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Making policies work

The AU-UN peace and security partnership:
POWER AND POLITICS

POLITICAL ECONOMY DYNAMICS OF REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN AFRICA

PEDRO

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Recent years have seen a strengthening and growing momentum of the peace and security partnership between the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN). This has been a priority for chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat and UN secretary general António Guterres. The two organisations have put in place several coordination mechanisms over the years, culminating in the Joint UN-AU Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which was signed in September 2017.

While much has been said about improving the technical and operational aspects of the partnership, this paper discusses the political dimensions, namely: the lack of permanent African representation in the UN Security Council (UNSC), despite 70% of UNSC agenda topics relating to Africa, as well as the challenges of securing funding for African peace support operations (PSOs). Taking the AU's growing assertiveness as a point of departure, the paper discusses how the AU uses formal and informal ways to overcome the structural asymmetries between the Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the UNSC while also contending with the national interests of its own member states.

This paper argues that while gaps in technical and operational coordination are indeed barriers to an effective partnership, the key challenges are equally about power and politics. For those working on and supporting the AU-UN peace and security partnership, it is important to recognise that the unresolved fundamental, political and power-related aspects of the partnership affect progress on the more technical and operational aspects of the partnership as well.

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Acknowledgements

Acronyms

AMIS	AU Mission in Sudan
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
APF	African Peace Facility
APSA	African Peace and security Architecture
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AUMIB	African Union Mission in Burundi
AUPSC	African Union Peace and Security Council
AU-UN	African Union-United Nations
CAP	Common African Position
CMCA	Commission for Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EPF	European Peace Facility
EU	European Union
ICG	International Crisis Group
MJTF	Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force
MNJTF	Multinational joint Task Force
MONUSCO	Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en République Démocratique du Congo (UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OAU	Organisation for African Unity
PAPS	Political Affairs, Peace and Security
PSC	Political and Security Committee
PSO	Peace Support Operation
REC	Regional Economic Community
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC COP	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
WTO	World Trade Organization

1. Introduction

While the United Nations (UN) is tasked with maintaining global peace and security, the African Union (AU) has become a leading peace and security actor in Africa. The two organisations recognise each other's strategic importance. In recent years, both organisations have shown an interest in deeping their peace and security partnership culminating in the Joint UN-AU Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which was signed in September 2017. The Framework sets out joint technical and operational steps and activities the two organisations will take, at different levels, to enhance the partnership. This is a welcome development even if the operationalisation of the Framework has proven a challenge. But the technical and operational difficulties of the partnership shouldn't mask the more political and fundamental challenges of the partnership.

Based on desk study and interviews with fifteen diverse stakeholders, this paper discusses the overarching political dynamics of the AU-UN peace and security partnership. It examines two issues in particular: the (un) representativeness of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC); and the challenges of securing UN funding for AU-led peace support operations (PSOs). While about 70% of the UNSC's agenda revolves around Africa, no African country has a permanent seat in the UNSC. The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) tries to influence UNSC decisions through the three non-permanent African states in the UNSC (the A3), but neither the A3 nor the PSC can direct the UNSC. Moreover, peacekeeping is a key component of the AU-UN peace and security partnership and both organisations recognise the AU's comparative advantage in deploying peace support operations (PSOs) in complex settings. However, the two organisations do not have a formal mechanism for financial burden sharing for AU-led PSOs in Africa.

These two contentious aspects of the partnership are particularly problematic for the AU which is increasingly positioning itself as a global actor and claiming space in global governance. How does the AU work within the structural limitations of the UN and the UNSC to secure African peace and security interests? And why have attempts to address the power asymmetry between the AU and the UN failed? The paper argues that while the two, and confront each other over asymmetries, but also try to work better on the technical front, they have a symbiotic relationship in which each relies on the other, and the status quo to assert its own relevance, legitimacy and credibility.

The paper is organised in four sections. The first section sets the historical context of the Africa-UN relationship to identify some of the historical and foundational factors that continue to shape the AU's relationship with the UN. The second section goes on to discuss the tension between primacy of the UNSC in global peace and security governance and the growing drive of the AUPSC to shape decisions of the UNSC. The third analyses another point of contention between the two organisations: financing peacekeeping. It argues that despite the tension around agency, hierarchy and legitimacy over decision making on African peace and security issues, the two organisations have a symbiotic relationship where they need each other to effectively act on their respective mandates. The paper then ends with some concluding remarks on the implications of this political relationship on the future of the AU-UN peace and security partnership.

2. Historical context

The influence of origins

It is important to place the current AU-UN peace and security relations in a historical context in order to understand how the African-UN relationship evolved over time and what underpins the thorny aspects of the relationship we see today.

At the foundation of the UN in 1945, only four independent African states – Ethiopia, Egypt, Liberia and South Africa – could be signatories. Following the wave of independence in the 1960s, they were then joined by a surge of newly independent African countries. The new members challenged the UN's order of business and pushed it to respond to their realities, namely ending colonialism and apartheid in Africa; and improving the socio-economic development of the continent (Adebajo and Luck 2009; Kay 1967).

At the time, the UN was primarily concerned with maintaining the post-Second World War global balance of power. It was largely disinterested in socio-economic matters (Kay 1967: 33) and was tolerant of colonialism as well. For example, Article 73 of the UN Charter referred to colonial powers as "members of the United Nations which have or assume responsibilities for the administration of territories whose peoples have not yet attained self-government". The UN's expectations of them were to "take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples and to assist them in the progressive development of their free political institutions'', but not necessarily to end colonial rule[1].

African states, which by 1960 numbered 25 out of the 99 UN member states, were deeply critical of this position. They pushed the discourse towards the immediate liberation of peoples under colonial subjugation by arguing that the colonial system was an impediment to global peace and security – the UN's *raison d'etre* (Kay 1967: 21). Together with Asian states, the Soviet block and Nordic Allies, African countries pushed for decolonisation and the end of apartheid (Adebajo and Luck 2009), resulting in the adoption of Resolution 1514 (1960) which acknowledged that " all peoples have inalienable rights to complete freedom, the exercise of their sovereignty and the integrity of their national territory" and called for an immediate end to colonial subjugation. With this resolution and by shaping the narrative around colonialism, African states "struck a global normative consensus on the 'impropriety' of colonialism and its defence between 1960-1967" (Kay 1967: 32).

