

## **REALIZING THE AFRICAN STANDBY FORCE AS A PAN- AFRICAN IDEAL: PROGRESS, PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction**

In January 2004 it was announced that African Ministers of Defense and Security, meeting at the headquarters of the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, adopted a *Draft Framework for a Common African Defense and Security Policy*. The relevant functionaries also reviewed progress on the development of an African standby (peacekeeping) force, and of an early warning system to detect and prevent potential conflict situations and to ensure speedy humanitarian relief in the event of disasters. In July 2004, the AU Assembly (of heads of state or government), meeting in Addis Ababa, subsequently formally adopted the said *Framework for a Common African Defense and Security Policy* (hereafter common defense and security policy) as Africa's 'blueprint' or conceptual framework in the search for peace, security and stability on the African continent.

The common defense and security policy is based on an understanding among African leaders and functionaries of what is required to be done collectively by African states to ensure that Africa's common defense and security interests and goals, as set out in Articles 3 and 4 of the AU's Constitutive Act, are safeguarded in the face of common threats to the continent as a whole. These developments should be viewed against the background of various calls over a number of years for a macro-policy

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<sup>1</sup> This article is an extended and more comprehensive version of an article that is due for publication in the May/June edition of the US Army journal, *Military Review*.

framework on conflict resolution and peacekeeping, specifically with regard to the role that the AU and sub-regional organizations should play on the continent.

Given the need to develop military mechanisms within the AU to deal with responsibilities in terms of "common security threats which undermine the maintenance and promotion of peace, security and stability on the continent", an AU *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council*, adopted in July 2002, provides for the establishment of a Military Staff Committee to advise and assist the (recently established) Peace and Security Council on all questions relating to military and security requirements. In addition, it also provides for an African Standby Force (ASF) to enable the Peace and Security Council to perform its responsibilities with respect to the deployment of peacekeeping missions and intervention pursuant to the provisions of the AU Constitutive Act.<sup>2</sup> It is clearly spelt out that the ASF should be regarded as the "implementing mechanism" for decisions of the Peace and Security Council.<sup>3</sup> In an effort to deal with the establishment and development of the ASF at all relevant functional levels, the AU furthermore adopted a *Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and the Military Staff Committee* in May 2003.

The formation of the ASF is important, as it will be the manifestation and development of an important political ideal in Africa to mobilize a standby (peacekeeping) force on the continent. In view of the above, the main aim of this paper is to outline and discuss the rationale and some of the key elements for establishing and developing the ASF, and also to reflect on some of the major challenges of implementation.

## Background

The African continent is steeped in armed conflict and instability. The most violent and devastating conflicts on the continent have notably been intra-state in nature: conflicts with considerable peacekeeping consequences for regional and international role-players. To this end, it is commonly accepted that there is a pressing need for African and other role-players to register greater progress on the need to address, manage and resolve the conflicts on the continent.

The AU made significant progress in the development of a cohesive African peace and security system in 2003 when African Chiefs of Defense Staff met in Addis Ababa in May 2003 where they agreed on the modalities of an ASF.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, it needs to be said that the notion of an ASF is not a new concept or Pan-African ideal. During the 1960s and 1970s various calls for an African High Command were made in the former Organization of African Unity (OAU) that a multinational military force be established, based on the concept of a continental defense agreement and composed of military contingents from OAU member states. It was, however, not clarified whether this would pertain to external aggression against OAU member states, or also internal threats.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the envisaged African High Command never made it beyond the planning stage, leading to a variety of ad hoc measures in the field of conflict resolution.

In 1981, the OAU sponsored the creation of a short-term all-African military force designed to resolve an expanding civil war in Chad. Composed of 4,800 troops from the former Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo), Nigeria and Senegal, this force failed

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<sup>2</sup> African Union, *Draft Framework for a Common African Defense and Security Policy*, adopted by the African Ministers of Defense and Security (Addis Ababa: Ethiopia, January 20-21, 2004), pp. 4, 13, 20. See also African Union, *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union* (Durban: South Africa, July 9, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> African Union, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Cedric de Coning, "Towards a Common Southern Africa Peacekeeping System", *CIPS Electronic Briefing Paper* 16 (2004), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Hough, "Military Intervention in Sub-Saharan Africa", in *Managing African Conflicts: The Challenge of Military Intervention*, Louis du Plessis and Michael Hough, eds. (Pretoria: HCRC Publishers, 2000), p. 184.

to achieve any concrete solution.<sup>6</sup> The mission did not succeed for a variety of reasons: inadequate planning, confusion over the mandate, absence of OAU command and control mechanisms, perceived partiality of some troop contributing countries, inadequate allocation of financial and logistical resources, and above all, lack of political will on the part of parties in conflict. As a first operation of this nature, it may, in the words of De Coning, perhaps best be described as “a useful learning experience”.<sup>7</sup>

The second time the OAU deployed military personnel for peace support was in Rwanda in 1993. After the eruption of conflict in Rwanda and through concerted efforts by the OAU and neighboring countries, the conflicting parties signed the Arusha agreement. As a result, the OAU deployed a Neutral Military Observer Group (NMOG) that monitored the Demilitarized Zone between the then Government of Rwanda and the Rwanda Patriotic Front. In this case, despite isolated incidents of cease-fire violations, the OAU and NMOG successfully maintained some degree of stability until the operation was handed over to the UN some months later. The assassination of Burundi’s democratically elected President in October 1993 resulted in a breakdown of law and order. After the UN Security Council turned down a proposal from UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to send a special mission to Burundi, the OAU organized a mission on its own. It was able to negotiate, among others, the deployment of the OAU Military Observer Mission to Burundi (OMIB). This was a confidence-building mission of military and civilian officers with a mandate of working towards the restoration of peace and security in Burundi. Initially, the mission did well in keeping tensions down to a manageable level.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Schraeder, *African Politics and Society: A Mosaic in Transformation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Wadsworth: Belmont, 2004), p. 258.

