

DISCUSSION PAPER No. 249

Regional peace architectures in Africa: A REALITY CHECK

POLITICAL ECONOMY DYNAMICS OF REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN AFRICA

PEDRO

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March 2019

The African Union and its formally-recognised regional organisations spend substantial financial resources and human capital on peace efforts in Africa to *silence the guns* by 2020. Over the last two decades, they have stepped up their efforts on peace and security, and the continental peace architecture is now well established, mostly operating with regional and sub-regional peace architectures.

In addressing some of the world's most sticky, complex and contingent conflicts, the continental and regional organisations have to find workable partnerships with one another, as well as with member state governments and non-state actors. While doing so, they also have to adapt to changing conflict dynamics. The African Union also engages with the global peace architecture of the United Nations, especially when mounting costly and demanding peace support operations on the continent. While Africa provides all the troops for such peace operations, the bulk of the money for Africa's peace agendas stems from external partners. This adds another layer of complexity, as external partners' own interests and incentives bring about both opportunities and challenges.

This paper discusses an array of multi-level and multi-stakeholder efforts to prevent, mediate or resolve violent conflicts. The peace-related dynamics and architectures range from the Sahel in the west of the continent to the Horn in the east, and from low-key mediation to high-risk peace support operations. These cases provide a reality check: implementing Africa's peace architectures is more about pragmatically 'muddling through' rather than implementing ideal-type policies or neatly planned interventions. This then poses particular demands on African stakeholders to be flexible and adaptive. It also poses challenges for external partners such as the UN and those donors with an interest in reducing violent conflict and in strengthening regional peace architectures. They are called on to purposefully look for ways of cooperating that help regional organisations develop the governance systems, capabilities and adaptive institutions for problem solving and generating peace and security outcomes.

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Acknowledgements

This paper is part of a study project financed by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) on the Political Economy Dynamics of Regional Organisations in Africa, PEDRO. It draws in particular on a series of papers looking at the peace and security role of regional organisations in Africa. The authors would like to thank Lidet Tadesse for her early inputs, as well as Bruce Byiers and Volker Hauck for their valuable comments and insights. The authors are responsible for the paper's content, including errors and interpretations.

Acronyms

AMISOM	AU mission in Somalia
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
CEN-SAD	Community of Sahel–Saharan States
CEW	Continental Early Warning
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
EAC	East African Community
EASFCOM	Eastern Africa Standby Force Coordination Mechanism
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
ICGLR	International Conference of the Great Lakes Region
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
KA IPTC	Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
LCBC	Lake Chad Basin Commission
MICEMA	Multidimensional Mission in Mali
MINUSMA	UN multidimensional stabilisation mission
NARC	North African Regional Capability
NUPI	Norwegian Institute for International Affairs
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PEDRO	Political Economy Dynamics of Regional Organisations
PERIA	Political Economy of Regional Integration in Africa
PSC	Peace and Security Council
REC	Regional Economic Communities
RO	Regional organisations
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UK	United Kingdom
UMA	Arab Maghreb Union
UN	United Nations
US	United States

1. Introduction

This paper discusses key findings on the political economy of peace architectures in Africa. There are three main reasons for doing so. Firstly, Africa features in more than a quarter of the world’s political conflicts, and about one third of highly violent conflicts (Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2017). Secondly, Africa’s continental and regional organisations spend most of their time and energy on peace and security related challenges. The varied mix of organisations and institutional arrangements that constitute the continent’s peace architectures range from the continental African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), to regional and sub-regional peace architectures¹. The African Union is especially preoccupied with conflict mediation, sanctions and expensive peace support operations. But there are numerous other regional and sub-regional peace architectures at work; all interacting with one another according to some basic principles, elaborate rules of the game and through dedicated regional organisational structures under mandates and authorisation from African member states. They have to find ways, in often strenuous circumstances, to prevent war, mediate in conflicts, introduce sanctions and at times even mount peace support operations in violent conflicts or wars. It is therefore important to understand what drives and constrains these efforts.

Figure 1: Peace and security in Africa



¹ *Regional organisations* (ROs) will be used to refer to both the AU as well as the eight officially recognised Regional Economic Communities and two so-called Regional Mechanisms, which also have mandates related to peace and security. The paper refers to *sub-regional organisations* in the cases of smaller groupings of countries, often around specific areas of cooperation. Many of those sub-regional organisations have a mandate from the AU to deal with conflict and peace, others don't.

Thirdly, much of the financial, technical and material support for peace and security comes from outside Africa. African member countries provide tens of thousands of African peacekeepers who are deployed across the continent in some of the world's most deadly conflicts. But for the peace architectures to function they rely on a handful of bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as on the United Nations, which provide the bulk of funding for Africa's expensive peace support operations.

This paper does not try to assess the impact of APSA, nor of any of the other peace architectures on the continent². There are better publications for that (e.g. Institute for Peace and Security Studies, 2017; Williams, 2014). Rather it tries to answer the following question: what political economy actors and factors help explain why and how Africa's regional organisations engage in peace and security matters?³ These are ten key findings, the implications of which are also presented in the conclusion to this paper:

1. **Each violent conflict needs to be understood in terms of its context specific and often deep-rooted causes.** There is a wide variety of violent conflict in Africa, rooted in different historical and socio-political realities, some going back to colonial rule. Many relate to blockages in the development of economic and political institutions, including those managing political competition and control over the use of violence. Some African states do not control large parts of their territory. This variety and deep-rootedness pose particular challenges for the institutional architectures in Africa for dealing with conflicts.
2. **Importantly, solutions to violent conflicts thrive on African owned dynamics and agency, often pushed and pulled by Africa's bigger swing states.** Nonetheless, smaller sized countries can also exercise influence. They regularly manage to block regional sanctions, mediation or peace support operations by networking and by playing the card of intra-African solidarity and non-interference.
3. **Most conflicts evolve over time and in space, requiring adaptive and context specific responses.** This poses numerous difficulties in terms of defining mandates, distribution of labour, responsibilities and roles. Concrete cases of violent conflicts in Mali, Somalia, Burundi, South Sudan, Nigeria and neighbouring countries clearly demonstrate the numerous challenges faced by the continental and regional peace architectures. Who leads? Who contributes troops, money, logistics? Who bears responsibility and assumes risks? Which instruments to use and how far to engage?
4. **These are hard questions to solve, the more so as Africa's peace architectures are poorly resourced to deal with such volatile and contingent challenges.** In spite of the pan-African call for African solutions for African problems, regional organisations often lack discretionary and quickly disbursable funding for emergency interventions. Though Africa provides all the peacekeepers for the nine peace support operations on the continent, there is a shortage of funds for mounting peace support operations or financing the various regional peace architectures. This extreme dependence on foreign funding for its peace support operations triggered a financial crisis of the AU in 2016, and kickstarted a reform process. This crisis strengthened the hands of those African member states and stakeholders with an interest in institutional reforms of the AU.

² For an insightful overview of conflicts in Africa and the types of results from the African Peace and Security Architecture, see: Institute for Peace and Security Studies 2017.

³ The paper is part of a broader study on the Political Economy Dynamics of Regional Organisations (PEDRO). The PEDRO project studied 17 regional organisations in Africa and covered 11 policy areas. The purpose of these studies was to help regional organisations overcome or navigate certain obstacles to improved regional outcomes. The point of departure was to look behind the formal structures of regional organisations to deconstruct the messy world of multilevel power plays, interests, ideas, incentives and institutional dynamics.

5. Such reforms were essential for **strengthening a sense of ownership among member states over decision making on when and how to address conflicts, who finances and who implements**. To do so, regional organisations need to prioritise and improve core governance functions and capabilities for collaborative peace efforts and for improved outcomes. The eagerness by outsiders to get things done by supporting peace actions should therefore be carefully balanced with support for the organisational systems and governance functions of Africa's peace architectures. These systems and functions are prerequisites for strengthening African ownership and for developing effective peace institutions over time.
6. All this demands deliberate investments in multi-partner and multi-level partnerships between donors and regional peace architectures. Effective partnerships don't happen, they are constructed. **Therefore, external partners, including the UN, need to pay special attention to strengthening capabilities of Africa's peace architectures for multi-level cooperation among numerous stakeholders**. This intermediate objective is vital for the realisation of Africa's peace agendas.
7. **Partnership approaches must also address the concerns of African partners about donors being "too close for comfort"**; or about donors leading rather than supporting regional organisations in Africa.
8. **Long, drawn-out peace support operations with a high degree of dependence on a limited number of donors carry particular risks**. This is highlighted by the African peace support mission in Somalia. A lack of time perspective may create disincentives for the Somali authorities to take on responsibilities for reforming the security sector, creating the institutions for sustainable political stability and development.
9. **Although the focus here is on the regional organisations that drive peace architectures, other actors are also important**. There have been examples of functional cooperation, problem solving and dialogue between specialised non-governmental organisations, think tanks, and research centres and the continental peace architecture of APSA and other regional peace architectures in Addis Ababa and beyond. Such *non-usual suspects* are often not on the radar of the formal peace architectures, but can play important roles.
10. The African Union has taken measures to improve member state funding of the continental peace and security architecture and its operations. This process is still in an early phase and nowhere near to a level of self-sufficiency. So regional organisations will continue to rely on external funding in the foreseeable future, especially for the bulk of peace support operations. **Hence the relevance for regional organisations and donors to plan for medium term transitional arrangements along three key principles:** (i) avoid creating perverse incentives through aid and ensure that no conflict is *orphaned*, (ii) invest in collective efforts among donors and with partners to improve the quality of aid, (iii) and allow for adaptability given the highly contingent nature and the complexities of multi-stakeholder cooperation in conflict dynamics.

