



THE AFRICAN STANDBY FORCE

*Progress and prospects*¹

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The African Union is preparing for its enhanced role in the maintenance of peace and security by establishing a Peace and Security Council that is tasked with identifying threats and breaches of the peace. To this end, the AU has recommended the development of a common security policy and, by 2010, the establishment of an African Standby Force capable of rapid deployment to keep, or enforce, the peace. The ASF would comprise of standby brigades in each of the five regions, and incorporate a police and civilian expert capacity. G8 leaders have pledged support for the AU proposal through funding, training, and enhanced co-ordination of activities. For its part, the AU will need to undertake a realistic assessment of member capabilities, to clearly articulate its needs, and to set realistic and achievable goals. The latest plan for establishing a rapidly deployable African peacekeeping force will require something that similar proposals have lacked: the political will to fund and implement a long list of recommendations. Success will ultimately be judged by the AU's future responses to situations of armed conflict. Even if such responses are largely symbolic in the short term, a sufficient display of political will among African leaders could inspire the confidence needed to galvanise international support.

Introduction

Territorial disputes, armed ethnic conflicts, civil wars, and the collapse of governmental authority in some states are among the principal threats to international peace and stability. Often, such threats require a rapid response from a group of well-trained, well-equipped military, police and civilian experts. They must not only be willing to establish a secure environment within which peace can be built, but must also have a mandate and resources to protect civilians in armed conflict.

To respond to threats to peace on the continent, African Union (AU) member states

have indicated their willingness to take risks for peace and accept their share of responsibility for ensuring stability and development in Africa. As a first step, the AU has created a Protocol that aims to establish a Peace and Security Council (PSC) that would act as the decision-making institution and the sole authority for deploying, managing and terminating AU-led peace operations. While the AU Constitutive Act defines conditions under which a collective response is required, the decision to intervene will require a common perspective on what a threat to the peace entails. To address this, the AU is proposing

the development of a common defence policy that would enable Africa to avoid over-reliance on the international community to solve its problems.

To enable the AU to respond to threats and breaches of the peace on the continent, African leaders have called for the creation of multinational African armed forces that would serve as a standby peacekeeping force ready to intercede in situations of armed conflict or genocide. The African Chiefs of Defence Staff (ACDS) recently laid the groundwork for a continent-wide force that, by 2010, would be able to respond to requests for African Union, United Nations, or regional monitoring, peacekeeping, and peace enforcement (intervention) missions. The AU also plans to manage a standby system that would include a roster of military observers, civilian and police components.

This idea of rapidly deployable multinational forces is not a new one. In April 1947, in accordance with Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the UN's Military Staff Committee published a report on the question of contributions of armed forces to the Security Council. It reflected significant disagreements among the Permanent Five about the size and composition of national contributions, and the whole endeavour was abandoned.² The issue remained sidelined throughout the Cold War, to be revived only after a number of perceived peacekeeping failures during the early 1990s.

In 1992, then UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali called for a system "by which governments commit themselves to hold ready, at an agreed period of notice, specially trained units for peacekeeping service."³ The purpose of standby arrangements, according to Boutros-Ghali, "is to have a precise understanding of the forces and other capabilities a Member State will have available at a given state of readiness should it agree to contribute to a peace-keeping operation."⁴ The UN Standby Arrangements System (UNSAS) that was subsequently launched in the mid-90s, is basically a database of military, civilian police and civilian assets and expertise indicated by Governments to be available, in theory, for rapid deployment to UN peacekeeping operations.

In 2000, the Brahimi report linked the issue of standby arrangements to regional co-operation. It reasoned that if UN military planners have assessed that a brigade (approximately 5,000 troops) is what is required to effectively deter or deal with spoilers of a peace process, then the military component of that peace operation ought to deploy as a brigade formation. It should not deploy as a collection of battalions that are unfamiliar with one another's doctrine, leadership and operational practices. That brigade would have to come from a group of countries that have been working together to develop common training and equipment standards, common doctrine, and common arrangements for the operational control of the force. The UN therefore "welcomes the creation and identification of peacekeeping forces through regional partnership arrangements and recognizes that coherent units that utilize common procedures will enhance the ability...to respond to crises."⁵

As the AU and African regions look to operationalise the African Standby Force (ASF), the significant costs related to its establishment led African leaders to seek support from the international community at the June 2003 G8 Summit in Evian. The G8 leaders pledged to support the AU through the continuation of funding, training, and enhanced co-ordination of activities. However, their failure to contribute specific funds to the ASF indicates they consider the proposal to be overly ambitious and expensive. Recognising the gaps between current and aspired capabilities, the G8 did not go as far as to support the AU proposal in its entirety. Rather, it called for a more gradual approach, requiring the identification of key building blocks aimed at enhancing African capabilities to undertake peace support operations.