<sup>7</sup> Cedric de Coning, “The Role of the OAU in Conflict Management in Africa”, in *Conflict Management, Peacekeeping and Peace-building: Lessons for Africa from a Seminar Past*, Mark Malan, ed. (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, April 1997), p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Cedric de Coning (1997), pp. 20-21.

Two developments underscored the OAU's ideal and desire to take a more systematic and proactive role towards conflict resolution in the post-Cold War era. Firstly, in 1993, the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted a resolution creating the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention and Resolution, a formal consultative process ideally designed to prevent and resolve conflicts on the African continent. The inspiration for this consultative process was a forward-thinking document, *Towards a Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Co-operation in Africa*, popularly referred to as the *Kampala document*.<sup>9</sup> The Mechanism had the following key objectives: to anticipate and prevent potential conflicts from escalating into major conflict or crises; and to undertake peacekeeping and peace-building in post-conflict situations.<sup>10</sup>

A second important development revolved around the possibility of creating a multinational African Defense Force, able to respond militarily to African crises. In May 1997, African leaders agreed that such a Force should be comprised of existing military units of OAU member states. Furthermore, such units would be equipped with the assistance of foreign powers, most notably the United States and France, although the Force would remain under the operational command of the OAU. Discussions, however, remained at an explanatory phase. Unresolved issues included which countries should be eligible to contribute forces (e.g. should involvement be limited to democratic states?) and what type of body should be able to authorize when and where to intervene (e.g. should intervention be based on consensus of all OAU member states or should a smaller body be responsible for such decision-making?).<sup>11</sup> Thus the creation of an African Defense Force effectively remained a Pan-African ideal.

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Schraeder, 258-259.

<sup>10</sup> 'Fumni Olonisakin, "Conflict and Conflict Resolution", in *Power, Wealth and Global Equity: An International Relations Textbook for Africa*, Patrick McGowan and Phillip Nel, eds. (UCT Press: Cape Town, 2002), 243.

<sup>11</sup> 'Fumni Olonisakin, p. 259.

The establishment of the AU in 2002 and the adoption of the common defense and security policy in July 2004 should therefore be seen as a decisive step by the AU, bearing in mind the need for a holistic approach to develop appropriate responses to security crises on the continent. Moreover, the adoption of this document provided for the creation and development of the ASF as a military mechanism to deal with security crises on the continent.

### **African peace and security framework**

African countries and multinational organizations have been experimenting with conflict management systems and various forms of peacekeeping endeavors over many years, and this has resulted in a common understanding in Africa, at least at the macro-policy level, on the place of African organizations and institutions in the international peacekeeping system. This common understanding can be said to rest on the following five principles:<sup>12</sup> The acceptance and recognition that the UN remains the pre-eminent international authority responsible for global security and international peacekeeping.

- The recognition of the need to enhance Africa's capacity to contribute to peacekeeping operations on the continent, and beyond.
- The recognition that peacekeeping operations in Africa should be undertaken with UN authorization, and that there should be close co-operation between Africa and the UN in this regard.
- The acceptance that in exceptional circumstances – when the UN Security Council is unable or unwilling to assume its responsibility – Africa may have to undertake peacekeeping operations on its own.
- The preference that the various initiatives from the donor community to enhance African capacity in this area should be co-ordinated by the UN, or at least along UN peacekeeping principles, in close co-operation with African organizations.

The common defense and security policy is certainly a document of much significance and one could expound a great deal about its contents. For the purpose of

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<sup>12</sup> Cedric de Coning (2004), p. 3

this discussion the following would suffice. Firstly, as a point of departure, it is premised on the view that the common defense and security of Africa should be based on both the traditional, state-centric notion of the armed forces of states to protect their national sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the less traditional non-military aspects which are informed by the new international environment and the high incidence of intra-state conflict. In this respect, the point is clearly made that each African state is inextricably linked to other African states, other regions and, by the same token, to the African continent as a whole. Furthermore, it is stressed that the causes of intra-state conflict necessitate an emphasis on the concept of human security.<sup>13</sup>

It could be stated that the AU has clearly acknowledged – in accordance with the broadening of traditional concepts of security in recent years – that appropriate responses to ongoing political, economic and social instability need to include a focus on effective governance, robust democracies, and constant economic and social development. In other words, there has been an acknowledgement that Africa finds itself in a profoundly new and different environment to that of the pre-1990 period, and that re-configured strategies are required to deal with previously ignored sources of insecurity and instability.