2. Political economy drivers and blockers of regional peace architectures

Peace and security problems have risen to top the agendas of most of Africa's regional organisations. The African Union has established a comprehensive group of organisational structures and institutional arrangements to deal with conflict and peace: the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Since the establishment of the AU in 2002, it has continued to develop an array of institutions and instruments for peace related policies and actions with other continental bodies, with the eight officially recognised regional economic communities and two regional mechanisms, and at times with sub-regional organisations⁴. Together they constitute Africa's peace architectures dealing with an enlarged peace and security agenda covering conflict prevention, conflict mediation and post-conflict peacebuilding. The available tools include diplomacy, mediation, sanctions⁵, and peace support operations. Moreover, these regional peace architectures are being complemented with cooperation arrangements at sub-regional and global levels.

This section synthesises the main political economy variables that shape the performance of APSA and the other regional peace architectures. Africa's history of decolonisation, liberation struggles and state formation during the Cold War help understand the persistence of some of Africa's violent conflicts, but also the efforts at resolving them as well as the evolution of the peace architectures involved. Apart from these foundational aspects, there are other factors at work such as the role that powerful states play on the continent as drivers or blockers of the development of regional organisations. Nonetheless, a number of smaller countries have managed to resist the AU and regional peace related interventions through all sorts of power plays. Given the heavy financial dependence on external players and the impact this has on the incentive environment, ways of working, prioritisation and institutional development of the peace architectures, this external variable is also analysed.

This section also presents the basic organisational structures, governance arrangements and subsidiarity principles underpinning the continental peace architecture in the implementation of its mandate. In most violent conflicts, this involves cooperation with regional and sub-regional bodies. The complex interactions between these variables help explain the challenges that Africa's peace architectures face to strengthen their peace capabilities and develop effective institutions.

2.1. Foundational and structural factors

Africa's history of decolonisation, liberation struggles and state formation under divisive Cold War conditions have had lasting effects on both the nature of violent conflicts on the continent, and on the growth paths of its ROs. In 1963, thirty independent African countries created the Organisation of African Unity, with a strong agenda of solidarity, with ongoing liberation movements and continental integration. But modern state-building was hampered by a colonial economic and administrative legacy, with, among other things, *thick* borders that artificially cut through regions with homogeneous ethnic allegiances and lineages.

⁴ The two regional mechanisms are: Eastern Africa Standby Force Coordination Mechanism (EASFCOM) and the North African Regional Capability (NARC). Apart from APSA and the AU, PEDRO has studied peace and security related matters in a number of regional organisations (ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC, the East African Standby Force) and sub-regional organisations (Lake Chad Basin Commission, ICGLR, the Kofi Annan Peace Training Centre). See <http://www.ecdpm.org/regionalorganisations>.

⁵ Sanctions can take the form of suspension of membership, targeted diplomatic and financial sanctions such as asset freezing, travel bans, arms embargoes and public condemnations, all of which have been regularly applied during the lifespan of the AU (Vines, 2013).

Exclusion of particular groups, inequalities within countries and the concentration of colonial wealth and power created grievances that were regularly instrumentalised, including to weaken neighbouring states by supporting rebel or proxy forces - or merely harbouring insurgents. This is the source of some of the sticky or intractable conflicts in Africa that remain today, for example in the Horn of Africa and in regions with porous borders. Historically ingrained anti-colonial sentiments help explain some of the misgivings about external interventions by former colonial rulers on the continent. They also help understand the incentives behind nation-states pushing for regional solutions.

The democratisation wave in post-Cold War Africa was accompanied by increased political competition. The initial optimism about the prospects of democratisation has meanwhile given way to a realisation that competitive politics is often accompanied by societal tensions that - if not addressed - can give rise to electoral violence as election results or the quality of competitive politics were, and continue to be, contested in numerous countries. The constitutional rules of the game are regularly contested, resulting in *coups d'états*, political instability and reemerging authoritarian rule. In North Africa, ruling elites managed to push back on demands for multi-party democratisation until the Arab Spring unleashed popular uprisings. That helped topple authoritarian leaders, reinstated others, and resulted in the introduction of a constitutional democracy in Tunisia, though it remains unique in the Arab world.

Another variable shaping conflicts and influencing ROs is the presence of a powerful or influential neighbour or a *swing state*.

2.2. Swing states

It is important to pay particular attention to the roles that member states play in shaping the agendas of ROs and in driving or blocking implementation their implementation. The decisive influence of powerful member states - especially in the area of peace and security - is highlighted at regional and at continental level by numerous studies.⁶ Maintaining peace and stability in their neighbours or the sub-region is often a mainstay for ruling elites to prevent costly spillovers from violent conflicts and ultimately to hold onto power. A few heavyweight countries have wielded a combination of diplomatic, military, economic and bureaucratic power and capabilities to exercise influence on less powerful neighbours and on their ROs, especially when seeking to reduce threats to stability in their regions of influence. Such swing states include Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Libya (before the overthrow of the Gaddafi-regime) and Ethiopia⁷. An early example of the abuse of power by such a swing state is the economic and military destabilisation of Southern Africa by apartheid South Africa before the nineties.

In West Africa, Nigeria provides a counterexample of a swing state that weighed heavily on the creation of the regional peace architecture through ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States, in order to quell unrest in neighbouring states. This helped safeguard Nigeria's vital interests in regional stability (e.g. Vanheukelom, 2017a). Ethiopia and Kenya play important roles in the fight against al-Shabaab in neighbouring Somalia, initially through the regional body IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development), later through the AU. Both countries also provide troops to the largest AU peace support operation (the AU Mission in Somalia, AMISOM) and act as political guarantors of the federalisation process. Both countries however have also been criticised for unilateral military actions in Somalia (Ethiopia) or for economic profiteering of conflict economies (Kenya) (Alison, 2015).

⁶ See PEDRO studies referred to above.

⁷ We prefer to refer to these influential states as *swing states*, though the literature also refers to them as regional *hegemons* or *Rambos*.

At the continental level, Nigeria and South Africa were pivotal in bringing about the transition from the Organisation for African Unity to the AU at the end of the 1990s. Their motivation was to a large extent based on security concerns for their sub-regions and the continent as a whole. It was hoped that the transformation into the AU would enable swift, continentally endorsed mediation and peace diplomacy, the implementation of a sanctions regime as deterrent to conflict, and peace support operations in situations of acute crisis. Such African-led peace support operations would compensate for the failures of the global UN system to engage effectively in a number of complex violent conflicts on the continent, but also neutralise the pretext of former colonial powers to intervene, often in their former colonies or zones of interest. Though powerful swing states influence Africa's peace architectures, smaller member countries can also exercise influence. They can block sanctions, mediation efforts or even peace support operations by networking and relying on the still strong aversion from many African countries against interference or breaches of the sovereignty principle, as discussed in Section 3.

2.3. External influences

There are numerous external actors and factors influencing both the types of conflicts (such as global terrorism, illicit trafficking or the ability to move and conceal financial assets), as well as the incentive environment within which regional organisations organise to deal with conflicts. Because of the persistent dependence of Africa's regional organisations on external funding, this paper prioritises 'donors', or international partners. At one level, these external funders provide resources for initiating and undertaking peace operations. Some also provide financial and technical support to the regional organisations and peace architectures themselves. Yet, as discussed here, the main donors - the EU, France, the UK, Germany and the U.S. - also influence the decision and incentive environment of ROs in ways that can hamper these organisations in developing capabilities and delivering results that matter for their African stakeholders. Given the EU's dominant role among donors, the focus in this subsection is mainly on the EU.⁸ The UN is an equally important player shaping peace and security responses and outcomes. Some of the roles of the UN, will be highlighted when dealing with concrete conflicts in Section 3. China is also expanding its footprint in matters of peace and security on the continent, especially in the Horn and in West Africa⁹.

