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African-centred Solutions in Peace and Security
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IPSS Report | December, 2014

African-centred Solutions for Peace and Security (AfSol)

Workshop Report

26 – 27 September 2014

Executive Summary

The Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) assembled a group of experts for a workshop on African-centred Solutions in Peace and Security (AfSol) from 26 to 27 September 2014. The objective of the workshop was to define and refine the concept of AfSol through presentations followed by in-depth discussions and debates. The discussions led to a common understanding on certain issues while, in others, it unveiled new dimensions of AfSol and pointed to areas of further research. The areas where the experts have reached on a common understanding namely: ownership, commitment and shared values, will serve as common ground to future discussions and researches.

FIRST WORKSHOP: **26-27 SEPTEMBER**

Contents

African-centered Solutions (AfSol) is an initiative of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) at Addis Ababa University aimed at identifying African-centered solutions to the continent's peace and security challenges.

Background

African Union Heads of States and Governments adopted the Tripoli Declaration on the "Elimination of Conflicts in Africa and the Promotion of Sustainable Peace" in 2009. In the declaration, the Heads of States further recognized peace and security as an "intellectual challenge". Following the mandate extended to IPSS by the African Union Executive Council Decision (AU) (EX.CL/567 (XVI)) and the Memorandum of Understanding signed between IPSS and the AU Peace and Security Department, the Institute became committed to train, research and promote African ownership by developing approaches better adapted to African realities. Since then, IPSS is offering a platform for critical debate on the concept of African-centred Solutions and its practical implications.

Group Photo

Africa has been a free continent for over 50 years. However, colonialism's footprints are still prevalent in today's social, cultural, economic and political institutions. The Organisation for African Unity (OAU) was formed in 1963 as a response to the challenge of colonialism. Africa's united struggle against colonialism and apartheid followed a pan-Africanist ideology, which was also the basis for the formation of the OAU as well as the discussion around African-centred Solutions. OAU's attempts to re-define its agenda in the 1980s embraced World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) frameworks. These frameworks prioritised state's sovereignty, neo-liberalism and structural adjustment reforms. Such attempts were widely accused of being inexpedient Western solutions for the continent.

Poverty, undemocratic political systems, corruption and several intrastate conflicts haunt the continent. Nine of the 20 most corrupt countries in the world are in Africa. According to Transparency International, all African countries, except four, have scored less than 50 in a scale of 0 to 100 (Corruption Perceptions Index, 2014). Although Africa is rich in ethnic and cultural diversity, it is the home to many internal conflicts, some on-going in Mali, Libya, Sudan, South Sudan, Nigeria and several others. Africa struggles to find suitable solutions for these and other peace and security challenges. The lack of clarity on the meaning and implications of AfSol has created divergent views; while some treat AfSol as an idea to be advanced and others a creed to be followed, some argue that it is a meaningless, if not harmful, myth to be avoided.

With the transformation of the OAU into the African Union (AU) in 2002, new sets of objectives under the African Union Peace and Security Council stressed the need to define and find African-centred solutions for peace and security in the continent. While the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) has been operational, albeit with a meagre budget, a bigger vision is emerging to urge the AU to focus more on the interface between peace, security and governance. This is making the search for African-centred solutions in peace and security more complex and broad since the solutions have to include elements of governance, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Furthermore, the debate has to be placed in the context of the framework of AU Agenda 2063 and the new AU initiatives in peace and security.

There are many underlying assumptions in the discussion surrounding AfSol. Primarily, it supposes the existence of shared African identity and values that can be reflected in the solutions. There is also a prevalent agreement over who these Africans are and their efficiency in tackling peace and security challenges if they own the processes. Furthermore, debate on these issues has laid the discussion on a clearer path to conceptualize AfSol. Beyond concerns for peace and security, there is a need to address the persisting conditions in which many Africans live: such as poverty, undemocratic political systems and corruption. Therefore, undemocratic governments may come under questioning. According to Vince Musewe, "this term [African-solutions] has been abused by Africa's leaders to avoid scrutiny, to hide corruption and protect political vested interests." He argues, "We must therefore create a new narrative that says we will adopt world-class solutions to our problems because we are educated and informed. We really should not care where the solution comes from, especially in this information age. We can bridge the gap between the developed and developing countries." Abukar, on the other hand, questions the African essence of important peace and security solutions in Africa, like peace negotiations and peace support operations. He argues that while APSA of the African Union as an acronym that connotes a timely and efficient result, most, if not all operations that are veiled under the "romantic motto", have proven that they are not indigenously conceived, funded or driven.