Ending colonialism and apartheid would however, require more than a global normative change. In 1963, 32 African states established the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) with the purpose of – among other things – ending colonialism, defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of African states, and promoting unity and solidarity among them (OAU Charter, Article II). With the establishment of the OAU, African states could coordinate among themselves for collective global activism against colonialism while continuing to provide political and financial support to liberation movements.

But the momentum for Pan African unity was lost in the 70s and 80s. Several of the founding leaders of the OAU or liberation movement were replaced, often through coups. Intrastate and interstate conflicts – at times linked to Cold War dynamics – had overtaken some countries (Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, Ethiopia) well into the 90s[2]. It became apparent that having completed its initial purpose of decolonisation, the OAU wasn't fit to deal with the critical challenges in post-colonial Africa.

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[1] See Article 73 of the UN Charter.
[2] For detailed overview on the various conflict dynamics see (Edo and Olanrewaju 2012).

The thought-leadership for reform came not from member states but the OAU Secretariat itself. The then Secretary General of the OAU, Salim Ahmed Salim, in his 1990 report "*Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World and their Implications for Africa – Proposals for an African Response*" – argued that the state of peace and security in the continent was partly due to the OAU's inability to engage in conflict prevention in a systematic manner and to intervene in intra-state wars (Djinnit and Wane 2020). He advocated for an institutionalised continental conflict resolution mechanism; and argued that the principle of *non-interference* – a sacrosanct principle in the Charter of the OAU – need not "be construed to mean or used to justify *indifference* on the part of the OAU" (quoted in Djinnit and Wane 2020: 9, italics added).

Member states debated the substance of the report but they didn't take onboard the Secretary General's proposals. Instead, they issued a Declaration[3] (OAU 1990) in which they pushed back on the prevailing global discourse on aid conditionality and (one-size fits all approaches to) democratic governance, avoiding the risk of doing so at the bi-lateral level (OAU, 1990; Djinnit and Wane 2020: 13).

This historical context provides two important lessons on the current mandate of the AU and how the AU relates with the UN. First, African states have always relied on solidarity and collective action to achieve their objectives internally and at global fora. This owes to shared challenges but also global power asymmetries they can only overcome by forming alliances. As will be seen in the next sections, the AU pursues this approach to navigate the 'realpolitik' of the UN. Second, maintaining the independence and autonomy of Africa and keeping external influence away, form part of the AU's and OAU's *raison d'etre*. To achieve this goal, African states set continental objectives and act on their own while also engaging in global activism to defend their interests. In peace and security, the two roles reinforce each other. As the AU enhances its capacity to manage peace and security in Africa, the more African peace and security matters can be addressed within the continent without external interference; and the more the AU is recognised as an indispensable partner in global security governance.

That said, the fact that the OAU was established in the context of ending colonial subjugation and safeguarding the continent's interest in global platforms does not imply that its agendas are solely shaped by external dynamics. By contrast, pursuing continental economic development, and socio-cultural cooperation among member states were among the objectives of the OAU and remain a core activity of the AU.

The AU as a 'new' peace and security actor

In 2002, African member states embraced the principle of "non-indifference" to establish the African Union with a mandate to intervene in a member state in the face of grave human rights violations, genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity (Constitutive Act of the AU, Article 4). While, as mentioned above, it was Secretary General, Salim Ahmed Salim, who underlined the need to revisit the principle of non-interference, it was the tragedy of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 which drove the point home: indifference to grave human rights violations, in favour of state sovereignty is unacceptably costly. (Stewart and Andersen 2018).

To prevent and manage conflicts more systematically and with minimal interventions from external actors, the AU launched the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in 2002.[4] **Through a comprehensive structure, and a well-functioning and efficient APSA, the idea was to devise "African solutions to African problems", a popular mantra that continues today.**

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[3] "Declaration on the political and socio-economic situation in Africa and the fundamental changes taking place in the world".

[4] The APSA has five components: a continental early warning mechanism, a Peace and Security Council, Panel of the Wise (for preventive diplomacy), an African Standby Force and the Peace fund. For more on APSA see ECDPM's guide.

In the early 2000s, the UN was the main peace and security actor in Africa and the main organisation with peacekeeping capacities. Yet the latter had become increasingly unsustainable for the UN. The nature of conflicts was shifting from interstate wars to intrastate wars in the 1990s and the traditional peacekeepers which the UN deployed to monitor ceasefires and protect civilians, were ill-fitting. Managing these 'new wars' required a more "proactive, and strategic use of force, rather than the static, defensive, and tactical posture of traditional peacekeeping" (Stewart and Andersen 2018) – which was beyond the scope of UN doctrine.

Moreover, the resounding failure of the UNOSOM humanitarian intervention led by the US in Somalia in 1993 and the UN's disastrous failure in averting the Rwandan genocide, bred skepticism and damaged the credibility of the UN in Africa. In the US, the Somalia Black Hawk incident stirred public outrage and shaped US and Western apprehension about troop contribution for UN peacekeeping missions.

The UN recognised these shortcomings and was ready to enhance its peace and security cooperation with the AU, notably in peacekeeping (Tieku and Hakak 2014). To add to this momentum, the 'September 11' terrorist attacks led to the declaration of the 'Global War on Terror', for which international partners needed countries and organisations willing to take on counterterrorism operations[5]. All of this created an incentive for the AU to continue to build APSA and build its capabilities to deploy PSOs.

Over the years, the AU has become a prominent peace and security actor in Africa, altering its role via-à-vis the UN. The establishment of the APSA has given the AU the institutional machinery to generate information and responses through early warning mechanisms, preventive diplomacy, force deployment and post conflict reconstruction. The effectiveness of the APSA in preventing or containing violent conflicts depends on several political factors such as the state concerned, the type of conflict and regional or international interest (Vanheukelom, Desmidt, 2019). Nonetheless, having demonstrated that it has the legal capacity to intervene in a member state in select cases, is willing to deploy forces even under risky and combat-heavy operations such as AMISOM, and has more buy-in from African states than the UN, the AU enjoys a unique relationship with the UN that no other regional organisation has (Tieku and Hakak 2014).

