# The Rationale for AfSol in Peace and Security: The Global, National and Regional Precipitants

**By Ndubuisi Christian Ani**[1]

**Abstract**

Since the establishment of the African Union in 2001, there has been a heightened activism for African Solutions (AfSol) in peace and security as opposed to the reality of external impositions and interventions. This article contends that while international factors play a role in Africa's insecurities, the continent suffers largely from the ineptitude and myopic interests of Africa's leadership at the state and regional levels. The clamour for AfSol by political leaders often serves to mask the complicity of local actors in Africa's crises especially in peace and security. To ensure sustainable peace and stability on the continent, the AfSol concept should be underpinned with good governance and reliable attempts at context-specific solutions alongside mainstream development and security paradigms.

Keywords: African-centred Solutions (AfSol), Africa, African Union, African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), Somalia

## Introduction

This article advances knowledge on Africa's security by interrogating the rationale for 'African (-centred) solutions' (AfSol) to African peace and security challenges, which has become a buzzword in contemporary African peace and security discourses. Although AfSol could be traced back to the emergence of Pan-Africanism and the independence of African states in the 1960s, there is a need to critically engage the rationale underpinning the recent calls for AfSol. Using three levels of analysis – global, state and regional, the study argues that the clamour for AfSol is precipitated by several factors that influence Africa's peace and security landscape.

The study is premised on the considerations that since 2002, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)'s successor, the African Union (AU), has been equipped with normative and institutional mandates to coordinate and spearhead the provision of African solutions wherever possible (Apuuli, 2012; Okello and Gebremichael, 2016). The robust security interventions of the AU as well as the sub-regional organizations are considered as examples of the renewed commitment by African leaders to ensure African solutions (Dersso, 2012). However, there remains persistent doubt about what AfSol entails because the so-called 'AfSol' employed by African actors is not often endogenously driven (Arman, 2014).

1 Ndubuisi Christian Ani (PhD) is based at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In 'who owns African ownership', Franke and Esmenjaud (2014) argue that while security has been Africanized, in terms of Africans being involved in peace operations, there are compelling reasons to argue that the process does not bode well for the principle of African ownership. Using the case studies of the AU mission in Darfur and Central African Republic (CAR), Franke and Romain (2014) stress that external actors still have immense influence on the decisions of African actors to establish a mission in spite of AfSol, and external actors also hold sway over the mission's mandate, operations, and termination. Moreover, the discourse on AfSol is often around the implementation capacity of Africa with limited discussion on the broader conceptual/endogenous capacity of Africa to resolve its challenges.

There tends to be less regard for the school of thought that argues that many peace and security initiatives are carried out under the paradigms of dominant powers to the detriment of other approaches that could yield sustainable solutions (Avruch, 2002). For Salem (2007), the mainstream conception of conflict resolution portrays fundamental ideas, assumptions, beliefs, values and thought processes of dominant/western powers. As such, the value systems of other localities – such as that of Africa – remain untested and marginalized in mainstream peace and security discourses and processes. In 'Decolonizing Conflict Resolution', Walker (2004) argues that the power imbalance in the research and practice of conflict resolution perpetuates colonialism and upholds the hegemony of western views while indigenous worldviews are marginalized. Thus, whether an intervention is carried out by an African actor or an external one, the intervention could reek of the values and perspectives of the dominant frameworks of powerful actors.

There has been inadequate engagement with the foregoing dynamics in the mainstream political discourses on AfSol. This is because 'the precise meaning of the concept of "African-led Solutions" to African problems in general is still debatable' (Komey, Osman, and Melakedingel, 2013: 1). Dersso (2012: 11) observes that "even though the political ideal of African solutions underlying the APSA (African Peace and Security Architecture) is routinely used in the literature and policy circles, questions still remain on what it actually entails and how it informs and shapes African policy making on peace and security issues affecting the continent." This article makes the point that the lack of conceptual and policy clarity of AfSol is the result of limited research on the factors that motivate the advancement of AfSol in the interdependent context of the global system. Yet, for any constructive effort to make meaning of AfSol's place in peace and security in contemporary Africa, it is imperative to engage with its precipitants.

