

The African Union Peace and Security Partnerships

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Peace and Security

Introduction

The African Union (AU) is developing a series of global partnerships covering a range of issues including peace and security. To date no consensus exists among AU member states on a principled platform from which to engage with global partnerships. Specifically, there is no internal AU consensus on whether global partnerships should be predicated on the principles of democratic governance, accountability, and economic transparency of states on both sides of the partnership.

This paper will assess the AU's peace and security partnerships, in particular, the European Union (EU) and Africa framework of collaboration, as well as the evolving partnerships with the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM). It will also consider the prospects for establishing a relationship between the European common security and defence policy framework and the African peace and security architecture (APSA). It will conclude with a discussion of the major challenges in the operationalisation of APSA and the scope for the AU's partnerships to play a constructive role in addressing them. This paper will conclude by highlighting a number of strategies enhancing the AU's peace and security partnerships.

EU–Africa collaboration on peace and security

A Joint Africa–EU Strategy (JAES) was adopted in December 2007 to guide the relationship between the two continents, with exchanges at the inter-governmental, parliamentary, civil society and private sector levels. The understanding is that the two continents would co-own the JAES. One of the priority areas is to enhance dialogue on peace and security in Africa: Article 17 of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) Protocol states that the Council shall maintain close and continued interaction with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in the fulfilment of its mandate to promote and maintain peace, security and stability in Africa, while Article 17(4) stipulates that the Council shall co-operate and work closely with other relevant international organisations on issues of peace, security and stability in Africa.

On 14 May 2008, the AU PSC issued a statement in which it reiterated its willingness to consolidate its relationship further with the EU Political and Security Committee or *Comité politique et de sécurité* (COPS).¹ In this regard, the EU working with the AU PSC and Commission can collaborate to enhance the organisation's capacity to plan, manage and deploy effective peace operations. Specifically, a new African peace facility has been established with €65 million for capacity development for a period of three years. In addition, the 10th European Development Fund has made a provision of €110 million for peace and security issues.

¹ African Union Peace and Security Council, Statement of the Council on the AU and EU Partnership, PSC/PR/BR/(CXXVII), (Addis Ababa: African Union, 14 May 2008).

The EU is funding a number of the AU's activities, including liaison officers in war-affected countries and the AU's engagement with disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD), security sector reform (SSR) issues as well as the AU border programme. The EU has also committed itself to financing AU-led peace operations to the tune of €200 million, which is supplemented by individual contributions from EU member states.

Key challenges

The key challenges are to ensure predictable and sustainable funding for peace operations in Africa. The AU's commitment to advancing internal peace and security is evident in its deployment: of AU missions, unilaterally in the Comoros and initially in Burundi (AMIB) and Darfur (AMIS); of AU special envoys and the establishment of AU liaison offices in war-affected countries on the continent. However, AU member states are not yet deploying the level of resources required to make the organisation a self-sustaining agent for the resolution of the continent's internal challenges, and a viable international actor. For example, the serious challenges to the AU mission in Somalia (AMISOM); the AU's inability to engage effectively with non-compliant member states such as Sudan, Zimbabwe and currently Guinea. In addition, there is a need to ensure the efficient utilisation of financial resources and transparent reporting of expenditure. It is also necessary to improve the administrative efficiency within the AU, and a level of professionalism has to be inculcated in the relationship between the partner organisations.

Collaboration with other relevant actors: The UN, NATO and AFRICOM

United Nations

Chapter VII of the UN Charter identifies co-operation between UNSC and regional and sub-regional organisations as an important pillar of the international system of collective security. The UN has recognised the need for effective co-ordination and collaboration, given that more than 60% of the Security Council's agenda focuses on crisis situations on the continent.