Not surprisingly, the common defense and security framework secondly deals in a comprehensive manner with those security threats that may be deemed to pose a "danger" to the common defense and security interests of the continent, or may undermine the maintenance and promotion of peace, security and stability on the continent. Such threats have been listed under the four main categories: inter-state conflicts and tensions; intra-state conflicts and tensions; unstable post-conflict

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<sup>13</sup> African Union, *Draft Framework for a Common African Defense and Security Policy*, p. 3.

situations; and other factors that engender insecurity.<sup>14</sup> Intra-state conflicts and tensions are probably the most interesting and significant of these categories, since conflict resolution and peacekeeping in Africa in the post-Cold War era has been heavily concerned with challenges relating to state failure, civil war and internal strife. To this end, the common defense and security policy lists the following threats under intra-state conflicts or tensions:<sup>15</sup>

- The existence of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.
- Lack of respect for the sanctity of human life, impunity, political assassination, acts of terrorism and subversive activities.
- Coups d'etat and unconstitutional changes of government, as well as situations which prevent and undermine the promotion of democratic institutions and structures, including the absence of the rule of law, equitable social order, population participation and electoral processes.
- Improper conduct of electoral processes.
- Lack of commitment by the parties to abide by elections conducted in accordance with the laws of the country.
- Absence of the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights, individual and collective freedoms, equality of opportunity for all, including women, children and ethnic minorities.
- Poverty and inequitable distribution of natural resources.
- Corruption.
- Political, religious and ethnic extremism, as well as racism.

Thirdly, the common security and defense policy outlines a number of principles and values underlying the policy framework. As far as intervention action is concerned, the document confirms the importance of the concept of state sovereignty on which the international system and the AU were founded. Drawing on 'old' OAU principles, respect for borders existing at the achievement of independence is acknowledged and there is a presumption that each state has the power, authority and competence to govern its territory. At the same time, the document reiterates the AU position that intervention may be necessary where a weak state is unable to protect its citizens from war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity, as well as a serious threat to

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<sup>14</sup> African Union, pp. 4-5.



legitimate order, in order to restore peace and stability in a relevant state. The right of any member state to request intervention is also acknowledged.<sup>16</sup>

Fourthly, the drafters of the common security and defense policy document attended to the objectives and goals of the policy framework. It should be noted that the scope and parameters of the common defense and security policy extend far beyond the need to dovetail conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts on the continent. Generally speaking, it addresses the need to ensure collective responses to both internal and external threats to Africa in conformity with the principles enshrined in the AU Act. The following objectives and goals of the common defense and security policy could *inter alia* be noted in this respect:<sup>17</sup>

- To serve as a tool for the enhancement of defense co-operation between and among African states.
- To provide a framework for AU member states to co-operate in defense matters, through the training of military personnel, exchange of military intelligence and information, the development of military doctrine and the building of collective capacity.
- To serve as a tool for the simultaneous enhancement of defense co-operation between and among African states, and the consolidation of national defense.
- To provide best practices and develop strategic capabilities through training and policy recommendations in order to strengthen the defense and security sectors in Africa.
- To develop and enhance the collective defense and strategic capability as well as military preparedness of AU member states.

Some of the objectives and goals outlined are of special relevance to the dovetailing of conflict resolution and peacekeeping endeavors on the continent. In this regard, the following objectives and goals could *inter alia* be noted:<sup>18</sup>

- To enhance the AU's capacity for and co-ordination of early action for conflict prevention, containment, management, resolution and elimination of conflicts, including the deployment and sustenance of peacekeeping missions and thus to promote initiatives that will preserve and strengthen peace and development in Africa.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> African Union, pp. 6-7.

<sup>17</sup> African Union, pp. 9-11.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

- To integrate and harmonize regional initiatives on defense and security issues.
- To provide a framework for post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction.
- To enhance the capacity of the AU to develop and promote common policies in other areas such as foreign relations and trade, to ensure the security of the continent.
- To provide a framework to establish and operationalise the African Standby Force (ASF).
- To promote a culture of peace and peaceful co-existence among AU member states and within the (sub-)regions that could foster an emphasis on the use of peaceful means of conflict resolution and the non-use of force, such as preventive diplomacy, negotiation, the use of good offices, persuasion, as well as mediation, conciliation and adjudication.

Finally, the common defense and security policy also deals with a number of "implementing organs and mechanisms", i.e. the "Actors or Organs for implementing the Common Defense and Security Policy for the whole African continent". Not surprisingly, a number of sub-regional organizations have been listed, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Arab-Maghreb Union, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and some others.<sup>19</sup> Against this background, the creation and development of the ASF as a new initiative will now be discussed.

