

Regionalism in Africa: Analysis of the Cooperation between Regional Organizations and the African Peace and Security Architecture in Fostering Peace

Leshore Prins Sokoine, Njoroge Kiriro, Alexandra Tody Nawa, Dr. Billiah Gisore

*United States International University- Africa, School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Nairobi, Kenya*

princeleshore@gmail.com

*United States International University-Africa, School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Nairobi, Kenya*

kiriro9@gmail.com

*United States International University-Africa, School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Nairobi, Kenya*

Nawa.an27@gmail.com

*United States International University- Africa, School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Nairobi, Kenya*

bgisore@usiu.ac.ke

Abstract

Regional cooperation in Africa is a vital endeavour. It has the potential to increase competitiveness, enhance unity, and instil socio-economic and political development. At the institutional and policy making level, regionalism enforces pool of resources, possess greater advantage and viable resource in preventing and resolving conflicts.

Regional cooperation and integration in Africa is dominated by internal and external forces that hinder its potential of uniting Africa into a single regional block. Regional security in Africa has evolved, there is involvement of multination partnerships in providing security, strengthening and rejuvenating regional and sub-regional organizations. Regional security in Africa and power struggles among member countries still affect state's capacity to effectively perform their role in regional security. Lack of consensus, capacity, ideological differences, multiple membership and weak institutions among others characterize the regionalism in Africa.

This paper focuses on determining the relationship between regional cooperation and security in Africa. It employs Structured Pragmatic Situational (SPS) approach to deal with the notion under study. This paper believes that regional cooperation in Africa is a possible initiative despite the existing challenges.

Keywords — Africa, regional institutions, regional cooperation, regional security architecture.

INTRODUCTION

Grant & Soderbaum (2003) refer to 'region' as different levels of territorial units, local, subnational and supranational. Regional cooperation has attracted much attention in the political and economic spheres. It has been defined as an economic project involving preferential regional trade arguments (Thonke & Spliid, 2012) and is also conceptualized as political and security dimensions (Alyson & Cottey, 2006). The concept of regional cooperation has gained importance among the analyst and practitioners in the political and socio-economic spheres (Zhai, 2016).

In Africa it has drawn various contentious issues, while one block claims that regional cooperation in Africa is prone to failure mainly because of Africa's historical background (David, 2006), the proponents claim that it is possible and achievable endeavour (Zhai, 2016). Hegre et al, (2013) projects that due to the emergence of regional and global cooperation in the world politics that by 2050 the proportion of countries at war will have declined significantly with high regard, peace and security (Adetula, 2014).

Different forms of cooperation have existed before and emerged on the notion of promoting settlement, communities and social groupings. Regionalization evolution theory traces the discourse on regional cooperation from euro centric, while the language of the theory emanated from alternative perspectives.

African theorists such as Deng, Salih and Sesay (Sesay, 1997) recognized that internal security is primarily important and interstate security is secondary. This idea has been used to justify inter border conflicts and failures of security complexes. Western theorists like Faecett, Hurrel and Buzan (Fawcett & Hurrel, 1995) have encouraged the supremacy of western political

organizations spearheading for mutual understanding between states (Melissa, 2017). Regional arrangements differ in agenda setting and how they are influenced by external forces. Conceptual literature suggests that there are two spheres of external forces of influence, on one end external factors dominate the region and its institutions as an imperialistic force. While on the other, it elaborates that the regions and their institutions are more influenced by external forces or powers than internal dynamics (Ebaye, 2010).

Alliances are one of the oldest forms of international cooperation to meet common desires. Alliances are forged as a means to an end rather than a good in itself. Cooperation's were used as a defence against a common enemy thus its membership did not comprise of the enemy (Alyson & Cottey, 2006).

Another form of regional security cooperation is collective security. Collective security was developed in the 20th Century as an alternative to older system of balance of power and alliances. It aims at preventing and containing war by assuming a response to any act of aggression or threat to peace and security among member states. This form of cooperation may include all member states regionally and sub regionally such AU and ECOWAS who have the mandate to enforce peace and security among member states (Alyson & Cottey, 2006).