Donors as external influencers

Of all external partners, the EU is the donor with the most comprehensive partnership with Africa's ROs and has been a long-standing partner to Africa's ROs (Mackie et al, 2017), supporting all African-led peace operations on the continent. Already in 1996, the EU had identified continental peace and security as a priority area, leading it to finance the bulk of the peace support operations on the continent. However, as discussed in this section, changes to their financing approach triggered a financial crisis in 2016 that led to AU responses to achieve greater financial and decisional autonomy by speeding up and deepening institutional reforms (see Vanheukelom, 2017; Vanheukelom, 2019).

⁸ With *core donors* we distinguish within the larger group of donors those who have indicated a concern about the negative effects of poorly administered aid on partner bureaucracies, governance systems and institutional growth path. In the case of peace and security Denmark, the EU, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK cooperate in the so-called Joint Financing Arrangement in support of strategic of this strategic pillar of the AU Commission's four-year strategy (2013-2017). For a more detailed account of the evolving partnership relations, see also: Pharathathe and Vanheukelom, 2018; PEDRO.

⁹ As the publicly available information on emerging donors such as Turkey and China and on their influence on ROs in the domain of peace and security remains sketchy, this is not dealt with by PEDRO. For an indication of the types of support provided, see also: on China (International Crisis Group, 2017 and 2018; Kovrig, 2018), on Turkey (Republic of Turkey, 2018).

The EU manages the most extensive support framework of all the donors, framed in a longer-term strategy with multiple components and instruments for financing, capacity support but also for policy and political dialogue. Moreover, EU support also extends rather broadly to Africa's regional organisations, to member states and national level and regional non-state actors active on conflict and peace.

When the APSA was launched, the EU became the first donor to provide substantial support through a newly created EU instrument, the African Peace Facility. This facility, not to be confused with the AU Peace Fund, is well suited for financing short-term needs as its funding cycles last two to three years. A second instrument for channeling funds consisted of the EU's three so-called Regional Indicative Programmes, through which it provides complementary support for peace and security matters to the ten regional organisations. This instrument can be used for financing projects over an even longer-term period.

Spread over two programming cycles of the EU (the first from 2008-2013, the second from 2014-2020) the overall EU funding for peace and security has doubled¹⁰. The bulk of this money was used for peace support operations, and on average the EU spent EUR 50 million annually on APSA for the 2014-2020 programming phase, a substantial increase to the previous phase (European Court of Auditors, 2018). Spending on peace support operations, especially in Somalia, has grown to become "the EU's single largest development project in Africa" (Williams, 2017). Other donors, mainly the U.S. and a handful of EU member states - primarily Germany, France, and the UK, but also Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands - provided support to regional and sub-regional organisations through in-kind contributions, technical assistance or financial support for peace operations or programmes.

The EU, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the UK and Sweden pooled their funding for APSA and supported directly the Peace and Security Department of the AU Commission so that it could fill two thirds of its vacancies. By harmonising their efforts, these donors reduced transaction costs, raised transparency by pooling data on donor support, and financed an additional 172 temporary staff members. This enabled the Peace and Security Department to continue to function, although this support did not solve the structural problem of shortage of qualified, permanent staff that mature with the evolution of the public bureaucracy (European Court of Auditors, 2018). Together with Germany, the EU provided technical support for the development of APSA roadmaps, with guidance for implementing a peace and security agenda. These roadmaps also set out a framework for donor coordination.

There were, however, also a range of shortcomings in the way the EU provided its support, including:

- the APSA roadmap 2016-2020 was considered to be too complex to work with, the more so as the ownership by the AU Commission was limited (Mackie et al., 2017; European Court of Auditors, 2018).
- the financing of technical assistance and operational costs within the AU Commission and regional organisations helped improve capacities to manage projects rather than those capabilities for strengthening core governance functions to improve ownership with key African stakeholders and management functions for effective conflict mediation and resolution (European Court of Auditors, 2018).

An external shock and internal reforms

Clearly, the quantity and quality of donor support to Africa's peace architectures enable regional organisations to develop and implement peace actions. Yet there are shortcomings as well. By 2016, the degree of financial dependence on a few big donors and the quality of the security partnerships between

¹⁰ Between 2004-2017 a total amount of EUR 2.7 billion has been allocated to the EU's African Peace Facility.

donors and ROs was raising concerns at both ends of these partnerships. Despite repeated promises by the AU of a shift towards gradual self-financing by member states through their yearly assessed contributions to the AU Peace Fund, the degree of dependence on foreign funding increased steadily.

Not surprisingly, questions were asked about how genuinely African governments own the APSA institutions, given the degree of dependence on donors. It raised the fundamental question, as asked by Williams (2014) “what level of architecture would be sustainable if the preferences of some key external donors were to change and their levels of financing reduced?” This concern was echoed in the stronger call by African stakeholders - well captured by President Kagame - for an arm’s length partnership with donors as they were perceived to move too close for comfort. In this line of thought, African member states lost confidence in APSA’s decision dynamics and implementation arrangements as such decisions were perceived to be overly influenced by the preferences or geostrategic interests of external players such as donors.

When the EU decided to cap the allowances of peacekeepers deployed in the mission in Somalia (AMISOM, see further) in January 2016 and therefore reduce payments for the 22,000 African peacekeepers by one fifth, this resulted in a political and financial crisis within the AU. Suddenly, the AU had to find additional resources to fill the gap in order to maintain the allowances for peacekeepers.

The EU-induced shock and the resulting financial crisis within the AU apparently pushed both the issue of member state funding and broader reforms of the AU institutions up the agenda. At the AU summit of mid 2016, African government leaders announced a new funding mechanism through a 0.2% levy on eligible imported goods. With this, it is hoped that member states will finance up to a 100% of the operational costs, 75% of programmes, and up to 25% of peace support operations by 2020 (Pharatlhathe and Vanheukelom, 2018; PEDRO). The AU also reinforced its partnership with the UN, hoping that 75% of the cost of peace enforcement would be financed through assessed UN contributions.

2.4. Expanding regional peace architectures

By the end of the nineties, Africa had seen an ethnic war in Burundi (1993), the genocide in Rwanda (1994), the First Congo War (1996-1997) in the Great Lakes Region and a series of military coups in African countries. These conflicts revealed that the Organisation for African Unity was not up to the task of engaging in swift and decisive interventions in violent conflicts or situations of political instability on the continent. After a decisive push from powerful emerging democracies such as Nigeria and South Africa, member states created the African Union with a legal mandate to initiate measures against “unconstitutional changes of government” and with the right to “intervene in a member state pursuant to a decision from the AU Assembly in respect of grave circumstances” (AU Constitutive Act, 2000). Without undoing the sacrosanct principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, the AU adopted the principle of *non-indifference* in well-circumscribed circumstances.

At the continental level, the APSA horizontally coordinates a number of organisations such as the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the African Standby Force and the Africa Peace Fund¹¹. The Peace and Security Council is a standing body that decides on where, when and how to manage conflicts and is accountable to the highest decision-making body of the AU, the Assembly of Heads of States and Government, and to the continental Executive Council of Ministers. Decisions are generally taken by consensus, and if that is not possible, by simple majority or two thirds majority for substantive matters. *De facto*, when the Peace and

¹¹ The other bodies of APSA include a Continental Early Warning (CEW) System, and a Panel of the Wise, while the AU Commission is also expected to support the work of the Peace and Security Council in peace and security matters.

Security Council was established in 2004, the AU Assembly delegated its mandate to the council to decide on peace support operations or sanctions against member states. In reality, however,

The African Standby Force¹² is still in the making, and will be tasked with mounting peace support operations in conflict affected areas. Doing so in time and engaging in mediation and preventive diplomacy are costly undertakings that require logistical preparedness, managerial capabilities, appropriate organisational structures and capable peace personnel. The AU Peace Fund was established almost two decades ago to respond swiftly to security related emergencies or crises. Until recently, member states failed to contribute to this fund but as part of the overall reforms under the AU presidency of the Rwandan President Paul Kagame, by the end of 2018, member states had begun to fund it with US\$ 79 million of the expected US\$ 130 million, though the target of \$400 million by 2020 is still far off (African Union, 2018).

