

# African Union's Response to Peace And Security in Africa: Gains, Gaps And Directions for the Future

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## Abstract

*The transformation of the erstwhile Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU) is a marked shift in the continents' quest for a peaceful continent that is free of the debilitating effects of the myriad of conflicts that have bedeviled it. The Constitutive Act of the AU and its Security Council have carefully crafted strategies to ensure effective conflict prevention and management (where there is a breach) anchored in the peace and security architecture of the organization. Implementing these ideals however is a different issue. This paper examines the interventions of the AU in response to the security challenges in Africa and concludes that although the organization has made some gains in its efforts to ensure peace and security on the continent, there still remains gaps that must be addressed to translate the lofty documents into practical results that the people can appreciate.*

**Key Words:** African Union, Peace, Security, Africa

## Introduction

The African continent is largely perceived as one of the most conflict prone regions in the World. Decades of bad leadership, poor policy choices coupled with the poisonous legacy of colonialism have further exacerbated Africa's troubles manifesting often in the incessant outbreak and spread of violent conflict. The cost and consequences of conflicts in

Africa do not only speak for themselves, but have continued to exact a massive toll on developmental outcomes across the region. For this reason, most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to lag behind on almost every indicator of human development, with many of them dangerously tethering on the precipice of failure and state collapse (Moss, 2008; Richard, 1999; Pierre, 2000). It is from this background that the emergence of the African Union (AU) as a regional organization that is determined to put an end to the spate of armed conflict in the continent can be appreciated.

Broadly speaking, the AU represents an expression of Pan-Africanism spurred by the failure of the international community to respond to certain security situations in the Africa region particularly in the mid-1990s. The AU has evolved over time to champion greater solidarity and collaborations among member states with the view to address the domestic, regional and global challenges that confront the continent. Thus, the genesis to the discussions over African capacities to intervene in intrastate conflicts emerged partly due to the failure of the international community to adequately respond to deadly conflicts such as was witnessed during the collapse of the Somali state in the early 1990s, the genocide in Rwanda, the never-ending war in the DRC and the intractable conflict in Darfur. The failure of the international community to act, once again underscores the 'shattered illusions of a post-Cold War peace dividend, which prompted many to search for new security and protection mechanisms' (Powell & Baranyi, 2005:2). The founding documents of the AU envisage an organization empowered to play a major role in resolving armed conflicts in Africa signifying a shift from the old norm of "noninterference" in intrastate conflicts to a new posture of "non-indifference" to member states' internal affairs. As opposed to the founding and operational principles of the defunct OAU, the AU was established on the promise of addressing a wide gamut of human security concerns which ultimately places the organization on the map, as the key pan-African interlocutor (Vines, 2013). In this sense, realizing the ideal of Pan Africanism as illustrated by the transformation of the OAU to AU means that African countries can no longer remain indifferent to the suffering, plight and predicaments of member states. Thus, it was poised to proffer "African solutions to African problems"

With the establishment of the institutional framework for the promotion of peace and security on the continent, the AU has taken a bold step to

translate its vision into reality. However, its collective response to peace and security challenges particularly, regarding complex emergencies has come under heavy criticisms within both policy and academic circles. Its records and achievements in conflict intervention have to date remained mixed. AU utilizes suspension and other forms of sanctions on a number of countries for varying degree of infractions ranging from coup d'état to unconstitutional change of government. Between 2003 and 2012, 12 coups d'état took place in Africa, and the AU suspended eight countries from its membership (Vines, 2013).

While this action is a clear illustration of the broader scope the AU has assumed which is beyond the scope of the defunct OAU, however, it has also come under criticisms for its failure to take further action against some of these governments who have chosen to prolong their unconstitutional stay in power. Similarly, while the AU has recorded relative success in the deployment of peacekeepers' in Burundi, on the other hand, however, it has been unable to stop the massive killings of civilians in Darfur and Somalia and not to mention the electoral violence in Zimbabwe, Kenya in 2008 as well as the insurgency in Mali. What may account for the variation in the outcome of AU's role in these different instances is central to the overarching question the paper is poised to answer. As one of the key organs of its peace and security architecture, the Peace and Security Council of the AU would be discussed with the view to understand the extent to which it struggles to live up to its founding principles for the promotion of peace and security in Africa. In this regard, we argue that AU's practical capabilities in responding to deadly conflicts in Africa continue to suffer from persistent capabilities-expectations gap, which falls below the ambitious vision and rhetoric contained in its founding document. Overall, by highlighting the potentials, successes and limits of the AU in this regard, the paper underscores the importance of regional arrangements as well as their general roles in global security policies.

