African Architecture for Peace and Security: Design relevance and achievement challenges

By Abdelhak Bassou

Summary

The big question for Africans on safeguarding peace and security is whether the Pan-African organization, which aspires to lead the continent towards peace and prosperity and to which the continent's predisposed human and material resource potential, is able to ensure the fulfillment of these ambitions through its own institutions? In other words, can the African Union manage African crises with independent African means?

This fundamental question calls for other more intermediate questions:
- What is the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and what are its main components?
- What are the relations between the structures responsible for peace and security in Africa?
- What coordination regulates cooperation between the RECs, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council, the Commission, or even the Conference?

What is the importance, magnitude or necessity of external intervention?

The institutions developed by the African Union for this purpose do not suffer from lack of relevance or a faulty design. However, some adjustments remain necessary for the established institutional structures to be functional and operational, headed by the Peace and Security Council, managed by the African Architecture dedicated to peace.

Introduction

1. A global need for peace and security missions

Maintaining global peace and security is one of the primary missions, if not the essential mission of the international community, headed by the United Nations. Both the United Nations and its predecessor, the League of Nations, have emerged from armed conflicts that have shaken the world and disrupted peace during the past century.

This international peacekeeping requires structures capable of intervening when political mechanisms of negotiation and mediation fail to resolve crises.

Whether for response, interposition or simple observation missions, the availability of international forces is vital. As such, the United Nations and regional organizations have mechanisms in place to bring together and activate these forces whenever necessary.

The necessity to preserve international peace is an insistent reminder for today's world at a time when the world is undergoing a wave of conflict and tension, which threaten international security more than ever before.[1]

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1. The United Nations now manages 16 peacekeeping operations around the world. These operations mobilize 117,306 soldiers and uniformed personnel from 125 countries.

The diversity and multiplication of these hotbeds of tension seem even to exceed the means of international organizations[2] and require that the question be treated on a regional scale. There are several reasons for this:

- International response capacity appears to be in decline with military budgets that have shown downward trends over the past decade;
- Some continents or regions with a certain degree of stability are reluctant to spend their energy on regions that are experiencing a proliferation of crises without the means to contain them;
- Regional forces benefiting from proximity and knowledge of their environment seem better adapted to meet the specific characteristics of conflicts.

«Some see the creation of this architecture as a desire to empower African mechanisms for safeguarding peace and security and a possibility to increase the number of these mechanisms to respond to the many risks and threats.»

2. The African situation

Africa is one of the regions in the world where security problems not only hinder development but also, and above all, threat to destabilize or bankrupt parts of certain African states that are currently prey to several currants of instability:

- Turf wars (Central Africa, South Sudan);
- Border tensions between states (Ethiopia / Eretria) and above all;
- Terrorism (West Africa, Gulf of Guinea, Sahel, Somalia).

This political violence is compounded by transnational crime, such as drug trafficking, arms trafficking, illegal financial flows and trafficking in human beings, which threatens the continent and strains the states.

Africa now mobilizes 23 peacekeeping and security missions, 10 of which are provided by the European Union, 8 by the United Nations and 5 by the African Union (see below table). Africa thus appears to cover only about 20 to 22 percent of its peacekeeping needs.

Table of peace and security missions in Africa

Provider	Mission
European Union	EUNAVFOR Atlanta, Somalia, Horn of Africa; EUTM, Somalia; EUTM Mali; EUMAM, Central African Republic; EUNAVFOR Med, Mediterranean; EUCAP, Nestor; Somalia, Horn of Africa; EUCAP Sahel Niger; EUCAP Sahel Mali; EUBAM Libya; EUSEC, DRC, Congo.
United Nations	MINURSO Morocco; MINUSCA Central African Republic; MINUSMA; Mali; MONUSCO; Democratic Republic of Congo; UNISFA; Sudan; UNMIL; Liberia; UNMISS; South Sudan; UNOCI; Ivory Coast;
African Union	AMISOM; Somalia; MNJTF; Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroon, Benin; REGIONAL TASK FORCE LRA; Central African Republic, South Sudan and Uganda; ECOMIB; Guinea Bissau; UNAMID; Sudan.

The African Union is therefore a regional organization whose mission and primary task is to safeguard peace and security:

- Ideally to take charge of the multiple conflicts that proliferate on the continent and to take ownership of African peace and security operations;
- Secondarily, at least, to effectively participate alongside the United Nations Security Council in managing these crises.

