

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i7.2988>

Facing Trouble: How the African Union Handles Coups and Conflict Today

Mustafa Osman I. Elamin ¹

Abstract

This study explores the African Union's (AU) response to escalating security challenges, including military coups and regional instabilities, through a posthumanist lens that interrogates the interplay of technology, humanity, and governance within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). By examining APSA's frameworks, the research highlights how emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and hybrid threat systems, reshape conflict dynamics and demand new ethical governance models. A mixed-methods approach integrates qualitative analysis of AU documents and secondary data from technologists with quantitative assessment of peace operation metrics, such as deployment efficiency and technological integration. Key findings reveal systemic gaps in APSA, including funding shortages, delayed decision-making, and overreliance on external technological support, compounded by uneven regional capacities among Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The posthumanist perspective underscores the need to reframe African solutions by balancing technological advancements with human-centered ethical considerations, ensuring AI and digital systems enhance rather than destabilize security. The study advocates for adaptive governance frameworks that integrate RECs and prioritize local innovation to address hybrid threats. Implications point to a redefined technology-society nexus, where ethical AI deployment and regional collaboration strengthen APSA's resilience. This research contributes to posthumanist discourse by situating African security within global debates on technology's role in shaping future governance and stability.

Keywords: Posthumanism, African Peace and Security Architecture, Hybrid Threats, AI In Security, Ethical Governance, Regional Integration, African Solutions.

Introduction

The African Union's (AU) African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) encapsulates a Pan-African commitment to self-reliance, aiming to prevent and resolve conflicts through mechanisms like the African Standby Force (ASF), Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), Panel of the Wise, and Peace and Security Council (PSC). However, APSA grapples with escalating challenges from hybrid threats—cyberattacks, misinformation, and AI-driven disruptions—that blur human and technological agency, exposing its operational and structural limitations (David & Mabudusha, 2024). These threats, alongside frequent military coups and regional instabilities, underscore APSA's vulnerabilities, prompting critical questions about its adaptability in a posthumanist era where technology redefines security, sovereignty, and governance (Chitando & Chanzi, 2024).

From a posthumanist lens, APSA's human-centric frameworks struggle to counter hybrid threats that challenge traditional notions of intent and agency, such as cyberattacks on infrastructure or

¹ Professor at the College of Islamic Studies, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, specializing in peace and security studies, regional integration, and African governance



misinformation fueling ethnic divisions (Balcaen et al., 2021). Institutional weaknesses, including heavy reliance on external funding, sluggish PSC decision-making, and inconsistent coordination with Regional Economic Communities (RECs), further hamper APSA's ability to leverage technologies like AI for CEWS or digital tools for ASF operations (Kaweesi, 2023). For example, while AI-enhanced early warning systems could boost CEWS's predictive capabilities, they raise privacy concerns that conflict with the AU's non-indifference principle under Article 4 of its Constitutive Act (Ani, 2021). Moreover, donor-driven technological interventions risk entrenching dependency, undermining efforts to decolonize African security frameworks (Cocodia, 2021).

APSA's challenges are compounded by internal contradictions, such as tensions between state sovereignty and regional integration, which weaken responses to crises like those in Mali and the Sahel (Strydom, 2019). Slow PSC decision-making and limited integration of traditional conflict-resolution methods further disconnect APSA from local realities, reducing its legitimacy (Desmidt, 2019; Cocodia, 2021). Partnerships with entities like the United Nations, while vital, often perpetuate unequal dynamics, conflicting with APSA's self-sufficiency goals (Bokeriya, 2022; Oriola & Knight, 2021). Initiatives like the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) offer flexible integration but risk deepening regional disparities, as stronger RECs outpace weaker ones (Fagbayibo, 2021; Nyadera, 2024).

This article employs posthumanist theories, including transhumanism and cybernetics, to reframe APSA's challenges and explore how ethical, inclusive technologies can enhance conflict prevention. By addressing financial dependency through mechanisms like the Peace Fund, strengthening REC coordination, and reforming PSC processes, APSA can align with Pan-African ideals of sovereignty and empowerment (Desmidt, 2019; Ani, 2021). Engaging global posthumanist debates, APSA has the potential to challenge Western-centric security models and foster equitable, tech-driven governance, provided it bridges structural gaps and prioritizes decolonized frameworks (Chitando & Chanzi, 2024; Cocodia, 2021; Oriola & Knight, 2021).

Background: Evolution of the AU and APSA in Addressing Security Challenges

The African Union (AU), formed in 2001 to replace the OAU, prioritized peace through the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). APSA's framework, including the PSC, ASF, and CEWS, promotes conflict prevention and management using diplomacy and, when needed, military interventions (Desmidt 2019; De Coning, Tchie, and Grand 2022). Despite ASF delays and uneven REC coordination, initiatives like ACIRC enhance responsiveness (Fagbayibo 2021). APSA aims for African-led solutions amid evolving threats.

Military Coups and Terrorism: Interconnected Challenges

Africa has faced nine successful military coups since 2020, driven by systemic issues rooted in colonial legacies, weak governance, and socio-economic stagnation. In former French colonies like Mali and Niger, coups reflect resistance to externally backed democracies perceived as ineffective (Sylla 2024). Niger's 2023 coup gained public support as a stand against corruption, while Mali's shift to Russian partnerships signals a rejection of Western influence, highlighting geopolitical realignments (Sowale 2024; Cold-Ravnkilde and Sylla 2024). These coups intersect with terrorism, as perceived threats amplify military influence, often justifying interventions to restore order (Bove, Rivera, and Ruffa 2019).

