

29

POLICY BRIEF



CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

THE AFRICAN UNION: REGIONAL AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Cape Town, South Africa

Date of publication: July 2016

Rapporteurs: Dawn Nagar of the Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), Cape Town, South Africa; and Fritz Nganje, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Editors: Adekeye Adebajo of CCR; and Jason Cook, Independent Consultant

2 DIXTON ROAD, OBSERVATORY 7925, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA ■ TEL: +27 21 689 1005

FAX: +27 21 689 1003 ■ E-MAIL: mailbox@ccr.org.za ■ WEBSITE: www.ccr.org.za

[f](#) CCR_CapeTown ■ [t](#) CCR_Africa

Introduction

The Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), Cape Town, South Africa, hosted a three-day policy research seminar in Cape Town, from 27 to 29 April 2016, on the theme “The African Union: Regional and Global Challenges”.

The meeting was convened with about 30 prominent African, Asian, and Western policymakers, scholars, and civil society actors to reflect critically on the historical mission, progress, problems, and prospects of the African Union (AU) in a changing regional and global environment.

1. Pan-Africanism and the African Diaspora

Pan-Africanism historically represented a bid to promote the political, socio-economic, and cultural liberation of Africa, and developed as a political movement in the twentieth century through the efforts of Africans in the Diaspora. The creation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in May 1963 represented a victory for a gradualist approach to continental unity. However, the OAU proved to be ineffective in promoting regional integration and continental development amidst the external machinations of the Cold War. The African Union was created in July 2002 to revive Pan-African goals of integration and development. Remittance flows to Africa from its Diaspora reached \$35 billion in 2015, compared to official development assistance of \$24 billion. There is, however, still an urgent need for the AU to be capacitated and to build bridges with the 169 million-strong African Diaspora.

2. The AU’s Governance Challenges

African countries gained their political independence from the 1950s. However, the initial democratic euphoria proved to be short-lived. Multi-party political systems soon morphed into one-party states, while military coups and civil wars proliferated. After the end of the Cold War by 1990, the changed international environment led to democratic reforms and more regular elections across Africa. Ruling parties have since been voted out of power in Zambia, Lesotho, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Kenya, Malawi, and Mauritius. African civil society has also become more assertive in holding governments accountable. Poor governance led to popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya in 2011, and Burkina Faso in 2014.

The AU launched the African Governance Architecture (AGA) in 2011 to strengthen the coherence of the diverse governance instruments across the continent. Its main goal is to empower the various AU organs and Africa’s Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to enhance democratic governance at the national level. The architecture’s three pillars are: shared norms and values centred on the promotion of democracy, sovereignty, and human rights; a set of institutions encompassing the AU and Africa’s sub-regional bodies; and a platform comprising agreed processes for interaction

“The African Union was created in July 2002 to revive Pan-African goals of integration and development.”



NATIONAL FLAGS OF THE AU’S 54 MEMBER STATES AT THE AU HEADQUARTERS IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA.

Image source - The African Union:
Mystery and Wonder – The Journey Revealed
<https://pcwoolner.wordpress.com/2015/02/28/the-african-union/>

adopted by governments and civil society actors. Complementarity between the AGA and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is essential to addressing the root causes of conflicts. The 2003 African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) – a non-adversarial, voluntary, and self-monitoring process involving 35 African states – must also be provided greater political and financial support by African leaders.

3. The AU's Socio-Economic Challenges

The Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) and the Final Act of Lagos (FAL), both of 1980, constituted the most comprehensive and strategic attempt to address Africa's socio-economic challenges. The initiatives were conceived around the total mobilisation of Africa's human resources to promote the continent's development. However, very little has been achieved in the area of regional integration, with intra-African trade estimated at a paltry 12 percent in 2016. As a socio-economic programme of the AU, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) sought to promote sustainable growth and development in Africa. Despite its lofty goals, however, the programme has been hampered by implementation constraints. Continental development strategies such as the 2003 Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the 2007 Minimum Integration Programme (MIP), and the 2010 Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, have also not been effectively implemented.

4. The AU's Peace and Security Architecture

Since the creation of the African Union in 2002, African leaders have expressed their renewed determination to achieve a conflict-free continent. After the Cold War ended in 1990, violent conflicts erupted in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), while new conflicts have recently emerged in the Central African Republic (CAR), Mali, and South Sudan. The 2002 African Peace and Security Architecture reflects a fundamental shift from the non-intervention principle of the OAU to a more interventionist approach. The APSA framework includes an African Standby Force (ASF) which should have been established by 2010. The delay in creating the ASF led to the establishment of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) in May 2013. Concerns have, however, emerged over apparent competition between the two initiatives. More positively, the AU's 15-member Peace and Security Council (PSC) has become a central decision-making body on peace and security issues in Africa, conducting over 600 meetings since 2004.

Very little has been achieved in the area of regional integration, with intra-African trade estimated at a paltry 12 percent in 2016.



FARMERS HARVESTING RICE IN LIBERIA.

