THE AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE: REVISITING THE MANAGEMENT OF NON-MILITARY THREATS IN WEST AFRICA

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Abstract

This paper attempts to point at certain gaps in Africa's Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), particularly because of challenges from and responses to the emergence of non-military security threats on the continent. It argues, using West Africa as a case, that it has become imperative to rethink the ECOWAS security architecture. In this regard, there is much to be said about the key lessons that some instances of the Nigerian security imbroglio have to offer, specifically the notion of widening the public space for the resolution of those threats to national security that have festered and are costing lives and properties and inflicting untold hardships on the citizenry. There appears to be a positive correlation between the adoption of such forms of 'democratized' security strategies - the opening up of the conflict management space as it were - and the recent relative success achieved in the containment of security threats from both conventional and non-conventional military sources. Consequently, the paper holds that the efficacy of this particular form of security defence democratization should be creatively introduced into the budding call for the establishment of a standby militia force not just nationally but regionally as well.

Keywords: *Democracy, Terrorism, APSA, ECOWAS, African Union*

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Introduction

After shaking off the shackles of colonialism, African countries came face to face with new vistas of challenges ranging from poverty to economic stagnation, rising debt crisis, internal strife, discontent, and civil wars, public health challenges including pandemics, trafficking in drugs, humans and arms, and in recent years, terrorism and insurgencies. Overall, continental security outlooks, irrespective of one's standpoint or perspective, remain both disturbing and dire.

The contemporary threats to peace and security are radically different, with the security environment still evolving. While some threats have existed through the years, others are new and unimagined. (Ogata, 2001). The new insecurities that have surfaced in African regions exist alongside drug trafficking, cybercrime, extremism, maritime piracy, and inter- and intra-state rivalries. While conflicts have been perennial, the nature of extant conflicts has been classified as counter-system rebellions. Such conflicts include those involving al-Shabaab, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and separatist groups in Mali, Angola, and Senegal, together with the attendant socio-economic and humanitarian consequences. (Ogata, 2001). Fresh crises in Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR), and others such as in Western Sahara, between Ethiopia and Eritrea as well as between Eritrea and Djibouti, have only just positively responded to peacemaking initiatives. (Peace and Security Council, 2013). It is imperative to note that for the most part, the headway recorded in conflict resolution remains fragile with a danger of reversal, whether in Somalia, Darfur, Mali, the Great Lakes region or in Sudan-South Sudan relations. (Roberts and Benedict, 2000; Berdal, 1999; Rob and Don, 2001). Suffice it to note that institutional responses may exist for certain threats and/or conflicts while they may be absent for others.

Overall there is today an increased awareness of emergent threats because of the regularity of human fatalities. Focus has extended towards internal conflicts and threat dynamics. Threats to the

environment, growing migrant populations, and the increasing need for water and energy resources are some effects of the heightened consumerist tendencies of the world and its burgeoning population. In addition, the fatalities associated with public health challenges (such as the afflictions of HIV/AIDS, Ebola, COVID-19, etc.), poverty, food insecurity, etc. leave devastating and indelible scars on communities. In other words, the security environment is now characterised by diverse linkages that set off myriad security threats. (Sen, 1981). Examples of some interdependent triggers of insecurity are poverty and conflict, post-conflict crimes and disproportionate job distribution, and rising inequality among others. (Sen, 2000).

Against this backdrop, an Extraordinary Session of the Heads of State and Governments of the African Union, AU, known then as the Organisation of African Unity, OAU, was convened in Sirte, Libya in 1999 to create a 'new' framework for dealing with these problems. The AU was subsequently birthed. According to the AU Constitutive Act, it

> …. was created to address global problems of economic, political, and social challenges taking place across the world, including those posed by globalization. (African Union, 2022).

In pursuit of these goals, the principles, objectives, and institutional arrangements of the defunct OAU were all broadened to address the wide range of issues identified. Ambitious plans for the continent were also set in motion, for example, the continent's economic recovery and integration plan known as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was created.

