The UN and the African Union in Mali and beyond: a shotgun wedding?

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After the initial post-Cold War euphoria about the potential for the United Nations (UN) to maintain international peace and security, as imagined in its Charter, from the 1990s onwards subcontracting from the world organization to regional organizations has become essentially the standard operating procedure for major military peace operations.[1] While UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was bullish in his 1992 *An agenda for peace*,[2] the UN has by and large withdrawn from the peace enforcement business following debacles in Somalia and Rwanda—as Boutros-Ghali's 1995 *Supplement to 'An agenda for peace'* and the 2000 Brahimi Report recommended.[3]

In many ways, peace operations have increasingly come to reflect the original intention of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, sometimes being approved by the Security Council but handed over in their entirety to regional organizations or at least involving a 'hybrid' between the UN and regional organizations. There are several reasons in theory why the latter have a comparative advantage in such operations. Members of regional organizations are closer to the crisis, and they often share a cultural background with its location, so that their operations can be seen to be more legitimate and sensitive. Given their proximity, regional organizations can deploy faster and often at lower cost. Moreover, regional actors have their own interest in solving conflicts close to home, and avoiding spill-over effects requires rapid action.[4] Conversely, proximity can also be disadvantageous, as regional actors may prioritize their own short-term interests over lasting solutions. Moreover, many regional organizations themselves reflect regional balance or imbalance—typically, a hegemon dominates, and not necessarily to the

benefit of less powerful countries. Regional troops, particularly those in Africa, are often poorly equipped and lack adequate training; and regional organizations are neither homogeneous nor necessarily composed of like-minded states.[5] The African Union (AU) is especially indicative of such diversity, drawing its membership from the Arab countries of North Africa, the formerly French-ruled Western Africa, the troubled Central Africa, the emerging East African markets and the richer South African one.

The bulk of the UN's ongoing conflict-management and peace-building business is in Africa. Jane Boulden has calculated that about half of all operations authorized by the Security Council in 2012 occurred there, as well as half of its meetings and resolutions.[6] This article begins with an overview of how relations between the UN and the AU have evolved since the 1990s, paying particular attention to several problematic peace operations since 2002 in which the two organizations cooperated: in Burundi, Darfur, Somalia and (with the AU on the sidelines) Libya. The operation in Mali is analysed in depth as a microcosm of why the UN and the AU are often at loggerheads and likely to remain so, thereby jeopardizing the future of war-torn societies on the continent.

Cooperation on peace operations: the early post-Cold War years

The early cooperation between the UN and the AU's predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), concentrated on the socio-economic development of Africa, with relatively little attention given to security[7]—the exception being the end of the South African apartheid regime. The shift of focus towards peace and security came in the early 1990s, when *An agenda for peace* invited regional organizations to assume more operational responsibility, and Boutros-Ghali specifically suggested that Africa build up its capabilities.[8] The OAU had little experience in this field—only one effort, in Chad in 1981—but wanted to assume responsibility.[9] Its first attempt in 1993 was embodied in the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution,[10] which proved ineffective when the OAU merely observed the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. A fundamental reform of the OAU was inevitable, and ultimately African leaders responded by replacing the OAU with the AU, including the African Peace and Security Architecture shortly after the AU's inauguration in 2002.

[5] Marrack Goulding, *Peacemonger* (London: John Murray, 2002); Jean-Marie Guéhenno, 'Everybody's doing it', *The World Today* 59: 8/9, 2003, pp. 35–6; Thomas G. Weiss, David P. Forsythe, Roger A. Coate and Kelly-Kate Pease, *The United Nations and changing world politics*, 7th edn (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2013), pp. 17–23; Bellamy et al., *Understanding peacekeeping*, pp. 311–13; Tavares, *Regional security*, pp. 14–18.

[6] Jane Boulden, 'Introduction', in Jane Boulden, ed., *Responding to conflict in Africa: the United Nations and regional organizations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 14.

[7] UN, *Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity: report of the Secretary-General*, document A/48/475/Add.1, 15 Oct. 1993, para. 8.

[8] UN, *United Nations new agenda for the development of Africa in the 1990s*, document A/RES/48/214, 23 Dec. 1993, para. 23.

[9] Klaas van Walraven, 'Heritage and transformation: from the Organization of African Unity to the African Union', in Ulf Engel and João Gomes Porto, eds, *Africa's new peace and security architecture: promoting norms, institutionalizing solutions* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 31–56.

[10] Resolution AHG/Decl-4 (XXIX)/Rev.1.

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Currently, this architecture consists of the AU's Peace and Security Council, the Continental Early Warning System, a Panel of the Wise and five regional stand-by brigades. The hallmark of the security architecture is article 4(h) of the AU Constitutive Act, Africa's home-grown version of the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P), which calls upon the AU to intervene in the internal affairs of AU member states in grave circumstances, which are defined as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes—a substantial departure from the previously sacrosanct non-interference principle.[11]

The UN approved several measures to support the AU, and an interdepartmental task force assisted the AU in capacity-building.[12] In 2002 General Assembly Resolution 57/7 called on the UN 'to strengthen its cooperation with the African Union and its Peace and Security Council and other African mechanisms in their efforts to resolve and prevent conflicts at the sub-regional and continental levels'. The collaboration culminated with a ten-year plan for AU capacity-building as part of the UN World Summit in September 2005.[13] The summit's deliberations, however, led the then Secretary General, Kofi Annan, to emphasize that using regional organizations should not be a means for the UN to wash its hands of responsibilities.[14] The 'ten-year capacity-building programme' went into effect in December 2006,[15] and was applauded as being 'a prudential recognition of the unique difficulties facing the African continent'.[16] The core problem was that it was politically impractical. The programme is primarily designed to support the AU in mission planning and management, in training civilians, police and military personnel, and in developing the AU's continental early-warning system.[17] Yet the AU initially requested assistance in planning and managing peace operations; and conflict prevention, early warning and peacebuilding were not part of the early UN–AU exchange. In 2013 the UN reviewed the programme and reinforced its office in Addis Ababa. According to interviews with officials, the reform included an upgrade of the head of office to UN under-secretary general, a strengthened Political Affairs Section, and the incorporation of good offices and mediation.[18]

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[11] This judgement still holds true, although AU practice has toned down the article's meaning. See Corinne A. Packer and Donald Rukare, 'The new African Union and its constitutive act', *American Journal of International Law* 96: 2, 2002, pp. 365–79; Baffour Ankomah, 'African Union: from non-interference to non-indifference', *New African*, no. 3, 2007, pp. 10–15; Paul D. Williams, 'From non-intervention to non-indifference: the origins and development of the African Union's security culture', *African Affairs* 106: 423, 2007, pp. 253–79; Kwame Akonor, 'Assessing the African Union's right of humanitarian intervention', *Criminal Justice Ethics* 29: 2, 2010, pp. 157–73.