Image source - AfricaRenewal Online
<http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2011/investing-africas-farms-and-its-future>

5. The AU and Africa's Regional Economic Communities

The 1991 Abuja Treaty aspired for continental unity through the establishment of an African Economic Community (AEC) by 2025. In the context of a gradual approach to continental integration, Africa's regional economic communities such as the Southern African Development Community

(SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) are the building blocks of the AEC. The AU has encouraged Africa's RECs to join a Continental Free Trade Area that would include trade liberalisation frameworks involving open markets and agreements signed with external partners. Trade liberalisation through bilateral trade agreements could, however, stall efforts at regional integration. It is imperative that African governments urgently finalise negotiations on rules of origin (ROOs) within their sub-regional bodies.

In the area of security, RECs have opened liaison offices at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, and the AU has done the same at the headquarters of the different RECs. However, REC liaison officers do not have access to the AU Peace and Security Council. There is also still little coordination between the AU Peace and Security Council and similar sub-regional decision-making bodies.

6. The AU Commission

A December 2007 report from the Audit of the African Union – chaired by Nigerian scholar-diplomat, Adebayo Adedeji – provided a scathing indictment of the administrative and management failings of the Commission under its first chair, Mali's Alpha Konaré, between 2004 and 2007. Only 50 percent of approved tasks had been implemented by 2006, while most directorates were under-spending by 70-90 percent. Key parts of the 2013 Olusegun Obasanjo Report on alternative sources of funding for the AU – which proposed such ideas as a \$2 hospitality levy and a \$10 airfare levy – need to be urgently implemented, if the AU is to have a sustainable source of funding. In light of the AU Commission's capacity constraints, with a staff component of only about 1,740, consideration should be given to delegating some of the functions of the Commission back to AU member states and Africa's RECs. In addition, the AU Commission should engage more strategically with African civil society, think tanks, the private sector, and the philanthropic sector.

6 The AU Commission should engage more strategically with African civil society, think tanks, the private sector, and the philanthropic sector. 9



INCUMBENT AU COMMISSION CHAIR, GABON'S JEAN PING, GREET'S HIS CHALLENGER FOR THE POST, SOUTH AFRICA'S NKOSAZANA DLAMINI-ZUMA, AT THE AU SUMMIT IN ADDIS ABABA IN JANUARY 2012.

Image source - Institute for Security Studies (ISS)
Photo - Jaqueline Prinsloo
<https://www.issafrica.org/futures/other-publications/18th-au-summit-elections-at-the-african-union-commission>

7. South Africa and the AU

Under the administration of Thabo Mbeki between 1999 and 2008, South Africa's foreign policy was increasingly shaped by an "African Agenda" which prioritised democratic governance, peace and security, and accelerated economic growth. Mbeki played a key role in transforming the OAU into the African Union between 1999 and 2002, and in enshrining the right for the organisation to intervene against military coups and in cases of egregious human rights abuses. South Africa became the first country to host the newly created African Union in its port city of Durban in 2002. The country further helped to craft the institutions of NEPAD and the APRM, both of whose secretariats it hosts, along with that of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP). South Africa also contributed to AU peacekeeping missions in Burundi (2003-2004) and Sudan's Darfur region (2004-2007).

Amid South Africa's own continuing domestic socio-economic challenges, critics have noted that mercantilist approaches and parochial concerns have increasingly shaped its foreign policy towards Africa under president Jacob Zuma since 2009. In furtherance of South Africa's continental ambitions, it controversially put forward the candidacy of Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma to contest the position of AU Commission Chair which she eventually won. She vacated the position in 2016 after serving only one four-year term, without enacting the radical administrative reforms of the Commission she had earlier promised.

8. The AU's Relations with the UN, the EU, and China

The AU's relations with external actors such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), and China also remain critical. In the 2015–2016 financial year, the nine UN-deployed missions in Africa (out of 16 globally) cost \$6 billion (about 82 percent of all missions). In its search for more sustained, predictable, and flexible sources of funding, the AU adopted a decision in January 2015 to enhance ownership of its budget by financing 100 percent of its operating cost, 75 percent of its programmes, and 25 percent of its peace and security budget. Any eventual decision on a proposal to finance the AU's peacekeeping operations from the UN's assessed contributions would, however, require the consent of powerful members of the UN Security Council, and the AU Commission would also need to strengthen its administrative and financial management capacity.

“ In the 2015–2016 financial year, the nine UN-deployed missions in Africa (out of 16 globally) cost \$6 billion (about 82 percent of all missions). ”



PEACEKEEPERS WITH THE AU-UN MISSION IN DARFUR, SUDAN.

Image source - Asharq Al-Awsat
 Photo - EPA/Albert Gonzalez Farran / UNAMID / Handout
<http://english.aawsat.com/2014/07/article55334287/sudanese-opposition-criticize-unamid-report-on-darfur>

Relations between the African Union and the European Union, based on the 2007 Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES), have been the most durable between the AU and an external actor. Though there are obstacles in this relationship, there has also been some progress. Brussels has contributed over €1.3 billion to the AU's peace and security budget. However, critics have noted that the rhetorical commitments emanating from political dialogue between AU and EU leaders are rarely matched by effective implementation. A trilateral partnership between the AU, the UN, and the EU has recently emerged with the objective of promoting peace and security in Africa. However, this relationship is still characterised by a number of contentious issues such as the failure of the veto-wielding permanent members of the UN Security Council, including the two EU member states – France and Britain – to agree to a meaningful reform of the organisation's most powerful body.