Thus, this article argues that AfSol is reflective of the complex external and local factors that constrain durable peace and security in Africa. This essay explores the enabling factors in favour of, and the challenges facing AfSol at the global, state, and regional

levels by drawing on specific cases in some African countries, particularly Somalia. It contends that while external factors partly inform the call for AfSol, national and regional actors are central to Africa's continued security conundrum and inability to realize the goals of AfSol.

**Africa in the Global Context: Misgiving over external solutions**

Africa's independence in the 1950s and 1960s raised widespread euphoria around African ownership and responsibility for self-determination and development. However, the newly introduced state-system exposed the continent to many socio-economic and political challenges that provided grounds for external powers to hold sway over the continent. It is within this context that Serequeberhan (1994: 8), in The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy, notes that it is between the 'ideality' of African independence and the 'actuality' of neo-colonialism many discourses on Africa find their expression.

**Efficiency of external interventions**

While external interventions have helped to contain many conflicts in the continent, there is a growing critique that external interventions have not often contributed to lasting peace. This is due to the consistent use of approaches that hardly resonate with the interests and contextual realities of the continent (Ayittey, 1994; Zartman, 2000; Nhema, 2008; Boege, 2011). Komey, Osman, and Melakedingel (2013) argue that outsiders – who are not directly affected by conflicts – are mainly concerned about the immediate outcomes of crisis regardless of the process and the long-term consequences. This is true of the response to the Libyan crisis in 2011. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)'s intervention in Libya is considered as one of the numerous cases where external interveners pursue quick solutions, undermine African voices and end up providing cosmetic solutions with dire consequences for Africa's long-term security.

As a less powerful entity, the AU's suggested political solution to peace in Libya was side-lined for a more coercive solution that saw the ousting and killing of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Since Gaddafi's ouster, Libya remains on the verge of state collapse in view of the continued upheaval in the country. In the face of the current uneasy stasis in Libya, western powers who were the leading actors in the NATO coalition now insist on a political solution to the crisis in the country as previously argued by the AU (AFP, 2015). It is against this background that Zartman (2000) maintains that despite the intervention of seasoned foreign peacemakers and peacekeepers in the attempt to solve conflicts in Africa, many conflicts in the continent remain unresolved.

**Concerns about the motive for external interventions**

The interventions of external actors have aided in lessening the impact of conflict on Africa. The UN, which is funded largely by external powers, has set up over thirty peacekeeping missions in Africa since 1948. Under the auspices of dominant powers, over 70% of all UN military, police and civilian officers are in Africa to address the continent's security challenges (DefenceWeb, 2014). The United Nations' Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), which was set up in 2005 to help countries emerging from war, has consistently prioritized African states, namely Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and the Central African Republic.

The recent French interventions in Cote d'Ivoire in 2010, Central African Republic (CAR) in 2014, and Mali from 2012 to date have saved countless lives and minimized conflict-related suffering in the continent. Pertinent to France's effort, for instance, Robert Dussey, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Togo, affirms that "Togo knows too well the value of the efforts made by France to fight alongside African countries" (cited in UN News Centre 29 September 2014). Dussey encouraged the continued and strengthened support of the international community in addressing Africa's problems. This note of appreciation was made during the annual UN debate of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly in 2014.

Critics of powerful actors have often contradicted themselves in many instances. When dominant powers intervene in crisis settings, as in the case of France in Mali in 2014 and the NATO intervention in Libya in 2011, some critics are wary of such externally imposed actions, and call for African solutions in their place. However when dominant powers show reluctance to intervene, as in the case of the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the terrorist challenge in Nigeria, critics argue that powerful states care less about human lives in Africa. Yet, when they do intervene, a barrage of criticism follows suit.

However, much of the criticisms around external intervention are foregrounded on the modus operandi of external interventions which tend to portray arrogance and nonchalance of local structures and authorities. In view of Africa's experiences of racial domination and colonialism, external interventions that are carried out with little backing from local structures conjures images of colonialism, imperialism and the blatant display of the superiority, even if the interventions are 'well-intended'.

