Understanding Ad-Hoc Security Initiatives in Africa

Cedric de Coning, Andrew E. Yaw Tchie, Natasja Rupesinghe and Anab Ovidie Grand

Summary

The policy brief examines the rise of ad-hoc security initiatives (ASIs) as an established type of collective security mechanism. ASIs are intended to eliminate threats posed by non-state armed groups, and operate across the borders of participating countries to enable the pursuit of such groups. ASIs have emerged because existing African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) mechanisms were not specific or responsive enough to meet this ongoing need. The Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord’s Resistance Army, the Multinational Joint Task Force, and the G5 Sahel can all be categorised as ASIs.

Key findings

• Authorisation from the AU or the UN is not legally needed for ASIs to function. However, all three existing ASIs requested and received authorisation from the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), and recognition from the UN Security Council (UNSC). This enables swifter access to logistical support and funding from international partners.
• Unlike traditional peace operations, the mandate for an ASI is not tied to a peace agreement, and interventions are primarily military.
• The new AU Peace Support Operations (PSO) Doctrine has begun to clarify where the ASIs fit within the APSA by making a distinction between operations mandated and carried out by the AU (i.e., AU PSOs) and those authorised or endorsed by the AU PSC, but carried out by regional economic communities and regional mechanisms, under coalitions of the willing or ASIs.
Recommendations

• The African Union’s (AU’s) Doctrine on Peace Support Operations clarifies the differences between mandated, authorised and endorsed operations. Additional guidance is needed for Peace and Security Council (PSC) participants to know the criteria for ad-hoc security initiative (ASI) approval.

• The AU’s role and responsibilities towards operations authorised by the AU PSC; the AU’s options for providing support; and the reporting requirements to the AU PSC need clarification concerning frequency and content.

• The AU and sub-regions should improve the mechanisms used to coordinate and synchronise ASI collaboration frameworks.

Introduction

When former United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali launched the Agenda for Peace, and since the launch of the African Union (AU) in 2002, peacekeeping and peace support operations (PSOs) have occupied significant UN and AU resources across the continent.

However, with the rise of groups like Boko Haram, the Lord’s Resistance Army and the advancement of jihadist and secular non-state armed groups in Mali and other parts of the continent, an emerging security response was birthed to stabilise conflict zones in Africa.

What is an ad-hoc security initiative?

An ad-hoc security initiative (ASI) is a collective or joint security arrangement between countries that share a specific sub-region, national border, and/or a shared transnational threat. A combined command structure or joint secretariat coordinates and manages the response, with member states contributing troops.

In 2011, the AU authorised the first ASI, namely the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord’s Resistance Army (RCI-LRA, 2001–2019). The second was the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin, which began in 2015 and continues to this day. The MNJTF differs from the RCI-LRA in that it was an existing arrangement linked to a sub-regional organisation — the Lake Chad Basin Commission. The third ASI arrangement was the 2017 G5 Sahel Joint Force (Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel, or FC-G5S [2017-ongoing]).

For member states involved in ASIs, there was a feeling that existing regional and security arrangements — the African Standby Force (ASF), Regional Economic Communities/
Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), AU or UN provisions – did not fulfil their requirements.

ASI provide the flexibility to respond across states’ borders to pursue militia, armed groups, or insurgents deemed a threat. In some incidents, this has resulted in arrangements that allow one country’s security forces, or joint forces, to cross over the border into neighbouring territory in pursuit of the aggressors. In each case, divisions of labour emerged based on the actual relations and comparative advantages of the different actors on the ground.

The legality of establishing an ASI

Authorisation from the AU or the UN is not legally needed for ASIs to function. Under Article 51 of the UN Charter and bilateral collective defence agreements between states, ASIs are based on self-defence principles. However, all three aforementioned ASIs have requested and received authorisation from the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC). In the case of the UN, some have been recognised by the UN Security Council (UNSC) through presidential statements, or resolutions. This can enable swifter access to logistical support and funding from international partners. The UN is yet to develop a politically coherent approach to the endorsement of ASIs.

