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Research Article

The Impact of AU's Weak Military Cooperation on Regional Stability: Lessons From Sudan And Congo

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Abstract

The continuous outbreaks of conflict in Africa made the establishment of multilateral security institutions at both subregional and regional levels imperative. From the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group to the East African Standby Force and the Southern African Development Community Standby Force, sub-regional military arrangements came to life in response to growing instability. However, the establishment of the African Union to replace the Organisation of African Unity in 2002 created space for the Peace and Security Council, a unified apparatus for managing conflicts. A concept that was previously rejected. However, despite its right of intervention by using military force inside member states, the AU effort has had limited effectiveness as demonstrated in the Sudan and Congo crises, where violent crises persist. In Sudan, the AU's fragmented coordination and over-dependence problem affected its capacity for early deployments, and in Congo, violent conflict continues to ravage the east. This article analyses the structural weakness affecting the AU's security arrangements and constraining its ability to ensure regional stability. It draws a parallel between the AU's weak military cooperation and the proliferation of armed groups and cross-border instability.

Keywords: Sudan, military, stability, UN, EU, SADC, conflict, insecurity, violence

Introduction

The security situation in Africa is precarious and has been so for many years. Each sub-region of Africa is unsettled by at least one form of violent crisis. In West Africa, particularly the Sahel, violent extremist organisations continue to exacerbate the humanitarian crisis and heighten instability. In North Africa, political violence overshadows hope for peace. The Horn of Africa is engulfed in a civil crisis and political violence that has claimed the lives of thousands. These prolonged crises have persisted despite external assistance, coordinated regional efforts, and even the particular AU's intervention, which has been both diplomatic and military. Rather than achieving peace, the conflicts morph into broader violence or resurface after a short period of recouping. Between 1989, the earliest for which data was available, and 2024, an estimated 3.9 million Africans have been lost to armed conflict alone 2024 (Uppsala Conflict Data Program [UCDP]).

The African Union was, in part, established as a response to regional instability, and with the right to intervene in member States to prevent or stop genocide, war crimes, and restore law and order. The AU

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predecessor, OAU, did not have this mandate. To remedy the restraints it suffered, the AU was created with a much broader security mandate. Based on this mandate, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) comprises interrelated institutions, including the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the African Standby Force (ASF), the Continental Early Warning Systems (CEWS), the Panel of the Wise, and the Peace Fund. All endorsed by member states as a tool that serves the region's "Africa's solutions to Africa's problem" agenda.

However, this seductive rhetoric has proven difficult to implement effectively over the years. The continent remains rife with crisis, with violence worsening in the states where the AU has conducted peacekeeping missions. The current wave of attacks in Sudan began in 2023 between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, often referred to as Hemedi, and the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. Recent media reports might portray both parties as rivals, but this was not always the case. Before the coup that brought the al-Bashir regime to an end, both forces had worked together to protect the former President Omar al-Bashir. While SAF existed as the state military, the former president hired the RSF in his desperate quest to cling to power, adopting a dual-military system. His doubts about the SAF grew over the years, and he had hoped to use the RSF as a sort of check and counterweight against the state force. However, the ripple effect of his actions was not in his favour and eventually set Sudan on fire. The RSF morphed out of the Janjaweed militias, which fought in the Darfur conflict. The current war in Sudan is an extension of the 20-year-long conflict, which had led to the AU intervention in Darfur. It was called the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). It was the AU's first major peacekeeping mission, followed by AMIS II and AMIS IIE, during which the war raged on, killing hundreds of thousands of Sudanese, while influencing the regional insecurity in Chad, Uganda, Egypt, the Central African Republic, Eritrea and Libya. (Ekengard, 2008).

When the M23 rebel group launched an attack on Goma, in eastern Congo, and took over the city in January 2025, around 2000 people were killed, and even more Congolese were displaced in their bid to avoid a terrorist government. The current crisis in Brazzaville, which began in 2002 after the rebel force re-emerged from 8 years of inactivity, citing failure to uphold the 2013 peace deal and the inadequate integration of the Tutsi population into the government. While the AU deployed a mission to Sudan, its role in Congo was restricted to indirect engagements. A regional coalition comprising Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and conflict-ridden Sudan deployed a military mission to support the Congolese government against the Movement for the Liberation of Congo and the Rally for Congolese Democracy, two rebel groups backed by Uganda and Rwanda. After the 1999 Lusaka ceasefire agreement, the UN Stabilisation Mission was deployed to monitor peace and protect civilians in the absence of an AU intervention. However, the rebel groups continued fighting, and the conflict lasted about an extra four years before another ceasefire was reached.