Indeed, the perception of neo-colonialism, coupled with internal grievances, has contributed to the emergence of radical and extremist movements that seek to oppose certain western values and policies. This includes terrorist groups, such as the Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Boko Haram of Nigeria, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, Ansar Al-Shariya in Tunisia, the Al-Qaeda-linked Mulathameen Brigade (the 'Masked Ones') in Algeria, the Islamic State in Libya as well as the Jamâ'ah Nusrah al-Islâm

wal-Muslimîn in Mali and the Sahel region. Despite their unjustifiable means, these extremist groups, among other goals, appear to invest a lot of time and effort to counter western influence in their localities and regions.

**The Reliability of External Interventions**

The uneven responses of powerful states to the insecurities in some parts of the African continent further raise concerns about the value accorded to African lives. One of the most recounted failures of external actors is the decision not to intervene to halt the massive killings of people during the Rwandan genocide in 1994. For Dersso (2012: 16), "in the global power calculus of the time [of the genocide], Africa was far less significant than other parts of the globe such as the Middle East and Asia". Though African actors are indicted for their poor response as well, that episode suggested that foreign actors could abandon Africa in times of need, especially when an intervention does not satisfy the interests of powerful states.

During the initial period of the armed conflicts in Sudan, Liberia and Sierra Leone in the late 1990s, the powerful states were conspicuously inactive until the latter period (Williams 2011). During the Liberian and Sierra Leonean crises, ECOWAS was most responsive before a UN Peacebuilding intervention was established. Dersso (2012) argues that the "decade of international disengagement and UN inaction, or lack of effective involvement, in Africa" is a driving force for Africa's proactive stance in peace and security. It is based on the foregoing concern that Ramose (2002: 2) asks "why is it that the African's right to life continues to be denied, derecognized, and remains practically unprotected by the beneficiaries of the violence, irrationality, and the inhumanity of colonization?"

Beside the question of the reliability of external actors in terms of intervention, another worrying concern is that external actors have historically played crucial roles in engendering and stoking conflicts in the continent. As argued by Ngwane (1996: 4) "even though the West are the first to appear in any trouble-spot or war zone in Africa posing as humanitarian relief agents and Peacekeeping forces, they are sometimes the catalysts of most tragic reactions in Africa".

The interest of powerful states in Africa's resources has also been a cause of insecurity in the continent. Williams (2011) observes that Africa "offers profitable business opportunities, especially in the energy, telecommunication, and minerals sectors". The parochial interests of foreign powers regarding African mineral wealth have contributed to underdevelopment, bad governance and other factors that incite conflict (Southhall and Melber, 2009). France, for instance, is dependent on Africa for many raw materials and energy resources (Renou, 1999; Utley, 2002). In fact, the need to access Africa's cheap materials on a permanent basis informs much of its policies in Africa.

In their quest to have a stake in Africa's resources, powerful states in Europe, Asia, and Russian Federation have used the foreign aid schemes to get African states to adopt favourable policies that enable them to prey on Africa's resources. While aid is considered necessary for the growth of developing states, Glennie (2008) highlights how foreign aid rather discourages actual growth and encourages a dependency syndrome among the recipients. Secondly, it serves as a channel through which donor countries impose their values on the recipients (Glennie, 2008).

Pertinent to the foregoing observation, the more aid African countries receive, the more dependent they become on donors. This is because foreign-aid encourages laziness on the part of the recipients who fail to foster growth from local capacities. It is rather ironic that countries that have received the most aid in Africa, like Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, "have slid into virtual anarchy" (Maren, 1997: 11).

In Somalia for instance, Siad Barre's regime had relied heavily on foreign aid which his regime barely used for the nation's development (Pham 2011). In his bid to sustain his inefficient regime, the generous aid from the Soviet Union, and later western powers, was used for self-aggrandizement, maintenance of power, and oppression of opposition groups and rival clans. Following the end of the Cold War between 1988 and 1989, foreign aid to Somalia diminished, thereby weakening the Somali central government. External donors further terminated support to Somalia. Menkhaus (2007) contends that by mid-1980s, Somalia could already be referred as a failed state due to its weak foreign-aid based economy. What followed was the inability of the state to provide political goods and security in the country, thereby leading to the civil war and protracted state collapse.