Public disillusionment with democracy fuels acceptance of military rule, with surveys indicating citizens view coups as corrections to dysfunctional governance (Opalo 2024). Yet, this risks

entrenching autocracy, though regions like Nigeria show democratic resistance grounded in human rights (Mayer 2024). The interplay of coups and terrorism challenges global governance, exposing the fragility of imposed democratic models and necessitating aid frameworks that empower local institutions over dependency (Opalo 2024).

Hybrid Threats: Emerging Complexities

Hybrid threats, blending conventional and unconventional tactics like cyberattacks and misinformation, pose new challenges to APSA. Designed to evade detection, these threats destabilize nations, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic when misinformation amplified insecurity (Wijnja 2021; Balcaen, Bois, and Buts 2021). Countering them requires identifying risks, building resilience, and using soft security measures, such as cognitive-emotional strategies, to combat disinformation (Filipec 2021). Sweden's total defense model integrates civilian and military efforts but risks democratic erosion, a caution for African contexts (Ljungkvist 2024). Poland's adaptation of counterterrorism laws to hybrid warfare offers a model for APSA, though legal flexibility must avoid undermining the rule of law (Gasztold and Gasztold 2020).

Objectives and Strategic Focus

This study examines the AU's strategies for managing military coups and regional instabilities, evaluating APSA's effectiveness and pinpointing areas for enhancement. Key obstacles include funding shortages, with 90% dependence on external donors, delays in operationalizing the ASF, and inconsistent REC integration (Desmidt 2019; Fagbayibo 2021). Recommendations focus on bolstering African-led peace through sustainable financing, improved REC coordination, and inclusive governance to tackle coup triggers like corruption (Opalo 2024). Addressing these challenges will strengthen APSA's resilience against hybrid threats and geopolitical shifts, ensuring robust African security frameworks.

Literature Review

The African Union (AU) faces significant challenges in its peace and security strategy, particularly in addressing military coups and regional instabilities. The unique aspects of regional frameworks, such as those seen in the contexts of UNAMID and AMISOM, highlight the complexities and evolving nature of peacekeeping and security governance in Africa.

Unique Aspects of Regional Frameworks: African countries often adapt and implement security norms in ways that align with their national identities and domestic complexities. For instance, Tanzania's decision not to join AMISOM reflects a distinct approach to peace and security norms, showcasing the nuanced interpretation of security measures across the continent (Jaensch, 2021). Similarly, the partnership between the UN and AU in peacekeeping operations, such as UNAMID, encounters significant challenges. These include unclear regulations, conflicting normative standards, and strained relations between the UN Security Council and the AU's Peace and Security Council, all of which undermine the effectiveness of their joint missions (Bokeriya, 2022; Spandler, 2020).

The African Union (AU) has adopted a 'multiple-speed' integration strategy, exemplified by initiatives like the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC). This approach allows member states to participate in security measures at varying paces, offering flexibility in addressing diverse security challenges (Fagbayibo, 2021). Furthermore, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) employs a dual approach to conflict management by combining

military operations with non-military tools such as preventive diplomacy and mediation. This methodology is particularly effective in mitigating political and election-related violence (Desmidt, 2019).

Challenges Faced by UNAMID and AMISOM: Despite being initially hailed as a model for UN-AU cooperation, UNAMID faced significant legitimacy challenges. Diverging strategies and authority claims between the UN and AU revealed the political complexities of inter-organizational relationships, which ultimately hindered the mission's effectiveness (Spandler, 2020). Similarly, the AU's engagement in Somalia through AMISOM has faced criticism for prioritizing the interests of external partners over local needs, highlighting the necessity for more homegrown and context-specific solutions to security challenges (Oriola & Knight, 2021). These examples underscore the importance of addressing structural and strategic issues within regional and international security frameworks to enhance their legitimacy, effectiveness, and alignment with local needs.

What are the unique aspects of regional frameworks dealing with peace and security, specifically in the context of the challenges faced by UNAMID and AMISOM?: The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) offers a distinctive regional framework for peace and security, blending military and non-military tools like preventive diplomacy and mediation (Desmidt, 2019). Unlike traditional interventions, APSA integrates Regional Economic Communities (RECs) for early warning and peace missions, emphasizing regional cooperation (Coe & Nash, 2020). This approach contrasts with the challenges faced by UNAMID and AMISOM, where hybrid UN-AU missions struggled with coordination, funding, and local legitimacy.

APSA's unique balance of sovereignty and non-indifference sets it apart, though it complicates interventions amid political resistance and unclear subsidiarity (Vlavourou, 2019). UNAMID, in Darfur, faced operational inefficiencies and government obstruction, while AMISOM, in Somalia, battled Al-Shabaab amid resource constraints and troop-contributing country rivalries. APSA's flexibility—rooted in formal and informal norms—enables adaptation to such contexts, unlike the rigid mandates often hampering UNAMID and AMISOM (Verjee, 2022).

The rule of law and democracy, vital for sustainable peace, are undermined by corruption, human rights abuses, and weak institutions in these missions' areas. APSA's African-led focus aims to address these by prioritizing local ownership and capacity-building (Hammett, 2022), offering a contrast to the externally influenced UNAMID and AMISOM frameworks. This adaptability and emphasis on African solutions highlight APSA's potential to overcome the political and structural hurdles that limited these missions' success.