### **Transformation from OAU to AU**

The most important development in Africa's effort towards translating the ideal of finding 'African solutions to African problems' into an institutional framework was illustrated by the transformation of OAU to the AU. The African Union was born in Durban, South Africa in July 2002 and composed of 54 states. The organization evolved from the defunct OAU which was established in 1963 with the objectives of

promoting the unity and solidarity of African countries; defend the sovereignty of member states; eradicate all forms of colonialism; promote international cooperation with due regard to the UN Charter and the Universal declaration of Human Rights and; to coordinate and harmonize Member states economic, diplomatic, educational, health, welfare, scientific and defense policies (OAU Charter, 1963). The founding documents of the AU envisage an organization empowered to play a major role in resolving Africa's armed conflicts (Cilliers & Sturman 2004: 11). And this is a sharp contrast from the policy of sovereignty, territorial inviolability and non-interference in the internal affairs of member states which were the bedrock principles on which the defunct OAU was founded in 1963. Worthy of note however, is the fact that the idea of sovereignty of states and the principle of non-interference enshrined in the OAU Charter mirrors similar provisions of the United Nations Charter (UN Charter 1945). In many ways, the UN Charter had a significant impact on the thinking of the African leaders who drafted the OAU Charter. Therefore, the establishment of the AU was conceived as a reformation of the OAU, rather than the creation of a new entity from the scratch. It evolved primarily, to address some of the shortcomings of the OAU, including its inability to deal effectively with armed conflict in the Africa region (Ulf & Gomes, 2010).

### **Marked Differences**

A clear understanding of the marked difference between the AU and its predecessor's approach to issues of peace and security can be derived from a frame of comparison of the Constitutive Act of the AU and the Charter of the OAU. The Constitutive Act of the AU was a significant departure from the OAU's notion of each Member State operating as a separate, sovereign and inviolable entity. Rather, AU's founding document provided a normative structure for a much more interventionist policy. The Constitutive Act provided for the General Assembly which is the supreme organ of the AU, and is composed of the fifty-three heads of African states. Voting on substantive matters or issues is done "by consensus or" on a two-thirds majority basis, while procedural matters only require the vote of a simple majority. Furthermore, its vision of conflict management commits member states to accelerate political and economic integration of the continent, including the development of a Common African Security and Defense Policy as well as the institutionalization of democratic principles of good governance, human rights, and sustainable development (Omar, 2005).

## **Important Security Components and Organs of the AU**

Articles 10 and 20 of the Constitutive Act established the Executive Council and the Commission of the AU respectively. The latter is the Secretariat of the Union, which is comprised of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Member States, or other Ministers, or designated by the Member State. Although the Peace and Security Council of the African Union was not originally part of the AU Constitutive Act adopted in Lome in 2001, however pursuant to Article 5(2) of the Constitutive Act, it was later established by protocol in 2004. Within the PSC, these regional groupings play important roles in agenda settings on positions as well as formulating the PSC's response to sub-regional security issues and challenges. As an important organ within the AU, the PSC is charged with the responsibility of authorizing deployment, and deciding the mandate of "peace support missions," recommending armed intervention to the Assembly in "grave circumstances," and initiate sanctions on governments that take power unconstitutionally (African Union, 2002). Although, the PSC is in some ways analogous to the UN Security Council, however, the ability to use force to intervene in an internal conflict without the permission of the Member state in question is vested with the Assembly instead of the PSC. Thus, it offers the basis for what is generally conceived as an effective conflict management framework for the AU (Williams, 2009).