## **Planning and developing the ASF**

Africa's leaders have accorded a high priority to the concept and creation of an ASF. During his term as Chairman of the AU in 2002/2003, South African President Thabo Mbeki urged member states to give special priority to the establishment of an ASF to allow the continent to solve its conflicts. "Recent international events have confirmed the need for us Africans to do everything we can to rely on our own

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<sup>19</sup> African Union, p. 8.

capacities to secure our continent's renaissance", Mbeki stated in 2003 prior to the annual meeting of Africa's foreign ministers in South Africa.<sup>20</sup>

The notion of an ASF is basically to set up a multinational force empowered to intervene in serious conflicts around the troubled continent. In terms of the new policy framework meant to encourage Africans to deal with crises on the continent, the ASF will be deployed under the auspices of the AU to intervene in border wars and internal conflict. In practical terms, the ASF will consist of five sub-regionally based brigades (3,000 to 4,000 troops) in addition to a sixth, continental, formation based at the AU's headquarters at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This will provide the AU with a combined stand-by capacity of 15,000 to 20,000 peacekeepers.<sup>21</sup>

In terms of the provisions of article 13 of the Peace and Security Council Protocol, it is broadly provided that the ASF will be composed of multidisciplinary standby contingents, with civilian and military components located in their countries of origin and ready for rapid deployment at appropriate notice. It further provides that the ASF shall, among others, perform functions in the following areas:

- Observation and monitoring missions.
- Other types of peacekeeping missions.
- Intervention in a member state in respect of grave circumstances or at the request of a member state in order to restore peace and security.
- Preventive deployment.
- Peacebuilding, including post-conflict disarmament and demobilization.
- Humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of people in conflict areas and support efforts to address major natural disasters; and
- Any other functions as may be mandated by the Peace and Security Council or the AU Assembly.

At a meeting in Addis Ababa in May 2003, the African Chiefs of Defense Staff swiftly moved to adopt a *Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby*

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<sup>20</sup> AFP, "Mbeki Wants Standby Force Prioritised", *Business Day* (May 23, 2003), [www.bday.co.za/bday/content/direct/1%2C3523%2C1352396-6098-0%2C00.html](http://www.bday.co.za/bday/content/direct/1%2C3523%2C1352396-6098-0%2C00.html).

<sup>21</sup> EA Thorne, "The African Standby Force Takes Shape: An Observation of Needs and Necessary Actions", *African Armed Forces Journal* (July 2003), p. 26.

*Force and the Military Staff Committee*, drafted by African military experts.<sup>22</sup> The policy framework outlines six possible "conflict and mission scenarios" the AU and the ASF are likely to face and will need to respond to in the foreseeable future.<sup>23</sup>

- Scenario 1 - AU/Regional military advice to a political mission.
- Scenario 2 - AU/Regional observer mission co-deployed with a UN mission.
- Scenario 3 - Stand alone AU/Regional observer mission.
- Scenario 4 - AU/Regional peacekeeping force for Chapter VI and preventive deployment missions.
- Scenario 5 - AU peacekeeping force for complex multidimensional mission with low-level spoilers (a feature of many current conflicts).
- Scenario 6 - AU intervention, e.g. genocide situations, where the international community does not act promptly.

Naturally, the speed with which forces will be required to deploy has particular implications for standby force structures and arrangements. In this regard, it has been recommended that deployment should be done in 30 days in the case of scenarios 1 - 4. For scenario 5, complete deployment should be done in 90 days, with the military component being able to deploy in 30 days. Finally, it will be important for the AU to be able to deploy a robust military force in 14 days in the case of demanding intervention operations, as envisaged in scenario 6.<sup>24</sup>

It was decided that the development of the ASF should become operational in two incremental phases. The first is aimed at developing a capacity to manage scenarios 1 to 3 towards the end of 2005, i.e. the conducting of observer missions. The second phase is aimed at developing a capability to deal with the remaining scenarios, i.e. classical peacekeeping to intervention operations towards 2010.<sup>25</sup> More specifically, phase 1 extends to June 30, 2005, by which time the AU should be able to deploy and manage monitoring missions (either AU or joint UN-AU) and sub-regions

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<sup>22</sup> Vanessa Kent and Mark Malan, "The African Standby Force: Progress and Prospects", *African Security Review* 12/3 (2003), p. 73.

<sup>23</sup> African Union, *Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and Military Staff Committee*, adopted by the African Chiefs of Defense Staff (Addis Ababa: Ethiopia, May 15-16, 2003), p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> African Union, p. 7

<sup>25</sup> Cedric de Coning, "Peacekeeping Trends", *Conflict Trends* 4 (2003), pp 30-31.

should develop a standby brigade capacity. Such a capacity should also include a small full time planning element of 15 staff members. Realizing that some sub-regions may need more time to develop standby forces, the African Chiefs of Defense Staff have recommended that, as a stop-gap arrangement, potential 'lead nations' should be identified and form coalitions of the willing pending the establishment of such a capacity by all participating nations. In addition, by June 30, 2005, the AU also intends to establish a roster of 300 to 500 military observers and 240 police officers to be held in member states on 14 days' notice to move.<sup>26</sup>

The second phase of developing the ASF extends to June 30, 2010, by which time the AU is envisaged to have developed the capacity to manage a complex peacekeeping operation. Again, sub-regions will be tasked with continuing to develop a capacity to undertake a peacekeeping operation. Sub-regions that have managed to establish their standby brigades will be encouraged to enhance their rapid deployment capabilities. They will also be required to incorporate a small headquarters planning unit within the AU headquarters, as well as in each of the five sub-regions to plan and manage the size, mandate, structure of a standby peacekeeping force.<sup>27</sup>

It is often said that the ASF will be based on the UN's Multinational Standby Forces High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG) headquartered near Copenhagen, Denmark. The brigade, a consequence of the UN's 'humiliations' in Rwanda and Srebrenica (Bosnia), musters between 4,000 and 5,000 troops when fully deployed. In its current form it consists of a multinational headquarters staff based on a permanent planning staff of 13 officers supported by 10 Danish staff.[28] In fact, SHIRBRIG has offered to assist the AU in the establishment of the ASF, and although there seems to

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<sup>26</sup> Kent and Malan, p. 73.

