Assessing the African Union's Operational Effectiveness in West Africa Under African Peace and Security Architecture

Omokpe, Eyamekuayare Augustine
Department of Political Science,
Faculty of the Social Sciences,
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria
omokpeaugustine@gmail.com (+234 806 251 2822)

Prof. Vincent E. Efebeh
Department of Political Science,
Faculty of the Social Sciences,
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria
vinefebeh15@gmail.com (+234 803 451 6815)

https://doi.org/10.56201/jpslr.vol.12.no10.2026.pg177.188

Abstract
This study examined the effectiveness of the African Union (AU), through the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), in addressing security threats in West Africa. It focused on political divisions among member states and the frequent occurrence of military takeovers. The study had two objectives: to assess the effectiveness of APSA in dealing with political divisions among member states and to examine the challenges affecting its ability to manage military takeovers. Collective Security Theory was used as the theoretical framework. The study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design and relied on secondary data from scholarly publications, African Union documents, policy briefs, institutional reports, and regional governance reports. Data were collected through documentary review and analysed using qualitative content analysis. The findings showed that APSA provides an important framework for preventing and managing conflicts through the Peace and Security Council (PSC), Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), and African Standby Force (ASF). These bodies support early warning, preventive diplomacy, mediation, sanctions, and joint efforts to address political instability and insecurity. However, the study found that there is a gap between the goals of APSA and its actual performance. Political divisions, conflicting national interests, weak political commitment, inadequate funding, poor logistics, and limited capacity for rapid deployment affect its ability to respond to security threats effectively. The study also found that dependence on external funding and poor coordination between the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) weaken its independence and effectiveness. The study concluded that APSA needs adequate and reliable funding, improved logistics, stronger early-warning systems, and greater cooperation among member states. It recommended improved coordination among relevant institutions, consistent enforcement of AU principles, and stronger collective efforts to promote peace and security in West Africa.

Keywords: *African Union, African Peace and Security Architecture, operational effectiveness, collective security, military coups, West Africa*

Introduction

Regional integration in Africa has long been framed not only as an economic project but as a deliberate peace-building and conflict-management strategy designed to reduce interstate tensions, promote democratic governance, and strengthen collective security responses to crises that transcend national borders. This vision became more pronounced with the establishment of the African Union (AU) in 2002, which replaced the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and institutionalized a new peace and security norm linking integration with conflict prevention and continental stability. Central to this evolution is the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and its core decision-making organ, the Peace and Security Council (PSC), which is mandated to prevent conflicts, enforce sanctions against unconstitutional changes of government, and authorize peace support missions (African Union, 2023). The AU's Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) further reinforces this agenda by promoting democratic governance, strengthening early-warning systems, coordinating mediation efforts, and developing continental frameworks aligned with Agenda 2063 (African Union PAPS, 2024). These institutions operationalize the AU's doctrine of African solutions to African problems, emphasizing coordinated mechanisms for conflict prevention, collective security, and democratic consolidation. However, scholarship indicates persistent structural challenges. As Amani Africa (2023) and Williams (2021) argue, although APSA is normatively ambitious, its implementation is weakened by chronic underfunding, logistical constraints, dependence on external donors, and inconsistent political will among member states. The Peace and Security Council while central to continental security governance is often hampered by political divisions among influential states, resulting in delayed or weak responses to crises (Williams, 2021; Amani Africa, 2023). These critiques reveal the gap between institutional ambition and operational reality.

West Africa provides a critical testing ground for the African Union's peace and security mechanisms. The region faces persistent threats including jihadist insurgency, violent extremism, electoral instability, and recurrent military coups. Although the AU has established an extensive institutional framework anchored in the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and enforced through the Peace and Security Council (PSC), scholars argue that ambiguities in the application of APSA principles, particularly subsidiarity and burden-sharing, often result in fragmented or delayed continental responses (ISS Africa, 2024; Adebajo, 2020). These challenges expose structural weaknesses in AU-led interventions during fast-moving political crises. These challenges and the recurring military takeover within the region call for the need to do a reassessment of the operational effectiveness of African Union in West Africa under its African Peace and Security Architecture. This paper will be guided by the following specific objectives which are to:

1. Determine the operational effectives of African Peace and Security Architecture of African Union in face of the recent political division among member States.
2. Examine the challenge affecting its ability to manage the crisis among member States especially that of military takeover.

