



Peace & Security Council Report

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Defining AU–REC relations is still a work in progress

The African Union (AU) and the regional economic communities (RECs) held their first coordination meeting on 8 July in Niamey, Niger. The meeting forms part of the AU's overall institutional reforms to rationalise its relations with the RECs, which are seen as the building blocks of African integration.

The debate on AU–REC coordination is not a new one – it is embedded in the choice of a gradual integration process. At the core of AU–REC relations is the principle of subsidiarity, whereby regional structures can take the lead in situations occurring in their region or under their political jurisdiction.

The application of subsidiarity has often posed problems, for example in the resolution of the conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR), where the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the AU initially waged a battle over supremacy in the peace process. More recently, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the AU were at odds about the electoral dispute in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

At the core of AU–REC relations is the principle of subsidiarity whereby regional structures can take the lead in their region

The first AU–REC Coordination Meeting focused on three key areas, namely the division of labour between the AU, RECs and AU member states; the first African Regional Integration Report; and the draft protocol amending the 2008 protocol on AU–REC relations.

Current PSC Chairperson

His Excellency Mr Sebade Toba,
Ambassador of Togo to Ethiopia
and permanent representative to
the African Union.

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Guinea, Gabon, Kenya, Liberia,
Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda,
Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone,
Togo, Lesotho, Zimbabwe

On the division of labour

The discussion around AU–REC coordination has highlighted member states' key role as the central pillars of this nexus and identified six main technical areas for the division of labour between them: policy planning and formulation; policy adoption; implementation; monitoring and information; partnerships; and joint resource mobilisation.

Of these areas, implementation, monitoring and evaluation have been the continent's weakest points. In that regard, it is proposed that the AU Commission (AUC) should organise annual consultations between AU organs and RECs. These consultations could look into different topics, such as the implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture or the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, taking stock of their progress and the challenges they face.

The RECs are, in fact, meant to report annually to the AU–REC Coordination Meeting on the status of regional implementation, and the monitoring and evaluation of continental policies, programmes and projects.

The AUC would also be tasked with coordinating the implementation of cross-cutting issues among RECs. This, however, could face serious resistance from RECs and member states, as has happened in the past. This is especially the case given that member states are ultimately in charge of implementing continental or regional policies and programmes, as well as ensuring the implementation of AU legal instruments at the national level.

One practical challenge is for member states to provide sound and accurate national data on the implementation of continental and regional policies, as is expected of them under the new AU–RECs–member states coordination arrangement.

Discussions will continue between the AUC, RECs and member states on developing a matrix for the division of labour around thematic areas. Overall, as with all governance issues on the continent, one of the biggest challenges to coordination between the AU and RECs is the goodwill of member states.

African Regional Integration Report

The July 8 AU–REC Coordination Meeting saw the tabling of the first edition of the *African Regional Integration Report*, produced by the AUC, RECs and the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF). Its findings were presented by AUC chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat. The main conclusion of the report is that Africa is indeed progressing towards becoming an ‘integrated, prosperous and peaceful continent’.

However, and not surprisingly, the report also states that ‘the eight RECs recognised by the AU face teething challenges of funding and human capacity constraints, overlapping memberships, weak implementation of key regional integration programmes and projects, and a lack of focus and institutional alignments’. It also notes that ‘persistent conflicts, insecurity and infrastructure bottlenecks remain pervasive obstacles to deeper integration. The need to devise innovative mechanisms for funding cannot be overemphasised.’

The analysis in the report is based on the eight dimensions of integration in the multidimensional index on African integration, which focuses on the following elements: trade integration, free movement of persons, infrastructure integration, political and institutional integration, monetary integration, financial integration, social integration, and environmental management.

Interestingly, the report also states that the division of labour between the AU and the RECs still has to be clarified. Although mentioned in the report, the issue of overlapping memberships does not seem to feature prominently in the debate, despite the fact that it presents a serious challenge to AU–REC coordination.

The issue of overlapping memberships does not seem to feature prominently, despite the fact that it presents a serious challenge

The issues plaguing the RECs and regional integration, as identified in the report, will also likely be challenges to the coordination between them and the AU.

The new protocol on AU–REC relations

Meanwhile, a new draft protocol on AU–REC relations has been proposed to replace the 2008 protocol on AU–REC relations, in order to address the above-mentioned challenges. The two protocols differ on two major points: the new draft protocol is broader in scope and sets out the structures and functions of the mid-year coordination meeting between the AUC and the RECs.

In terms of scope, Article 2 of the new protocol sees the introduction of the environment, the blue economy, migration and the African governance architecture as new areas to be covered in the relations and coordination between regions and the continent. This is in addition to economic, social, political and cultural fields, including gender, peace and security areas.

The new draft protocol also establishes new structures or organs for the coordination meeting:

- The mid-year coordination meeting itself, composed of the Bureau of the Assembly and Chairpersons of the RECs, in charge of assessing the state of continental integration and coordinating the implementation of continental decisions, among others
- The Committee on Coordination, composed of the chairperson and chief executives of financial institutions of the AU and the AUDA-NEPAD, which will provide policy orientation for the implementation of the new protocol
- The Coordination Secretariat, composed of the representatives of the AU, RECs and other AU organs, which is tasked with preparing and submitting reports to the Committee on Coordination

According to the draft protocol, the AU is to open permanent representations at the headquarters of each REC. In turn, each REC is expected to establish a national integration structure in each of its member states. Moreover, Article 23 of the draft protocol provides for sanctions (by the Assembly and/or Executive Council) in cases where RECs are lagging behind in implementation or where their measures and programmes are incompatible with AU treaties.