<sup>27</sup> Kent and Malan, p. 74.

<sup>28</sup> Thorne, p. 26.

be some resistance to base the ASF on a Western model, SHIRBRIG's experience could nevertheless prove invaluable to ASF planners and functionaries.<sup>29</sup>

The formation of the ASF is indeed important, as it will be the manifestation of a long desired ideal in Africa to maintain a standby (peacekeeping) force on the continent. It is also important in the sense that further planning and capacity-building initiatives can now be directed to support this common objective and it could be expected that much of the focus during ongoing multilateral defense and security meetings will be directed towards this objective, both at the continental and sub-regional levels.

## **Realities and challenges**

There is a realization on the part of the AU that the recommendations of the (much discussed) Brahimi Panel on UN Peace Operations in 2000 have far-reaching implications for AU and regional peace support efforts, especially in the areas of organization, equipment, training, doctrine and capacities. It is also acknowledged that the Panel's contention that "[t]here are many tasks which United Nations peacekeeping forces should not be asked to undertake and many places they should go" necessitates serious consideration of those issues relating to mission-capable forces on the African continent.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, it is also duly acknowledged on the part of the AU that the Brahimi report has made collaboration with the UN system even more fundamental.<sup>31</sup> In this regard it should be noted that a number of events have taken place in Africa that clearly suggest a trend that regional and sub-regional organizations are the first to respond to emerging crisis situations. Such organizations undertake short robust stabilization or

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<sup>29</sup> Kent and Malan, p. 76.

<sup>30</sup> African Union, *Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and Military Staff Committee*, p. 9.

peace enforcement operations, and after some time, these operations are transformed into multidimensional UN peacekeeping missions.<sup>32</sup> This division of labor between the UN and regional organizations appears to play into the strengths and compensate for the weaknesses of both types of organizations. The UN is relatively slow to respond to crises on the African continent. The regional organizations are not swift either, but they seem to be able to deploy somewhat sooner than the UN. Importantly, regional organizations are not required to meet the same criteria or minimum standards that the UN has adopted. Nor do they require units to meet the same level of readiness in terms of pre-deployment training or equipment tables.<sup>33</sup>

Drawing on the Brahimi report, the first six to twelve weeks following a cease-fire or peace accord is often the most critical period for establishing both a stable peace and credibility of peacekeepers. In short, credibility and political momentum lost during this period can often be difficult to regain. Using this as a point of reference for deployment time-lines, Kent and Malan argue that the AU will need the capacity to react quickly on three interdependent aspects of rapid deployment: personnel, materiel readiness, and funding.<sup>34</sup> In the opinion of Denning, "speed and teeth" should be regarded as the core competencies of "any credible ASF", i.e. the ability to organize and deploy rapidly and the ability to conduct Chapter VII operations.<sup>35</sup>

This said, it should be noted that one of the realities of recent peacekeeping missions in Africa relates to financial constraints. In the past years, the extent of African peacekeeping was not limited by political will or the availability of troops, but rather by insufficient funding. Peacekeeping endeavors are by their very nature costly affairs. The recent peacekeeping experience is that even the relatively small and less

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Cedric de Coning, "Refining the African Standby Force Concept", *Conflict Trends* 2 (2004), p. 22.

<sup>33</sup> Cedric de Coning (2004), p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> Kent and Malan, p. 76.

logistically demanding unarmed military observer missions undertaken were so costly that the AU and its predecessor, the OAU, were unable to finance them from their own budget. Moreover, it could be pointed out that the budget for the OAU Liaison Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (OLMEE) amounted to \$1.8 million per year in 2000. Its original planned strength was 43 civilian and military personnel, but it had an actual strength of 27 in 2000, comprising 11 military staff and 16 civilian support staff – directly as a result of financial constraints. It could furthermore be noted that the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) is considerably larger than any mission the AU, or the OAU before it, has undertaken. With 3,335 personnel and an operational budget of approximately \$110 million in 2003, it has been a significant expense in the African peacekeeping context – especially when viewed against the 2003 AU budget of approximately \$32 million.[36] Moreover, as the AU already stands in arrears of \$40 million from previous budgets, the AU will have to depend on the strength and goodwill of 'lead nations' among its member states and the international community for financial support if it wishes to develop and utilize the ASF as a standby reinforcement system on the continent.[37] In other words, the AU will have to address and meet the glaring financial realities of the high costs of peacekeeping missions if it would like the ASF to play any significant peacekeeping role in African conflict resolution and peacekeeping requirements. Some observers even contend that from a funding perspective, the only viable peacekeeping operations in Africa are UN (funded) peacekeeping operations.[38]

Realizing that financial and technical assistance will be pivotal to the successful development of the ASF, a joint Africa/G8 Action Plan aims to enhance African

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<sup>35</sup> Mike Denning, "A Prayer for Marie: Creating an Effective African Standby Force", *Parameters* xxxiv/4 (Winter 2004-05), p. 108.

