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The African Union: A Discussion Regarding the Organisation's Future Development

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Africa and its different macro-regions are of increasing interest and relevance with regard to security policy. Security problems relating to disintegrating states, international conflicts, civil war, economic and political development, radicalisation, streams of refugees and resource and climate issues have made the continent of great immediate interest within international security policy. Africa's problems, in the form of famine and a lack of political and economic development, are more relevant than ever, something that is also illustrated in the UN's Millennium Development Goals and other efforts.¹ Among the external actors involved, both the EU and the UN are carrying out and planning peace-support missions on the continent. China is investing major resources in trade and aid. The US is matching this with similar activity and also a newly established military *Africa Command* (AFRICOM). France and Great Britain have traditionally been very active in different parts of the continent. All this points to increased interest in the continent with regard to security policy.

Since the AU was formally created in 2002, it has quickly become a very important actor in the area of African security. Through its extensive peace-support efforts from mediation to full-scale military operations, observing elections and economic sanctions, the organisation is already firmly rooted in the continent. An expression coined at the time of the creation of the AU is that it should contribute 'African solutions to African problems', which also indicates a willingness among African leaders to look after their own affairs. The AU has also created an important link between regional economic organisations, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the international level, with the EU and the UN at the forefront. An understanding of the AU's organisation, capacity, opportunities and limitations is, therefore, of the utmost importance in order to be able to pursue effective policies with the aim of developing the capacity of African organisations and processes.

The aim of this paper is to discuss and problematize the development of the AU. The paper therefore highlights a number of key areas in the future development of the Union in order to analyse the fundamental question of where the organisation is heading. Before embarking on this discussion, a short introduction to some general history and aims of the Union is in order.

The Formation, Vision and Aims of the African Union

The African Union is the most ambitious continental project Africa has ever seen within the areas of peace and security, economic development and African integration. It is, however, far

¹ The UN's Millennium Development Goals were created at the Millennium Summit of September 2000 and constitute a declaration of global cooperation concerning a number of time-bound objectives in order to reduce poverty by 2015.

from being the first continental organisation within these areas and is the result of a long tradition of Pan-Africanism, decolonialisation and the African states' struggle for independence.

During the 1990s, to some extent as a consequence of the humanitarian catastrophes caused by the conflicts in Somalia, Rwanda, the Manu River region, and the war in the DRC, a new wave of Pan-Africanism swept across the continent. This emphasised the importance of increased cooperation within the area of security and, unlike its predecessor the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), also democracy, accountability, good governance and political openness as important concepts for African security.² South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki provided a clear example of this new Pan-Africanism when he spoke of an 'African renaissance' at the end of the 1990s.³ The international community's inability to intervene to prevent conflicts or to alleviate their consequences also led to African leaders realising that, if the continent was to break the destructive cycle of violence, poverty and a lack of development, it would be necessary for Africa to take its fate into its own hands and not rely on the international community – to provide 'African solutions to African problems'. It was in this context that the AU was created.⁴

In September 1999, the member states of the OAU were summoned to a meeting where a majority of the members decided to reconstruct the OAU into the AU as part of the so-called Sirte Declaration.⁵ At a meeting in Togo in July 2000, a majority of heads of state and government signed the agreement on the union, the so-called *Constitutive Act of the African Union*.⁶ This entered into force in May 2001 when two-thirds of the 53 member states ratified the agreement. After a transitional period of a little more than 2 years, the OAU was completely replaced by the AU in Durban, South Africa, on 9 July 2002. The AU has its headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and its members consist of all of Africa's states with the exception of Morocco.⁷

The AU wishes to work towards far-reaching political and economic cooperation between its member states and it hopes that this will lead to reduced poverty, increased respect for human rights and the promotion of peace and democracy. There are two new norms in Pan-African politics that constitute the most important difference between the AU and its predecessor, the OAU, and which demonstrated an unrivalled willingness in an African context, to limit the right of self-determination on the part of the states in favour of so-called human security: the condemnation of non-constitutional changes of government and the introduction of interventions in 'serious circumstances', such as genocide and human rights abuse.⁸

² Christopher Landsberg, 'The Fifth Wave of Pan-Africanism', in Adekeye Adebajo and Ismail Rashid (eds.), *West Africa's Security Challenges – Building Peace in a Troubled Region* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004), p. 117.