The aim of this essay is to provide a synopsis of the key elements of the latest planning guidelines for establishing an African Standby Force, or regional standby forces, and to highlight the major challenges of implementation. The recent G8 recommendations in response to the AU plans are also briefly evaluated as a possible means to overcome some of the impediments to implementation.

The African Standby Force: Proposed action plan⁶

Time is one of the most crucial factors in preventing an emerging crisis from erupting into a major war. Under the current UN peacekeeping structure, it takes an average of between three and six months from the time the UN Security Council decides to establish a peacekeeping mission until the UN is able to deploy peacekeepers and support equipment. Crises in Rwanda, Bosnia and more recently, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, highlight the need for a readily deployable peacekeeping force.

In anticipation of the ratification of the Protocol establishing its Peace and Security Council⁷, the Chiefs of Defence Staff of AU Member states have developed a policy paper outlining a model standby arrangements system to facilitate timely and efficient response to conflict and crisis in Africa. The plan involves the establishment of regionally based standby brigades (3,500–5,000 troops), where each participating country is required to pledge soldiers and logistical support to the UN, AU or regional peace support operations. The AU will seek Security Council authorisation for its enforcement actions, and African regional organisations will similarly seek AU authorisation for their interventions.

Recognising the multidimensional aspects of conflict, the AU also calls for a multi-disciplinary capability encompassing NGOs, the humanitarian, human rights, gender, political and legal dimensions of peace operations, as well as the civilian police and security sector components. By establishing such a system, the AU aspires to be sufficiently flexible to meet a wide variety of contingencies, ranging from humanitarian assistance to peace enforcement or intervention missions. Despite its constituent units being dispersed in separate locations, an effective military formation must be quick to organise, deploy, and be mobile once in the area of operations. It should also be self-sustainable for the initial stages of the operation. A rapid reaction capacity also requires elements such as early warning, an effective decision-making process, strong command and control structures, the ability to transport equipment and personnel,

adequate logistics support and finances, and well-trained personnel.

The African Chiefs of Defence Staff adopted a Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby force and the Military Staff Committee, during a meeting in Addis Ababa in May 2003. The policy framework outlines the various conflict scenarios the ACDS envisage the AU responding to, the mandating authority, its goals, priorities and conceptual framework for the ASF. The ACDS agreed to work towards establishing a Standby Force that would be capable of undertaking monitoring missions, and build up towards a rapid reaction capacity that can eventually be used to undertake peace enforcement/intervention missions. The ASF will adhere to UN doctrine, guidelines, training and standards.

The ACDS have recommended that the ASF be developed in phases to establish a standby system that would use as its basis for doctrine and training, concepts and material developed by those with vast experience and knowledge in setting up similar structures. The concept will also need to be validated against pragmatic conflict scenarios. The ACDS set benchmarks for the development of a strategic level AU management capacity as follows:

Phase I extends to 30 June 2005, by which time the AU should be able to deploy and manage monitoring missions (either AU or joint UN–AU) and regions should develop a standby brigade capacity. Such a capacity should also include a small full time planning element of 15 staff. Recognising that some regions may take more time to develop standby forces, the ACDS recommend that, as a stopgap arrangement, lead nations form coalitions of the willing pending the establishment of such a capacity. At the AU level, lead nations are to be identified for these intervention-type missions.

By 30 June 2005, the AU also intends to manage a roster of 300–500 military observers and 240 police officers to be held in member states on 14 days notice to move. In this timeframe, the AU also aspires to establish a standby system of formed police units that would be comprised of two company-level formed units (approximately 225 police) on 90-days notice to deploy in support of a complex peacekeep-

ing operation. On the issue of civilian experts, the AU aims to establish and manage a roster of mission administration and other experts, including human rights, humanitarian, governance, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), and reconstruction components. Police officers and civilian experts are to be paid by parent member states, while the AU will be responsible for travel, mission subsistence and other allowances.