[12] Hikaru Yamashita, 'Peacekeeping cooperation between the United Nations and regional organisations', *Review of International Studies* 38: 1, 2012, pp. 177–82.

[13] UN, 'World summit outcome', document A/RES/60/1, 24 Oct. 2005, para. 93.

[14] UN Security Council, 5282nd meeting, S/PV.5282, 16 Oct. 2005.

[15] UN, 'Letter dated 11 December 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly', document A761/630, 12 Dec. 2006.

[16] Paul D. Williams, 'The African Union: prospects for regional peacekeeping after Burundi and Sudan', *Review of African Political Economy* 33: 108, 2006, pp. 352–7, 353.

[17] UN, *United Nations ten-year capacity building programme for the African Union. First triennial review (2006–2009), final report*, Nov. 2010, para. 14, available at http://www1.uneca.org/Portals/nepad/Documents/AUTenYear-CapacityProgram_Eng.pdf, accessed 11 May 2014.

[18] Martin Welz carried out interviews with UN and AU officials in Cape Town in August 2013 and in Addis Ababa in February 2014 upon which many of the findings here are based. When the text refers to perceptions, they reflect the content of these structured, confidential conversations.

Already in 2007 the UN had authorized a Peacekeeping Support Team in Addis Ababa as part of its Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and both the AU and the UN adopted the joint action plan, and the partnership between the two organizations became an established part of the DPKO's activities.[19] Moreover, Romano Prodi chaired a panel to identify how to strengthen the relationship, including financing for AU-led peacekeeping missions, an essential and mammoth shortcoming in the past.[20]

Today, the UN's assistance to the AU includes desk-to-desk exchanges, a joint task force, meetings twice a year to review strategic issues, capacity-building for mediation, electoral assistance, and advice for developing a more effective AU Peace and Security Council.[21] In addition, joint meetings of the UN's and the AU's security councils have been convened annually since 2007—a symbolic expression of commitment by both organizations. Despite requests by the AU, these meetings are informal and without a fixed agenda for follow-up. The UN's presence in Addis Ababa consists of 63 authorized staff, whereas the AU office in New York is understaffed; indeed, according to senior officials, it is little more than a post-box.

Interactions in Burundi, Darfur, Somalia, Libya

The first AU peacekeeping experiment was in 2003 in Burundi. The Arusha Accord did not include a ceasefire; and, having endured several earlier mishaps, the UN was reluctant to get involved in an operation in which there was no peace to keep.[22] The newly created AU, without functioning peace and security architecture, fielded an operation to Burundi after South Africa in 2001 had already deployed troops with neither UN nor OAU authorization. South Africa asked that its force be incorporated in the AU framework; this 'rehatting' provided a first AU litmus test. The African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) integrated South African with Ethiopian and Mozambican troops. The 2,612 soldiers and the budget allocation (some US$134 million for the 14 months of operations) appear risible in comparison with the challenges.[23]

The weaknesses of the AU mission soon became apparent, and the need to create a stronger and better-equipped one became ever more obvious. By December

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[19] UN, *Implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, report of the Secretary-General*, document A/61/668/Add.1, 22 Dec. 2006, para. 45; Yamashita, 'Peacekeeping cooperation', pp. 165–86, 180.

[20] UN, *Report of the African Union–United Nations Panel on modalities for support to African Union peacekeeping operations*, document A/63/666–S/2008/813, 31 Dec. 2008.

[21] UN Department of Political Affairs, *United Nations–African Union cooperation*, http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/undpa/main/activities_by_region/africa/unlo, accessed 11 May 2014.

[22] Henri Boshoff, *Burundi: the African Union's first mission. Situation report* (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2003); Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, 'Who's keeping the peace? Regionalization and contemporary peace operations', *International Security* 29: 4, 2005, pp. 157–95, 189; Cedric de Conig, 'The evolution of peace operations in Africa: trajectories and trends', *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 14: 1, 2010, p. 19.

[23] Williams, 'The African Union', p. 354; figures taken from Festus Agoagye, *The African mission in Burundi: lessons learned from the first African Union peacekeeping operation* (Addis Ababa: Institute for Security Studies, 2004), http://www.issafrica.org/uploads/CT2_2004%20PG9-15.PDF, accessed 12 May 2014; Annemarie Peen Rodt, *The African mission in Burundi: the successful management of violent ethno-political conflict?* Ethnopolitics Papers no. 10, May 2011, http://www.ethnopolitics.org/ethnopolitics-papers/EPP010.pdf, accessed 11 May 2014.