Subsidiarity and comparative advantage will remain the driving principles of AU–REC relations and will guide the division of labour between them

Although it was not adopted at the first coordination meeting (probably owing to some of the contentious clauses), it appears that the draft protocol will in fact create another AU structure that will be in charge of supervising coordination between its different parts.

One could legitimately wonder about what seems to be the proliferation of AU organs aimed at coordinating the work of the many existing ones in an attempt to rationalise the work of the union and integrate the continent.

The way forward for AU–REC coordination

The major outcome of the first AU–RECs–member states coordination meeting is that it began putting in place the framework for the coordination meeting, including the possibility of sanctions for non-compliance.

It is also clear that subsidiarity and comparative advantage will remain the driving principles of AU–REC relations and will guide the division of labour between them. This also means that ad hoc or REC-specific arrangements will sometimes be necessary, especially given the diversity in their respective levels of advancement and capacity, as well the very ethos of each REC. The different stakeholders must consider this as they finalise the matrix on the division of labour.

Finally, member states will be either enablers for or barriers to better AU–REC relations for the benefit of the continent.

2008

THE PROTOCOL ON
AU–REC RELATIONS

The Niamey summit sees the slow implementation of AU reforms

For the first time since 2004, the AU Assembly did not meet for its mid-year session in July 2019. The decision to have only one ordinary session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government is a result of the AU reforms, championed by Rwandan President Paul Kagame and the reform implementation unit of the AU Commission (AUC).

The aim of this reform is to limit the large meetings of heads of state where few real decisions are made and to have smaller, more efficient meetings such as the Mid-Year Coordination Meeting, which was held for the first time on 8 July 2019. Heads of state also have other occasions to meet within the context of their regional economic communities (RECs), or bilaterally.

However, despite the AU's reducing the number of annual summits, over 30 heads of state did attend the extraordinary summit on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in Niamey, Niger on 7 July. An ordinary session of the AU Executive Council and several side meetings of the Peace and Security Council and other organs also took place, lending the event all the trappings of a normal AU summit.

The aim of limiting AU summits to only one per year was therefore, to an extent, undermined by the decision to launch the AfCFTA, championed by Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou, in Niamey. The first Mid-Year Coordination Meeting between the AU and RECs, which was supposed to replace the Assembly, was reduced to a side event and barely lasted a few hours.

Over 30 heads of state attended the extraordinary summit on the African Continental Free Trade Area

From this perspective, and from other decisions at the summit that were either not taken or postponed, the Niamey meeting was only partially a manifestation of the implementation of the AU reforms.

The cost of hosting the Niamey summit was also very high for the host country, which had decided to build a new conference centre and luxury hotels, some of

which were not completed by the time the summit took place. One of the aims of the AU reforms is to bring the AU closer to the people and while decentralising the activities of the union is important, civil society organisations are concerned about decisions on spending by cash-strapped African countries.

In the draft decisions of the executive council in Niamey, it is recommended that the AUC 'take into consideration the principles of cost efficiency, equity and regional rotation' when holding meetings outside the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa.

Other decisions only partially implemented

Strengthening the AUC and streamlining the activities of the summits was one of the cornerstones of the AU reforms, adopted in January 2017. They also include: focusing the AU on key priorities with a continental scope; realigning AU institutions in order to deliver against those priorities; managing the business of the AU efficiently and effectively at both the political and operational levels; and financing the AU sustainably and with the full ownership of the member states.

Concerning the restructuring of the commission, details of its implementation that were supposed to have been finalised by the executive council in Niamey were pushed to the next ordinary summit in January 2020 in Addis Ababa.

It has already been decided to reduce the number of AU departments and commissioners from eight to six by merging the departments of peace and security and of political affairs. It is therefore crucial that the decisions on the details of the restructuring are made soon, so that the process of selecting the 2021 commission can start in January 2020.

In addition, there were again divisions among member states on the question of partnerships. The original reforms aimed at an agreement where 'Africa should

speak with one voice'. The intention was that the AU troika (or the AU bureau of five heads of state) and the AUC would represent the continent during some of these meetings with outside partners, particularly when Africa was called to meet with only one country.

Consensus has already been reached on allowing all countries to attend meetings with similar large groupings such as the European Union or the League of Arab States. Some also agree that existing partnerships such as those with China (FOCAC) and Japan (TICAD) should be kept intact.

However, there is no consensus on who should represent the continent at summits with single countries such as Russia, Turkey, the United States or even France, which has held France–Africa summits for many years now. Many heads of state believe they should not be sidelined in favour of a smaller structure that does not necessarily represent their interests.

A reduced budget

According to the draft decisions of the executive council, the budget of the AUC was again reduced from the previous year, this time by around US\$40 million to US\$647 million, from US\$681 million last year. This was done by cutting out duplication and through better management of the AUC – a crucial part of the reforms.