The AU launched a holistic security architecture covering human security, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction, humanitarian intervention, and human rights amongst others. Apart from the Constitutive Act, the AU also developed other

treaties that provided the institutional framework for the realization of its peace, security, and good governance objectives. These include:

1) The Common African Defence and Security Policy
2) The African Union Non-Aggression and Common Defence Pact
3) Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government
4) The Conference on Security, Stability, Development, and Cooperation in Africa Solemn Declaration
5) The African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance

Continental Peace and Security: The Case of the African Peace and Security Architecture

African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is a bold effort to develop a holistic approach to peace and security that recognizes the importance of prevention and mediation as much as peacekeeping. It provides the framework for the AU's engagement and is the structure that seeks to provide peace and security on the continent. It makes available a political decision-making body – the Peace and Security Council; an analysis centre – the Continental Early Warning Centre; an external mediation and advisory body – the Panel of the Wise; a multidimensional standby force comprising military, police, and civilian components – the African Standby Force; and a special fund to cover costs – the African Peace Fund. Notably, each of these structures is replicated at the sub-regional level in each of AU's official regions – West Africa, Southern Africa, North Africa, Central Africa, and East Africa. Additionally, the role of the AU within APSA is to drive the process, provide guidance and policy directions, act as a legitimizing institution, and provide coordination. (Porto, 2010). The AU's achievements since 2002 have in many respects been remarkable.

There are major difficulties in operationalising the African peace and security architecture with the deadline for achieving operational readiness having been extended severally. The various reasons for the

delays are linked in varying degrees to technical deficiencies, weak institutions, and poor funding. There are also political obstacles, with member states being reluctant and sometimes unwilling to commit themselves, to limit national sovereignty for the implementation of policies and norms being developed at the regional or continental level. Other challenges encountered in the implementation of APSA include internal political dynamics in the regions, rivalries between members, and different geopolitical interests.

There is also the problem of finance; as a result, APSA remains heavily dependent on Western donors (mostly the European Union (EU), certain EU member states, and the U.S.). The United Nations (UN) is also an important contributor to the AU's ongoing operations such as the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The new building (under construction) housing the AU's Peace and Security Department is a gift from Germany. (Tionneland, 2014).

Despite these constraints, the invigorated AU and APSA are being consolidated. The AU and its sub-regional partners are developing common strategies for peace and security issues that are increasingly becoming the accepted norms for engagement. The AU's ability to further develop APSA and its institutions will however depend on the organization's ability to work with the sub-regional organizations and how it manages the self-interest of many of its powerful members. It will also depend on its ability to work with international partners, including the rising powers.

As Africa is not isolated from the global order, globalization has generated new forms of complex and interrelated threats that force states to redefine their security needs and modify the means through which international security relationships are directed. For instance, in 2000, the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government affirmed that "the security of each African country is inseparably linked to that of other African countries and the African continent as a whole", agreeing to establish a structure for codifying into national laws and legislation the concept of human security as enshrined in the

Conference on Security, Stability, Development, and Co-operation in Africa (CSSDCA) Solemn Declaration, to rebuild confidence and establish collaborative security frameworks at regional and continental levels (Ng, 2021).

It has long since been recognised that any prospect that African countries have for attaining global competitiveness and sustainable growth and development will be dependent on their capacity to successfully harness their collective human and material resources. By 1980 the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU) now the African Union (AU) had in the Declaration of the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) given voice to the collective aspiration of African states to foster cooperation and forge regional economic integration arrangements. (Ikome, 2007). Over the years several regional economic arrangements have sprung up across the continent making very significant progress in diverse areas which include trade facilitation, and the harmonization of standards in crucial monetary and fiscal policy areas such as tariff, non-tariff, and other regulatory mechanisms. Progress is also being made in the areas of international public health, transport corridor development, and related Protocols like the free movement of Goods and Persons, conflict resolution, and peacekeeping, among others.

By 1991, the AU had established the African Economic Community (AEC) via the instrumentality of the Abuja Treaty (African Union, 1991). This new organisation continues to support and push even further the efforts at deepening and extending integration arrangements both within and between the various regions in Africa. Further to this the Abuja Treaty recognises some eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as the building blocks for strong economic integration and an eventual AEC. These are the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS; the East African Community (EAC); the Economic Community of Central African States, ECCAS; and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). Others recognised by the AU are the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, COMESA; the

Southern African Development Community, SADC and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, IGAD. It is the case however that some states belong to more than one of these or some other integration arrangements within and beyond the continent which not only have diverse priorities and commitments but for all practical purposes operate at different stages as well as paces of development. The security objective of Africa is observable in the interests of regional organisations in matters of security and conflict management, as exemplified in the 1999 ECOWAS Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security (ECOWAS, 1999).