<sup>36</sup> Cedric de Coning (2003), p. 34.

<sup>37</sup> Kent and Malan, p. 73.

<sup>38</sup> Cedric de Coning (2004), p. 5.



capabilities to undertake peace support operations so that by 2010, African partners will be able to engage more effectively to prevent and resolve violent conflict on the continent. In this regard, it specifically provides for the establishment, equipment and training of coherent, multinational, multi-disciplinary standby capabilities at the AU and sub-regional level which would be available for UN-endorsed missions undertaken under the auspices of the UN, AU or an African sub-regional organization.[39] However, it should be noted that the initial G8 response to the ASF was anything but blank check acceptance. The G8 clearly indicated that the development of *five* regional brigades was considered to be overtly ambitious and expensive. In the words of Denning: "While the G8 did not offer the AU a blank check, neither did its members categorically dismiss the ASF initiative".<sup>40</sup> Substantial support – both funding and technical assistance – has already been contributed by G8 partners towards institutional capacity-building for peace and security, the development of capacity for peacekeeping operations and of an effective network in Africa of peace training centers for military and civilian personnel in peacekeeping operations.<sup>41</sup>

Apart from financial and technical challenges, AU and ASF functionaries furthermore have to attend to logistical and administrative aspects pertaining to the establishment of rosters of mission leadership, military, police and civilian experts as a requirement for proper mission start-up, as well as the capacity to plan and develop missions quickly. In addition, the need to establish unity of command and staff capacities for new missions has been identified as a top priority with a view to organizing combined missions. Also, the quick disbursement of funds and procurement

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<sup>39</sup> G8, "Implementation Report by Africa Personal Representatives to Leaders on the G8 Africa Action Plan", G8 Summit (Evian: France, June 1-3, 2003), [www.au2002.gov.za/docs/releases/g8030604b.htm](http://www.au2002.gov.za/docs/releases/g8030604b.htm).

<sup>40</sup> Denning, p. 107.

<sup>41</sup> G8, "Implementation Report by Africa Personal Representatives to Leaders on the G8 Africa Action Plan".

of essential goods will be an important component of any effective rapid deployment capacity.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, the multi-dimensional notion of security will require that peacekeeping forces not only be combat capable, but to undertake training on issues related to HIV/AIDS, gender issues, children's rights, civil-military co-ordination, respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. It will also be important to ensure specific training required for peace enforcement and intervention missions. After all, the AU Constitutive Act – in stark contrast to the principles that underpinned the former OAU – establishes in article 4(h) the right of the Union to intervene in a member state pursuant to a decision of the Assembly (of heads of state or government) in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.<sup>43</sup> In addition, the development of sub-regional brigades will have to be developed as building blocks of the ASF concept.

### **Developing sub-regional standby brigades**

The *Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and the Military Staff Committee* calls upon sub-regions to develop standby brigades that could, by the end of phase of the first developmental stage, i.e., up to 30 June 2005, be utilized as standby reinforcement instruments to manage classical peacekeeping missions (scenario 4 of the conflict and mission scenarios). In addition, it calls upon sub-regions to develop standby brigades that could, by the end of the second developmental stage, i.e., up to 30 June 2010, be utilized as standby reinforcement instruments to manage complex, multidimensional peacekeeping missions (scenario 5 of the conflict and mission scenarios).

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

In Africa, sub-regional organizations began featuring as important peacekeeping instruments in recent years as it has increasingly been accepted that there is a need for Africans to take care of their own security requirements. In this regard, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), are perhaps the best known sub-regional organizations as regards involvement in robust peacekeeping endeavors. Well aware of the UN's limitations to impact upon the continent, African states and specific role-players at sub-regional level have shown a clear willingness to prepare for and undertake combined diplomatic and military action. The 'indigenous' intervention operations conducted in Liberia (1990), Sierra Leone (1997), Guinea-Bissau (1998), the DRC (1998) and Lesotho (1999), for instance, are of particular interest, as these represented important new dimensions in the management of African peacekeeping requirements in the post-Cold War era.

In view of recent commitments to the ASF concept, four sub-regions initiated efforts to come to terms with the challenges of establishing sub-regional standby capacities. At the end of October 2003 the Defense Chiefs of Staff of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) decided to create a brigade-size sub-regional standby force.<sup>44</sup> Since then a number of meetings were held by experts, Chiefs of Defense Staff, and the Ministers serving on the Peace and Security Council of ECCAS. It was also announced that a multinational training exercise, known as *Exercise Bahl Ghazel 2005*, is planned with a view to setting the ECCAS Regional Standby Brigade in motion.<sup>45</sup>

Likewise, ECOWAS and its 'military arm', the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), that was set up in 1990 as a non-standing military force to deal with security problems in West Africa, took strong action in operationalising the ASF

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<sup>44</sup> Cedric de Coning (2004), p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> African Union, "Roadmap for the Operationalisation of the African Standby Force", *ReliefWeb* (March 22-23, 2005), [www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/EVIU-6BDJHH?OpenDocument](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/EVIU-6BDJHH?OpenDocument).