Phase II extends to 30 June 2010, by which date the AU should have developed the capacity to manage a complex peacekeeping operation. As in Phase I, regions are tasked with continuing to develop a capacity to use a standby reinforcement system to deploy a regional peacekeeping operation. Regions that have already established their standby brigades are encouraged to enhance their rapid deployment capabilities, and incorporate a small headquarters planning element within the AU headquarters, as well as in each of the five regions to plan the size, mandate and structure of a standby peacekeeping force. The ACDS further recommend the establishment of a robust military force able to deploy in 14 days to respond rapidly to situations of genocide.

The ACDS have committed themselves to meet in August 2003, in order to set in motion regional processes. They envisage a series of workshops in each of the five regions to identify, by December 2003: standby forces; rapid reaction elements; centres of excellence for peace support operations' training; lists of military and civilian observers; regional logistics support required; and location of early warning and communication capabilities. The regional workshops are also to deliberate on draft doctrine and standing operational procedures (SOPs), including reimbursement, financial management systems, and command and control. The ACDS have further agreed to reconvene early in 2004 to discuss the recommendations of the various workshops, and identify to identify the next steps of the process.⁸

Budgetary implications

One of the most critical aspects of the ASF that remains to be resolved is the issue of how it will be financed. As the ACDS have noted,

“[the] lack of central funding and reimbursement for peacekeeping costs have severely inhibited the full participation of less endowed Member States. This situation has undermined multinational efforts of the Region and engendered sub-regional polarisation.”⁹ To address the financial and operational activities related to peace and security, the OAU established a Peace Fund in the early 1990s. Today, the fund is still supported by an annual contribution of 6% from the AU regular budget, as well as voluntary contributions from member states and outside donors. The AU will aim to raise member state contributions to the regular budget and subsequently increase the amount from the regular budget dedicated to the Peace Fund from six to 10%. In order to increase its financial resources, the AU has made a variety of recommendations, including: imposing a peace tax on African citizens; creating a pan-African visa in which visitors to Africa pay a tax of \$10 or on imports from outside Africa; organising fundraising activities; soliciting for individual donations in cash or kind, and involving insurance corporations.¹⁰

The annual OAU budget amounted to approximately \$32 million,¹¹ while the current AU annual budget needed to cover the costs of AU staff alone is estimated to reach \$57 million.¹² If calculations are based on these budget estimates, the proposed increase from six to 10% would provide \$5.7 million to the Peace Fund, as opposed to an increase of \$1.8 million based on the old OAU budget. The Peace Fund also receives outside contributions: between 1993 and 1996, African countries contributed approximately \$5 million to the Peace Fund and the donor community contributed approximately \$6.5 million. However, the operational costs of maintaining just 67 military observers in Burundi (OMIB) over the 1993–1996 period amounted to nearly \$7.2 million.¹³

With the financing issue far from resolved, the AU is likely to depend on the strength and goodwill of lead nations and donations from the international community. International financial support for non-UN peacekeeping operations on the continent is currently based on bilateral agreements, rather than co-ordi-

nated under the auspices of the regional body overseeing the deployment. The issue of reimbursement is another important element that remains to be deliberated. While the AU notes that the scale of assessment used by the UN should be used as a model, it will have to determine its own scales based on capacity. One of the largest challenges the AU is likely to face is the actual reimbursement of costs. As the AU already stands in arrears of \$40 million from previous budgets, countries that do not pay their dues in full, on time, and without conditions, will inhibit the Union's ability to deploy peace support operations and further undermine the willingness of contributors by delaying reimbursement.

The AU must be able to address and meet the financial realities of the high cost of peacekeeping operations. Clearly, the cost of deploying large, and perhaps simultaneous, missions will require additional funding, although it is unlikely to match the size of the UN peacekeeping budget, which is estimated in FY2003/04 at \$2.17 billion.¹⁴ While this figure is expected to cover costs related to 11 active peacekeeping missions¹⁵ for the next 12 months, \$1.3 billion (or 60%) of the UN budget is earmarked for five missions in Africa.¹⁶ Of these missions, four are in sub-Saharan Africa: the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL); the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE); the UN Mission in the Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) and the UN Mission in the DR Congo (MONUC). A fifth mission is in North Africa (MINURSO) and is based in the Western Sahara. The lion's share of the money is needed to finance the 'big two' UN missions in Africa: MONUC (in DRC) and UNAMSIL (in Sierra Leone), which take up 53% of the total UN budget.¹⁷ The reality is, however, that a budget of \$2.17 billion is tiny compared with the US military budget of \$350 billion for 2003.¹⁸

