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Editorial Introduction to the Maiden Issue of *JAPS*

Kwaku Danso and Kwesi Aning

Introduction

The editors, on behalf of the editorial board, the executive management committee and the core partners (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, are delighted to announce the publication of this maiden edition of the *Journal of African Peace and Security (JAPS)*. As the name implies, *JAPS* is a biannual peer-reviewed journal dedicated to deepening knowledge and understanding in the issue areas of African peace and security. Recognising knowledge as a 'public good', the journal offers open access to top-quality articles that provide fresh and critical insights into issues and problems around peace and security on the African continent. Consistent with this recognition, the journal serves as a platform for cutting-edge research targeted at academics, policy professionals and students. *JAPS* is designed for researchers seeking to publish in an African-based journal of the highest international standard and reputation, as well as practitioners interested in illuminating their understanding of the issues that shape the dynamics of conflict, security, stability and development in Africa. *JAPS* publishes research articles, review articles and book reviews.

JAPS has been in the offing since 2008 and aims to provide an ongoing review of peace support operations in Africa, as well as create an avenue for new ideas to be presented to a wider readership that draws attention to the evolving nature of conflicts in Africa and their resistance to lasting transformation. The idea of publishing a new academic journal in an already crowded field should hopefully inspire innovative thinking and reflection on the sources of conflict and the conditions for sustainable peace and security, while strengthening the policy relevance of research in Africa. For the editorial team, it is critical that the papers that are published emphasise the importance of understanding in terms of the changing dynamics of security, as understanding remains a vital prerequisite for lasting

solutions to the challenges being encountered. *JAPS* provides a vital publication outlet for original research that deepens understanding of the issues driving these dynamics and the outcomes to which they give rise.

Africa's Security Environment

Africa's security environment is undergoing profound transformation, partly in response to fundamental events and processes that have been taking place since the late 1980s (Aning, 2007; Arnould & Strazzari, 2017; Metelits, 2016; Murithi, 2014). These include the demise of the Cold War and the fall of communism, the phenomenon of globalisation and shrinking time and space, and the emergence of intrastate conflicts as the most prevalent and deadly form of armed conflicts. Equally significant have been the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States and the concomitant war on terrorism, the 'Arab Spring' and the war in Libya, and the growing threat of transnational organised crimes that include the resort to terrorism by sub-state actors. Others relate to the growing actorness of Africa's regional and sub-regional organisations that operate alongside the state, the changing meaning of sovereignty and the chequered record of democratic experimentation in Africa.

Significantly, the threat of war between African states has become virtually non-existent with some of the dramatic political changes and shifts that are occurring on the continent, not least the rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and is likely to remain absent in the foreseeable future. Overwhelmingly, conflicts on the continent have occurred within states, even if they are structurally embedded in regional security complexes (Adebajo & Rashid, 2004; Kaldor, 2007; Williams, 2016). The internal nature of these conflicts raises fundamental questions about the basic nature of the African state. This is, in turn, challenging the realist notion of security understood as a derivative of power. In Africa, it is the dynamics of state action and or inaction and the corresponding social responses that have been at the heart of most conflicts.

The local character of these conflicts with increasingly regional and global underpinnings means that they tend to occur on the margins of the international system and are hence conceived as 'second order' conflicts—despite their catastrophic implications for individuals, communities and states. Their

complex and peculiar nature also means that they easily defy the post-1945 United Nations (UN) collective security scheme premised on the 'sovereignty regime' (Clapham, 1996). Moreover, the UN sometimes finds support for intervention into these conflicts difficult, particularly when the interest considerations of key member states are undisturbed. However, it is within this neglected space that resource-constrained African institutions, namely the African Union (AU) and especially the Economic Community of West African States, have carved a niche. While such roles place enormous stress on the AU, limiting its capacity to deliver prompt and effective responses, it is nevertheless by its actions demonstrating the utility of African agency in times of stress.

In response, the idea of burden-sharing through regional and global partnerships in peacekeeping has been proposed (AU & UN, 2017). This proposition rests on the assumption that regional and multilateral peacekeeping partnerships will enable the AU and the UN to leverage their comparative advantages in ways that make possible the deployment of more responsive and effective peace operations (Aning, 2008). While this logic is rapidly gaining traction, particularly within the UN system, there is still no clear articulation of how regional and global partnerships should be structured. In other words, the question of what makes for effective peacekeeping partnership remains unanswered. Similarly, partnership arrangements between the AU and its sub-regional mechanisms are yet to be streamlined.

Beside armed conflicts, Africans are grappling with other sources of security threats. Included among these are violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism, organised criminality in diverse forms, excruciating poverty and economic stagnation, environmental stresses and strains, pandemics like HIV/AIDS and Ebola, as well as structural and gender-based inequities. These threats combine to make the continent's security landscape more complex, more diverse and more fluid than ever. In order to respond effectively to these challenges, there is need for current and in-depth understanding, informed by critical debate and analysis: *JAPS* seeks to respond to these needs.

Why *JAPS*?

JAPS is a new scholarly journal with a primary focus on African peace and security issues. The journal is one of a few journal publications on the African continent

dedicated to enhancing the interfaces between theory and practice in peace and security through a commitment to policy-relevant research and dissemination. Thus, *JAPS* has relevance for a wide range of users in academic and policy communities, including young scholars seeking a top-quality publication outlet.

Journal Objectives and Scope

The overarching objective of *JAPS* is to deepen knowledge and understanding of scholars and practitioners in the issue area of African peace and security. The journal strives to achieve this objective by:

- Providing an open but rigorous scholarly platform that encourages critical analysis and sustained reflections on African peace and security;
- Encouraging the publication of original research findings on African peace and security that are informed by theory and practice from diverse perspectives;
- Publishing basic and applied research, in the form of research articles, review articles and book reviews, that stimulates innovative ideas while providing policy professionals with policy-relevant advice;
- Inspiring intellectual reflection and publication among young African scholars.

In terms of scope, *JAPS* publishes scholarly works that explore, re-evaluate and challenge prevailing orthodoxies on African peace and security. The thematic foci of the journal include the following:

- Peace support operations
- Conflict prevention, early warning and peacebuilding
- DDR, SSR and transitional justice
- The African Peace and Security Architecture
- Countering violent extremism and radicalisation
- Election-related violence
- Good governance, democracy and the rule of law
- Indigenous conflict management approaches
- Natural resource governance
- Negotiation and mediation
- Transnational organised crimes
- Maritime and cyber security
- Climate change, water and food insecurity
- Gender, peace and security

Peer Review Statement

All research articles published in *JAPS* undergo rigorous peer review, based on initial editor screening and anonymous double-blind refereeing by two referees.

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