Research Questions

1. What is the operational effectiveness of African Peace and Security Architecture of African Union in face of the recent political division among member States?
2. What are the challenges affecting African Peace and Security Architecture in managing the crisis of military takeover among member States?

Overview of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)

The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is the institutional framework established by the African Union (AU) to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts, promote peace, and strengthen security and political stability across Africa. It emerged from the AU's commitment to move beyond the non-interference principle associated with the former Organisation of African Unity towards a more proactive approach to conflict prevention and intervention. The framework is anchored in the AU Constitutive Act of 2000 and the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), adopted in 2002. Its principal components include the Peace and Security Council, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the African Standby Force (ASF), the Panel of the Wise, and the African Union Peace Fund. Together, these mechanisms are intended to facilitate early identification of security threats, preventive diplomacy, mediation, peace-support operations, and post-conflict reconstruction. The PSC provides political leadership and decision-making on peace and security matters, while the CEWS gathers and analyses information to identify emerging threats. The ASF is designed to support timely deployment for peace-support and related operations, whereas the Panel of the Wise contributes to mediation and conflict prevention. The Peace Fund is intended to provide financial support for AU peace and security activities. The effectiveness of these mechanisms, however, depends on coordination among AU institutions, cooperation with regional economic communities such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the willingness of member states to implement collective decisions. The APSA therefore represents both an institutional commitment to collective security and a framework whose success depends on the practical capacity to translate continental decisions into coordinated action (African Union, 2000, 2002).

In contemporary practice, APSA's significance is reflected in its efforts to respond to complex security challenges, including terrorism, violent extremism, unconstitutional changes of government, electoral disputes, and protracted armed conflicts. The African Union's report on the activities of the Peace and Security Council for 2023, published in 2024, reviews the implementation of peace and security decisions and the relationship between APSA and the African Governance Architecture (African Union, 2024). Nevertheless, the existence of formal institutions does not automatically guarantee effective crisis management. Operational effectiveness requires timely information-sharing, adequate financial and logistical resources, political commitment, and coordination between the AU and regional organisations. These requirements remain particularly important in West Africa, where responses to coups, insurgency, and regional political tensions require cooperation between continental and subregional institutions. The AU Peace and Security Council's 2026 update on the African Standby Force also reaffirmed the importance of adapting the force to changing security threats and advancing cooperation between the AU and regional economic communities and mechanisms (African Union Peace and Security Council, 2026). Thus, APSA should be assessed not only by the institutions it has established but also by its ability to prevent escalation, facilitate timely intervention, implement collective decisions, and support sustainable peace. Its continuing development

depends on strengthening operational readiness, securing predictable financing, and ensuring that member states consistently uphold their commitments to collective peace and security.

AU's Operational Capacity under the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)

The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) constitutes the cornerstone of the African Union's (AU) operational capacity to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts across the continent. APSA comprises several integral components, including the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the African Standby Force (ASF), and additional mechanisms designed to promote collective security and crisis response (African Union, 2020). These structures collectively seek to create a continental platform capable of addressing multifaceted security challenges, ranging from interstate conflicts to intra-state insurgencies. Despite these high ambitions, APSA's practical implementation often falls short, especially in West Africa, where complex insecurity dynamics, such as terrorism, communal violence, and activities of non-state armed groups, significantly complicate operational effectiveness (European External Action Service, 2019). This gap between strategic design and ground realities presents a continuous challenge to the AU's peace and security efforts in the region (Boas & Dunn, 2017).

