The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)

– Discussing the Remaining Challenges

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Sammanfattning

Syftet med denna rapport är att ge en lägesrapport och analysera den fortsatta utvecklingen av den afrikanska freds- och säkerhetsarkitekturen (APSA). Fokus ligger på kvarvarande utmaningar inom de centrala institutioner som utgör APSA.

Det största hindret för den fortsatta utvecklingen av APSA bedöms vara dess finansiering. AU och dess medlemsstater har hittills förlitat sig tungt på internationella givare. AU är dock medvetet om riskerna med detta och har tagit steg för att säkra mer intern afrikansk finansiering.

Följande slutsatser dras om APSA:s konfliktförebyggande och konflikthanterande institutioner:

Panel of the Wise är en institution menad att lyfta frågor av betydelse för konfliktförebyggande arbete inför AU:s freds- och säkerhetsråd. I dagsläget fyller panelen ingen sådan funktion. En möjlighet är att förändra mandatet och införliva en medlande roll för att utveckla APSA:s konfliktförebyggande förmåga.

Fastän *Continental Early Warning System* teoretiskt fyller en viktig konfliktförebyggande funktion och har utvecklats betydligt på kort tid, är det tveksamt om en vidareutveckling av plattformen kommer att ha märkbar effekt på fred och säkerhet i Afrika. Den politiska viljan att intervenera i konfliktförebyggande syfte saknas fortfarande inom APSA.

Den bristande politiska viljan att agera preventivt för att stävja konflikter på den afrikanska kontinenten innebär att militära instrument som *African Standby Force* och *African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises* blir centrala instrument i arbetet med att skapa "afrikanska lösningar på afrikanska problem."

Summary

This report seeks to analyse the current status of the African security structure, with a particular focus on discussing remaining challenges within the central institutions that compose APSA.

The report concludes that the greatest impediment to the continued development of APSA is funding. Relying so heavily on international donors is inherently risky, an issue of which the AU is very much aware of and is taking active steps to remedy.

The following conclusions are reached about APSA institutions devoted to conflict prevention and management:

The *Panel of the Wise* is an institution intended to bring issues of certain timely importance to the attention of the Peace and Security Council. This report finds limited support for the notion that the Panel provides an important function in this regard, nor does it believe it prudent to amend the mandate of the Panel to incorporate more of a mediating role without also adjusting the current format of the Panel. Although the *Continental Early Warning System* theoretically fills an important function within APSA, further development of the platform is unlikely to prevent conflict in the region. This is since such a system matters little if there is limited or no political will for an early response, which is frequently the case.

The lacking political will to engage in conflict prevention at an early stage results in the *African Standby Force* (ASF) and *African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises* (ACIRC) becoming crucial instruments in the effort to provide "African solutions to African problems."

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Abbreviations

ACIRC	African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
ASF	African Standby Force
AU	African Union
CEWS	Continental Early Warning System
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
EAC	East African Community
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWARN	ECOWAS Early Warning
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
PSC	Peace and Security Council
REC	Regional Economic Community
RM	Regional Mechanism
SADC	Southern African Development Community
STCDSS	Specialized Technical Com. on Defense, Safety and Security

1 Introduction

Seeking to never again have to experience the equivalent of the Rwandan genocide, the African Union (AU) embarked on the ambitious mission 14 years ago of constructing an institutional infrastructure capable of preventing and managing armed conflict on the continent. Where are we at with regards to institutional development today?

This report seeks to analyse the current status of the African security structure, with a particular focus on discussing remaining challenges within the central institutions that compose APSA.

APSA has been described as "the umbrella term for the key African Union (AU) mechanisms for promoting peace, security and stability in the African continent."[1] More formally, it is "an operational structure for the effective implementation of the decisions taken in the areas of conflict prevention, peace-making, peace support operations and intervention, as well as peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction."[2]

The AU Peace and Security Protocol lays out the two main principles against which the creation of APSA should be understood. First, APSA is envisioned as a means by which Africa can take a greater role in managing peace and security on the continent, with the objective of offering 'African solutions to African problems'.[3] Second, the AU has the right to intervene in a member state when asked to do so by said member state, but can also do so independently in cases of war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide.[4] Combined, these two principles are intended to prevent the recurrence of tragedies such as the Rwandan genocide – where the international community failed to intervene to stop the bloodshed – by creating an African diplomatic and military capability to intervene in such situations.

APSA can be viewed as consisting of two interconnected layers. First, it comprises key institutions within the AU, namely the Peace and Security Council, the Panel of the Wise, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the African Standby Force (ASF), the African Capacity for

[1] African Union, *African Union Handbook: A Guide for those Working with and within the African Union*, 2014, 28.

[2] African Union, *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union*, preface, July 2002.

[3] *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union*, preface. This principle does not preclude the need for the AU to work closely with international actors, especially the United Nations (UN), given that the UN Security Council is the primary organ in charge of managing international peace and security.

[4] *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union*, article 4(j,k). The latter is frequently referred to as the 'principle of non-indifference'.

Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC)[5] and the Peace Fund.[6] Second, it includes the eight AU-recognised regional economic communities (RECs)[7] and the two regional mechanisms (RMs) in charge of administering and managing the North African and Eastern African standby forces.[8] Of the RECs, only the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are in charge of developing and managing regional standby forces.

Purpose and delimitations

This report seeks to analyse the current status of the African security structure, with a particular focus on discussing remaining challenges (as of September 2016) within the central institutions that compose APSA, with particular focus on remaining challenges. More specifically, the report outlines the main pillars of APSA and assesses the extent to which the current institutions are able to fulfil their intended goals. The report seeks to identify and discuss potential obstacles to the continued development of APSA. In this way, the report aims to serve as a resource for policymakers to gain a more in-depth understanding of the current status of APSA, information that can be useful when planning how best to assist in supporting this African endeavour.

In order for APSA to serve as an institutional infrastructure promoting peace and security in Africa, both the AU and REC levels have to work, separately as well as jointly. Hence, the relationship between the AU and primarily the RECs is central to the continued development of APSA.[9] Therefore, the report

[5]Since ACIRC was only created in 2013, there is no reference to it as part of APSA in the PSC Protocol (2002). Despite there not being an explicit mention that ACIRC should be viewed as part of APSA in the Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Operationalisation of the Rapid Deployment Capability of the African Standby Force and the Establishment of an "African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises" (April 2013), it is nevertheless implicitly clear from the text that it should be regarded as such.

[6]*African Union Handbook*, 28.

[7]The AU formally recognises the following eight RECs: the Arab Mahgreb Union (UMA); the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD); the East African Community (EAC): the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). *African Union Handbook*,118.

[8]These are the North African Regional Capacity (NARC) and the East African Standby Force Secretariat (formerly EASFCOM). African Union, Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, article 16(1).