Maren (1997: 11) regards foreign aid as 'a self-serving system' that bolsters the interests of powerful states given that foreign aid is often given under the condition of open market economics. This is to enable the sustained foothold of multinational companies (MNCs) from powerful states in Africa's economy. Notably, the MNCs that have taken charge of Africa's economy do not have the interest of Africa at heart given the poor knowledge transfer mechanisms available to capacitate locals (Goodwin 2005).

Mo Ibrahim (2014) goes further to contend that MNCs do not pay taxes as they should, because small African countries have weak tax collection systems and they lack lawyers and forensic accountants to challenge the companies. The report of the High-Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows (IFF)[2] from Africa that was presented by Thabo Mbeki to the AU summit in early 2015 provides a clearer idea of the ills of MNCs in Africa. The report highlights that much of the illicit financial flows from the African continent are from multinational companies that evade tax payment (AU and ECA 2015). It is along

2 The High Level Panel on IFFs refers to IFFs as 'money illegally earned, transferred or used' (AU and ECA 2015).

such considerations that Murobe (2002: 574) surmises that "the success of powerful countries is based on their ability to prey on the economic and political weaknesses of poor countries". The resultant poor development in Africa has led to mass grievances that lead to many conflicts in the region.

Based on the misgivings over the efficiency, motive and reliability of external relations with Africa as explained in this session, AfSol thrives on the imperative for African actors to proffer solutions to the continent's development and manage Africa's peace and security. This resonates with Kwame Nkrumah's (1961) claims in I Speak Freedom where he observes "for too long in our history, Africa has spoken through the voices of others. Now what I have called the African Personality in International affairs will have a chance of making its proper impact and will let the world know it through the voices of Africa's own sons."

Nevertheless, it is narrow-minded to hold that Africa's continued challenges are solely because of external impositions and interventions. William Minter warned that "what should be clearly rejected…are simplistic accounts that reduce events to a simple story of outside interventions or a clear dichotomy between external and internal causes" (in Schmidt, 2013: xiv). This turns our attention to the internal factors that contribute to Africa's continued security challenges.

**The National Context: The Complicity of African State Actors**

The complicity of African states in engendering insecurities and wrong policies in the continent is an implicit but significant rationale for the clamour of AfSol after over fifty years of political independence. While AfSol is imperative, the maxim has been used often by some African elites to divert attention primarily to 'external factors' while masking their culpability in Africa's problems.

**Poor governance: political economy of predation**

Ake (1992) and Ayittey (1994) rightly observe that the optimism of post-independent states was shattered by the ineptitude of African elites. African leaders have not inspired growth that could rival developed states in any significant economic or political context. One can only look at some states – like Brazil, Singapore, and Hong Kong that experienced colonialism – to note that colonial legacies could be transcended. As noted by Mo Ibrahim (2014), colonialism is not really the problem of Africa given that "at the moment of independence, many African countries like Ghana and Egypt had higher income per capita than China, India or Singapore. Where are we now? And where are those guys?"

The status quo in many countries is that national treasuries as well as the foreign-aid pumped into African states are plundered and stashed away in private and covert foreign banks by political elites. Thabo Mbeki's report on Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) from Africa to the AU Summit in February 2015 estimates that approximately over US$50 billion worth of illicit money flows out of Africa every year. The funds include money transferred by corrupt officials.

These illicit flows are greater than the official development assistance (ODA) from donor countries and organisations to Africa (AU and ECA 2015). The irony is then that the illicit money flows from the continent exceeds the foreign aid flowing into the continent. As such, through illegal means, Africa then becomes a significant and implicit donor to developed states. Mbeki's report further notes that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) could be achieved in a timely manner only if the outflow of capital from the continent is stopped. Even with such realization, there remains little hope that Africa's leaders are keen on revamping their gloomy economic systems.