The AU has recorded successes in some of its peacekeeping missions, such as its intervention in Comoros in 2008, in Somalia between 2007 and 2022, and in Mali in 2013. Its broader efforts to maintain regional stability have been largely constrained, making it difficult to fulfil a key mandate. The research interrogates the influence of AU military cooperation on its lofty mandate to provide African solutions to African problems, particularly in relation to insecurity. By analysing case studies, existing institutional frameworks, and peacekeeping missions, this paper critically assesses the African Union's effectiveness in ensuring regional stability. It will identify patterns in case studies and highlight the relationship between

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these patterns and broader regional stability. This study will also provide some insight into how the body can improve regional security and stability in the region.

Literature Review

When the Organisation of African Unity was formed in 1963, the goal, in art, for the continent was to have a strong institutional body that allowed Africans to stand shoulder to shoulder, in support of one another, in their liberation struggle. The OAU was created to coordinate African states in fighting colonialism and apartheid rule in unison (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2014; Clark, 2016; Crossen, 2017). In the aftermath of this struggle, however, States faced instability and crises fueled by political and ethnic differences, border disputes that escalated into major conflicts, and several countries grappling with existential threats. The OAU was not equipped to handle this, and the need for a compact security governance system closely linked to an institutional framework became imperative.

The AU was established as a regional body with the goals of both accelerating the integration process among African states and resolving the multifaceted security and political crises that have become rife across sub-regions. The mandate of the AU includes stability, security, peace, and development alongside economic and political development. The AU adopted an interventionist posture. It emphasised the "African solution to African problems" as the rhetoric which captured its agenda and approach to peace. The AU also adopted a doctrine of non-indifference regarding security, genocide, and human rights violations, contrasting with the state-centric stance of the OAU.

As part of its efforts to ensure regional stability and promote peace, the AU, through its flagship initiative, "Silencing all Guns," had hoped to reduce insecurity and consolidate peace and stability across the continent. The initiative, first introduced in 2013, had 2020 set as its initial deadline. This was then revised to 2030. These organisations' security goals were to be achieved through an institutionalised security framework and architecture(Apuuli, 2020). This includes: the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the African Standby Force (ASF), the Continental Early Warning Systems (CEWS), the Panel of the Wise, and the Peace Fund.

However, despite the AU's lofty ambitions and institutional development, it has failed to produce a strong, fully coordinated military cooperation capable of adequately ensuring stability. Existing literature appears to widely agree that the gap between the AU's ambition and its operational capacity is central to its limitations.

Jacob Mahlangu argues that the AU struggled to implement peace initiatives due to financial constraints that limited its capacity to conduct large-scale military operations in states where intervention was necessary. As noted, the organisation's integration agenda is held back by weak commitment from states to funding and budgets. African states do not consider their commitments a priority and, in many cases, either pay in part or pay late.

Djilo argues that one of the reasons for this is that member states historically see the AU Commission as expensive and wasteful spending. Without an independent source of revenue, it is forced to rely on either its members' irregular payments or external sources. During peacekeeping missions, the organisation is struggling to fund deployed military officials. There have been multiple cases of delayed salaries, poor living conditions, poor medical care for wounded operatives, and delayed compensation for death or injuries. At a larger scale, it affects the troops' operational and functional capacity.

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The AU's capacity to provide logistics for the mission is also limited. African States are typically not prepared for war and, as such, often do not have the machinery to deploy troops. Guicherd states that effective peace support operations must have strong logistics. He referred to it as the backbone of all of PSOs (Guicherd, 2007). In this context, logistics can be simply defined as the process of moving, equipping, and accommodating troops in peacekeeping operations. And the lack of capacity to adequately implement this part of the intervention program has a major impact on the speed and scale of deployments.

