How African Institutions Help Keep the Peace

Since the turn of the century, African institutions have assumed increasing responsibility for peace and security on their continent. These peacekeeping missions have assumed many shapes and sizes, often in collaboration with the United Nations (UN), United States, or other Western partners. What have these missions achieved?

The RAND Corporation and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) examined 26 cases of African peace operations since World War II and conducted an in-depth examination of six of them. These include missions by the African Union (AU), regional African organizations, and individual African countries. Researchers assessed the challenges that the missions faced; analyzed each mission's mandate, size, and other relevant characteristics; and examined how the missions fared in resolving their challenges.

This research is presented as the fourth in a series of RAND reports exploring U.S., European, and UN nation-building efforts, defined as "the use of armed force after conflict to promote a durable peace and representative government."

An Analysis of Six Operations

The six selected missions represent a wide range of peace operations in Africa. Only one (Burundi) resembled a "classic" peacekeeping mission in support of a peace agreement. Two of the cases (Central African Republic [CAR] and Comoros) were closer to peace enforcement—the use of armed force to compel a settlement and then to ensure its implementation. Two others (Somalia and the Lake Chad Multinational Joint Task Force) are straightforward counterinsurgency operations designed to suppress violent extremist groups. Finally, the operation in Darfur principally intended to protect civilians amid an ongoing conflict over which the multinational force had limited influence.

Burundi (2001–2004)

In the AU's first peacekeeping operation, African-led troops entered Burundi in 2001 to support an agreement to end a long-running civil war between Hutus and Tutsis. Peacekeepers protected the returning political leaders and secured national elections. By 2004, an AU-led force of at most 3,500 troops had helped stabilize the country sufficiently for the

Key findings:

- African-led missions have often been the peacekeepers of last resort, taking on tasks that other institutions turn down.

- Two of the six African operations examined (Burundi and Comoros) helped set a relatively peaceful trajectory.

- Three of the missions (Darfur, Somalia, and the Lake Chad Basin) contributed to improving security.

- African-led missions tend to focus on security tasks—and, in some cases, on security in only a limited area—as opposed to economic and other forms of assistance.

- Regional solidarity is the greatest asset that African institutions bring to peace operations on their continent. While the greater resources and organizational capacity that the United Nations (UN) and other partners wield will still be important, African institutions will continue to play a major role in keeping the peace on the continent.

- Several policy steps could help build up African organizations' capabilities for peace operations, such as authorizing the African Union to tax imports for funding such missions and developing model templates for collaboration with the UN and other non-African organizations.

UN to deploy a larger and more capable force. The African- and then UN-led peacekeepers ushered in a decade of relative peace and gradual material improvement in the lives of Burundians. This two-step model became the preferred paradigm for AU-UN collaboration, but few subsequent operations followed such a positive trajectory.

Central African Republic (2001–2014)

CAR borders three of the world's most strife-torn areas: Darfur, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since 1997, 16 international missions (led mostly by the UN and African organizations but also France and the European Union [EU]) have tried and failed to halt CAR's downward trajectory. Of the four largest African-led mis-

sions, the first three were organized by different subregional groups and the fourth by the AU. These African-led missions came after a UN peacekeeping force left in 2000, worked alongside a new UN and French forces in 2007–2010, and was finally replaced by yet a third UN force in 2014. These international efforts were largely ineffective and, at best, kept CAR's security from deteriorating further. When the UN withdrew in 2000 and 2010, African-led forces were not capable of filling the gap.