Vertically, APSA coordinates with the ten recognised regional organisations and mechanisms as well with sub-regional organisations¹³. The institutions and organisations that form the APSA are tasked to operate according to the principle of subsidiarity. This acknowledges that regional or sub-regional organisations are the first to respond to conflicts in their member countries given their proximity to the sources of conflict, and given the stronger interests of their member states in preventing violence from spilling across borders. These regional and sub-regional organisations may also have advantages of size and flexibility to respond faster to crises than the continental machinery. Another dimension of vertical coordination relates to the APSA mandate to work with global actors, especially the UN. Here too, the subsidiarity principle requires a division of labour along lines of complementarity and comparative advantages.

On paper, these principles, organisational structures and formal rules of the game seem to cover the ground for effective policymaking and practice. However, the real-life cases discussed below illustrate how multi-level cooperation models between regional organisations may deviate from best-practice design when under pressure. In addition to the numerous political economy drivers and blockers discussed above, the APSA and regional peace architectures need to respond and adapt to the changing nature - and often geographic locations - of violent conflicts. What looks like muddling through, is often an adaptive approach to finding 'best-fit' solutions. In certain contexts, sub-regional organisations are mandated to take on peace and security roles beyond their original mandate, or are specifically created to fill empty spaces in the peace and security landscape. Section 3 provides a reality check to better understand the nature of this gap between best-practice design and real-life muddling through. This can provide a better basis for reflecting on further reforms of regional organisations and on support strategies that are anchored in existing momentum and capabilities rather than in imagined institutions and capabilities.

3. Reality check - ideal design vs. muddling through

As highlighted in Section 2, the institutional forms and governance systems of Africa's peace and security architectures look impressive on paper. In theory, all peace and security interventions fall under the continental framework of the APSA and its *building blocks*, the eight regional economic communities and two regional mechanisms formally recognised by the AU. In reality, however, numerous peace architectures often work simultaneously. While the formal *rules of the game* may have been clearly articulated - often in line with

¹² So far, the standby force has been activated in three conflicts (Lesotho, the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau).

¹³ These *building blocks* of the APSA include the eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) that are officially recognised by the AU, plus two Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. Other PEDRO reports point to the diversity in the institutional forms of three RECs and their regional peace architectures - ECOWAS, SADC and IGAD - within the continental framework of APSA (Vanheukelom, 2017; Desmidt, 2017a; Byiers, 2017).

best-practice models - regional and sub-regional players and swing states respond to threats and the contingent nature of context-specific conflicts in idiosyncratic ways.

This section considers three main types of intervention: mediation, sanctions and peace support operations. These interventions are usually used in combination, without rigid sequencing, the choice shaped by context. We further distinguish three types of conflictual contexts:

- those violent conflicts that only or mainly play out in a single country (Somalia, Mali and Lesotho),
- conflicts with spillover effects in a subregion (Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region),
- and political unrest and instability, typically involving mediation and sanctions (Sudan, Burundi).

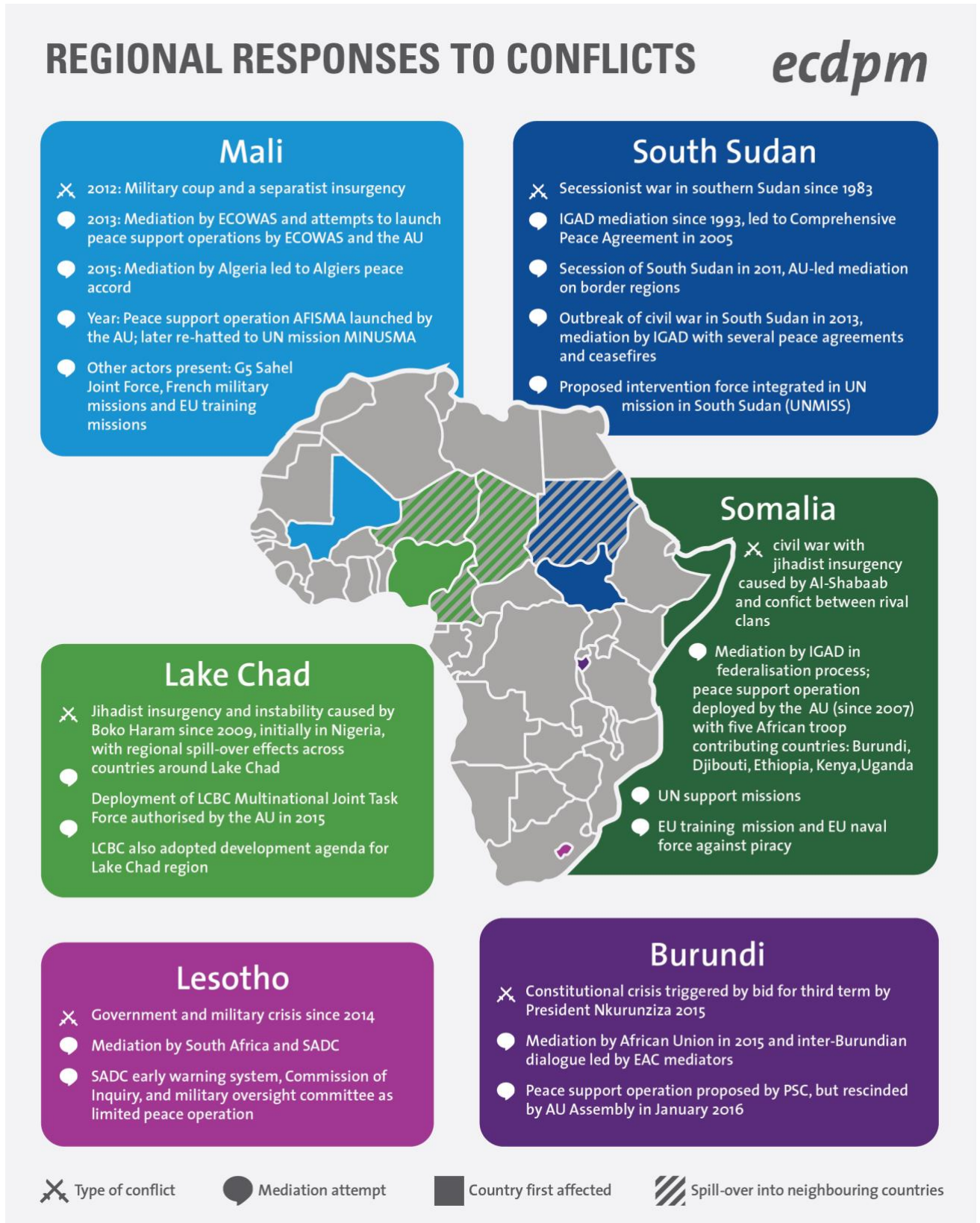
Readers with less interest in the details of the conflict or peace efforts are encouraged to skip the narrative as the main messages are summarised “in short” at the end of each conflict story.

3.1. Single country conflicts and regional responses

Of the 67 conflicts recorded on the continent in 2016, 59 involved only one country. In the same year, the African peace architectures engaged in 28 of those 67 violent conflicts. These interventions often mixed peace diplomacy with mediation, but also the use of compliance mechanisms such as sanctions, and peace support operations. Peace support operations are the most substantial international and regional mechanisms for contemporary conflict management. That year, eight of them were ongoing in Africa, with differing levels and types of engagement by regional organisations in these operations, as conflicts evolved over time (Institute for Peace and Security Studies, 2017).

In all cases, questions revolved around when to engage in diplomacy and mediation, or to apply sanctions, and when and how to mount peace support operations. Often, a combination of instruments was used, with the lead typically shifting from the national-regional level to the continental level, the more so as this degree of complexity and resourcing require closer cooperation with global players such as the UN system and with donors.

Figure 2: Regional responses to conflicts



Source: ECDPM

Somalia - a never ending peace mission: from the regional to the continental level

The conditions in which armed conflicts unfold in Somalia make it a difficult environment for peace support operations.¹⁴ Clan conflicts, warlordism and the collapse of the central government in 1991 have contributed to a situation in which the UN pulled back its peacekeepers in 1995. In 2006, the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) proposed a protection and training mission in Somalia, authorised by the AU Peace and Security Council in January 2007, with the UN Security Council authorising it a month later. With IGAD unable to operationalise it, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) started as a six-month interim mission.

The mission was seen as part of a global anti-terrorism campaign against the extremist islamists of al-Shabaab. The assumption, though, that the UN Security Council would provide financial and other support proved to be wrong. The UN Secretary-General argued unambiguously that sending UN peacekeepers was “neither realistic nor viable” (Mahmood and Ani, 2017). So the AU and five African troop contributing countries filled the security void, with the EU stepping in from the beginning by paying the allowances of the African peacekeepers. The UN provided logistical support packages, with bilateral donors such as US and UK providing donations.