Both organisations have identified the need to establish a mechanism of co-operation and co-ordination between the PSC and the UNSC. Consequently, the PSC emphasised the 'Establishment of a Coordination and Consultation Mechanism between the African Union Peace and Security Council and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)'.² Article 17 of the PSC Protocol stipulates that, where necessary, recourse will be made to the UN to provide the necessary financial, logistical and military support for the PSC activities in accordance with the provisions of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter on the role of regional organisations. In December 2008, a panel headed by the former prime minister of Italy, Romano Prodi, issued a report on 'the modalities for support to African Union peace-keeping operations', stating that the role played by regional organisations in promoting peace and security is indispensable to the work of the UNSC.³

² African Union Peace and Security Council, *Communiqué PSC/PR/Comm(LXVIII)*, (Addis Ababa: African Union, 14 December 2006).

³ United Nations Security Council Resolution, *A/63/666-S/2008/813*, (New York: United Nations, December 2008).

The UN is already engaged in a joint initiative with the AU, notably the deployment of the AU/UN hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The deployment of UNAMID clearly brought challenges, specifically in the design and planning phases, and major difficulties remain in the operationalisation of the joint mission and implementation of its mandate. It is still too early to conclude definitively whether UNAMID is a model for the co-operation between the UN and AU, not least because the situation in Darfur has not been adequately resolved. The co-ordination difficulties facing UNAMID at a strategic level between the AU and the UN should serve as a catalyst for reviewing and improving the working relationship between both bodies. Some key members of the UNSC feel that the perception, that the PSC and the Security Council are equal partners in form and substance, should be neither entertained nor encouraged. In May 2009, a meeting between the UNSC and the PSC, in Addis Ababa, spent an inordinate amount of time discussing whether the two bodies were engaged in an informal or formal meeting. Implicit in this debate was the issue of whether the UNSC and the AU PSC are in effect 'equal' partners. Essentially, as the only body officially mandated to oversee international peace and security, some key members of the UNSC prefer to view their counterparts in the AU PSC as playing a subsidiary role and function to their initiatives.

The UN can further assist the AU in specific areas, including enhancing capacity and institutionalising regular consultations and exchange of information. With specific reference to peace operations, this presupposes co-ordinating joint fact-finding missions, co-ordinating mediation efforts, and planning, designing and implementing peacekeeping operations.

On 6 October 2010, the UN appointed its first Assistant Secretary-General (ASG), Ambassador Zachary Muburi-Muita, to head the UN Office to the African Union (UNOAU), which was established by the General Assembly on 1 July 2010. In particular, the ASG will represent the UN in the area of peace and security at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa. This is the first UN office of its kind in the AU and could serve as a basis for enhancing co-operation between both organisations.⁴

Key challenges

A challenge to the AU's relationship with the UN is the breakdown of internal AU coherence and common positions, which occurs when AU policy diverges from the national interest of specific member states. For example, the Ezulwini Consensus on UNSC reform was initially undermined by individual states (South Africa, Nigeria, and Egypt) advancing their own interests. The core premise of the Ezulwini Consensus remains the AU's policy on UNSC reform but the continent's regional hegemony still harbour designs for securing a permanent seat on the Council. Therefore, the AU's co-ordinated engagement with the UN can, at times, be disorganised and unfocused. The current AU policy on non-engagement with the International Criminal Court (ICC), and its request to the UNSC to defer and postpone the indictment of the president of Sudan, Omar Al-Bashir, for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, has also generated controversy. The AU's stance of non-engagement with the ICC has seen the dissension of South Africa and Botswana with more countries expected to publicly diverge from the AU position.

⁴ United Nations/African Union Press Release, *The First UN Assistant Secretary-General to the AU Commission presents letters of credence to the Chairperson Jean Ping*, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 6 October 2010.

NATO

In the aftermath of the end of the Cold War, NATO has been struggling to define its role in the absence of its nemesis, the Warsaw Pact. With its extensive professional expertise and logistical capabilities, NATO can clearly play a role in supporting the AU's fledgling security institutions. However, the precise nature of this support has to be delineated, given that NATO's original mandate was to offset any threat to its members, and was thus predicated on a defensive and reactive posture. Playing the role of peace supporter in Africa is therefore a new venture and an unknown quantity for NATO.

The AU's collaboration with NATO was inaugurated in 2005, following the AU's request to NATO to provide support for the now defunct AMIS in Sudan. NATO also has the AU-UN hybrid mission in Darfur, Sudan (UNAMID) and AMISOM in Somalia.

