AFRICAN UNION'S CONFLICT INTERVENTION FRAMEWORK AND THE MALIAN CONFLICT, 2012-2022

By

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Abstract

This study interrogate the African Union's institutional framework and engagement in the Malian between2012-2022.The study was guided by Organizational theory as theoretical framework of analysis and the idea of the theory is rooted on the fact that African Union as an organization has an institutional mechanisms and procedures to resolve conflict within the African region. The Malian conflict is complex one, involving various factors which triggered it. The theory addressed the role played by the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) which includes the role of Peace and Security Council (PSC), the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the Panel of the Wise (PoW). The study adopted qualitative descriptive research design and data were gathered from secondary sources which included textbooks, publications/newspapers, journal and articles and data were analyzed through content analysis. The study recommends that while it is true that African Union leaders and organs are committed to resolving the Malian crisis through interventions, such intervention like others around the globe are inherently and essentially reactive. African Union must go beyond such reactive intervention to strengthening good governance in the region as provided for in the good governance protocol. This can stem the systemic failures that water the ground for state inflicted and armed group's violence. The study also recommends that the institutional mechanisms and procedures of the African Union should be well- funded in order to function effectively and efficiently and finally, the organ of the Continental Early Warning System should be pro-active in duty in order to provide timely information on violent conflicts before the conflict even erupt.

Keywords: African Union, Conflict, Conflict Resolution, Sustainable Security

Introduction

For decades, the phenomenon of regional and sub-regional organizations have acquired much relevance in the context of wider debate in the conduct of international relations and security. As can be deciphered from literature, they fulfill important roles in guaranteeing regional stability, peace and security through conflict prevention mechanisms and resolutions (Ikejiaku & Dauda, 2011). As Observed in Bamidele (2016), the modern global system is characterized by the issue of regionalism. The management, negotiation, settlement of borders, territorial disputes, intra-state conflicts take place at regional levels. Apparently, because the global international organizations have been considered over-burdened, regional organization emerged in a bid to proffer solution to regional problems.

The above accords with one of major rationale for the establishment of the African Union (AU) geared towards ensuring the pacific settlement of dispute among member states as well as security challenges facing African region (Article 4 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, n.d). Africa is a continent characterized by conflicts and crisis. There is hardly any country that has not contended with one conflict or the other. The majority of African conflicts are intra-state, which as observed in Ogbu (2017), have resulted in decades of devastation and gratuitous destruction, impoverishment of the African population, political instability, institutional decay and socio-economic stagnation. Because these conflicts are intra-

state, the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states enshrined in the Charter of the OAU limited the roles of the organization and made it incapable and less effective in managing regional conflicts. As noted by Ogbu (2017), the effect of intra-state conflict in the disruption of socio-economic activities across African region may have convinced and triggered the African Heads of State to empower African Union to deal with the dynamics and emerging challenges across African region. The African Union, established in 2000, inherited an institutional framework of OAU built upon the principle of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-indifference. However, unlike the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the constitutive act of the African Union (AU) gives room for interference in the domestic/internal affairs of member states in some specific cases; such as genocide and conflicts that threaten political stability in the region as well as unconstitutional changes of government among African countries (Herbst & Mill, 2003). This complex framework which is designed to promote peace, security and stability across the continent, has guided the AU's response to numerous conflicts including the protracted conflict in Mali.

With the regional power conferred on the African Union (AU), the organization has taken initiatives with huge success across African continent. As affirmed by Ndiho (2010), there were about 20 wars and conflicts ongoing across African region before the divergence from Organization of African Unity (OAU) to African Union (AU),

but have reduced to only four conflicts/wars in Africa in less than a decade of the establishment of AU. This marked a big success in the first decade of the establishment of African Union. Whether in places like Burundi, Darfur, Chad, Somalia, Liberia, etc the African Union played prominent role guided by the institutional framework. Understanding this institutional framework is crucial to analyzing the AU's engagement and its effectiveness in addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by the Malian conflict.