2002, South Africa's then Vice-President Jacob Zuma revealed the intention that the AU mission should serve as a 'bridging instrument, opening the situation for the United Nations to come in when we have perfected the conditions'.[24] In other words, the AU wanted the UN to take over once a minimal level of security was achieved, and there was peace of sorts to keep. UN Security Council Resolution 1545 eventually authorized the deployment of a peacekeeping operation in May 2004. Even though AMIB faced financial constraints and was engulfed by political differences about how to resolve the ongoing civil war, it nevertheless contributed to stability in Burundi and paved the way for the subsequent UN engagement.[25]

In Somalia, the ousting in 1991 of Siad Barre, the country's strongman ruler since 1969, fuelled the ongoing civil war, and Somalia soon came to be seen as the epitome of a 'failed state'. Two UN missions in the early 1990s were led by the United States. While the humanitarian crisis temporarily abated, they failed to stabilize Somalia, whose situation continued to deteriorate. The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional organization in the Horn of Africa, was unable to solve the crisis despite the backing of UN Security Council Resolution 1725 and the AU Peace and Security Council.[26] Without resources, the IGAD Peace Support Mission in Somalia (IGASOM) never deployed, but the AU started planning for 2007. Meanwhile, Ethiopia unilaterally invaded Somalia to counter Somalia's de facto ruling Al-Shabaab militias, which had declared jihad on Ethiopia with support from Eritrea. A multilateral force was now necessary as Ethiopia had become a party to the conflict.[27]

UN Security Council Resolution 1744 endorsed the AU's plan and authorized the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in February 2007, eventually with around 10,000 troops in 2012 (out of a total authorized strength of 17,731) and a budget of US$247 million.[28] The AU assumed that the UN would eventually deploy its own operation.[29] This hope, however, was not fulfilled until 2013. In 2007, 'the UN Secretariat was clearly unenthusiastic'[30]—and with memories of Somalia still fresh, so were the three permanent western members of the Security Council (P3: France, the United Kingdom and the United States). Therefore, the UN did not deploy troops in 2007, but maintained its Political Office for Somalia in Kenya, renewed AMISOM's mandate, assisted in alleviating the human misery,

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[24] Jacob Zuma, quoted in United Nations Security Council, 4655th Meeting, Weds 4 Dec. 2002, UN document PV.4655.

[25] Bellamy and Williams, 'Who's keeping the peace?', pp. 192–3.

[26] AU Peace and Security Council, communiqué, 16 Sept. 2006, document PSC/PR/Comm(LXII).

[27] AU Peace and Security Council, communiqué, 19 Jan. 2007, document PSC/PR/Comm(LXIX); Paul D. Williams, 'Into the Mogadishu maelstrom: the African Union mission in Somalia', *International Peacekeeping* 16: 4, 2009, pp. 514–30.

[28] 'UN unveils new look Amisom as Kenya joins up', *The East African*, 12 Feb. 2012, http://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2012/Feb/22670/un_unveils_new_look_amisom_as_kenya_joins_up.aspx; http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/aap/2012/af_aap-spe_2012_intra-acp_p5.pdf, accessed 11 May 2014.

[29] Katherine N. Andrews and Victoria K. Holt, *United Nations–African Union coordination on peace and security in Africa*, issue brief, Henry L. Stimson Center, 2007, p. 8, http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/Issue_brief_AU-UN_FINAL_sept08.pdf, accessed 12 May 2014; Said Djinnit, quoted in AU, 'AU mission in Somalia agreement signed', press release, 6 March 2007, http://www.ethioembassy.org.uk/news/press%20releases/AU%20Mission%20in%20Somalia%20Agreement%20signed.htm, accessed 11 May 2014.

[30] Williams, 'Into the Mogadishu maelstrom', p. 523.

and in January 2009, in Security Council Resolution 1863, set up a trust fund to finance AMISOM. NATO assisted with strategic airlifts, but the AU was essentially on its own with an 'ultra-low budget. For example, AMISOM does not have a single helicopter'.[31] By mid-2012 the security situation had improved sufficiently to enable the inauguration of a new president, effectively ending Somalia's half-decade 'transitional' period. Officials in Addis Ababa argued that the AU had earned respect for its efforts—in the UN and the EU as well as in France and the United States.[32] In May 2013 the UN endorsed the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and resumed a more proactive role in stabilizing Somalia: Security Council Resolution 2102 covers support for the Federal Government of Somalia's peace and reconciliation process and for AMISOM's efforts in security sector reform, rule of law, disengagement of combatants, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. However, the UN resists 'rehatting' AMISOM.

The African Union–United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) was established amid genocide in Sudan's Darfur region and owes its existence to several factors: the Sudanese government's refusal to allow non-African troops into the country; the AU's inability to stop the ongoing genocide; and the urgent need, as articulated by the Security Council, to solve the crisis with the consent of the Sudanese government. Effectively, the Sudanese government evicted the UN and showed the limits of the world organization's capacity in the face of host government hostility. Nonetheless, the cash-strapped AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS)—with its budget of US$466 million and 2,341 military personnel in 2005—felt the pressure to hand its operations over to the UN, with its greater financial and human resources.[33]

The planning for the handover started in early 2006,[34] yet it took the Security Council until August to approve Resolution 1706, which extended the mandate of UN troops in Southern Sudan to redeploy to Darfur. The UN and the AU dispatched a joint mediation support team along with special envoys Salim Ahmed Salim (former OAU secretary general) and Jan Eliasson (Sweden's minister for foreign affairs, at the time UN deputy secretary general), who facilitated Khartoum's consent. As a major trading partner of Sudan, China also put pressure on the government,[35] which ultimately agreed to UNAMID's deployment in July 2007. Resolution 1769 approved a budget of about US$1.5 billion and 14,000 troops.[36] The first UN–AU hybrid operation was born, with the AU conducting day-to-day operations and the UN assuming overall control.[37]

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[31] BBC News, 'Can Somalia's cheap peacekeeping defeat Al-Shabab?', 11 June 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-18392212, accessed 11 May 2014.

[32] Author's interviews, Addis Ababa, Feb. 2014.

[33] Theo Neethling, 'UN–AU burden-sharing and hybridisation in contemporary peacekeeping context with specific reference to UNAMID', *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 31: 1, 2009, pp. 41–64 at p. 48. Figures from Henri Boshoff, 'The African Union Mission in Sudan: technical and operational dimensions', *African Security Review* 14: 3, 2005, pp. 57–61.

[34] Williams, 'The African Union', p. 354.

[35] Adekeye Adebajo, *UN peacekeeping in Africa: from the Suez Crisis to the Sudan conflicts* (Auckland Park: Fanele, 2011), pp. 209–10; Linnéa Gelot, *Legitimacy, peace operations and global-regional security: the African Union–United Nations partnership in Darfur* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 101, 124–125.