Financial ownership is an important aspect of AfSol. The recent AU Malabo Summit reflected the significance of the issue.

In the summit, a budget of just under US$522 million was approved for the AU for 2015, which includes US$144 million for operational costs and US$380 million for programmes. Although this is a considerable increase from the US$308 million budgeted for this year, a big chunk of next year's budget is still funded by outside organisations like the European Union and other donors, as was the case in the year before. Yet, calls for African-centred solutions from African leaders are frequently echoed. These demands are echoed because of the continued limitations of African institutions to deal with its own conflicts and finance its own interventions. The African Solidarity Initiative (ASI), launched at the July 2012 AU Summit, is a prominent example. The ASI gives an opportunity for member states to respond to post conflict needs of other African countries, both financially and in kind.

Another stream of discussion focuses on "African Traditional Mechanisms (ATMs)" and its perceived indigenous origins. The ATM approach suggests that those involved in local conflicts know their best solutions, thus prefer to use the term "home-grown solutions". ATMs are practical mechanisms that have strong roots in localised settings. They have persisted through colonialism, to an extent that hybrid solutions are being formulated. Hybrid solutions are encapsulated in discourses functioning from a special "platform'' and "writing new narratives".

The depth and complexity of the issues raised above makes the journey of conceptualising AfSol challenging and stimulating at the same time. More so, African-centred solutions are difficult to categories. Therefore, the workshop has tackled the questions of whether African-centred solutions are a policy, concept, an ideology, philosophy or pure practice.

Procedure

Selected key scholars and personalities who are knowledgeable on the subject matter were given the task to streamline and dissect the historical discourse, process and develop conceptual underpinnings of AfSol. The formats selected were brainstorming sessions, presentations and discussions aimed to start the process of conceptualisation and contribute to unpacking the notion of African-centred Solutions.

The workshop was developed with the aim of building a core expert group that encompasses experts from all over Africa coming from various education and professional backgrounds. Several students and IPSS staff also contributed towards to the AfSol discussion in different dimensions.

The group was tasked with defining and shaping the AfSol concept by presenting points of discussion on the research questions identified by the IPSS research team. The first of the questions was concerned with identifying why defining AfSol was important. After establishing the need for AfSol, presentations on the historical origin of AfSol followed. The first day concluded with presentations on the underlying assumptions and actors of AfSol.

The second day started by experts attempting to categorize AfSol. Building on all the previous discussions the subsequent presentations defined AfSol directly and indirectly, by illuminating the attributes AfSol is 'not'. All presentations were followed by extensive discussions that led to common understandings in some areas, and exposed topics for further research in others.

Lively AfSol Discussion

Major discussions

The first question, which determined the necessity of all further discussions, was 'why do we need AfSol?' According to several participants, the answer lays in the uniqueness of the African socio-cultural and political settings that requires special analysis. African states are young, still struggling with the process of state building. Limited capacity, lack of good governance, fragile institutions and complex security challenges have been addressed by foreign-led solutions that frequently been arbitrary, impractical and destructive. With regards to economic policies, constant pressure for restructuring and adoption of models that are not contextually adjusted illustrate the need for AfSol.

The participants pointed to "Try Africa First' initiative, which is a part of the book "OAU after 20 years" (1984), when attempting the inquiry on 'the origins of AfSol'. "Try African First" seeks to encourage Africans to prevent and manage African conflicts.

It has been highlighted that AfSol should not be seen as giving Africans exclusive say in peace and security but it is to provide a framework for Africans to assist one another before resorting to external actors. The historical perspective of AfSol looked into the shared historical and contemporary experiences.

Elements of AfSol were instilled in the objectives and principles of the OAU at its establishment. For instance, the 1960 Cairo declaration contained the concept of negotiation, mediation, conciliation and arbitration; though they were not practiced. Even if the historical perspective in defining AfSol was impeccable, contemporary security threats like Ebola appeared as a topic of discussion as well.