The rise to prominence of the AU as a leading peace and security actor in Africa has two implications in relation to AU-UN relations. Firstly, **the AUPSC has a mandate to intervene in a member state under certain conditions but it is the UNSC which has the ultimate legal mandate to authorise the use of force.** This raises questions on the hierarchy between the PSC and the UNSC even when cases at hand don't revolve around the use of force. **This is further complicated by the absence of Africa at the UNSC decision making table, on a permanent basis,** bestowed with the same rights and privileges of the permanent members (P5). Secondly, as much as the UN appreciates the AU's ability to deploy PSOs in complex and risky contexts, it has not set aside predictable funding for African PSOs or APSA for that matter. The AU therefore argues that the two organisations share the expenses as an expression of their shared responsibility, while the UN shies away from making financial commitments for African PSOs which are notoriously costly.

These two tensions are the focus of the following two sections.
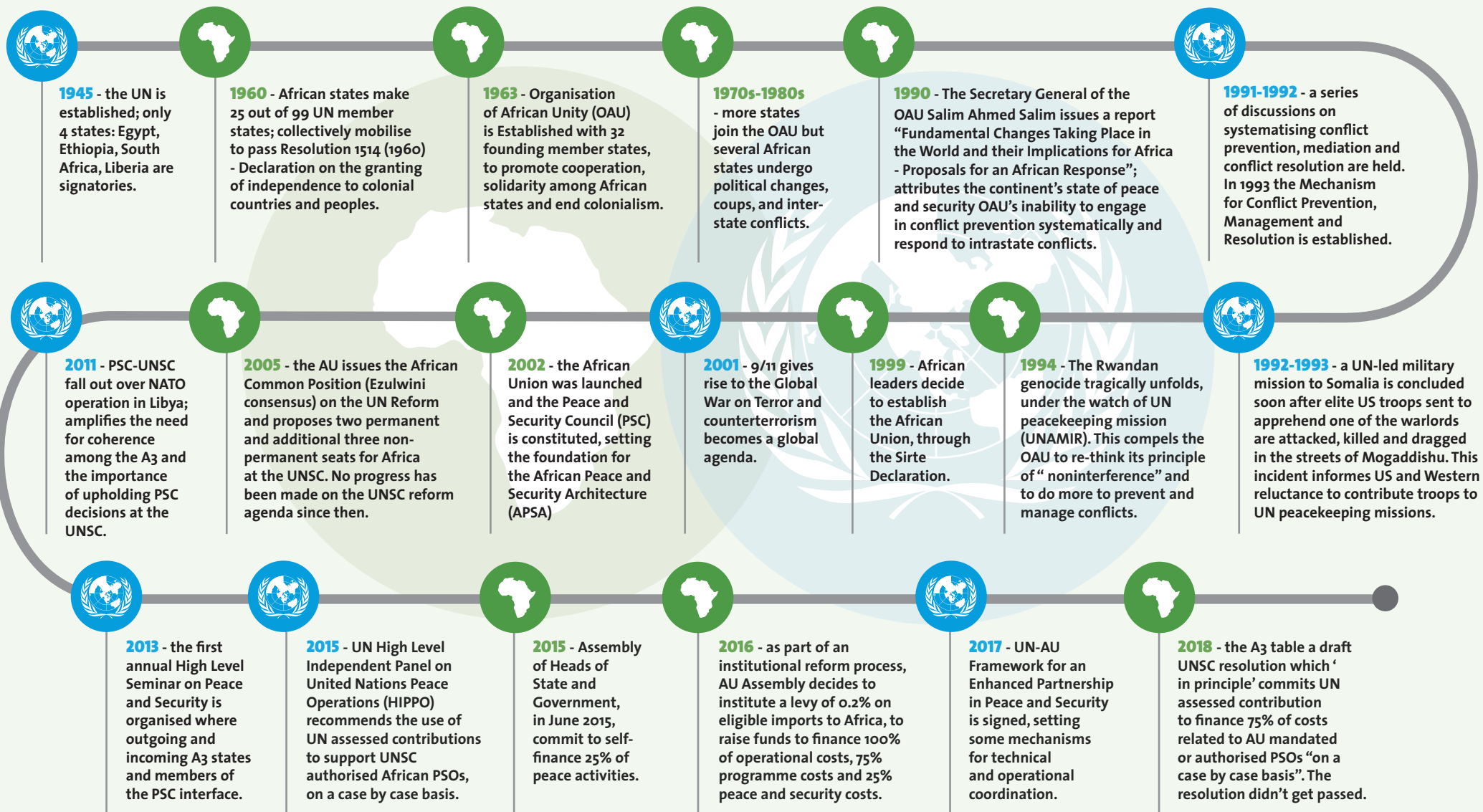
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[5] Interview with a senior scholar on the AU 11 February 2021.

Key events in the UN-AU peace and security partnership

The current AU-UN peace and security partnership faces several challenges and opportunities. Some of these dynamics are rooted in history. The following infographic illustrates notable developments that shaped the UN, the AU or the partnership as a whole.

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1945 - the UN is established; only 4 states: Egypt, Ethiopia, South Africa, Liberia are signatories.

1960 - African states make 25 out of 99 UN member states; collectively mobilise to pass Resolution 1514 (1960) - Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples.

1963 - Organisation of African Unity (OAU) is Established with 32 founding member states, to promote cooperation, solidarity among African states and end colonialism.

1970s-1980s - more states join the OAU but several African states undergo political changes, coups, and inter-state conflicts.

1990 - The Secretary General of the OAU Salim Ahmed Salim issues a report "Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World and their Implications for Africa - Proposals for an African Response"; attributes the continent's state of peace and security OAU's inability to engage in conflict prevention systematically and respond to intrastate conflicts.

1991-1992 - a series of discussions on systematising conflict prevention, mediation and conflict resolution are held. In 1993 the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution is established.