NATO provided airlift services to AU peacekeepers to and from Darfur, when there was a shortage of cargo capacity as well as helicopters. Between July and October 2005, NATO co-ordinated the strategic airlift of about 5 000 peacekeepers from African troop-contributing countries to Darfur. When AMIS was terminated in December 2007, NATO subsequently became involved in the UNAMID operations. To date NATO has provided airlift to a total of approximately 24 000 AU peacekeepers.

NATO also provided training to AMIS personnel. Training initiatives focused on strategic and operational planning issues. In particular, the training imparted insights into how AU assets could be optimally deployed to ensure that they enhance the overall operational initiatives.

NATO is also part of the international counter-piracy effort off the Somalian coast and has escorted a naval vessel dedicated to the AU, which was transporting Burundian military equipment to one of its battalions in Somalia. In addition, the co-operation between the AU and NATO has extended to the areas of air logistical co-ordination and military manpower management.

In general, NATO has also assisted with supporting the operationalisation of the African standby force. Specifically, NATO undertook a study to evaluate and assess the operational readiness and peacekeeping capabilities of the force.

On 2 March 2007, the former AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Said Djinnit, visited NATO's headquarters in Brussels. Djinnit who met with the then NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, also addressed NATO's principal decision-making body, the North Atlantic Council, and acknowledged that the co-operation between the two institutions had been 'very positive'. During the visit, the two parties agreed to explore the possibilities for extending the ongoing co-operation to support AU capacity building.

AFRICOM

General Keith Ward, head of the US military command for Africa (AFRICOM), visited the AU in February 2010, where he met with AU Commissioner for Peace

and Security, Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, and announced that AFRICOM was willing to assist the AU in its peace and security efforts within the APSA framework. The visit was aimed at strengthening ties between the organisations and improving the Command's image on the continent – which is still viewed as a combat force in Africa. AFRICOM had never featured on the agenda of the AU Summit. Lamamra further noted that individual member states would adopt their own specific responses to AFRICOM, and that the AU had not yet sought to have an institutional engagement with the Command.

AFRICOM's launch in 2007 brought a renewed strategic focus, but also attracted initial criticisms of being effectively 'a militarisation of American diplomacy in Africa'. A number of pivotal AU member states, including regional hegemony Nigeria and South Africa, promptly stated their opposition to the Command.

AFRICOM, which is currently based in Stuttgart, Germany, has a staff complement of about 600 military personnel and 600 civilians. Despite issuing an official statement that AFRICOM has no plans to relocate to Africa in the near and medium future, suspicions remain around the ultimate objectives of the Command, whose focus is on security sector governance. This specific programme aims to improve civil military relations and civil military co-operation initiatives in Africa by assisting in the development of professional, legitimate, effective and accountable African security institutions, which support democratisation processes.

In 2008, the Command helped to deploy 1 600 Ugandan peacekeepers to Somalia and has also participated in an airlift support of AU personnel to Darfur in the context of AU-NATO collaboration. There are clearly components of APSA that could collaborate and partner with AFRICOM based on a genuine partnership. However, in September 2009, the Command's commitment to democratic governance was questioned following AFRICOM's joint military exercise with the armed forces of Gabon, after the nation's disputed election that witnessed a crackdown by the security forces.

Towards a working relationship between the European common defence and security and the APSA

In December 2009, the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon inaugurated a new legal and political structure to frame the EU's external relations. The EU's High Representative (HR) for foreign affairs and security policy now has the mandate to focus attention on Europe's foreign policy priorities. The current HR, Laura Ashton, and her 'diplomatic corps', the European external action service (EEAS) working through the EU's delegation, can enhance the working relationship between the European common defence and security policy framework and the APSA. Specifically, future EU support for APSA will be co-ordinated through the HR's office. The HR's office, EEAS and the EU delegation to the AU in Addis Ababa, can play a constructive role in co-ordinating European common defence and security policy initiatives and provide a more robust platform to follow-up on objectives already articulated in the JAES on the peace and security partnership.