Since the change from OUA to AU in 2002, what are the most peculiar aspects of regional frameworks dealing with peace and security? / What makes APSA a unique institutional innovation if you think it is the case?

Since the OAU transitioned to the AU in 2002, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) has emerged as a peculiar regional framework for peace and security. APSA's uniqueness lies in its comprehensive approach, integrating early warning systems, preventive diplomacy, and peace support operations like AUPOs, mandated by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) (Desmidt, 2019). This proactive shift enhances conflict prevention and resolution, as seen in Somalia and Mali. APSA's institutional innovation stems from its adaptability and regional cooperation via RECs, which tailor APSA to local contexts (Coe & Nash, 2020), marking a qualitative leap in African-led peacebuilding.

1920 Facing Trouble: How the African Union Handles Coups

What is your viewpoint on the rule of law and democracy in Africa? : The rule of law and democracy in Africa are vital yet complex, shaped by diverse contexts and challenges. The rule of law is often undermined by its use as a power tool rather than a framework for equitable governance, weakening state legitimacy (Nwoke et al., 2022). Constitutional ideals frequently clash with practice, necessitating institutional reforms to align governance with principles of justice and human rights (Udombana, 2024). In South Africa, for instance, socio-economic unrest reveals gaps in integrating rights into legal systems (Klaasen, 2020).

Democracy, while progressing through elections and power transfers, often remains superficial, lacking accountability and inclusivity (Etieyibo, 2020). External efforts, like those of the AU, prioritize process over legitimacy, missing deeper trust issues (Chacha, 2023). Democracy's link to development hinges on purposeful implementation, addressing structural barriers to sustainability (Brammah & Forson, 2023). A one-size-fits-all Western model may not suit Africa's cultural diversity; instead, governance must reflect local needs and group rights alongside individual freedoms (Olu-Owolabi et al., 2020). Despite setbacks like coups, progress in entrenching these principles exists, but vigilance and context-specific reforms remain essential for meaningful advancement.

What do you think about Article 4 of the AU Constitutive Act related to the non-indifference principle?

Article 4 of the AU Constitutive Act, embodying the non-indifference principle, is a bold commitment to intervene in grave crises like genocide, war crimes, and threats to legitimate order (Afewerky, 2023). It marks a shift from the OAU's non-interference stance, empowering the AU to uphold peace and human rights. I view it as essential for stability, aligning with the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, yet its implementation reveals challenges. The AU struggles with capacity and consistency, as seen in unresolved conflicts, undermining the "African solutions" ideal (Afewerky, 2023).

Article 4(h) authorizes intervention, but political will and resources often falter, especially against incumbent abuses or unconstitutional changes (De Wet, 2021). This inconsistency questions its effectiveness in promoting democratic governance under Article 4(p), where responses to coups vary (De Wet, 2021). Critics argue it risks meddling in state sovereignty, yet supporters see it as a necessary check on atrocities. I believe its intent is commendable, but practical gaps demand reform.

Strengthening enforcement through mandatory participation in bodies like the African Court could bolster accountability (Maluwa, 2024). The principle's success hinges on balancing sovereignty with intervention, avoiding overreach while ensuring action. Unlike the EU's supranational model, the AU must tailor this to Africa's context, enhancing legislative authority without mimicking external frameworks (Maluwa, 2024). Article 4 signals political resolve, but its evolution requires addressing these tensions to truly safeguard Africa's stability.

Are you familiar with the African Peace and Security Architecture, APSA?

Yes, I'm familiar with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), a robust AU framework for conflict prevention, management, and resolution. APSA integrates key pillars like the Peace and Security Council, Continental Early Warning System, African Standby Force, Panel of the Wise, and Peace Fund, blending military and non-military tools such as preventive diplomacy and mediation (Desmidt, 2019; Nyadera, 2024). It collaborates with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to promote peace, reflecting a pan-African vision of unity and

self-determination (Coe & Nash, 2020).

APSA's interventionist stance balances sovereignty with non-indifference, though this sparks debate over subsidiarity and effectiveness (Vlavourou, 2019). Challenges include inconsistent local reception, as seen in Burkina Faso and The Gambia (Witt & Schnabel, 2020), and critiques of its peacekeeping impact. Its interactions with international regimes add complexity (Brosig, 2023). As APSA turns 20, calls for an APSA PLUS reform aim to enhance cooperation with non-African actors and adapt to emerging threats (Nyadera, 2024). It's a normative anchor for peace, yet its success hinges on overcoming these hurdles.

How do you see the role of African Armed Forces in promoting peace and security in the region?

African armed forces play a vital role in promoting peace and security, serving as professional, non-political entities under civilian control to ensure stability (Tchie, 2023). Within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), they support the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) by deterring threats and enabling rapid responses (Nyadera, 2024). Their involvement in peacekeeping, like Ghana's UN missions or Nigeria's efforts in Darfur, showcases their potential despite resource constraints (Eyeh, 2024; Tchie, 2023).

African-led Peace Support Operations (PSOs), such as the AU Mission in Somalia, enhance local agency, aligning military action with political solutions (Tchie, 2023). Ad-hoc Security Initiatives (ASI) in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin further address cross-border threats, complementing the African Standby Force (De Coning et al., 2022). Gender integration, exemplified by Zambian female soldiers in the Central African Republic, bolsters community engagement and human rights advocacy, though challenges like chauvinism persist (Kamfwa, 2022).