The study is qualitative and adopted organizational theory as the theoretical framework of analysis. This theory is apt to the study based on the fact that African Union as an international organization has demonstrated a favorable commitment to the resolution of the Malian conflict through its appropriate agencies of Peace and Security Council (PSC, African Standby Force (ASF), Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), Panel of the Wise (PoW), Pan African Network of the Wise (PanWise). The theory provides a valuable insights into the African Union's role in the Malian conflict.

The Context and Dimensions of the Malian Conflict

The Malian conflict is a very complex issue with multiple contributing factors such as fall-out of crisis of governance, ethnic and tribal tensions between two rivalries groups of Tuareg (Fulanis) demanding for a stake in the government (autonomy). When Mali gained independence in 1960 from France, the government formed had to assert its authority on a large territory, including desert regions where Tuareg and Arab communities directly challenged its authority. The task already proved to be more challenging because of the deep resentment of Malian government towards the northern Mali region whose population was regarded as the main obstacle to national unity.

The northern Mali constitutes about 10 percent of the Malian population and they reside within the borders of the West African region. The southern elites resolved to focus their political and economic efforts on the development of their region and gradually marginalized the north. The Malian conflict historically rooted in distrust had led to four (4) Tuareg and Arab uprisings of 1963, 1991, 2006 and 2012 respectively (Transparency International, 2015). Even though peace accords were signed and multiple demobilization programmes implemented, none of them succeeded in normalizing the tensions and disagreement between the north and Bamako. Furthermore, their intra-Malian tensions aggravated by one foreign interference or the other, more passive forces, aided and exacerbated tension in the north. These external actors however take the advantage of the Malian weak state capacity to build their influence primarily in the north. Countries like Libya and Algeria are two regional powers that have long sought to push their agenda for sahelian influence as a step to broader geopolitical primacy. Fessy (2012) noted that it did not take long for the Libyan conflict to spill over borders in the Sahel and Mali seems to have paid the highest price, so far following the coup de'tat and the tension

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therein in the region. Hundreds of Malian combatants who fought to the collapse of the Libyan president, Muammar Gaddafi regime in 2011, fled back to country home with their weapons at the end and formed a formidable and most powerful Taureg-led rebel group known as Azawad National Liberation Movement (MNLA).

To note is the fact that the process of externally imposed state formation during colonialism in Africa did not follow the process of organic or internal state formation, where a state develops naturally over time through the interactions and consolidation of internal social, economic, and political forces, instead, externally imposed state formation in Africa was characterized by arbitrary borders, imposition of foreign institutions, disruption of traditional systems and exploitation of resources. The result of it was that many African countries do not comprise a secure community and have limited capacity. Yet, they are required to democratize without the fundamental of sufficient security and capacity being in place. More so, Idigo (2024) noted that the rising insecurity is intricately linked to systemic governance failure, characterized by corruption. While Mali might be considered to be a "democracy foster child'' in the region (Reuter, 2012), it has been argued that this "proved to be a façade for institutional weakness and mismanagement (Boas & Torheim, 2013). While the Libyan crisis did not cause the conflict in Mali, it certainly revealed the malaise felt within the army and the arms in circulation from Libyan crisis which were not retrieved from the combatant helped to fuel the Malian conflict.The influx of the Islamic fighters created a new dimension in the conflict which coincided with a coup d'etat in the capital of Bamako on 22nd March, 2012 and establishment of interim junta government under Captain Amadou Sanogo.As noted by Idigo (2022), the insurgency in the northern part of the country threatened security in the sub-Sahara region including Nigeria. The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime argued that the international focus on countering terrorism has obscured signals that "there is something deeply rotten in the state governance" in Mali. They saw the main trigger of the 2012 coup as "in fact the widespread disillusionment and incumbent government and political leadership, not the northern separatist movement"(The Global Initiative, 2015). However, the persistent series of attacks between the northern and southern Mali since January 2012 continued to question the very existence of not only Malian national security but African regional peace and security as various terrorist and insurgent groups have not only spread across Mali but into neighbouring States. As observed by Amnesty International (AI) (cited in Hirsch, 2012), the conflict in Mali has created Mali's worst human rights violations since her independence as the uprising has resulted in documented instances of gang rape, extra-judicial executions in the capital of Mali, Bamako, Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal, Mopti, Bourem and other cities and towns in Mali, and all forms of abuse on women and children by the Tuareg and Islamist groups. European Civil