The original reforms aimed at an agreement where 'Africa should speak with one voice'

The Permanent Representatives' Committee (ambassadors) also presented a report by external auditors at the summit. The report revealed major weaknesses in the accounting practices of the AUC and its various organs. Clearly, the call for the AU's self-funding goes hand in hand with greater accountability and transparency.

In his speech to members of the executive council in Niamey, AUC chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat said the commission took note of the findings of the external auditors and was putting in place measures to improve the situation and sanction those responsible for wrongdoing.

While the 0.2% levy on imports to fund the AU – one of the initial cornerstones of the reforms – has not been universally implemented, some momentum was created by the reforms to ensure a steady increase in members paying their assessed contributions to the AU. The contributions of member states increased in the 2019 and 2020 budgets to around 40%, from a low of 27% for the 2018 budget.

More money for the Peace Fund

It was also announced in Niamey that the AU Peace Fund had grown substantially to US\$120.7 million. In his speech Mahamat said the Peace Fund was 'an instrument of sovereignty' and would make it possible for Africa to ensure its active presence in conflict areas, and to work towards preventing conflicts.

The call for the AU's self-funding goes hand in hand with greater accountability and transparency

While the modalities of accessing and managing the fund have not yet been clarified, this could give mediation and other conflict-prevention efforts by the AU an important boost. For example, thanks to the Peace Fund the AU will be able to mediate in crises such as in Sudan or the Central African Republic without having to ask partners for funding. This is certainly significant.

Focus on silencing the guns

It was also decided at the summit that the theme for 2020 would be 'Silencing the guns: creating conducive decisions for Africa's development'. This theme is in line with the aims of Agenda 2063 that involved silencing the guns by 2020. Although this milestone will be impossible to achieve, the aim is to take stock of the progress made by the AU and to devise new strategies to achieve peace on the continent.

Going forward, the challenge for the AU will be to continue with the implementation of the reforms and to sanction those member states that do not comply with continental agreements such as the self-financing of the AU. The outcomes of the Niamey summit show that reaching consensus on key issues remains an obstacle to reforming the AU.

Silencing the guns beyond 2020

At its meeting in Niamey, Niger in July 2019, ministers of the AU Executive Council decided that the AU theme of the year for 2020 would be ‘Silencing the guns: creating conducive conditions for Africa’s development’.

As a flagship project of Agenda 2063, ‘Silencing the guns by 2020’ was adopted by the AU heads of state during the 50th anniversary of the OAU/AU in 2013.

Their vision ‘to achieve the goal of a conflict-free Africa, to make peace a reality for all our people and to rid the continent of wars, civil conflicts, human rights violations, humanitarian disasters and violent conflicts and to prevent genocide’ within seven years, was ambitious from the outset.

Nonetheless, the vision underscored that conflict is one of the biggest challenges for the implementation of Agenda 2063 – the continent’s blueprint for a peaceful and prosperous Africa.

Practical steps

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) attempted to translate this grand vision into practical steps by adopting the ‘Master roadmap of practical steps to silence the guns by 2020’ in 2016.

The roadmap acknowledged the nexus between peace and security, governance and development in sustaining peace. It also outlined a comprehensive interpretation of the challenges facing Africa in its efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts. In addition, it assigned focal points for the implementation of actionable steps within set deadlines.

While member states were expected to implement some activities, the PSC, AU Commission (AUC), regional economic communities or regional mechanisms (RECs/RMs), various AU organs and the AU Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) were expected to be the major implementers of the roadmap.

While the roadmap gave a broad outline of long-term goals, it was, however, bound to fail given it only had four years to overcome the plethora of peace and security challenges in Africa.

Taking stock of achievements

Clearly, merely adopting the 2020 theme ‘Silencing the guns: creating conducive conditions for Africa’s development’ will not achieve a conflict-free Africa. It will, however, galvanise stakeholders to take stock of achievements and challenges in implementing the roadmap.

The PSC, as the architect of the roadmap, will consider the feedback from various stakeholders in the coming year when developing a more robust action plan that guides the attainment of a peaceful and prosperous Africa as an ongoing endeavour beyond 2020.

Do the conditions exist for silencing the guns?

The roadmap faces both operational and institutional obstacles. These mainly stem from its underlying assumption that ‘conditions for silencing the guns now exist in the continent’.

Expecting organs to perform even though they have not been fully capacitated sets them up for failure

The activities of violent extremists and other insurgent groups in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, violence related to political transitions and the unprecedented level of climate change and natural disaster-induced displacement all pose a threat to states’ ability to keep their citizens safe.

A number of countries also lapsed into violent conflict owing to weak state institutions or a lack of sustainable political settlements, such as in South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Mali and Libya.

In addition, the political will and capacity of member states to implement AU decisions and declarations remain low.

Lack of clarity of the roadmap

Another obstacle to the implementation of the roadmap is the inherent contradictions in and lack of clarity on the sequencing of activities.

For example, it proposes that there should be capacity building and operationalisation of major components of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) such as the Africa Standby Force and Panel of the Wise.

At the same time, the roadmap assigns responsibilities to these APSA organs, with the expectation that they already have the capacity to respond to peace and security challenges. Expecting them to perform even though they have not been fully capacitated sets them up for failure.