European Court of Auditors (2018) report highlights APSA's chronic resource and logistical deficits, which undermine its ability to act decisively during crises. According to the 2018 European Court of Auditors report, key APSA organs, particularly those tasked with rapid deployment such as the ASF, suffer from severe underfunding, inadequate strategic airlift capabilities, and logistical challenges that hinder timely troop movements and operational readiness (European Court of Auditors, 2018). These deficits result in delayed or incomplete responses during West African emergencies, where rapid intervention is often critical. Furthermore, financial dependence on external donors exposes APSA to fluctuations in funding priorities, adversely affecting sustained mission deployment (Biersteker & Weber, 2020). Such structural weaknesses limit the AU's ability to fulfill its mandate of swift and efficient conflict intervention. While APSA is designed as a continental architecture, effective conflict management in West Africa relies heavily on coordination with regional economic communities (RECs), primarily the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Literature reveals that coordination between APSA and ECOWAS is often fraught with complexities, including overlapping mandates, political competition, and divergent priorities (Obi, 2018). This can lead to duplication of efforts, delays in response, and operational inefficiencies (Aning & Pokoo, 2013). Despite these challenges, scholars emphasize that the AU's operational effectiveness in West Africa is largely contingent upon the quality of its cooperation with ECOWAS, given the latter's established regional presence and operational experience (Katzenstein, 2017). Hence, aligning APSA's continental framework with ECOWAS's regional capacities and political will is essential for coherent and impactful peace and security interventions.

A critical function of APSA lies in its preventive diplomacy, anchored by the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), which aims to detect and address conflict triggers before they escalate. However, studies show that CEWS faces significant operational limitations, such as insufficient data collection, lack of reliable real-time information, and bureaucratic inertia (Murithi, 2019). Moreover, the preventive diplomacy practiced under APSA tends to be more reactive than proactive, often responding to crises only after they have gained momentum (Williams, 2021). This undermines APSA's potential to function as a truly preventive tool in volatile contexts such as West Africa, where early intervention could avert widespread violence. The interplay of

resource constraints and political hesitancy further complicates efforts to utilize early warning data for timely diplomatic engagement (Adebanwi, 2020).

The African Standby Force (ASF) was conceived as APSA's rapid-reaction military component, capable of swiftly intervening in crises. However, research consistently points to significant shortcomings in its operationalization. Key challenges include delays in troop generation by member states, inadequate funding, and the persistent lack of strategic airlift and logistics, which are critical for rapid deployment (Toure & Aning, 2019). Consequently, the ASF remains largely a paper concept, without the fully developed capacity to act independently in emergent West African conflicts (Aning & Pokoo, 2013). These deficits significantly limit the AU's capacity to project power and provide timely peacekeeping or enforcement missions, forcing reliance on regional actors or international partners for intervention.

APSA's record in peacekeeping and peace support operations in West Africa is mixed, reflecting broader institutional and contextual challenges. While the AU has successfully deployed missions in some regions, such as AMISOM in Somalia, its capacity to maintain long-term, complex operations in West Africa remains constrained (Williams, 2019). In cases such as Mali and the Sahel, the AU has typically relied on ECOWAS or international coalitions rather than direct APSA-led missions, underscoring its limited independent operational reach (International Crisis Group, 2022). This dependence points to a broader challenge of institutional capacity and resource availability within APSA, limiting the AU's ability to sustain multidimensional peace operations in the region. Robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks are critical for institutional learning and continuous improvement in peace operations. However, there is limited evidence that the AU has effectively institutionalized these practices within APSA. Murithi (2020) reported that scholarly critiques reveal that APSA lacks systematic after-action reviews and learning mechanisms to critically assess mission outcomes and inform future strategies. This absence of institutional memory and feedback loops risks perpetuating operational shortcomings in West African interventions, undermining the architecture's long-term effectiveness. Without comprehensive M&E systems, the AU struggles to build adaptive and responsive peace and security capabilities (Murithi, 2020).

A persistent challenge confronting APSA is its financial sustainability. Although the AU envisions member states as primary funders, actual contributions are often irregular and insufficient, leading to heavy reliance on external donors such as the European Union, the United Nations, and bilateral partners (Schmidt & Williams, 2019). This dependency undermines APSA's autonomy and subjects its operational planning to donor preferences and conditionalities, complicating peace and security initiatives in West Africa (Biersteker & Weber, 2020). Financial instability poses serious risks to long-term mission sustainability and the development of an indigenous African peace and security capability. The success of APSA is closely tied to the political will of AU member states and their willingness to cede sovereignty for collective security measures. In West Africa, national governments may resist AU-led interventions, perceiving them as infringements on sovereignty or politically motivated (Obi, 2018). The normative principle of ―African solutions to African problems‖ also faces scrutiny when operational capacity does not match expectations, leading to doubts about APSA's credibility and legitimacy (Murithi, 2020). Political hesitancy and lack of consensus among member states thus constitute significant barriers to the effective implementation of APSA in the region. Despite the challenges, there are encouraging signs of reform and institutional strengthening within APSA and its interaction with regional bodies. For instance, ECOWAS's Peace Fund conducted a benchmarking visit to the AU Commission in 2025, aimed at deepening coordination and addressing capacity shortfalls (ECOWAS, 2025). This initiative