Since its inception it has held over 290 meetings, issued over 150 communiqués, imposed sanctions against regimes in several African states (including Togo, Mauritania, Guinea, Madagascar etc), and authorized peace operations in Sudan and Somalia (Dersso, 2013). To achieve its objectives in the management and prevention of armed conflict in the continent, the PSC was given eighteen "powers," ranging from assisting in the provision of humanitarian assistance to the direction of military interventions to countries engulfed in armed conflict. To undertake its tasks, the PSC has three primary instruments at its disposal: the Panel of the Wise (POW), the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) and the African Standby Force (ASF). These three instruments, together with a special fund for financing missions and activities related to peace and security (the Peace Fund) and the Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution constitute the central pillar of the African Union Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

## **AU's Approach to Peace and Security in Africa**

Armed conflict has been a recurring reality in the analysis of postcolonial African states. It is estimated that since the 60s, more than 50% of countries in sub-Saharan Africa have experienced and suffered from one form of violence or the other, while 22 others have struggled to avoid war (Lindemann, 2008). These wars are often described as “war of liberation”, “proxy wars”, “fratricidal wars”, “internal wars”, “new wars” etc, have not only been a persistent plight of the African people, but have to a large extent, stalled the process of building a durable foundation for human progress and development in the region. Thus, central to the goals for the formation of the AU was a realization that the scourge of these conflicts constitutes a major obstacle to peace and security. These two variables are a necessary condition for achieving the ultimate goals of regional integration and development in the African continent.

When the AU succeeded the OAU in 2002, it discarded the policy of non-interference and instead adopted a principle of non-indifference. While, it respects the principle of national sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its member states, it however explicitly imposed a constitutional duty upon itself to intervene in member states under certain circumstances (African Union, 2002). Driven by the idea of finding “African solutions to African problems” the organization has developed certain ambitious institutional mechanisms within the last decade for managing and responding to deadly conflicts. This was illustrated by the deployment of forces to the Military Observer Mission in the Comoros (MIOC), African Mission to Burundi (AMIB), African Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), Darfur (AMIS) and the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA). Thus, in the area of conflict prevention, the organization has lived up to its principles of interference in order to avert internal crisis in Member states as demonstrated by the suspension of Niger republic in 2010 as well as the demand for the return of constitutional order. These bold steps illustrate the broader scope claimed by the AU beyond that of the OAU which clearly demonstrates its willingness to oppose unconstitutional changes of government through sanctions, complex emergencies and mediation (Mwencha, 2010).

### **AU Peace and Security Architecture**

The different elements of APSA accord the AU a wide range of options and instruments for addressing threatening issues to peace and security.

For example, the PSC relies on advice from the POW, CEWS and the MSC in order to deploy peacekeepers (ASF) to member states. Thus, as a central organ of APSA, the PSC coordinates, organizes and legitimizes all the other elements within the structure (Sturman & Hayatou, 2010). Thus, APSA denotes a complex chain of interrelated institutions and mechanisms that function at different levels. At the regional level for instance, it relies on the continent's regional economic communities (William, 2008). It recognizes eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as well as five mechanisms for coordinating the African Standby Force (the East Africa Standby Force; the Economic Community of West African states Standby Force; the North African Regional Capability; the Southern Africa Development Community brigade and the Central African Multinational Force).

Broadly speaking, the relationship between the AU and the RECs is said to be hierarchical albeit mutually reinforcing. It harmonizes and coordinates the activities of the RECs when confronted with certain security challenges through liaison officers stationed in the AU Commission in Addis Ababa. Thus, while it has proven to be an effective legitimizing body in the pursuit of peace and security across the continent, its coordinating role in the deployment and sustenance of peacekeeping missions has rather been complex and problematic. Its role in this field has been tested politically- in the sense of the articulation of appropriate political and strategic military guidance; institutionally-the appropriate structures and resources to conduct peacekeeping operations and; conceptually-the appropriate peacekeeping concepts to meet its peacekeeping challenges.

### **Test Cases: Burundi, Darfur and Somalia**

#### ***Burundi***

The conflict in Burundi was driven by ethnic rivalries between the Hutu and Tutsi groups which has escalated and degenerated into total anarchy within the last two decades (Svennson, 2008). The background to AU's peacekeeping in Burundi began after President Melchior Ndadaye, a member of the majority Hutu ethnic group, was assassinated on 21 October 1993 by soldiers from the Tutsi-dominated national army. Mediation efforts by regional leaders resulted in the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, signed on 28 August 2000 by the government of Burundi, the National Assembly and representatives of the principal Hutu and Tutsi political parties. The Agreement provided for a

transitional period of 36 months during which national assembly and presidential elections were to take place (Roldt, 2011).