2011 - PSC-UNSC fall out over NATO operation in Libya; amplifies the need for coherence among the A3 and the importance of upholding PSC decisions at the UNSC.

2005 - the AU issues the African Common Position (Ezulwini consensus) on the UN Reform and proposes two permanent and additional three non-permanent seats for Africa at the UNSC. No progress has been made on the UNSC reform agenda since then.

2002 - the African Union was launched and the Peace and Security Council (PSC) is constituted, setting the foundation for the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)

2001 - 9/11 gives rise to the Global War on Terror and counterterrorism becomes a global agenda.

1999 - African leaders decide to establish the African Union, through the Sirte Declaration.

1994 - The Rwandan genocide tragically unfolds, under the watch of UN peacekeeping mission (UNAMIR). This compels the OAU to re-think its principle of " noninterference" and to do more to prevent and manage conflicts.

1992-1993 - a UN-led military mission to Somalia is concluded soon after elite US troops sent to apprehend one of the warlords are attacked, killed and dragged in the streets of Mogaddishu. This incident informes US and Western reluctance to contribute troops to UN peacekeeping missions.

2013 - the first annual High Level Seminar on Peace and Security is organised where outgoing and incoming A3 states and members of the PSC interface.

2015 - UN High Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (HIPPO) recommends the use of UN assessed contributions to support UNSC authorised African PSOs, on a case by case basis.

2015 - Assembly of Heads of State and Government, in June 2015, commit to self-finance 25% of peace activities.

2016 - as part of an institutional reform process, AU Assembly decides to institute a levy of 0.2% on eligible imports to Africa, to raise funds to finance 100% of operational costs, 75% programme costs and 25% peace and security costs.

2017 - UN-AU Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security is signed, setting some mechanisms for technical and operational coordination.

2018 - the A3 table a draft UNSC resolution which ' in principle' commits UN assessed contribution to finance 75% of costs related to AU mandated or authorised PSOs "on a case by case basis". The resolution didn't get passed.

3. The AU PSC and UNSC hierarchy

An evolving relationship

As discussed above, the OAU was transformed into the AU with the objectives – among others – of managing continental peace and security with minimal external interference and articulating Africa's voice on global issues. This vision was historically rooted in how the continent attained liberation from colonialism and Aparthied and also pushed the structural limits of the UN – by collective mobilisation. But the full realisation of the AU's vision on peace and security are met with politico-legal and financial challenges. This section discusses the legal and political contestations between the AU-UN over primacy of decision-making powers of the AUPSC and UNSC.

Under Article VII of the UN Charter, the UNSC has the ultimate authority to maintain global peace and security. But Article VIII of the UN Charter also encourages regional organisations to assume a role in regional conflict prevention and management. The AU operates based on this provision and has constituted its PSC with substantive decision-making powers including on coercive measures vis-a-vis member states. As one veteran African diplomat recalled, the momentum to resolve African issues by Africans was so great and the confidence on the PSC so strong, that back in the 90s and early 2000s, the discourse among AU member states was whether Africa needs a UNSC decision in order to act in a member state, or if the decision of the PSC suffices[6].

By virtue of being members of the UN**, all African states, in principle, recognize the supremacy of the UNSC, whether or not they think it's justified. But the AU doesn't see itself as a mere implementer of UNSC decisions.** It expects that the UNSC would defer to PSC positions when deciding on African issues (ICG 2019) and that in certain circumstances, UNSC approval for its decision to intervene or use force can be "granted 'after the fact' in circumstances requiring urgent action" (AU 2005). This shows that the AU sees itself as the primary peace and security decision maker in Africa, even if the UNSC has legal privileges in context of Article VIII of the UN Charter.

The AU draws its 'self-image' from three of its comparative advantages: i) its political legitimacy as an organisation established by its own member states, ii) greater proximity to the conflict setting and contextual expertise as a result, iii) its two-decade investment in designing and implementing the African peace and security architecture (APSA) with the ability to deploy peace support operations PSOs in complex settings.

Over the years, the AU has earned buy-in from its member states and has developed the technical and bureaucratic capacity needed to prevent and manage conflicts. Through the APSA, the AU has put in place a mechanism for conflict early warning and response, stabilisation, and post conflict reconstruction even if whether, when and how the AU responds is a political matter. This capacity is largely housed in the African Union Commission, namely the former Department of Political Affairs (DPA) which is now the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) which oversees the implementation of APSA. But the AUC has also established liaison offices in 17 countries to monitor and coordinate the Union's work in these countries[7]. This has given the AU the technical authority and contextual expertise on many of the peace and security issues in the continent.

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[6] Interview with former senior AU official 21 May 2021.
[7] See African Union 2016 for the list of liaison offices.

The AU has also increasingly established itself as a "norm entrepreneur" by popularising normative stances such as the principle of non-indifference, the responsibility to protect, and group rights (Okeke 2018; Deng 2009; Murithi 2019). All of this has added to the AU's authority on African peace and security matters and has allowed the AU to assume roles such as deploying PSOs, which was managed solely by the UN prior to 2002. Based on this, the **AU claims recognition for its role in global governance and wants a permanent seat at the decision-making table. The UNSC has had to reckon with the AU's comparative advantages and seeks to improve its relationship with the AU and the AUPSC but doesn't have incentives to reform.**

These power dynamics between the AU and the UN, and their effect on peace and security decision making are discussed in the rest of this section.

Reforming the UNSC

One of the fundamental questions raised by African states in relation to the UN is the exclusivity of UNSC. This of course is not a new problem. In the context of the UN 60th anniversary in 2005, the UN tabled a UNSC reform agenda. Different regional blocks made proposals. The AU proposed an expansion of the UNSC in which Africa would have a total of five non-permanent seats and two permanent seats, with veto powers (AU 2005). The AU's proposal was similar to that of the "G4" – Germany, India, Japan and Brazil – who proposed additional four non-permanent seats (one each for Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe) and six new permanent seats without veto powers to be taken up by the G4 and two for African states (Welz 2013).