The third type of regional security cooperation is security regimes (Alyson & Cottey, 2006). Regimes are ideal for a non-security dimension of international relations such as international trade and transport. Security regimes promote transparent cooperation's for member states and enjoy a wide scope to instil non-use of force and promote respect among member states. Security regimes are ideal in control and use of weapons (nuclear weapon free zone), drugs and military movements (Melissa, 2017).

Security community was forged by Karl Deutsch in the 1950's to deal with the challenges posed by post second world war. It is a group of states with an assurance that member states have an assurance that the member states will not fight against each other but settle their disputes amicably with a non-force action (Ebaye, 2010). Security community is the most effective form of security cooperation because it has the potential of creating sustainable security with limited risk of interstate security conflict. Despite of the internal strength they can be easily affected by external forces such as terrorism, criminal gangs and infectious diseases (Alyson &Cottey, 2006) like Ebola.

Regional communities in Africa were created to solve socio-economic and political challenges (Grant &Soderbaum, 2003) where some have entirely security mandate and others have a blend of both socio-economic and political mandate (Alyson &Cottey, 2006). The African Union (AU) have significant security mandates as well as regional and sub-regional organizations/groups like Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with security, democracy, human rights, socio-economic and political scope (Zhai, 2016).

The concept of regional cooperation has gained much interest since the 1990's in world politics (Alyson &Cottey, 2006). The 1990's saw the emergence of violent and increasingly violent conflicts in Africa (Biswaro, 2013) and in 1999 the then United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan challenged the international community to develop a consensus to respond to gross human rights violations as a result of highly violent and violent conflicts in Africa, this brought about the drift and shift of focus to Africa by the international community to enhance peace and security (Powell, 2005).

The emerging security challenges in Africa such as conflicts in Liberia, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Burundi among others prompted African Union (AU) involvement with a responsibility to protect, prevent and rebuild. Therefore, the need for military led interventions for sustainable peace building and reconstruction in African conflicts was highly necessary. However new challenges have emerged for the need to find a balance between immediate reconstruction and long term peace building priorities in challenging conflict complex (Biswaro, 2013).

Equally, Sub-Sahara Africa is one of the most intense conflict regions with 14 out of 38 global high intensity conflicts registered in the region (HIIK, 2017), with very high terrorist activities and attacks, accelerated conflict trend with 14, 640 individual conflict events since 2009 and numerous cases of political and electoral violence (ACLED, 2016).

Armed conflict in Africa has drastically transitioned, over the past 2 decades it has gone from inter-state to intra state characterized by governance challenge, riots and protests, rise of rebel groups and unconstitutional change of government. Since the 1990's there have been a growing number of international organization peace and security activities in Africa and rise of regional and sub-regional cooperation (Sophie & Volker, 2017). Despite this level of both regional and multilateral interventions there has been insignificant level of impact recorded (Adetula, 2014).

The African Union (AU)

African leaders can be commended for their efforts to propagate and promote a dynamic new peace and security agenda through the AU, the

New Economic Partnership for Development (NEPAD) and other regional and sub-regional organizations. The AU was launched in 2002 and embarked on the mandate of institutional building in the security realm (Makinda&Okumu, 2007). The transformation of OAU to AU saw the establishment of African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

The normative shift from non-intervention to non-indifference was coined under elaborate and constructive institutional architecture to curb the human rights, peace and security dilemma in the AU. The AU Constructive Act (2000) was adopted to safeguard, human rights, democracy, good governance and institutionalized the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC) and necessitated mandate for AU intervention in case of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity in Africa (Sophie & Volker, 2017).

The AU possesses the political will to implement its commitment to peace and security including dealing with potential threats to vulnerable people. This was evident to African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) and Sudan (AMIS). However these missions demonstrated the need for extensive logistic, political and financial support. The AU mission in Burundi and Sudan showed lack of political will and support from donors to match the strategies developed to develop regional peace and security agenda. The AU strategies did not appreciate the long term strategies to rebuild and create sustainable peace in the region (Powell, 2005).