The original Arusha Ceasefire Agreement provided for the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force to assist in the implementation of the peace agreement. However, African leaders sprang to action in view of the unwillingness of the UN to deploy, citing as an excuse, the absence of a comprehensive ceasefire agreement. The AU was born during this period, but the actual deployment of its forces into Burundi was approved on 03 February 2013. The initial thinking was that AMIB will act as a stop-gap deployment pending the possible deployment of a UN force. Its task included monitoring and verification of the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreements, supporting disarmament and demobilization processes, securing assembly areas, and protecting designated returning politicians (Agoagye, 2004).

The total approved strength of AMIB was 3,335 and drawn largely from South Africa (acting as the lead nation), Mozambique and Ethiopia. The mission was to be undertaken with a total budget of \$110 million however, the AU did not have these funds. This lack of financial capacity hampered the ability of troop-contributing countries to deploy fully consequent upon which the AU decided that troop-contributing countries must shoulder responsibility for the first two months of deployment pending a reimbursement and a take over from the AU. As a result, about 1,600 South African peacekeepers were left to undertake the mission on their own even as the violence continued to escalate. Despite the deployment of both Ethiopian and Mozambican forces in September and October 2003, AMIB was unable to mobilize and reach its target strength. At the close of the mission in May 2004, the strength of its forces stood at 2,600. A large chunk of the funding for AMIB was obtained from financial contributions from Western countries. However they were grossly insufficient to cover AMIB costs which came to \$134 million. Despite the false start and the financial constraints, there is a wide consensus even by military and other security experts that AMIB represents one of AU 'biggest' success stories in direct conflict intervention (Boshoff, Vreÿ & Rautenbach, 2010).

Its intervention brought relative peace to most provinces in Burundi and also paved the way for a broader intervention effort by the UN which was initially reluctant to deploy due to the precarious nature of the security in



the country. The peace process and ceasefire agreements were fragile and not all parties to the conflict had consented to the presence of peacekeepers. There was also a risk that the country could return to full-scale violent conflict considering the fragile nature of the ceasefire agreement and the fact that not all parties to the conflict have signed the peace agreement. Nonetheless, the AU intervened and successfully managed the violence while creating a conducive environment for the design and implementation of DDR programs, the subsequent UN takeover of the mission as well as repositioning the post conflict Burundi on the cusps of stability and economic development (Rodt, 2011).

### ***Darfur***

At the time of its deployment to Darfur in July 2004, the AU had succeeded in attracting appreciable international support for its peacekeeping roles and objectives. As such, Franke (2009) observes that the deployment of African peacekeepers to Darfur “represented the biggest test case of the AU’s new peacekeeping ambitions, not only because of its sheer size but also because of the complexities of the conflict it was meant to solve”. Despite its higher profile and the support, resource problems loomed large during its mission to Darfur. This problem would later lead to the establishment of a hybrid UN-AU mission in 2007. The Darfur conflict began in February 2003 between the Sudanese government and the Arab Janjaweed militias on the one hand, and two rebel forces, the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) on the other (International Crisis Group, 2004). The cause of the conflict is complex and is said to be rooted in both historical and structural injustices (de Waal, 2007). By April 2004, it was estimated that 750,000 Sudanese were internally displaced, with more than 110,000 refugees having fled to Chad. By early 2005, more than 2 million persons were thought to have been displaced by the conflict (Gramizzi & Tubiana, 2012). Subsequently, a Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement (HCFA) was signed in the capital of Chad between the government of Sudan, Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) which called on the AU to monitor its implementation.

The UNSC gave its support to the AU’s active and lead role in Darfur, and the deployment of AU monitors, including a protection force (UNSC, 2007). The Sudanese Government, the SLM and the JEM also signed the Abuja Protocols on Humanitarian and Security Issues on 9 November

2004. In the Abuja Protocols, the parties requested the AU to urgently take the necessary steps to strengthen AMIS on the ground, with the requisite mandate, to ensure a more effective monitoring of the commitments. Thus, AMIS I was approved by the PSC on 25 May 2004. Initially, it had 60 military observers (MILOBs) and 300 MILOB protectors. However, the small size of the troops deployed was insufficient to cover the Darfur region. Consequently, ceasefire violations occurred on all sides and hence no improvement in the security situation was recorded.