Understanding Non-military Threats in West Africa; Trends, Patterns and Classification

Democratization, economic growth, and regional collaboration have all advanced significantly in West Africa. However, concerns about the future of the region and its development have heightened in light of the recent rise in extremism, violence, conflict, drug trafficking, piracy, and other new risks most of which are non-military. A thorough and robust approach is essential to the full comprehension of the complex and multidimensional subject of these non-military threats in West Africa. Be that as it may, it should be mentioned here that non-military threats comprise several factors under the dynamics of human security. Such may be known to include; poverty and unemployment, diseases, environmental degradation, hunger and starvation, immigration, and arms smuggling. Environmental degradation for instance has provided forced migration and movements of criminal elements across porous borders in West Africa. Mention must thus be made also, that non-military threats in West Africa are somewhat inter-connected and where there is a gap in one, it is bound to link to the other.

APSA Approach to Non-military Threats in West Africa

Recognizing that security has multiple facets, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) addresses non-military challenges holistically. APSA incorporates diplomatic, political, and socio-economic methods alongside military measures to confront difficulties such as conflict, terrorism, and transnational crime. By taking a comprehensive approach, reactions to non-military threats are more successful, fostering stability and long-lasting peace throughout the continent. For this study, two case studies - *Response to the Ebola outbreak, 2014–2016, and Drought in the Horn of Africa, 2011–2012* have been identified;

APSA was critical to the overall response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. The African Union (AU) demonstrated APSA's dedication to handling health emergencies as a non-military danger by mobilizing resources and sending medical staff to impacted nations.

In response to the catastrophic drought plaguing the Horn of Africa, APSA organized relief activities and sent supplies. This example showed how APSA can address socio-economic issues and lessen the negative effects of natural disasters on the stability of an area.

Challenges Faced by APSA in Dealing with Non-Military Threats

In an attempt to deal with non-military threats in West Africa, APSA seems to be faced with several threats ranging from lack of resources and poor funding, lack of capacity building, absence of political will from states as well as inefficient coordination from the various states in West Africa. Nonetheless, APSA has adopted a method of coordinating with regional and continental bodies in the actualization of its mandates. In no particular order, such efforts include; coordination with the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, and African Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Additionally, it has also cooperated with international humanitarian and

development agencies in the actualization of its mandate of responding to non-military threats in West Africa.

Management of Non-Military Threats in the ECOWAS Region

Consideration by ECOWAS for the region's security architecture was a subsequent, some would even say a secondary development designed to counter mainly conventional military threats such as interstate wars that could arise because of border clashes between states, and intra-state armed conflicts such as civil wars. In effect, this regional economic partnership arrangement at the onset limited its security provisions to essentially address traditional conflict patterns and accordingly introduced two protocols: the 1978 ECOWAS Protocol on Non-aggression and the 1981 ECOWAS Protocol on Mutual Assistance and Defense (MAD).

The 1978 Protocol was designed to prevent a possible outbreak of war between West African nations. Article 1 of the Protocol stipulates that:

> Member states shall in their relations with one another, refrain from the threat or use of force or aggression or from employing any other means inconsistent with the charters of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity against the territorial integrity or political independence of other states. (ECOWAS Protocol on Non-Aggression, 1978 in The West African Bulletin, 1995).

The MAD Protocol, signed in Freetown, Sierra Leone in 1981 from its content addressed only issues bordering on state actors, as there were no provisions for intra-state issues. Even more important, it was designed to serve as a regional defence pact against conventional security threats from forces outside the region. Article 2 of the protocol stipulates that: Member States declare and accept that any armed threat

or aggression against any Member State shall constitute a threat or aggression against the entire Community. (ECOWAS, 1981). Article 3 goes on to say that member States resolve to give mutual aid and assistance for defence against any armed threat or aggression.

However, it was only in 1990 that an active step was taken to implement the Protocol on MAD, precisely Article 4b when Nigeria spearheaded the founding of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), to restore order in the ravaging war in Liberia and later Sierra Leone. It is important to note that the creation of ECOMOG applied only to the 1981 Protocol on Mutual Defence. Furthermore, in 1991 the Declaration of Political Principles was adopted in Abuja, upon which economic and security issues topped the agenda, committing, firstly, to fast-tracking and bolstering the economic integration of member states, and secondly, to improving politico-security cooperation among them. The ultimate objective is to transform West Africa into a "security community" as contained in Article 58 of the Revised Treaty on Regional Security (Sesay, 2014). In the years that followed ECOMOG would be transformed into the ECOWAS Standby Force, ESF; a regional peacekeeping force with rapid response capability drawing from a full complement of military, police, and civilian units. (Sesay, 2014).