Darfur (2004–Present)

In 2004, the AU deployed 5,000 peacekeepers to protect civilians and secure humanitarian relief in Sudan's Darfur region amid a year-old conflict pitting rebels against the government, government-sanctioned militia against the rebels, Muslim Arabs against non-Muslim Africans, Arabs against Arabs, Africans against Africans, and all of these armed groups against defenseless civilians. The AU force, which eventually numbered 7,000, was replaced in 2008 by a hybrid UN-AU mission that eventually deployed some 26,000 military personnel and continues to this day. However, the Sudanese government, which forced the UN-AU marriage as the price for accepting a UN mission in Darfur, has limited the mission's scope. Although neither the UN nor the AU has been entirely comfortable with this unique arrangement, the two organizations seem to have worked out a division of labor that draws on their strengths: The UN has largely assumed operational control, while African countries have supplied most of the troops and arranged collaborations with regional capitals. The AU and then the hybrid UN-AU missions have helped protect civilians in their immediate areas, but neither has significantly affected the course of the conflict.

Comoros (1998–2008)

Comoros is made up of four primary islands along with a number of smaller islands off the coast of Mozambique. Since three islands gained their independence from France in 1975 (one chose to remain), Comoros has experienced 21 attempted or successful coups. Beginning in 1998, the Organization of African Unity and then the AU dispatched eight military missions to Comoros. The three largest missions, deployed in 2006–2008, successfully secured national elections and, at one point, mounted an amphibious operation to suppress a secessionist attempt by one of the islands. No coups have been attempted since. The peacekeeping missions were all small—the largest involved 1,800 peacekeepers—and largely bloodless affairs. The AU members showed resolution in proceeding with the amphibious operation even when the largest potential troop contributor, South Africa, dropped out.

Somalia (2006–Present)

Beginning in 1992, the UN and subsequently the United States initiated peacekeeping missions in a vain effort to end Somalia's civil war. Both had given up and left by 1994. Twelve years later, Ethiopian and then AU forces—as many as 22,000 strong— drove the militant Islamic Courts Union (ICU) out of Mogadishu and eventually pushed beyond the capital so that a Somali central government could form. Remnants of the ICU then created al Shabaab and affiliated themselves with al Qaeda. Al Shabaab has since been pushed back but not eliminated. The international community is becoming less willing to continue funding and supporting the AU mission's efforts in Somalia, but the Somali government and national security forces are still not capable of standing alone, so the AU mission has no obvious exit strategy. Nevertheless, Somalia's prospects are brighter than they have been since U.S. and UN troops abandoned their efforts to stabilize the country nearly a quarter-century ago.

Multilateral Joint Task Force: Lake Chad Basin (2015–Present)

Boko Haram—one of the deadliest Islamist terrorist groups in the world—is affiliated with the Islamic State and operates throughout the Lake Chad Basin. In 2015, Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Benin formed a multinational joint task force (MNJTF) to coordinate their counterinsurgency operations, as authorized by the AU and the UN Security Council. Task force staff facilitated intelligence-sharing and joint planning for coordinated national operations, including authorizing forays across each other's borders. Over the next several years, these concerted military efforts reduced Boko Haram's numbers, exposed rifts within its leadership, and forced the insurgency to revert to guerrilla and terror tactics. But Boko Haram has proved resilient, and MNJTF members have struggled to maintain control of recovered territory.

Comparative Analysis

Only two of the six countries where African-led missions were deployed achieved a peaceful trajectory. This is a lower success rate than that of the U.S.-, UN-, and European-led missions covered in earlier volumes of this series, but this discrepancy is less the fault of the African-led missions than of the larger structural problems facing these countries.

First, three of the six missions examined—Darfur, Somalia, and the MNJTF—are still under way, and in all three, the security situation is somewhat better than when the AU operations commenced.

Second, African-led missions were mandated to focus on security tasks and in some cases were only mandated to provide security in a limited part of the country. Meanwhile, other organizations, including the UN and Western coun-

tries or institutions, would need to provide assistance to meet the non-security challenges if these were to be addressed.