Subsequently, the PSC decided on an enhanced mission, which came to be known as AMIS II in 2004. The mission's personnel were increased just as AMIS's mandate was strengthened with the view to secure the environment for the delivery of humanitarian aid as well as the safe return of IDPs. However, the major difficulty confronting the AU was the funds required to the effective execution of its mandate. Although it has received pledges from members of the international community running into millions of Dollars, only \$43 million was actually redeemed (Dagne, 2011). Consequently, after three and a half years presence in the region, there was still no viable peace to be found. It is evident that the combined efforts to create peace had failed and the efforts of AMIS barely produced tangible results compared to its previous deployment in Burundi. Moreover, it may seem that every single phase of AMIS (I & II) was hastily put together without any proper planning. This has generated series of problems ranging from the implementation of inefficient structures to the absence of a clear division of labour between mission components (Birikorang, 2009).

While the quality of planning did improve with the creation of the Darfur Integrated Task Force (DITF) and the addition of international experts, however AMIS was never able to shed its quintessentially reactive character and assume initiative (Franke, 2009). Overall, during its three and a half years in the field, AMIS presence and performance in the area of peacekeeping missions clearly demonstrates the growing willingness of the AU to get involved in the continent's conflicts despite the fact that its intervention failed to achieve the much desired objectives of ending the violence in Darfur.

## ***Somalia***

Somalia has been in a state of armed conflict since the overthrow of President Siad Barre in 1991. The utter collapse of legitimate authority or government in Somalia led to a situation where warlord rule and inter-clan warfare had become deeply entrenched in the country (Sabala, Ahmad & Rutto, 2008). All previous international attempts to respond to the armed conflict failed abysmally. Most of the efforts that were carried out in the 1990s formed a crucial part of the background leading to the formation of the AU in 2002. Unfortunately, the continuing security debacle in the country, particularly within the last two decades would ironically come to further expose the weaknesses AU's peacekeeping roles and objectives.

In 2002, the 'Somalia National Reconciliation Process' was initiated under the auspices of the East African regional organization known as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). This initiative was supported by the UN, AU, EU and USA. Although the initiative has significantly paid off as evident by the 'Declaration on the Cessation of Hostilities and the Structures and Principles of the Somalia National Reconciliation Process', however it failed to yield the much desired effect of peace and stability in the war torn country (Miti, 2010). Thus, the escalation of the conflict in 2002, coupled with the growing involvement of external actors in the violence further increased the risk of a wider regional conflict. Acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the UNSC determined that the situation in Somalia constituted a threat to international peace and security and hence authorized IGAD and AU Member States to establish a protection and training mission (IGASOM) IN Somalia (UNSC, 2007).

Faced with a deteriorating security situation which was also fast spreading to other countries in the region, the Peace and Security Council of the AU authorized the deployment of AMISOM in 2007, with a mandate to support the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) formed after the adoption of a Transitional Federal Charter in 2004. Part of AMISOM's mandate was to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance as well as to create conditions conducive to long-term stabilization and reconstruction effort in Somalia (Medhane, 2009). The whole idea was for AU peacekeepers to replace the Ethiopian troops who had been on the ground but were showing every sign of war fatigue, and also for the mission to evolve into a UN operation. Despite receiving

some logistical support and assistance from the US, NATO, Italy, AMISOM's capability was short of what is required to restore peace and security in the war ravaged country.

From the onset, AMISOM's lack of finance capacity led to problems of obtaining and deploying insufficient troops to the troubled spot. As such, it has to rely on troop contributing countries to be self-sustaining. It was under such difficult and challenging circumstances, that the PSC urgently requested the deployment of UN forces to take over from AMISOM (Cilliers, Boshoff, & Aboagye, 2010). Overall, many experts seem to share the view that AMISOM was an ill-conceived mission deployed to the wrong place at the wrong time by an institution incapable of meeting its grandiose statements of intent. Some of the critics even went further to note that at the time of the deployment of AMISOM, the AU had shown no evidence that it could muster, deploy, fund and manage an 8000-strong peacekeeping operation while engaging in another mission in Darfur (Omorogbe, 2011).