[9] Needless to say, the relationship between the AU and the United Nations is also of central importance, but remains beyond the scope of this report.

discusses this aspect of APSA in more detail than the AU institutions that comprise the other legs of the security architecture.

It does not set out to provide a historic review of the evolution of APSA or a detailed overview of the workings of the AU or the RECs/RMs.

For a variety of reasons, there has been relatively strong international interest in promoting African efforts to build up mechanisms that will allow the continent to manage challenges to peace and security more or less independently. A number of donors contribute financial resources to APSA, either through bilateral schemes or through multilateral organisations such as the European Union (EU). Assessment of the status and future of APSA is thus of immediate interest in particular to policy makers and officials within donor governments. As such, this report and the policy recommendations made within it are directed primarily to donor governments within the EU, as well as the EU itself.

Method and sources

When assessing the progress made within the central APSA institutions, the author sought to evaluate the extent to which these institutions are able to fulfil the respective functions they are meant to serve in order for the overall system to work as envisioned. More specifically, the report analyses to what extent APSA institutions devoted to conflict prevention and conflict management, respectively, are working in such a way as to be able to fulfil their respective missions.

This report draws exclusively on secondary sources, including academic papers and news reports. One particularly important secondary source that the report draws upon heavily is the *APSA Assessment Report 2014*.[10] This report is an internal AU document written by independent scholars and commissioned by the AU. As such, it is a crucial document for anyone wanting to understand the state of APSA, but it is not publically available. Although drawing on the key insights of this report, the findings of this analysis also draws on a broad array of additional writing. Consequently, the conclusions reached in this report are independent from the APSA Assessment Report. Another important distinction between this report and the APSA Assessment Report is that the latter's primary audience is the AU. In contrast, the primary audience of this report is the international donor community, particularly the EU.

[10]Nathan, Laurie et al., "*African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) 2014 Assessment Study, Final Report*", 16 April 2015.

It is difficult to obtain information on certain aspects of APSA, particularly funding. For this reason, the present report draws exclusively on the APSA Assessment Report for the chapter analysing the Peace Fund (Chapter 5).

Outline

The contents of the report are organised into six chapters. After a brief introduction of the Peace and Security Council, Chapter 2 outlines the APSA institutions within the AU devoted to *conflict prevention*, namely the Panel of the Wise and the Continental Early Warning System. Chapter 3 then discusses the APSA institutions within the AU devoted to *conflict management*, namely the African Standby Force and the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises, and to what extent these should be viewed as complementary or antagonistic. Chapter 4 addresses the AU's relationship with the RECs, focusing in particular on discussing how different notions of the principle of *subsidiarity* that is meant to characterise the relationship has caused tension between the two APSA structures. Chapter 5 discusses funding for AU's APSA institutions, with particular focus on European Union contributions. Chapter 6 provides some concluding remarks and policy recommendations.

2 The AU's Conflict Prevention Tools

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) is the AU's main decision-making body with regard to issues of peace and security. The main institutions devoted to assisting the PSC in matters relating to *conflict prevention* – a theme identified as the main strategic priority in the AU's *APSA Roadmap 2016-2020* document[11] –are the Panel of the Wise and the Continental Early Warning System. The following sections review the extent to which the Panel of the Wise and the Continental Early Warning System have been successful in achieving their strategic objectives, as well as the degree to which they are able to contribute to the work of the PSC.

2.1 Panel of the Wise

According to the AU Protocol, the Panel of the Wise is composed of "[f]ive highly respected African personalities from various segments of society who have made an outstanding contribution to the cause of peace, security and development on the continent"[12]

The main function of the Panel is to support the PSC and Chairperson of the AU Commission on matters relating to preventive diplomacy. A common misapprehension about the Panel of the Wise is that it is a mediating body.[13] The main role of the Panel is instead to bring emerging issues relating to conflict prevention to the attention of the PSC.[14] Although members of the Panel of the Wise can be asked to assist the lead AU conflict mediator, this is not done frequently. Rather than solicit the help of the Panel of the Wise, the AU has tended to rely on special committees, special envoys and high-level panels for its mediation needs. As such, the most direct contribution of the Panel in matters of preventive diplomacy has been to alert the PSC and Chairperson of the AU Commission to the importance of certain thematic

[11]African Union, *African Peace and Security Architecture: APSA Roadmap 2016-2020*, December 2015, 23.

[12]African Union, *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union*, article 11(2). Current Panel of the Wise members are (until 2017) Albina Faria de Assis Pereira Africano, a former government minister and Special Advisor to the President of Angola; Speciosa Wandira Kazibwe, former government minister of Uganda; Lakhdar Brahimi, former Foreign Minister of Algeria and former Arab League and UN Special Envoy for Syria; Luisa Diogo, former Prime Minister of Mozambique and Edem Kodjo, former Prime Minister of Togo and former Secretary-General of the OAU. (http://www.peaceau.org/en/page/29-panel-of-the-wise-pow).

[13]Gomes Porto, João, and Kapinga Yvette Ngandu. "The African Union, Preventive Diplomacy, Mediation, and the Panel of the Wise: Review and Reflection on the Panel's First Six Years", *African Security* 7.3 (2014): 181-206.

[14] ISS, "New Panel of the Wise has a lot on its Plate", *Peace and Security Council Report*, October 1, 2014.

issues. This is done through the publication of reports. To date, the Panel has written thematic reports on election-related violence, fighting impunity, women and children in armed conflict, and democratisation and governance.

Yet, rather than forecasting future problems that could emerge, as originally intended, Panel publications have been released in response to *already* ongoing crises.[15] To inform itself about these issues, the Panel of the Wise relies on information provided by the Continental Early Warning System (more on this below), but also by independent fact-finding missions.[16]

The *APSA Assessment Report* notes that although the Panel has a good working relationship with the PSC, its role is operationally unclear, since it is not evident what type of advice the Peace and Security Council wants the Panel to provide.[17] This echoes the impression of other experts, who suggest that the Panel of the Wise is "institutionally..[sic]…isolated"[18] and that "in terms of its work, the panel's role has been limited and has received little attention".[19]

The Panel of the Wise has nevertheless encouraged the creation of corresponding institutions at the REC level through the creation of the Pan-African Network of the Wise (PanWise) in 2013.[20] The umbrella organisation is meant to be a formal forum through which the Panel can collaborate with its regional counterparts. So far, ECOWAS[21], SADC, COMESA, and IGAD have established Panel of the Wise-like institutions.[22] However, as the *APSA Assessment Report* notes, the Panel is currently unable to coordinate preventive diplomacy processes at either the AU or the REC level, with the result of there sometimes being numerous separate, yet overlapping, initiatives addressing the same crisis or conflict.[23]