³ Thabo Mbeki cited in Benedikt F. Franke, 'Competing Regionalisms in Africa and the Continent's Emerging Security Architecture', *African Studies Quarterly*, 9:3, Spring 2007, <<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v9/v9i3a2.htm>>.

⁴ Landsberg, 'The Fifth Wave of Pan-Africanism', p. 117.

⁵ *AU in a nutshell*, <www.africa-union.org>.

⁶ *Constitutive Act of the African Union*, <http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AboutAu/Constitutive_Act_en.htm>.

⁷ Morocco left the OAU in 1984 when the organisation welcomed the Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara as a member. The same applies to the AU, which means Morocco refuses to become a member.

⁸ *Constitutive Act of the African Union*, Article 4, Principles.

The vision of the African Union is ‘that of an Africa, integrated, prosperous and peaceful, an Africa driven by its own citizens, a dynamic force in the global arena’.⁹ For this reason, according to its charter, the AU will promote and defend common African interests in international contexts, accelerate Africa’s development, promote unity, solidarity and peace between the African countries, work for democracy and respect for human rights on the African continent and work towards political and economic integration between the continent’s different regions.¹⁰

Discussing the Development of the African Union

This section involves four topics of great interest regarding the African Union’s future; the tension between the concepts of sovereignty and intervention; the decentralised security structure of the Union; the gap between ambition and capacity in conflict management, and; the balance between African ownership and external funding.

State Sovereignty or Interventions to Safeguard Human Security?

As previously mentioned, the introduction of two new norms in Pan-African politics constitutes the biggest difference between the AU and its predecessor, the OAU: the condemnation of non-constitutional changes of government and the introduction of interventions in ‘serious circumstances’, which, in a later context, has come to be called ‘*the responsibility to protect*’ (R2P).¹¹ It should, however, be pointed out that, higher up on the list in Article 4, the principles of state sovereignty and non-intervention appear, although this is not mentioned as frequently in the references to the charter. This section will take a closer look at the area of tension between the principles of sovereignty and intervention within the AU.

Three important factors operate within the area of tension: the organisation’s ambition and culture, the organisation’s capacity to intervene and the Member States’ will and capability to make political decisions, and to contribute financially and with materiel and personnel to the implementation of those decisions. The principles of sovereignty and intervention and R2P respectively will thereby be applied from case to case depending on political processes and interests. At the heart of the discussion is Article 4(h) of the AU’s *Constitutive Act*, which expresses the following principle:

*The right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity;*¹²

What is important in relation to this principle is that it only requires a two-thirds majority within the AU’s highest decision-making body, the *AU Assembly*, to carry out an intervention. In other words, without individual states’ right of veto, the organisation can force through decisions on sanctions and interventions in individual states by virtue of a statutory majority of the member states.

⁹ African Union, *Strategic Plan of the African Union Commission, Vol. 1: Vision and Mission of the African Union*, May 2004, p. 26.

¹⁰ Makunda and Okumu, *The African Union*.

¹¹ Paul D. Williams, ‘From Non-Intervention to Non-Indifference: The Origins and Development of the African Union’s Security Culture’, *African Affairs*, 106/423, March 2007, pp. 253–279, p. 278. The R2P principle was developed in a report, ‘The Responsibility to Protect’ from December 2001, by the Canadian International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS).

¹² *Constitutive Act of the African Union*, Article 4, Principles.