In drawing the background of the concept, the participants discussed African identity. The attempts by several African personalities such as Abdel Nasser of Egypt and Nkrumah to answer the question of who an African is was cited by many experts.

Lively AfSol Discussion

The experts explored the range of African identities such as Arab-Africa, Black Africa, Tropical Africa, Caribbean Africa, and so on. Exploration of these identities made the participants question if AfSol is a one size fits all template or if it is an issue specific solution.

The participants cautioned the general usage of AfSol, to avoid being mistaken for a jargon. Instead, they highlighted innovative approaches integrating collective African action with global domain. The participants stressed that political autonomy; capacity building and good diplomacy are the ways to build an effective AfSol. The need for strong media outlets that enables African voice to be heard was also mentioned to be crucial.

Furthermore, the participants successfully identified 'What the underlying assumptions of AfSol are'. Tackling the problem of dependency and the practical need to finance AfSol are among the underlying dimensions. Key points of controversy were mentioned in this session. One of which is the presentation of some solutions, such as democracy, as a one shoe fits all solutions. Another controversy is the setting of priorities, with regards to basic human needs such as food and clothing versus physical infrastructure.

The existence of shared value system is one of the underlying assumptions that the participants discussed. They raised the need to build concrete value system that defines AfSol. The experts pointed out that lessons could be learned from unexpected actors in this regard. For instance, the colonial project had a certain philosophical foundations on which a system was built that works to this day.

Next, the participants discussed several issues to understand 'Who defines AfSol for whom'. The discussion recognized the role of African people and the importance of institutions and legal systems as actors and instruments for defining and executing AfSol. For example, the immunity clause that is clearly stipulated on African Charters on Human Rights and International Criminal Protocol was discussed.

Because of the tendency to change constitutions to avoid accountability, the number of unconstitutional changes of government determines the duration and number of constitutions in a country. There has to be laws that make leaders accountable for the crime of unconstitutional change of government. This approach is an example of the manifestations of AfSol through legal systems for African governments and citizenry.

Moreover, the experts tried to place AfSol in a suitable classification by presenting and discussing on the forwarded question; that is, 'Where do we categorize AfSol?' The participants reached in a consensus on the following point:

- AfSol is an ideology that dates back to the time of pan-Africanism.
- AfSol is a philosophy, which dates back to the Nkrumah's idea of political kingdom.
- AfSol is a policy in the making
- Therefore, AfSol can be practiced, this dimensions is a work in progress.

"Consequently, AfSol was placed in the category of idealism but with a blend of realism. The former refers to AfSol as an aspiration, a desire that reflects an incomplete project still under work. The latter is reflected in Africa's collective self-help in peace and security.

To make AfSol's aspiration a reality, key conditions were put forward for discussion. These were good governance, economic cooperation, consideration of the gender dimension and a feasible bottom-up approach at all level. Moreover, sustainable economic growth, youth empowerment, effective state building and price adjustment on food and energy supplies are some of the issues mentioned.
Finally, the participants addressed the questions 'what is AfSol?' and 'what is NOT AfSol?' If not categorized and redefined AfSol implies 'nothing' since it runs the risk of being 'everything'. However, this discussion, shaped AfSol systematically into a strategy in action, based on African conviction of Pan-Africanism,

Ownership and determined action through concerted efforts. Although the scope of 'African Solutions' can be broadened beyond peace and security by increasing the levels of analysis and spheres of examination, this discussion on AfSol specifically concerned with peace and security. Therefore, the aim of these discussions and the following workshops will focus on 'African-centred Solutions in Peace and Security'.
AfSol has several components. For instance, a solution might not fit a criterion of AfSol solely for being designed by African leaders. This is because solutions will not make AfSol unless they are inclusive of other actors, especially the African public. This entails ownership of the designing, process and practice. The experts agreed that AfSol is beyond collectively agreed solutions but extends towards accommodating diversity.