It has been recorded that between 2013 to 2015 joint efforts to security dilemmas in Africa grew by 13 percent from 56 to 69 percent and 2014 saw a spectacular increase to 75 percent. Regional cooperation in Africa has transitioned to create meaningful partnerships models with international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) to address violent and highly violent conflicts (Sophie & Volker, 2017).

However slow response, limited political will and support has far more affected the effectiveness of AU and REC/RM's cooperation towards peace and conflict resolutions in Africa.

Economic Community of West African States

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established by 15 developing West African Countries in 1975 to enhance economic development and prosperity for the member states. However the 1990's and early 2000's presented a security challenge to the achievement of their economic development and prosperity goal, thus birthed the need to promote peace and security as a means of achieving economic development and prosperity. In 1978 and 1981 ECOWAS adopted Security Protocol on Non-Aggression and the Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defence respectively. It developed and institutionalized conflict resolution, peacekeeping and security mechanism (Kabia, 2011). The symphony of ECOWAS failures and challenges in curbing root causes of conflict in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast questioned the ability of ECOWAS to enable sustaining peace resolutions to prevent further resumption of violence (Amanda & Lizella, 2018).

ECOWAS played a key role in enhancing peace and conflict resolution in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast (Yabi, 2011). ECOWAS institutionalized peace keeping and incorporated conflict prevention and peace building into its security mechanism which has enabled ECOWAS play a significant role to regional peace keeping operations through ECOWAS Monitoring Group's (ECOMOG) (Thomas & Stella, 2011). However ECOWAS faces a lot of challenges in handling peace and conflict resolution because it is composed of cultural, ethnic, religious, political structure, economic structures, different military training standards, external interference and colonial background among the member states (Yabi, 2011).

Despite the robust and revolutionary ideas, regional organizations in Africa including ECOWAS face the challenge of institutionalized conflict prevention and management mechanism. They lack enough institutional backbone to support conflict prevention management, they rarely intervene before conflict arises among member states and their interventions are inform of military which may not adhere to conflict management operational procedure(Zhai, 2016). Collaborative efforts in peace and conflict resolution interventions have been very aggressive and determined in Africa. For instance the partnership between UN and ECOWAS in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast provides a platform for collaborative effort between regional organizations in developing shared task and labor which was also evident with shared division of labour between AU and the UN to enhance better performance and develop strong collaborative framework for peace and conflict resolution. UN is a well-resourced regional organization with vast experience and capacity therefore more effective partner in peace and conflict resolution (Kabia, 2011).

Equally there has been enormous collaborations between AU, REC/RM's and the international Contact Groups (ICG) forged for peace and conflict coordinated efforts in predominantly highly intensively conflict areas like Sudan (UN and AU), Somalia (UN and AU), Mali, Congo and Central African Republic (Sophie & Volker, 2017).

The AU has had various collaborative efforts combat terrorism and rebel activity in Uganda (2009) and Somalia against Al-Shaabab terrorist group (2007-2016) with funding from the European Union and United States of America (Melissa, 2017).

IGAD

Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGAD) was formed in 1980 with

the agenda to promote food security and combat desertification in the Horn of Africa. It was founded by Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and later Eritrea. IGAD has played significant role in peace and conflict intervention and created a useful platform for mediation in internal conflicts among member states (Sophie & Volker, 2017).

IGAD has not been left behind in peace and conflict resolution in the sub region dimension. It has a high moral authority of instilling sub regional peace and security; strengthen sub regional social economic and political goals (Ebaye, 2010). It is arguable that regional organizations possess greater advantage and viable resource in preventing and resolving conflicts, this may be because they understand the region better and thus can share the burden equally.