What started as a relatively small operation, with 1,600 Ugandan troops, grew dramatically into a quasi-permanent presence of peacekeepers over a ten-year period. In 2007, the mission costed approximately \$700,000 per month at \$500 per soldier per month for allowances. These allowances were drastically increased, first to \$750 per soldier per month, and later to \$1,028 per soldier, after the AU argued that African peacekeepers needed equal pay to those funded through UN operations. The EU continued to foot the increased bill of the AMISOM allowances, amounting to \$20 million per month for 22,000 peacekeepers in 2016, with no end of dependence on external funding in sight. When the mission in Somalia ‘celebrated’ its tenth anniversary in 2017, the EU had provided \$1.3 billion since the start of operations (Mackie et al. 2017; European Court of Auditors, 2018).

In January 2016, the EU, refused to raise its financial support for the AMISOM allowances. There were a number of reasons to impose this cap on allowances of \$822 per peacekeeper per month¹⁵. Some of the European member states had raised questions about the performance of peace support missions in Africa and the related costs at a time of budgetary pressures in Europe, partly triggered by concerns about irregular migration. Moreover, the EU had also started to financially contribute to combating the threat of terrorism in the Sahel region and in the Lake Chad Basin (see further). The cap, however, was not imposed mainly to make savings, but rather to reallocate the money that was saved through lower allowances for other components of the AMISOM mission. By shifting the finances, the EU wanted to emphasise the need to beef up support for security sector reforms in Somalia as a precondition for sustainable peace and stability, and for terminating the AMISOM mission (Williams, 2017). The EU also sent signals to the AU and member states to assume more financial ownership of APSA in general and for peace support operations - beyond its support for peacekeepers - more specifically.

In some aspects, AMISOM has been effective by improving security for organising electoral processes in Somalia and for establishing new Interim Regional Administrations in south-central Somalia. AMISOM has reduced the influence of the militant forces of al-Shabaab in Mogadishu and major cities in south-central

¹⁴ The Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI) has launched a network of researchers and institutes - the Effectiveness of Peace Operational Network - to assess the effectiveness of peace support operations, including AMISOM. The study on Somalia and others is forthcoming.

¹⁵ This figure is somehow telling, as it equals the amount that most peacekeepers would pocket. Governments of the troop contributing countries usually deduce an amount of up to one fifth of the total allowance for all sorts of costs. This may, however, create perverse incentives in the persistence of peace support operations.

regions. The peace mission also managed to coordinate a number of tasks across an extraordinarily complex set of actors ranging from the AU, IGAD, the UN, the EU, bilateral donors, the five African troop-contributing countries, six police-contributing countries and the Federal Government of Somalia as well as its Federal member states.

The Somali authorities, however, did not - or could not - capitalise on these opportunities to re-establish political stability and core functions such as security. Hence, AMISOM found itself in a political vacuum in terms of reforming the Somali security forces, especially in those areas that the mission had conquered from al-Shabaab. The EU brought the message home that more efforts needed to be invested in an exit strategy of AMISOM. This requires Somali political elites to assume ownership over these core state functions of peace, political stability and development more broadly. It also requires AMISOM to take on important capacity building functions to back such transition.

In short:

- The Somalia conflict plays out in one country, starting small, but gradually involving the largest and most expensive peace operation on the continent.
- Though a 'single-country conflict', historical conflicts around Somali irredentism relating to Somali populations in Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti as well as cross-border refugee flows gave this conflict a regional dimension.
- The initiative shifted from the regional organisation, IGAD, to the AU and was framed as part of the struggle against global terrorism. Yet, the EU provided the bulk of the funding, with additional support from other donors.
- The peace support operation proved to be effective in a narrow sense, but failed to engage the government of Somalia in meaningful reforms of its security sector. This raises questions about the preparedness and capability of the Somali authorities to design an exit strategy for the peace operation.
- The high degree of dependence on financial contributions from donors, especially from the EU, left the AU mission vulnerable to a sudden shift in funding priorities.

Political crisis in Lesotho - South Africa as a swing state: from the national to the regional level

In Southern Africa, South Africa still plays a dominant role in shaping actions related to political instability or conflicts. When a political crisis and instability broke out in landlocked Lesotho in 1998, South Africa stepped in militarily with the help of Botswana as it saw its strategic interests threatened in this poor and small but water-rich neighbour. Botswana's interests were less clear, but one plausible explanation relates to a combination of real-politics and the country's earlier involvement in regional support to democratisation in Lesotho. Thus, Botswana helped legitimise South Africa's claim that this intervention was not a unilateral action, and that it acted on behalf of the regional organisation, the Southern African Development Community. SADC endorsed the operation retroactively as a peacekeeping mission.

Since then, SADC has played a more prominent role in politically fragile Lesotho, taking the lead on mediation, election observation, the creation of a Commission of Inquiry and an early warning mechanism.¹⁶ In January 2016, SADC threatened to sanction and expel Lesotho from the regional body, a principled stance

¹⁶ It was a South African, Cyril Ramaphosa - then vice-President - who acted as facilitator for Lesotho on behalf of SADC. Ramaphosa became South African president in 2018.

that has not been repeated in the cases of more influential SADC members that violated basic democratic principles.

As the political crisis in Lesotho morphed into a politico-military crisis, with risks of the army re-entering politics, a major concern in the region has been to combine political reforms with reforms of the country's security sector. SADC has therefore mandated a Preventive Mission in the Kingdom of Lesotho. The AU Peace and Security Council visited Lesotho in August 2018, showing that the AU is also seized by the political instability (Louw-Vaudran, 2018). Despite the efforts by South Africa and SADC as a whole over the past 15 years, there is no clear end in sight for the drawn-out politico-military crisis.

In short:

- A powerful member state, South Africa, saw its strategic interests threatened by political unrest in a neighbouring state and intervened.
- Later it engaged with neighbours and with the regional organisation, SADC, to obtain endorsement for the peace operation and to engage in a more comprehensive agenda involving election observation, mediation, and security sector reforms.

3.2. Complex cross-border conflicts - and hybrid solutions

The APSA Impact Report 2016 counts eight ongoing conflicts in Africa with major sub-regional or cross-border spill-overs. Most conflicts start within national boundaries, but some morph with illicit trafficking, the spread of terrorism and spill over into neighbouring countries or thrive in poorly managed or securised border regions. This has been the case in Mali, but also in northern Uganda. The rebellion of the Lord's Resistance Army started around local grievances of discrimination, but spilled over into the border regions of its neighbouring countries, notably the Central African Republic. It survives in the security vacuum and the porous borders of that subregion (Vanheukelom, 2016).

The Mali crisis - ever adaptive peace arrangements

Since Tuareg separatists launched a rebellion in the north of Mali in January 2012, this insurrection has led to a number of peace operations that are poorly aligned to resolve the country's crisis (World Peace Foundation, 2016). Attempts to establish an independent homeland for the Tuareg has deeper roots in decades of neglect of this region by the central state. It was already the fourth rebellion of its kind since Mali's independence from France in 1960. The army was at loggerheads with the President over his handling of the Tuareg crisis, and launched a coup in the south of the country on 22 March 2012. By April, Tuareg rebels, in loose alliance with radical Islamist groups advanced and occupied northern Mali. Islamist groups soon gained control over the region and declared sharia law.

This military coup triggered a decision by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to engage in mediation in order to re-establish the constitutional order. ECOWAS also applied travel and economic sanctions against members of the military junta. It started with the preparations for the deployment of its regional standby force, the Multidimensional Mission in Mali (MICEMA) to quell the rebellion. But this mission did not make it beyond the drawing board for a number of reasons.

First, the military junta remained hostile to any armed presence in the Malian capital and rejected a military response to restore constitutional order as a priority. Secondly, two neighbours, Algeria and Mauritania, objected to a military way forward, fearing military actions would push terrorists across the Mali borders into their own territories. And finally, ECOWAS did not manage to secure sufficient resources from its member

states, so it had to rely on external funding, primarily from the EU. Due to fiduciary risks, the EU could not channel the funding through ECOWAS. But ECOWAS members states also faced operational challenges in deploying troops in the deserts of northern Mali (Caparani, 2015).

After the defeat of its army, the Mali government requested France to intervene militarily, an action which the UN Security Council authorised. Further developments involved the deployment of AU peacekeepers, their subsequent reformatting into a UN multidimensional stabilisation mission (MINUSMA), with numerous administrative and financial hurdles on the way. So the initial fast response by ECOWAS resulted in a gradual transfer of responsibilities and mandate to the AU. Because of the poor institutionalisation of the peace architecture, both AU and ECOWAS struggled to provide a mandate, but also to ensure preparedness and the financing for swiftly launching a peace operation. Rivalries between both regional organisations on who was to channel or manage scarce donor resources, and positions taken by swing states such as Algeria, further influenced decision making dynamics, for example on how to interpret and implement the subsidiarity principle between various levels of governance. Still, ECOWAS and the AU managed to adapt to the circumstances and to continue to involve numerous African stakeholders and external actors (Vanheukelom, 2017a).