These military efforts paid off well for West Africa mostly because the threat to peace and stability in the region and the resultant military responses were both mainly conventional. However, the advent of new security challenges could be termed "non-traditional" or unconventional military threats, i.e., threats that fall predominantly under the categorization of insurgency, terrorism, irregular wars, etc. These violent threats are posed most times by non-state actors with transnational capabilities against established state authorities in their attempt to secede from the state, collapse the state, change the government, control state resources, or create constant instability in the state in which they operate. These threats are unconventional because of the strategies and tactics employed to execute them.

In December 1999, the leaders of ECOWAS assembled in Lomé, the capital city of Togo to reflect upon the security conditions of the region, and consequently, a different security framework known as Protocol A/P.1/12/99 Relating to the Mechanism For Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security was created. This Protocol was slightly different from others in that it emphasized the non-military aspect of human security. This digression from the norm was necessary considering the new challenges facing the region. The principle under Article 2(a) of the Mechanism, states that the economic and social development as well as the "security of peoples and states" are inextricably linked. This aspect of human security was embedded in promoting "Democratic" values and standards, reaffirmed in the 2001 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. In a region where the military plays a dominant role, the Protocol reaffirmed the apolitical nature of the security forces and their subjugation to civilian authorities. (African Report, 2016). The second chapter introduced sanctions, to be activated in the event democracy is abruptly ended by any means unconstitutional or where there is a massive violation of human rights.

The 1999 Mechanism also made room for the creation of a "sub-regional peace and security observation system", the Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN). This framework gives warning signals of threats to stability and relies on an Observation and Monitoring Centres, which is located at the ECOWAS headquarters in Abuja with four local offices in Banjul, Cotonou, Monrovia, and Ouagadougou, each responsible for monitoring a group of countries.

Also, to fight capital flight by corrupt government officials in the region, ECOWAS created another security instrument in 2000, the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA). This agency, based in Dakar, works in partnership with government agencies to combat money laundering and sponsors of terrorism. Additionally, the objectives of the mechanism under Article 3(j) of the Lomé Protocol state that ECOWAS shall protect the

environment and take steps to restore the degraded environment to its natural state. It can therefore be seen that the 1999 Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security by design is more encompassing than previous security Protocols: it incorporates aspects of non-traditional security considerations.

However, as the realities on the ground continue to question the supposed potent credentials of the traditional or state-centric security regime, it has become imperative to rethink and (re) apply the relevant ECOWAS Protocols and related security formulations, particularly at the level of national units. It is necessary to also submit here that national-level efforts have been quite effective in addressing non-military threats and as such may remain viable models of engagement.

In this regard, it is submitted here that there is much to be said about the key lessons that some instances of the Nigerian security imbroglio have to offer, specifically the notion of widening the public space for the resolution of those threats to national security that have festered and are causing loss of lives and properties and inflicting untold hardships on the citizenry. It can be argued that there is a positive correlation between the adoption of such forms of 'democratized' security strategies - the opening of the conflict management space as it were - and the recent relative success achieved in the country's containment, even if not total elimination, of security threats from both conventional and non-conventional military sources.

Many facets of the Nigerian polity which constitute the main un-conventional security challenges for the country are undoubtedly amenable to interpretations and extrapolation on scales that can be meaningfully applied to the region. Emergent security challenges in West Africa such as insurgency, pandemics and other public health crises, corruption, kidnappings, assassinations and other forms of violent organized crimes, trafficking in drugs, arms, and humans, food insecurity, environmental degradation, and mass unemployment to mention but a few have questioned the supposed potent credentials of

the traditional, state-centric security approach. The implication is that the resolution of these threats or, at least, their amelioration resides in the amalgamation of traditional and non-traditional security regimens.

Issues and Key Lessons from the Management of Nigeria's Security Challenges

Nigeria's war on terror has been marked by the fact that the asymmetric and embedded nature of the conflict makes devastating attacks by the insurgents against soft targets ever more possible. Unlike the case of the national army, enemy combatants and materials routinely emerge from and dissolve into the populace with unencumbered ease. Recruitment and training of the terrorists follow similar informal, unstructured networks of interpersonal relations and communications. Seditious propaganda, invidious teachings, and narratives are spurned and sustained by and/or through traditionally recognized and respected channels and authority figures. Credibility and legitimacy are further earned and bolstered for the terrorists by the sheer incapacity of the state to foster good governance, promote equity and justice, and create jobs and/or the enabling environment for the same. In all as national growth, development, and prosperity elude an increasing number of the populace, and life and living become a daily struggle against drudgery, poverty, illiteracy, and disease it becomes all the easier to propagate the antisocial narratives that drive hate and discontent.