Ngwane (1996: 2) surmises the predicament of African states by noting "whenever a leadership comes to power, it metamorphoses itself into a coterie of black termites eating deep into the coffers of the country's wealth". Thus, coupled with the impact of continued exploitation by powerful states, the stark truth is that African elites have also played a huge part in deepening post-colonial poverty and dependency.

Based on the frustration-aggression theory as propagated by Gurr (1970) in his Why Men Rebel, discontent due to the gap between expectation and achievement contributes to various forms of aggressive acts. When the state and its institutions do not fulfil people's basic needs – due to corruption and bad governance –, the state gradually loses its authority and legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens, leading individuals and groups to suspect that they are particularly marginalized in the system. For Uwazie (2011), "many African citizens have lost faith in the ability of their nations' courts to provide timely or just closure to their grievances."

Without reliable avenues to express their grievances or influence governments, aggrieved citizens as well as interest groups resort to unconstitutional means to articulate their political ideologies and interests. Many rebel groups have risen in this regard to assert their interests, and sometimes, with the aim of toppling state governments. This is evident from the crisis in Somalia, Mali, the DRC, CAR, and Burundi as well as the so-called 'Arab Spring' revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. From Somalia's independence in 1960 until state collapse in 1991 for instance, governance was characterized by

corruption, incompetence and oppression.[3] Grievances against the state fostered the emergence of opposition movements that ultimately toppled the government.

It could be held that the protracted state collapse in Somalia and the continued challenge of state-building in the region is due to the strong misgivings of Somalis over the state-system. This is as a result of their experience of statehood between 1960-1991 and the continued experience of state failure in the era of the transitional and the current mainstream governance from 2004 to the present. The new government in Somalia remains highly dependent on foreign aid and they manipulate figures to receive more funds that do not translate to the provision of political goods and services to the people (Menkhaus 2007). For Menkhaus (2003: 406), the "protracted state collapse and armed conflict' in Somalia has created 'opportunity for profit, not a crisis to be solved". Between 2009 and 2010, only $2,675,000 of the $75,600,000 international aid pumped into the country could be accounted for by Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (Pham 2011). Such mismanagement of resources deepens the misgivings towards the state system and sustains extremist ideologies as exposed by Al-Shabaab.

**Political repression**

One of the foundations of insecurity in Africa is the massive divide between the state and civil society. African political elites have, over the years, effectively alienated the rest of the masses from political and decision-making matters. The state positions itself as an independent sector with little or no connection to the society, thereby creating alienation and distrust. Bates (2008: 7) observes that "the conditions that led to the breakdown of order in Africa are the authoritarian nature of its states and their rulers' penchant for predation".

Despite the so-called civilian and democratic order in contemporary Africa, the election crises in Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Gabon, The Gambia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) reflect the sit-tight-in-office syndrome in the continent and the difficulties involved in attaining peaceful transitions of power in the continent.[4] The reality of political oppression in the continent further highlights the

3 The nine years of civilian leadership (1960-1969) in Somalia was mired in chronic mismanagement with a proliferation of political parties that were divided along clan lines with competing interests and unstable allies. The disregard of the interest of the electorate and the discontent against the state resulted in a bloodless coup on 21 October 1969 as masterminded by Maj. Gen. Muhammad Siad Barre, the Commander of the Somali Army. With the deposition of Mohamed Ibrahim Egal's civilian regime, Barre took over the reins of leadership from 1969 to 1991 (Ismail 2010, p. 86). Barre's regime also failed to prioritise the provision of goods and services to Somalis. Barre introduced socialism to enable him to control every facet of the economy. Instead of developing the state, the socialist practice created a platform for Barre's regime to use national funds and foreign aids for self-enrichment and to finance clampdowns on opposition groups. The socialist experiment further created a large, wasteful, corrupt and inefficient public sector because public offices were not held by merit but by loyal elites and clan members of Barre (Menkhaus 2007, p. 80).