Since then, the conflict situation in Mali has evolved into a crisis with regional ramifications. As Mali continues to be affected by violent extremism, neighbouring countries have become increasingly concerned about the negative spillovers, leading to a further multiplication of peace operations. Five Sahelian states - the G5-Sahel - established a joint force in January 2017. Members of the G5-Sahel insisted on obtaining a mandate both from the AU and the UN. The UN delayed its decision as a result of the American and British reluctance to fund a UN support package. Other military operations in the region include the French Operation Barkhane and the joint Multinational Security Force between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

Some see the G5-Sahel joint force as complementary to the UN mission, MINUSMA, while others would prefer to see their troops return home. Cooperation with the UN mission will not be easy, given the differences in mandate (stabilisation versus counter-terrorism) and reach (Mali versus the Sahel region).

In short:

- The violent conflict in Mali started in one country, and presents a highly contingent and intractable combination of a military coup, a separatist insurgency that was compounded by a terrorist insurgency, within a fragile state facing organised crime against the background of state failure to reform the security sector and of regional power struggles.
- When push came to shove, neither ECOWAS nor the AU were able to mobilise sufficient resources to swiftly mount a peace support operation.
- The conflict and the threat of violent extremism spilled over into the region, which raised concerns among five neighbours, which established a joint force that did not get a mandate from the UN Security Council. The UN launched its proper mission to stabilise the situation in Mali.
- The last round of attempts to establish a regional security architecture in the Sahel suggests the constant fluidity of the APSA and the varying ways in which the AU, sub-regional organisations, member states, the UN and other global players adapt and respond to an ever-changing environment.

Finding an appropriate vehicle - the Lake Chad Basin Commission made fit for purpose

Another telling and still unfolding case involves numerous sub-regional organisations around the jihadist movement, Boko Haram, which began its military “uprising” in the north eastern part of Nigeria in 2009. This conflict spread into ever more border regions with other neighbouring countries. However, the countries suffering from this jihadist insurgency did not belong to one Regional Economic Community. Nigeria, Niger and Benin belong to ECOWAS. Cameroon and Chad belong to the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Initially, ECOWAS preferred to cooperate on counter-terrorism with ECCAS. But over time, and under pressure from Nigeria, ECOWAS has changed its position and now supports another sub-regional organisation in its military efforts, the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) (Galeazzi et al. 2017, PEDRO).

This regional organisation was originally established in 1964 to solve water-stress related challenges in the Lake Chad Basin, including cross-border security and conflicts around changing shores and banditry. The LCBC was in charge of a Multinational Joint Task-Force, which gradually became less operational. However, with the drying of Lake Chad and, as of 2009, the emergence of Boko Haram, the LCBC reactivated the joint military task force in 2012. Subsequently, in 2015, the AU authorised the deployment of the military task force and mandated the LCBC to act as the political coordinating body.

This way, the LCBC filled a gap, as neither ECOWAS nor ECCAS could provide a credible and geographically coherent coverage for the main protagonists in this particular configuration of conflicts in Lake Chad Basin¹⁷. It acts as a forum to discuss security and military cooperation with its member states, with its Executive Secretariat interfacing between APSA and the task force. This joint task force has little military expertise; nor does it operate as an integrated regional force with joint patrols, but rather as a coordination body of national contingents operating on their own territories. Under specific conditions, LCBC can authorise military operations on the territory of neighbouring states (idem; Assanvo et al, 2016). Once the AU had provided the authorisation to the LCBC, the water basin organisation was equally authorised to coordinate international financial and technical support for the joint military task force. It received EUR 50 million from the EU’s African Peace Facility, and logistical support from the AU.

In short:

- Various violent conflicts in Africa start in one country, but spill over into others. This poses problems, as these conflicts don’t follow the geographic boundaries of the various regional organisations dealing with conflict and peace.
- Numerous alternative sub-regional architectures are created for conflict mediation and cooperation in resolving specific cross-border security related challenges.
- One such formula involves creative adaptation of the mandate of an existing sub-regional organisation, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, and expand it for purposes of providing support functions of the countries affected by violence and the spread of terrorism.

3.3. Conflict mediation and sanctions

Poorly institutionalised political competition in new democracies remains one of the main triggers of violent conflict in Africa. In 2016, contested election results, coups d’état or unconstitutional transfers of government were the main triggers of one in five violent conflicts on the continent (Institute for Peace and Security, 2017).

¹⁷ LCBC covers six countries in the Lake Chad Basin: Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic and Libya. The members of the Multinational Joint Task Force include Nigeria, Niger and Benin (ECOWAS members, although Benin is not a member of the LCBC) and Cameroon and Chad (members of ECCAS).

The continental Peace and Security Council has been very active in deliberating and decision making on such conflicts, with mediation and sanctions occupying a central place in the APSA. Despite some elaborate ground rules - for example spelling out the conditions for membership of the peace and Security Council - there are numerous informal power plays shaping the decision logics of these APSA institutions.

Sanctions - from clear cut to muddled

Since its creation in 2002, the Peace and Security Council has imposed numerous sanctions on member states by applying asset freeze, travel bans and suspension from membership in Togo (2005), Comoros (2007), Mauritania (2005 & 2008), Guinea (2008), Madagascar (2002 & 2009), Niger (2010), Côte d'Ivoire (2011), Guinea Bissau (2012), Mali (2012), Egypt (2013) and the Central African Republic (2013).

According to Nathan (2016), temporary suspension of members has been applied in 92% of incidents of unconstitutional change of government. Often, AU sanctions followed or complemented sanctions by other regional organisations, notably ECOWAS in West Africa. The sanctions against Egypt in 2013 were a telling case in that Egypt was at the time of the action one of the five major funders of the AU, and a member of the AU Peace and Security Council. Still, Egypt was expelled because of a military coup. A few years after the elections, the AU welcomed Egypt back as a member.

In West Africa, ECOWAS has demonstrated a stronger commitment than the AU to halting unconstitutional changes of government. It has consistently mobilised regional diplomatic and coercive measures to ensure respect for democratic election results. It even threatened Cote d'Ivoire with the use force in 2012 and The Gambia in 2017. This "zero-tolerance" for unconstitutional changes of government owes much to the region's heavyweight, Nigeria, and its own painful past of military coups. Other ECOWAS member states such as Ghana and Senegal have become relatively stable democracies with peaceful alternations of power following competitive multi-party elections.

So far, the landmark Article 4 (h) of the AU constitution stating "the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State" has not been invoked. In 2015, however, the Peace and Security Council came very close to authorising a peace support intervention in Burundi, one of its smaller member states. Its president, Pierre Nkurunziza, triggered a constitutional crisis by opting for a third term of office, while the constitution foresees two. Internal opposition reached its peak, with heavy handed repression and subsequent opposition from South Africa and neighbouring Rwanda, with the Chairperson of the AU Commission openly calling for sanctions.

The Peace and Security Council threatened to impose such sanctions against targeted individuals in December 2015. However, Burundi announced it would regard such a force as external aggression. It also managed to find allies among African states, such as the Ugandan President Museveni, who pulled the weight of the East African Community (EAC) and cleverly played two trump cards. One was the card of the historically ingrained (and unwritten) rule of decision by consensus in the highest AU body (Dersso, 2016). The second one was the card of solidarity and sovereignty in the face of external forces such as donors imposing sanctions on Burundi. So, the AU Assembly of January 2016 rescinded the decision by the pan African Peace and Security Council and opted to reinvigorate an EAC-led mediation process by sending human rights and military observers instead (ISS, 2016). Even though the EAC then had only five-member states, this regional body - with relatively little historic mediation experience - was not able to mobilise sufficient consensus for a coherent position. In April 2018, the UN Security Council expressed its concern over the lack of progress in the EAC-led dialogue among Burundian stakeholders, with questions being raised whether the regional body was fit for purpose (de Carvalho, 2018).

Meanwhile, the position of the Peace and Security Council has further weakened as the AU Executive Council of February 2019 voted Burundi back in this rotating 15-member body. This is clearly out of sync with the strict criteria for candidate members as outlined by the Protocol of the Peace and Security of 2002. It also illustrates that the efforts under the AU presidency by Kagame, who insisted on stricter compliance of these basic membership criteria, were somehow overruled, and that “countries whose undemocratic practices converge, often provide cover for each other on the Peace and Security Council, which is part of the reason that Burundi is able to return to the council so easily” (ISS, 2019; International Crisis Group, 2019).