Whatever the arithmetic, the fact remains that TCCs are reimbursed, and reimbursed well for contributions to UN peace operations. On the other hand, regional peace operations under the auspices of the AU will not come cheap, and there is no guarantee of reimbursement from the African Union. For example,

the provisional budget for the 3,500-strong AU Mission in Burundi (AMIB) amounts to \$121,614,231.¹⁹ Even though this is far more modest than the budgets of the big UN missions in Africa, the fact remains that lead nations, such as South Africa and Nigeria, will not be willing to bear the brunt of the cost for AU operations.²⁰ Moreover, negotiations over reimbursement have caused long delays the deployment of the Ethiopian contingent to AMIB, and these issues will have to be resolved if there is to be any meaning to the concept of rapid deployment for AU forces.

Rapid deployment

The Report of the Panel on UN Operations (the Brahimi Report) highlights that "The first six to 12 weeks following a ceasefire or peace accord is often the most critical period for establishing both a stable peace and the credibility of the peacekeepers. Credibility and political momentum lost during this period can often be difficult to regain."²¹ Using this as a point of reference for deployment timelines, it is clear that the current operational capabilities are not suitable for situations that require a rapid and credible force on the ground. A six-month delay in getting UN troops deployed has been compared to the difference between a situation of imminent conflict and one of outright disaster.²²

The ACDS have established long-term deployment targets for the ASF that coincide with UN timelines of having the operational capabilities to fully deploy traditional peacekeeping operations within 30 days of the adoption of a resolution, and complex peacekeeping operations within 90 days. The ACDS further recommend the establishment of a robust military force able to deploy in 14 days to respond rapidly to situations of genocide. The ability to plan, command, direct and support a multinational peacekeeping force has been identified by the defence chiefs as a key element of rapid deployment. However, in order to meet these timeframes, the AU must also have the capacity to react quickly on three interdependent aspects of rapid deployment: personnel, materiel readiness, and funding.²³

The establishment of rosters of mission leadership, military, police and civilians experts is a well-recognized requirement for proper mission start-up and the capacity to plan and develop missions quickly. However, UN desires to establish on-call lists consisting of qualified military, civilian police and civilian components ready to meet a wide spectrum of crisis situations remain unfulfilled. A centralised UN roster has proven almost unmanageable in light of the required human resource requirements such a task entails. The UN itself is often required to seek names from national lists of qualified candidates. It is important that the AU recognise that while there is a need to establish similar mechanisms, they must do so in a centrally managed, properly resourced fashion. The AU should also be aware of the financial implications for its members of holding rosters, which require states to nominate and pay the salaries of personnel on an on-call list, whilst they remain on 'standby' in their home country.²⁴

The need to establish unity of command and staff capacities for a new mission has also been identified by the ACDS as a top priority, and they thus recommended the establishment of a small Planning Element to support the planning for new missions and serve as part of an initial headquarters capacity. In the pre-deployment stage, its responsibility is to develop standard operating procedures, to work on concepts of operations and to organise limited joint exercises. During operations the Planning Element serves as the nucleus of a regular brigade staff. The AU decision to establish a Planning Element in the AU Commission, as well as within each of the regional standby arrangements will, if realised, provide for improved co-operation amongst the military units of different nations and promote their rapid deployment.

There is an existing model upon which the AU can base the development of a rapid deployment structure and draw best practices and lessons learnt. The Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG), established in 1996, aims to provide the UN with a non-standing multinational brigade at high readiness based on the UN Standby Arrangement System (UNSA). SHIRBRIG is a multi-

national military formation designed to provide the UN with a well prepared, rapid deployment capability for peacekeeping operations. In order to meet its rapid deployment commitments, SHIRBRIG has a permanent Planning Element based in Denmark.²⁵

SHIRBRIG has offered to assist the AU in the establishment of a Standby Force, and although there is resistance to base the African organisation on a Western model, drawing from SHIRBRIG's experience and lessons learned could nevertheless prove invaluable. SHIRBRIG has further indicated that it would be willing to allow African secondments to its Planning Element to provide expert consultations about its operating methods and technical assistance. To date, the AU, ECOWAS, South Africa, Ghana and Senegal have received invitations to nominate individuals for secondment to the planning element. SHIRBRIG is also looking to include African representatives to its Command Post Exercise (CPX) and other training.