Finally, the AU's relationship with China has demonstrated signs of dependence accompanied by a rhetoric of partnership. This solidarity was formalised in the historical relationship between the Group of 77 (G-77) and China at the UN from the 1960s. Beijing established the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000 as a platform for collective consultation and dialogue. China – which has become Africa's largest trade partner, worth \$300 billion in 2015 – has sought to enhance its global status while contributing to Africa's infrastructural development. However, one of the major challenges facing this partnership is that the AU does not seem to have a long-term strategy for engaging China.

Policy Recommendations

The following 10 key policy recommendations emerged from the Cape Town policy seminar:

1. The AU Commission should engage more strategically with African civil society, think tanks, the private sector, and the philanthropic sector in order to implement its mandate more effectively. There is an urgent need to revisit Adebayo Adedeji's 2007 five-year review of the AU Commission in order to implement its main findings on reforming the AU's institutions and accelerating regional integration and economic development efforts in Africa. Key parts of the 2013 Olusegun Obasanjo Report on alternative sources of funding for the AU should also be implemented to ensure a sustainable source of financing.
2. There is an urgent need to sanction non-performing AU staff members and to implement results-based management at the AU Commission in Addis Ababa. Recruitment, retention, and training of personnel should be greatly improved. There is also a need for better coordination between the AU's Department of Political Affairs and its Peace and Security Department. The AU Commission must further strengthen its administrative and financial management capacity to be able to absorb and manage donor funds.
3. The AU's continental early warning system needs greater coordination with the mechanisms of sub-regional bodies. Furthermore, African leaders must provide greater financial and political support to the APRM, strengthening its capacity and restoring its previous consistent funding.
4. There is an urgent need to create institutionalised mechanisms for effective coordination between the AU's Peace and Security Council and the organs of the RECs; this must include the increased participation of civil society and parliaments in decision-making to ensure complementarity between the AU and the RECs in this critical area.
5. Regional integration in Africa should take into account the configuration of interests in member states, and put in place mechanisms to compensate groups that may lose out from integration. There is an urgent need to cultivate a national entrepreneurial class to drive socio-economic development across Africa. The continent also needs more "Afrocrats" – young, highly competent officials with a strong commitment to Pan-Africanism, similar to many of the EU's "Eurocrats".
6. The AU needs to rationalise relations between the RECs and the African Economic Community in light of the multiple membership of the former. It might also be necessary to create a smaller grouping of African states in which conditions for entry involve sound economic and political performance, resulting in greater aid and investment for its members.

“The AU Commission must further strengthen its administrative and financial management capacity to be able to absorb and manage donor funds.”



AFRICAN LEADERS DURING THE 19TH AFRICAN UNION GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT THE AFRICAN UNION HEADQUARTERS IN ADDIS ABABA IN JULY 2012.

Image source - The Statehouse of Uganda
 Photo - PPU
<http://www.statehouse.go.ug/media/photos/2012/07/16/19th-african-union-au-summit-addis-ababaethiopia-0>

29

POLICY BRIEF

“The AU should develop the capacity to coordinate Africa’s interests in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.”



CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING (CENTRE), SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT JACOB ZUMA (LEFT), AND ZIMBABWEAN PRESIDENT ROBERT MUGABE (RIGHT) AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE EXHIBITION ON 15 YEARS OF THE FORUM ON CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION, IN JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, IN DECEMBER 2015.

Image source - Coastweek.com
<http://www.coastweek.com/3849-African-officials-hail-President-Xi-speech-at-FOCAC-summit.htm>

7. In line with the AU’s Common African Position, five key principles should underpin relations between the AU and the UN: promotion of collective security in the context of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter; support for African ownership and priority-setting; fostering a partnership on the basis of consultative decision-making, division of labour, and burden-sharing; mutual respect and adherence to the principle of comparative advantage; and establishment of a division of labour underpinned by the concept of complementarity.
8. By 2016, the EU had contributed over €13 billion to support the AU’s peace and security agenda. The EU-UN joint consultative mechanism must, however, be made more effective in order to facilitate cooperation between both organisations in planning, training, communication, and sharing “best practices” in African peace operations, while fostering trilateral cooperation with the AU.
9. The AU and its member states must invest in understanding China’s strategy in Africa and developing the technical capacity to engage effectively with Beijing in order to promote African interests more effectively; the AU should also develop the capacity to coordinate Africa’s interests in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.
10. Finally, Africa should learn lessons from how the Israel lobby has influenced policy in the United States (US) Congress. The tens of thousands of highly educated Africans in America must be mobilised to build a viable constituency for Africa. There is also an urgent need for the AU to develop programmes that build new bridges between Africa and its Diaspora, while also devising strategies to tap into the 169 million-strong African population in the Diaspora for greater investment and development. The AU should thus develop a Diaspora strategy that looks beyond remittances to harness the expertise of the Diaspora to address the skills gap in Africa, especially in the area of science and technology.