During the cold war it was rather challenging for regional organizations in Africa to fully function in their role of peace keeping due to power struggle and limited resources however in the post-cold war era there was a power and interest shift and the regional organizations took a greater role in enhancing peace and conflict resolution (Essuman-Johnson, 2009)

Analysis of Conflict in Contemporary Africa Vis-À-Vis APSA 2015 Report

According to Mlambo&Dlamini (2019) the impotence of the AU in handling the outbreaks of conflict and violence has created doubt in many due to the geopolitical dynamics that overrun the organization. The APSA roadmap of 2016-2020 that was created in December 2015 highlights the plans and strategies of better cooperation between the AU& RECs in line with AU initiative on "Silencing of the Guns by 2020" (AUC, 2015).

The five main interest areas that are highlighted include: Conflict prevention, crisis/conflict management, post conflict reconstruction,

strategic security issues and partnerships (AUC, 2015). Notwithstanding the vivid recognition of the need to improve regional cooperation, the AU still suffers from financial glitch (AU, 2017). This explains why they have been unable to suppress violence in Africa.

The war in the DRC is one of Africa's deadliest. Over 5 million people have lost their lives. In 2019 around 732,000 displacements were recorded, this meant more difficulties for the DRC government. Majority of the peacekeepers there are from the UN (Ighobor 2019). The AU, although getting help from the UN, has still been unable to bring peace in the region. Muggah (2018) concludes that the AU failed to act in the initial stages of the conflict. Limited action, poor planning and lack of political will is what heightened the crisis.

In South Sudan, the civil war of 2013 has led to the death of more than 380,000 people. The AU through the help of foreign bodies was able to create the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). However, the agreement has not been fully implemented and there is still no unity, peace and stability in South Sudan.

In Somalia, the AU has welcomed efforts by both the government of Somalia (FGS) and its Federal Member States (FMS) in promoting dialogue for the peaceful implementation of the legislative agenda in the country. However, Al-shaabab still poses a huge threat to the stability of the country. With AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) carrying out frequent military attacks together with its partners, they have significantly reduced the territorial power of the terrorists, but attacks targeting civilians are rampant (CGTN Africa 2020).

Notably, Central African Republic has gone through several years of conflict. In response, UN Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) was established in 2014 to stop the crisis. The AU, through effective

Ambassador Ismail Chergui, who is the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, have worked together with UN and other bodies to restore state authority in CAR through the Political Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation (AU, 2019). This is a step in the right direction but the AU still needs funds and logistical support from member states to fully implement the Agreement, considering it is an election year in the country.

Libya continues to suffer from conflict after the ouster of the long serving Pan African leader Muammar Gaddafi. The Western powers' interference in Libya politics greatly due to their hidden interests in its large oil reserves has sidelined the AU in solving the conflict. Western muscle expressed in finance, mercenaries and air strikes has had a big blow on actions of the AU in promoting peace in the region(Chothia, 2020).

The key APSA components of the 2016-2020 road-map have become operational but not fully implemented. The goal of having a conflict-free Africa by the year 2020 seems far-fetched especially considering the unfortunate outbreak of the corona virus. Therefore more has to be done not only by the AU but also respected members of all member states. In reconsideration, the corona virus pandemic could bring us together, if leaders are able to come up with rational solutions to ending crises that focus on women and youth empowerment.

Regional Cooperation Challenges in Africa

Many African states have merely emerged from civil strife and may not be fully able to play an effective role in providing peace and conflict management solution through regional integration. Most of the sub-regional organizations such as ECOWAS were first economic related organization and later transitioned to providing security, peace and conflict resolution agendas, thus have the

inability to actively play the two roles of economic and security agenda because of poor structures and unfit organs (Ebaye, 2010).

Regional cooperation in Africa faces socio-political and economic challenges. The political ideological differences among member states hinder consensus. During the cold war era regional organizations failed to takeoff due to political ideological differences for instance the East African Community (EAC) faced ideological differences with Kenya embracing a capitalist ideology while Tanzania embracing socialism. Ideological differences among other factors led to the demise of EAC (Zhai, 2016).