The AU's proposal for two permanent seats for African states was bold and principled but not pragmatic. Even within the AU, there were different takes on the proposal. Two ideas were particularly debated prior to the declaration of the Ezulwini consensus: one was whether the request for two permanent seats was realistic and if Africa should instead request one[8]; the second was where to align positions with the G4, to make Africa's proposal more compelling and attainable. Member states were divided. Some argued for pragmatism and the promise of incremental gains while others insisted that differentiated privilege among permanent members of the UNSC would be indefensible and also ineffective as veto wielding members would continue to be disproportionately represented (Welz 2013).

But the nature of the 'ask' wasn't the only issue that impeded negotiation. **AU member states could not agree on which two African states would take the two permanent seats on behalf of Africa. At the beginning, the proposal was to have permanent membership on a rotational basis, but later on, competition emerged between South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria and Egypt.**[9] These 'swing states' started lobbying for support and against each other (Welz 2013). Regional competitors who might stand to lose on national interests should these countries take permanent seats also lobbied for their disqualification. For the AU, this was double trouble: it needed to 'sell' the proposal and get a global buy-in for it (outside the continent), while also temper the deeply nationalistic interests of its powerful states to present a continental vision and a tenable proposal.

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[8] Interview with former senior AU official 21 May 2021.
[9] Interview with former senior AU official 21 May 2021.

The process was a typical example of two recurrent and inherent challenges the AU faces as an intergovernmental organisation: the difficult and highly political task of steering its members towards a continental position despite competing national interests; and the need to follow the lead of its member states which are all equal on paper, but some hold more sway in practice. The big, and/or influential member states which can wield financial or thought-leadership, like the 'swing states' mentioned above, often seek to achieve national goals through the AU. This latter point is a well-recognised challenge faced by intergovernmental organisations in general, and African regional organisations in particular (Byiers et al. 2019).

In the end, AU member states could not agree on who would represent them, and decided to not align with the G4 proposal. The UNSC reform process itself stalled and no major effort has been put to revive it since 2005 when it was tabled.

As for the AU, the decision to go with a principled proposal over a pragmatic approach (one permanent seat and or no veto power) can be seen as a reflection of the AU's understanding of Africa's rightful place in the UNSC – but it can also be seen as weak diplomacy on the part of the AU. Whatever the judgement on the matter, it's clear that the competition for the two permanent seats weakened the AU's proposal. Even if African positions were fully aligned and the continent managed to speak with one voice, including on which states would take over the two permanent seats, members of the UNSC wouldn't have heeded the call to change the composition of the UNSC in transformative ways.

Indeed, **the more fundamental impediment to the reform process in general was the UNSC itself; the permanent members had neither the will nor the incentives to share their (veto) powers with new members.** This is particularly true for some members of the P5 such as the UK, France and Russia – who lost some of their global relevance in a post-colonial (UK and France) or post-Cold War era (Russia). They need to hold on to their veto-wielding membership at the UNSC to retain global geopolitical power.

The coalitions that made proposals such as the G4 and 'United for Consus' group also had their own politics too. At times the motivation for joining these coalitions was to undermine the campaign of their regional opponents as it was to tap into the prospect of a permanent seat at the UNSC. For example, the 'United for Consensus' group led by Italy and including Pakistan opposed the G4's proposal due to regional competition between Germany and Italy, and Pakistan and India[10]. Similarly, China continues to support the African proposition and lobbies against a compromised proposal such as alignment with the G4, in part to block Indian and Japanese permanent membership in the UNSC[11]. In other words, the conflicting interests of different countries that are currently under-represented, starting with African ones, has reinforced the status quo.

Fifteen years after the reform agenda, all indications are that the formal structural arrangement of the UNSC is unlikely to change in the near future. The different blocks and coalitions have maintained their positions and continue to lobby for and against each other's proposals whenever there are hints of activating the reform. In this context, the 'success' of African member states has been in maintaining the Ezulwini consensus and not breaking the 'African voice' despite the pressure they face from different directions[12]. As one interviewee put it, "the UN is a place where realpolitik is played; it's a deep jungle. The one thing the African group has going for it is its solidarity; that is how Africa is able to yield influence."[13] This means the AU needs to try other strategies to ensure African interests and positions are well reflected in the UNSC despite the Council's structural limitations.

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[10] Interview with a former AU member state diplomat 20 May 2021.
[11] Interview with a former AU member state diplomat 20 May 2021.
[12] Interview with a senior AU official 9 June 2021.
[13] Interview with a senior AU official 9 June 2021.

African influence in an unreformed UNSC

With limited possibilities of transforming the UNSC formally, African states rely on informal channels such as the A3 (the bloc of three elected African countries to the UNSC) to influence the debates within the UNSC and challenge its working methods.

While the need to better represent PSC positions in the UNSC was always clear to members of the AU, it became even more apparent following the fallout between the PSC and the UNSC over the intervention in Libya in 2011 (Amani Africa 2021). The 'Libya incident' – where the PSC was working towards a negotiated solution while the UNSC imposed a no-fly zone and opted for the use of force – continues to be a painful reminder to the AU that the UNSC gets the final say. But the AU took the lesson that it would need to do more to be heard at the UNSC.

In 2013, Algeria took the lead in organising a ministerial level High Level Seminar on Peace and Security in 2013, where outgoing and incoming African members of the A3 interfaced with members of the PSC. These meetings have been organised annually since 2013 with the aim of systematising coordination among the A3 and between the A3 and PSC.

Building on the early years of these annual High-Level meetings, the AU took a strong interest in the coordination and reporting of the A3. In January 2016 (Decision 598), the AU Assembly decided to further cement the "*special responsibility [of African members of the UN Security Council} to ensure that the decisions of the PSC are well reflected in the decision-making process of the UNSC on peace and security issues of concern to Africa".* It requested the A3 *to "report through the PSC to the Assembly, on their efforts within the Security Council and the extent to which they managed to promote African positions as articulated by the PSC".*

AU member states generally subscribe to the notion of A3 coordinating among themselves and also reporting back to the AU, as evidenced in their adoption of the decision in January 2016. But it's hard to say that all member states accept the *responsibility* to *represent* PSC positions at the UNSC. For example, even though Egypt played a positive role in trying to bring the A3 together during its UNSC membership in 2016-2017, it's more critical of this responsibility (ICG 2019: 15).

