

SESSION 1

DISCUSSION PAPER

PEACE, SECURITY AND DEMOCRACY

Introduction

The recent events in Northern Africa and in Côte D'Ivoire remind us that peace remains fragile in Africa. They also show the existence, in the long-term, of an intimate relationship between political stability and democracy. Indeed, the lack of the latter often jeopardizes the former. Despite great improvements in the stability and economic growth of many African states, some of its regions still experience significant domestic conflicts. More than ever, security threats require a common approach based on a variety of partnerships which should aim to establish coordination both at the strategic and at practical levels.

Peacekeeping in Africa

In the previous years and in response to political and military challenges, African leaders have built a range of common institutions. They have decided for an approach that begins at the sub-regional level and moves into regional and continental levels. In the security field, in particular, the African Union has developed the African Peace and Security Architecture, which encompasses a range of conflict-management and conflict-prevention activities. Many successful results have been achieved by the African Union and its partners to ensure support for African Union peace operations and the development of a long-term capacity. However, the complexity and the necessities of modern peace operations imply that no single organization is capable of tackling the challenge on its own.

The Charter of the United Nations acknowledges the role of regional arrangements in dealing with matters of international peace and security. This is the starting point for building a stronger partnership between the United Nations and the African Union. The main goal is to build up the African Union's capacity for peacekeeping, consistent with the goals of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter and the founding act of the African Union, both of which stress the need to support peace, security, and stability on the continent. In particular, there is a need for the African Union to develop the institutional capacities necessary for implementing peace operations, i.e. capacities to plan, manage and support both conflict prevention and peacekeeping activities.

Although the relationship between the UN and the AU is evolving progressively, it has yet to achieve the necessary level of strategic engagement to support a real common approach. In this regard, there is a need to clarify the relationship between the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council. The objective should be to maximize the African Union's strengths in terms of its contribution to conflict prevention, mediation, its ability to address smaller-scale requirements such as mediation and restoration of



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political order, and, finally, its capacity to act as the first response to larger-scale United Nations missions. In developing a more effective relationship between the African Union Peace and Security Council and the United Nations Security Council, the objective should be to establish a division of responsibility based on the African Union's comparative advantages.

However, in devising the distribution of responsibility, it is key not to foster the idea that the UN is subcontracting peacekeeping to the AU. In this context, specific emphasis should be placed upon: recognition of the primacy of the United Nations Security Council in the maintenance of peace and security; the need to enhance the strategic relationship between the United Nations and the African Union, specifically between the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council, and the United Nations Secretariat and the African Union Commission, as the basis for a more effective partnership when addressing issues of mutual interest. This division of responsibility should also take maximum advantage of the strengths of the different organizations involved in Africa, especially regional organizations. In recent years cooperation and understanding has increased between international and regional organizations, but there remains a need for more detailed and functional mechanisms to be created. This is also valid for the relationship between the African Union and the other African sub-regional organizations.

Financial Problems

In examining the past operations, it is clear that the African Union faces particular challenges, as illustrated by the recent and ongoing conflicts in Africa. The complexity, in terms of the range of responses from mediation to intervention, creates demands that are beyond the available resources of the AU.

Regardless of the numerous practical and technical problems faced by the AU, it is clear that the issue at hand is more political than technical. Developing the necessary capability depends on a combination of political will and availability of resources. The lack of political will undermines credibility, while the lack of resources compounds the problem by limiting the ability of a mission to implement its mandate. Indeed, financing options are not difficult to identify. One of the main problems still lies in the question how to finance African Union's peacekeeping missions; in particular, whether or not they should be funded from United Nations-assessed contributions. Unfortunately, no improvements on this issue have been made.

International Fragmentation

While it has become very clear that only by overcoming the present political and economic fragmentation Africa can move ahead towards further peace, development and prosperity, it is also clear that most developed countries have a great responsibility for the current situation, having always dealt with African states on strictly bilateral basis with no attention for any continental approach. Now it is the time to develop a more meaningful strategic relationship between the European Union, the United States, the United Nations, and emerging powers deeply involved in Africa such as China and India.

Even EU members do not have a fully common policy towards Africa. While with the African Peace Facility (AFP) the EU has greatly contributed to support Africa-led peace and security operations, EU member states still have bilateral relationships with African states.

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These bilateral relationships are often the product of historical legacies dating back to the colonial period, which strongly influence the political and economic content of these relationships. Indeed, the priorities of EU member states often overshadow the actual needs of African states.

It is also important to acknowledge the impact of other current events that will influence the ability of the international community to generate the funding that is needed both to support the deployment of African Union peacekeeping missions and the long-term capacity-building. In such a situation, only a global and inclusive coordination of all international partners beyond bilateral relationships can ensure efficient spending and avoid the duplication of costs. This process of pooling together the financial support to African institutions is especially important in light of current economic crisis, which is likely to decrease the resources allocated to the African Union.

Part 2: Democracy and Stability in Africa

It is unlikely that demand for peacekeeping capacity will decrease in the near future. This makes it even more important to ensure that peacekeeping is not seen as the only and universal remedy. Not only should every effort be made to develop a shared strategic vision, but it must also be viewed in the wider context of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction activities.

While one of the priorities should remain active conflict management to create a stable and secure environment at the national, regional, and continental levels, the intimate relationship between democracy and political stability should not be overlooked. The recent events in North Africa have shown something that we already knew from historical experience: that only democratic institutions can ensure long-term political stability. History has taught us, however, another fundamental lesson that we have often disregarded in the past; in order to plant its roots and to be stable, democracy needs to experience economic growth. While security is a prerequisite for both long-term sustainable development and democracy, economic growth is a necessary requirement for the strengthening of newly-born democracies. From this point of view, the recent decision by the G8 to offer financial assistance to the Arab world, firstly to Tunisia and Egypt, should not only be commended, but should be followed by similar actions from other countries and international players.

Conclusion

In the current period of rebellions, secessions and civil wars, it might sound utopian to still talk about African integration, even more so if we take into consideration that in the future the African Union will face additional financial problems, which have two main causes. Firstly, with the likely disappearance of Gaddafi's Libya, one of the main financial contributors of the African Union will likely disappear or at least decrease substantially too. Secondly, we need to acknowledge that many African states mistrust the African Union and that they often condition their contribution to a more transparent administration. Transparency provides information for member states and international donors about what the African Union is doing. Improving transparency and accountability is therefore a key objective because it promotes trust, efficiency and effectiveness. Above all, transparency is also likely to generate additional resources.



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All these elements combined make African integration a very difficult objective to achieve. Nevertheless, we should not stop to favor further cooperation among African countries and we must continue to work on what at first may seem almost as the 'utopia' of African integration.

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