Another operational issue is funding for the implementation of the roadmap. Member states and RECs/RMs are in most cases expected to fund the activities to be implemented by themselves, as well as the AUC, the PSC, the PSC Secretariat and various other AU organs and instruments. It is unclear whether their contributions to the Peace Fund suffices or if they will have to undertake additional fundraising and resource mobilisation to implement the roadmap.

Its implementation depends heavily on collaboration and coordination between the AU and RECs/RMs, yet formal discussions on the division of labour between these have just started.

In addition, while the roadmap assumes the integrated nature of governance and peace and security issues, the AUC structure and operation have so far responded to political and governance issues and peace and security issues in silos.

ECOSOCC and civil society organisations (CSOs) have also been included as focal points or implementers of some activities within the roadmap. However, ECOSOCC has never been fully operational and there are few other avenues for the AU to engage CSOs.

Opportunities for revising the roadmap

AU institutional reform, the revitalisation of coordination between the AU and RECs/RMs, and the selection of 'Silencing the guns' as the AU's theme for 2020 all serve – despite the numerous challenges – as opportunities to develop a revised action plan that guides the attainment of a peaceful and prosperous Africa beyond 2020.

The first Mid-Year Coordination Meeting of the AU and RECs/RMs in July 2019 tried to give further clarification on the division of labour between the AU, RECs/RMs and member states in terms of policy formulation, adoption, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of progress. It is expected that further debate around the division of labour between the AU and RECs/RMs will take place during the next AU summit in January 2020 and at the next coordination meeting.

The AU Peace Fund has already secured more funding than ever before

The merger of the AU Peace and Security and Political Affairs departments – part of the AU reforms – could also enhance synergy between APSA and the African Governance Architecture, which are key pillars of the roadmap.

The reform process is also focused on revitalising the AU Peace Fund, which has already secured more funding from member states than ever before. This will enable the implementation of more activities geared towards peace and security issues, some of which will be from the roadmap.

What next for 'Silencing the guns'?

The AU has established a Silencing the Guns Unit within the Bureau of the Chairperson. This unit, in collaboration with various stakeholders, has developed an action plan for fast-tracking the silencing the guns by 2020, to prioritise actions and interventions until the end of 2020. It will lead the coordination of activities around the theme, assisted by Ramtane Lamamra, AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns in Africa.

The PSC, as the guardian of the roadmap, should in the coming year take stock of achievements and challenges in its implementation by the various stakeholders. The Draft Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism of the roadmap, which the PSC has asked the AUC to finalise, will be invaluable in this regard.

The monitoring and evaluation of its implementation will have to be finalised before the end of 2020, so that the PSC can incorporate lessons learned and take the lead in the development of a robust action plan for silencing the guns in Africa beyond 2020.

Can the peace-trade equation stabilise the Horn?

The launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on 7 July at the AU summit in Niamey, Niger, has created the largest free trade zone in the world for 1.2 billion people with a gross domestic product of around US\$3.4 trillion.

Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou hailed the AfCFTA as 'the greatest historical event for the African continent since the creation of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963'. The AfCFTA agreement, signed by 54 of the 55 AU member states and ratified by 26 of them, aims to create a single continental market for goods and services, expedite regional and continental integration, and enhance competitiveness in industry.

If fully implemented, the deal could deliver more than economic dividends – it could contribute to peace and security in Africa through inter-state economic interdependence. Its dispute settlement mechanism could also enable amicable resolutions to trade related disputes among African countries.

Peace and security challenges

Implementing the deal faces daunting challenges though, many of which are related to peace and security issues. This is most pronounced in the Horn of Africa.

Except for Eritrea, all the countries in the Horn have signed the agreement. The region's geo-politics, including the securitisation of borders, political instability, illicit cross-border trade and financial flows, as well as underdeveloped infrastructure and human capital, are the main challenges.

If fully implemented, the deal could deliver more than economic dividends – it could contribute to peace and security in Africa

Instability within states will pose the greatest difficulty to regional trade. Somalia and South Sudan have been experiencing protracted civil wars, while both Sudan and Ethiopia are undergoing political reform that has destabilised the countries in recent times.

Securitisation of borders in the Horn will also create obstacles for free movement of goods and people as envisaged by the AfCFTA. The border between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which was initially opened after their July 2018 rapprochement, has been reclosed. There is also a military presence on both sides of the border.

Similarly, Sudanese troops have since January 2018 been deployed along the Eritrea-Sudan border. Sudan's Transitional Military Council deputy chairman

26 countries

RATIFIED THE AFCFTA

Lieutenant-General Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo and Eritrea's President Isaias Afwerki said the border would reopen when they met on 2 July, but trade is yet to officially resume.

The Eritrea-Djibouti border has also been closed since 2008 as a result of a border dispute between the two countries. Although their leaders met briefly in September 2018 and promised to resume relations, trade between the two nations seems unlikely soon.

Security along the Ethiopia-Somalia border remains tight owing to Ethiopia's fear of an al-Shabaab attack. Sudan and South Sudan also have an ongoing territorial dispute over their oil-rich border, especially in the Abiye region.

Illegal trade

The other challenge facing the AfCFTA is the extent of illegal trade in the region mainly due to porous borders and a lack of coordinated border security. Cross-border cattle raiding and illegal livestock marketing exists along the Ethiopia-Kenya, Ethiopia-Djibouti and Ethiopia-Somalia borders.