Aware that the stockpile of essential equipment facilitates the rapid deployment of equipment, the AU has suggested investigating the possibility a concept for logistical infrastructure and re-supply system, similar to the strategic deployment stocks at the United Nations Logistics Base (UNLB) at Brindisi, Italy. The ASF Military Logistics Depot (AMLDD) would provide a logistical infrastructure and resupply system. While African Chiefs of Defence Staff recognise that equipment standardisation across the whole spectrum of military equipment is not possible, they do note that establishing similar types of military logistics depots in Africa will require equipment standardisation in key areas where interoperability is essential, such as inter-unit communications. Such an infrastructure would inevitably impact national government procurement practices as well as external capacity building initiatives and therefore must be debated and discussed both within Africa and with the donor community prior to any final decision.

The quick disbursement of funds and procurement of essential goods is also an important component of the larger rapid and effective deployment debate. After articulating his

concerns with the persistent delays in procurement for new missions, the UN Secretary-General was recently given the authority to use up to \$US 50 million to acquire, hire and reposition the goods and people needed to deploy an operation rapidly before the Security Council adopts the resolution to establish it. This significantly improves the UN's ability to deploy rapidly, as contracts can be established and procurement can commence well before a mission needs to deploy. Peace operations in Africa are often hampered by limited logistical infrastructure; access to such funds prior to actual deployment would therefore greatly enhance the ability to deploy rapidly.

While it is difficult to generalise about so many differing states with a wide variety of sizes and strengths, it remains that maintaining properly trained and equipped forces is simply beyond the reach of most countries. African military capabilities are very limited, and few countries have the capacity to undertake or contribute to a robust peacekeeping or enforcement operation. Vast differences in capabilities, policies, languages and cultures will accentuate the need for co-ordination in multinational deployments, as it will the need to exercise effective command and control during operations. Other challenges have been identified in the deployment of African forces, including limited technical and logistics capacities, poor equipment, and lack of appropriate training and discipline, with few penalties imposed upon military malfeasance.

The multi-dimensional notion of security requires that peacekeeping forces not only be combat capable, but undertake training on issues related to HIV/AIDS,²⁶ gender issues, children's rights, civil-military co-ordination, respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. In fact, the UN mission orientation courses require such components be incorporated into UN training packages for peacekeeping or peace support operations²⁷.

As the AU undertakes the task of building a capacity to deploy in support of multi-dimensional peace support operations, it will be important to ensure that the plan includes specific training required for peace enforcement / intervention missions. The AU establishes in Article 4(h) of its Constitutive Act: "The right of

the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity."²⁸

The right to intervene must therefore be paralleled with the capacity to do so. Robust intervention requires strong command and control, communications, interoperability, logistics and equipment. Moreover, while some advances have been made in the training, equipping, and command of peacekeeping forces, there remains a reluctance on the part of many member states to permit such forces to undertake a peace enforcement role as most have not been appropriately trained, mandated or resourced to do so. Where circumstances demand, the AU should be given the power to call in appropriately trained and resourced forces mandated to identify and deal with spoilers and protect civilians, rather than remain neutral in the face of those who renege on their commitments or otherwise seek to undermine a peace accord by violence.

It will take time and considerable resources to create and establish the conditions to sustain the complete range of capabilities needed to fully undertake complex peace support operations or deal with situations of genocide or mass ethnic cleansing. Currently, most African countries lack the capacities to support even the most modest mission, and are also unwilling or unable to pay the cost required to upgrade training and equipment. Africa will therefore need to develop key partnerships as it makes progress towards acquiring the capabilities required to meet its long-term vision of playing a significant role in African security.

There are clearly many lessons the AU can draw upon in the establishment of an ASF. However, the AU should also balance its aspirations against the need to set realistic, attainable goals. Enabling officers to gain experience in organisations such as the UN or SHIRBRIG will strengthen the AU's capacity to identify best practices, and draw up its own plan to establish similar structures based on African needs and priorities. One of the clear and basic lessons is that the ability of multinational brigades to share a common understanding of operational prerequisites and embark on a co-ordinated response requires the development

of inter-operable equipment, standardised training packages, and joint training exercises. For the AU, it is also clear that pre-deployment training and preparations, while a national responsibility, will need outside support as well as enhanced co-ordination.

While African foreign ministers took note of the ACDS report at the Third Extraordinary Session of the Executive Council in Sun City from 21–25 May 2003, they fell short of supporting the proposal, and recommended further consultation to consolidate recommendations. While there is no lack of support for the establishment of standby forces, valid concerns persist about the financial implications of implementing such objectives.