The participants acknowledged the need for shared values to define or redefine AfSol. The solutions should be sensitive to these values that Africans share. They observed that some values are not fully shared and are, in some cases, contradictory. This is often reflected in our institutions. AfSol should not be a cliché that stands alone or replaces the African tendency to create new institutions when the other fails or delays to deliver; an example is the creation of NEPAD, APSA, and AGA among the many institutions Africa has tried. Instead, the principles

of AfSol can and should be reflected in the actions of African institutions, states and citizenry.
The participants raised the risks of losing African values through global influences. Experience on the surface shows the double life Africans live at home and in the office. The point was demonstrated by the example of traditional names changed to 'modern' names of western origin.

Common understandings on AfSol

After reaching a consensus in using "AfSol" as the abbreviated name for 'African-centred Solutions', the participants agreed that there is a need to define the concept. AfSol is usually met by numerous reactions ranging from pessimism to optimism. While the negativity comes by discussing the 'hopeless' continent with so many plights, the optimists celebrate the uniqueness of African values and practices.

The workshop participants embraces the notion of Ubuntu (collectivism) where "one sees oneself through others" as Bishop Desmond Tutu has put it. The workshop discussion took off with this spirit of optimism as well as with some caution not to romanticize the concept. Remembering the tendency of formulating decorative abbreviations (NEPAD, AGA), the participants warned against diminishing AfSol to a fashionable cliché to be replaced by another with no or little practical implication.

As a key point, the experts recognized that, AfSol is a strategy in action based on the conviction of philosophy, ownership, commitment and leadership, determined through a conceptual framework and tools that are being developed. The common understandings established in the discussion have been dissected into three pillars recorded as follows. The second pillar, the commitment of Africans at all levels, supports the first pillar, ownership. Both adhere to a set of shared values that is the third and final pillar of AfSol. The major findings can possibly develop and guide further research in the following three major practical strategies:

- An alternative way of doing things on the continent
- Identify and mobilize African intellectual knowledge
- Guiding principles that define and shape policy.

Nevertheless, the aim is for the AU and African countries to take the lead in defining the nature of the continental peace and security issues, making suggestions on what strategies and policies are required to address conflicts.

A. Ownership and commitment

The participants agreed that African ownership is not about success but about doing it in one's own way. Africans are able to tackle their own problems best because they are more familiar with their problems than external actors. AfSol is a home grown approach where Africans are 'their own-brothers' keepers' using relevant mechanisms.

An important principle embedded in the discussion of ownership is inclusiveness. The experts have agreed that African ownership has to be located at several levels ranging from public ownership of the design, process and practice of solutions to the leading role played by political institutions and CSOs. African ownership does not represent the narrow dominance of African leaders in ownership

of decision-making, but the ownership of the African people.

The responsibility for each other and for the challenges Africa faces is the starting place of ownership. In AfSol, Africa should challenge the tendency to blame others for 'African problems.' Instead, AfSol should create a situation where Africans take responsibility of negative contributions and acknowledge best practices.
A sub-principle of constant evaluation and validation for the achievements and limitations can be drawn from it. Overcoming challenges that depict Africans as victims, which has been the case in the past, will transform the global image of Africa. Africans should be proactive in the process of developing AfSol. AfSol should not only own African problems of conflict management and deployment of peacekeeping missions. It should also be concerned with long-term solutions and conflict prevention mechanisms that are more inclined to good governance. This rests on political will and, commitment of leaders, academia and the African people.

Financial ownership is one of the areas where commitment is detected, easily yet surely. More than 80% of the AU Peace Fund Budget comes from external funding. The Peace Fund, one of the main pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) has lacked the resources and the accountability it needs to be effective in recent crisis situations in Mali and Libya. Actually, 2% of the Fund has been raised from African States in the period between 2008 - 2011 (Peace Fund: Financing and Refocusing, June 24, 2013). AfSol, if turned in to a working strategy, which requires finances to be developed, promoted and implemented.

Ownership at various levels can only emanate from the commitment of actors at all levels. Commitment of leaders at national, regional and continental level is crucial to the promotion of good governance. The role of citizens in shaping good governance lays in their commitment to elect appropriate leaders by being active participants of the process. The necessity of African solution to bad African leadership assumes governance as the basis for AfSol.

Moreover, the experts discussed the role of a robust think-tank, committed to educate citizens on the essence of AfSol. Their primary commitment would be for such actors to work in harmony with each other and with external partners since all are working on the same objectives and goals.