Components of engagement doctrines, especially underpinning ideologies of counter-narratives must therefore be rethought and made to reflect the critical imperative of placing the populace in its very nexus. The state must actively sponsor a re-direction of the focus of national institutions and processes of socialization to complement the military boots on the ground in the theatres of war. This process must be made to percolate right through to the local and community levels for in the final analysis, the spate of conflicts and insecurity under consideration is quintessentially local.

To a limited extent, Nigeria has increasingly toed the line of this logic in its recent war efforts against terrorism particularly in the Northeast. The military has leveraged the Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF), the local neighbourhood watch/ vigilante group. These are lightly armed militia groups assisting largely in intelligence gathering, localized arrests, and, in limited instances, armed confrontations with the insurgents. There appears to be a positive correlation between the recent success of the Nigerian military in its fight against terrorism and this securitisation of neighbourhood watch /vigilante groups' efforts. The military's combat strategy has also allowed for an increased stepping up and forward by leaders of thought, including religious and traditional institutions to help with the articulation of counter-narratives. This apparent 'democratization' of the security defence apparatuses has been vital, particularly in the battle over the minds and souls of the potential recruits that would have swelled the ranks of the terrorists' army.

Democratization of the security architecture of any polity however requires the buy-in and willing participation of the citizens, something which only a functional state (functional in terms of the state's capacity to deliver on public goods as well as critical social safety infrastructure) can effectively solicit from the people. It is perhaps even more so in the management of non-military threats such as have been highlighted in the proceeding sections of this paper. Non-military threats connected as they invariably are to the crisis of development, require that the state pays close attention to and address the structural dysfunctions in the local political economy as well as the socio-cultural milieu.

ng the fact that the flow and ebb of national economic fortunes have differential impacts on diverse groups in the polity, discontent

and/or alienation of disadvantaged groups – the group that is usually in the majority anyway – is mitigated where established social engineering processes are driven by the state equitably and inclusively. Conversely, and as instances of failed states have amply demonstrated, threats to national security are further accentuated where states have proven unwilling or incapable of pursuing and sustaining growth and development, especially in an inclusive manner. Thus, APSA can deepen its effectiveness in responding to non-military threats by adopting some approaches such as resource mobilization, capacity building, enhanced coordination, political commitment, strategic planning, public health infrastructure, early warning systems, etc.

Conclusion

This paper argues for a reformulation of the regional security architecture of the ECOWAS pointing at certain security gaps realized because of the challenges from and response dynamics to emergent threats. It indicates that from 1978 up until the 1990s, these dynamics fell within the bounds of traditional security demand and supply chain. This disposition of the ECOWAS security apparatuses notwithstanding the region has witnessed an upsurge in non-military security threats like disease pandemics, corruption, organized crime, trafficking in arms, drugs, and humans, food insecurity, environmental degradation, mass unemployment, etc. Such lingering security challenges continue to escalate questioning the efficacy of traditional, state-centric security approaches while those new non-military threats, not envisaged or insufficiently contemplated within the framework of extant regional security arrangements, are also opening new vistas of threats. Arguably, the solutions lie partly in the amalgamation of traditional and non-traditional security regimes.

It is against this backdrop that it is argued here that West Africa's security challenges and the responses to them need to be creatively rethought along lines that, as some of the instances from Nigeria

demonstrate, allow for a democratization of the security space. Confronted with an intractable armed insurgency and devastating acts of terrorism particularly in the Northeast of the country, the Nigerian military equipped and incorporated the local vigilante corps, the Civilian JTF, into its engagement strategy. Complimenting this is the added effort of engaging the civil society and its institution and securing the buy-in of the people and their leaders of thought. The successes achieved in the subsequent military campaigns against the Boko Haram sect are a pointer not only to the efficacy of the strategy but, equally important, it is also an indication that it is valid for an extended replication on both a national and regional scale.

The efficacy of this form of security defence democratization should be creatively introduced into the budding call for the establishment of a standby militia force not just nationally but regionally as well. The regional security Protocols should therefore be revised and reformulated to accommodate a well-managed and controlled regime of democratized security and defence arrangement.

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