concept. In this regard, the ECOWAS Defense and Security Commission approved the establishment of a West African standby force of 6,500 soldiers that could be deployed rapidly in response to crisis or threats to peace and security in the West African sub-region. The establishment of such force, to take over from the non-standing intervention force ECOMOG set up in 1990, was one of the decisions taken at the end of the Commission's 9<sup>th</sup> session in Abuja, Nigeria, in June 2004.<sup>46</sup> The force would include a rapid reaction component of 1,500 soldiers to be known as the ECOWAS Task Force, boosted with 3,500 additional troops to form a brigade, while the remaining 1,500 soldiers would constitute the reserve for the force, ECOWAS said in a statement. The Task Force will have the capability to be deployed within 30 days, while the brigade would have the capability not only to be deployed within 90 days, but also to be self-sustaining for 90 days.<sup>47</sup>

The ECOWAS Defense and Security Commission also decided that soldiers for the standby force would be drawn from predetermined units, selected on the basis of their experiences in previous deployments in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. Meanwhile, the Commission has asked the ECOWAS Secretariat to define the operational requirements of the force, assess the military capability of member states in terms of equipment and logistics, as well as to determine the infrastructure needed for the sub-regional logistic depots.

In a similar initiative, a meeting of eight Eastern African Chiefs of Defense Staff or their representatives was convened in February 2004 in Jinja, Uganda with a view to contemplating the establishment of an Eastern Africa Standby Brigade (EASBRIG). The meeting was convened by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

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<sup>46</sup> PANA, "West African Commission Endorses Standing Force", *Panapress* (June 19, 2004), [www.panapress.com/freenews.asp?code=eng046289&dte=19/06/2004](http://www.panapress.com/freenews.asp?code=eng046289&dte=19/06/2004).

<sup>47</sup> AFP, "West African Defense Chiefs Establish 'Rapid Reaction Force' ", *SpaceWar* (June 18, 2004), [www.spacewar.com/2004/040618200925.cjswes.fy.html](http://www.spacewar.com/2004/040618200925.cjswes.fy.html).

and attended by Chiefs of Defense Staff or their representatives from the following states: Comores, Djibouti, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. The Defense Attaché of Tanzania attended as an observer. A representative of COMESA also attended. During the meeting it was set out to ensure the establishment of such a brigade in accordance with AU planning.<sup>48</sup> In a subsequent development, it was formally decided in September 2004 that a 3,000-strong East African brigade would be established to carry out peacekeeping undertakings under the flag of the AU. Defense Chiefs from 11 nations agreed in the Rwandan capital, Kigali, to set up the brigade. It was also decided that troops for the EASBRIG were to remain in their respective countries, but the headquarters would be set up in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, while a secretariat would be located in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. It was furthermore resolved that the command of the brigade would rotate annually, and in alphabetical order, among member states, but starting with Ethiopia. The states contributing to the brigade are Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.<sup>49</sup> More recently, it was announced in April 2005 that EASBRIG is expected to be fully operational by June 2006, and that it is to have a minimum force strength of 5,500 troops. The force will have an operational budget of \$2,5 million contributed by its members to start.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, SADC, representing more than 50 per cent of Sub-Saharan Africa's Gross National Product and about 40 per cent of the region's area,<sup>51</sup> also initiated efforts to come to terms with the challenges of establishing a sub-regional standby

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<sup>48</sup> IGAD, *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Eastern Africa Chiefs of Defense Staff on the Establishment of the Eastern Africa Standby Brigade (EASBRIG)* (Jinja: Uganda, 16-17 February 2004), p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> IRIN, "East Africa: Eleven Nations to Provide Troops to AU Standby Force", *IRINNEWS.ORG* (September 10, 2004), [www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=43125](http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=43125).

<sup>50</sup> Anon, "East African Standby Brigade Will Help End Wars in Somalia", *GEESKA AFRIKA ONLINE DAILY NEWS AND VIEWS* (April 13, 2004), [www.geeskaafrika.com/somalia\\_13apr05.htm](http://www.geeskaafrika.com/somalia_13apr05.htm).

<sup>51</sup> Patrick J. McGowan, "The Regional Sub-System of Southern Africa", in *Power, Wealth and Global Equity: An International Relations Textbook for Africa*, Patrick McGowan and Phillip Nel, eds. (UCT Press: Cape Town, 2002), p. 243.

capacity. It should be noted that in Southern Africa a SADC Mutual Defense Pact was adopted by the SADC Summit in Tanzania in 2003. One of the striking aspects of the Pact is that it contains elements of a classic mutual defense pact while at the same time engaging in regional confidence measures for the sub-region.<sup>52</sup> The Defense Pact does not specifically provide for the formation of a Standby Force, but commit states to engage and co-operate in the following areas of mutual interest:

- the training of military personnel in any field of military endeavor and, to that end, from time to time, hold joint military exercises in one another's territory;
- exchange military intelligence and information in all relevant matters subject to any restrictions or otherwise of national security; and
- joint research, development and production under license or otherwise of military equipment, including weapons and munitions, and to facilitate the supply of, or the procurement of defense equipment and services among defense-related industries, defense research establishments and their respective armed forces.