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Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operation (2023) reported that less than 5 million Malian residents fled the country between 2012 when the conflict started and 2022 due to the tension in the region. Figure of about 198,000 residents of Mali were refugees in the neighboring countries of Algeria, Burkina Faso and Mauritania. Also about 1,726 schools have been closed down, thereby leaving about 520,000 school children and 10,000 teachers out of school and these constituting another security threat to the country and Africa in general (European civil protection, 2023). Klobucrata and Bussenmaker (2020) noted that casualties from across the three countries increased fivefold since 2006 reaching to four thousand (4000) deaths in 2019. Aljazeera News (2017) reported that thirty-three (33) Malian soldiers were killed while fourteen (14) others sustained several degree of injuries. More so, about 100 assailants on trucks launched the attack in the town of Tessit, located 60km (37 miles) southeast of Ansongo, near Mali's border with Burkina Faso and Nigeria. In essence, the conflict in Mali has spread into Burkina Faso and Niger, with fighters linked to Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) flaming tensions between ethnic groups. This spatial dimension of the conflict complicated and form of intervention in Mali as it must deal with regional and international factors and actors at work in the Sahel. This is the context of AU intervention leveraging on its institutional architecture for peace and security

African Union's Security Architecture and the Malian conflict

The main AU mechanism for promoting peace and security is Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) which consists of evolved instruments and elements within the framework of APSA, AU undertakes diplomatic intervention, mediation, Peace Support Operation (PSO) and post conflict reconstruction and development. These activities are undertaken by a range of institutions which are outlined in protocols to include, Peace and Security Council (PSC), Panel of the Wise (PoW), Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), Peace Fund (PF) and African Standby Force (ASF). It is within the context of operationlization of these institutions that African Union's role in Mali can best be analyzed

The Peace and Security Council (PSC)

African Union Peace and Security Council is the standing decision-making organ or structure of the African Union for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. The body is a security and early warning arrangement projected to promote timely and effective responses to conflict and crisis situations in Africa. It is a key major pillar of the African Union Peace and Security Architecture.International Colloquium Report (2012), reports that attempts to resolve conflict and crisis in Africa resulted in establishment of Peace and Security Council (PSC) by the African Union on December 26, 2003.The AUPSC in order to resolve the conflict in Mali has continued to call for dialogue and negotiation between

the two rivalry groups, such as the 339th meeting held in 2012 and 1001st meeting held on 1st June, 2021, and other series of meeting convened to discuss for the peace and stability of the region. The PSC organ of the AU strongly condemned attacks on MINUSMA convoys on 25th September, 2017 in the region of Gao and other violent incidents in Mali, emphasizing the need for stability and security in the region. On the other hand, the AU has welcomed the signing of peace agreements such as preliminary agreement to the Presidential election and inclusive peace process in 2013. Overall, the PSC's effort has contributed to promoting peace and stability in Mali,although the complexity and persistence of the conflict suggest that continued engagement and support are necessary to achieve lasting peace in Mali