Africa still faces the challenge of lack of strong collaborative sub-regional leadership at the centre for conflict prevention, management and resolution which is a challenge to peace and security of the regions and sub regions especially in the war tone regions in Africa like Somalia, Libya, Congo and Sudan. The AU remains weak because of lack of consensus affecting decision making (Jürgen & Paul, 2009).

Membership into multiple regional organizations draws conflict of interest and questions the loyalty of member states. Multiple memberships may result into confusion thus calling for the need of developing one few strong regional organizations, for instance Kenya and Tanzania is member of EAC, IGAD, COMESA and Botswana belongs to SADC and South African Union (SACU) (Mulaudzi, 2009).

The lack of single regional block in Africa may affect the concentrated efforts and strength of the multiple regional organizations weakens with multiple memberships. However it can be argued that multiple memberships may forge the possibility of future commitment to creation of single regional organization in Africa including all member states (Zhai, 2016).

Conclusion

Regional security institutions serve as a framework for communication and dialogue among member states, regular and expensive meetings are intended to enhance networking and avoid miscommunication among member states, however they are expensive and at times promote competition among member states limiting their primary goal to their states and at the same time at the fulfil their obligation to the regional organizations (Alyson & Cottey, 2006).

The role of regional organizations in conflict management has become extremely convoluted. The approach to peace and conflict resolution in Africa has drawn so much attention, there is a new wave of partnerships between regional and sub-regional organization in peace and conflict resolution. This form of partnership may seem logical because of the shared cultures, identity, historical background and experiences among member states however; this form of partnerships may drain the spirit of impartiality and generates tension among member states rather than creating a united front. Despite these challenges conflict management in Africa has become more robust and revolutionary (Ebaye, 2010).

Regional cooperation in Africa is vital endeavour and had the potential to increase competitiveness, enhance unity and instil socio-economic and political development, at the institutional and policy making level regionalism enforces pool of resources, they possess greater advantage and viable resource in preventing and resolving conflicts. The new paradigm shift in African regional cooperation is characterized by the increasing role of multinational corporations and their investment across African borders, infrastructural development initiatives majorly in rich suburbs, these form of development initiatives were formerly carried out by national government. Africa can be commended for its commitment

to ensure regional success in supranational, pan-regional and legal authority.

Regional security is dynamic and regional organizations use different forms of security cooperation such as security cooperation's, alliances, security communities and regimes the study determines that security regimes are far more the best form of regional security in Africa with limited risk of conflict and possess the potential of achieving sustainable peace and conflict resolution in Africa.

Regional institutions in Africa have been commended for their tireless commitment to ensuring adoption of effective methods of instilling peace and security agenda's. However they are faced with power struggles, competition, lack of capacity and both internal and external influence to deal with emerging challenges such as terrorism, globalization, diseases such as Ebola and Covid-19.