Thus, since the creation of the African Union in 2002, States have focused on the proliferation of crises that hamper the progress of Africa and are a major concern to such an extent that the principle of non-interference privileged by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) has given way to that of "non-indifference" adopted by the AU.

Africans have therefore invested in the establishment of an African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

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2. Approved appropriations for the period from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017 amount to approximately US 7.87 billion dollars.

Some see the creation of this architecture as a desire to empower African mechanisms for safeguarding peace and security and a possibility to increase the number of these mechanisms to respond to the many risks and threats.[3]

The big question on this subject is whether the Pan-African organization, which aspires to lead the continent towards peace and prosperity to which the continent's human and material resource potential predisposes, can ensure the fulfillment of these ambitions by its own institutions? In other words, can the African Union manage African crises with independent African means?

This fundamental question calls for other more intermediate questions:

• What is the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and what are its main components?
• What are the relations between the structures responsible for peace and security in Africa? What coordination governs cooperation between the RECs, the AU Peace and Security Council, the Commission or even the Conference?
• What coordination regulates cooperation between the RECs, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council, the Commission, or the Conference?
• What is the importance, magnitude or necessity of external intervention?

II. What is the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)?

This architecture is based on a decision-making body (the Council for Peace and Security); on mechanisms for analysis and evaluation (the Continental Early Warning System and the Council of Elders) and an action instrument (the African Standby Force).

1. The Peace and Security Council (PSC)

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) is the African counterpart of the United Nations Security Council. It replaced the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which became obsolete with the advent of the African Union. The Union had decided in 2002 to revise its structures, procedures and working methods. For peace and security, the Union had opted for a protocol to establish a Peace and Security Council. In the first paragraph of Article 2, the Protocol, which was adopted in Durban in July 2002 and entered into force in December 2003, sets forth:

There is hereby established, pursuant to Article 5(2) of the Constitutive Act, a Peace and Security Council within the Union, as a standing decision-making organ for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. The Peace and Security Council shall be a collective security and early-warning arrangement to facilitate timely and efficient response to conflict and crisis situations in Africa. The Peace and Security Council has become the decision-making body for the management and resolution of conflicts and aims to provide the continent with a rapid response to conflict and crisis situations in Africa.

« The African Standby Force is a multidisciplinary contingent that can be deployed throughout Africa. The ASF is part of the cooperation framework between the UN and the AU.»

In order to respond resolving conflicts, the Peace and Security Council has adopted adequate structures for each task: [4]

• The continental early warning system for situation analysis;
• The Panel of the Wise is responsible for evaluating and selecting responses and;
• The African Standby Force, responsible for taking action to resolve the situation on the ground.

A Military Staff Committee (MSC) serves as technical adviser to the PSC on military and security matters.

The Council shall consist of fifteen members without veto rights or a weighted voting system (Article 5 of the Protocol). To ensure continuity, there are tiered mandates:

• Ten members are elected for a two-year term;
• Five members are elected for a three-year term.

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3. ANALYSIS NOTE - January 15, 2014. Michel Luntumbue. APSA: contours et défis d'une Afrique de la défense. GRIP Analysis Note, January 15, 2014, Brussels.

4. These structures are covered in the second paragraph of Article 2 of the protocol establishing the PSC: "The Peace and Security Council is supported by the Commission, a Panel of the Wise, a continental early warning system, and a Special Fund."

2. Other architectural mechanisms

The continental early warning system

Its objective is advise the PSC and to provide timely information on potential conflicts and threats to peace and security in Africa (Article 12 of the Protocol). It is composed of:

- An observation and control center responsible for collecting and analyzing data;
- Regional observation and control units.

The Panel of the Wise

It is "composed of five highly respected African personalities who have made an outstanding contribution to the cause of peace, security and development on the continent." Its mission precedes the sending of forces into the zone of tension or conflict. Indeed, the forces only intervene when mediators or facilitators of the Panel of the Wise fail in maintaining or restarting dialogue between the parties to the conflict (Article 11 of the Protocol).

The African Standby Force (ASF)

Article 13 of the Protocol establishing the Peace and Security Council covers the African Standby Force. The framework document on the establishment of this force and the Military Staff Committee (MSC) was discussed during the meeting of the African Chiefs of Staff in May 2003; it was subsequently approved at the AU 3rd Ordinary Session in Addis Ababa in July 2004.

« The more the 14 states are involved in CARIC, the less they can make efforts for the regional brigades that make up the African Standby Force.»