More so, the power of PSC in agreement with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, include; to anticipate and prevent disputes and conflict as well as policies, which may lead to genocide and crime against humanity; to undertake peace-making and peace-building functions to resolve conflicts where they have occurred; to authorize the mounting and deployment of peace support missions and lay down general guidelines for the conduct of such missions including the mandate; to recommend to the Assembly, pursuant to Article 4 (h) of the African Union Constitutive Act, to intervene on behalf of the Union, in a Member State in respect to grave circumstances, namely; war crimes, genocide and crime against humanity as defined in relevant international instruments; to institute sanctions whenever an unconstitutional change of government takes place in a member state;to implement the African Union's common defense policy; to ensure implementation of key conventions and instruments to combat international terrorism; to promote harmonization and coordination of efforts between the regional mechanisms and the AU in the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa; to follow-up promotion of democratic practices, good governance, the rule of law, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and respect for the sanctity of human life and international humanitarian law; to promote and encourage the implementation of conventions and treaties on arms control and disarmament; to examine and take action in situations where the national independence and sovereignty of Member State is threatened by acts of aggression, including by mercenaries; and to support and facilitate humanitarian action in situations of armed conflicts or major natural disasters. (William, 2009)

However, some African Union members have criticized the Peace and Security Council (PSC) Protocol for being vague on which the institution has the primary legal authority to use military force; for instance in article 16, the PSC Protocol states that the African Union has the primary responsibility for promoting peace, security and stability on African continent whereas in Article 17, the same Protocol states that the United Nations Security Council has the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. On this

basis, what it means is that the Peace and Security Council in some cases, African Union would first get the UN Security Council approval/authorization before carrying out military interventions. This action was criticized thereby doubting the strength of the organ. While the implications would lead to delay of the organ of Peace and Security Council to swing into action without due consultation of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) which invariably question the sovereign power of the organ.

Another major critic rests on the fact that members who were actively disobeying African Union decisions or carrying out gross human rights violations within their borders are still been admitted or elected into the Peace and Security Council. European Court Auditors (2018), reported that this is due to the failure of the Assembly of African Union Heads of State to properly evaluate the potential members' compliance to the PSC membership criteria. Therefore, it required that African Union as a matter of urgency should stop treating African problem leaders with 'kid's gloves' all in the name of respect and solidarity rather sanction/suspend erring members when need be.

Panel of the Wise (PoW)

Panel of the wise (PoW) is considered a consultative body of the African Union, encompassing five (5) members who serve three year term with the primary aim of providing opinions to the Peace and Security Council on issues relevant to conflict prevention, management and resolution while representatives of the constitutive body

are chosen from the five (5) regions of African continent which are the North, West, East, South and Central region of Africa. (VOA News, 2009). Appointment of members of the Panel of the Wise (PoW) is based on selection by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and subject to the approval of the African Union Commission for three (3) year terms and renewable once,(Kodjo, 2012). The PoW meets a minimum of three (3) times in a year to discuss its work and choose regions or countries it wishes to visit; they organizes annual workshops on conflict prevention and management as well as related issues in order to help PoW develop a thematic report on what to submit to the Assembly of Heads of States and Government of the African Union for its approval and most of the reports by the Panel often cover non-impunity, women and children in armed conflicts as well as electoral disputes. The mandate of the Panel of the Wise (PoW) encompasses; support and advise the effort of the chairperson of the commission and African Union's Peace Security Council in the area of conflict prevention;advise both the Commission and the Council on issues that are necessarily considered by the policy organs of the African Union such as issues of impunity, justice and reconciliation as well as, women and children in arms conflicts and its impact on the most vulnerable ones; use its good offices to carry out conflict mediation and broker peace agreements between warring parties; help the African Union Commission mapping out threats to peace and security by providing regular advice and analysis and requesting the commission to deploy fact-

finding or mediation teams to specific countries (AU website, April 2018)

African heads of state and government have indeed held meetings to discuss resolving the Malian conflict, particularly within the framework of the AU, ECOWAS. Panel of the Wise have played significant roles in addressing the conflict in Mali by condemning the action of the armed terrorist group in the northern Mali and encouraged all actors concern to redouble their efforts to speed up the resolution. They equally help to facilitate the establishment of channel of communication through mediation between the Malian government and the Taureg separatist group. These was evident in the high level retreat meeting held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso on 4th and 5th June, 2012 which focused on strengthening the relationship between the AU and the Panel of the Wise and other similar regional mechanisms to addressing the conflict in Mali and African continent at large (Accord, 2013)