signals growing institutional commitment to enhancing synergy between the AU and its regional partners, which is crucial for improving APSA's operational relevance in West Africa. Such reforms, alongside efforts to streamline funding and improve strategic logistics, offer hope for a more robust and responsive continental peace and security architecture.

Major Institutional, Political, and Structural Challenges that Hinder the AU's Role in Promoting Collective Security

Public opinion surveys across Africa show widening gaps between citizens' democratic aspirations and the actual performance of elected governments including declining trust in institutions, frustration with corruption and poor service delivery, and rising openness to non-democratic alternatives. According to recent continental opinion data, more than half of Africans feel their countries are headed in the wrong direction and express falling confidence in democratic institutions (Afrobarometer, 2023). This widespread discontent weakens the AU's normative leverage because when citizens lose trust in democratic institutions, national leaders feel less domestic pressure to respect AU democratic standards.

Recent governance assessments reveal that security and political stability have declined in many African countries, while widening data gaps hinder timely detection of democratic backsliding. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation's 2023 Index reports stagnation or deterioration in overall governance scores and warns that missing or incomplete data obscures early signs of fragility (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2024). These gaps reduce the AU's ability to formulate timely responses or target at-risk states. Analyses of the AU Peace and Security Architecture highlight persistent capability gaps, including shortages in air mobility, medical evacuation, heavy-lift capacity, and operational logistics. AU standby forces remain unevenly equipped and rarely deploy at the speed required to match PSC mandates (AU Peace and Security Department, 2023). This mismatch between political authorisation and operational delivery undermines credibility. Research from democracy-governance institutions shows that AU member states often resist assertive AU enforcement actions, citing sovereignty concerns, which leads to inconsistent use of sanctions and uneven responses to democratic erosion. Recent analyses argue that sovereignty-shielding has become a major obstacle to enforcing AU norms on unconstitutional changes of government (International IDEA, 2023). Governance reviews indicate that the AU frequently repeats operational mistakes because lessons from previous political transitions and peace operations are not systematically archived or institutionalised. According to continental governance assessments, long-term lesson-capture remains underdeveloped, preventing the AU from improving its interventions over time (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2024). Several studies show that AU engagement with domestic civil-society groups, national parliaments, and media actors remains limited, reducing the Union's capacity to detect early warning signs of democratic decline. Recent public-opinion and civic-engagement reports demonstrate that grassroots participation is essential for democratic resilience, yet AU structures still rely heavily on state-centric channels (Afrobarometer, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The Collective Security Theory was adopted for his study and it is rooted in the works of Claude (1962), has been expanded by scholars like Williams (2020), Paris (2021), and De Carvalho & Engel (2022) to explain multilateral defence mechanisms. Recent African-focused research shows the theory's relevance for understanding the AU's Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), early-warning systems, and intervention norms. These updated studies argue that collective security is essential for addressing sub-regional coups, terrorism, and unconstitutional changes of

government. Collective Security Theory posits that threats to one state are threats to all, requiring unified deterrence or intervention (Claude, 1962; Williams, 2020). For the AU, this principle underlies the Constitutive Act's Article 4(h), which mandates intervention in war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. Contemporary scholars argue that the AU's normative commitments demonstrate continental acceptance of collective defence logic.

The theory emphasises the need for centralised decision-making, usually through a standing authority capable of coordinating responses (Paris, 2021). Within Africa, the AU PSC plays this role by authorising missions and sanctions. However, studies find that inconsistent member-state compliance weakens the centralised authority necessary for effective collective action. Collective security requires pre-agreed enforcement measures like military deployment, sanctions, arms embargoes, or diplomatic pressure (Williams, 2020). Recent AU cases, such as imposing sanctions on Mali in 2022 and Niger in 2023, illustrate attempts to operationalise enforcement, though scholars note inconsistencies in follow-through.