However, such a working partnership will not be straightforward, since the AU expects the EU to address peace and security challenges on the African continent, but on the AU's own terms, rather than on the basis of dictates from the EU. Specifically, the AU thinks that the EU should consult with the AU or take the AU positions into account prior to issuing policy prescriptions that could fundamentally undermine efforts to consolidate peace. The AU also expects the EU to support the operationalisation of APSA and AU peace operations, although, again, the mode of engagement remains a key issue. The AU wants to be able to define its needs and then receive the required support from partners such as the EU. In practice, the lack of capacity to identify and develop effective innovative proposals on how external actors can support the AU creates the vacuum that is readily filled by international partners and donors (like the EU) as well as civil society and think tanks.

The AU Commission also expects the EU not to create a situation in which Regional Economic Communities (RECs) receive EU support in a way that effectively undermines the ability of the AU to operationalise APSA. Sentiments among some RECs diverge on the primacy of the AU. Some RECs consider themselves to be more 'institutionally' experienced and effective than the AU, but the reality contradicts this, as the majority of RECs suffer from the same institutional constraints as the AU.

Specifically, with regard to support for peace operations, the AU expects support for some of its unilateral initiatives such as AMISOM. Major resource constraints have hampered the effective operationalisation of this mission, which is still fraught with serious challenges. There are similar expectations for AMISEC/MAES and support for AU liaison offices.

The scope exists to enhance the working relationship between the European common defence security framework and the APSA. For example, the PSC and the EU COPS have already begun to convene joint meetings once a year, alternatively in Addis Ababa or Brussels.

Specific areas of EU–AU collaboration

In terms of specific areas of collaboration, both organisations can work towards: i) establishing a regular exchange of information and views; ii) co-ordinating their joint fact-finding and assessment missions in potential crisis situations; iii) co-ordinating the design, planning and implementation of peace operations; iv) co-ordinating their mediation efforts; and v) strengthening the capacity of the AU military staff committee.

Collaboration to enhance the operationalisation of the APSA

The degree of co-ordination and harmonisation on how to enhance the operationalisation of the APSA needs to increase. On 12 September 2008, the Council convened a preparatory consultation of the joint PSC/EU–COPS meeting, which was held on 30 September 2008 in Brussels, Belgium. The two bodies met again in October 2009. The relationship between the two bodies should be clearly articulated, as well as characterised by mutual respect, legitimacy and effectiveness.

What are the indicators for a successful peace and security partnership?

No precedents exist for monitoring and evaluating a peace and security partnership. However, the trend towards a successful partnership could be identified, when the AU is able to conduct an effective peace operation, and has clear channels of communication with its partners on the delivery of assistance and the co-ordination of logistics and implementation on the ground.

AU and EU have established a basis for dialogue and the building of a partnership on security co-operation. Monitoring success will also remain a challenge because the EU-AU dialogue is not yet bi-directional, in the sense of two interlocutors exchanging ideas. The EU interest in stemming further insecurity in Africa, which has a spill-over effect in its own back-yard (in terms of increased immigration, and the concomitant social pressures imposed upon their societies), means that the EU tends to assert itself as the dominant partner in the relationship. This is also evident in the EU PSC's ability to 'call the shots' on the allocation of funding and effectively determine and define the extent to which it will co-operate and support the AU.

Monitoring and evaluation will always be constrained by the lack of effective communication. In such a context, it becomes very difficult to ascertain the degree to which a successful partnership has been consolidated. The issue of communication is regularly emphasised by individual AU member states due to the absence of an effective internal communication framework within the AU and also between the AU Commission and partners like the EU.

Another constraint on monitoring and evaluating a successful partnership is that the AU has capacity limitations, and so cannot, and does not, always take the lead in defining its own internal requirements. Often the AU finds itself in the position of a recipient of ideas, proposals, and external consultants (from the UN and other partners like the EU) in order to operationalise key components of APSA. These constraints are undermined by arcane administrative procedures, which mean that staff recruitment is in itself a substantial hurdle to the operationalisation of APSA. In this context, monitoring and evaluation becomes quite an uphill task.