Accordingly, challenges of the Panel of the Wise include but not limited to lack of commitment by African Heads of State and government, inability of the Panel to initiate interventions to support conflict prevention by the council and African Union Commission chairperson due to Peace and Security Council Protocol which limited the effort of the panel to thematic discussions only, and also lack of political autonomy and financial independence to help reduce conflicts and overcome structural challenges(Woldemichael, 2022)

Pan African Network of the Wise (PanWise)

The PanWise core members include AU Panel of the Wise/Friends, ECOWAS Council of the Wise, Southern African Development Community (SADC), Mediation Reference Group and Panel of Elders, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Committee of Elders, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Mediation Contact Group, Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), East African Community (EAC), Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Community of Sahel–Saharan States (CEN–SAD). The associate members include Forum of Former African Heads of State (Africa Leadership Forum), African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA), National Infrastructures for Peace, National Mediation Councils, Relevant African Mediation Associations/Institutions, All Africa Council of Churches, African Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediation (FemWise-Africa)

African Union through its organ of PanWise has provided multiform support, including financial support, to the organization of the Presidential and Legislative elections in 2013 in Mali. It provides, in this context, technical support, through advice to the Government and the armed movements to encourage compromise and promote the spirit of dialogue and cooperation between the parties.The organ also contributed in preventing and de-escalating election related disputes in Mali. These was achieved through

incorporating members of FemWise (Network of the African women in conflict prevention and mediation) into election-related deployments and facilitating the inclusion of youths in peace building process. PanWise also worked to election dispute from escalating into violence by providing early warning signal and promoting democratic principle. For instance, the July 29th and August 12th, 2018 presidential election conducted in Malian was with the assistance of the PanWise supporting for a hitch free and fair election in Mali. The support it receives from member states and regional organizations helped its ability to work collaboratively with other stakeholders

Continental Early Warning System (CEWS)

The Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) has, as its objectives the anticipation and prevention of conflicts in the continent as well as to provide timely information and evolving violent conflicts based on specifically developed indicators (AU, 2018).Continental Early Warning System as a conflict early warning operation within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) was supported by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1809 of 2008. On this note, the Continental Early Warning System is specifically mandated to collaborate with the United Nations, its agencies, other relevant international organizations, research centers, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), academic institutions among similar others to facilitate the effective functioning of the CEWS (AU, 2018). In order to facilitate the

anticipation and prevention of conflict in Africa, the Continental Early Warning System consists of; an observation and monitoring unit, popularly known as 'the Situation Room; this is located at the Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Division of the African Union and is responsible for data collection and analysis, followed by the observation and monitoring units of the Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution which are to be linked directly to the Situation Room (AU, 2018). The overall goal is to support Peace and Security Council of the AU in curbing conflict in Africa (Engel, 2022). The early warning system played a crucial role by continuously monitoring the security situation in Malian, analyzing trends, patterns, and potential flashpoint. Before the out broke of the Malian conflict in 2012, the Continental Early Warning System was instrumental in providing timely information on evolving violent conflicts based on specifically developed indicators, however, this could not be sustain due to lack of fund to keep the organ up and running.As the conflictbroke out, the CEWS provide timely warnings of potential escalations or deteriorations of the conflict to Malian neighbouring countries. Some number of factors impeded the CEWS from carrying out its functions which includes; capacity constraint like fund, infrastructure and data quality etc

African Standby Force (ASF)

The African Standby Force is an international, continental African and multidisciplinary peacekeeping force with

military, police and civilian contingents that acts under the direction of the African Union and meant to be deployed in times of crisis in Africa. The Constitutive Act gives the AU the right to intervene in a Member State in grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. As per Article 13 of the Protocol Relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, the mandate/objectives of the African Standby; observation and monitoring missions; other types of peace support missions; intervention in a member state in respect for grave circumstances or at the request of a member state in order to restore peace and security, in accordance with Article 4 (h) and (j) of the Constitutive Act; preventive deployment in order to prevent (i) a dispute or a conflict from escalating, (ii) an ongoing violent conflict from spreading to neighboring areas or state, and (iii) the resurgence of violence after parties to a conflict have reached an agreement; peace-building, including post-conflict disarmament and demobilization; humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of civilian population in conflict areas and support efforts to address major natural disasters; any other functions as may be mandated by the Peace and Security Council or the Assembly.