What the G8 has proposed

At the G8 Summit, held in Evian from 1-3 June 2003, G8 Leaders endorsed a plan to develop African capacity to promote peace and security. This plan is more modest than the AU proposal, calling for the development of only one standby brigade by 2010. To support the AU objectives, leaders called for the development of a Joint Africa/G8 Plan to mobilise technical and financial assistance so that, by 2010, African partners are able to engage more effectively in peace support operations. In order to work with African partners, the group proposed taking a step-by-step approach to building an ASF and identified additional building blocks, including:

- the development of capacities to provide humanitarian, security and reconstruction support;
- the establishment early warning centres; the development of institutional capacities to prevent conflict through mediation, facilitation, and observation;
- the establishment of priority regional logistic depots; the standardisation of training doctrines, manuals, curricula and programs for both civilian (including police) and military personnel;
- enhanced capacity in regional peace training centres;
- continued joint exercises at the regional level; current regional peacekeeping initiatives; and

- consensus building in the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) to consider as Official Development Assistance a more inclusive range of assistance provided to enhance capacities to undertake peace support operations.²⁹

Many G8 partners, and indeed other donors, already have established extensive, ongoing programs with African nations and institutions to support the development of African capacities to undertake complex peace support operations and related activities. However, the G8 recognises the need to enhance co-ordination among donors and with African partners to avoid duplication of effort and ensure cost-effectiveness. Enhanced co-ordination will also help channel individual and collective efforts and build complementarities among programs and partnerships. By focussing on clearly identified African priorities, donor countries will be in a better position to target assistance. The decision to redefine what is considered official development assistance will also enable many countries to provide support in areas other than training and policy level discussion and research.

The G8 also plans to assess peacekeeping capacities in the contributing countries and identify which of these capacities will be made available to the AU for peace support operations. To undertake a task of this magnitude, G8 leaders recommended that consultations take place “regularly among resident players in capitals where African continental and regional peace and security institutions are located, as well as in the capitals of African peace keeping nations.”³⁰ Leaders also recommended that the AU host an annual consultation on the enhancement of African capacity to engage in peace support operations, between the AU, all interested donors (not only G8) and African peace and security institutions at the continental and regional level, such as peacekeeping training centres. Such consultations could provide an ongoing mechanism to review the joint plan and its implementation. To complement these consultations, it has also been proposed that the UN generate a database of information on donor activity to support the development of African peacekeeping capacities. While the UN already hosts a ‘Database on Peacekeeping

Training and Initiatives in Africa', the database is not yet complete, it has not been updated since 1998, and it requires additional information on both the training needs and requirements of African countries as well as the resources of donor nations and organizations willing to play a role. The input and feedback of Member States is therefore "...critical to ensuring that this [database] becomes a highly useful and effective mechanism for sharing information."³¹ The reality, however, is that countries are likely to continue to contribute bilaterally, with little or no co-ordination, and remain further constrained in their programming by what their domestic constituents consider important. Enhanced efforts at co-ordination will certainly put the AU in a stronger position to achieve tangible results.

Such efforts have not necessarily been successful in the past. For example, in response to early African expressions of concern about the unco-ordinated and un-consultative nature of Western-led capacity-building for peacekeeping, France, Great Britain and the US launched the "P-3 Initiative" in May 1997. This entailed the drafting of a series of principles and the proposal of an institutional framework for the co-ordination of peacekeeping enhancement efforts by all parties involved (including Africans and donors). However, the planned institutional framework for co-ordination, which was to be constructed under the sponsorship of the UN and the OAU, never materialised. Thus "... the three partners have created little in the way of synergy. Few countries are willing to co-operate with any enthusiasm if they do not get sufficient credit and have control of the situation."³²

On the other hand, the UN also helps to match donors and African troop contributing countries in need of equipment to undertake peace support operations. The UN is discussing arrangements with the AU and African regional organisations to enable them to partner with the appropriate UN offices. The UN DPKO is also providing advice and training to African states and regional organisations, as well as support for regional and national training centres. The impact and effectiveness of these efforts will benefit from the G8 plan to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the extant capa-

bilities within African states, as it will be in a better position to identify, with its African partners, the gaps that require focused attention. Without a centralised system responsible for managing contributions, however, the G8 proposals—like many others before—risks falling by the wayside.