The African Standby Force is a multidisciplinary contingent that can be deployed throughout Africa. The ASF is part of the cooperation framework between the UN and the AU. The AU carries out a rapid deployment of purely African forces or a joint deployment with a UN mission. The response and deployment times of the African Standby Force are 30, 90 or 14 days depending on the degree of complexity of the missions that fall within six scenarios:

- A military advisory service;
- AU observer missions alongside a UN mission;

- An autonomous observation mission;
- An autonomous peace mission under Chapter VI of the UN Charter and preventive troop stations to maintain peace;
- A peacekeeping mission alongside a complex multi-dimensional peacekeeping mission;
- Military intervention by the AU in serious situations, such as preventing genocide if the international community does not intervene.

ASF units operating on the ground include military staff that report to the Force Commander and Police Force, as well as civilian staff that report to the representative appointed by the Commission Chairperson.

Each Regional Economic Community (REC) is responsible for setting up a reserve or standby brigade, a military logistics depot, and one or more training centers. In addition to its standby brigade, each REC is supposed to have a permanent planning mechanism, and a headquarters framework from which its brigade is assembled. The cumulative forces of the regional brigades should reach between 25,000 and 32,000 men.

Therefore:

- In East Africa, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) was mandated to coordinate the region's efforts to set up the standby brigade for East Africa;
- In West Africa it is ECOWAS' responsibility; [5]
- In Southern Africa the mission is entrusted to SADC and;
- In Central Africa ECCAS has been mandated.
- The turmoil at the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and the fact that Morocco was not a member of the African Union[6] made it the only region where the establishment of a standby brigade still lags far behind. The planned unit is called the North Africa Regional Capacity (NARC)[7] and the mission has been entrusted to a group that is not part of any recognized Regional Economic Community (REC).

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5. Since the 1990s, ECOWAS has developed a nucleus of a military force that was deployed in Liberia in 1990 and in Sierra Leone in 1998.

6. Morocco returned to the African Union in January 2017.

7. The return of Morocco to the African Union will undoubtedly result in a medium or short-term revision of the composition of this force. On the one hand, Morocco would constitute a great added value to this force given its military capabilities and its degree of development; But on the other hand, the African Union will have to revise the participation or even foresee the withdrawal of the "Saharawi unit," which is not a considerable contribution and is even a burden for the North Africa Regional Capacity. The logic is that the lack of resources cannot be resolved by relying on such poor entities whose legal status is doubtful.

Military Staff Committee (MSC)

The Military Staff Committee (MSC) is comprised of senior officers from the member states of the Peace and Security Council. The Chiefs of Staff submit recommendations to the Committee Chairperson on how best to strengthen Africa's capacity for peace support operations. The Committee Chairperson shall take appropriate measures to conduct and follow up meetings with the Chiefs of Staff of the Peace and Security Council member countries.

III. Status and current questions

1. Operationalization of African Standby Forces

Are the brigades operational?

In a press release following its 570th meeting in Addis Ababa in January 2016, the Peace and Security Council:

"Welcomed the progress made by the East African Standby Force (EASF), as well as the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the operationalization of their respective standby brigades, and recognized the efforts of the North African Regional Capacity (NARC) operationalization of its own."

The communiqué confirms North Africa's delay in preparing its African Standby Force. While it welcomed the progress of the four other regions, it merely acknowledged the efforts made by North Africa. This lack of operationalization is furthermore mentioned in the communiqué concerning the operationalization of the brigades. The Council recognizes only four regional forces as operational; the fifth, which is not cited, is nevertheless easy to identify if the subtle language explained above is taken into account:

"The Council welcomed the recommendations contained in the Statement of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defense and Security (CTSDSS), in particular, that the ASF had reached its full operational capacity, The AA-II FTX and the confirmation of full operational capability by four (4) RECs / MRs, and therefore the African Immediate Crisis Response Capability (CARIC) should be dissolved

in accordance with decisions 489 (XXI) and 515 (XXII) of the Conference of the Union."

The communiqué thus confirms that the of four of the five planned brigades are operational and supports the recommendation to dissolve the "African Immediate Crisis Response Capability" (CARIC), a structure created in 2013, as a provisional strategic alternative to the African Standby Force which was then not yet operational.