A research conducted by the US government showed that out of a group of twenty African states, five had no logistics at all. Eight armies had low-capacity logistic networks that could not support company-level units beyond their barracks. While only six states had limited battalion-level capabilities to perform within their home state.

Neethling (2010) argues that in an effort, many African states cannot deploy a mission outside their territory. He attributed this to a lack of preparedness for war or any external agreement. For instance, troops in Somalia struggled with logistics. During the AMISOM mission in 2007, Burundi and Uganda were the first countries to contribute troops. However, Burundi, which contributed troops to the mission, did not have the transport aircraft to deploy and sustain them independently. Gitega had to rely on external support, while Uganda assumed operational leadership. Williams (2017) describes deployments among African states as largely asymmetrical, in which the few states with greater military capacity are obligated to alleviate the operational burden of the mission on the weaker states. Beyond the factors already listed above, poor supply chain systems, insufficient troops, limiting and vague mandates, the absence of standard equipment, and overdependence on external resources have further contributed to weaknesses in the AU's military cooperation over the years and continue to do so.

Cedric de Coning, on the other hand, attributes the weakness of the AU military cooperation to its consistent search for quick solutions and external assistance. He says this is especially with regard to command, interoperability, and sustainability, which its ability to stand independently as a regional institution is questionable.

The situation in Sudan, particularly in Darfur, provides a clear picture of the highlighted limitations. The 2004 deployment of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) is considered one of the first attempts of the AU to participate in peacekeeping. The organisation’s action, by means of this, seeks to guarantee that the AU is building a reliable military system that can be trusted to intervene when the need arises, but most researchers consider AMIS a good demonstration of the organisation's limited operational capabilities. Indeed, scholars have linked the limited success recorded in Darfur and continued violence in many parts of Sudan, which contributes to the regional instability, it manifests as refugee inflow to neighbouring Egypt, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Chad, Uganda and even Libya. There are also cross-border crimes, active armed groups, and tension between neighbouring states.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo sharply contrasts with what is obtainable in Sudan. However, as scholars have found, it provides a good example. It broadens the perspective on the different yet key aspects of AU's weak military cooperation and its impact on crises ranging across the continent. In Congo, there was no AU military operation despite the scale and duration of the armed conflict there. The scale of the conflict ultimately makes military action important, with troops provided by other African states. Council on Foreign Relations records that around 6 million people have been killed in Congo since 1996. However, the AU has not sent a peacekeeping mission to the country. Instead, the United

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Nations conducted peacekeeping operations through the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

The regional bloc, the Southern African Development Community, was the African body that carried out peacekeeping efforts. According to the literature on the topic, the situation in the DRC has a rather chaotic security system, resulting from the involvement of several parties with competing interests and inefficient coordination. As De Coning et al. put it, the presence of multiple actors and conflicting mandates created a needlessly lengthy bureaucratic management process that impeded efficiency.

Existing literature shows a nexus between poor military cooperation and regional instability, and in Africa, the AU's inability to independently carry out an effective military response has created space for crises and conflicts ravaging African states to thrive. It has led to the death of millions in West, East, North, and Central Africa. In the case of Sudan, the failure of AMIS and the absence of adequate follow-up intervention gave room for a prolonged crisis that continues to kill and displace people in thousands. The crisis in Sudan has led to several other challenges in countries in the region, as earlier indicated. At the same time, in the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the lack of a unified security policy facilitated the presence of armed groups that had had considerable consequences for the overall regional stability.

However, there is a noticeable omission in the existing literature: a comparison of various intervention models proposed by the AU across different conflict situations. At the same time, there is a wide array of research devoted to particular events and circumstances in Sudan and the DRC. However, fewer studies discuss the interconnections among the intervention, the patterns they highlight in AU military cooperation, and what these imply for broader regional stability.

Overall, the research reveals that poor military coordination within the AU, characterised by logistical challenges, political divisions, and reliance on external sources, undermines peace and stability in the region. In instances where there are restrictions on the intervention process, as witnessed in Sudan, or even no involvement at all, as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, such factors result in fragmented efforts.