Conclusion

Responsibility for security in Africa is devolving to African states and regional organisations. For better or worse, the AU reflects the realities of the international system: a society of independent states among which power is very unevenly distributed and rarely exercised with ethical consistency. If the AU aspires to become a leading organisation for maintaining peace and security on the continent, it must seize the opportunity to implement the provisions of the 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. Even if the response is largely symbolic, a display of political will among African leaders could inspire the confidence required to galvanise sufficient international support to address the crisis.³³

The most serious impediment to the efficacy and legitimacy of contemporary peace missions lies in the complex and uneven interplay of powerful national and corporate interests that ultimately underpin the success or failure (and even launching) of any particular peace operation. Africans will therefore have to set aside national agendas in the interest of regional and continental security. For African states to allow the AU to determine on their behalf what constitutes a collective threat, however, will require faith in the transparency, accountability and representative nature of the decision-making process and overall management of the Commission.

To be credible, the AU PSC will have to strengthen the current collective security environment and be empowered to proscribe a co-ordinated response to threats and breaches of

the peace. An appropriate response will require credible, well-trained and equipped peacekeeping capacities, but will further require a holistic approach to peace and security. Thus, the PSC must work in co-ordination with NGOs, civil society groups and the humanitarian community. Clearly, any decision to intervene is not based solely on the capacity to do so, but rather on the political will required to act. It remains to be seen whether AU member states have the political will to develop and implement a common defence policy and actually commit forces for the ASF. Even if there is a will to develop a clear and operational common defence policy and standby capacities, the political nature of African bureaucracies may negatively influence the military professionalism of African forces. Therefore, a commitment from African countries to demonstrate higher standards of military professionalism while building their peacekeeping capacity will stand them in good stead in the eyes of the international and donor communities.

There are important roles for both Africa and the international community if this new security architecture is to be established. The international community should, for its part, support and underwrite, rather than dictate and supervise, the establishment of multinational military forces. It should also work more closely with government institutions and NGOs to ensure equal support is being provided to develop a vibrant civil society. The AU, for its part, will need to clearly articulate its needs. African ownership of the problems requires strong and clear African input into the resolution thereof. The AU should further ensure it takes firm but gradual steps towards the establishment of the PSC and standby forces. This is a long-term project that requires realisable and achievable goals. The AU and regions must first establish a mechanism that would manage military and civilian personnel that could, eventually, form the building blocks for the establishment of an African standby force.

The ACDS followed a logical theoretical point of departure by providing a clearer definition of the possible roles and tasks of an African force. However, these cannot be accurately delineated without a clear and realistic notion of who and what would ultimately be

available on the ground. The G8 plan—to assess peacekeeping capacities in the contributing countries and identify which of these capacities will be made available to the AU for peace operations—is therefore an essential part of the way forward. This assessment should be rooted in reality, and proceed from a basic and honest stock-taking of member state capabilities for peace operations (however modest these may be). Such stock-taking can be meaningless however, unless accompanied by a strong signal of willingness and intent by the countries concerned to actually commit the assessed assets to peace operations.

The pursuit, adherence and follow-up to the process of establishing the ASF, and its proposed timetables, should identify and expose additional challenges related to international and continental co-ordination and duplication of effort in support of establishing standby arrangements on the African continent. The call to establish yet another new security infrastructure will require what many similar proposals have not had: the will to implement the recommendations. Without this key ingredient, the objectives stated by the AU and support proffered by the G8 and the international community will only crumble before the ink is dry and the first building blocks are in place. Moreover, the ruins left behind can only compromise the credibility of any attempts to put forward a similar plan in the future.

Notes

1. This essay is published in furtherance of the research agenda of the Training for Peace in Southern Africa Programme, a peacekeeping capacity-building initiative funded by the Royal Norwegian Government.
2. Adam Roberts, From San Francisco to Sarajevo: The UN and the Use of Force, *Survival*, 37(4) Winter 1995–96, p 9.
3. Supplement to an Agenda for Peace: position Paper of the Secretary-General on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations (A/50/60-S/1995/1), 03 January 1995. For additional information, go to: <http://www.unog.ch/archives/agendas/supagp.htm> (04 July 2003).
4. UN Secretariat, *Report of the Secretary-General on Standby Arrangements for Peacekeeping*, S/1995/943, 10 November 1995.
5. The Implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Panel on United Nations