In abundant support for the dissolution of CARIC, the Peace and Security Council wished to emphasize that a high degree of the brigades' are operational. Is the Council's opinion justified?
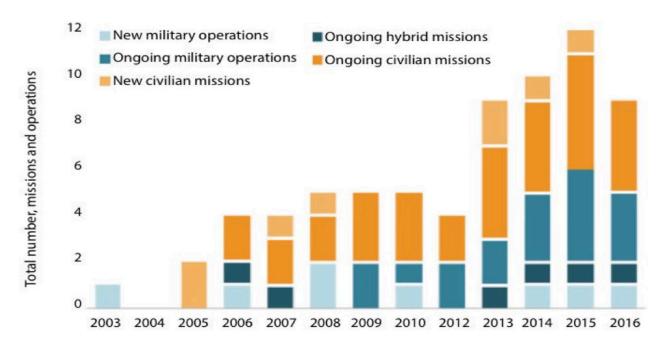
CARIC is not yet dissolved

The other bodies of the African Union do not seem to be convinced that the time has come to dissolve CARIC:

- The 26th ordinary Session of the AU Summit Conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on January 30-31, 2016, made a decision[8] that the "African Immediate Crises Response Capacity (CARIC) would continue pending the review of AMANI AFRICA II exercise in Maputo, Mozambique in March 2016 and an assessment mission would be undertaken by the Commission and the Regional Economic Communities / Regional Mechanisms in the Regional Economic Communities to verify the preparedness of the Regional Standby Forces ... ";
- Following this decision, in August 2016, eight months after the communiqué noting the Peace and Security Council's (PSC) wish to see this provisional structure dissolved, the military maneuvers called "Utulivu Afrique II" by CARIC began in the province of Bengo in Angola, Nation Cadre (2016), with the endorsement of the African Union, and;
- In November 2016 during the meeting in Addis Ababa, in a joint statement, the Heads of State and Government of the Voluntary States under the auspices of CARIC announced the adoption of lead nations rotation and training programs for the fiscal year 2016/2017, among other measures concerning CARIC as specified in this extract from the declaration:

  - "Let us endorse the CARIC 2016/2017 lead nation rotation, the 2016/2017 training programs and the decision of the CARIC 1st Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting, held in Addis Ababa on January 29,

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8. This concerns the AU decision / Dec. 589 (XXVI)

Figure depicting European security presence in Africa between 2003 and 2016

Source: EEAS, Clingendael Institute, see https://twitter.com/DanielFiott.

2016. Let us organize the next meeting for the CARIC Army Chiefs of Staff and Ministers, in Angola to develop a work plan for CARIC.

- Declare that CARIC's capacity is ready to quickly respond to crises and to contribute to Peace Support Operations mandated by the SPC in accordance with Article 4 (h) and (j) of the Constitutive Act.
- Decide that the deployment of CARIC is the responsibility of the African Union SPC, in consultation with the CARIC Voluntary Nations
- Call upon the Commissioner for Peace and Security to continue to assess / review all areas of conflict in Africa and propose ways in which the CARIC Voluntary Nations can assist with containing the situation."

It follows, therefore, from the decision of the African Union Conference, the exercises in Angola and, in particular, the Joint Communiqué of the Heads of Voluntary States of CARIC that the African Standby Force is not yet operational, as of November 2016, and that the African Capacity for Immediate Crises Response will continue to be the supporting force of the Peace and Security Council in 2017. If the ASF will be operational, it will be so in 2018 at least for the four brigades whose preparation is already well under way.

2. Africa's ownership of its peace and security issues

Analysis of the on-the-ground situation of the African Standby Force reveals certain handicaps, which still hamper Africa's ownership of its mechanisms for safeguarding peace and security in the continent:

Inequalities between regions and dependence on external support

- Inequality between the REC's resources and the disparities between them, particularly at the economic and military levels, has affected the level of the African Regional Standby Brigades being operational. The level of preparation and pace of advancement are therefore at unequal speeds. These development inequalities in each region, and consequently from one regional brigade to another, are detrimental to the interoperability of forces, which is the ultimate phase of being operational.

- External assistance is still essential for the African Union peace and security structures. Certain operations carried out by this organization cannot be maintained without foreign assistance, such as missions to Darfur or Somalia where assistance from third countries or international organizations is essential. The EU, NATO, the United States, France,

etc. remain essential in terms of deployment as well as financial and logistical support[9] (see the following figure on the evolution of the European security presence in Africa between 2003 and 2016).

- The African Union's experience in this area shows that despite Africa's great strides in designing its own structures and the strong desire to make them independent, the continent does not yet have the necessary resources in terms of expertise and capacity to carry out multiple and diverse missions. Several missions initiated by the AU were soon transferred to the United Nations. Some observers question whether AU forces should not be limited, at least in the medium term, to the primary tasks of entering the conflict scene and then hand over the situation to the UN for subsequent phases, including reconstruction.