4 Between 2000 and 2015, 16 African states tried constitutional reform for the purpose of extending presidential term limits and 10 of the states were successful (Zimbabwe Times 2015).

continued willingness of Africa's 'strong men' to use every means possible to remain in power. As observed by Brown (2001), violent opposition is likely to erupt if a state adopts oppressive or violent measures against its people. By trying to suppress opposition movements and terrorize their citizens, tyrannical African regimes ended up fostering and strengthening rebellious movements that are willing to do all it takes to get rid of such regime.

In other contexts where the regimes fail to collapse despite rebellion, some rebel movements merely continue destabilizing the state and/or benefiting from the economic gains of war. This is true of cases such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) which originated in Uganda and spread to other countries in Central Africa. These players have no interest in upholding state sovereignty or territorial integrity (Boege 2011). The rapid growth of extremist groups in Africa reflects the growing resistance against, or outright defiance of state structures, as well as the hegemonic world order.

**Politicization of ethnicity**

Based on a traditionalist view, ethnicity is indicted for being detrimental to state cohesion especially in Africa.[5] However, Claude Ake (1992) examines the role of ethnicity in African conflicts and contends that it is a misconception to hold tenaciously that ethnicity is at the heart of African problems. He argues along the lines of an instrumentalist view by noting that what manifests as ethnic conflict in Africa often masks the manipulation of ethnic differences by political elites for selfish interests.

According to Anthony Smith, "an ethnic community is a named human population with a myth of common ancestry, shared memories, and cultural elements; a link with a historic territory or homeland; and a measure of solidarity" (cited in Brown, 2001: 210). Adedeji (1999) notes that, ethnic or tribal identity is not an absolute phenomenon that can be identified by tangible facts like mere language or dress code. Rather, ethnic and tribal identities are perceptions about a group of people. Since ethnic identity is largely perceptual and as a result subjective, it shifts or metamorphoses over time in the face of added facts or experiences.

Some political leaders use ethnicity as an instrument in the society to create disorder to assert their interests and maintain a sustained foothold on power (Ismail, 2010). For Ake (1992), ethnicity does not necessarily cause people of a particular ethnic group to be antagonistic towards people of different ethnic groups. Rather, the changing nature of ethnic identities makes it susceptible to manipulation by some influential people who mobilize ethnic identities for their selfish interests. When their political and economic

5 Many conflicts in Africa – such as that of Rwanda that culminated in the 1994 genocide and the clan conflict in Somalia – are ostensibly dubbed ethnic conflicts.

interests are threatened, opportunistic elites transform their personal issues and problems into ethnic issues.

Consistent with the Somalia example, Somalis share the same culture, ancestral origin, language and religion. However, when Somali elites began drawing on clan solidarity by devaluing and demonizing other clans, clan divisions became pronounced in the country. As noted by Rotberg (2002: 94), "Mohammed Siad Barre arrogated more and more power and privileges to himself and his clan" to the disadvantage and dismay of other clans. Notably, the state was run by Barre's Darod sub-clans, specifically the Marehan sub-clan of his paternal relations, the Ogaden clan of his maternal kin, and the Dulbahante clan of his principal son-in-law Ahmed Suleiman Abdulle. Barre projected his interests as though it were the interest of his Darod clan.[6] When threatened by opposition groups, Barre scapegoated and demonized the clan of the leaders of the opposition groups and mobilized his clan to stand in solidarity with him.

Consistent with Thomas Scheff (1994), the feeling of being alienated and oppressed could instigate a group to take up arms against its perceived enemy. When a cultural group's shared grievances about marginalization and social ills are combined with a strong sense of group identity, there is a tendency for the eruption of violent responses against the source of their marginalization whether real or imagined (Gurr, 1970). As the result of his favouring his Darod clan members and other allied clans, marginalized and mistreated clans embarked on a widespread opposition movement against Barre's regime in the 1980s that culminated with the collapse of the government in 1991. Thus, the "roles played by domestic elites in transforming potentially violent situations into deadly confrontations" should not be underestimated (Brown, 2001: 210).

To shift blame from themselves, it is commonplace for some African leaders to deflect the continent's ills to external factors. This is sometimes through the clamour for AfSol by referring to the negative influence of external powers and the spurious resolve to pursue African-oriented solutions.