As previously mentioned, the AU's explicit and implicit organisational culture and norms also play an important role for work within the organisation. The AU was created in the context of a new wave of Pan-Africanism, which emphasised democracy, accountability, good governance and political openness as important concepts for African security.¹³ Unlike its predecessor, the OAU, this is also clearly stated in the charter.¹⁴ This is made clear by the former Chairperson of the AU Commission, President Alpha Oumar Konaré, who advocated the importance of going from an organisational culture based on non-intervention to '*non-indifference*', which briefly means that the fundamental principles of the sovereignty and right of self-determination of states must not entail that human suffering is accepted due to intrastate persecution or abuse of power; on the contrary, this will lead to an intervention in such cases.¹⁵ These principles are in stark contrast to the OAU's uncompromising support for the sovereignty of states and the principle of non-intervention.¹⁶ It has also been noted that the political norms on the continent are largely based on a change in the concept of security from state security to human *security*, which is clearly enshrined in the AU Charter.¹⁷ At the same time, it is cautioned that the concept is on the retreat within the AU. According to Thomas Kwasi Tiekou, there is the risk of a return to the OAU's system of norms based on the sovereignty of the state and non-intervention. The risk is an anti-colonial view of human security as a neo-colonialist attempt to impute Western values to African states. Advocates of the principle of human security are not as powerful today as they were at the time of the creation of the AU and the anti-Western rhetoric of their opponents is enticing. This is made clear when comparing the original draft of the AU's joint defence and security policy, produced in the early years of the AU, and the recently produced *Non-Aggression and Defence Pact*, in which human security is not expressed as an important factor.¹⁸

The strong wording of the AU's *Constitutive Act* and the subsequent establishment of the ASF and other structures for international missions offset, however, the most negative descriptions of the development of norms and culture within the AU. It is, therefore, too early to draw any conclusions regarding the AU's future support for R2P and human security. A hard balancing act for external actors working for democratisation and liberalisation is to support the AU as conflict managers without this giving the appearance of implementing Western values – something that could ultimately weaken the African Union and its even more fragile R2P culture.

A Decentralised Structure in Symbiosis?

An interesting and important aspect of the African Union's new peace and security structure is its multilayer, symbiotic method of security cooperation. As described in Chapter 3, the Pan-African security structure within the AU gravitates towards existing regional organisations, particularly in the implementation of continent-wide security policy.¹⁹

¹³ Christopher Landsberg, 'The Fifth Wave of Pan-Africanism', in Adekeye Adebajo and Ismail Rashid (eds.), *West Africa's Security Challenges – Building Peace in a Troubled Region* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004), p. 117.

¹⁴ See, for example, *Constitutive Act of the African Union*, Article 4, Principles (m).

¹⁵ Tim Murithi, 'The Responsibility to Protect, as Enshrined in Article 4 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union', *African Security Review*, 16:3, 2007, p. 16.

¹⁶ Williams, 'From Non-Intervention to Non-Indifference', p. 278.

¹⁷ Thomas Kwasi Tiekou, 'African Union Promotion of Human Security in Africa', *African Security Review*, 16:2, 2007, p. 27.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 33–34.

¹⁹ Benedikt F. Franke, 'Enabling a Continent to Help Itself: U.S. Military Capacity Building and Africa's Emerging Security Architecture', *Strategic Insights*, 6:1, January 2007.

Historically, however, the regional structure is on shaky ground as relations within and between the different regions have, in some cases, involved conflicts and competition for existing aid. There is an abundance of different regional organisations and institutions on the continent, which need to be integrated into the AU in different ways. Overlapping and competing structures are thereby a problem that must be dealt with within the AU in order to avoid the unnecessary duplication of efforts and resources and to facilitate the financial and temporal obligations that membership of several organisations involves.²⁰ As previously mentioned, this is a problem the AU is very conscious of and which has already been dealt with in several different ways – by, among other things, limiting the number of organisations the AU works together with and by allowing the RECs to be the mainstays within conflict management.