However, critiques highlight limitations—military integration often falters due to political issues (Verjee, 2022), and APSA's military focus may neglect broader security needs (Vlavourou, 2019). Regional successes, like ECOWAS interventions, offer hope, but resource gaps hinder broader impact. With improved support, African armed forces could significantly advance regional peace.

According to you, does APSA provide an efficient framework to react quickly in the region if a security issue emerges?

In my view, APSA offers a framework with potential for quick reaction to security issues, but its efficiency is hampered by significant challenges. The Peace and Security Council (PSC) and tools like preventive diplomacy enable proactive responses (Desmidt, 2019), and REC engagement strengthens regional action (Coe & Nash, 2020). APSA's adaptability shines in African-led peacebuilding, showing successes in conflict prevention (Hammett, 2022). However, the African Standby Force (ASF) lacks speed, necessitating Ad-hoc Security Initiatives (ASI) for agility (De Coning et al., 2022). Institutional complexity and AU-REC overlap create delays, worsened by unclear subsidiarity (Suzuki, 2020; Magara, 2022). Political struggles and inadequate funding further stall decisions and implementation (Vlavourou, 2019). While effective against some threats, APSA struggles with hybrid challenges due to resource and training gaps (Nyadera, 2024). Reforms, like expanded pillars and partnerships, could enhance responsiveness (Nyadera, 2024), but currently, APSA's promise is tempered by these practical limitations.

How does the historical trajectory of the Pan-African project affect the current structure of

The Pan-African project's historical trajectory profoundly shapes the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Rooted in ideals of unity, self-determination, and collective prosperity, APSA reflects a Pan-African vision of African-owned peace and security (Desmidt, 2019). Its structure, including the Peace and Security Council and African Standby Force (ASF), evolved from centralized ambitions to a decentralized model, empowering Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to mirror the collaborative spirit of early Pan-African debates (Nyadera, 2024).

APSA's non-military tools—like preventive diplomacy and mediation—embody Pan-African preferences for peaceful conflict resolution, while its integration with the African Governance Architecture (AGA) tackles governance-related violence (Desmidt, 2019). However, tensions between state sovereignty and non-indifference, a legacy of Pan-African struggles, challenge its operations (Vlaponou, 2019). The shift from the OAU to the AU, driven by transformative leadership, embedded these principles, yet sustaining them demands renewed focus on governance and unity.

Current challenges, like subsidiarity disputes, reflect the diverse political landscape Pan-Africanism navigates. Proposed reforms, such as APSA PLUS, aim to adapt APSA to modern threats, enhancing global cooperation while staying true to its roots (Nyadera, 2024). Thus, APSA's structure and evolution embody Pan-Africanism's dynamic legacy, balancing historical ideals with contemporary realities.

To what extent traditional mechanisms are well included in APSA?

Traditional mechanisms are partially integrated into the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), notably through the Panel of the Wise, which leverages eminent Africans for mediation and peace efforts (Desmidt, 2019). These non-military tools, like diplomacy, align with African conflict resolution traditions, enhancing APSA's legitimacy (Suzuki, 2020). Collaboration with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) further embeds localized approaches, especially in West Africa (Suzuki, 2020). However, their inclusion remains limited. The framework prioritizes military responses, sidelining deeper integration of traditional methods into security interventions (Vlaponou, 2019). Ad-hoc initiatives in the Sahel expose APSA's agility gaps, suggesting traditional tools aren't fully optimized (De Coning et al., 2022). The complex mix of formal and informal practices also obscures their impact (Verjee, 2022). Reforms like APSA PLUS aim to strengthen this integration, adapting traditional mechanisms to modern threats (Nyadera, 2024). While APSA acknowledges their value, fuller incorporation requires balancing them with military aspects and enhancing responsiveness to ensure they effectively complement the architecture.

How do you see the articulation between RECs and the AU regarding the deployment of African Stand-by forces?

The articulation between Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Union (AU) is pivotal for deploying the African Standby Force (ASF) within APSA. RECs, as AU pillars, enable regionally tailored responses, leveraging proximity for swift action (Apuuli, 2019). The Peace and Security Council protocol mandates this partnership to enhance peace and stability (Fagbayibo, 2021). However, effectiveness varies. Some praise RECs' local insight, but challenges like funding, training, and coordination persist (Robinson, 2020). The ASF's inflexibility, evident in slow responses in the Sahel, has spurred Ad-hoc Security Initiatives

(ASI) and alternatives like ACIRC for faster action (De Coning et al., 2022). Regional disparities—North Africa’s lag post-Qadhafi versus stronger RECs elsewhere—highlight uneven engagement (Robinson, 2020). Past failures, like the EASF’s Burundi misstep, reveal coordination gaps and sovereignty tensions (Apuuli, 2019). While the REC-AU link offers potential for rapid, context-specific deployment, centrifugal tendencies and operational hurdles undermine it. Strengthening this articulation requires aligning political will, resources, and respect for regional dynamics.

11. To what extent do African Stand-by forces contribute to subregional and regional integration in Africa?

The African Standby Force (ASF) contributes to subregional and regional integration by fostering military cooperation and a shared security framework under the African Union (AU). It strengthens ties through joint peacekeeping missions, enabling technical and tactical collaboration among member states’ forces (Fagbayibo, 2021). This exchange builds mutual understanding and supports a common defense voice, enhancing integration (Robinson, 2020). The ASF’s flexibility, seen in the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC), promotes deeper integration among willing states, offering a model for broader AU efforts (Fagbayibo, 2021).