Other high-value export commodities, such as gold, Khat, charcoal and sugar, are also illegally traded along these borders. Revenue from such trading has been used to finance armed groups. Trafficking in small arms and light weapons is prevalent along the Ethiopia-Sudan border. Large-scale contraband trafficking undermines legitimate cross-border commerce, especially the security of small- to medium-scale traders.

Other problems in the region include illicit financial flows and money laundering, the hoarding of considerable sums of cash owed to speculation, counterfeiting money and an active black market for foreign exchange.

These transactions are related to trafficking in people and goods, financing insurgent groups and grand corruption. Partly in reaction to these factors, Eritrea abruptly changed its currency in 2015, while Ethiopia introduced strict regulations and confiscation of foreign currency in 2018.

Trade can help to make peace

Recognising these challenges, AU Commission chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat said in Niamey that it would be a 'delusion to talk of trade and development

without peace and security'. While true, the statement represents only half of the peace-trade equation. The 'chicken and egg' relationship between peace and trade means that as much as peace is needed to boost trade, so too is trade an ingredient for establishing and sustaining peace.

Through the AfCFTA's implementation processes, countries in the Horn could potentially create conditions that would enable them to coexist peacefully. A good example is the Ethiopia-Djibouti relationship. Both have invested more than US\$15 billion for road and rail connectivity. Ethiopia uses the Djiboutian ports for 95% of its foreign trade and has invested heavily in them. Djibouti's trade with Ethiopia accounts for more than 80% of its GDP, including electricity and water imports from Ethiopia.

This mutual dependence would pressure the two countries to amicably resolve disputes that arise in their foreign or trade relations. The nations have never engaged in zero-sum relations and proxy wars through supporting armed opposition groups to destabilise each other. Proxy wars – which have at times defined relations between Horn countries, such as between Eritrea and Ethiopia – have been a major source of instability in the region.

Through the AfCFTA's implementation processes, countries could potentially create conditions that would enable them to coexist peacefully

Djibouti and Ethiopia have also invested heavily in securing trade routes and infrastructure, streamlining their customs procedures, legal and regulatory frameworks and establishing a single border post.

The region has the potential to effectively implement the AfCFTA, with dividends for peace and security. Trade disputes among Horn countries that might arise as the deal is activated could be resolved through its dispute settlement mechanism. Those responsible for this mechanism must recognise the challenges covered here, and the region's peace and security dynamics. This is especially so given that one of the Horn's most devastating wars, between Eritrea and Ethiopia, had trade relations at its heart.

The democratisation process in The Gambia remains fragile

In the last week of July, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) is to undertake a field visit to The Gambia to track the progress made since the ousting of former president Yahya Jammeh in January 2017.

The fall of Jammeh following the presidential election in December 2016 had raised the hopes of Gambians and the international community. At that time, transitioning peacefully towards democracy seemed the greatest challenge; more difficult than healing the wounds caused by 22 years of authoritarian rule. However, almost three years after its first democratic transition, The Gambia faces many challenges that undermine the democratisation process.

Indeed, despite the democratic reforms initiated by the administration of President Adama Barrow with international support, persistent socio-political divisions are slowing down the implementation of initiatives and reforms defined in the National Development Plan (NDP).

Persistent socio-political divisions are slowing down the implementation of initiatives and reforms defined in the National Development Plan

Launched in February 2018 by the new government, the NDP was designed following consultations with members of the government, civil society organisations, the private sector and international stakeholders. It is meant to achieve good governance, revitalise the economy, improve social cohesion and advance national reconciliation. In this regard, various initiatives and reforms have been initiated, including a transitional justice process, security sector reform and a constitutional review.

A divisive transitional justice process

The transitional justice process was launched in January 2019 with the hearings of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), which is essential for national unity and the consolidation of democracy. The commission was officially established in October 2018 with a two-year mandate to investigate and record evidence of human rights violations during the 22 years of Jammeh's rule. It is also tasked with making recommendations.

The commission opened its fifth session on 10 June without the support of Jammeh's Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC) or some of his former collaborators. They accuse the government of using the commission to launch a witch-hunt against them.

22 years
THE RULE OF
YAHYA JAMMEH

While several senior party members and senior military officials have agreed to testify before the commission, the refusal of former military junta member Yankuba Turay to do so shows that the transitional justice process is facing resistance. In addition, the commission's proceedings have been increasingly criticised since Turay's arrest. Turay was detained on the charge of murdering former minister Ousman Koro Ceesay while the hearings were still ongoing.

In addition, the high-profile revelations by Gambian women accusing Jammeh of rape and sexual assault following an investigation by the non-governmental organisations Human Rights Watch and TRIAL International have put additional pressure on the commission to shed light on alleged sexual abuses perpetrated under the former regime.

These allegations, which were denied by the APRC, are perceived in some corners as being part of a defamation and demonisation campaign against the party, which in turn contributes to a heightened sense of selective justice.

Sensitive security sector reform

Security sector reform (SSR) is another key aspect of The Gambia's stabilisation process. The programme has been underway since September 2017 with the objective of creating an effective, professional and responsible security sector. It was established in coordination with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Mission in The Gambia, the AU and the United Nations (UN), all of which are members of the SSR steering committee. While the country has adopted its first national security policy, effective implementation of the SSR has been slow.