The decentralised system has, however, been criticised for creating unnecessary bureaucracy and organisational complexity on the continent and for therefore causing lengthy processes when conflicts and crises are to be dealt with. The five RECs, which are the mainstays of the ASF, are also faced with several individual challenges in their work on achieving peace and security. These shortcomings may have consequences for the development of continental capacity in the areas of peace and security and will require good monitoring within the capacity development at both continental and regional levels.²¹

Several authors (Powell, Franke, Juma and Mengistu) believe, however, that the regional system has significant advantages.²² By incorporating existing regional systems, the AU is allowed to profit from the RECs' comparative advantages, i.e. their experience of previous peace operations and already established frameworks and mechanisms for the prevention and management of conflicts.²³ The proximity of the regional organisations to trouble spots may also lead to a better understanding of the specific dynamics of the conflict – which actors and interests are of importance and how to best arrive at a solution. The proximity principle may also, in theory at least, lead to the regional organisations managing these crises more effectively than larger organisations, such as the UN.²⁴ Another advantage of the regional organisations working on conflict management is that regional leaders and organisations may have greater legitimacy than international organisations. It would thereby be easier for them to achieve peace and security in conflicts than for distant powers.²⁵ It should, however, be added that while proximity to conflicts may lead to comparatively legitimate, quick and less costly missions by the RECs, they thus could, however, also jeopardise neutrality and the impartiality of the actions. Being close to a conflict may cause considerable tension between the parties involved: in the worst case scenario, so much tension that the regional organisation that is to remain impartial becomes part of the conflict.²⁶ It is, therefore, relevant to raise the matter of how the regional organisations should act if a regional superpower is a party in a

²⁰ Benedikt F. Franke, 'Competing Regionalisms in Africa and the Continent's Emerging Security Architecture', *African Studies Quarterly*, 9:3, 2007, <<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v9/v9i3a2.htm>>.

²¹ Kristiana Powell, *The African Union's Emerging Peace and Security Regime: Opportunities and Challenges for Delivering on the Responsibility to Protect*, ISS Monograph Series, No. 119, 2005.

²² See for example Powell, *The African Union's Emerging Peace and Security Regime*; Franke, 'Competing Regionalisms', *The Infrastructure of Peace in Africa: Assessing the Peace Building Capacity of African Institutions* (International Peace Academy, 2002).

²³ Franke, 'Competing Regionalisms'

²⁴ Powell, *The African Union's Emerging Peace and Security Regime*.

²⁵ Juma and Mengistu, *The Infrastructure of Peace in Africa*.

²⁶ Powell, *The African Union's Emerging Peace and Security Regime*.

conflict and whether the regional brigade will then be sufficiently impartial and strong to act neutrally or if more geographically distant brigades from the ASF should be used.²⁷

The regional structure of the AU's peace and security architecture means that the organisation is continuing to build on established structures for peace and security and focusing them on joint efforts towards continent-wide conflict management.²⁸ The creation of the ASF in regional form therefore contributes towards continent-wide security policy cooperation in a further two ways. On the one hand, the ASF constitutes a common goal for the member states, a political framework for peace and security, which increases the opportunity for channelling the great variety of resources, initiatives and programmes in a common direction.²⁹ On the other hand, the ASF's decentralised structure helps the regional organisations retain both their interest and a sense of responsibility as they still personally play a key role in both regional and continental security. A large part of the responsibility for peace and security in Africa is thereby kept within the regional organisations, while the AU contributes the strategic framework, the continental legitimacy and the important conceptual and institutional link with the global level (the UN, the EU, etc.). This mutual symbiosis between the AU and the regional organisations increases the different actors' sense of responsibility for the capacity development at the same time as reducing the risk of competition between different levels of African security organisations and initiatives – something that often restricted the OAU's initiatives regarding peace operations and joint forces.³⁰ The regional, decentralised peace and security structure within the AU may, therefore, be described as a natural and practical solution to the problem of creating integration and cooperation over such a large and heterogeneous area as Africa. In order to effectively develop capacity in Africa, local, regional and continental levels will be required. It should, however, be emphasised that capacity that is equivalent to the level's tasks and undertakings must exist at all three levels if the structure is to work well.³¹