References

- Acled. (2016). *Real-Time Analysis Of African Political Violence*. Acled, Conflict Trends (No. 45). .
- Adetula, V. A. (2014). African Conflicts, Development And Regional Organisations In The Postcold War International System. *The Annual Claude Ake Memorial Lecture* (Pp. 1-78). Uppsala, Sweden :NordiskaAfrikainstitutet.
- Alyson, J. K., &Cottey, A. (2006). *Regional Security Cooperation In The Early 21st Century*. Sipri Yearbook, Armaments, Disarmament And International Security.
- Amanda, L., &Liezelle, K. (2018). *Sustaining Peace In Practice Liberia And Sierra Leone*. Oslo: Peace Research Institute.
- African Union. (2017). Main Successes Of The Au In Peace And Security, Challenges And Mitigation Measures In Place [Press Release]. Retrieved From <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/2017012>
- [7/Main-Successes-Au-Peace-And-Security-Challenges-And-Mitigation-Measures-Place](#)
- African Union Commission, Psc. (2015). African Peace And Security Architecture. *Apsa Roadmap 2016-2020*. Addis Ababa: Auc
- Biswaro, J. M. (2013). *The Role Of Regional Integration In Conflict Prevention, Management, And Resolution In Africa; The Case Of African Union*. Brasilia: Funag.
- Cgtn Africa. (2020). Au Welcomes Progress By Somali Gov't In Implementation Of Legislative Agenda. Retrieved From <https://Africa.Cgtn.Com/2020/03/01/Au-Welcomes-Progress-By-Somali-Govt-In-Implementation-Of-Legislative-Agenda/>
- Chothia, F. (2020). How Africa Has Been Frozen Out Of Libya Peace Efforts. Bbc News. Retrieved From <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-51293355>
- David, F. (2006). Uniting Africa: Building Regional Peace And Security Systems. *Aldershot: Ashgate*, 1-3.
- Ebaye, S. E. (2010). *Regional Integration And Conflict Management In Africa*. Ethiopia: An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal .
- Essuman-Johnson. (2009). Regional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms: A Comparative Analysis Of Two African Security Complexes. *Africa Journal Of Political Science And International Relations, Vol. 3 (10)*, 409-422,.
- Fawcett, L. A., &Hurrell, A. (1995). *Regionalism In World Politics*. Oxford.
- Grant, J. A., &Soderbaum, F. (2003). *The New Regionalism InAfrica*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Hegre, K. (2013). *Heidelberg Conflict Barometer 2016*. Heidelberg Institute For International Conflict Research.

- Ighobor, K. (2019). Work In Progress For Africa's Remaining Conflict Hotspots. *Africa Renewal*. Retrieved From <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/December-2019-March-2020/Work-Progress-Africa%E2%80%99s-Remaining-Conflict-Hotspots>
- Jürgen, H., & Paul, D. W. (2009). *Regional Arrangements And Security Challenges A Comparative Analysis*. London: Crisis States Working Paper, Series 2,.
- Jürgen, H., & Paul, D. W. (2009). *Regional Arrangements And Security Challenges: A Comparative Analysis*. Washington: Crisis States Research Centre.
- Kabia, J. M. (2011). Regional Approaches To Peacebuilding: The Ecowas Peace And Security. *Bisa-Africa And International Studies Esrc Seminar Series: African Agency In International Politics* (Pp. 1-12). Birmingham: University Of Birmingham.
- Makinda, S., & Okumu, F. W. (2007). *The African Union*. London: Routledge.
- Melissa, J. (2017). *Regional Security Theory: The East African Experience. A Look Back At The Challenges Entering The New Millennium*. Canada: Ante Portas – Studia Nad Bezpieczeństwem.
- Mulaudzi, C. (2009). New Regionalism In Southern Africa? *Open Edition Journals*, 47-65.
- Powell, K. (2005). *The African Union's Emerging Peace And Security Regime: Opportunities And Challenges For Delivering On The Responsibility To Protect*. Ottawa, Canada: The North-South Institute.
- Sesay, A. (1997). *Regional And Sub-Regional Conflict Management Efforts*. Herndon.
- Sophie, D., & Volker, H. (2017). *Conflict Management Under The African Peace And Security Architecture (Apsa); Analysis Of Conflict Prevention And Conflict Resolution Interventions By The African Union Resolution Interventions By The Au Conflicts In Africa For The Years 2013-15*. Ecdpm- Discussion Paper No. 211.
- Thomas, J., & Stella, A. (2011). *Ecowas & The Dynamics Of Conflict And Peacebuilding*. Consortium For Development Partnerships.
- Thonke, O., & Spliid, A. (2012). What To Expect From Regional Integration In Africa. *African Security Review*, 21 (1), 42-66.
- Yabi, G. O. (2011). *The Role Of Ecowas In Managing Political Crisis And Conflict: The Cases Of Guinea And Guinea-Bissau*. Abuja: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
- Zhai, H. (2016). What Is The Future Of African Regionalism? *International Relations*, 1-5.