In view of the challenges facing Africa's states, many analysts have looked to the continent's regional organizations to provide a holistic solution to Africa's challenges. The expectations and limitations of regional responses also contribute to the re-invigorated clamour for AfSol in peace and security.

6 Colonial powers have already done their part in politicizing clans in Somalia by dividing their colonies along clan lines. Given that they recognized some clans as allies while others as enemies, they ended up pitting clans against each other (Ismail 2010, p.42). To aggravate the colonially sown hatred, Siad Barre's regime further politicized clanism in Somalia.

**The Expectations and Shortcomings of Regional Solutions**

The clamour for AfSol should be seen as a renewed attempt by regional actors to address Africa's challenges, particularly in Africa's peace and security landscape. The AU's predecessor, OAU, which was formed on 25 May 1963, was expected to drive the then Pan-African agenda of limiting external involvement in the continent's affairs and upholding the sovereign and territorial integrity of the newly independent states in Africa as captured in Article II of the OAU's 1963 Charter.

According to Poku, Renwick, and Porto (2007), the over three decades of OAU's existence was characterized by non-interference in the internal affairs of member states. Even with the formation of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in June 1993, the OAU was constrained by its non-interference stance. Incidents such as the 1994 Rwandan genocide occurred while the OAU and its Mechanism were supposedly functional.

In 2002, the OAU was re-launched as the AU with normative and institutional mechanisms to play an active role in the continent as well as in the global arena (OAU, 1999). As noted by Nhema (2008: 3) "there is a new realization in Africa that, while the role of external actors is indeed laudable, Africa will have to rely increasingly on its own resources to provide the long-term solutions to its own problems." Pertinent to peace and security, Alpha Oumar Konaré, the first chairperson of the AU Commission, affirmed at the special meeting of the UNSC in September 2007 that:

> *... the primary responsibility for ensuring peace in Africa belongs to Africans themselves. They must shoulder that responsibility. Our partners must let Africans run their own business. Financing is important, but it does not justify unbridled intervention or conduct. I feel that to be of extreme importance, because the vital interests of the African peoples are involved [...] Africa is no longer a private hunting ground; it is no longer anyone's backyard; it is no longer a part of the Great Game; and it is no longer anyone's sphere of influence. Those are the few simple rules that will allow the continent to shoulder its responsibility and to demonstrate inter-African solidarity (Konaré, 2007: 17).*

Since 2002, most of the peace operations in the continent were initiated by the AU and sub-regional organizations before a UN response. This is evident from the cases of the regional interventions in Burundi, Comoro Islands, Sudan, Somalia, Mali and CAR. Inasmuch as the regional body recognizes the inviolable rights of states to sovereignty, the AU stresses its right to intervene in the internal affairs of member states in response to human rights violations and grave security threats in line with article 4(h).[7]

7 Article 4(h) of the Constitutive Act notes that the AU has the right 'to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity' as well as a serious threat to legitimate order.

However, despite the impressive norms and interventions of the regional body, the AU is yet to meet up to expectations (Williams, 2011). This led Møller (2009) to maintain that there is a huge gap between the ambitions and accomplishments of the AU. The most worrying aspect of the AU's capacity is its perennial resource constraint and dependency on external support, which has debilitating implications for the regional body's capacity for proactive intervention (Kobbie, 2009; Vines, 2013). Such limitations have undermined early warning and early response initiatives of the continental body. At the 27th Summit in Kigali in 2016, the AU made known its intention to establish an African force in Mali and the Sahel to combat the terrorist threat in the region, but financial constraints limited it from taking any decisive steps towards establishing the mission.

Although the AU has the mandate to engage in long-term peace operations, the AU missions have mainly been designed as stabilization operations to be replaced by a well-resourced UN peace operation from about 90 to 120 days because of limited resources. Beside the case of Somalia, the AU has pulled out its missions from Mali, CAR, Sudan, and Burundi and they have been replaced with UN missions. This questions the regional body's commitment and capacity for long-term strategic solutions to Africa's security challenges. An exception to AU's withdrawal is the case of it mission in Somalia (AMISOM) which is highly funded by external powers particularly the EU. In 2016, the AU developed an exit strategy for AMISOM by 2020 despite the concern that such an exit will be untimely. The exit plan is highly motivated by financial challenges besides the need to complete the stabilisation effort and allow the country to take full responsibility for its development. In 2015 when the exit strategy was revealed, AMISOM officers were said to have endured six months without pay. The EU, which provides the funds for AMISOM personnel, has also decided to cut down its financial support to AMISOM by 20%.

