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African Politics, African Peace charts an agenda for peace in Africa, focusing on how the African Union can implement its norms and use its instruments to prevent and resolve armed conflicts. It is an independent report of the World Peace Foundation, supported by the African Union.

The Report is the most extensive review of the African Union's peace missions ever conducted. It is based on detailed case studies and cross-cutting research, and draws on consultations with leading experts, peacekeepers, and mediators.

This Paper is a summary of research undertaken in support of the Project.

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# The African Union and the Libyan Revolution: The Efficacy of the African Peace and Security Architecture

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## Introduction:

Examination of the AU decision-making process during the Libyan crisis, including analysis of the conflict resolution mechanisms utilized by the AU to facilitate the resolution of the crisis, in the context of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the impact of policies pursued by the UN and other regional organizations on AU decision making suggests several areas where the AU should focus efforts to improve outcomes. These include:

- a. The decision making process in the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC): the time taken to make a decision after the identification of a crisis can be significantly shortened. In case of the Libyan crisis, by the time the AU had made a decision, its efforts to pursue a political negotiation resolution were significantly constrained by UN actions and resolutions.
- b. The coordination mechanism between the PSC and the UN Security Council (UNSC): streamlining the mechanisms for coordination would promote consultative decision-making. In addition, such a mechanism would allow for the appropriate calibration of mediation and military efforts, and promote the 'division of labour' between the two bodies.
- c. A more effective coordination mechanism ought to be developed between the PSC and the African members of the UNSC. In the Libyan crisis, such coordination could have helped shape language of UNSC Resolution 1973 to reflect AU concerns, and strengthened the role to be played by AU in the resolution of the crisis.

## Key Findings:

The Libyan crisis began with the popular revolt against Qaddafi in February 2011, and concluded with the installation of a Transitional Government in Tripoli in October 2011. Throughout the crisis, the real dilemma faced by the AU was to agree on a policy that could stabilize the situation without necessarily undermining Libya's sovereignty while deterring Qaddafi from taking even harsher measures against the civilian population.

Libya was a crucial test for the efficacy and resilience of the APSA, which remains the all-encompassing inter-governmental framework for crisis management in Africa. The various components of the APSA have, however, evolved unevenly and significant gaps remain between the APSA's actual decision-making capability and the expectations of it. Within the APSA, the PSC remains the most visible component, as the standing decision-making organ for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. However, during this time, its functioning was greatly affected by external factors. In particular, NATO as the implementer of UNSC Resolution 1973 played a crucial role in impacting AU's deliberations.

The AU made significant diplomatic efforts to pursue a political settlement in Libya, although its policy options were constrained by the interests of external actors. The PSC, for instance, created an *Ad-Hoc* High-Level Committee (AUHLC) on Libya, comprising five Heads of State and Government, as well as the Chairperson of the Commission, and agreed on a 'Roadmap' for Libya. However, the AU's efforts were significantly hampered by the adoption of Resolution 1973 by the UNSC on March 17, 2011, which led to, first, the imposition of a no-fly zone and then, the provision of air support to rebel forces. The UN and NATO-led coalition rejected subsequent AU efforts to mediate the crisis, and the rebel National Transitional Council (NTC) demanded Qaddafi's removal as a precondition for political transition, which the AUHLC was in no position to guarantee.

As the conflict progressed, a major public debate opened up within the AU on the issue of how its members had pursued diametrically opposite courses of action on Libya at the UNSC and the PSC. Although there is no requirement for countries to follow a decision adopted by the PSC in matters being considered at the AU and the UNSC level, the three countries (Gabon, Nigeria and South Africa) that had supported Resolution 1973 were accused of being politically naïve; South Africa, in particular, expressed strong misgivings about the NATO strikes being undertaken under the authority of Resolution 1973.

As the conflict in Libya reached a stalemate, and then began to turn against Qaddafi, Western powers increased the pressure on the AU to recognize the NTC as the sole and legitimate representative of the Libyan government. The PSC finally did so on 20 October 2011, when it authorized the NTC to occupy the seat of Libya at the AU and all its organs. Coincidentally Qaddafi was killed on the same day, and the NTC announced the end war in Libya three days later.

The Libyan crisis illustrates the potential and actual limitations of APSA mechanisms. A recalibration of these mechanisms, including greater transparency on part of the AUHLC, and alliance-building with alternative international actors could have reduced the constraints imposed by NATO military action. Libya also highlights the existing dysfunction in AU-UN relations, despite continuous efforts to streamline the existing strategic partnerships. A joint AU-UN team could have worked to establish a ceasefire monitoring mechanism, and could have jointly co-managed the mediation process.

The APSA is a useful framework, but its mechanisms need to remain adaptable to Africa's changing realities.

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