One of the key recommendations of the *APSA Assessment Report* of 2014 is that the AU needs to decide whether the Panel should become a mediating body or, as it does now, merely *support* preventive diplomacy initiatives. The view that the Panel should take on more of a mediation role is echoed in the *APSA Roadmap 2016-2022*.[24] Yet, several factors suggest that the Panel may be ill-

[15]ISS, "New Panel of the Wise has a lot on its Plate."
[16]Nathan et al., 53.
[17]Nathan et al., 53.
[18] ISS, "New Panel of the Wise has a lot on its Plate."
[19] ISS, "New Panel of the Wise has a lot on its Plate."
[20]For more on the evolution of the Panel of the Wise, see Gomes Porto, João, and Kapinga Yvette Ngandu. "The African Union, Preventive Diplomacy, Mediation, and the Panel of the Wise: Review and Reflection on the Panel's First Six Years", *African Security* 7.3 (2014): 181-206.
[21]The ECOWAS Council of the Wise was created in 1999 and was the inspiration for the Panel of the Wise, which was established in 2007.
[22]Nathan et al., 8.
[23]Nathan et al., 9.
[24]African Union, *APSA Roadmap 2016-2022*, 37.

suited to take on such a role in its current format. In particular, the fact that the Panel of the Wise is not a standing body – in fact it has only met twice a year in the seven years since it was created – suggests it would not be well adapted to taking on the time-consuming and intensive work associated with preventative action and conflict mediation.[25] Changing the mandate of the Panel would thus also require a change to its working format.

2.2 Continental Early Warning System

The Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) collects information on a multitude of variables related to conflict outbreak in AU member states, analyses this information[26] and brings its findings to the attention of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, who then briefs the PSC. The information collected by CEWS tends to be open-source and comes from AU field missions, liaison offices, early warning officers and monitoring and observation units in the RECs.

The overall goal of CEWS reporting is to give early warning about situations that could escalate to armed conflict, thereby giving the PSC the information needed to act preventatively. Information is presented in the form of daily or weekly briefs, in addition to flash reports for more urgent developments. CEWS staff not only collect and analyse the information, but on occasion also suggest specific plans of actions for the PSC to consider.[27]

Although CEWS has developed substantially since its creation in 2002, experts suggest that two core issues are currently limiting its effectiveness. First, only the western REC ECOWAS, the eastern REC the East African Community (EAC), and partly the southern REC SADC are currently connected to CEWS, thus limiting the system's ability to obtain information related to key conflict variables across the continent.[28] Second, and perhaps more importantly, there is a disconnect between early warning and early response.[29] For example, CEWS staff claim they gave an early warning about the outbreak of conflict in

[25]"New Panel of the Wise has a lot on its Plate".
[26]Although crucial to understanding the actual contribution of CEWS to APSA, the CEW's methodology is too complex to describe here. For more on the methodology see the *CEWS Handbook (2008)*, African Union, (http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/cews-handook-en.pdf) and Wane, El-Ghassim et al. "*The Continental Early Warning System: Methodology and Approach, Africa's New Peace and Security Architecture*". Farnham, Ashgate Publishing Limited (2010). For more on the evolution of CEWS since its creation in 2002, see Noyes, Alexander and Janette Yarwood "The AU Continental Early Warning System: From Conceptual to Operational?", *International Peacekeeping*, 20:3, 2013, 249-262.
[27]Noyes and Yarwood, 250.
[28]Nathan et al., 12.
[29]Nathan et al., 12.

Mali and Guinea-Bissau in 2012, but that the PSC nevertheless decided not to take any preventative action based on this information.[30] The reason for failing to act in these cases was allegedly related to a lack of political will to intervene in the internal matters of member states and the PSC's preference for reaching decisions by consensus.

Given the AU's strained peacekeeping budget (more on this below) and the fact that conflict prevention is disproportionately less costly than conflict management, investing more in APSA institutions related to conflict prevention would be more cost-effective. If the examples above are indeed indicative of a general reluctance within the PSC for preventive action, then increasing connectedness between CEWS and REC counterparts in order to more effectively track variables related to conflict outbreak on the continent will ultimately have little to no actual effect on African capability to prevent conflict. What is ultimately lacking appears not to be the information needed to identify emerging conflicts, although this is certainly a secondary problem, but rather political will to act on such information.

Here, perhaps, ECOWAS could lead by example: having identified the same disconnect between early warning and early response with regard to its ECOWARN system, ECOWAS sought to bypass the problem of needing to reach consensus among member states in order to act preventively by seeking instead to increase national ownership. ECOWAS did so by supporting the creation or further development of national early warning systems. This was based on the thinking that member states with well-functioning national early warning systems are more prone to take preventative action themselves, making intervention by the AU or external powers unnecessary. Yet, this solution can only work if the national government is not itself party to the crisis and has the resources and diplomatic skills necessary to de-escalate the security situation. Relying on national early warning will only be helpful in certain instances, whereas in others there will still be an urgent need for regional actors to intervene to prevent a national crisis from escalating into a full-on armed conflict. As such, the problem of lack of political will to act preventatively is likely to continue being an impediment to nipping conflict on the African continent in the bud, irrespective of the sophistication of the early warning system of national governments and regional or continental organisations.

[30]Noyes and Yarwood, 256.

2.3 Conclusions

Despite the Panel of the Wise and CEWS being up and running and supposedly performing the tasks set out for them, these institutions do not fulfil the conflict prevention role envisioned within APSA.

The Panel meets rarely and has to date been unable to bring issues to the attention of the PSC in advance of these resulting in crisis or armed conflict. If, as suggested in the *APSA Roadmap 2016-2020*, the Panel is to take a greater role in mediation, it needs to become a standing body within the AU and meet much more frequently than it has so far.

With regard to CEWS, further development of the current system is likely to have little effect on crisis prevention, since AU member states most often lack the political will to act preventatively. This results in them instead being more or less forced to engage in conflict management using military means when crises have escalated to armed conflicts, a much more challenging task.

3 The AU's Conflict Management Tools

The AU's conflict management tools currently consist of two military capabilities: the African Standby Force (ASF) and African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC). Whereas the development of the ASF has been ongoing since 2003,[31] the decision to launch ACIRC is a relatively recent (2013) initiative.[32] The following sections describe each military capability in turn, and then proceed to discuss the extent to which ASF and ACIRC can be considered complementary or antagonistic.

3.1 The African Standby Force (ASF)

Consisting of five regional standby forces,[33] the ASF has both civilian and military components and is intended to be available for rapid deployment. Although the regional standby forces were originally intended to deploy outside their respective regions, current thinking appears to be the exact opposite, namely that regional standby forces be deployed exclusively within the jurisdiction of their respective RECs.[34]

The ASF is envisaged as being used for a variety of missions, including observation and monitoring missions, peace support missions and interventions in member states (see table 1 below).[35]

[31]The *Policy Framework for the Establishment of the ASF and the Military Staff Committee* was finalized in May 2003.
[32]African Union, *Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Operationalisation of the Rapid Deployment Capability of the African Standby Force and the Establishment of an "African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises*", April 2013, RPT/Exp/VI/STCDSS/(i-a) 2013.
[33]These regional groupings are the Central African Standby Force (CASF), Eastern African Standby Force (EASF), North African Regional Capability (NARC), Southern Africa Standby Force (SASF) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Standby Force (ESF). *African Union Handbook*, 37.
[34]William, Paul D. "The African Union's Conflict Management Capabilities", *Working Paper, Council on Foreign Relations*, October 2011,10.
[35]*African Union Handbook*, 37.