In short:

- Burundi demonstrated that the AU is still not prepared or able to invoke the one article in its constitution that allows for supranational imposition of an intervention.
- A small country can exercise its influence by mobilising swing states or more influential neighbours to counter the agreed formal rules of the game.
- Sanctions have become part of the means through which APSA tries to implement its mandate and ensure compliance from member states. However, through networking by targeted member states, informal power games and by playing the solidarity card sanctions have been applied in uneven ways, thereby undermining the credibility and effectiveness of APSA.

Mediating a new state - Sudan and South Sudan

The number of mediation missions, as mandated by ROs, has risen considerably since the establishment of the AU. Similar to sanctions, such mediation interventions are often initiated or supported by swing states who see their interests in peace and stability served with such actions. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development, for example, led an effective mediation effort in the Horn of Africa, where it mediated peace talks in a long lasting, secessionist rebellion in southern Sudan. These mediation efforts resulted in a Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army in southern Sudan in 2005. In 2011, the Republic of South Sudan became the 55th independent country of Africa.

The leadership qualities of some IGAD government leaders (particularly the late Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi) and strong network relations (Prime Minister Zenawi with both rebel leaders and the Sudanese President Omar al Bashir) were all contributing factors (Verhoeven, 2012). Ethiopia’s fingerprints as an influential swing state were omnipresent as it wielded considerable diplomatic capital, benefitting from hosting the headquarters of the AU, and chairing, since 2008, the IGAD Secretariat.

The informal, personalised and ad-hoc approach employed by IGAD proved to be effective within this conflictual setting (Byiers, 2017). But the same approach adopted after a civil war broke out in this new state in 2013 also demonstrated its limits. Despite various iterations of a peace agreement and several ceasefire agreements, the political settlement in South Sudan remains fragile, with several relapses into conflict, now spreading far beyond the capital. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement was not sufficiently supported beyond the highly fractionalised political elites that had signed it. IGAD, meanwhile, has applied numerous mediation formulas, which leave the deeper-rooted causes of elite fragmentation and fragility in South Sudan intact.

In this scheme of overlapping initiatives, it is unclear which platform offers most traction, and where external partners can provide support most effectively. Unlike other ROs, such as SADC and ECOWAS, IGAD does not dispose of a regional standby force.

In short:

- The regional organisation IGAD mediated peace among secessionist rebels in southern Sudan and the Sudanese government.
- Ethiopia, played an important role as a regional swing state in the Horn of Africa, with its then Prime Minister acting as an effective peace broker.
- Yet, when the newly established state sank into civil war the ad-hoc and informal approaches to conflict mediation by IGAD proved insufficiently robust to deal with this outbreak of violence.

4. Conclusions and implications - the art of muddling through

In the fields of peace and security, more than in any other policy domain, Africa's continental and regional peace architectures have gained political traction with member states. Responding to threats to peace and security are a key part of the agendas of most regional organisations. Given the high costs involved, the bulk of the resources and of the work of the African Union is invested in peace and security related challenges through the African Peace and Security Architecture. Numerous other regional and sub-regional organisations, member states and non-state stakeholders are also involved in conflict prevention, mediation and resolution. The multi-stakeholder and multi-level cooperation that emerge have taken on a diversity of forms, at times in *ad hoc* and adaptive ways, but also with frictions, conflicts of interest and waste.

As Africa's peace architectures are dependent in multiple ways on external partners - such as the UN system and major donors - the quality of these partnerships has profound effects on the political traction or the value that regional organisations can add in violent conflict situations.

This concluding section builds on the main political economy findings of Section 2 and the findings of the reality check of how these regional and sub-regional organisations operate and cooperate in conflicts in Section 3. It presents some implications for African actors or stakeholders with an interest in enhancing the effectiveness of these peace and security architectures. It also articulates implications for donors, as one underlying assumption of the PEDRO work is that Africa's regional organisations will - in the foreseeable future - continue to rely on and work with external support.

Finding #1: on the deep-rooted causes of conflict

Over the years, especially since the creation of the AU in 2002, the institutional architectures in Africa for dealing with conflicts have considerably expanded. However, the instruments of mediation, sanctions, peace support operations, or combinations thereof, are in and of themselves not able to - nor were they meant to - address the deeper, structural factors of instability and sticky violent conflicts on the continent. These result from the unfinished processes of state-building, the slow maturation of inclusive, democratic policies, and the fragile consensus among ruling elites as they hold on to highly unequal political dispensations.

Implications:

- *The deep-rooted causes of persistent and contingent conflicts cannot be tackled by merely relying on these peace and security architectures, even if they were to operate optimally.*

- *Hence, the importance for policy-makers, reformers and their supporters to adjust the level of their ambitions and objectives.*
- *Peace and support measures need to be informed by a realistic reading of politically feasible margins for manoeuvre in often fragile contexts of violent conflicts rather than assume state capabilities - and by extension capabilities of regional organisations - that don't (yet) exist.*

Finding #2: on African owned dynamics and swing states

Influential member states of Africa's regional organisations such as Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, Algeria and Egypt have become important players in these peace architectures. As their ruling elites are concerned about the immediate costs of spill-overs from neighbouring countries or in the region - and the threat to their own political survival - such swing states are more likely to wield their influence in conflict contexts and sway decision making at different regional levels. When it serves them better, they may push for unilateral or bilateral interventions. While the right of *intervention* has been enshrined in the AU constitution, there still is a strong preference for state sovereignty and rule by consensus, which poses challenges to effective crisis prevention or conflict resolution by regional organisations and other APSA actors.

Implications:

- *In areas where swing states take an active interest in managing, preventing, or resolving violent conflicts, there may be opportunities for regional organisations to overcome some of the blocking factors of effective engagement by regional organisations to move from policy to action.*
- *Swing states may even create additional traction for strengthening regional peace architectures, although - as South Africa illustrates with its intervention in Lesotho - this may only emerge over time.*
- *Nonetheless, small countries can and do militate and effectively mobilise against peace related interventions by relying on networks, leadership ties, and the strongly ingrained, often informal, principles and practices of sovereignty and consensus seeking. Externally induced actions may be counterproductive and reinforce such resistance.*

Finding #3: on the evolution of conflict, adaptation and context specificity

As the cases show, all violent conflicts or threats to stability are context specific. Most evolve over time, posing new threats to new and old groups of stakeholders. What started as a separatist rebellion in one sub-region in Mali grew and spread geographically as it became mixed with Islamist insurgencies. These forces combined ousted a central government, and created security threats to neighbouring countries. Such changes pose numerous difficulties in terms of defining mandates, distribution of labour or roles to different stakeholders at different levels. Who leads? Who cooperates? Who is to contribute what, and which instruments or interventions will be mobilised (mediation, sanctions, peace support operations or a combination of two or more)? How are these mandates, roles and mix of instruments to evolve over time?

Implications:

- *Answers to those questions cannot be anything but context-specific. Because of the highly contingent and volatile nature of some of Africa's sticky, violent conflicts, it is important not to overdesign the organisational arrangement and not to dismiss off-hand idiosyncratic - and often far from perfect - security architectures.*
- *The attraction of best-practice blueprints may stand in the way of the adaptive approaches that help develop those basic functions and capabilities needed for hands-on problem solving.*
- *Such basic functions for regional organisations that merit attention in the multi-level architectures for dealing with conflict contexts include cooperation, coordination, as well as the commitment to interpret and apply mandates and subsidiarity principles.*

Finding #4: on ownership and donor dependency

The African Peace and Security Architecture is the embodiment of the pan-African call for African solutions for African problems. This principle is firmly embedded in high-level agreements, commitments and policies. But, as the Kagame Report (African Union, 2017) highlighted, this principle is still far from being put in practice. While peacekeepers on the continent are overwhelmingly from African troop contributing countries, there remains a shortage of quickly disbursable funding for short notice interventions. The AU Peace Fund begins to address this shortage. Still, Africa's peace architectures continue to depend on donor support, raising questions about the quality of the partnership with donors, and questions about the quality of the ownership by African member states, regional organisations and other African stakeholders such as non-state actors.

Just how fragile the partnership can become when overly dependent on external funding was demonstrated when the European Union decided to reduce its funding to peacekeepers in Somalia in January 2016, forcing the AU to look for emergency funding. This triggered a financial crisis within the AU. Simultaneously it gave a boost to those AU stakeholders with an interest in institutional reform that affect the sense of ownership among member states and their willingness to pay their yearly contributions to the AU.