Some see the rise of ASIs as a way for states to circumvent established pathways and be selective about mechanisms favourable to their cause. Others see it as overcoming the AU and RECs’ shortcomings, as the formation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force in 2017 has shown.
Features common to all ASIs:

- Arranged to reduce or eliminate threat(s) posed by non-state armed group(s) that undertake both terrorist and criminal activities.
- Operating under the UN Charter, Article 51, principles of collective self-defence, or intervention by invitation, with consent from the host nation(s).
- Legal arrangements are established to underpin cross-border operations, enabling participating countries to position response forces within another state’s territory.
- Each participating country contributes resources and is responsible for covering some or all of their operational costs, including troop salaries.

Discerning ASIs from traditional peace operations

Unlike traditional peace operations, the mandate for an ASI is not tied to a peace agreement, and interventions are primarily military. ASIs primarily engage national security staff, mainly within their national borders and/or in conducting cross-border operations. In contrast, a typical international peace operation deploys personnel who are not nationals of the host country.

ASIs do not necessarily have a civilian dimension to their missions, unlike international or African PSOs. (In this regard, the ASF is a multidimensional concept [since its founding], with a civilian dimension policy developed in 2006.)

Since ASIs have limited command-and-control responsibility or oversight, supervising or regulating ASIs that operate outside of international standards is a complex process. Furthermore, funding sources and support come from voluntary contributions, participating countries, bilateral support, or the AU and UN. ASI headquarters provide the formal command, but have little operational control of day-to-day activities. Whilst ASIs may have the authorisation, endorsement and support of the AU PSC and the UN, they are not deployed under their auspices, management, or command. Instead, these organisations are limited to providing strategic-level monitoring, political direction and coordination.

Implications of ASIs on the African Peace and Security Architecture

Since 2002, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) has been the continental framework for enhancing peace and security.

Drawn from the 2000 AU Constitutive Act and the 2002 Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the AU PSC, the APSA identifies the roles, instruments and procedures of the AU and RECs/
RMs to be put in place for conflict prevention, management and resolution.\textsuperscript{14}

According to the APSA, the RECs/RMs are recognised as building blocks and implementing agents of the APSA (and the ASF), but ASIs have been established outside of the RECs/RMs framework.\textsuperscript{15}

Since ASIs operate outside of these pre-defined institutional building blocks, concerns have been raised about how the AU and RECs/RMs can ensure accountability and compliance of the ASIs within International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law. However, the APSA promotes the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity, and advocates for partnerships between the AU and regional entities. Thus, one can argue that ASIs represent flexible solutions, such as are needed to address specific security challenges in a way that transcends the RECs/RMs, geographical boundaries and lines of authority.\textsuperscript{16}

ASIs also align with the AU’s Common Defence Policy for the African continent, enshrined in Article 4(d) and Article 3(e) of the AU Constitutive Act. This enables member states to consult among themselves and to adopt a common position on matters relating to defence, and which affect or constitute a potential threat to the collective security of the continent.\textsuperscript{17}

As an illustrative example, the ASF is one of the pillars of the APSA and was declared fully operational and ready for deployment following the AMANI Africa II field training exercise\textsuperscript{18} in South Africa and Ethiopia in October and November 2015.\textsuperscript{19} In a crisis, the RECs/RMs would generate the standby brigades\textsuperscript{20} (5 000 personnel per region) and capabilities necessary for deployment under AU leadership.\textsuperscript{21} However, the alliance envisaged in the ASF concept is a multinational force deploying into a host state’s territory, so some ASI characteristics were not envisaged in the ASF concept.

The rise and use of the ASIs bring into question how they fit into the APSA, and how the AU and sub-regions can
develop better frameworks for working together with ASIs to help enhance coordination, avoid tensions between these entities and avoid a duplication of efforts to help increase the overall efficiency of the APSA.

The new AU PSO Doctrine has started to clarify where the ASIs fit within the APSA by making a distinction between operations mandated and carried out by the AU (i.e., AU PSOs), and those authorised or endorsed by the AU’s PSC, but carried out by RECs/RMs, under coalitions of the willing or ASIs.

**Conclusion**

While the AU and the sub-regional organisations in Africa have become an integral part of global peace and security architecture, the emergence of ASIs that address transnational and regional security interests is a significant new development that needs to be better integrated within the APSA framework.

The success of ASIs will hinge on ensuring that the model is not limited to military responses only. Attempts to focus solely on a military response will be insufficient as a long-term strategy towards achieving sustainable peace and stability across Africa.

ASIs thus need to develop multidimensional capacities or synergies with matching civilian initiatives, as has been done in the Lake Chad context with the Regional Stabilisation Strategy and in the G5 Sahel context with the Priority Investment Programme.