### **General Achievements**

The formation of the AU in 2002 coincided with a significant "shift" amongst African leaders regarding security issues on the continent. This shift involves a new security arrangement that differs significantly from the previous arrangement under OAU. Thus, any evaluation of the AU peace and security architecture must take a stance on whether it has made a real difference in its desire to achieve the goal of conflict intervention. In this regard, it is reasonable to state that despite the obvious problems and challenges that have marred its peacekeeping roles, the security situation in contemporary Africa would have probably been worse without the AU. Its experience and performance in conflict intervention show clearly that the organization has been unrelenting in its desire to find "African solutions to African problems". While there may not be too many success stories however, the AU has arguably proven its noble intentions by reducing the worst symptoms of ongoing violent conflict, a feat it achieved through its peacekeeping roles in Burundi and to a reasonable extent, in Darfur. In Darfur, AMIS has put in its best, to alleviate widespread suffering and to contain a conflict in which no one else seems prepared to intervene. Although its inability to end to violence against civilians would continue to cast a shadow of doubt over its capacity to deliver on peacekeeping operations, however, its attempt clearly demonstrates AU's dedicated efforts to develop a continental

capacity for responding to security challenges irrespective of the daunting challenges that mars such efforts.

While the mandate for the mission in Burundi was not backed by the use of force, however its rules of engagement were based on self-defense and protection of the civilian population against threats of physical force and violence. Moreover, the mission constituted a clear mandate in accordance with UN principles and standards, international humanitarian law and the laws of armed conflict. Overall, the AU has fared relatively well in some cases, but have also fallen below expectations in others. Needless to say that the real acid test for the organization and its peace and security architecture lies in the question of whether it can actually resolve ongoing conflicts as well as remove the potential of war recurrence in the future.

In addition, whether the failure of AMIS in Darfur can be attributed to the troops on the ground or not, is a subject of another different debate. But what is glaring from the experience is the fact that the debilitating challenges that hamper its operations is fundamentally a fall out of a combination of structural factors ranging from lack of financial resources, absence of the requisite political will, poor operational management and logistic capacity. The fact that the AU and its member states have expended sizable financial, diplomatic, and military resources engaging with conflicts in different parts of the continent suggests that the principles of its founding Charter have at least been partly translated into action. On the question of whether the organization has carried out its operational activities and missions competently and efficiently, overall, it appears, there are more positives than negatives. Even under strenuous circumstances, AU forces have in many instances performed admirably. But, chronic obstacles and challenges to more effective intervention remain.

### **Challenges and Capability Gaps**

It is very obvious that AU's financial and military resources are way below what is required to successfully conduct peacekeeping missions in Africa. This problem has grossly hampered the capacity of AMIS to mobilize and fulfill the authorized level of fighting force of 7,000 (International Crisis Group, 2005). Similarly, the deployment of AU peacekeepers to Somalia in 2007 has further exposed AU's limitations. Of the eight thousand troops promised, only 2,700 Ugandans and 2,550

Burundians were deployed as of August 2009 (Hanson 2009). Thus, Williams (2011) observed that the most blatant example of military unpreparedness came in the early phases of AMISOM when the initial Burundian contingents lacked the most basic military equipment (which was ultimately provided by the U.S. government).

This problem is compounded further by the lack of specialists with niche skills in the area of engineering and intelligence gathering. AU often relies on external actors in order to fill this gap. In most cases, the equipments AU fighting forces are woefully inadequate for the task at hand. For instance, officers deployed under (AMIS) are only armed with pistols, while AK-47's and one rocket propelled grenade (RPGs-7) were the only available weapon for the majority of the troops and for every ten soldiers respectively (Refugees International, 2005). However, when you are up against a rebel group which is alleged to be sponsored and armed by a powerful government, such fighting equipment can only prove to be a little more than a nuisance.