Persistent socio-political divisions are slowing down the implementation of initiatives and reforms defined in the National Development Plan

This is owing to two factors. Firstly, there is the issue of the downsizing of the army. A 2017 UN Security Sector Assessment report revealed not only several deficiencies, such as a lack of training, the politicisation of the army and a loosely defined legal framework, but also the need to reduce the size of the security services, especially the army.

This downsizing – advocated by a number of partners – remains a sensitive issue. The Gambian army, with an estimated 6 500 troops, is mainly composed of members of Jammeh's Diola ethnic group. During his decades in power, Jammeh tended to promote military officers based on loyalty rather than skills. The soldiers belonging to the Diola community fear that they will be the first targeted in the recommended downsizing of the army.

Secondly, the fact that some members of the military accused of human rights violations during Jammeh's rule are still in active duty also slows down the SSR process. Their continued presence in the army is causing

February 2018

THE LAUNCH OF
THE NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT PLAN

unease among the troops, which puts the Gambian government in a predicament. Some of them also refuse to cooperate with the commission, which threatens not only to undermine the transitional justice process but also to further hamper the implementation of SSR.

A tense political climate

Against the backdrop of the upcoming 2021 presidential election, rivalry between the country's two leading political figures – Barrow and the leader of the United Democratic Party (UDP), Ousainou Darboe – continues to fuel tension. Barrow's stated intention to serve a five-year term and then run for a second term is believed to be at the root of tensions within the coalition, especially with Darboe, who may also harbour presidential ambitions.

The fact that Barrow sacked Darboe as vice-president and fired two ministers affiliated with the UDP confirmed Barrow's split from his former party. He is suspected of seeking to transform the Barrow Youth for National Development (a youth movement formed within the UDP) into a fully-fledged political party and use it as a launching pad for his candidacy in the upcoming presidential election.

While the country has adopted its first national security policy, effective implementation of the SSR has been slow

The coalition for which Barrow ran as a candidate in the 2016 presidential election is divided over how the 2016 political agreement should be implemented. The document was signed by seven opposition parties and provides for a three-year transitional period. Barrow now says the Constitution allows him to govern until 2021, for a five-year term, but some members of the coalition are calling for a presidential election in December 2019.

Support from the international community

Consensus on the duration of the transition must be reached to ease tensions in the political arena. To this end, the AU should encourage actors to continue their political dialogue, as The Gambia can only implement the reforms indispensable for its stability and effectively revive its economy in a peaceful political context marked by stronger national cohesion.

The Gambia stands at a crucial juncture in its transition process. Two-and-a-half years after Jammeh's withdrawal, the ongoing democratisation process remains fragile. The involvement of civil society and the government in raising public awareness of democratic issues and inter-community dialogue, as well as efforts to include all communities, could foster an effective transition and a peaceful reconciliation process.

2021

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
IN THE GAMBIA

Where to from here in Algeria?

It is Friday, 19 July 2019, in Algeria. Once again – as they have for 22 weeks – protesters fill the streets of cities across the country. Their ranks represent a cross-section of Algeria: young and old, men and women, office workers and labourers. All marching peacefully, many draped in Algerian flags, calling for democracy and civic rights.

The protests have accomplished far more than many observers expected. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the long-serving president whose bid for another term prompted the protests, is out of power. Politicians and businessmen linked to him are under investigation or detained.

The duration, momentum, and pacific nature of the protests are accomplishments in and of themselves, and underscore the strong support by many Algerians for an overhaul of a deeply unpopular political system.

Despite these successes the political uncertainty in Algeria is far from being resolved. Government efforts to placate the public through small, largely symbolic actions – such as the arrest of widely disliked former regime officials or businessmen – have only fuelled demand for more comprehensive change.

A worsening stand-off

The protesters are unwilling to accept any vestiges of the old regime in positions of power. This includes both interim President Abdelkader Bensalah and Prime Minister Noureddine Bedoui.

Protesters' rejection of these figures and the broader transition process advocated by the government led to the cancellation of elections planned for 4 July. On 9 July the mandate of the interim government expired, creating a de jure constitutional vacuum even if the interim government remains in de facto control.

Despite the creation of a national dialogue forum, there is no clarity on what happens next.

This uncertainty is exacerbated by a worsening stand-off between the protest movement and the government. Police are taking a harder line, and are arresting a growing number of protesters and dissidents.

Lieutenant General Ahmed Gaïd Salah, the army chief of staff and the person believed to be the key decision maker at present, has issued increasingly strong

statements condemning those advocating against the government's transition plans.

But, impediments to negotiating a consensual solution to the political impasse exist on both sides.

No leader among the protestors

Among the protesters there is little formal leadership or specific ideology. Initially, this was one of the movement's greatest strengths. The leaderless approach prevented the government from detaining leaders to end the protests, while the lack of ideology other than denying Bouteflika another term enabled a broad-based coalition to coalesce.

Now, being leaderless has become a weakness. It offers no clear point for the government to negotiate with or a process for distilling the demands of the street into concrete policy proposals. For constructive negotiations with the government to begin, such leadership needs to consolidate.

Despite the creation of a national dialogue forum, there is no clarity on what happens next

Crucially, the leadership that emerges must focus as much on building consensus between the different class, gender, and geographic constituencies within the protest movement as on negotiating with the government.