Empirical review

This section of the paper analyses existing empirical evidence on the intersection of operational issues that colour military deployments facilitated by the AU, drawing on realities observed in Sudan and Congo. These case studies were chosen to highlight the different yet related issues that affect AU peace and security efforts as they reflect on the strength of the body's standing military arrangement. The intervention in Congo in 2002, described by scholars as a litmus test in Peacekeeping and mediation.

The deployment was facilitated through contributions from Nigeria, Rwanda, Gambia, Senegal, and other countries after the Sudanese government and rebel groups signed the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement on April 8, 200,4 in Abuja.

The flow of refugees from Darfur into Chad had compelled President Idriss Déby to initiate negotiations between Sudan's government and the rebel Sudan Liberation Movement Army. The talks led to the signing of the Abéché Agreement, which called for a 45-day ceasefire (Tubiana, 2008) . This was not a lasting solution, and so negotiations continued until the AU stepped in. The final result of the AU-facilitated talks on Darfur was the Darfur Peace Agreement.

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The ambition of the agreement, however, was low. The key goals as identified in the agreement include: an end to the hostilities among the warring parties, the release of war prisoners, the provision of aid, the creation of a joint ceasefire commission, and the deployment of military observer teams called AMIS. This mission occurred in three phases. One major setback the mission faced was in the deployment of troops. Deployments were delayed significantly. For instance, in April 2005, during AMIS II, only 2200 of the 3300 personnel meant to be deployed had arrived in Darfur. The mission also had no redeployment logistics plan. Also, during AMIS IIE, troop numbers were raised to over 6,171, and logistics and deployment remain major factors. (Ekengard, 2008).

This factor is also intertwined with the AU's inability to source funding independently. A part of the factor responsible for its poor logistics, aside from poor planning, is the delay in funding from external sources. During AMIS II, a larger share of its funding came from the European Union, which contributed €70 million through the African Peace Facility. Canada, France, and the United Kingdom also made contributions (Appiah-Mensah, 2006). The mission also lacked infrastructure and air assets, which were crucial to the execution of its ambitions. It relied on Canada and the Netherlands for helicopter fleets. Canada made a significant donation of 25 helicopters and 105 armoured carriers, while the Netherlands provided three helicopters.

However, this external funding could not cover the entire cost of the mission. AMIS still needed much more. Also, the funding did not fix the annual allocation and was paid in bits, which delayed and affected troop mobilisation. By 2006-2007, the AU was already struggling with a severe funding gap, which necessitated the transition to a hybrid AU-UN mission, which lasted 10 years, albeit still fraught with challenges. However, the UN provided funding, logistics and a wide range of institutional support while the AU played a largely operational role.

As the crisis in Sudan continues, the humanitarian crisis in North Africa worsens, displacements, cross-border movements, armed group activities and volatile border areas remain a challenge to the region and threaten the security of neighbouring states. The crisis in Sudan continues to strain its neighbours.

Currently, in Congo, the M23 rebel group is advancing toward the North Kivu capital of Goma. Tension between Rwanda and Congo heightens, and the humanitarian crisis is worsening. Amidst this chaos, the UN stabilisation mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is slowly winding down its operations after over 10 years of consolidating peace. While the East African Community (EAC) has regional forces on the ground in eastern Congo and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) president, there is a need for an AU mission to fill up the existing gaps affecting the effectiveness of the mission. This is also crucial given the presence of a parallel operation model and limited coordination. Unlike in Sudan, the Congo crisis provides a clear example of the absence.

The AU did not deploy military troops at any point in Congo, despite the intensity of the violence and repeated calls by scholars. Rather, it outsourced the crucial responsibility of maintaining peace and security in the region to the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

While the crisis in Congo continues to cause a severe humanitarian crisis, where over 7000 people have already been killed between January and March, according to Al Jazeera, this is despite the presence of military forces. Congo poses a multi-dimensional problem to both economic and social development in the Great Lakes region. The protracted war is also driving displacement and mass migration to neighbouring

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states. South Sudan, where a huge population of Sudanese refugees are located, now has more than 1.7 million refugees, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

Despite this, the AU's role has been solely centred on providing political and operational support to missions facilitated by small, sub-regional blocs. A comparative analysis of the crisis in Sudan vis-à-vis what was and is obtainable in the Democratic Republic of the Congo reveals a similar pattern. From what has been empirically observed. While in the case of Sudan, there was a deployment of forces but without the ability to accomplish objectives due to operational challenges, in the case of the DRC, the AU failed to undertake any form of military operation, producing a similar outcome. That is, continued violence and an unsuccessful attempt to manage the conflict. Whether through inefficient intervention or a lack of intervention altogether, poor military cooperation at the African Union level contributed to growing instability.