As an intergovernmental organisation, decisions of the AU do not supersede that of member states. But in the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the PSC, member states have agreed to "accept and implement decisions of the Peace and Security Council, in accordance with the Constitutive Act" (AU 2016; Art7(3). Moreover, unlike the campaign for UNSC seats in other regions where countries have to campaign at the national level to claim the seat allocated to their region, African members of the UNSC are collectively endorsed by members of the AU through consensus and with regional representation in mind (Amani Africa 2021). The notion of representing PSC positions at the UNSC is therefore drawn out of these arrangements.

This means A3 have to balance between their national, regional and continental interests and their track record in this regard is positive even if not perfect. For example, by some accounts, the A3 delivered 16 joint statements at the UNSC in 2019[14], and vote splitting occurred only in 8 out of 289 topics between 2010-2019 (Forti and Singh 2019: 7). Even Egypt and Ethiopia – who have competing regional interests in general and were undergoing tough negotiations on the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Nile – informally agreed to put their differences aside and work together during their overlapping UNSC membership in 2017[15].

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[14] https://issafrica.org/iss-today/africa-can-become-more-influential-in-the-un-security-council
[15] Interview with a former AU member state diplomat 20 May 2021; Amani Africa 2021.

However, there are also cases where the A3 take differing positions. A case in point was the stance taken by AU member states on Sudan's former president Omar al-Bashir. In 2005, the UNSC issued Security Council Resolution 1593, which referred al-Bashir to the ICC for crimes against humanity. The ICC issued an arrest warrant in 2009 and 2010 but the former president travelled to Uganda and South Africa in the years after. In June 2017, the ICC briefed the UNSC and called on it to act. Of the A3, Senegal supported the Court's work on Darfur while Egypt and Ethiopia called for caution and argued that the ICC process undermines the sovereignty of Sudan and the peace process that was underway at the time (Rivera 2018; UN 2017).

Maintaining coherence therefore has its challenges, but most observers agree that the A3 – more so than any other grouping in the UNSC – try to consistently speak with 'one voice'. They are also increasingly gaining recognition as an important block and are often consulted on African portfolios even if not their inputs are not always taken onboard.[16] The P5 avoid standing in direct opposition to PSC positions supported by the A3. In recent years, the A3 have also been deliberate about aligning to or at least not contradicting each other's national positions if there are no PSC positions to stand by.[17] They don't always succeed but the attempt is a laudable development.

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[16] Interview with a former AU member state diplomat 20 May 2021; interview with a close observer of the UNSC 28 May 2021; Interview with a senior AU official 9 June 2021; Amani, 2021.
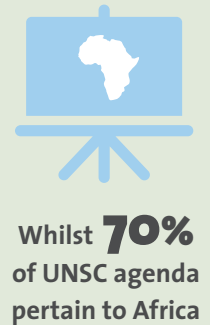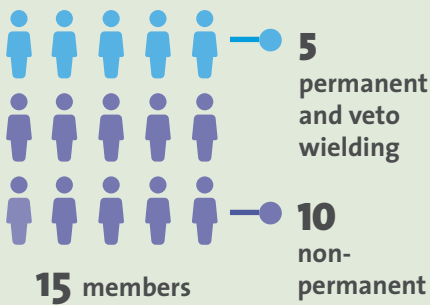
[17] Interview with senior AU official 9 June 2021.

# The set up of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)
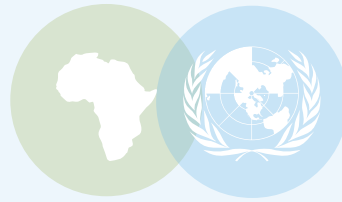
ecdpm

UNSC is the ultimate decision maker on global peace and security.
It is made of 15 states.

15 members

5 permanent and veto wielding

10 non-permanent

3 rotating African non-permanent members (A3)

No African state occupies a permanent seat yet

Whilst **70%** of UNSC agenda pertain to Africa

In 2005, at the height of the UNSC reform agenda. African states - through the Common African Position on UN Reforms (Ezulwini consensus) suggested:
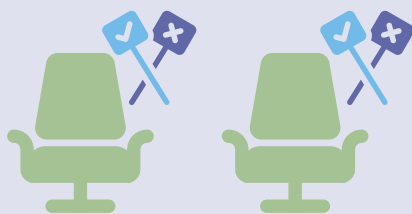
2 permanent seats with veto rights for African states

3 additional non- permanent seats for African states

In absence of progress on UNSC reform formally, the AU tries to influence UNSC decision through informal structures:

Making sure the A3 align with AU PSC decisions or positions during their term in the UNSC.

The A3 try to align their national positions when there's no PSC position.

Encouraging the A3 to become 'pen holders' on African issues at the UNSC.

Enhancing the capacity of AU Permanent Mission to the UN to liaise between Addis Ababa and New York and to retain continuity as the constitution of the A3 changes

New ways to alter the UNSC

Beyond being a recognised block and being consulted, **the AU aims to challenge and alter the working methods of the UNSC. The low hanging fruit in this regard is changing the pen holder system of the UNSC.** France, the UK and the US have established themselves as pen holders i.e., political and technical leads on specific African countries or themes where they draft resolutions for example. This is based on the P3's colonial or historical links to specific countries or regions but also their permanent membership which affords them continuity and institutional memory on most files.

African states are increasingly questioning the legitimacy of this arrangement and aim to become de-facto pen holders on African matters[18]. Accordingly, the A3 together with the AU Permanent Observer Mission in New York have stepped up their engagement with the UNSC. They increasingly make substantive contributions on both thematic and country-specific agenda points of the UNSC, and have been expanding their public visibility online and off-line to demonstrate 'ownership' of African issues[19]. This has added to the recognition of the A3 as a block and their legitimacy to substantively contribute to debates and resolutions of the UNSC. All of these steps go towards being recognised as de facto pen holders on African matters. Yet exerting influence through quiet diplomacy and public agenda setting – which are key aspects of getting things done at the UNSC – will continue to prove difficult for the A3 given the capacity gaps of most A3 delegations[20].