Thus, despite the supposed riches of the continent, resource constraints remain the perennial impeding factor for robust and sustained AfSol in the continent. It remains an expectation that the proposed funding plan for the AU will be implemented by AU member states. At the 27th Summit in Kigali, the AU adopted a new funding plan for the AU, a 0.2% levy on all imports. If the AU is able to secure local funding, AfSol will be less encumbered by the dependence on the goodwill of external actors to fund peace initiatives in Africa. For Kobbie (2009), however, there is a long way for the AU to go to be capable of managing or solving the conflict challenges in the continent without external support.

Resource challenges, however, are not the only aspect of regional limitations. The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) has only paid attention to managing conflicts rather than preventing them. Less attention seems to be paid to security threats such as environmental degradation, diseases climate change and transnational criminal activities that undermine peace and security in the continent (Williams, 2011). Hence, the AU remains comfortable with serving as a fire extinguisher rather than a coherent

organization working effectively to prevent conflicts. While there are norms for conflict prevention, the limited effort in terms of conflict prevention undermines the quest for durable solutions to Africa's security problems.

The AU also suffers from the poor political will, half-hearted measures and indecision of African actors (Apuuli, 2012). This makes it relatively easy for external actors to meddle in the affairs of the continent. For Apuuli (2012), the half-hearted measures and poor political will of the AU contributed to the French-led UN intervention in Cote d'Ivoire (2011) and NATO's intervention in Libya (2011). The half-hearted measures of the AU is also evident from the delay in terms of escalating (intensifying) efforts to convene a national dialogue for reconciliation in Libya, as announced by the AU PSC Commissioner, since the 27th AU Summit in Kigali in July 2016. The national dialogue remains crucial to uniting the rival governments and leaders of Libya, including General Khalifa Haftar who commands the Libyan military forces in the eastern part of the country.

There remains a huge expectation that Africa's regional organisations will, overtime, gain the required capacity to solve the continent's peace and security challenges. It is within the context of the limitations on regional solutions that the maxim AfSol makes meaning. The maxim of AfSol serves to inspire confidence and a sense of purpose amongst African actors who are continually challenged to exercise robust agency in addressing the continent's security challenges.

**Conclusion**

This article argues that the maxim of 'African solutions to African problems", behoves African leaders and stakeholders to lead the re-invigoration of the ambition of Africa to define the terms of its engagement with the world, by fundamentally owning, resourcing and taking the lead in addressing its peace and security challenges.

Nevertheless, the AfSol vision demands good governance and development on the continent. African leaders and people have to also constructively explore the place of endogenous concepts and practices within the mainstream governance, development, and peace concepts and practices. In his The Conversation of Races, du Bois (2007) maintains that Africa should strive to enhance its mode of existence by adapting to current realities and at the same time ensuring that their values are not subsumed by the views, ideologies and values of others.

The AU's Study on 'African Union Government' of 2006 also agrees by highlighting that:

> *Although Africa has, for well-known historical reasons, lost some of its self-sustaining characteristics, it is of paramount importance to use the shared values as leverage towards closer unity among and joint purpose of action by African countries and people. They should particularly be used at the national, regional and continental levels to devise and implement developmental policies and programmes that are people centred and well rooted in African traditions. Thus, through a skilful combination of indigenous and modern knowledge systems, African countries could devise well thought-out and creative strategies for the transformation of their social structures, political systems, and economic organizations to the present world environment so that the continent as a whole would successfully claim the 21st century (AU, 2006: paragraph 21).*

Devising, testing, and developing context specific solutions for Africa's socio-economic and political challenges lies at the heart of attaining sustainable solutions to the insecurities in the continent.

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