Table 1. The six scenarios of the ASF and the regional standby capabilities

	Description	Deploy in:
1	Military advice to a political mission	30 days
2	Observer mission co-deployed with UN mission	30 days
3	Stand-alone observer mission	30 days
4	Chapter VI peacekeeping and preventative deployments	30 days
5	Complex multidimensional peacekeeping	90 days, with the military component being able to deploy in 30 days
6	Intervention (e.g. against genocide)	14 days with a robust military force

Source: Hull et al., "Patchwork for Peace: Regional Capabilities for Peace and Security in Eastern Africa", FOI-R--3048--SE, 2011.

However, critics claim that this mandate is far too ambitious to be realistic considering the resources available.[36] In particular, resources have been lacking to develop the rapid deployment capability outlined in the ASF scenarios.

The rapid deployment capability of the ASF is key to the notion of finding an "African solution to African problems". This is because it is intended to give the AU the military capability to deploy at short notice to prevent war crimes, genocide or crimes against humanity,[37] rather than having to be at the mercy of the international community deciding to take action.

Rapid deployment capability is the critical capability that has been lacking from the ASF to date. This is preventing the ASF from performing the most challenging mission scenarios, namely those including complex multidimensional peacekeeping (scenario 5) and interventions (scenario 6).[38]

[36]Nathan et al., 59.
[37]African Union, PSC Protocol.
[38]African Union, *Policy Framework Relating to the Establishment of the ASF and the Military Staff Committee*.

According to the AU, the PSC has the right to decide to deploy the ASF for missions, but the ASF can only intervene in a member state with the authorisation of the AU Assembly. Since the regional standby brigades that comprise the ASF are provided and maintained by RECs and RMs, these and the member states they represent generally argue that they should have a say in their deployment. Hence, it remains highly unlikely that a regional standby brigade would be deployed by the AU if the REC in question opposes the mission. In other words, on a practical level, deployment of individual ASF brigades would most likely require consensus between the AU and the REC. The issue of who has the mandate to deploy the ASF is crucial to conflict management on the continent and is discussed further in Chapter 4 of this report.

One concrete problem with deploying the ASF is that the regional standby brigades are not in fact comprised of stand-by forces, but of troops pledged by member states from their own national armies and which may be engaged elsewhere at any given time. Thus pledged troops may not necessarily be available on demand.

An example may help illustrate this dilemma. Nigeria provides the vast majority of troops to the ECOWAS Standby Force. Since the majority of the Nigerian military is currently involved in fighting Boko Haram, it is unlikely that Nigeria would be able, or indeed willing, to divert troops to an ECOWAS/ASF mission. Hence, despite troop pledges, ASF troop availability ultimately remains dependent on the national security situation of individual member states and on the political will to divert troops to a particular ASF mission.[39]

As mentioned above, the lack of rapid deployment capacity has prevented the AU from declaring the ASF as having reached full operational capability. The 2010 Command Post Exercise *Amani Africa* established that the ASF had attained *initial operational capability*, meaning that it was capable of conducting missions 1-4 outlined in the ASF Policy Framework.[40] However, the ability to perform missions 5 and 6, which require rapid deployment capability, was deemed out of reach. Consequently, a new December 2015 deadline was set for the ASF reaching full operational capacity.[41] This goal was

[39]This is of course true on the regional level as well.

[40]Apuuli, Kasaija Phillip. "The African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) and the establishment of the African Standby Force (ASF)", *Journal of African Union Studies: Critical Reflections on the OAU's 50th Anniversary Commemoration and the AU Agenda Towards 2063* 2.1 & 2 (2013), 71. NARC was the only standby force that had not attained initial operational capability by 2010.

[41]Apuuli, 73.

to be technically assessed during the 2015 Command Post Exercise *Amani Africa II*.[42]

Because the AU cannot postpone the deadline for the ASF again without risking international donors losing faith in the project, it was expected that the AU would declare the ASF fully operational despite remaining challenges. This is indeed what happened in February 2016, despite only four of the RECs having reached full operational capacity.[43]

Practically, however, rapid deployment capacity for the ASF will remain out of reach for the foreseeable future. The primary reason for this is that the logistics component of rapid deployment capacity is lacking. The most serious logistics problem is the lack of strategic airlift, without which troops cannot be moved with the speed needed for rapid deployment.[44] Having said that, the ASF still has the capacity to deploy for several other types of missions, demonstrating that this conflict management tool has already served an important role in managing conflict on the continent.[45]

3.2 African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC)

The AU's inability to deploy the ASF in Mali, quickly following the crisis that unfolded in 2012, made clear the urgent need to establish a ready-to-deploy capability. Since this capacity within the ASF was at least three years away from being established at the time, a transitional solution was deemed necessary. Thus in 2013 the AU decided to create African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises or, as it is more commonly known, ACIRC.[46]

[42]All regional standby forces, except for NARC, will participate in this exercise. Fabricius, Peter, "Standing by or standing up: Is the African Standby Force nearly ready for action?", *ISS Today*, 23 July 2015.

[43] African Union, Press Statement of the 570th meeting of the PSC on Amani Africa-II and AFRIPOL, 2 February 2016, http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/press-statement-of-the-570th-psc-meeting-on-the-declaration-of-the-second-extraordinary-meeting-of-the-specialized-technical-committee-on-defence-safety-and-security-stcdss

[44]De Coning, Cedric, "Enhancing the Efficiency of the African Standby Force: The Case for a Shift to a Just-in-Time Rapid Response Model?", *Accord Conflict Trends*, 2014 (2).

[45]Lotze, Walter, "The Future of African Peace Operations: Time to Adjust the Operational Design", *Policy Briefing, Future of African Peace Operations*, May 2015.

[46]*Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Operationalisation of the Rapid Deployment Capability of the African Standby Force and the Establishment of an "African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises*", April 2013, RPT/Exp/VI/STCDSS/(i-a) 2013. The force is referred to as both the "African Immediate Crisis Response Capacity (AICRC)" and the "African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises" the abbreviation of which would constitute ACIRC in the report. Since the force with time has come to be referred to as ACIRC, this is the name used in the present report.