However, challenges limit its impact. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) create coordination complexities, while political divisions among states hinder unified action (Robinson, 2020). North Africa’s operational lag exemplifies uneven engagement (Robinson, 2020), and ad-hoc security initiatives in the Sahel reveal ASF’s agility gaps (De Coning et al., 2022). Military culture also affects success—forces respecting human rights enhance operations, while weaker ones struggle, undermining local trust. Though the ASF bolsters integration through collaboration, its full potential requires overcoming these disparities and aligning with RECs and ad-hoc efforts.

How do you see the role of national armies in promoting efficient regional deployments?

National armies are essential for efficient regional deployments within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). They ensure readiness with modern equipment, skilled personnel, and accountability, leveraging local knowledge of geography and culture for effective action (Cannon & Donelli, 2022). By aligning with African Standby Force (ASF) standards, they enhance cooperation among Regional Economic Communities (RECs), fostering seamless deployments (Robinson, 2020). Rwanda’s independent operations in Mozambique and the Central African Republic exemplify how strategic leadership and strong military culture can drive success, offering a model for regional efficiency (Cannon & Donelli, 2022).

However, challenges persist. Varying resources, training, and skills across nations hinder uniformity, while North Africa’s lag—post-Qadhafi—reflects weak regional collaboration (Robinson, 2020). External actors like China and the U.S. can influence APSA, risking sovereignty if not balanced with African-led priorities. Political will is key—joint training and border security initiatives thrive under committed leadership, but disparities limit broader impact. National armies thus promote efficiency by bridging RECs and the AU, yet their role depends on overcoming resource gaps and asserting autonomy amidst external pressures.

What do you see as the main challenges of the African Peace and Security Architecture?

1924 Facing Trouble: How the African Union Handles Coups

The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) faces significant challenges that undermine its effectiveness. A primary issue is its heavy reliance on external funding, limiting autonomy and sustainability (Desmidt, 2019). Inconsistent political will among African leaders hampers unified action against conflict roots (Nyadera, 2024). Coordination between the AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) is often inefficient due to overlapping mandates, while poor AU-UN alignment complicates joint efforts (Bokeriya, 2022). The African Standby Force (ASF) struggles with deployment agility, prompting alternatives like ACIRC (Fagbayibo, 2021). Capacity gaps in training and skills weaken peacekeeping, and external interference driven by geopolitical interests undermines sovereignty. Persistent terrorism, weak governance, and corruption further strain APSA (Seiyefa, 2023). Ambiguity over subsidiarity and sovereignty limits non-military tools like mediation (Desmidt, 2019). Reforms, such as APSA PLUS, propose broader partnerships and structural updates to address these evolving threats (Nyadera, 2024). Without tackling these—through better funding, coordination, and governance—APSA’s impact remains constrained.

Is the financial dependency of the African Union vis-à-vis its foreign partners an obstacle to promoting African solutions to African security challenges?

Yes, the African Union’s (AU) financial dependency on foreign partners hinders promoting African solutions to security challenges. While partnerships with the UN and others provide legitimacy and logistics, they compromise AU autonomy (Oriola & Knight, 2021). External funding—often over 90% of APSA’s budget—forces alignment with donors’ interests, like in Somalia, where U.S. and Ethiopian priorities overshadowed local needs (Cocodia, 2021). This reliance stifles independent, context-specific strategies and perpetuates Eurocentric models unfit for African realities (Kaweesi, 2023). It also fosters a dependency culture, undermining self-determination (Gardachew, 2021). To counter this, the AU must mobilize internal resources—via diaspora funds or public-private partnerships—and strengthen member state contributions. Homegrown solutions rooted in local norms would enhance legitimacy and sustainability (Oriola & Knight, 2021). Without reducing this financial reliance, the AU’s ability to prioritize African-led security approaches remains limited.

Do you see disparities between the level of subregional integration (for example between West Africa and East Africa) as an obstacle to the efficient implementation of the African Stand-by mechanism?

Subregional integration disparities, such as those between West Africa and East Africa, pose significant obstacles to the efficient implementation of the African Standby Force (ASF) within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). These disparities stem from varying levels of political, economic, and institutional cohesion across Africa’s Regional Economic Communities (RECs), affecting the ASF’s ability to operate as a unified rapid-response mechanism.

West Africa, through ECOWAS, exemplifies strong subregional integration. Its established mechanisms for conflict resolution, such as the ECOWAS Standby Force, enable coordinated and timely responses to security threats, as seen in interventions in Mali and Liberia (Fagbayibo, 2021). This integration fosters robust early warning systems and military cooperation, aligning with APSA’s goals. In contrast, East Africa’s integration, led by the East African Community (EAC) and IGAD, lags due to political fragmentation and weaker institutional frameworks (Nyadera, 2024). The East African Standby Force (EASF) has faced challenges, like the failed Burundi intervention, highlighting coordination and readiness gaps (Apuuli, 2019). These

disparities create a "multiple-speed" integration dynamic, where some regions advance faster, leaving others unprepared for ASF deployment (Fagbayibo, 2021).

Economic and political factors amplify this challenge. Larger economies polarize benefits, while non-tariff barriers and institutional weaknesses fragment markets, undermining collective security efforts (Pasara, 2020). Political instability in regions like East Africa further erodes the cohesion needed for effective ASF operations (Nyadera, 2024). Desmidt (2019) identifies operational gaps in APSA tools like the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), exacerbated by these imbalances. For instance, West Africa's stronger REC framework supports CEWS functionality, while East Africa struggles with data integration and response times.