African-led peace and security operations to date have shown that no one model can accommodate the specific needs of each situation, and it is thus essential to remain flexible and to allow new models to evolve as needed.

The emergence of ASIs is a significant development, and needs to be better integrated within the APSA framework.
### RCI-LRA

**Troop Contributing Countries**
- Uganda
- South Sudan
- DRC
- CAR

**Headquarters**
Yambio, South Sudan

**Date Authorised Deployment by PSC**
22 November 2011

**Level of Approval at the UN**
Endorsement in Presidential Statement
29 June 2012
S/PRST/17

**Force Strength**
- Authorised: 5,000
- Military: 2,531 (13 of these are at the RTF HQ)
- Total: 2,531

**Partner Support**
- US
- EU

**Mandate**
To strengthen the operational capacity of the LRA-affected countries to eliminate the LRA, create conditions conducive for the stabilisation of the affected areas, and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the affected populations.

### MNJTF

**Troop Contributing Countries**
- Cameroon
- Chad
- Benin
- Niger
- Nigeria

**Headquarters**
N’Djamena, Chad

**Date Authorised Deployment by PSC**
29 January 2015

**Level of Approval at the UN**
Endorsement in Presidential Statement
19 January 2015
S/PRST/2015/4

**Force Strength**
- Authorised: 10,000
- Military: 10,602
- Civilian: 22
- Police advisor: 01
- AU Support Team: 21
- Total: 10,624

**Partner Support**
- UK
- Turkey
- EU
- France
- US

**Mandate**
To create a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by the activities of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, facilitate the implementation of overall stabilisation programmes by the LCBC Member States and Benin in the affected areas, including the complete restoration of state authority and the return of IDPs (internally displaced people) and refugees; and facilitate, within the limit of its capabilities, humanitarian operations and the delivery of assistance to the affected populations.
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<tr>
<th>Troop Contributing Countries</th>
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<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
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<td>Chad</td>
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<th>Level of Approval at the UN</th>
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<td>Recognised by UN Security Council</td>
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<td>UNSCR 2359</td>
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<th>Partner Support</th>
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<td>EU</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
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<td>Seeking bilateral and multilateral support</td>
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**Mandate**

*To combat terrorism, drug trafficking and human trafficking to create a secure environment by eradicating the actions of the Terrorist Armed Groups and other organised criminal groups,* to restore security and peace per international law

- Contributing as necessary to the *restoration of state authority and the return of displaced persons and refugees*
- *Facilitate humanitarian operations and the delivery of aid to the affected populations* to the maximum extent possible
- Contribute to the implementation of *development actions* in the space of G5 Sahel
Notes

1 Training for Peace supported a roundtable that gathered several high-level AU commission staff, experts and partners. The roundtable was funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This policy brief does not represent the views of the AU or the Norwegian government or TfP. The roundtable meeting report can be found here: https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/auc-holds-roundtable-with-experts-on-the-implications-of-ad-hoc-security-initiatives-for-the-asf-and-apsa.

2 This ASI brought together Uganda, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, international partners, and the AU.

3 The MNJTF comprises national armies from several countries that share common borders or sub-region. Unlike the first ASI, the MNJTF encompassed an existing arrangement linked to the Lake Chad Basin Commission. See Africa Union (2021). Multi-National Joint Task Force: https://africa-eu-partnership.org/en/projects/multinational-joint-task-force-mnjtf-against-boko-haram


6 The ASF is one of the critical components of the APSA and declared fully operational and ready for deployment following the AMANI Africa II field training exercise in South Africa and Ethiopia in October and November 2015.


13 De Coning et al. 2016


15 Karlsrud, J., and Reykers YF, 2020

16 De Coning et al., 2016


19 See ACCORD, 2014. See also: The ASF force is organised into five regional brigades composed of multidisciplinary contingents, consisting of 5 000 personnel on standby in their country of
origin. The RECs/RMs (ECOWAS, NARC, EASF, ECCAS, SADC) were delegated responsibility for developing necessary capabilities for these brigades to be deployed at the continental level. Available here: https://www.accord.org.za/news/accordtfp-participatesin-amani-africa-ii-field-training-exercise-afteraction-review/.


22 The AU Mission Support Team, who play a role of: planning and delivery of AU additional support and advising the commander on civilian related issues including compliance with IHRL-IHL.
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