Third, these missions were also substantially less well resourced than those led by the United States, the UN, or Europeans. Their troops are generally less numerous, less well equipped, less well provisioned, and less mobile. As a result of these different mandates and levels of resources, African-led missions tend to have fewer police and fewer civilian experts attached—if they have any at all—than other missions. And the societies in which African-led missions operate generally receive less international economic assistance than those in which UN, U.S., and European forces operate.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, many African-led missions simply face greater challenges. In many instances, African institutions are the peacekeepers of last resort, taking on tasks that have been shunned by all of the other more-capable institutions. In some cases, such as CAR, the resources provided were grossly insufficient to address the deep economic, military, and political problems facing the society.

Given these built-in disadvantages, the level of achievement of African-led missions is noteworthy. Of the six examined here, two were ultimately successful, and three have shown some progress. This has not been achieved without considerable external support. Nearly all African-led missions received substantial funding, advice, training, and sometimes intelligence and logistical support from the UN, the EU and its member states, and, to a somewhat lesser degree, the United States.

African-led missions have demonstrated several comparative advantages over non-African sources of peace operations. Representing the societies most directly affected by nearby conflicts, these institutions have been ready to run risks and take on tasks that others shun. In particular, African peace operations are engaged in active combat against Islamist insurgents in Somalia and the Lake Chad Basin that would be infeasible for the UN. African institutions are quicker to deploy, and supporting African forces is cheaper on a per-troop basis. African institutions can have better insights into the regions' difficulties, better access to the societies in conflict, and greater ability to mobilize and involve immediate neighbors.

The hybrid model of UN-AU collaboration pioneered in Darfur offers one means of addressing such limitations. There, a UN mission now exercises operational control, while the AU provides political weight, and African countries contribute the majority of troops.

How Can African Peacekeeping Operations Be Improved?

Although African institutions have made progress, many challenges remain. Analysts and officials who were inter-

viewed noted gaps in African command and control, planning, sustainment, training, and doctrine. They also identified as issues the lack of funds for personnel and building bureaucratic capacity in the AU's headquarters and the AU's dependence on foreign donors for all but the smallest missions. A number of possible initiatives exist.

Authorize the AU to tax imports for funding. The AU has agreed on a clear solution to the problem of funding: a 0.2-percent levy on all imports to the continent. U.S. opposition has been a principal reason why the tariff has not been implemented. U.S. officials should consider providing a waiver or facilitating special authorization by the World Trade Organization.

Help African institutions improve their capabilities. African-led missions have not focused on non-security issues, such as building democratic governments or encouraging economic growth, but African institutions have expressed an ambition to do so. International partners that often take on these tasks could help African institutions develop these capabilities.

Increase bureaucratic capacity-building in African institutions. U.S., EU, and UN advisors have tried to work with the AU and subregional organizations on bureaucratic capacity-building with varying degrees of success. But there are examples of advisors making a difference, and the AU's overall capacity for peace operations has clearly grown with experience. The interviewees suggested that a more African-centric, longer-term approach might be more successful. For example, advisors would consider African priorities rather than Western goals and identify ways to articulate operations concepts in an African context.

Develop templates for future collaborations. The UN and AU could build on their experiences and develop two or three basic templates for future collaborations to avoid starting each mission from scratch. African nations and the UN have alternated lead and support roles, for example, and the UN-AU hybrid pioneered in Darfur is also a possible model.

Conclusion

Regional solidarity is the greatest asset that African institutions bring to peace operations on their continent and is reason enough to involve them more heavily in these endeavors. African-led peace operations have been able to undertake a range of different types of tasks, up to and including high-intensity combat, under different subregional or continent-wide institutions and supported by varying partners. While the greater resources and organizational capacity that the UN and other partners wield will still be key to Africa's future, African countries and institutions will continue to play a major role in keeping the peace.
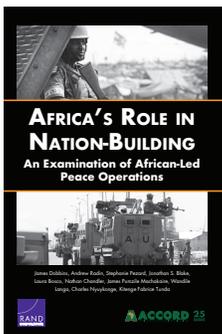
AFRICA'S ROLE IN NATION-BUILDING
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