The ASF's continent-wide implementation suffers as a result. Regional disparities lead to uneven military capabilities and readiness, with North Africa's post-Qadhafi disengagement adding another layer of complexity (Robinson, 2020). Fagbayibo (2021) argues that harmonizing REC protocols and clarifying subsidiarity are critical to address this. The emergence of ad-hoc security initiatives (ASI) in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, filling ASF gaps, underscores the mechanism's inflexibility and the need for regional alignment (De Coning et al., 2022). Without balanced integration, the ASF risks being a patchwork rather than a cohesive force.

Reforms could mitigate these obstacles. Nyadera (2024) proposes an APSA PLUS model, expanding REC-AU coordination and incorporating non-African partnerships to bolster weaker regions. Chitando and Chanzi (2024) suggest aligning AU and UN frameworks to standardize capabilities across subregions. Grassroots efforts, like Cameroon's reconciliation initiatives, show local potential that integrated RECs could amplify (Lefort-Rieu, 2024). However, political will remains uneven—West Africa's commitment contrasts with East Africa's hesitancy, reflecting deeper governance challenges (Seiyefa, 2023).

Qualitative analyses of AU charters and peace mission reports reveal these tensions. Thematic coding highlights recurring themes of coordination failures and funding disparities, while deployment timelines and budget data quantify the ASF's uneven performance (Desmidt, 2019). Secondary studies, like Joseph (2024) on trade-security links and David and Mabudusha (2024) on terrorism, emphasize the interconnectedness of security and integration, urging a holistic approach.

Subregional disparities hinder ASF efficiency, creating imbalances. Harmonizing policies, boosting weaker RECs, and fostering unity are vital. Without this, APSA's standby vision fragments, limiting its ability to address Africa's security challenges effectively.

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative analyses to evaluate the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and its efficacy in addressing the continent's peace and security challenges. Qualitative methods such as thematic coding, discourse analysis, and expert interviews, are employed to examine APSA's frameworks, focusing on its charters, protocols, and peace mission reports. These are paired with quantitative analyses of mission metrics, funding trends, and regional capacity assessments, providing a holistic view of APSA's operational and systemic dynamics (Chandrasekar et al., 2024; Michelen et al., 2024).

The findings reveal critical structural inefficiencies within APSA's institutional pillars, such as the African Standby Force (ASF) and the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS). These

mechanisms often lack the operational agility to address emerging threats like the Sahel insurgency and political upheavals in West Africa. Furthermore, institutional misalignments between the African Union (AU) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) exacerbate delays in deployment and coordination, undermining APSA's overall mandate (Desmidt, 2019; Nyadera, 2024). Financial dependency also emerges as a significant challenge, with over 90% of AU peace operations funded externally, primarily by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN). This reliance compromises APSA's strategic autonomy and perpetuates a dependency culture that inhibits innovation in homegrown conflict-resolution mechanisms (Kaweesi, 2023).

Disparities in regional capacities further hinder APSA's effectiveness. For instance, West Africa's ECOWAS demonstrates a proactive approach to conflict prevention, leveraging tools like early warning systems, whereas North Africa suffers from fragmented security frameworks and an acute lack of collective action. The multiple-speed approach to integration within APSA perpetuates uneven progress, posing significant challenges to the AU's objective of cohesive and universal security solutions (Fagbayibo, 2021; Seiyefa, 2023). Additionally, hybrid threats such as cyber warfare and misinformation campaigns intersect with terrorism, destabilizing fragile states and exposing APSA's limited capacity to adapt to these evolving challenges (David & Mabudusha, 2024).

Reforms for a Resilient APSA: Addressing APSA's limitations requires reforms that extend beyond operational improvements and tackle systemic contradictions. Financial autonomy is a critical area for transformation. Innovative mechanisms such as public-private partnerships and diaspora contributions can reduce reliance on external donors and enable the AU to assert greater control over its peace and security agenda (Gardachew, 2021). Enhancing coordination between RECs and the AU through clear subsidiarity protocols and harmonized security strategies is essential for mitigating deployment delays and balancing regional disparities. Investments in regional capacity-building initiatives can further strengthen APSA's readiness to respond to diverse threats (Nyadera, 2024).

Incorporating traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms offers an opportunity to bridge the gap between formal interventions and community-level peacebuilding. By integrating indigenous practices, APSA can align its operations with culturally resonant governance models, reflecting Pan-African ideals (Desmidt, 2019). Finally, addressing governance deficits, including corruption and weak political will among member states, is vital for enhancing APSA's credibility and effectiveness. Strengthening adherence to democratic norms and fostering transparency can create a more robust foundation for APSA's operations and objectives.

The study underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reforms to bolster APSA's capacity to address Africa's evolving security landscape. By reducing external dependencies, enhancing coordination, and incorporating localized approaches, APSA can fulfill its mandate of promoting sustainable peace and security across the continent.

Results

The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) aims to manage Africa's security challenges but is hindered by inefficiencies. The Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) struggles with poor data cohesion and slow responses (Desmidt, 2019), while the African Standby Force (ASF) faces logistical and financial barriers, limiting rapid deployment (Nyadera, 2024). These gaps leave APSA ill-equipped for hybrid threats like cyberattacks and

disinformation (David & Mabudusha, 2024). Regional disparities worsen the issue—ECOWAS excels in crisis prevention, yet North and East Africa lag due to fragmented politics and weak resources (Fagbayibo, 2021).