ACIRC is an all-military ready-to-deploy capability composed of 5,000 troops organised into tactical battle groups of 1,500 troops. It is intended to be deployed within 10 days of receiving authorisation from the PSC. Missions for which ACIRC could be deployed include "(i) stabilization, peace enforcement and intervention missions, (ii) neutralization of terrorist groups, other cross-border criminal entities, armed rebellions; and (iii) emergency assistance to Member States within the framework of the principle of non-indifference for protection of civilians."[47]

This new APSA conflict management tool is an all-volunteer force composed of AU member state pledges, with a rotating lead nation among the troop-contributing countries in charge. As of October 2015, 13 countries had volunteered to join ACIRC, namely Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Egypt, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.[48]

Troop-contributing countries are responsible for sustaining their troops logistically and otherwise for the first 30 days of the mission.[49] This means that ACIRC will need to overcome the same impediment that has so far prevented the ASF from becoming fully operational, namely the logistics challenge, the most serious being the lack of strategic airlift.[50] Despite this, ACIRC was declared ready for operations in January 2014.[51]

ACIRC differs from the ASF in that the AU can deploy it with only the lead country on board, whereas with the standby brigades the AU needs to get approval from the RECs/RMs.[52] The latter is not only a more cumbersome process, but also more likely to be vetoed by the RECs/RMS, given their many member states. (For more on the AU-REC relationship and their internal hierarchy, see Chapter 4).

[47]African Union, *Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Operationalisation of the Rapid Deployment Capability of the African Standby Force and the Establishment of an "African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises*".

[48]Karuhanga, James, "Rwanda commits troops to new African intervention initiative", *The New Times*, October 12, 2015. The motivations behind these countries' participation is interesting, but beyond the scope of this report.

[49]*Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Operationalisation of the Rapid Deployment Capability of the African Standby Force and the Establishment of an "African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises*".

[50]Brosig, Malte and Norman Sempijja, "The African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis: Advice for African Policymakers", *SAIIA Policy Briefing*, Draft 2015; ISS, "Will ACIRC survive the AU Summit?"

[51]Lotze, 3.

[52]ISS, "Will ACIRC survive the AU Summit?"

3.3 ASF and ACIRC: Complementary or rival?

While encompassing a number of core differences, the ASF and ACIRC both include a ready-to-deploy military capability – raising the question of whether the two concepts should be seen as complementary or antagonistic.

The AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, claims that there is no contradiction between ACIRC and the ASF and that "whatever we achieve in ACIRC will serve the objectives of ASF".[53] The AU has also sought to emphasise the ways in which ACIRC and ASF are complementary by including both components in the *Amani Africa II* exercise. By doing so, the AU has made up for the fact that the ASF does not yet have ready-to-deploy capability, thereby making it possible to argue that the ASF has nevertheless reached full operational capacity.[54]

The official position on the AU has been that the ACIRC and ASF concepts are harmonised and that the ACIRC should be seen as an interim measure until the ASF has been fully operationalised. Indeed, in its statement of the ASF having achieved full operational capacity, the AU Specialized Technical Committee on Defense, Safety and Security (STCDSS) also announced that ACIRC consequently will be dissolved. But experts say that there is no unified position within the AU on whether this will actually happen and that the STCDSS press statement was not fully coordinated with the member states. In practice, ACIRC is still in place and to continue its work into 2017. Experts with insights into the process predict that that no formal decision of whether to end ACIRC or merge it with ASF will be taken until the January 2017 AU summit.

Some ASF proponents worry that the establishment of ACIRC will distract the AU and international donors from taking the additional steps needed, including providing the funds, to operationalise the rapid deployment capability within the ASF.[55] Whether the concern about external funding being diverted away from the ASF and towards ACIRC is warranted remains doubtful, especially since the operating costs for the first 30 days of deployment are supposed to be borne by ACIRC troop-contributing countries.[56] There is also a fear that once ACIRC is up and running, the initiative will become institutionalised and will be politically difficult to dismantle. Were this to happen, the ready-to-deploy capability of the ASF might be put on hold indefinitely, critics fear.[57]

[53]Fabricius.
[54]Fabricius.
[55]ISS, "Will ACIRC survive the AU Summit?".
[56]Hull Wiklund, Cecilia, "*ACIRC – En afrikansk förmåga till omedelbar krishantering*?", [*ACIRC: An African Resource for Immediate Crisis Management*?], Swedish Defense Research Agency, FOI Memo 5239, January 2015.
[57]Brosig and Sempijja.

Many member states also worry that ACIRC will result in too much centralised power being placed in the hands of ACIRC troop-contributing countries. Concern about ACIRC being largely driven by South Africa has allegedly made states such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya and Egypt unwilling to support the project.[58] As mentioned above, since ACIRC completely bypasses the RECs/RMs, there is also concern that this will result in a shift in the current balance of power away from the RECs and towards the AU.[59] Finally, unlike the ASF, ACIRC is a solely military tool and does not have any civilian capacity. This has raised the concern that diverting energy from the ASF to ACIRC may also result in the AU relying too much on "a military interventionist approach to peace at the expense of civilian peace making capacities."[60]

3.4 Conclusion

Despite the deficiencies of the ASF capability and the unclear relationship between it and ACIRC, it is clear that the AU has nevertheless progressed far in developing a force structure that, at least on paper, should be able to contribute substantially towards managing conflict on the continent. Interoperability and logistics – especially strategic airlift – are hurdles that have yet to be overcome. Yet despite these challenges, the AU and RECs have nevertheless been able to deploy quite a number of missions.

A more serious obstacle to conflict management is whether RECs have the political will to deploy the regional standby forces that compose the ASF if asked to do so. The deployment of ACIRC is equally dependent on the political will of the volunteering troop-contributing countries, but provides the AU with a military instrument that can be used independent of the RECs.

The broader issue about who has the right to deploy the military forces that compose APSA has already caused substantial tension within the AU-REC relationship, as elaborated upon in the following chapter.

[58]Brosig and Sempijja.
[59]Warner, Jason, "Complements or Competitors? The African Standby Force, the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises, and the Future of Rapid Reaction Forces in Africa", *African Security* 8.1 (2015), 67.
[60]Brosig and Sempijja.