[36] Figures from UN, 'UNAMID: African Union/United Nations hybrid operation in Darfur', http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unamid/facts.shtml, accessed 12 May 2014.

[37] Gelot, *Legitimacy, peace operations and global-regional security*, p. 125.

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In the face of violence in Libya in early 2011 in the context of the 'Arab Spring', the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1970 under Chapter VII in February, and a variety of regional organizations—including the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic States and the Gulf Cooperation Council as well as the AU—appealed to the UN to act; the AU approved an ad hoc high-level committee made up of five African heads of state and the chair of the AU Commission.[38] The AU roadmap for peace implicitly included Gaddafi's resignation, officials being convinced that the organization stood a chance to persuade the Libyan leader to step down. However, on 17 March the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1973, calling for 'all necessary measures … to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in [Libya]' and imposed a no-fly zone over the country.

The NATO-led coalition effectively snubbed the AU and its diplomatic efforts when it convened a summit on 19 March in Paris, the same day for which the first meeting of the AU ad hoc committee was scheduled. The AU had effectively lost control over negotiations (if it had ever had any) as air strikes began. The AU's committee could not proceed to Libya on 20 March because the coalition, particularly France, would not interrupt air strikes and ensure the committee's security. On 10 April, when the AU team finally arrived in Libya, they encountered hostility from the Libyan rebels, scepticism from Gaddafi, and no support from the P3 or other states. The ad hoc committee's diplomatic efforts were doomed.

Moreover, divisions were evident within the AU. Some African leaders—most visibly Ethiopia's then Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, as well as the governments of Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sudan and Tunisia—favoured ousting Gaddafi, whereas others stood by his side—notably Burkina Faso's President Blaise Compaoré and the governments of Chad and Niger.[39] The AU's most influential supporter at the UN remained Russia (which had abstained on Resolution 1973 along with China, Brazil, India and Germany).[40] The coalition and the rebels gained strength and, united under the umbrella of the National Transitional Council (NTC), seized Tripoli; the NTC was soon recognized by several states, including France and the United States, as the sole legitimate representative of Libya. The UN General Assembly's Credentials Committee overwhelmingly made the same decision in mid-September 2011. On 20 September the AU acquiesced and recognized the NTC,[41] after several African states, including Nigeria and Ethiopia, had already done so. Ultimately, the AU joined the chorus, even if, as one official noted, the intervention was a 'slap in the AU's face'. After success in Somalia, the AU was on the sidelines; and this influenced its approach to the Mali crisis.

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[38] AU Peace and Security Council, communiqué, 10 March 2011, document PSC/PR/COMM.2(CCLXV), para. 8.
[39] Alex de Waal, 'African roles in the Libyan conflict of 2011', *International Affairs* 89: 2, March 2013, pp. 365–79.
[40] Alexey Boguslavsky, 'The African Union and the Libyan crisis,' *International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy and International Relations* 58: 1, 2012, pp. 71–9.
[41] See http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/09/african-union-officially-recognises-libyas-new-leadership, accessed 12 May 2014.

Mali: back to the future?

Even though the UN and the AU agreed about the ends for the Mali interven-tion (eliminating the jihadist rebels and restoring democratic constitutional order), there was no agreement about the means. In many ways, this case provides a magnifying glass for the longstanding clash between the perspectives and capabili-ties of the world organization and those of the African regional body.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) became involved in Mali soon after president Amadou Toumani Touré was ousted by a *coup d'état* in March 2012, which crystallized the division of Mali into a southern part governed from the capital Bamako and a northern part effectively run by the Tuaregs' National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad. This rebel group, which has ties to militant Islamists (and Al-Qaeda), moved into the political vacuum in the Sahara following Gaddafi's death and the availability of arms among Tuareg fighters formerly on Gaddafi's payroll. Following the coup, ECOWAS quickly suspended Mali and called for action. The AU 'had to play catch-up':[42] it too condemned the coup, suspended Mali and stressed 'the unwavering commitment of the AU and all its Member States to the national unity and territorial integrity of the Republic of Mali'.[43]

While the AU response was tardy, France prodded the UN Security Council and took the lead in providing military and security planners to assist ECOWAS and the AU. Security Council Resolution 2071 in October set a deadline for both African organizations and the UN secretary general to present 'detailed and actionable recommendations' for a military mission. With the Libyan debacle fresh in mind, ECOWAS and the AU recognized the need to act rapidly and decided to authorize the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) for September 2013 under the aegis of ECOWAS. According to UN and AU officials, a dispute arose as to whether the AU or ECOWAS should be responsible for the mission. This conflict reflects the generally strained relations between the AU and African regional economic communities. In trying to field a 'perfect mission', ECOWAS lost time. Paris and Washington in particular pressed ECOWAS to conduct adequate training before deploying. In addition, the AU argued that Mali's armed conflict transcended outside the ECOWAS region with southern Libya also being affected (Libya is not a member), and ultimately the AU took the lead, using ECOWAS as its delivery mechanism. Troop contributors were mainly from ECOWAS, with the notable exception of Chad. AFISMA was tasked with supporting and building the operational capacities of Mali's security forces and enabling them to play 'a lead role in the recovery of the regions in the north'.[44] The AU urged the UN Security Council to authorize AFISMA, and Resolution 2085 doing so was approved on 20 December 2012.

The AU's planning lagged as security deteriorated rapidly in early 2013. Islamic militias seized several strategically important towns and marched on Bamako.

[42] Alex Vines, 'A decade of African peace and security architecture', *International Affairs* 89: 1, 2013, pp. 89–109.
[43] AU Peace and Security Council 2012, communiqué, 3 April 2012, document PSC/PR/COMM.(CCCXVI).
[44] AU Peace and Security Council 2013, communiqué, 13 Nov. 2012, PSC/PR/COMM.2(CCCXLI), para. 6.

