should be part and parcel of a distinctly European approach of military support to APSA. This applies particularly to the European Peace Facility, which can square the circle of a strategic instrument with high compliance standards through close monitoring regarding human rights, international humanitarian law and weapons exports control.

■ **Strive for full reciprocity in partner participation in instruments and institutions**

While the EU sits on the board of trustees of the AU's Peace Fund and has an oversight role, the European Peace Facility's decision-making process does not foresee give the AU an institutionalized administrative or strategic role. The EU could include the AU in an observer or consultative role. Even broader inclusion regarding the EU's entire toolbox of security policy in Africa, including CSDP missions, EPF lethal support, and APSA support, would reflect the spirit of partnership that the EU and Africa strive for.

■ **Better coordinate European support at all hierarchical levels of APSA**

Sub-national, national, regional, continental – APSA's numerous European partners offer support at all of these levels. Coordination between hierarchical levels and between organizations is weak. European APSA stakeholders could improve the coordination of different European and EU partnerships with African states and regional organizations to avoid duplication and inefficiency. Western APSA stakeholders should be careful not to impose priorities due to insufficient European coordination, which sometimes can create a situation of competing institutional frameworks. The high number of strategies and initiatives on security in some conflict zones should be streamlined to give states, RECs, and the AU ownership of the policy agenda. European coordination should also include like-minded non-EU states such as the United Kingdom, Norway, and Switzerland, as commonalities with these partners far outweigh differences.

■ **Maintain the momentum towards funding AU peacekeeping through the UN peacekeeping budget**

The funding of peacekeeping on the African continent remains challenging. The AU and UN are struggling to re-energize plans for the UN to cover 75% of the AU's peacekeeping costs, which are currently mainly funded by the EU. While the AU has taken an official position on the 25/75% split in co-funding AU PSOs, UN member states have yet to formalize a position. Beyond its initial commitment, the AU is negotiating a Common African Position on the issue of UN funding for AU PSOs.



Agreeing such a text is one challenge, and consistently defending that position in New York is another. The AU should ensure that solidarity and coherence within the African Group remain intact throughout negotiations.

■ **Enhance UN-AU relations between Councils**

The AU-UN partnership is more productive between secretariats than in the two organizations' Councils' intergovernmental dynamics. Parties could enhance Council-to-Council relations through a specific agreement on Council-to-Council cooperation. Such an agreement would allow upgrading the meetings' current arrangement between 'members of the UN Security Council and the AU PSC' rather than the Councils themselves. The cooperation of the two Councils should also focus on conflict prevention. In addition, more attention could be paid to the field relations of different organizations.

■ **Improve civil society participation in APSA planning and partnerships**

Western stakeholders could espouse a participatory planning methodology to reflect the need for a people-centred, decentralized, and holistic approach. External partners often take the central state as entry and endpoint, have poor access to peripheral areas and populations, and prioritize hard security over a more holistic approach. External actors can underwrite a shift away from capital city politics by factoring local populations into programme design.

■ **Support synergies in the AU merger of security and governance departments**

The AU Commission's merger of two departments and two main goals of the AU resulted in the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS). The fate of the hitherto less politically supported African Governance Agenda (AGA) is of particular interest in the PAPS merger. The merger of PAPS revives the need for concrete linkages between peace and governance. European APSA partners should support the AU in making the most of the PAPS merger without imposing a more ambitious version of the merger than there is political will for among member states.



About the author

Ueli STAEGER is a Research and Teaching Fellow at the University of Geneva, focusing on international relations and security. He holds a PhD in International Relations/Political Science from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. His research explores the politics and funding of international organizations, with a particular interest in the African Union in international security. Ueli's research has been published in the Journal of Common Market Studies, West European Politics, and International Spectator. He provides media commentary on African international relations and works on African Union affairs with the public sector, think-tanks and civil society organizations.

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Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Peace and Security
Centre of Competence Sub-Saharan Africa
Point E | boulevard de l'Est | Villa n°30
P.O. Box 15416 Dakar-Fann | Senegal

Tel.: +221 33 859 20 02 | Fax: +221 33 864 49 31
Email: info@fes-pscc.org | www.fes-pscc.org
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