4 The AU-REC Relationship

Regional cooperation and the RECs are essential parts of APSA. In order for APSA to fulfil its envisioned purpose of promoting peace and security in Africa, both the AU and the REC components of APSA have to work effectively, both individually and together. This chapter seeks to outline the degree to which the AU-REC relationship is effective in promoting the continued development of APSA. Unfortunately, numerous issues make the AU-REC relationship problematic, making it hard for APRA to reach its full potential. In particular, diverging views about how to interpret the rules intended to establish the AU-REC relationship have been a source of tension and sometimes even competition or rivalry between the AU and the REC layers of APSA.[61]

4.1 The rules defining the AU-REC relationship

The AU-REC relationship is codified primarily in the *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union* (PSC Protocol)[62] and the 2008 *Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security between the AU, RECs and the Coordinating Mechanisms of the Regional Standby Brigades of Eastern and Northern Africa* (MoU).[63]

According to the PSC Protocol, the AU-REC relationship is hierarchical, with the AU having "the primary responsibility for promoting peace, security and stability in Africa."[64] Yet, the same document also states that "[t]he modalities of [the AU-REC] partnership shall be determined by the *comparative advantage* of each and the *prevailing circumstances*" [author's italics].[65] This statement, in contrast, appears to indicate that the modalities of the AU-REC relationship are flexible and dependent on the contextual situation. Moreover, the MoU does not clarify the AU-REC relationship. On the one hand, it reiterates what is already stated in the PSC Protocol, namely that the AU has

[61]Leijenaa, Annette et al., "26th AU Summit: Can the AU walk the talk?", *ISS Today*, 26 January 2016.
[62]African Union, PSC protocol.
[63]*Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security between the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities and the Coordinating Mechanism of the Regional Standby Brigades of Eastern Africa and North Africa*. Other documents that speak about the relationship between the AU and the RECs include the Abuja Treaty (1991) and the AU Constitutive Act (2000).
[64]Article 16, PSC protocol.
[65]Article 16, PSC protocol.

the "primary responsibility [sic] in maintenance and promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa".[66] Yet it also argues that in order to "optimise" the AU-REC relationship, the respective parties should exercise "adherence to the *principles of subsidiarity*, *complementarity* and *comparative advantage*" [author's italics].[67] The MoU does not define what is meant by either principle.

The principle of subsidiary, complementarity and comparative advantage has nevertheless come to be widely interpreted as meaning that conflicts should be handled first on the regional level, by the REC/RMs, and only if that is not possible should the responsibility transfer to the continental level, the AU.[68] The logic behind this outlook is that regional organisations (and their member states) are closer to the conflict zone in question and therefore have insights into its context and dynamics that a continental organisation may not, thus making it more appropriate for the regional organisations to take the lead in peace support operations and other peace making or peacekeeping initiatives.[69] As such, these principles suggest, just like the PSC Protocol, that the AU-REC relationship may not actually be completely hierarchical.

4.2 Practical implications of the legal ambiguities

The AU-REC relationship is a legal curiosity and most likely an example of *constructive ambiguity*.[70] But the different interpretations do have great practical implications. It is of considerable significance whether RECs have the independent mandate to serve as "first responders" when conflict in their region emerges, or whether doing so would require advance approval from the AU. The question also arises as to whether the AU has the mandate to order RECs to intervene in conflict zones by means of their standby forces, or whether RECs have the final say in determining deployment. As noted above, differing opinions amongst the AU and the RECs on these issues have resulted in some tensions between the two, and may indeed be an impediment to the future effective functioning of APSA. In other words, the main question inherent in this debate is whether the AU should be the main decision-making party of

[66]MoU, article 4 (ii).
[67]MoU, article 4 (iv).
[68]Nathan et al., 98.
[69]For a discussion on the pros and cons of a regional approach to managing peace and security in Africa, see Hull Wiklund, Cecilia and Gabriella Ingerstad, "*The Regionalisation of Peace Operations in Africa*", February 2015, FOI-R--4031--SE.
[70] With constructive ambiguity means purposefully leaving a text somewhat open to interpretation in order for parties to be able to reach an agreement that is acceptable to all parties of a negotiation. United Institute of Peace, "Constructive Ambiguity", Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding, http://glossary.usip.org/resource/constructive-ambiguity

APSA, and whether the AU by default has the mandate to order RECs to implement its decisions.

A hierarchal relationship between the AU and RECs means that the RECs are only allowed to engage in operations using force in their region provided they have authorisation from the AU. Correspondingly, the AU has the legal mandate to order the RECs to deploy their part of the ASF and the REC is expected to abide by such an order. This does indeed seem to be implied by the paragraphs in the MoU that speak of "modalities for interaction" between the AU and the RECs:

> The RECs managing regional brigades within the framework of the African Standby Force and the Coordinating Mechanisms shall, upon decision by Council, make available their assets and capabilities, including planning, to other RECs and Coordinating Mechanisms or the Union in order to facilitate deployment of peace support operations outside their areas of jurisdiction.[71]

Some scholars argue that this is the correct way to interpret the legal situation, since such a hierarchy reinforces the one in place between the United Nations and the AU. These rules state that African peace operations that entail the use of force require a UN Security Council (UNSC) mandate according to Chapter VII of the UN Charter.[72] This view prescribes RECs functioning as "first-responders" to conflicts in their respective region, but also entails that they should not do so without having received prior approval from the AU and the UNSC. This goes in line with language in the *2005 Roadmap for the Operationalization of the African Standby Force*, which states that "The AU will seek UN Security Council authorization of its enforcement actions. Similarly, the [RECs] will seek AU authorization of their interventions".[73] Indeed, some scholars claim that the emerging norm is that the UN Security Council will deal exclusively with the AU, and no longer[74] give RECs the authorisation to deploy peace operations.[75] Others point out that since Chapter VII of the UN Charter does not actually distinguish between continental and regional institutional arrangements, there is nothing inherent in the UN

[71]African Union, MoU, Article XX, Modalities for interaction, (2).
[72]De Coning, Cedric et al, "*Strategic Options for the Future of African Peace Operations*", 2015-2025, NUPI report, Report 1, 2015.
[73]De Coning et al., 57.
[74]The ECOMOG and ECOMIL missions were ECOWAS missions authorized by the UN Security Council. De Coning et al., 57.
[75]De Coning et al., 57.

mandate to dictate that it only grants authorisation to institutions at the higher level.[76]

However, the principle of hierarchy is inconsistent with the fact that RECs/RMs are independent legal entities from the AU. Since RECs in turn are composed of member states, a hierarchal relationship with the AU would technically imply that REC member states are somehow subordinate to AU member states.[77] To make things even more complicated, some AU member states are of course those very same REC member states. Indeed, a legal analysis of ECOWAS and ECCAS organisational rules found that these two RECs consider themselves as having the prerogative to intervene in their own member states without first having received formal authorisation to do so from the AU.[78] Some claim that SADC also views itself as not needing to ask the AU for approval to launch peace operations.[79] In sum, this means that all the RECs that manage ASF regional standby brigades view themselves as having independent authority to launch peace operations, and hence are clearly not in a hierarchical relationship with the AU.

The reason why these RECs view themselves as not being legally subordinate to the AU, especially when it comes to making decisions on whether to deploy their regional standby brigades in conflicts within their own zones of jurisdiction, may be more understandable when one considers that many of these regional organisations existed prior to the AU being founded.[80]

Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that tense relations sometimes emerge between the AU and RECs, when both parties view themselves as the party entitled to take the lead in dealing with a crisis or conflict.