Gap in Literature

Despite the efforts made by regional bodies and the United Nations through its intervention methods, insecurity persists across the country. Its impact is burgeoning as the cross-border crisis worsens. Data on forced displacement is growing, and the burden of care is foisted on the government of neighbourhoods whose internal issues make it a herculean task to take on such an additional role.

Literature on peace operations in Africa exists in significant numbers, as well as research on regional stability, security, governance, the role of the AU, and the relevance of institutional frameworks to development. However, gaps exist in the use of comparative analysis of realities from different conflict-ridden countries to weigh the effectiveness of the AU military structure and cooperation. There is hardly any comparison of the different approaches to the crisis in African states adopted by the AU, or an identification of patterns that exist in the results.

The existing literature often focuses on either the analysis of specific cases of AU intervention or the institutional design of military interventions. They centre on the issues that impede and limit the scope of AU missions across different sub-regions. An extensive amount of time and research has been devoted to highlighting the lack of financial resources, logistical problems, and the poor contributions of countries within the organisation as factors affecting the AU. For instance, articles written by Williams (2016) and Murithi (2009), among others, offer a comprehensive analysis of the factors that limit the efficiency of AU operations in African states. The articles prioritise crisis and AU responses that involve the deployments of troops after contributions from different member states over a time period during the conflict. The studies examine not only the duration of the conflicts, but the severity, the impacts it has on neighbouring countries and even regions at large. As such, studies on the comparison of successful and unsuccessful interventions with those in which the AU chose not to intervene militarily are noticeably absent. But it is essential for there to be an analysis that incorporates both the presence and absence of such phenomena of AU millitary intervention in countries.

"African solutions to African problems" is a common theme in the literature. Still, there has been little investigation of how well the AU has operationalised this idea in its military cooperation. The discussion has remained largely normative, focusing on what ought to happen rather than on the effectiveness of these ideas. There is, therefore, a lack of empirical evidence to assess the effectiveness of the AU's security provision.

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A comparative analysis of AU military cooperation in Sudan and the DRC will be conducted for this study. Given that it seeks to appraise the AU's intervention in Sudan and its non-intervention in the DRC, an empirical study of the state of security over the years forms a core part of the research.

The study seeks to identify how institutional capacity, coordination challenges, and political constraints shape outcomes. In doing so, this research will provide a more nuanced understanding of regional security governance. It will also highlight the need to evaluate not only what the AU does, but also what it does not do, in explaining patterns of regional instability.

Theoretical framework

This study adopts the theories of regional security cooperation and collective security, tied to institutional competence and coordination for the successful implementation of peace missions. Primarily, the research considers the role of the African Union as an essential regional security organisation. It also seems to identify the impact of inadequate military cooperation on the regional security status. Mainly, this is in light of the outcomes of AU intervention and non-intervention efforts.

The theoretical framework adopted in this research incorporates aspects of Collective Security Theory, Regional Security Complex Theory, and Institutionalism.

However, the research that adopts collective security, a theory that is based on the principle that security is a collective responsibility, is the main theory. Collective security posits that external aggression that threatens the integration of a state or region should be met with collective actions.

The AU security architecture provides an example of a structure centred on collective security that seeks to encourage support for countries in crisis. For effective collective security, it is necessary that African states are ready and able to engage in cooperation regarding financial, troop, and political assistance. However, from practical experience, the African Union's previous peacekeeping efforts show that these conditions can be weak or inefficient, causing a reluctance to step in on other such cases.

The Regional Security Complex theory helps make this perspective more understandable. It looks at it through the broader lens of the dynamics of intra-state crises in Africa.