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France reacted quickly and launched Opération Serval, while the AU was still unable to deploy AFISMA. The French operation included massive air strikes targeting the Islamic militias, as well as the deployment of a contingent of ground troops consisting initially of some 2,400 soldiers and eventually almost 4,000, with an estimated budget of some US$94 million.[45] France acted because ECOWAS meetings 'were inconclusive and the feeling in Paris was that many African players wanted to benefit from the Malian crisis, but were not interested in solving it'.[46] In fact, the Malian government never wanted ECOWAS and requested the French to intervene. A subsequent ECOWAS report concludes that an intervention was needed but ECOWAS was never considered the appropriate organization to undertake it; Washington was among those against an ECOWAS operation, feeling that US counterterrorism efforts might thereby be compromised.[47]

With Paris fully engaged, ECOWAS and the AU recognized the need to play catch-up and join the French campaign. The first Nigerian troops arrived on 18 January, one week after the launch of Opération Serval, and other ECOWAS troops soon followed.[48] An ill-equipped AFISMA was finally under way. Notwithstanding the quick deployment, African leaders understood the damage their passivity had done. At the opening of the AU summit in January 2013, several thanked the French government. Benin's President and outgoing AU chair, Boni Yayi, called France's action something that 'we should have done a long time ago to defend a member country'.[49]

UN officials question giving too much credit to France. Along with the United States, France provided intelligence and equipment, but apparently the bulk of fighting was done by Chadian soldiers who were willing to endure high casualties, particularly in the mountainous area in northern Mali controlled by Islamists.

In February a joint planning conference by the UN, the AU and ECOWAS sought to harmonize AFISMA, which facilitated a UN peace operation[50] that had been planned earlier. UN officials admit that it was the UN secretariat (and France) that had exerted pressure, taking into account among other things the fact that several UN operations were about to close and qualified staff were available. On 25 April, Security Council Resolution 2100 established the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Resembling the operations in Burundi, Somalia and Sudan, it envisaged that the AU would enforce the peace (this time side by side with France) and the UN would keep the peace once established. The transfer from AFISMA to MINUSMA took place on 1 July 2013, with the latter mandated to stabilize the key cities, especially in northern Mali, to

[45] 'French defence minister says Malian intervention to cost over 94m dollars', BBC Monitoring Africa, 13 Feb. 2013; 'France to keep 1,000 troops in Mali indefinitely', *Telegraph*, 16 May 2013.
[46] Roland Marchal, 'Briefing: military (mis)adventures in Mali', *African Affairs* 112: 448, 2013, pp. 486–97 at p. 488.
[47] Craig Whitlock, 'Mysterious fatal crash offers rare look at US commando presence in Mali', *Washington Post*, 9 July 2012.
[48] 'The intervention in Mali: sands on the boots', *The Economist*, 26 Jan. 2013.
[49] 'African Union says its Mali response was slow', *Al Jazeera*, 27 Jan. 2013.
[50] Arthur Boutellis and Paul D. Williams, 'Disagreement over Mali could sour more than the upcoming African Union celebration', http://www.theglobalobservatory.org/analysis/502-disagreements-over-mali-could-sour-more-than-the-upcoming-african-union-celebration.html, accessed 12 May 2014.

prevent the return of armed belligerents and to assist Mali's transitional authorities with the swift implementation of the transitional roadmap 'towards the full restoration of constitutional order, democratic governance and national unity in Mali'.[51] Once fully operational, MINUSMA and its 11,200 military personnel plus 1,440 police will be the third largest UN peacekeeping mission, with an approved budget of about US$367 million for six months.[52] However, the UN encountered the traditional difficulty in finding troop contributors and is far from authorized strength. Therefore, Operation Sérval remains crucial, and the EU has agreed to share the burden. In January 2013 it set up the EU Training Mission (EUTM Mali) with a total of 550 staff, including some 200 instructors, and a 15-month budget of €23 million.

Even though the AU generally supports the UN's assuming responsibility—indeed, officials in Addis Ababa welcomed the prospect it offered of enabling hitherto inactive and poorly guided troops to fulfil their duties better—the MINUSMA mandate rekindled frictions between the AU and the UN. The AU and the UN recognize that the AU's main operational problems remain: particularly, those associated with ill-equipped troops coming from many countries, thereby making difficult any effective command and control. The AU had set parameters for AFISMA's transformation into a UN mission,[53] but Resolution 2100 ignored several of these parameters. In particular, tensions arose over the AU request to create a support package for AFISMA and over the allocation of key posts. Pierre Buyoya—AU high representative for Mali and the Sahel, and special representative and head of AFISMA—was passed over in favour of Albert Koenders, who had previously served in the UN's operation in Côte d'Ivoire.[54] Within UN circles, Buyoya's credentials were tarnished: as the former president of Burundi who had staged a coup and had a dubious human rights record, he was seen as a problematic candidate for the UN secretary general's special representative for MINUSMA.

Most importantly, however, the AU was on the sidelines when essential deliberations and decisions were made. It had aspired to play a 'central political role … in supporting the transition … as well as in the formulation and implementation of the governance and other reforms to be carried out to address the root causes of the multidimensional crisis faced by Mali'.[55] Yet its role was effectively downgraded in New York. Resolution 2100 stated the primacy of the UN secretary general in 'close collaboration with the AU, ECOWAS and the EU Special Representative for the Sahel'. The AU Peace and Security Council responded that the UN 'resolution does not take into account the concerns formally expressed by the AU and ECOWAS and the proposals they constructively made to facilitate a coordinated international support for the ongoing efforts by the Malian

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[51] UN Security Council, Resolution 2100, 25 April 2013, S/RES/2100 (2013).
[52] Figures from UN, 'MINUSMA United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali', http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minusma/facts.shtml, accessed 12 May 2014.
[53] AU Peace and Security Council, communiqué, 7 March 2013, document PSC/PR/COMM(CCCLVIII), para. 13.
[54] Boutellis and Williams, 'Disagreement over Mali'.
[55] AU Peace and Security Council 2013: communiqué, 7 March 2013, document PSC/PR/COMM(CCCLVIII).

stakeholders'.[56] In brief, the AU again felt slighted by the UN Security Council. The AU Assembly, comprising all African heads of state and government, met in Addis Ababa in May 2013 to mark the 50th anniversary of the OAU's establishment. The gathering provided the opportunity to reiterate 'the need to build an innovative, flexible action-oriented and balanced partnership with the international partners, notably the United Nations, to ensure that Africa's concerns and positions are adequately taken into account by the Security Council when making decisions on matters of fundamental interest to Africa'.[57] Among officials in Addis Ababa, the widely held sentiment is that AFISMA's transformation left a 'lot of bad blood'.