- Peace support operations (A/56/732) 21 December 2001, http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/ (26 June 2003).
6. Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and the Military Staff Committee, Adopted by the African Chiefs of Defence Staff, Addis Ababa, 15–16 May 2003, Chapter 3.
 7. Established in July 2002 at the inauguration of the African Union in Durban, South Africa, the Peace and Security Council requires 27 of the 53 countries to ratify before it will enter into force. To date, seven countries have ratified the instruments, including: Algeria, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda and South Africa.
 8. Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force (Part I), op cit, p 47.
 9. Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force (Part I), op cit, p 12.
 10. Ibid. See also G Wannenburg and A Kajee 'African Peacekeeping: A Mandate Without Money?', *E Africa*, The electronic journal of governance and innovation, Volume 1, June 2003, South African Institute of International Affairs, www.wits.ac.za/saiia/ (23 June 2003).
 11. The African Standby Force and the Military Staff Committee (Part II: Annexes), Submitted by African Military Experts to African Chiefs of Defence Staff, 12–14 May 2003, Addis Ababa.
 12. This figure was provided in an interview conducted with the AU Commission.
 13. The African Standby Force (Part II: Annexes), op cit.
 14. UN News Centre, General Assembly adopts \$2.17 billion peacekeeping budget, 19 June 2003, <http://www.un.org/News/> (26 June 2003).
 15. The new UN budget will finance 14 active peacekeeping missions in Kosovo, India-Pakistani border, Cyprus, Georgia, Syrian-Israeli border, Lebanon, East Timor, Iraqi-Kuwait border and the five African missions.
 16. The cost of keeping the peace in Africa, Mail & Guardian online, 03 July 2003, www.mg.co.za (07 July 2003).
 17. The DR Congo has the largest budget at \$608.2 million, followed by Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) at \$543.4 million. For additional information go to: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.shtm> (07 July 2003).
 18. The cost of keeping the peace, op cit.
 19. According to a briefing by H Boshoff, ISS, 11 May 2003. This provisional budget is based on a cycle of 365 days, a strength of 3,500 troops, and addresses only costs that will be the responsibility of the African Mission. Force Preparation and Mission Readiness and all other costs will remain the responsibility of the Troop Contributing Countries.
 20. Nigeria bore over 70% of the collective manpower, logistical and financial burden of ECOWAS's interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The cost of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) deployment to the UN Mission in the Congo is estimated to cost the government R619 million above and beyond what the UN is expected to reimburse. See Congo-Kinshasa; High Price of Keeping the Peace, Sunday Times, 22 June 2003 and African Union, The African Standby Force and The Military Staff Committee (Part II: Annexes), 12–14 May 2003, Annex E, p 7.
 21. United Nations General Assembly/Security Council, Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, A/55/305, S/2000/809, 21 August 2000, paragraph 87. For additional information go to: http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/ (04 July 2003).
 22. Report of the Government of Canada, Towards a Rapid Reaction Capability for the United Nations, September 1995, p 7. For additional information, go to: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/peacekeeping/menu-en.asp> (04 July 2003).
 23. See The Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations, paragraph 89, [www.http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/](http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/) (07 July 2003).
 24. The UN On-Call List requires officers to be part of the Standby Arrangements System for a period of two years. For additional information go to: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/rapid/sba.html> (18 June 2003).
 25. For additional information, go to: www.shir-brig.dk.
 26. It is speculated that between 10% and 60% of African military personnel are HIV positive.
 27. Peacekeeping has traditionally been a primarily military activity. The term 'peace support operations' or 'peace missions' has come to represent the more complex form of peacekeeping, requiring not only a military, but a police and civilian expert response as well. In order to respond to the more complex crises, peace support operations deploy personnel with more varied skills.
 28. Constitutive Act of the Africa Union, Article 4 (h).
 29. Implementation Report by Africa Personal Representatives to Leaders on the G8 Africa Action Plan, Evian, June 1, 2003. For the full report, including the Annex: Joint Africa/G8 Plan to Enhance African Capabilities to Undertake Peace Support Operations, go to: <http://www.g7.utoronto.ca/summit/2003evian/index.html#chair> (01 July 2003).
 30. Implementation Report by Africa Personal Representatives to Leaders, op cit.
 31. For additional information, go to: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/training/list2a.htm>.
 32. EG Berman, French, UK and US Policies to Support Peacekeeping in Africa: Current Status and Future Prospects, a report for the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs, submitted on 4 January 2002, par. 69.
 33. J Cilliers & K Sturman 'The Right Intervention: Enforcement challenges for the African Union', *African Security Review*, Volume 11 No 3, 2002, p 3.