Member states were urged to take steps to establish standby contingent for participation in peace support missions and in the year 2003, a 2010 operational date for the African Standby Force was set (Burgess, 2011).The African Standby Force (ASF) played a role by assisting in the resolution of the Malian conflict, through the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), which was authorized by the UN Security Council in 2012. Although, the ASF does not have a standing army in the classical sense, rather they relies on the standby arrangements with member states. The Force cooperates with the United Nations and its agencies, other relevant international and regional organizations, as well as national authorities and NGOs, wherever and whenever appropriate. Specifically AFISMA was tasked with assisting the Malian authorities in recovering rebels-held regions and restoring national unity. Even though the starting point of the interrogation of the impact of AU intervention is the AFISMA plan which came about as a policy drawn from ideas from the AU, ECOWAS and the EU. The AFISMA plan came out with a seven-point list of short- and medium-term objectives, including; facilitating the inclusive democratic process in Mali by re-establish Malian authority, restore government control and services in areas occupied by extremist groups, including Ansar Dine, AQIM and MUJAO; disarm and demobilize armed groups, including rebel fighters; reconcile and foster dialogue among Malian communities; ensure accountability for justice and human rights abuses and violations; restore the country's unity and territorial integrity; reform its defense and security sector, and addressing the structural challenges facing the wider Sahel region.

After the transfer of authority from AFISMA to MINUSMA, AU created the African Union Mission for Mali and Sahel

(MISAHEL) in order to maintain the presence of AU and support Mali and the Sahel countries in their stabilization and development efforts. MISAHEL was tasked with managing the African Union (AU) Strategy for the Sahel region and aims to support Mali in the crisis recovery process and help the countries of the Sahel face security, governance and development challenges. The MISAHEL mandate comprises three (3) main components which includes; the political component aimed at supporting the consolidation of peace gains, the promotion of the rule of law and contribution to the strengthening of democratic institutions in the Sahel region, including human rights protection, capacity building of national human rights institutions, the judicial system and civil society organizations. This component also concerns with humanitarian matters, especially in the North of Mali. Secondly, the component of MISAHEL is devoted to security in Sahel. It is aimed at coordinating the efforts of the AU linked to security challenges, in particular conflicts, terrorism, organized crime, as well as different types of trafficking and thirdly, the component is related to development problems in the Sahel, and deals with matters concerning the environment, such as the deterioration of the environment, as well as under-development in general (Djiré et al, 2017).

Though the intervention and involvement of the AU in the conflict helped to achieve some degree of success in some military areas of the conflict which includes; rejection of Islamist extremists with the help of the military intervention whichdrove out the Islamist extremist groups, including Ansar Dine, AQIM and MUJAO from the north; restoration of territorial integrity of Mali which was done with the military intervention which enabled the Malian government to regain control over the northern regions especially the capital city of Bamako; protection of civilians which amongst all, the intervention helped to protect civilians from human rights abuses and violence, including rapes perpetrated by the extremist groups.