Despite criticisms about Mali's two rounds of presidential elections on 28 July and 11 August being rushed, they went smoothly. Soumaïla Cissé acknowledged defeat, congratulated the new President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, and 'declared that he would keep the new president on his toes with a lively but legal opposition'.[58] A renewed appreciation emerged for democratic standards that resembled those that had existed before the 2012 coup.[59] Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, chair of the AU Commission, hailed 'Soumaïla Cissé's recognition of Mr. Keïta's victory and his decision to concede defeat. This gesture is a demonstration of great political and democratic maturity and a deep commitment to the higher interests of Mali.'[60] Peace remains fragile, nonetheless, as suggested by the large-scale military operation of French, Malian and UN forces on Malian territory in October 2013.

UN and AU: starkly differing approaches

Following the experiences in Libya and Mali, relations between the UN and the AU are at a difficult juncture, perhaps even a fork in the proverbial road of cooperation. This generalization goes beyond the tensions surrounding peace operations. In fact, the International Criminal Court's arrest warrant for Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir, along with the trial of Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and Vice-President William Ruto, have exacerbated already troubled relations between the AU and the UN (whose Security Council refused to defer these cases after requests from the AU to do so).[61]

Nonetheless, our focus here on the two organizations' interactions in peace operations provides a helpful guide to the underlying tensions between them. Indeed, the Mali intervention provides a microcosm of the more general clash

[56] AU Peace and Security Council 2013: communiqué, 25 April 2013, document PSC/PR/COMM(CCCLXXI), para. 10.
[57] AU, press release, 27 May 2013, http://summits.au.int/en/21stsummit/events/final-press-release-21st-ordinary-session-summit-african-union, accessed 12 May 2014.
[58] 'Mali's new president: what next?', *The Economist*, 16 Aug. 2013.
[59] Morten Bøås and Liv Elin Torheim, 'The trouble in Mali—corruption, collusion, resistance', *Third World Quarterly* 34: 7, 2013, pp. 1279–92.
[60] AU, 'The African Union welcomes the smooth holding of the second round of the presidential elections in Mali', press release, 13 Aug. 2013, http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/auc-com-mali-13-08-2013.pdf, accessed 12 May 2014.
[61] Martin Welz, 'The African Union beyond Africa: explaining the limited impact of Africa's continental organization on global governance', *Global Governance* 19: 3, 2013, pp. 425–41.

between the world bodies, which may be summarized under four headings: different capabilities; risk-averse vs risk-assuming approaches to casualties; diverging geopolitics; and leadership rivalry.

Differing capabilities

The United Nations has to beg and borrow—it cannot steal—troops for its operations: the Charter's call in articles 43–6 for standing military capacity and a Military Staff Committee were still-born. Nonetheless, though this is an obvious shortcoming, the experience of observers and soldiers since 1948 has demonstrated the value of the world organization's traditional peacekeepers, with others authorized to act when enforcement is necessary. More particularly, when NATO or a P3-led coalition of the willing is involved, a first-rate military capacity is available.

The AU, in contrast, is dependent on soft funds for virtually its entire peacekeeping budget and on technical, logistic and communications support from donor states, as AFISMA's dependence on US, French and EU support indicates. In general, the AU's financial, human and technical resources are insufficient to meet the aspirations and responsibilities spelled out in its Constitutive Act. The presidents of Guinea, Niger and Senegal, as well as the Malian coup leaders themselves, pressured France to act when the situation in Mali deteriorated,[62] thereby expressing greater confidence in their former colonial master's capabilities than in those of the AU or ECOWAS. The UN recognized the disparity between aspirations and capacities when approving the ten-year capacity-building programme to assist the AU in planning and implementing peace operations. Currently, the AU remains overly dependent on key African states, such as Ethiopia in the case of Somalia and South Africa in Burundi. AU forces cannot sustain long-term operations; hence the AU typically has requested the world organization to take over or at least assist, and the UN often has done so—in Somalia with considerable delay, and in Mali before the AU force was effectively deployed. EU officials regretted the latter especially because they would have liked the AU to prove itself capable of dealing with such a crisis.

Indeed, the military potential of the AU (and ECOWAS, as well as other subregional organizations in Africa) and its member states has not coalesced into a cohesive force. The African Standby Force is not yet standing by; this key component of the African Peace and Security Architecture exists mainly on paper. The five standby forces envisaged for each identified subregion (North, South, East, West and Central Africa) were originally supposed to be operational in 2008. While several countries have expressed their readiness to send troops on joint missions, the deadline has been postponed several times, most recently until 2015.[63] In fact, the AU Commission is currently calling for a rapid reaction force in the form

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[62] Marchal, 'Briefing' p. 490.
[63] 'Deadline for African standby force now 2015', *The East African*, 26 Jan. 2013, http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Deadline-for-African-Standby-Force-now-2015/-/2558/1676156/-/3yiaih/-/index.html; 'Die African Standby Force auf dem Prüfstand', *CCS Analysen zur Sicherheitspolitik*, no. 84, http://www.css.ethz.ch/publications/pdfs/CSS-Analysen-84.pdf, both accessed 12 May 2014.

of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises. This temporary and voluntary force could, however, become permanent and an excuse not to move ahead with the standby forces—a suspicion commonly expressed by individual regions *vis-à-vis* AU headquarters.

Even if the AU improves its capacity to implement peace operations routinely and independently, financial constraints will remain. Despite its own financial difficulties, the UN has the advantage of being better able to mobilize funding for peace operations. The AU has established a foundation and 'called upon Member States, private sector, donors, philanthropists, and individuals to contribute towards the Foundation to ensure its operationalization';[64] but rhetoric outpaces reality, as the South African *Business Day* summarizes: 'Instead of a muscular rapid-response force to halt genocide, protect civilians in coups or civil wars, and pursue jihadists, drug traffickers and pirates, African peacekeeping remains a hotch-potch, almost entirely externally funded and mixed into United Nations or foreign missions.'[65] The AU Peace Fund amounts to a mere US$2 million.