A central tenet of the theory is that member states must share costs and capabilities (De Carvalho & Engel, 2022). In Africa, burden-sharing manifests in the African Standby Force (ASF) and ECOWAS Standby Force. Yet, persistent underfunding and donor-dependence indicate structural weaknesses in collective security burden-sharing arrangements. Collective security also requires shared legitimacy norms, ensuring that interventions are perceived as lawful and morally justified (Paris, 2021). AU decisions on unconstitutional changes of government, peacekeeping, and mediation reflect attempts to establish common standards. However, some states undermine these norms for domestic political gain.

Relevance to the Study

The theory explains why the AU positions itself as a guardian of democratic order: coups threaten regional stability, and collective action prevents spillover (Williams, 2020). AU and ECOWAS sanctions on Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger follow this logic of shared defence against threats to constitutional governance. Collective security illuminates why AU operations fail when states do not provide sufficient troops, funding, or political backing (De Carvalho & Engel, 2022). The AU's reliance on external donors for peace operations contradicts the theory's requirement for autonomous, predictable enforcement capacity.

The theory clarifies the consequences of political fragmentation, such as when member states disagree over sanctions or interventions. These divisions cripple collective security systems because their strength depends on unanimity or near-unanimity (Paris, 2021). AU divisions during crises like Sudan and Niger affirm this theoretical expectation. Collective security principles support reforms such as strengthening the AU Peace Fund, creating standing rapid-deployment units, and improving early-warning response times. These reforms align with theoretical prescriptions for a credible, unified security structure capable of deterring or resolving crises swiftly.

Research Method

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design, which was appropriate for analysing existing empirical studies, policy documents, institutional reports, and scholarly literature on the African Union's (AU's) role in promoting democracy and collective security. This approach supported a rich, contextualised understanding of the AU's evolving security practices and democratic norms as documented in recent publications (Sandelowski, 2020). The study relied exclusively on secondary data obtained from academic and policy sources. Peer-reviewed journal

articles, institutional publications, policy briefs, and governance datasets formed the core of the data. Key sources included African Union communiqués and Peace and Security Council (PSC) reports accessible through the AU Peace and Security Department (African Union, 2023); ECOWAS intervention assessments (International IDEA democracy reports (International IDEA, 2023).This study adopted a qualitative approach to data collection, relying exclusively on documentation method using secondary sources of information. Data were systematically gathered through documentary review of relevant academic, institutional, and policy-based materials that addressed the African Union's (AU's) role in promoting democracy and collective security across the continent. Data collected from the reviewed publications were analysed using qualitative content analysis, a systematic method of identifying patterns, themes, and interpretive insights within documents (Schreier, 2021).

Discussion

Institutional Capacity and operational effectiveness of African Peace and Security Architecture of African Union in Conflict Prevention and management

The operational effectiveness of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) can be observed in its early-warning and threat-monitoring capacity, conflict prevention and mediation, peace-support operations, coordination of regional security responses, and post-conflict peacebuilding (Murithi, 2019). Through the Peace and Security Council (PSC), Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), and African Standby Force (ASF), the African Union has established mechanisms for identifying emerging threats, facilitating dialogue among conflicting parties, supporting responses to political instability, and coordinating interventions against terrorism, insurgency, and communal violence (Williams, 2021). However, political divisions among member states, competing national interests, inadequate funding, logistical constraints, and inconsistent political commitment weaken the implementation of these mechanisms. Consequently, although APSA provides an important institutional foundation for regional peace and security, its operational effectiveness depends on the willingness of member states to cooperate, implement collective decisions, and provide the resources required for timely and coordinated action (Williams, 2019).