The negative impact of the military intervention in Malian conflict includes: human rights violations including extra-judicial killings, torture and disappearances, committed by Malian soldiers and international forces; displacement and humanitarian crisis: The military engagement against the rebels which led to the displacement of over 500,000 people, creating a humanitarian crisis and large number of refugees in neighboring countries of Algeria, Cameroon, Chad, Burkina-Faso; destruction of infrastructures including schools, healthcare facilities, and cultural heritage sites; long-term instability which has not addressed the underlying causes of the conflict and potentially leading to long-term instability; risk of radicalization of which the intervention contributed to the radicalization of some of groups, potentially perpetuating the cycle of violence in Mali; the regional destabilization also contributed to instability in neighboring countries of Mali; civilian casualties resulting from the military operations

Challenges faced by the force include; complex political dynamics on the African continent, challenges of command, control and communication, the emergence of common or different battle procedures, lack of common training doctrine, interoperability of equipment and language barriers (Cardoso, 2009)

Peace Fund

The Peace Fund is one of the broader African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) that works together with the Peace and Security Council (PSC), African Standby Force (ASF), the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) and the Panel of the Wise (PoW) to support the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts and facilitate timely and effective responses to conflict and crisis situations in Africa (AU, 2023). The objective of the Peace Fund is to enable the African Union to fully finance mediation and preventive diplomatic activities, support institution readiness and capacity, maintain a crisis reserve facility as well as enabling the African Union to meet its commitment to Finance 25% of its peace operations budget.

As observed in the Article 21, relating to the Establishment of Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union, provisions are made for the legal establishment of a special fund to be known as the Peace Fund with the primary aim of providing the necessary financial resources for peace support missions and other operational activities related to peace and security in Africa. More so, Article 3 of the PSC protocol states that

the Fund will finance the African Union's operational peace and security activities. They mandate includes; ensuring predictable and sustainable financing; putting in place credible and transparent governance systems and structures; consolidating work on fiduciary rules and management in compliance with international acceptable standards (African Union webmail, 2023)

Peace Fund didn't play a specific role in the resolution of the Malian conflict rather, they joined the United Nation's Peace Building Fund (PBF) which played a crucial role in supporting peace and stability in Mali, particularly in the context of the on-going conflict. The PBF has focused on variety of initiatives, including support and reintegration of children released from armed groups into communities through psychosocial, medical and family unification support, the fund has trained Malian youths on child protection and the risk of recruitment with the aim to prevent future recruitment into armed group, and promoting social cohesion through public awareness campaigns reaching a significant number of people. The UN Peace Building Fund through the assistance of African Union Peace Fund also supports the development of regional and local structures for conflict management and encourages trust between the Malian people and the government.

In addressing these challenges, the AU can build on its progress and continue to play a vital role in promoting peace, stability and development in Mali. The Strategy is in pursuance of a number of relevant

instruments, particularly the Constitutive Act of the AU and the Agenda 2063.

Conclusion

As at 2022, the Malian conflict has continued, and there appears to be no end in sight. The state institutions have not been able to function properly. Impunity and disregard for the rule of law reigns as attacks by extremist groups such as al-Qaeda and Islamic state affiliates, continue to occur in the northern and central Mali. Clashes between the Malian armed forces and the Coordination of Azawad Movement put the 2015 peace deal between the two parties at risk. Mali experienced two military coups in 2020 and 2021, leading to political uncertainty. More so, the conflict in Mali has led to a significant humanitarian crisis, with over 400,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 1.3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance (World report, 2024; Mali Event, 2023).

The AU continued to play active role in dealing with the conflict.There are number of prospects for success which includes; African Union's commitment and continuous engagement support; the regional support which fostered regional cooperation and bringing together neighboring countries and regional organizations to address the conflict; the inclusive dialogue and encouraging participation from various stakeholders, including political parties, civil society, and religious leaders; and peace building efforts which focuses on reconciliation and development. However, the fact that the conflict still persist indicate that not much has been achieve.

Recommendation

While it is true that African Union leaders and organs are committed to resolving the Malian crisis through interventions, such interventions like others around the globe are inherently and essentially reactive. African Union must go beyond such reactive intervention to strengthening good governance in the region as provided for in the good governance protocol. This can stem the systemic failures that water the ground for state inflicted and armed group's violence. The study therefore recommends that the continental early warning system and other organs of African Peace and Security Architecture be properly funded and fully operationalize in other to be pre-active and lastlyAfrican leaders must cease treating the ''problem leaders'' with kids gloves in the name of respect and solidarity.

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