Risk-aversion vs risk-assuming tendencies

The United Nations (and its most powerful members) and the African Union have distinct postures and attitudes towards sustaining fatalities and casualties during peace operations. The so-called 'Somalia syndrome' still unsettles western approaches towards outside intervention. The unwillingness to commit boots on the ground, accompanied by a reliance on air power (especially 'humanitarian bombing' in Kosovo and Libya), contrasts starkly with the willingness of the AU's troop contributors to sustain casualties. The AU Mission in Somalia alone has incurred over 3,000 deaths since its inception in 2007—a total rivalling the full number of fatalities (some 3,100) among UN peacekeeping operations since 1948.

The willingness of the AU and its troop contributors to assume risks becomes apparent when comparing AMISOM casualties to those in the Iraq War. The United States and its allies in Iraq took about 5,000 casualties during the ten years of war, in which they deployed an average of ten times as many troops as AMISOM. AMISOM's casualties are 3.5 per cent of the force annually; in Iraq, the rate was 0.3 per cent. In other words, the rate for a 'peace' operation suggests a willingness to take casualties 10–12 times higher than western countries in a recent hot war.[66]

The analysis of the Mali operation—as well as the overview of previous AU missions in Burundi, Darfur and Somalia—has illustrated the extent to which the AU is willing to conduct peace operations in tough environments, whereas UN blue helmets and troop-contributing countries are often reluctant to accept the

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[64] AU, *press release*, 27 May 2013, http://summits.au.int/en/21stsummit/events/final-press-release-21st-ordinary-session-summit-african-union, accessed 12 May 2014.

[65] 'News analysis: African Standby Force remains a paper tiger', *Business Day*, 27 May 2013, http://www.bdlive.co.za/africa/africannews/2013/05/27/news-analysis-african-standby-force-remains-a-paper-tiger, accessed 12 May 2014.

[66] We thank Francesco Mancini for sharing his research.

consequences of entering on such commitments. The ongoing operation in the Central African Republic is similar, with African (again the Chadians) and French troops sharing the risks. In fact, the AU and other African states and subregional organizations often engage in peace enforcement and only later approach the UN Security Council. This argument holds true even in Mali, where the AU planned a mission while the UN dawdled. France intervened with UN approval after advocating Resolution 2100, but the AU deployed troops immediately following the French stabilization. At that juncture, the UN deployed MINUSMA. Similarly, the AU's request that counterterrorism activities be included in MINUSMA's mandate, something the UN had rejected, demonstrates the extent to which 'African states have displayed a willingness to engage in peace enforcement activities on the continent and criticized UN operations for being risk averse and lacking consistency regarding the use of force against "spoilers".'[67]

Geopolitics

On virtually any issue, decision-making reflects perceived self-interest, and a UN Security Council decision to intervene is no exception. The veto is easily understood, as illustrated by the continuing paralysis in Syria, which reflects the perspectives of Moscow and Beijing. However, when the P3 agree and Russia and China do not object, not only are peace operations approved and financed, but the most prominent NATO members can act, singly or collectively. The P3 concentration of decision-making and military might, including colonial powers in their former colonies, contrasts distinctly with the world-view of the AU and its member states. The clashing perspectives were obvious in the Libyan intervention, but also came to the fore during the Mali crisis.

The P3 (sometimes in cooperation with allies) want to keep emerging crises firmly under their control and make decisions about who responds or does not. In Mali, one manifestation of this desire to retain control was naming Koenders, instead of the African candidate, as head of the mission. The AU and its member states do not possess the capabilities and resources and are hence marginalized. In Libya the P3 quickly decided to intervene militarily (with Chinese and Russian abstentions). The AU and its members disagreed among themselves and also had no real capacity to get involved in enforcing a no-fly zone designed by the P3; thus the organization was effectively excluded from decision-making and presented with a *fait accompli*. The P3 and their allies ignored the AU's roadmap because the no-fly zone had already been created.[68]

The tensions between the UN (or, more precisely, the P3) and the AU were even more evident in Mali, leaving a bitter taste in the mouth of the commission in Addis Ababa and several AU member states. After the Islamic militias started

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[67] Boutellis and Williams, 'Disagreement over Mali'.
[68] Private conversation with a senior European military commander involved in the decision-making process, July 2013; see also Ebrahim I. Ebrahim, 'Libya, the United Nations, the African Union and South Africa: Wrong moves? Wrong motives?', lecture at University of Pretoria, 15 Sept. 2011, reprinted in *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 33: 2, 2011, pp. 128–34.

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their military campaign from the north, France lobbied the European Union to set up a training mission that would enhance the Malian Army's ability to reconquer the northern part of the country and sought UN approval for this—a somewhat doubtful proposition in that the US Army had supposedly been involved in such an effort over a number of years with little discernible effect. At no stage, however, did France seek African military inputs. President François Hollande reportedly consulted with the presidents of Guinea, Niger and Senegal; but France and the EU did not bolster the planned AFISMA to make it viable enough to expel the Islamic militias. Paris did not consult the AU about its plans, and in Washington then UN ambassador Susan Rice 'with her usual diplomatic tact and sense of nuance, described the plan to set up an African force for Mali as "crap"'.[69]

Strategic economic and security calculations were certainly relevant to the decisions that led to both the Libya and the Mali interventions. The region is rich in energy resources, including oil, gas and uranium, and access to them was essential. In 2010 France imported 205,000 barrels of crude oil from Libya per day, satisfying roughly 16 per cent of its demand.[70] Only Italy, the former colonial power, imported more crude oil from Libya. In Mali, an interest in the energy resources of the country and its neighbours was complemented by a strategic interest in counterterrorism sparked by the activities of Islamist militias. The French President 'emphasised his promise to break with murky post-colonial relations of the past' and stressed that France had '"no interest" in Mali and was just "serving peace"'.[71] Yet uranium from Niger, Mali's neighbour, accounts for one-third of the fuel consumed by French nuclear plants. Mali's conflict could easily spill over to other countries in the region, as indicated by the hostage crisis on an Algerian gas field shortly after the launch of the French intervention, and by attacks of suicide bombers on uranium mines in Niger. An unstable Sahel and Libya, in particular, threatened a wave of unwanted migration across the Mediterranean, prompting calls for European action with France in the forefront of efforts to stem the flow of illegal immigrants. To this list of factors should be added the US preoccupation with failed states as breeding grounds for terrorists.