This theory, espoused by Barry Buzman and Ole Waever, posits that states can have their national security interlinked and must operate to achieve peace through collaboration, as this bond cannot be delinked or addressed independently of each other. It regards security threats as a regional concern, arguing that it is clustered due to the series of spill over effects that are more than likely to follow the outbreak of war. This crisis in Sudan, which has created a major humanitarian crisis in Chad or Egypt, where the government has become unwilling to accept vulnerable groups fleeing RSF violence, provides a clearer picture of the concept of regional security. A crisis in one state often has a wider regional impact.

Through this theory, the failure of the African Union is made evident. It helps understand the relevance of institutionalism and the impact of AU's failure on the different African sub-regions.

AU's effectiveness is measured through its institutional capacity which includes funding structure. The lack of a guarantee and independent revenue sources portends its weakness.

Poor institutional capacity is the primary factor responsible for what scholars describe as implementation gaps. A case where formal mandates do not match operational capabilities. This is applicable to most AU peace operations. It is responsible for the challenges it faces while seeking to carry

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out a mission. Issues that arise include inadequate troop deployment, reliance on external funding, and limited interoperability between member states' armed forces.

This theory further provides a rationale for the involvement of external or foreign framework. Such as the Department of Security Operation of the United Nations. It explains the interest and effort of other key sub-regional organisations, such as SADC, EAC, and ECOWAS, who, in the absence of the regional body, must step in swiftly as a counterweight to the activities of rebel groups in border areas.

Through these theories, it can be argued that poor military cooperation among African Union members is not simply a result of weak political will or, in a sense, a lack of commitment to regional security. Rather, it is a consequence of structural and capacity constraints. There is most certainly a nexus among security, the collective security responsibility of states, and institutional capacity, from which a holistic study of why the AU's military action was limited or even non-existent can be conducted.

This analysis forms the core of the study. It shows the impact of the lack of military cooperation on the AU's mission to maintain stability in affected parts of the continent.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The qualitative research method was adopted for this study. It is used to explore the impact of the lack of military cooperation within the African Union on the continent's regional stability, with a particular focus on Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

A qualitative research methodology was adopted as more suitable for this topic. This is because the research problem involves analysing institutional behaviour and conflict, as well as evaluating the efficiency of military cooperation.

Data collection was also primarily based on secondary sources. Secondary academic literature played a vital role in data collection, as it provides not only a theoretical background on the research issues but also an empirical analysis of the African Union's operations and limitations. Official documents of relevant organisations are also included to provide an empirical basis for the research.

Thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns in the data. This research method is adopted to identify, organise, and provide an academic description of patterns of meaning or themes within a data set. As such, it provided a systematic framework for analysing issues related to military cooperation and stability. The themes analysed in this study are drawn from the research objectives and include: military cooperation capabilities within the African Union, the efficacy of intervention in Sudan, the effects of non-intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the overall effect of this dynamic on regional stability.

The analysis process also incorporated triangulation, in which information from multiple sources, such as academic literature, institutional reports, and policies, was cross-checked.

This approach provided an ideal way to investigate the influence of weak military cooperation in the African Union on conflict outcomes in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Discussion

In recent times, international relations and political economy scholars say the African Union is spiralling downward at speed, into a shadow of itself. Nevertheless, it is coming from nowhere, either. The issues responsible for its prophesied decline have long existed and have, in part, clipped its ability to grow

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into a strong supranational body for the African continent. Institutions and policies are the lifeline of regional frameworks. They play a crucial role in defining issues, initiating and implementing policies, mediating, and pulling resources together for the good of states (Parks, 2000; Oakerson, 2000). From impressive economic growth, the expansion of the middle class, to increased labour productivity and foreign investment, the ambition that backs and continues to drive the AU is expansive. The AU is not short on good ideas. Its problem has been with implementation (Gruzd, 2023). However, there is a significant gap between the ambition and execution for the African Union, and this gap is no more evident anywhere else than in its conflict management.

Presently, about 13 African countries are dealing with intrastate armed conflicts, some of which are rooted either in elite power struggles or identity-based grievances, as applicable to both Sudan and Congo. Some of these wars are the remnant of the 19th-century imperialist domination and the European scramble for Africa, which saw the amalgamation of African polities with no historical ties, eventually creating heterogeneous states (Meredith, 2005). The continent remains rife with intra-state conflicts that undermine the possibility of achieving the AU 2063 agenda. This particularly includes its flagship initiative, "Silencing all Guns," aimed at reducing insecurity and consolidating peace and stability across the continent.