4.3 Conclusion: The future of the AU-REC relationship

Several initiatives for developing a more symbiotic and less legally ambiguous relationship between the AU and the RECs that are currently ongoing are worth mentioning.

[76]Boutellis, Arthur, and Paul D. Williams. "Peace operations, the African Union, and the United Nations: Toward More Effective Partnerships". *IPI Policy Papers* (2013), 6.
[77]Nathan et al., 98.
[78]Lamont, Carina, "*Afrika och militär intervention: En folkrättslig analys av Afrikanska unionens och afrikanska regionala organisationers interventionsprinciper*" [*Africa and military intervention: An analysis of the African Union's and African Regional Organizations intervention principles from an international law perspective*], Swedish Defense Research Agency, FOI-R--3514—SE, 2012, 20.
[79]Ndiaye, 63.
[80]Ndiaye, 54.

First, the Joint Task Force on Strengthening the Relations between the AU, RECs and RMs in the Area of Peace and Security (JTF), an internal task force created by the AU, has the specific mandate to "work out modalities to ensure implementation of the existing legal and policy frameworks regarding AU-REC/RM collaboration and coordination in the area of peace and security".[81] Despite this promising initiative, it is nevertheless difficult to assess exactly what the JTF has accomplished thus far.

Second, as required by the PSC Protocol, AU Liaison Offices have been established in the RECs/RMs and RECs/RM Liaison Offices in the AU. These offices are meant to ensure information sharing and coordination between the institutional layers, in an effort to improve the AU-REC relationship.[82] However, there appear to be some problems with making these offices work as intended, with liaison officers complaining that they often fail to be informed of important developments, both by their host and mother institution.[83]

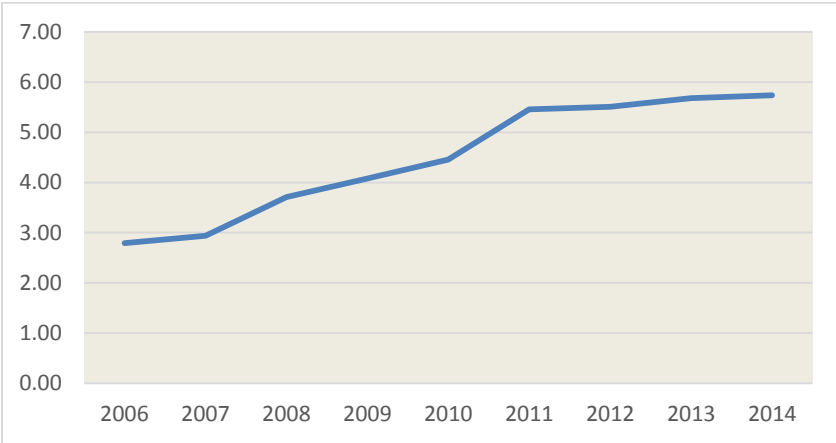
Finally, there have been discussions about whether to draft a new AU-RECs/RMs MoU dealing exclusively with modalities during peace operations.[84] Yet, given their diverging views, drafting a new document acceptable to all parties may be difficult. This is evidenced by the fact that there has been little progress on drafting such a MoU since it was first suggested, six years ago.[85]

[81]Nathan et al., 97.
[82]Nathan et al., 100.
[83]Nathan et al., 18.
[84]Ndiaye, 63.
[85]Ndiaye, 63.

5 Funding APSA: The Peace Fund

The final component of APSA is the Peace Fund, which is meant to provide the funds necessary for peace support operations and other operational work linked to issues of peace and security.[86] The Peace Fund is currently severely underfunded. Despite the overall amount in the Peace Fund having steadily increased since 2006 (see diagram below), its overall funds pale in comparison with the annual cost of an African peace operation, which ranges from US$ 134 to 900 million.[87]

Graph 1: AU Peace Fund in millions of $US, 2006-2014



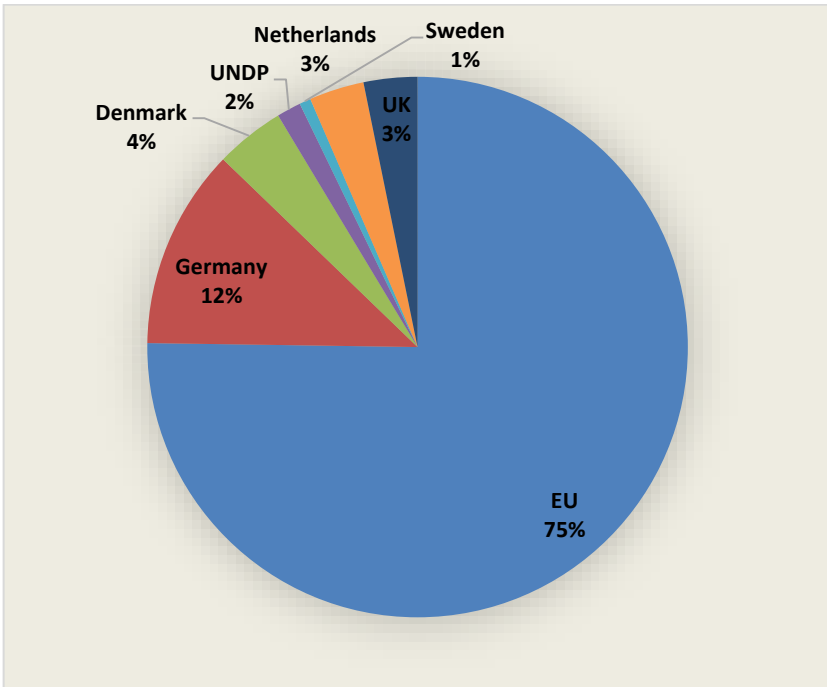
Source: Nathan et al.

Only one of five African-led peace operations 2009-2015 has been funded through the AU budget. About 75% of the money in the fund is devoted to financing post-conflict reconstruction development, while the remaining 25% is used to support peace operations, but also AU Liaison Offices in crisis countries.[88] Counterintuitively, the Peace Fund therefore does not provide the bulk of the funding for APSA, which is instead funded through the Peace and Security department budget.[89]

[86]Nathan et al., 74.
[87]Nathan et al., 77-78.
[88]Nathan et al., 79.
[89]Nathan et al., 156.

Because the AU considers African security to be a matter that should concern the entire international community, the organisation believes that 75% of the peace and security budget should be provided by international donors.[90] The AU is currently aiming to provide the remaining 25% of the budget, but has been unable to do so in the past. Consequently, funds for the operationalisation of APSA are overwhelmingly provided by the international community, with the EU being the primary contributor (see diagram below). Of these funds, 50% go towards ASF.[91]

Graph 2: Funding by international donors for operationalisation of APSA



Source: Nathan et al.