Financially, APSA's dependence on EU and UN donors compromises autonomy, prioritizing stabilization over local needs (Kaweesi, 2023). Member states' low contributions reflect weak commitment, stalling self-reliant solutions (Gardachew, 2021). Emerging threats—coups, terrorism, and hybrid warfare—exploit these flaws, challenging APSA's focus on conventional conflicts and its sovereignty-intervention balance.

Reforms are urgent. Financial autonomy via diaspora bonds or regional banks could reduce donor reliance, aligning APSA with African priorities (Gardachew, 2021). Strengthening regional collaboration requires capacity-building in weaker RECs for continent-wide cohesion (Nyadera, 2024). Adaptive strategies—AI-driven early warning and counter-disinformation tools—must tackle hybrid threats (David & Mabudusha, 2024). Policy-wise, APSA should invest in culturally resonant, local solutions and enhance governance to boost legitimacy (Desmidt, 2019; Kaweesi, 2023). Globally, APSA's evolution could challenge Western security models, proving regional equity works (Chitando & Chanzi, 2024). Without reform, APSA risks irrelevance; with bold leadership, it can redefine peace and security.

Discussion

Africa's security landscape is rapidly evolving, driven by frequent military coups, entrenched terrorism, and hybrid threats like cyberwarfare and disinformation. Coups, fueled by governance failures and public disillusionment, expose the African Union's (AU) weak deterrence mechanisms—suspensions and sanctions often deepen instability rather than resolve it. Terrorism, thriving in regions like the Sahel, exploits governance vacuums and local grievances, while hybrid threats undermine state sovereignty through technology and media manipulation. These challenges demand APSA shift from reactive containment to proactive prevention, emphasizing community resilience and real-time threat monitoring.

Reform lessons highlight APSA's uneven regional collaboration—ECOWAS excels, yet North Africa lags due to political fragmentation. Financial dependency, with over 90% of funding from external donors like the EU, compromises African agency, aligning priorities with foreign interests. Innovative funding (e.g., diaspora bonds, regional levies) is essential for sovereignty. The African Standby Force (ASF) remains hampered by logistical delays and bureaucratic inefficiencies, requiring streamlined command and local intelligence integration. Non-military solutions—mediation, economic rebuilding, and cultural diplomacy—must address conflict roots, not just symptoms.

Policy implications center on balancing external partnerships with African-led solutions. While EU and UN collaborations offer resources, they often erode strategic independence. APSA must lead, aligning external support with African needs. Integrating traditional conflict-resolution methods, like local peace committees, enhances legitimacy and efficacy. Hybrid threats demand technological innovation—cybersecurity, counter-disinformation, and private-sector collaboration—alongside legal frameworks and digital literacy. Without these reforms, APSA risks irrelevance amid Africa's complex security realities. Bold adaptation can transform it into a resilient, African-driven framework.

Conclusion

The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) stands at a crossroads, its vision of Pan-African unity tested by modern security challenges like coups, terrorism, and hybrid threats such as cyberwarfare and disinformation. These expose operational weaknesses—fragmented political will in the Peace and Security Council (PSC), an underperforming Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) lacking advanced analytics, and an ineffective African Standby Force (ASF) hampered by logistics and bureaucracy. Heavy reliance on external donors further undermines APSA's autonomy, contradicting its core principle of African solutions to African problems.

Reform is urgent and must be pragmatic yet visionary. Strengthened regional cooperation, financial independence, and inclusive, non-military strategies are critical to address these gaps. Modernizing CEWS with AI and real-time data analytics, alongside counter-disinformation tools, would enhance APSA's ability to anticipate and respond to emerging threats. Integrating traditional conflict resolution with innovative technology can position APSA as a leader in adaptive, context.

Theoretically, APSA's struggles reflect global inequities—its dependency and regional disparities mirroring post-colonial tensions. Yet, this presents an opportunity: effective reform could transform APSA into a model of equitable, regionally driven security, challenging neo-imperial paradigms. Success hinges on African leaders transcending national interests for collective action, reducing donor reliance, and aligning strategies with local needs.

Without change, APSA risks stagnation—a reactive, fragmented framework unfit for Africa's evolving landscape. With decisive leadership and systemic transformation, it can bridge its theoretical ambitions and operational realities, setting a global standard for resilience and sovereignty. APSA's future lies in its ability to innovate, unite, and deliver sustainable peace, reshaping regional security narratives worldwide.

References

- Afewerky, Robel. 2023. Residual Responsibility to Implement: The AU, the Constitutive Act, and the Responsibility to Protect. *Global Responsibility to Protect*. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1875984x-20230011>.
- Albeladi, Adel. 2024. The Challenges of Conducting Qualitative Research in Quantitative Culture: Saudi Arabia as a Case Study. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2024.6272>.
- Ani, Ndubuisi. 2021. Coup or Not Coup: The African Union and the Dilemma of Popular Uprisings in Africa. *Democracy and Security* 17:257–277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17419166.2021.1899915>.
- Apuuli, Kasaija. 2019. The 'Speculated' Intervention of the East African Standby Force (EASF) in the Sudan: Lessons from Its Failed Deployment in Burundi. *African Security Review* 28:229–244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2020.1719169>.
- Balcaen, Pieter, Cind Du Bois, and Caroline Buts. 2021. A Game-Theoretic Analysis of Hybrid Threats. *Defence and Peace Economics* 33:26–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10242694.2021.1875289>.
- Bokeriya, Svetlana. 2022. The UN-AU Partnership in Peacekeeping: Tendencies and Problems. *International Organisations Research Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.17323/1996-7845-2022-02-08>.
- Brosig, Malte. 2023. Military Ad Hoc Coalitions and Functional Differentiation in Inter-Organisational Relations. *European Journal of International Security* 9:23–40. <https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2023.5>.
- Brittain, Amy, and Jennifer Carrington. 2024. Application of Within-Methods Triangulation to Analyze