This imbalance in firepower helps explain how both an 18-man AMIS patrol and its 20-man rescue team were easily abducted by an armed group in West Darfur (Mansaray, 2009). Similarly, while military equipment and materials are crucial for a successful intervention effort, mustering the right civilian capabilities is also vital. AU's PSC suffers from the shortage of civilian experts in critical areas such as the rule of law, police, corrections officers, justice and experts on capacity building training. In addition, Africa's relatively well-off states continue to bear the financial burden for peacekeeping operations albeit their contributions are often complemented by foreign donations which are also very inadequate. This problem makes good planning difficult and ultimately undermines the capacity of peacekeepers to meet datelines and expectations (Gottschalk & Schmidt, 2004).

Another obvious obstacle to AU's peacekeeping is the absence of the requisite political will to act with a unity of purpose. The protracted and prolonged conflict in Darfur is also due to the disagreement and tension between African leaders who believed in taking a hard line position against the Sudanese government on the one hand, and those who preferred the soft approach or 'quite diplomacy' on the other. Consequently, some member states appear to be sympathetic towards the government of Sudan while others were frustrated with Khartoum's

failure to back down from lending support to the Janjaweed militia group. This division has had a negative impact on AMIS. Thus, the seeming conundrum in Darfur brings to fore the difficulty of reconciling the apparent contradiction between the idea of non-interference and the principle of intervention in crisis situations.

Furthermore, AU's poor performance in some of their peacekeeping experiences can be attributed to poor bureaucratic structures both in the field and in the headquarters. This manifests often in the inability of officials to provide strategic vision and support to mission leadership or team. To this date, AU still lacks the institutional capacity and human resources to conduct effective preventive diplomacy as well as to conduct emergency operations in the continent. The AU Commission particularly continues to suffer from weak bureaucratic processes and management systems; a lack of professional and motivated personnel; weak reputation, presence, and reach; and inadequate sources of funds (AU Commission, 2008).

### **Conclusion: Lessons Learned and Directions for the Future**

AU's pattern of response to peace and security challenges in the African continent has been conducted mostly in the framework of conflict prevention and peacekeeping missions. The Peace and Security Council of the AU has been central to the mobilization and coordination of these intervention activities. While, the result or outcome of its experiences have remain mixed as this paper was able to illustrate, however the AU has made steady progress in its evolution as a continental organization that is ever willing to tackle its security challenges. Thus, in its search for "African solutions to African problems", it has steadily grown in significance as a serious political actor and enabler. There are promising signs to show that this trajectory is likely to continue as evidenced by the development of the ASF which is regarded as the centerpiece of AU peace and security architecture.

Although major capability gaps which are partly caused by both technical and political factors exist, however the potential of successful interventions efforts in the future remain high. The AU remains the only continental institution that is able to present and represent pan-African interest both within and outside Africa. But in order to address the apparent discrepancy between its capacity on paper and its actual impact in crisis situations, the organization must pursue clear mandates that

facilitate, rather than impede, peacekeeping operations in countries where such interventions becomes an imperative.

Important political enablers that affect its peacekeeping capabilities which include inter alia; a widespread agreement on what AU peacekeeping operations can (and cannot) be expected to achieve; unity within the PSC in support of those objectives; sustained high-level political engagement to support AU special envoys, committees, and panels as well as peacekeepers in the field, is key to building or enhancing the capacity of the organization to effectively respond to the challenges of peace and security. Thus, prior to any deployment, the AU must first and foremost, realistically determine its capability to successfully execute its mandate as well as its ability to protect itself.

To address the financial gap which is critical to the success of peacekeeping missions, the AU must consider developing a reliable source of dedicated funding through taxes, tariffs and possibly fees to directly support military training and operations of its forces before and during actual deployment. Although this may look like a tall order considering the poor economic status of most member states, however the notion of African ownership or better still, the idea of proffering 'African solutions to African problems' is automatically dwarfed when the organization continue to demonstrate its total dependence on external actors for both funding and logistical support. That said however, this suggestion does not seek to downplay the significance or potential of collaborative partnerships with external actors like the UN, EU or foreign governments. Building collaborative partnerships with a wide range of actors is also an important prerequisite for overcoming some of AU's debilitating limitations and challenges in the field of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace building.

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