There is diversity in the size of delegations of the A3, but **all African countries lack the advantage of permanent membership: established familiarity of topics, actors and working methods of the UNSC as well as the networks in the UN 'bubble' in New York**. Their UN delegations are not comparable to that of the P5 and very few manage to scale up their UN delegations well enough to carry the technical and bureaucratic demands of UNSC membership. The Permanent Observer Mission of the AU plays an indispensable role in maintaining institutional memory among rotating A3 members. Yet, it only has eight team members people who perform the Mission's three core functions as: a formal secretary of the A3, convener of the Africa Group of the UN General Assembly, and representative of the AU Chairperson of the AUC[21].

Further, the A3 also have to work with inadequate or delayed communication from the PSC, and the difficult task of balancing between national, regional and continental positions – both of which expose them to 'vote splitting' or pressure from other groupings in the UNSC (Amani Africa 2021: 12). Some succumb to pressure more easily than others: Francophone African countries are said to have a soft spot for France.[22]

The A3's attempt to hold the pen on African issues puts them at odds with members of the UNSC who have interests in maintaining the status quo. While the P5 welcome the A3's joint positions and other efforts to facilitate communication between the UNSC and the PSC, they implicitly and explicitly reiterate the primacy and even supremacy of the UNSC. For example, when taking part in joint field visits with the PSC, members of the UNSC insist that they participate as members of the UNSC and not as the UNSC *per se* (ICG 2019). On the African side, this is interpreted a reminder that the PSC and the UNSC are not of equal stature[23].

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[18] Interview with a close observer of the UNSC 28 May 2021.
[19] Interview with senior AU official 9 June 2021.
[20] Interview with a close observer of the UNSC 28 May 2021.
[21] Interview with a close observer of the UNSC 28 May 2021. Interview with senior AU official 9 June 2021.
[22] Interview with former AU member state diplomat 20 May 2021; interview with former senior AU official 21 May 2021.
[23] Interview with senior AU official 9 June 2021.

As much as the AU may resent this reminder, this asymmetry feeds into its symbiotic relationship with the UN. The UNSC has the necessary legal authority to make decisions on African peace and security matters especially when it involves the use of force or deployment of peacekeeping missions. It is also financially better resourced. But **the AU has the advantage of proximity to conflict contexts and buy-in from African states; it also has the ability to deploy PSOs quickly and into volatile contexts.**

Under these circumstances, even if the PSC was to achieve an equal political status as the UNSC, without financial autonomy and legal legitimacy at the same level as Article 7 of the UN Charter – it won't be able to act on its decisions. Therefore, in the short to medium term AU stands to gain from accepting the supremacy and primacy of the UNSC. For example, **the AU's proposal for UN assessed contribution to fund African PSOs, is based on the premise that the UN (and not the AU) holds the ultimate legal authority and responsibility of the UNSC to maintain peace and security** (AU 2015).