The goal was unable to be achieved successfully in 2013, had 2020 and still remains unlikely to be achieved by the revised deadline of 2030. Twenty-four years after the establishment of the African Union, stability on the continent remains under threat. Drawing from what is obtainable in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, evidence points to something much more complex than simply a success or failure outcome.

Rather, we see that the lack of cooperation among member states is likely to yield one of two results. Either a constrained intervention. That is, a scenario where the AU intervenes but ultimately fails to reach the goals it had set out to achieve. Alternatively, an institutional void, in which what is obtainable is the absence of military intervention by the AU.

These two situations have important consequences for the effectiveness of the AU's ability to serve as a regional security guarantor. Both cases were born from issues linked intricately to heavy external dependency and the absence of a clear revenue structure. Two-thirds of the AU 2023 budget was drawn from external sources, according to ISS Africa. Its biggest funders of the bloc are the United Nations and the European Union. The EU is the largest contributor to the AU's annual budget, and this contribution can hardly cover its needs.

Meanwhile, internal funding mechanisms are hinged on the contributions of member states. Even the 0.2 per cent levy on eligible imports from Africa, used as a financing mechanism, has been inconsistent. A policy to be considered one of the body's most important reforms aims to wean it off its partners. It is important to note that AU's lack of independence has made it difficult for the body to conduct peacekeeping missions, contributing to delays in troop deployment in previous cases where interventions have been carried out. It has affected the training of troops, supply chains, weapons supply, and logistics. All while impeding the organisation's ability to extend engagement to non-traditional partners and build a wider alliance.

The case in Sudan provides a broader understanding of the difficulty associated with engaging in operations without having strong military cooperation between states. As stated earlier, the introduction of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) was a major leap and an attempt to proactively engage in

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regional security efforts, given that it involved an active military presence rather than passive monitoring and mediation activities.

Yet, the practical implementation of the mission's objectives falls short of expectations. It hindered previously identified factors, such as inadequate troops, logistical problems, and others that, in one way or another, find their root in the absence of financial resources. Resources are dominantly provided almost entirely from external sources.

These challenges, however, which implicitly affect AMIS and other AU peace efforts, were also caused by a gap in the AU's organisational structure. There is a lack of a uniform commitment from member-states, alongside the absence of a rapid response force with the capability to deploy troops at speed. As such, the military operation could not have had a meaningful effect on the conflicts in the region, particularly the crisis in Sudan.

On the other hand, the situation in DRC tells many truths. One of which is that non-intervention is not a solution either. Despite a relatively prolonged period of unrest and multiple factions active in the state, alongside historical crisis breakouts, the AU did not organise a military intervention in the DRC.

The intervention in Congo is conducted by the UN, as an external player, through MONUSCO, alongside the regional Southern African Development Community, which understands that it is in its strategic interest to push back the Rwanda-backed M23. While the decision was initially about defending a member state that was sponsored by Rwanda and Uganda, SADC members then also realised it was in their interest to mitigate the violence. Though the involvement of the other parties provided, to a large extent, much-needed human and financial resources in the conflict zones of the DRC, it fundamentally created a complex and incoherent security architecture. The absence of coordination within the framework of the AU created a dichotomy. Such that each operation has its mandate and objectives, which affect their effectiveness, this struggle for peace in the DRC has not been successful. Through a comparative analysis of the AU mission in Sudan and the DRC, one can conclude that it is not about the AU's intervention, but about how and on what terms the organisation carries out military operations.

A main structural failing within the African Union is the lack of adequate structuralisation of the African Standby Force (ASF). For a rapid response to the crisis, the development of the regional brigades that formed the ASF was severely inadequate.

Bureaucratism in the 'rapid' deployment process of military response within the AU contributes to its inefficiency within the institution. Also, the absence of an effective accountability structure to regulate the behaviour of peacekeeping troops further undermines efficiency and erodes public trust. Accountability of the deployed troops is a crucial responsibility of any effective security structure. Soldiers who take part in missions must be monitored to ensure adherence to international laws as well as the peacekeeping policies of the United Nations. However, in practice, this aspect remains problematic since states are responsible for their soldiers' actions during missions.