The Gap between Ambition and Capacity

The institutional framework, doctrines and concept for AU-led peace-support missions are in place and are of a relatively high quality. Unfortunately, the structure implemented does not match up to the theoretical one. The AU needs time to develop its practical capacity and the missions carried out and going on therefore have had little chance of succeeding. These hastily put-together and, in many aspects, inadequate efforts are the result of a great willingness to find 'African solutions to African problems', eagerly supported by external actors' reluctance to become too heavily involved in complex and, to say the least, dangerous missions on the continent. This has led to the AU taking on assignments with international support, despite all those involved being aware of the many shortcomings.³² The other side of the same coin is that, given the ambition of African solutions to African problems, the AU has been reluctant to accept support when it patently needs it.

²⁷ International Peace Academy, *Refashioning the Dialogue: Regional Perspectives on the Brahimi Report on UN Operations* (2001).

²⁸ Franke, 'Competing Regionalisms'

²⁹ Cedric de Coning, 'Towards a Common Southern African Peacekeeping System', Electronic Briefing Paper No. 16, Centre for International Political Studies, University of Pretoria, 2004, p. 4.

³⁰ Franke, 'Competing Regionalisms'

³¹ This was raised by Colonel Anders Edqvist, former Swedish defence attaché in South Africa, during an interview at the Ministry of Defence on 26 November 2007.

³² Ibid.

African leaders have put the creation of the ASF at the heart of the AU's peace and security agenda. By way of this tool the PSC will be given the capacity to intervene militarily in conflict and crisis areas when this is required.³³ It is, of course, impossible to emphasise enough how important the ASF's capacity will be for the credibility of the PSC on the continent. Work has, however, proceeded very slowly and it cannot be regarded as likely that these will be operational by 2010 as planned. In the meantime, the many shortcomings in the AU's operations in Somalia and Sudan are showing a major gap between ambition, capacity and even quality.

When we speak of a lack of resources and capacity within the AU, it may be necessary to make this clear by using a few figures in order to illustrate the extent of the problem. In 2007, the AU's total budget was USD 73 million. In addition, there is what international donors contribute within the AU's *Peace Fund* and what is provided in connection with specific operations. USD 73 million is, however, a very small sum in the context. For example, the EU's budget is 2,500 times bigger at EUR 129 billion. The member states within the AU are among the poorest on the planet and their limited national budgets are largely financed by international donors.

An important argument that is often presented in connection with the AU and the ASF's capacity development is that the biggest problem is not producing soldiers but transporting them quickly over great distances and being able to support them with sufficient logistics for a long time and under difficult circumstances.³⁴ Deane-Peter Baker believes that the AU's lack of capacity was illustrated through its inability to quickly and effectively intervene in Somalia in December 2006 after Ethiopia invaded Somalia and when it began its retreat from Somalia after international pressure. Somalia witnessed the beginning of a revolt and the AU decided to send 8,000 peacekeepers from the *African Union Mission to Somalia* (AMISOM). However, the AU was only able to muster 4,000 soldiers on paper, of which only 1,200 Ugandan soldiers were sent to Somalia in March 2007. In August 2007, only a couple of hundred Ugandans had arrived in addition to the initial force and there were no other troop contributions in place although 1,700 soldiers from Burundi were technically ready to be deployed but, according to them, they still lacked transport and communications equipment promised by the US and France.³⁵ It should, however, be added that the rapidly deteriorating security situation made other potential troop contributors hesitant about the mission in Somalia and technical obstacles should, to some extent, be seen as excuses to avoid having to go into a highly dangerous mission area – a reluctance the AU's member states share with both the EU and the UN.