The effect of political interests on preventing effective collaboration

Even though certain principles currently define the EU-Africa partnership, there are clear political interests which determine the nature of collaboration between the two bodies. The AU seeks to engage with the EU as a partner, but not one that dictates the terms of the relationship. In addition, a majority of AU members have an inherent resentment at the patronising tone, when the EU and individual member states advocate for specific approaches to address the peace and security challenges on the African continent.

The AU's primary political interest is ownership of its initiatives that is recognised by external partners. However, the AU's lack of extensive capacity to operationalise the APSa makes this desire an aspiration. AU ownership is also constrained by the asymmetrical nature of the relationship between the EU and AU, based on the EU's continuing role as a net 'donor' to AU activities.

The AU's other political interest is to ensure predictable support for the operationalisation of APSA from partners like the EU. However, this is not guaranteed due to the internal political interests, dynamics and will of EU institutions to unlimited and un-earmarked funding, particularly the challenges of internal financial management and accountability within the AU.

The role of civil society in advancing the EU-AU partnership

The AU has entrenched a culture of paying lip-service to engaging with civil society organisations (CSOs), while internally establishing obstacles for effective engagement with them. AU's lack of effective engagement with civil society undermines the credibility of the commitment of AU member states to undertake genuine internal and domestic transformation and collaborate effectively with partners, like the EU, to achieve the required aspirational change. Without stating it openly, some AU member states do not want to see the EU empower African civil society, due to domestic political undemocratic agendas.

African civil society is constantly establishing relationships with European civil society. Civil society from both continents will need to collaborate actively, in particularly on policy development, advocacy and pressurising the AU and EU to uphold the rhetoric of the security policies. Ultimately, this can only be beneficial towards achieving the objectives of the JAES, by increasing the ability of African and European civil society to engage effectively with the AU and EU to ensure that norms, values and principles are upheld – using increased capacity building, training and awareness-raising to achieve this interest. Therefore, short-term goals should include consolidating civil society networks to engage the AU and EU, and for CSOs to become a permanent fixture in the activities of these institutions.

Conclusion

The AU would like to oversee the stabilisation of the continent, based on an autonomous definition of the strategy and action to manage continental peace and security challenges. Inter-African support systems to resolve continental problems also need to be increased, which in an inter-connected and globalised world, has to be predicated on regional and international partnerships. It is self-evident that increased internal coherence and consensus between AU member states, in order to speak to the international system with one voice and influence global policy formulation, would be beneficial. Building global partnerships will advance continental and domestic economic interests – notably by reducing the debt burden, increasing access to trade markets (limited by tariffs and subsidies by non-African countries), and promoting inward investment into Africa.

The lack of internal coherence among AU member states on a number of issues will continue to undermine the organisation's international image. Regrettably, the divide-and-rule doctrine still applies in Africa and governments gladly ignore or sideline AU policy positions when domestic national interests demand. This means that global partners, like the EU, may continue to have doubts about the veracity of statements and positions adopted by the AU.

By agreeing to institutionalise an annual meeting, both the EU and AU recognise each other as key interlocutors in Africa. Co-ordination mechanisms between the EU and African need to be further strengthened and, where necessary, new ones developed. These co-ordinating mechanisms should be based on joint strategic plans and joint work plans in order to ensure common expected outputs and results, and clearly defined, periodic, technical meetings should be held to consolidate the partnership.

Predictable and sustainable funding for peace operations in Africa needs to be assured. The EU needs to approach the AU as a genuine partner rather than as a patron. In the absence of a relationship based on mutual respect and dialogue, the EU may begin to be seen as having a virtual controlling or 'policing' function over the AU's operational activities. Therefore, the future relationship between the EU and the AU should be characterised by mutual respect, legitimacy and effectiveness.

The AU's partnerships should not be premised exclusively on relationships between governments, but also between the continents' peoples. The AU's inability to whole-heartedly embrace African civil society as a partner, and not as an interloper, will continue to undermine the effective implementation of the continent's peace and security strategy and the operationalisation, monitoring and evaluation of APSA.