Take, for example, the case of Sudan, where the African Union Mission had problems due to its complicated situation that could have been resolved through efficient control and investigative practices. Limitations in accountability mechanisms directly affect mission efficiency. The lack of consistent disciplinary actions has led to poor performance on the ground.

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In sum, this analysis highlights the limitations of collective security in weakly institutionalised settings and its overarching impacts.

As indicated earlier, the effectiveness of collective security depends on more than common values; it also requires access to sufficient resources and the ability of members to take action.

Conclusion

With the changing world order, in which the continent is working to secure a much more favourable position, persistent security threats and humanitarian crises stand as an antithesis to the continent's agenda.

As it stands, the outbreak of conflicts is a trend the continent must be desperately committed to addressing to achieve its goals at both sub-regional, regional and global levels. For this reason, it is imperative that it evolves the security architecture and the peacekeeping system under the APSA. This would be in recognition of, and in accordance with, its mandate and target of "silencing all guns" and ensuring continent-wide development by 2063.

It is important to emphasise that we avoid making overly deterministic claims on AU's weakness, particularly given that the organisation has a history of successful peace efforts and has attempted reforms, and in some ways progressed through the initiation of normative principles and mechanisms of peace and security. This particularly includes the development of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the 2016 0.6 per cent import levy aimed at reducing dependence.

While previous efforts towards reforms can be considered a step in the right direction and some progress towards regional integration since the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963, it is important to develop or reform the mechanisms for a collective response to threats. This is vital for the continent.

AU interventions can sometimes take the form of diplomacy, mediation, and other forms of assistance. Nevertheless, evidence from this research indicates that stronger military cooperation is a prerequisite for effective AU military interventions.

Recommendation

The findings of this study raise questions and concerns about the sustainability of Africa's collective security arrangements and the prospects for peace and stability on the continent when institutional power is minimal and political will is uneven.

Even with institutional frameworks in place, the African Union has been found lacking in the capacity to implement effectively and efficiently. This capacity gap, more often than not, accounts for the limited intervention and institutionality in instances of conflict.

As stated earlier, providing additional resources and support missions facilitated by regional bodies such as ECOWAS, SADC, and EAC is of great value and necessary for achieving stability. However, greater political commitment from member nations to the goals and initiatives introduced or institutionalised under the African Union as a unifying body is crucial. This, alongside better mechanisms for coordination at the continental and regional levels.

To strengthen military cooperation, there is a need to increase the African Standby Force (ASF) 's operational capacity. This body was created to provide rapid reaction capability, but it has not been fully functional.

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Aside from this, AU also needs to focus on improving logistics. It also needs to review and improve its command systems and ensure there is interoperability among the militaries of different nations. Such would include training and the acquisition of standardised military equipment.

A priority area for the AU is its dependence on foreign aid from traditional partner countries. Scholars have argued that it would be difficult for the AU to be recognised globally, and even amongst member states, as a key regional organisation without becoming a financially independent body. The AU needs to address its overreliance. Its reliance on external bodies such as the EU constrains the organisation's strategic and operational capacity and causes inconsistencies.

AU needs to prioritise compelling member states to strengthen logistics capability. There is a need for increased investments in this sector. Raising logistics and standards within the military sphere among member countries of the African Union is as important to the organisation's broader goal. Empirical evidence has shown that the lack of this constitutes a challenge to the efficient coordination of the AU military operations. It has affected the ability to mobilise, m coordinate, and sustain troops in volatile areas.

Meanwhile, the need for political coordination between member states cannot be overstated. In some cases, poor military coordination is not primarily a result of logistical problems but rather of differences in national interests. African countries must also have a greater commitment to collective security decision-making.

Moreso, the AU needs to strike a balance between military and non-military strategies for conflict resolution. Prioritise both in equal measure.

It should also build capacity for early-warning and conflict-prevention measures. The repeated outbreaks of conflict in Sudan, the DRC, and other parts of the continent are partly due to delays in addressing these crises.

Early warning systems can assist the AU in taking measures ahead of time to prevent domestic and inter-state conflicts.

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