Resource Constraints and the Challenges of Collective Security among African Union Member States

A dominant theme emerging from the analysis is the severe resource and logistical limitations affecting APSA's operational capacity. Evidence shows that inadequate funding, lack of strategic airlift capabilities, and insufficient logistical infrastructure significantly hinder rapid deployment and crisis response. These constraints result in delayed interventions in time-sensitive conflict situations, thereby reducing the AU's ability to effectively manage emerging security threats in West Africa. The dependence on external donors further complicates this issue, as it introduces uncertainty and affects the sustainability of peace operations. The African Standby Force (ASF), intended as APSA's rapid-response mechanism, is found to be largely underdeveloped and operationally constrained. Thematic analysis highlights delays in troop mobilization, insufficient training, and logistical inefficiencies as major barriers to its effectiveness. As a result, the ASF has not fully achieved its mandate of providing swift military intervention during crises. This limitation weakens APSA's overall operational strength and forces the AU to rely heavily on regional bodies or international actors in addressing conflicts in West Africa.

The findings of the study revealed that the African Union's (AU) operational capacity under the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) remains constrained in effectively addressing security challenges in West Africa, are strongly supported by existing literature. This finding aligns with the work of the African Union (2020) and the European External Action Service (2019), who emphasize that although APSA is designed as a comprehensive security framework, its implementation has not matched its strategic objectives. The persistence of complex security threats such as terrorism and communal conflicts in West Africa corroborates the study's conclusion that there is a significant gap between APSA's design and its operational realities. Similarly, Boas and Dunn (2017) agree with this position by highlighting the challenges of translating policy frameworks into practical conflict management outcomes.

Furthermore, the study's findings are in consonance with the European Court of Auditors (2018) and Biersteker and Weber (2020), who identify resource and logistical constraints as major impediments to APSA's effectiveness. Their works support the finding that underfunding, inadequate logistics, and dependence on external donors significantly weaken the AU's capacity for rapid response. This aligns with the study's observation that delayed interventions and limited operational readiness undermine APSA's credibility in West Africa. In the same vein, Schmidt and Williams (2019) agree that financial instability affects long-term mission sustainability, thereby reinforcing the study's conclusion on the limitations of APSA's operational capacity.

In addition, the findings of this study corroborate the views of Obi (2018), Aning and Pokoo (2013), and Katzenstein (2017) regarding the complexities of coordination between APSA and regional bodies such as ECOWAS. These scholars highlight issues of overlapping mandates, political competition, and divergent priorities, which align with the study's finding that poor coordination reduces operational efficiency. Similarly, Murithi (2019) and Williams (2021) support the study by pointing out the weaknesses of the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), particularly its reactive nature and limited capacity for proactive conflict prevention. This agreement underscores the study's conclusion that APSA's preventive diplomacy mechanisms are not fully effective in addressing emerging conflicts in West Africa.

Conclusion

This study concluded that while the African Union (AU) has established an extensive normative and institutional framework for promoting collective security in West Africa, its overall effectiveness remains constrained by a combination of operational, political, and structural limitations. It further state that mechanisms such as sanctions, suspensions, and diplomatic engagement have not consistently deterred unconstitutional changes of government, largely due to weak enforcement and inconsistencies in application. Similarly, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), though conceptually robust, is hindered by inadequate resources, logistical deficiencies, and limited rapid-response capability, thereby restricting its ability to address complex and evolving security threats

Recommendations

1. The African Union (AU) should strengthen the operational capacity of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) by improving its financial, logistical, and rapid-response capabilities. The AU should ensure the effective implementation of the Peace Fund and encourage member states to make regular financial contributions towards peace and security activities. It should also improve the operational readiness of the African Standby Force (ASF) through adequate training, equipment, strategic airlift, and communication facilities.

2. The African Union should address the institutional and political challenges that weaken collective security among its member states. These challenges include political divisions, conflicting national interests, inconsistent commitment to AU decisions, and inadequate coordination between the AU and regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The AU and ECOWAS should establish more effective mechanisms for information-sharing, joint assessment of security threats, mediation, and the implementation of agreed decisions.
3. The African Union should promote sustainable collective security by strengthening democratic governance, institutional accountability, and public participation in peace and security processes. It should support credible elections, constitutional governance, effective public institutions, and dialogue between governments and citizens to address the grievances that may contribute to political instability and military takeovers. The AU should also strengthen its monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the implementation and effectiveness of its peace and security decisions.