In addition to contributing to APSA through the EU, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (UK) also provide funding bilaterally. While the EU aims to fund the conflict prevention role of the Panel of the Wise, the development of CEWS and AU-REC coordination and

[90]Nathan et al., 76.
[91]Nathan et al., 157.

harmonisation, the majority of its funds (88%) go towards enhancing ASF capability and operations. All of Sweden's and Denmark's APSA aid goes towards developing the conflict prevention role of the Panel of the Wise. The Netherlands and UK, on the other hand, direct all their financial aid towards the development of CEWS. Germany focuses on supporting ASF capability and operations, but also provides 28% of its funds to CEWS, whereas UNDP only funds ASF operations (see table 2 below).[92]

Table 2. International donor aid allocated towards components of APSA

Country	Conflict prevention role of the Panel of Wise	CEWS	ASF capability	Capability of ASF operations	AU-REC coordination and harmonisation
EU	8%	4%	53%		35%
Germany		28%	20%	51%	
Netherlands		100%			
Sweden	100%				
UK		100%			
UNDP				100%	
Denmark	100%				

Source: Nathan et al.

According to the latest figures (from 2014), there is a 40% funding gap for the Panel of the Wise and a 20% funding gap for enhancing ASF capability.[93]

The riskiness of having the funding of APSA relying on international donors so such a large extent is a problem which the AU is very much aware and has been doing what it can to get this message across to AU members.

Recent developments suggest they have been partly successful: At 27th AU Summit July, 2016 the decision was reached to implement a 0.2% levy on imports to the continent, the funds of which will be paid by member states to fund the AU's operational budget.

[92]Nathan et al., 156.
[93]Nathan et al., 156.

The details of this initiative remain to be worked out, but is supposed to go into effect as early as 2017.[94] If working according to plan, the levy would most likely result in African Union member states being able to contribute enough funds for them to reach the 25% African funding target for AU peace operations. This would be a great step towards making the AU less reliant on international donor aid and should be applauded.

Yet, the risks of relying on the international community for 75% of the remaining funding means that financing is likely to continue to pose a great obstacle to the continued development of the institutional framework for the foreseeable future.

[94] African Union, Press Release No 25/27th AU Summit, 25 July 2016.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

The purpose of this report is to analyse the status of operationalisation of the various components of APSA as of September 2016, with particular focus on remaining challenges. Given that the relationship between the AU and primarily the RECs is central to the continued development of APSA, the analysis focused in particular on understanding why this important relationship has sometimes been tenuous and characterised by rivalry rather than synergy.

Some of the conclusions reached in this report can be summarised as follows:

The Panel of the Wise is often misunderstood as being a mediating body, whereas in reality it is more of an institution intended to bring issues of certain timely importance to the attention of the PSC. This report found limited support for the notion that the Panel of the Wise provides an important function in this regard. Moreover, it does not believe it a good idea to amend the mandate of the Panel to incorporate more of a mediating role without also addressing altering its working format, given that the Panel in its current state lacks many of the characteristics that suggest it would be successful in such a mission. Hence, a mandate change without changing the working process of the Panel would not be a good idea. Unless and until the Panel is made a permanent body with a more clear-cut mediation role, the EU and bilateral donors may wish to reconsider providing continued funding for the Panel. Instead, funds could be diverted towards other parts of APSA that are more instrumental in preventing and managing peace and security in Africa.

Although CEWS theoretically fills an important function within APSA and has developed substantially within a short period of time, it is doubtful whether further development of the platform will have any noticeable effect on peace and security in Africa. The reason for this is that enhanced early warning capability matters little if there is limited or no political will for an early response. Rather than investing more in CEWS, the EU, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK should perhaps consider funding studies analysing how to encourage AU member states to engage in conflict prevention at an early stage.

Given the lack of political will to nip conflict on the African continent in the bud, the ASF and ACIRC are central instruments in the effort to provide "African solutions to African problems". Although the problem of lacking political will to intervene in conflicts very much remains at the conflict management level of APSA too, it is also possible to observe situations where both the REC and AU level wish to engage. The development of the regional standby forces has proceeded steadily, albeit perhaps slowly, among most

RECs/RMs and the AU has now announced the ASF as having achieved full operational capacity.

The creation of ACIRC may in many ways also allow the AU to overcome the ASF's remaining challenge of developing rapid deployment capability, as noted above. Indeed, when assessing the state of the conflict management tools of the AU, one must not forget that the AU has already been able to deploy numerous missions, notwithstanding the lack of rapid deployment capability. Hence, although serious problems remain, such as uncertainty over the availability of troop pledges, uncertainty over deployment mandates and the continuing lack of strategic airlift capacity, the ASF and ACIRC are crucial conflict management instruments that will most likely serve important functions in managing peace and security on the African continent in the future. This is especially the case if one accepts the AU's assertion that these instruments can be harmonised without necessarily shifting the current balance of power between the AU and the RECs. Having said that, international donors must be aware of the fact that any aid provided to the ASF is also aid to African national armies. Since the ASF regional standby brigades are composed of troop pledges from member states' armies, financial aid given to developing the ASF also enhances the military capacity of these individual states, many with questionable human rights records.

Last, but perhaps most important, is the AU-REC relationship. Despite a certain power struggle being evident in their diverging views on how to interpret the principle of subsidiarity, the relationship is nevertheless working. In many ways, it is quite remarkable that the relationship is not more tense or prone to more operational friction, given the ambiguous modalities in place. Although both the AU and RECs are occasionally eager to take the lead in particular crises or conflicts, this problem is indeed preferable to the more likely problem, namely that neither organisation is willing to do so. Having said that, every effort should be made to try to make the relationship more functional and smooth. Doing so will be instrumental in making APSA work as intended.

Although there are several obstacles to APSA reaching its full potential, one must remember how young this structure is and yet how advanced the level of institutionalisation has already become. This feat is very much to be commended.

The greatest impediment to the continued development of APSA, therefore, is funding. Relying so heavily on international donors to fund the various components is inherently risky. For example, despite the EU having supported the endeavour for a long time, and therefore having a vested interest in APSA succeeding, unexpected developments such as the refugee crisis may result in the EU having to divert funds away from Africa and APSA. Although the EU is no doubt aware of the importance of acting to prevent conflict in order to

forestall the next refugee crisis coming from Africa, it would nevertheless be prudent of AU member states to take active steps towards seeking to provide more of the funding for APSA, preferably beyond the 25% they are supposed to contribute. The new funding decision is definitely a step in the right decision, albeit unlikely to solve the inherent riskiness of having at least 75% of AU funding for peace operations provided by the international community.

In sum, the evolution of APSA has made great strides in an impressively short period of time. This should be a source of great optimism for the future development of African security. Yet, as noted, important challenges nevertheless remain, suggesting it would be wise to continue tracking the development of this African security structure, especially as it pertains to the constantly evolving AU-REC relationship and the funding situation, as these aspects may prove crucial to the system functioning as envisioned.

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