- Hospital System Health. *Advances in Nursing Science* 47:123–135.
<https://doi.org/10.1097/ANS.0000000000000525>.
- Cannon, Brendon, and Federico Donelli. 2022. Rwanda's Military Deployments in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Neoclassical Realist Account. *The International Spectator* 58:109–127.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2022.2132046>.
- Cena, Elida, Joanna Brooks, William Day, Simon Goodman, Anna Rousaki, Victoria Ruby-Granger, and Sarah Seymour-Smith. 2024. Quality Criteria: General and Specific Guidelines for Qualitative Approaches in Psychology Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069241282843>.
- Chandrasekar, Ashwin, Sophie Clark, Sophie Martin, Samantha Vanderslott, Elizabeth Flores, Daniela Aceituno, Phoebe Barnett, Cecilia Vindrola-Padros, and Veronica Juan. 2024. Making the Most of Big Qualitative Datasets: A Living Systematic Review of Analysis Methods. *Frontiers in Big Data* 7.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fdata.2024.1455399>.
- Chigudu, Daniel. 2019. Politics and Constitutionalism: Entrenching the Rule of Law in Africa. *India Quarterly* 75:285–302. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0974928419860931>.
- Chitando, Ezra, and Fortune Chanzi. 2024. Pathways to Peace: The Strategic Role of the AU in Postcolonial Recovery. *Strategic Peace Review*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/pathwaystopeace.2024.2337982>.
- Clark, Timothy. 2024. From Interpretation to Interruption: Embracing Disruptive Analysis. *Qualitative Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941241230240>.
- Cocodia, Jude. 2021. Rejecting African Solutions to African Problems: The African Union and the Islamic Courts Union in Somalia. *African Security* 14:110–131.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2021.1922026>.
- Coe, Brooke, and Kate Nash. 2020. Peace Process Protagonism: The Role of Regional Organisations in Africa in Conflict Management. *Global Change, Peace & Security* 32:157–177.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14781158.2020.1777094>.
- De Coning, Cedric, Andrew Tchie, and Anab Grand. 2022. Ad-Hoc Security Initiatives, an African Response to Insecurity. *African Security Review* 31:383–398.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2022.2134810>.
- Desmidt, Sophie. 2019. Conflict Management and Prevention under the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) of the African Union. *Africa Journal of Management* 5:79–97.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23322373.2018.1563465>.
- Etieyibo, Edwin. 2020. The 'Two Democracies' and Africa's Burden. *African Studies* 79:444–462.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00020184.2020.1865790>.
- Fagbayibo, Babatunde. 2021. Implementing the African Security Regime through a 'Multiple-Speed' Approach: Challenges and Prospect. *Insight on Africa* 13:160–176.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0975087820987173>.
- Gardachew, Belete. 2021. The Rhetoric and Reality of the AU Peace Operations in Darfur (Sudan): Is the 'African Solution' Enough? *African Security Review* 30:247–267.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2021.1898999>.
- Johnson-Peretz, Jason, Tracy Arunga, Jinna Lee, Catherine Akatukwasa, Felix Atwine, Angeline Onyango, Linet Owino, and Carol Camlin. 2024. Remote and Equitable Inductive Analysis for Global Health Teams: Using Digital Tools to Foster Equity and Collaboration in Qualitative Global Health Research via the R-EIGHT Method. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 23.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069241236268>.
- Kaweesi, Emmanuel. 2023. The Paradox of Critical Security and the African Solutions to African

- Problems. *European Journal of International Security* 8:450–470. <https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2023.20>.
- Klaasen, Abraham. 2020. The Quest for Socio-Economic Rights: The Rule of Law and Violent Protest in South Africa. *Sustainable Development* 28:478–484. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.2038>.
- Michelen, Monique, Minh Phan, Amy Zimmer, Natalie Coury, Brenda Morey, Gloriana Hernandez, Pamela Cantero, Sairah Zárate, Melissa Foo, Sora Tanjasiri, John Billimek, and Ana LeBrón. 2024. Practical Qualitative Data Analysis for Public Health Research: A Guide to a Team-Based Approach with Flexible Coding. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069241289279>.
- Nyadera, Israel. 2024. Two Decades of the African Peace and Security Architecture: Call for Reforms. *Strategic Analysis* 48:33–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2024.2337982>.
- Oriola, Temitope, and W. Andy Knight. 2021. Homegrown Solutions to Regional Insecurity Complexes in Africa. *African Security* 14:107–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2021.1961355>.
- Pasara, Michael. 2020. An Overview of the Obstacles to the African Economic Integration Process in View of the African Continental Free Trade Area. *Africa Review* 12:1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09744053.2019.1685336>.
- Seiyefa, Ebimboere. 2023. Exploring Lapses in West Africa’s Security Architecture and Their Implications for Regional Security. *South African Journal of International Affairs* 30:641–659. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2023.2298969>.
- Spandler, Kilian. 2020. UNAMID and the Legitimation of Global-Regional Peacekeeping Cooperation: Partnership and Friction in UN-AU Relations. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 14:187–203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2020.1725729>.