ASF and CARIC: Provisional that lasts to the point of redundancy?

The "African capacity for immediate crisis response," as described above, brings together 14 volunteer countries, each of which belongs to a regional economic community and is therefore responsible for preparing the brigades for their regions.

These States are now seeing their efforts, resources and budgets scattered between the approaches and expenses to be ensured within their regions and those necessary to ensure the functioning of CARIC's provisional structure.

Would the delays of the components of the African Standby Force, which make it mandatory to prolong the duration of CARIC, eventually make CARIC a permanent structure? Indeed, the more the 14 states are involved in CARIC, the less they can make efforts for the regional brigades that make up the African Standby Force.

Relationship between the peace and security council and the regional economic communities' brigades

The "Southern African Development Community (SADC)"[10] website site hosts a short article on the SADC Standby Brigade, as follows:

"The African Standby Force will consist of civilian and military components in each African region ready for rapid deployment anywhere in Africa at appropriate notice. Who has authority to deploy the Force and who will fund the Force are two major questions that need answers before the Force can be mobilised. Until these paramount questions can be answered the African Standby Force remains regional and continental goal."

« Morocco's return to the African Union constitutes an advantage on which the AU can capitalize to improve its structures.»

What authority does the African Peace and Security Council and consequently the African Union have over the regional brigades? The details of this relationship will determine the success or failure of the project of the African Standby Forces.

In considering the text of the protocol that defines this relationship,[11] it is a partnership and cooperation relationship on equal footing without hierarchizing the structures or decisions despite the provision of Article IV sub-paragraph iii of the aforementioned protocol which timidly implies a certain primacy of the African Union over regional communities in terms of peace and security:

"Recognition and respect for the primary responsibility of the Union in the maintenance and promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa, in accordance with Article 16 of the Protocol on the PSC."

Indeed, other articles give the impression of a lack of hierarchy between the African Union and its regional partners. This is the case of sub-paragraph IV of the same article, which makes subsidiarity, complementarity and comparative advantages the relationship's guiding concepts:

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9. Africa has established "The Peace Fund," which would normally cover AU operations. However, contributions by African States do not meet the resources required by missions. For example, the first AU peacekeeping operation in Burundi (AMIB) required an annual approved budget of about $ 130 million. At that time, the AU budget fell significantly short of covering such an expense: it was barely $ 32 million. As a result, external funds are necessary to fill the budget gap. For example, the EU, through the African Peace Facility, and the USA through the Reinforcement of African Military Peacekeeping Capacity (RECAMP) or the Africa Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) are the primary providers for peace and security actions in Africa. This considerable dependence raises the question of the effectiveness of African ownership of the African Standby Force's implementation.

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10. http://www.sadc.int/themes/politics-defence-security/regional-peacekeeping/standby-force/#

11. Cooperation protocol on Peace and Security between the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities, and the Regional Standby Brigade's Coordination Mechanisms for East Africa and North Africa (2007).

"Compliance with the principles of subsidiarity, complementarity and the respective comparative advantages of the Parties, in order to optimize the partnership between the Union, the RECs and the Coordination Mechanisms in promoting and maintaining peace, security and stability".

The African continent is making efforts to organize, design and intensify political support for its peace and security architecture. The steps taken within the new African Union are much more effective than those of the former OAU, and the breakthroughs and advances are tangible and palpable. However, the young AU must step up its efforts to improve the design of the continental and regional structures of this architecture.

Some combined factors (dependence, inequalities and accumulation of structures) slow down and even hamper Africa's handling of its peace and security issues. Inequalities must be met by solidarity and interoperability. On the accumulation of structures, clear and unequivocal options are needed as well as dedicated resources for the chosen option. On dependence, States must respond by types of sacrifices that should be relative to each country's capacity.

Conclusion:

Ambitious to achieve peace and prosperity, Africa will ultimately have to carry out parallel efforts to ensure these two ambitions. Alongside the progress made by the continent in terms of economic growth and human development, there remain questions about Africa's ability to secure this momentum by taking over the Africanization of peace and security mechanisms.

The institutions developed by the African Union for this purpose do not suffer from lack of relevance or a faulty design. However, some adjustments remain necessary for the established institutional structures to be functional and operational, headed by the Peace and Security Council, managed by the African Architecture dedicated to peace. Some of these adjustments might even help to surpass the financial issue. On this point, Morocco's return to the African Union constitutes an advantage on which the AU can capitalize to improve its structures.

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