In the mean-time, a more explicit commitment to the creation of a SADC Standby Brigade has transpired. At a meeting in Pretoria in December 2004 of SADC's "troika", which consists of the immediate past, current and following chairmen of SADC's Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Co-operation, the green light was given to SADC's military chiefs to appoint a planning team in this regard. It also became clear that the full complement of troops for the Brigade would not be stationed at headquarters, but would be called upon whenever they are needed.<sup>53</sup> At the time of writing it was unclear as to whether the brigade would soon be able to deploy alongside the UN within 30 days of receiving orders, and whether the AU's timeframes would be met.

One of the problems that needs to be sorted out at political level, however, relates to that of (sub-) regional integration schemes, specifically relating to dual

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<sup>52</sup> Hussein Solomon, "State vs Human Security: Reflections on the SADC Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Cooperation", in *Towards a Common Defense and Security Policy in the Southern African Development Community*, Hussein Solomon, ed. (Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa, 2004), p. 190.

<sup>53</sup> Anon, "Botswana to Host Southern Africa Force", *Africast.com* (December 28, 2004), [www.africast.com/article.php?newsID=53405](http://www.africast.com/article.php?newsID=53405).

membership of sub-regional blocks. Countries that maintain dual membership of SADC and COMESA, for instance, are Angola, the DRC, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.<sup>54</sup>

<b>Members of SADC and COMESA[55]</b>					
<b>Countries</b>	<b>SADC</b>	<b>COMESA</b>	<b>Countries</b>	<b>SADC</b>	<b>COMESA</b>
Angola	√	√	Mauritius	√	√
Botswana	√		Mozambique	√	
Burundi		√	Namibia	√	√
Comoros		√	Rwanda		√
DRC	√	√	Seychelles		√
Djibouti		√	South Africa	√	
Egypt		√	Sudan		√
Eritrea		√	Swaziland	√	√
Ethiopia		√	Tanzania	√	
Kenya		√	Uganda		√
Lesotho	√		Zambia	√	√
Madagascar	√	√	Zimbabwe	√	√
Malawi	√	√			

Although dual membership is more problematic in the political-economic context – SADC has already acted as a stumbling block for COMESA's Free Trade Agreement concluded in 2000<sup>56</sup> – this may also have a negative impact on security co-operation

<sup>54</sup> Asanda Saule, "To Stay or to Leave", *South African Foreign Policy Monitor* 12/3 (2004), pp. 2-3.

<sup>55</sup> Saule, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> Saule, p. 2.

and sub-regional integration in the military field. It was striking, for instance, that Tanzania attended the February 2004 in Jinja, Uganda in an observing capacity, but eventually decided to join the formation of an East African brigade in September 2004. Interestingly, Tanzania withdrew from COMESA in 2001 and chose to remain a member of SADC. The Seychelles, on the other hand, withdrew from SADC in 2003 and chose to remain in COMESA. Saule rightly points out that sub-regional integration schemes in Africa have a checkered past<sup>57</sup> and it is clear that some thought will have go into solidifying sub-regional integration if the relevant role-players wish to make security co-operation a viable policy option on the continent.

## **Conclusion**

From the above it is clear that the AU has made progress in the development of a comprehensive and cohesive peace and security policy framework in recent times. Although many practical issues and principles guiding interventions have yet to be thrashed out at specific functional levels, the common defense and security policy certainly represents a meaningful advance in conceptual thinking concerning the parameters and principles of regional or coalition peace operations in Africa.

Furthermore, the ASF clearly represents a serious intention on the part of African leaders to set up a multi-national military force empowered to intervene militarily in serious conflicts around the troubled continent. African leaders seem to be keen to avoid a repeat of genocide such as in Rwanda in 1994 when extremists from the Hutu majority slaughtered an estimated 800,000 minority Tutsis and Hutu moderates in 100 days of killings. If planning comes to fruition, Africa should have a six brigade UN-style force ready to police the continent's conflicts by the end of this decade. All in all, the

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.



formation of an ASF is of great significance as it is the development of the ability, long desired, for Africa to police its trouble spots.

While there is no lack of political support for the development of the ASF, valid concerns persist about the financial implications of implementing such objectives. As the AU and African regions look to operationalize the ASF, the significant costs related to its establishment led African leaders to seek support from the international community. In this regard, African leaders managed to mobilize technical and financial assistance so that, by 2010, African role-players would hopefully be in a position to engage more effectively to prevent and resolve violent conflict on the continent, and to undertake peacekeeping operations in accordance with the UN Charter. Still, much of the practical challenges and responsibility for developing the ASF are in the hands of African role-players and functionaries themselves. Thus, if the AU aspires to become a leading organization in Africa's conflict resolution requirements, it must, in the words of two South African analysts, now "seize the opportunity to implement the provisions of the (AU) Constitutive Act. Its success will rightly be judged on whether it can and will respond to situations of armed conflict and on the extent to which the presence of AU or regional peacekeeping forces will manage the strategic and operational challenges required to resolve complex multidimensional peace support or enforcement operations".<sup>58</sup> Many African nations have trained and experienced peacekeeping troops. At the same time, a strategic management capacity for multidimensional peacekeeping operations is still embryonic within the AU and within sub-regional organizations. In the final analysis, it will take some time and considerable resources to create and establish the conditions to sustain the complete range of capabilities needed to fully undertake complex peacekeeping operations and their related activities.

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<sup>58</sup> Kent and Malan, p. 79.