Building strong African institutions and overcoming the challenge of finding a common ground is another element of commitment, often referred to as institutional commitment. Africans still face the challenge of missing a common ground for unity and action because of the lack of strong pan-African institutions and systems. In this argument, the group of experts acknowledged the existence of traditional systems that can work better than the "modern" can. The Gacaca established for the genocide trial in Rwanda is an illustration of the reality.

For this reason, the workshop participants expressed the need to trust and formalize the African traditional legal system after thoroughly researching the systems. After decolonialization, African countries, with the exception of Ghana and Botswana, established legal systems that were a direct replica of their colonizers. African traditional legal systems remained secondary and informal to the formal structure transplanted from western systems.

B. Shared Values

The experts have extensively discussed the issue of shared values. These values are the basis for commitment and ownership of African peace and security challenges. Each individual state has its own values, some of which it shares with its neighbouring states at the regional level. Africa is a platform where the shared values of each region form a ground for an Africa wide identity. On the other hand any African value found at a certain location, shared with others or not, should be reflected in the solution designed for the people of that locality since it is 'shared' among individuals, creating the basis of their collective identity.

Shared history, geography and identity are the basis for shared values. Africans have a shared history that goes back to experiences such as slavery and colonialism. The experts have identified geography as the defining element of an African identity. Geographically, if states and their people are found in Africa, they are African. This identity creates a longing for Africans to create a peaceful and united Africa. All stakeholders, governments, think tanks, citizens and the diaspora share this responsibility.

This does not mean that AfSol only represents solutions agreed or acceptable by all Africans unanimously. Instead, acknowledgement of diversity and willingness to accommodate and even embrace different actors and their values in the process of decision-making is critical to AfSol.

To achieve this goal the shared values should encompass tolerance, solidarity, collective security, responsible leadership and citizenry committed to justice, practical solutions and human rights. These values are not based on romanticizing the past;

Instead making practical and realistic links between tradition and other 'adopted' systems. This can be done with commitment, ownership and the determination to build common African values, since Africa is in the making and is not something established. This will be based on the understanding, that value systems change over time and, therefore, values demand constant revision.

A very important point raised by the group of experts at the end is the need to consider other value systems. Africa exists with the global system, where it has been interacting with other parts of the world, therefore its solutions should be cognizant of the similarity or contradiction it has with these global values systems, not necessarily to conform with it but to handle the situation with understanding.

Way Forward

This approach to AfSol defines a particular action or policy as 'African' by assessing the consideration of the principles of ownership, commitment and shared values. This ensures the 'Africanization' of the process of formulating a solution. However, this approach does not guarantee the outcome. A scenario where a process is owned and led by Africans, yet fails in outcome cannot be fully eliminated. In such cases the reason behind the outcome should be examined. The workshop will call researchers to examine

processes as well as assess outcomes, when applicable. Case studies on contemporary issues will give the experts a chance for in depth discussions in the following workshop. With this understanding, the second workshop series will focus on the best, progressing and failed practices of African institution, particularly the African Union and RECs in dealing with African conflicts. Other areas that need further research to be addressed in future workshops are:

- Critically examining shared values and filling the gaps
- Further exploration of working traditional models
- The challenges of Human Rights and good governance
- Areas to enhance citizen's participation and capacity

In the end, AfSol has been depicted as a multi-stake holder approach where Africans, especially the public engages in shaping the direction of the continents peace and security agenda by active participation. For this to be practical, the collaboration of academicians, practitioners, policy makers and other stakeholders is essential.

AfSol Discussion

Annex 1: Abbreviations

AAU – Addis Ababa University

AfSol – African-centred Solutions

AGA – African Governance Architecture

APSA – African Peace and Security Architecture

ASI – African Solidarity Initiative

ATM- African Traditional Mechanisms

AU – African Union

AUC – African Union Commission

ECOWAS – Economic Commission of West African States

EU – European Union

IPSS – Institute for Peace and Security Studies

NEPAD - New Partnership for Africa's Development

OAU – Organization of African Unity

PSC – Peace and Security Council

SADC – Southern Africa Development Cooperation

Annex 2: List of Participants

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Copy-editing by IPSS
Design and typesetting by IPSS

This report was published by the Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia (IPSS).