The point here is to underline that geopolitics is pertinent to an understanding of the longstanding African resentment against the exercise of western military power in Africa. It is hard to predict the eventual impact of these interventions on UN–AU relations.

Leadership rivalry: who's in charge?

The ambiguity in the UN Charter about who takes the lead—emphasizing regional responsibilities but indicating the superior position of the Security Council when it is able to act—has resulted in predictable organizational turf battles. Africa is certainly not unique, but the numbers of peace operations on the continent

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[69] Marchal, 'Briefing', pp. 486–97 at p. 494.
[70] See http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/02/libyan_oil, accessed 12 May 2013.
[71] 'Mali: hostage crisis sparks fears of escalation. Mali conflict may spread across region after militant attack on Algerian gas field', *Guardian*, 17 Jan. 2013.

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renders the turf consciousness especially critical. The AU has developed a legal framework and is completing the institutional underpinnings of the African Peace and Security Architecture.

The UN's *An agenda for peace* and related documents called upon regional organizations—and all eyes were on the AU as well as NATO—to upgrade capacities to maintain security in their respective regions. This initiative not only set in motion the acceleration in the construction of regional security architectures but also opened up the possibility for more autonomous regional decisions. The AU's willingness to criticize UN positions and act accordingly came to the fore during the Libya and Mali crises and is still visible in the ICC's efforts to deal with the al-Bashir case.

Moreover, the UN Security Council and its permanent members give the AU little room for manoeuvre. From the P3's perspective, it is clear who is in charge. If they deem the AU capable of solving a crisis (or have little interest in it themselves), they call upon the regional body. If the P3 believes that a crisis needs their collective attention and their capabilities, they act themselves, as happened in Libya and Mali, with one or more advocating Security Council authorization. In Libya, the march on Benghazi and the threat by Gaddafi to crush 'rats' and 'cockroaches' (the same language used by the *génocidaires* in Rwanda) meant that rapid action was of the essence to forestall atrocities—even if it also provided, as many in Addis Ababa and elsewhere believe, a smokescreen for France to eliminate Gaddafi. French interests in Mali were too strong and African capacities too weak; the AU bickered while jihadists seized several strategically important towns and approached Bamako. With little support from the P3 and their allies and France willing to take the lead, the AU was effectively out of business. The same is true for Libya, where the AU and its diplomatic efforts were set aside. In the words of a close observer: 'You had to kill the guy and the AU was not seen as capable of doing this.'[72]

Conclusion

The AU–UN cooperation in Mali is disconcerting for those who wish to rely more upon African military forces for peace enforcement and even robust peace-keeping on the continent. The tensions underlying earlier collaboration between the two organizations are immediately evident: diverging capabilities; risk-averse vs risk-assuming approaches to casualties; differing geopolitical calculations; and leadership rivalry. Nor are they far from the surface in the newer AU operation in the Central African Republic, in which France (with Chad) provides the bulk of the ground troops but cooperates closely with the AU on the ground.

Is it possible to improve what has been a forced intimacy between the United Nations and the African Union? An affirmative reply is predicated on three recommendations being implemented.

First, and most essential, is capacity. Given the frequency of violent crises on the continent, African governments themselves should invest more in armed forces—

[72] Interview with unnamed UN officials, Addis Ababa, Feb. 2014.

particularly regional standby brigades or the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises. At the same time, donors need to put their money where their mouths are and help Africans to a position from which they can help themselves. Politics and military capacity ultimately determine whether, when and where to protect and assist affected populations. The AU's political will to act in Mali but its inability to do so in a timely manner are obvious. However shocking to the conscience any emergency, and however hard or soft the applicable public international law, only when political will *and* military capacity come together will humanitarian space open and war victims be assisted and protected. Without a meaningful upgrading of capacities across the continent, we will witness the moral, legal and often political dimensions dovetailing but without sufficient military capacity to ensure African implementation. If so, 'African solutions to African problems' will remain a hollow slogan. It provides a ready-made excuse collectively to wash international hands of a situation when outsiders prefer to keep their distance—as in Rwanda. In addition, when an African initiative falls short, it also permits the application of an all-too-facile label of incompetence.

Second, the AU and its member states should implement the AU's non-interference principle and augment their willingness to cede and pool sovereignty. The establishment of the regional standby brigades or the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (and the willingness to deploy these troops) should be priorities. In addition, AU member states should smooth the roughest edges off their rivalries and pool resources that could reinforce collective efforts. If the AU speaks with one voice, it stands a chance of being heard and recognized as a credible partner not only by the UN but also by the P3, which largely determine the outline of the world organization's actions.[73]

Third, the AU should be taken more seriously by the UN, and specifically by the P3 and the western allies. The AU has responded remarkably, in the light of its feeble resources, when the UN has dragged its feet—for instance, in Burundi, Darfur and particularly Somalia. The AU roadmap for Libya was not impossible and could have been interpreted to include the removal of Gaddafi. The AU—given its special relationship with the Libyan strongman—was in an unusual position to negotiate a face-saving departure. With regard to Mali, the AU similarly had a plan and scheduled a mission; but, lacking resources and without rapid-reaction or standby forces, it was in no position to deploy quickly. Yet France could have interacted more closely with the AU and benefited from its diplomatic backing.

We offer these suggestions to help save the shotgun marriage. Divorce is not an option. The United Nations and the African Union need each other to address Africa's chronic security crises. Their current adversarial mode and turf battles should be set aside in favour of collaboration. A strong, reliable and recognized AU will ultimately serve the security interests of all UN member states.

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[73] Welz, 'The African Union beyond Africa'.