Vested interests

The negotiations are also challenged by factors and factions within the government, especially within the military. The latter force has played a determinative, though largely behind-the-scenes, role in political decision-making since independence.

However, the military is not neutral when it comes to the political transition. It is deeply vested in the old system.

This is in part institutional, with the defense budget rising fivefold during the Bouteflika years. Current and retired senior officers are also personally vested in the system, with many leveraging their years of service into lucrative business opportunities.

The institutional and personal interests of the force in the status quo make negotiations far more difficult. Senior officers whose agreement is needed for concessions are those whose interests are most impacted by significant change.

Divisions within the military

Further complicating official decision-making is the lack of unity within the military. The force has a number of different power centres and factions. Purges of senior officers in mid- to late-2018 and again in July 2019 underscored these divisions, and has likely further fuelled tensions in the force. Divisions also exist between senior officers and junior officers, who benefit less from the system and so are more open to protesters' demands for change.

The leadership that emerges must focus as much on building consensus between the different class, gender, and geographic constituencies

Inter-military discord narrows the space for concessions by Salah and other senior officers. Too many concessions, or concessions on key priorities, could lead to Salah and other senior officers being removed from their positions. It may well be that Salah's increasingly hawkish statements are meant in part to buttress his own support within the ranks.

The transition process will hinge on how the protesters and the government, mainly the military, are able to overcome their internal interests and constraints and find consensus.

However, the outcome of the process will also be influenced by external factors. In particular, the trajectory of the economy and the actions of terrorist groups could have a major impact.

Economic woes

Algeria's economy, heavily dependent on exports of petrol, has worsened significantly over the last few years. Further deterioration – or popular perception of worsening troubles – poses risks to both sides.

The government faces the clearest potential risks, with a worsening economy exacerbating Algerians' frustrations and grievances and redoubling support for the protesters. However, protesters also run a risk, particularly if the government seeks to link the faltering economy to protesters' intransigence.

In the less likely event of an economic improvement, the position of the interim government will probably be strengthened. With increased revenues

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THE MANDATE OF THE
GOVERNMENT EXPIRED

the government could return to the expansive social programmes of the mid-Bouteflika period, thereby allaying key public frustrations.

The threat of terrorism

Equally, terrorist activity could have a significant impact on the transition process. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb continues to operate in the north-centre and north-east of the country. Though their capacity has declined, urban suicide bombings claimed by the group in 2017 underscore that they remain a dangerous threat.

The risk now is not of terrorists resurging in Algeria, but rather of their derailing the already fragile transition process. Just one or two deadly or high-profile attacks could have a determinative impact, by swaying attitudes and decision-making among the protesters, the military, or broader society.

There is little opening for foreign mediation, with little likelihood the government will be amenable to such support

The current moment is one of political uncertainty in Algeria, This is both an opportunity and a challenge. The country is moving into a new era, not only with the departure of Bouteflika but also with the passing from the political scene of the generation that was directly involved in the independence struggle.

Foreign actors engage with care

While foreign states have an understandable interest in the outcome of Algeria's political transition, they should recognise that they have only a limited productive role to play in the process. There is little opening for foreign mediation, with little likelihood the government in particular will be amenable to such support, and a distinct danger for the protesters if they push for such aid.

However, this does not mean foreign actors have no part to play. Rather, they can play an important role through public expressions of support and private diplomatic pressure for a transition process that is broad-based, peaceful, and focused on building a social consensus on the next political steps.

Early in the protests, the AU took just such an approach, with Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat stressing support for the process rather than for a specific outcome. The AU, European Union, and neighbouring states should focus on such messaging and diplomatic pressure in order to best support the transition process.

The inclusivity, peacefulness, and tenaciousness of the protests are profoundly hopeful signs for the future of Algeria. Resolving the current political uncertainty requires significant courage and strategic patience by the protesters and the government. But, if the events of the last five months are any indication, there is a real chance of success.

5 months

ONGOING PROTESTS
IN ALGERIA

PSC Interview: ‘I’m not here to tick a box’, says AU youth envoy

Last year the AU appointed its first youth envoy, a position that is set to have an impact on the continental body’s Youth, Peace and Security Agenda. The *PSC Report* spoke to Aya Chebbi and asked her how she intends to use her two-year term to empower youth to silence the guns in Africa.

As a young person who participated in the Arab Spring in your home country Tunisia, what is your view of youth inclusion in Africa’s governance and peace processes?

The short answer to that is – youth must be included in governance. We must not just have governments; we must have young governments. Youth should not only be at the table but also in key decision-making positions so that those young people outside of the processes can strategise with them to get their demands heard. For me, governance is, first, people power and citizen participation; second, to be at the table that is representative of the youth population, that is diverse and not homogeneous; and third, youth in key leadership positions – and not just leadership. They should be parliamentarians, ministers, mayors, presidents and CEOs [chief operating officers] of companies. Youth should not just be on the margins, they should be head of political parties and not the youth volunteer wing, etc. So, we need to start having youth in key decision-making positions and in leadership.