AMIS has further underlined the gap between the AU's ambitions and its capacity to intervene in crises. The conclusions from a seminar arranged by the *International Peace Academy* once again point to it not being enough just having soldiers available.³⁶ Among other things, it indicates a lack of planning on the part of AMIS prior to the operation commencing. In principle, there were no structures for strategic and operational command and the result was an *ad hoc* organisation which did not have the capacity to command the

³³ See Article 13 (1), *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council*, July 2002.

³⁴ Deane-Peter Baker, 'The AU Standby Force and the Challenges of Somalia', *African Security Review*, 16:2, 2007, p. 122.

³⁵ *BBC News*, 'Burundi delays Somali deployment', 7 August 2007, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6935033.stm>>.

³⁶ Catherine Guicherd (Rapporteur), *The AU in Sudan: Lessons for the African Standby Force* (International Peace Academy, 2007).

mission. This should be linked to the analysis of the PSOD in the previous chapter, which indicated precisely the serious understaffing and lack of resources for planning and leading missions. The logistics were also totally lacking at the beginning of the mission and did not function until a private American company was hired with funding from the *US State Department*. The lack of resources meant that units and observers in the field often lacked sufficient means of communication and transport. Another conclusion was that the operation was completely dependent on funding from external actors and on external actors' technical and tactical advice. This caused unnecessary delays, uncertainty, limitations and confusion.³⁷

Just like all international organisations, the member states' willingness to contribute motivation, funding and resources of different kinds is decisive for the AU's ability to implement. For this reason, the AU's development is largely dependent on its ability to exude confidence both on the continent and internationally. The development of the AU's capacity in the areas of peace and security therefore largely depends on the organisation's ability to make the latest wave of Pan-Africanism tangible in a credible form and thereby act as a catalyst for continental integration. This ability is largely dependent on the member states' perception of the AU's capacity, in relation to the membership cost, which, in the end, either generates political will and drive or an implementation and credibility crisis where financial, personnel and material contributions quickly disappear. The OAU suffered, to a great extent, from implementation difficulties when the organisation's high-flying ambitions were not supported by a corresponding political will from its members. At the moment, however, the majority of member states have a great political willingness to support the AU's work. It is more the case that there is frustration at the Commission's inability to execute decisions or make the most of the member states' expertise in order to support the organisation's work and processes.³⁸

For this reason, the AU's failed missions and the financial problems, combined with its weak stance against, for example, Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe and Omar al-Bashir in Sudan, are serious. Its strength and credibility are weakened, as the high expectations set are not met. The president of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, has repeatedly stated that setting expectations that are too high is a major danger in war-torn regions.³⁹ The same applies to the complicated organisational climate in Africa, in which loyalties change just as quickly as perceptions of capacity and returns. It will take a long time to build up the resources and capacity required to implement the AU's comprehensive *Constitutive Act*. It is deemed that 2010 will not be a realistic target for the operability of the ASF's five brigades within the full scale of deployment scenarios indicated.⁴⁰ The organisation must, therefore, be given time, finances and peaceful surroundings in order to develop this capacity before it is forced into missions that are too large scale and that risk upsetting its present status and the affection for it among many of Africa's leaders and peoples. The AU's leadership also has a responsibility not to set too high expectations until such time as there is sufficient capacity and not to create too big a gap between the organisation's ambitions and its actual capacity. External actors who have lent support to the organisation's ambitions, so far by pushing it into complex conflicts also

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 3–4.

³⁸ Interview with Martin Kimani, Senior Researcher at the ISS, Stockholm, 21 January 2008.

³⁹ Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, speech to the Swedish Parliament on 27 November 2007.

⁴⁰ This clearly emerged at an interview with Colonel Anders Edqvist, former Swedish defence attaché in South Africa, at the Ministry of Defence on 26 November 2007, and at the talk 'The Establishment of the African Standby Force – A Progress Report', by Henri Boshoff, Institute of Security Studies (ISS), Pretoria, South Africa, at the Ministry of Defence in December 2007.

have an important role to play by focusing on the development of the AU's capacity without asking too much of missions over the next few years.