Implications:

- *Managing funding will continue to be a daunting task for African regional and sub-regional organisations. In supporting regional organisations donors need to a) refrain from superimposing overly ambitious agendas or narrowly identified pet-projects, and b) build on the traction these organisations have developed, with a recent example being the slowly growing support in member states behind self-financing of Africa's regional organisations and the AU Peace Fund.*
- *Dependency on donors can create disincentives for key African stakeholders to develop key governance functions (such as solid budgeting, financial management, transparent and accountable execution) that are so essential over time for creating political traction and ownership over decision making and implementation.*
- *Such governance and institutional functions and capabilities of regional organisations cannot simply be assumed; they need to grow over time as key stakeholders start to trust regional organisations as they add value by solving national, cross-boundary or regional conflict related problems. Those solutions thrive on African owned dynamics as developed by African organisations and coalitions.*

Finding #5: on partnerships and governance

Partnership relations between African regional organisations and donors are asymmetric and demanding in numerous ways, affecting the outcomes of their collaboration. The AU Commission and some of its core donors have undertaken efforts to improve the quality of the partnership around peace and security. The AU has prioritised in its latest round of institutional reforms, among other things, measures to strengthen accountability, budget planning, budget implementation, monitoring and reporting. All these functions are essential for instilling trust and ownership among African stakeholders, but also for reinforcing relations with external partners. It has also created a new mechanism to enhance member state contributions to the AU budget.

Seven Addis Ababa based donors have agreed to pool their funding, harmonise reporting requirements and reduce the administrative overload on the AU Commission. The partnership relations are currently being evaluated, and will be discussed within the broader partnership framework of the AU Partners' Group, the umbrella body for cooperation between the AU and donors. Nevertheless, there remains a broad variety of donors with their own political agendas and administrative preferences and constraints, posing numerous collective action challenges.

Implications:

- *There is good potential in current institutional reforms of the AU to gradually strengthen a number of transparency and accountability functions that are also beneficial to partnership relations with donors.*
- *Donor efforts with African stakeholders in peace and security can be meaningfully strengthened by investing in transparency and dialogues among donors and among partners on strengths and weaknesses in terms of complementarity, cooperation and division of labour.*
- *Efforts to improve on donor harmonisation may be costly and time consuming, but should not be abandoned. A lack of such efforts can harm prospects for institutionalising Africa's peace architectures and can reduce their effectiveness.*
- *All this demands deliberate planning and additional human and other resources for the purpose of improving collective action. Partnerships don't happen - they are constructed.*

Finding #6: on capabilities for multi-level cooperation

Most violent conflicts on the continent involve context specific ways of cooperating at numerous levels, including the global level. While ideal-type scenarios or protocols can be developed, reality proves to be much more messy and unpredictable than these scripts. Over time, the AU has managed to engage with various members of the UN family, including with the UN Security Council through its own Peace and Security Council. Most of the old and new donors of the AU - the US, France, the UK and China - are also permanent members of the UN Security Council. Other core donors such as Germany and Sweden can also be part of the UN Security Council as non-permanent members.

Implications:

- *AU member states in the UN Security Council and donors with either permanent or rotating seats can make common cause at the level of the UN Security Council and promote coherent engagement and support strategies with Africa's peace architectures.*
- *Donors can act as honest brokers at the level of the UN in support of solving problems related to articulating mandates, identifying added value and cooperation modalities, mobilising resources, and materially or logistically supporting Africa's peace support operations.*

Finding #7: on leading or supporting peace actions

African partners are concerned about donors being “too close for comfort”; or about donors leading rather than supporting regional organisations in Africa. As we saw, donor support to developing APSA roadmaps raised questions about the lack of African ownership. Or, donor preferences for support to particular types of conflict situations, or geographic locations, may raise suspicion as to ulterior donor motives. There were also examples where donors came in support of sub-regional organisations with a strong buy-in from African stakeholders, such as the regional peacekeeping training centre in Ghana (KAIPTC).

Implications

- *The eagerness by outsiders to address conflict situations should be balanced with the need for African ownership in often messy contexts, and with the importance of improving African organisational effectiveness and institutional capabilities over time.*
- *The inevitable trade-offs in donor support - in balancing the need for African ownership, the need for speed, the need for immediate results, for accountability and for medium-term institutionalisation - merit deliberate choices and dialogue with key African stakeholders.*

Finding #8: on combining appropriate in-country support strategies through time

Long, drawn-out peace support operations with a high degree of dependence on a limited number of donors carry particular risks, as revealed by the African peace support mission in Somalia. This is a clear example of multi-level cooperation, with five African countries contributing peacekeepers, the UN and multiple donors providing material support, and the EU covering the allowances of 22,000 peace soldiers. There is recognition that the AU peace mission and the regional organisation in the Horn, IGAD, have contributed to improving the security needed for political processes and conflict mediation. Yet, the duration and nature of the mission have been criticised. It is argued that the lack of time perspective may create disincentives for the Somali authorities, and that continued support discourages the Somali government to take on responsibilities for reforming the security sector, creating the institutions for sustainable political stability and development.

Implications:

- *The typical conflict related tools that have been the main subject of this report - mediation, sanctions and peace support operations - are usually combined according to evolving challenges posed by political instability or violence conflicts. Yet, such combinations may have to be mixed with flanking measures in order to shift the emphasis from conflict resolution to peace and statebuilding.*

- *This puts additional demands on AU peace architects and donors in two ways. First, there is the necessity to be able to analyse and read the 'sign of the times', which requires investments in knowledge development as the context in which different partners operate evolves.*
- *Secondly, the often messy and volatile conflicts not only challenge best-practice models; they also call for support strategies that are adapted to local context, flexible in the implementation, and iterative so as to create short feedback or learning loops within a longer term process perspective. This may call for an overhaul of overly linear, technocratic and results oriented aid models.*

Finding #9: on balancing support to non-usual suspects in peace and security

The emphasis in this paper has been on Africa's regional organisations that drive peace architectures in Africa. They also act as main channels for external support for peace and security architectures in Africa. However, donors have also supported a range of state and non-state actors involved in various conflict related programmes at national or sub-regional levels. These include civil society, academia or think-tanks, but also hybrid organisations such as the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre. This Ghana-based training and research centre is nationally anchored, but has extended its reach and cooperation to West Africa and the AU, with clear added value in strengthening peacekeeping capabilities. There have been examples of functional cooperation, problem solving and dialogue between APSA and other regional peace architectures in Addis Ababa and beyond with specialised non-governmental organisations, think tanks, and research centres. They have contributed to monitoring, evaluation, impact assessments, road mapping, policy dialogue, or providing contributions on theme specific areas of expertise (such as gender, climate change, migration).

Such *non-usual suspects* are often not on the radar of the formal peace architectures, but can play important roles and fill capability, knowledge and accountability gaps with approaches that can be complementary to - or supportive of - peace architectures in Africa.

Implications:

- *As public goods such as evidence, data, credible monitoring tools, peace support skills, dialogue and mediation capabilities, are being produced outside the realm of the recognised peace architectures in Africa, dedicated attention needs to go to move from the ad-hoc use and support of such non-state actors to more structured forms of cooperation.*
- *Avenues need to be explored or kept open for supporting challenge, watchdog or accountability functions, and for strengthening their capabilities in a variety of areas in which they create peace and security related added value.*

Finding #10: on future prospects for funding

Despite the recent efforts by the AU to improve on self-financing the African peace and security architecture through the AU Fund, the process is still in an early phase and nowhere near to funding self-sufficiency. So regional organisations will continue to rely on external funding in the foreseeable future. Case studies point to the dangers of an over-reliance of regional and sub-regional organisations on external funding, as this may turn them overly responsive to external needs or preferences. Poor partnership relations may also harm the potential to grow accountability relations through adding regional value in the area of conflict and peace on behalf of member states and other African stakeholders.

Implications:

- *Hence the relevance for donors and regional organisations alike to plan for medium term transition arrangements along three key principles.*
- *One is for support to be selective: preference should go to those regional organisations with political traction or adding regional value.*
- *The other is for support to be adaptive: given the highly contingent nature of conflict dynamics and the complexities related to responses from numerous players and stakeholders, support strategies need to remain flexible and adaptive.*
- *Finally, the principle of rightsizing should help prevent putting regional organisations on steroids: overly generous or ill-targeted funding has created incentives for certain organisations to bend their agendas to where the external funding takes them, with the inevitable danger of losing traction with African stakeholders, such as member states.*

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In addition to structural support by ECDPM's institutional partners: The Netherlands, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark and Austria, this publication mainly benefits from funding of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

ISSN1571-7577

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