When we realised that this space was hijacked we decided to build a strong, resilient civil society where we had advocacy groups in the constituent assembly

For me, there are many layers of governance to be addressed, because even in the Tunisian revolution, we thought that, ‘Okay, in order for us to be in leadership, we have to run for office or for Parliament and you know, be here and there.’ But then when we realised that this space was hijacked we decided to build a strong, resilient civil society where we had advocacy groups in the constituent assembly, basically writing the constitution for the members of the assembly. We had to push at different fronts in advocacy. At the end of the day, we wrote the constitution. That, I think, is people power and that is what the first layer is about.

The second layer is youth in leadership. Youth must have a say in decision-making. So far, in the last five years, we have succeeded in opening the space to advocate for youth to be at the table and we see more and more youth at that table. But we’re not enlarging that table enough, because it is still only the elite youth with exclusions in terms of refugee, migrant, disability, gender, etc. We have the young people ticked in the box and that’s it.



‘YOUTH SHOULD NOT BE AT THE MARGINS’

What can we expect from your office in terms of supporting or complementing the work of the AU Youth for Peace (Youth4Peace) Africa Program?

What my advisory council and I are trying to do is to first analyse what already exists on youth in the commission and see the gaps. We need to see how we can promote what they have, but also how can we make them do better. I work closely with Ambassador Fred Ngoga Gateretse the head of the conflict prevention and early warning division, and his amazing Youth4Peace team. We have great support from Smail Chergui, Commissioner of Peace and Security. I met him recently and discussed the support needed for youth in conflict and displacement. We also work closely with Madame Aïssatou Hayatou, the operations manager for silencing the guns, in the chairperson's office. So, we have to have our own voice there and support them in getting the word out about their work and how it relates to youth.

How well do you think the AU has done so far in attempting to silence the guns on the continent?

I think there are different efforts at different fronts. Silencing the guns by 2020, which is next year, is not a date deadline. It's more like how are we non-violent in our mentality and behaviour, and how is that sustainable?

The question remains, are these initiatives responding to what youth actually need right now at the AU level?

I think what is missing for me coming in and what my contribution would be, is that youth are not involved in these initiatives towards silencing the guns. They are not co-designing the initiatives. The question remains, are these initiatives responding to what youth actually need right now at the AU level?

With the youth advisory council, we aim to influence certain processes and policy decisions, and put forward recommendations. I think my bigger role is to make sure that now we have a permanent space for youth to speak and contribute, and we use it. For example, I'm developing a concept of roundtables with youth in peaceful political transitions aimed at bringing together brilliant young people from Sudan, Algeria and other countries that have gone through political transitions since 2011 like Tunisia, The Gambia, Zimbabwe, etc. where they can share their experiences and best practices. I aim to organise this roundtable monthly.

Hopefully we can do some regional ones with the RECs [regional economic communities] as well to inform the AU Peace and Security Council that, 'Hey, you know, this is what the youth are saying about what's happening in their countries etc.', and this might help you in your decision because maybe they're giving a perspective that you don't know about because

Tunisia
The Gambia
Zimbabwe
EXPERIENCED POLITICAL
TRANSITIONS

they're the ones, at the end of the day, leading change in their countries in a peaceful, positive way.

A lot of youth are hard to reach and in some cases in conflict-affected areas. How does your office plan to reach them?

We are working on bringing to light the existing youth platforms on the continent. There are many movements on the continent with similar mandates for youth, peace and security. Most of them might not be online and the people they work with might not have Internet access either. We are trying to get to offline youth and speak to young people on the ground and support youth hubs, clubs and chapters. For me, this layer is about mobilisation. For example, if our event or initiative is advertised online, we could ask youth applying to bring someone who is offline or film someone who doesn't speak their language and who doesn't have Internet but who would have a story to tell.

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There are many creative ways that we can explore. It's just about the willingness to do it. And we need action because we can talk about as many great ideas as we want, about how we create inclusive spaces. The other day, my council and I were talking about how we can really own the ground. And we talked about the first-ever TEDx event at a refugee camp, in Kenya, TEDxKakumaCamp, as an example of meeting youth where they are. It's about taking innovative ideas to the youth and ensuring their participation.

The Peace and Security Council underscored the need for AU youth peace ambassadors to support your work. What are your expectations from these five when they get on board?

I'm excited about that. I think for me, anything that gives a platform for youth is great but there is always the question, 'Who is going to be there?' People say, 'Let's create a new structure, let everyone have a voice.' But who is the person who will be heard? Is that person affected by conflict? Is that person a refugee? Is that person a migrant? The five ambassadors would have to have gone through a struggle and have also overcome it so they can be the hope for other young people.

When you say 'ambassador', your role would be to inspire. When you go as an ambassador to refugee camps and speak to young people, you let them know that 'there is hope and you are getting out of this because you are amazing, you are talented and you're not going to be trapped in this'. This is what we need to make sure the process is inclusive. So, with this initiative, we will be prepared to reach as many young people as possible, not only online.



'YOUR ROLE IS TO INSPIRE'

About the PSC Report

The Peace and Security Council Report analyses developments and decisions at the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC). The monthly publication is the only one of its kind dedicated to providing current analysis of the PSC's work. It is written by a team of ISS analysts in Addis Ababa.

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The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) partners to build knowledge and skills that secure Africa's future. Our goal is to enhance human security as a means to achieve sustainable peace and prosperity. Using its networks and influence, the ISS provides timely and credible analysis, practical training and technical assistance to governments and civil society.

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