References

Adebajo, A. (2020). *The ECOWAS peace and security architecture: A critical analysis*. Centre for Conflict Resolution. https://www.ccr.org.za

Adebanwi, W. (2020). African Peace and Security Architecture: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of African Security, 14*(3), 45–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2020.1753501

African Union. (2000). Constitutive Act of the African Union. https://au.int/en/treaties/constitutive-act-african-union

African Union. (2002). Protocol relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. https://au.int/en/treaties/protocol-relating-establishment-peace-and-security-council-african-union

African Union. (2023). *African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) annual report*. https://au.int

African Union. (2024). Report of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on its activities and the state of peace and security in Africa: Reporting period January to December 2023. https://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/10561

African Union PAPS. (2024). Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security: Mandate and activities. https://paps.au.int

African Union Peace and Security Council. (2026, May 26). Communiqué of the 1346th meeting of the PSC held on 15 May 2026, on update on the operationalization of the African Standby Force (ASF). https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-1346th-meeting-of-the-psc-held-on-15-may-2026-on-update-on-the-operationalization-of-the-african-standby-force-asf

Afrobarometer. (2023). *Round 9 survey findings*. https://afrobarometer.org

Amani Africa. (2023). PSC report: Challenges facing APSA implementation. https://amaniafrica-et.org

Aning, K., & Pokoo, J. (2013). The African Standby Force and the future of regional peacekeeping in Africa. *African Security Review, 22*(4), 17–29. https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2013.844858

AU Peace and Security Department (PAPS). (2023). AU operational reforms and financing notes: Policy recommendations. African Union.

Biersteker, T., & Weber, C. (2020). Funding Africa's Peace and Security Architecture. *Global Governance, 26*(2), 179–198. https://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-02602003

Boas, M., & Dunn, K. C. (2017). *African agency in international politics*. Routledge.

Claude, I. (1962). *Power and international relations*. Random House.

De Carvalho, B., & Engel, U. (2022). Collective security in Africa: Progress and limitations.*Journal of Modern African Studies, 60*(3), 345–365.

ECOWAS. (2025). Regional initiatives to strengthen peace, security, and democratic governance. https://www.ecowas.int/ecowas-launches-e105-million-regional-initiatives-to-strengthen-peace-security-and-economic-integration-in-west-africa-with-support-from-eu-germany-and-spain

European Court of Auditors. (2018). Special report: The African Peace and Security Architecture. https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=45614

European External Action Service. (2019). Assessment of APSA. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/62833/assessment-african-peace-and-security-architecture-apsa_en

International Crisis Group. (2022). West Africa: Challenges to peace and security.

https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. (2023). *The Global State of Democracy 2022: Forging social contracts in a time of discontent*. International IDEA.

ISS Africa. (2024). Public trust and the future of ECOWAS security architecture. https://issafrica.org

Katzenstein, P. (2017). African regional security governance. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development, 12*(1), 17–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2017.1283112

Mo Ibrahim Foundation. (2024). *Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG)*. https://iiag.online

Murithi, T. (2019). The African Union's Peace and Security Architecture: The challenge of prevention. *African Security Review, 28*(1),43–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2019.1569893

Murithi, T. (2020). Institutional learning in African peace operations. *Conflict, Security & Development, 20*(4), 451–468. https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2020.1755784

Obi, C. (2018). ECOWAS and the AU: Regional and continental cooperation. In *Routledge Handbook of African Security* (pp. 247–264). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315670214-19

Paris, R. (2021). Collective security and global governance. *International Organization, 75*(4), 1003–1025.

Sandelowski, M. (2020). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health*.

Schmidt, E., & Williams, P. (2019). Funding African peace operations. *Journal of Modern African Studies, 57*(3), 435–459. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X19000561

Schreier, M. (2021). *Qualitative content analysis in practice*. SAGE Publications.

Toure, M., & Aning, K. (2019). ASF: Operational challenges and prospects. *African Security Review, 28*(3), 244–260. https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2019.1635061

Williams, P. D. (2019). Peacekeeping in Africa: The African Union, regional security, and the quest for peace. *International Peacekeeping, 26*(5), 563–584. https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2019.1619712

Williams, P. D. (2020). *Violence and security on the African continent*. Polity Press.

Williams, P. D. (2021). Preventive diplomacy and early warning in Africa. *Journal of International Peacekeeping, 25*(2), 123–146. https://doi.org/10.1163/18754112-02502003