Striking a Balance: African Ownership – External Funding

The lack of economic and material resources is one of the biggest problems that all peace and security initiatives contend with on the African continent. At present, funding from external donors is a necessity in order to be able to carry out any activity whatsoever within the AU and in order to improve the organisation's capacity to forestall, prevent and manage conflicts. *The African Mission in Burundi* (AMIB) and the AMIS were largely funded by external actors, which also applies to the set-up of the ASF. All operations are also influenced greatly by international expertise, advisors and companies. This is, to some extent, problematical in relation to the popular motto, '*African solutions to African problems*'. Bearing in mind the continent's extreme poverty and the limited funds in the public coffers, complete African funding and ownership are thus utopian in the short and medium term, while, in order to maintain the AU's legitimacy and credibility on the continent, it is extremely important that external funding is not accompanied by too much influence on decision-making processes or leadership.⁴¹ Often, increased funding is not enough either, as skills and personnel are in short supply within the organisation. On several occasions, money has been sent back when the AU Commission has not had the staffing capacity to accept and administer these financial contributions to operations.⁴² Bearing in mind the expressed importance of African solutions to African problems and the hesitation over Western interference in decision-making processes, mentorship and advice are instead, according to Anders Edqvist, a model that can be combined with financial support. This model is, however, significantly more difficult than completely taking over, as it is based on mutual trust in order to work.⁴³ Once again, it will be difficult for Sweden and other external actors to strike the right balance.

Conclusions

The African Union was created out of a new wave of Pan-Africanism and has become a very important organisation for peace and security in Africa in a short time. Its charter gives the organisation the ability to intervene when there are serious crimes against humanity and non-constitutional changes of government, such as military coups – something that distinguishes the AU from its toothless predecessor, the OAU. A number of important institutions, such as the Peace and Security Council, the Panel of the Wise, the Continental Early Warning System, and the African Standby Force, have been created in a short time and are accompanied by an impressive doctrine and concept development.

The AU is an organisation with great ambitions regarding the promotion of peace and security, but which, at the same time, suffers from a serious lack of resources. Extremely limited finances and a small staff at its headquarters mean that the organisation has great difficulty meeting the high expectations set. The AU is, therefore, best described as a skeleton structure that must be given time to develop the capacity required in order to bridge the gap between ambition and actual ability. The development of the ASF, based on five regional brigades, is absolutely central to building up this capacity. Despite the fact that the ASF has large sections of the brigades ready on paper, there are major gaps within leadership, training,

⁴¹ Kwesi Aning, 'Africa: Confronting Complex Threats', IPA Coping with Crisis, Working Paper Series, February 2007, pp. 8–10.

⁴² Interview with Martin Kimani.

⁴³ Interview with Anders Edqvist.

equipment, transport options and the general health situation. Having five operational brigades ready by 2010 cannot be regarded as a realistic goal.

Just like all international organisations, the AU suffers from the great breadth of national and regional interests. Just as within the framework of the UN and the EU's international efforts, the political support of the member states is required in each individual case and, in particular, contributions in the form of troops, materiel and diplomacy. The AU will never be more effective than the sum of its members' will. A triangular area of tension has, thereby, arisen between the AU's ambitions, the organisation's resources and capacity and the member states' political interests and will. At present, there is great political will among the majority of member states while the lack of resources is limiting the contributions required for effective implementation.

Despite the shortcomings, the AU has, however, carried out an impressive number of diplomatic tasks, sent observers to conflicts and, in particular, carried out a number of large-scale peacekeeping operations in difficult areas, such as Burundi, Darfur and Somalia, since its official inauguration in 2002. The conclusion is, therefore, that the willingness and ambition that pervade the AU's work must be accompanied by a major build-up in capacity in order to reinforce the organisation's credibility on the African continent and also globally.