4.   The AU-UN partnership and financing PSOs
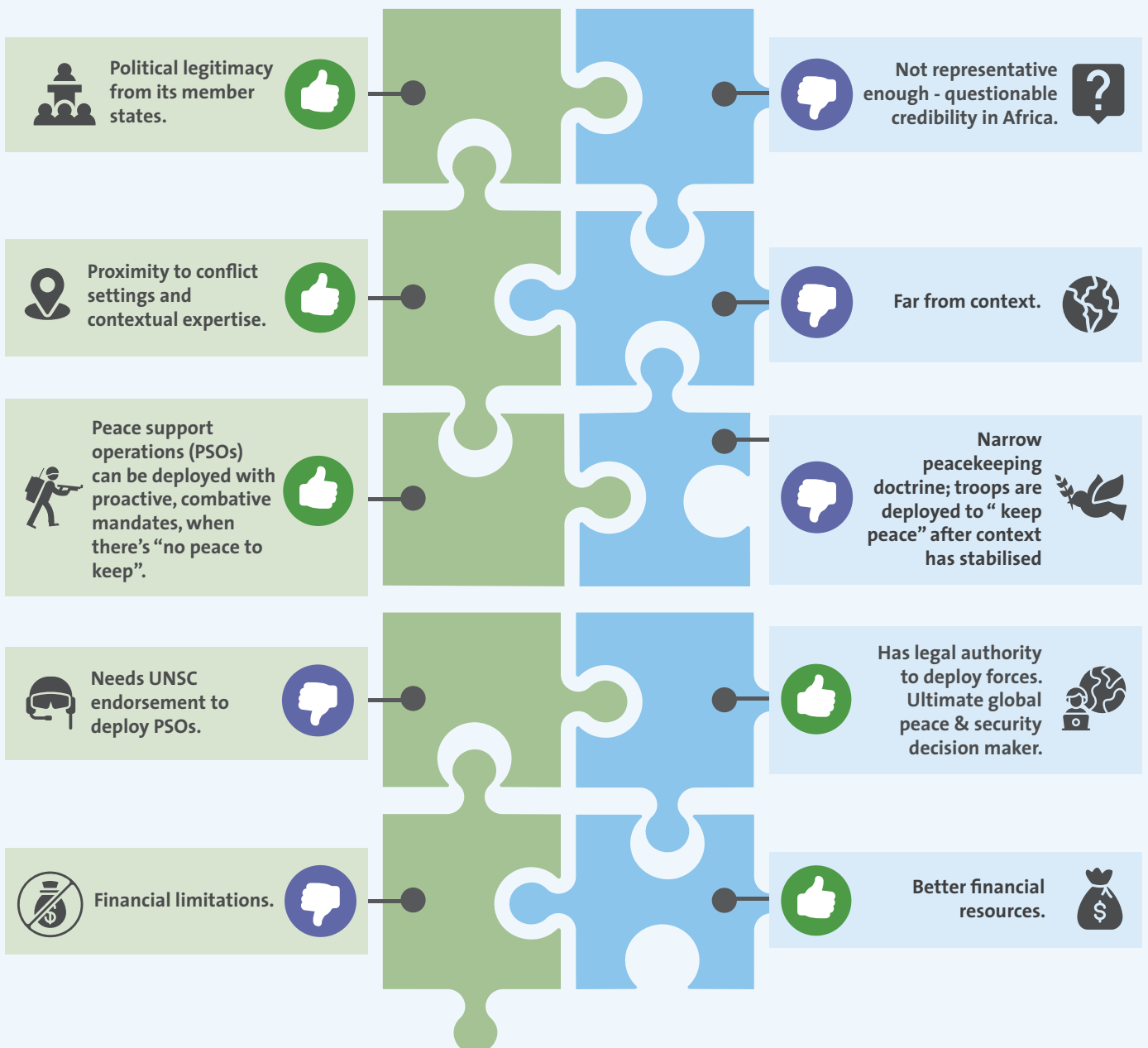
Seeking UN contributions

One of the key comparative advantages of the AU over the UN is its ability to deploy PSOs in complex contexts where the UN cannot, for both doctrinal and political reasons. The doctrinal reason revolves around the complexity of a security context where there is 'no peace to keep' and more active and complex military interventions are needed to stabilise a country. In this case, AU PSOs rather than the UN peacekeeping missions can do the job. Politically, in contexts of intrastate conflicts, where PSO deployment requires impartiality and sensitivity to sovereignty, the AU's efforts are better received than the UN's. A case in point was the deployment of the UN-AU hybrid mission in Darfur (UNAMID) which Sudan only consented to because it was a hybrid mission (Tieku and Hakak 2014).

The symbiotic relationship between the AU and the UN therefore, lies in the fact that the AU has more political and doctrinal leeway to deploy forces but lacks finances. The UN on the other hand has the legal mandate to authorise deployment, some capacity in logistics but lacks political legitimacy as well as troops to deploy in difficult circumstances in Africa. The AU is well aware of its comparative advantage but also its limitations. In its Common Position on the UN Review of Peace operations in 2015, **the AU positioned African PSOs as "local solutions to global problems" and a positive contribution to the "global common good" (AU 2015: 9).** Based on this, the AU argued that the international community, through the AU, has the duty to support AU operations", preferably through assessed contributions. The AU's claims for UN assessed contributions are based on the conviction that "the UNSC retains the primacy for the maintenance of international peace and security and that, in undertaking peace operations in the continent, the AU is responding to an international obligation and acting on behalf of the UN (AU 2015: 10). In short, the AU wants to maintain political leadership on decisions over the deployment and management of PSOs. But the UNSC – which has the mandate to authorise PSO deployment and the responsibility to maintain global peace and security – should pay for those PSOs.

AU-UN symbiotic relationship
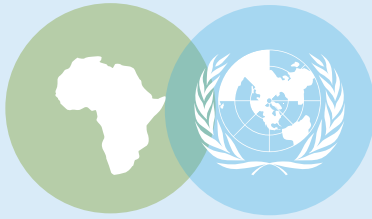
The AU questions UNSC's representativeness and wants the UNSC to defer to it on African matters. Yet it accepts the primacy of the UNSC and argues that it deploys PSOs on behalf of the UNSC, which justifies the AU's proposal for UN assessed contribution to pay for 75% of cost of PSOs.

The P5 appreciate the AU's contributions, but they have no incentives to change the membership or set up of the UNSC. The global geopolitical relevance of the P5 partly stems from their permanent membership & veto power in the UNSC. Therefore, they insist on the supremacy of the UNSC to avoid becoming mere payers and observers of PSC decisions.

African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC)

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

AUPSC	UNSC
👍 Political legitimacy from its member states.	👎 Not representative enough - questionable credibility in Africa.
👍 Proximity to conflict settings and contextual expertise.	👎 Far from context.
👍 Peace support operations (PSOs) can be deployed with proactive, combative mandates, when there's "no peace to keep".	👎 Narrow peacekeeping doctrine; troops are deployed to " keep peace" after context has stabilised
👎 Needs UNSC endorsement to deploy PSOs.	👍 Has legal authority to deploy forces. Ultimate global peace & security decision maker.
👎 Financial limitations.	👍 Better financial resources.

The AU had been discussing securing UN assessed contributions for African PSOs as far back as 2008, with some encouragement from the US under the Obama administration. The AU's proposal for UN assessed contributions was further reinforced by the report of the UN High Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (HIPPO for short), which, having acknowledged the political and doctrinal limitations of UN peacekeeping, recommended the use of UN assessed contributions to support UNSC authorised African PSOs, on a case-by-case basis (UN 2015).

Around the same time as the HIPPO report, the EU, which is AU's main financial partner in peace and security, cut down its financial support to the biggest African PSO – AMISOM. This heightened the urgency to secure predictable funding for African PSOs. The AU as an organisation set out to reform itself and improve its financial autonomy under the leadership of President Kagame of Rwanda in 2016. The reform set a few priorities including improving the financial autonomy of the AU, the bureaucratic efficiency of the AUC, the popular relevance of the AU vis-a-vis African citizens and the AU's ability to elevate continental positions on global matters (Apiko and Miyandazi 2019).

Accordingly, the 'Kaberuka proposal' was adopted with a fundraising strategy of introducing a 0.2% levy on select imports which, if implemented by all states, would allow the AU to finance 25% of its PSOs (excluding AMISOM), 75% of AU's programmatic costs and 100% of the AU's operational costs (AU Peace Fund 2016; Apiko and Aggad 2017). The UN welcomed this proposal and in UNSC resolution 2320 (2016) the Council communicated its readiness to consider the AU's proposal while staying clear of making any commitments (ICG 2019).

The last AU attempt to secure UN assessed contributions for African PSOs was in 2018. Ethiopia had started its two-year term at the UNSC in 2017 and enhancing the AU-UN relations in peace and security was one of its key priorities. In 2018, Ethiopia, in close coordination with the A3 (Cote D'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea) and the PSC secretariat tabled **a resolution which sought to secure an 'in principle' commitment from the UNSC to finance 75% of costs related to AU mandated or authorised PSOs "on a case-by-case basis".** This proposal was premised on the primacy of the UN in maintaining international peace and security but also on the recognition that the AU PSC deploys PSOs on behalf of the UNSC. At the operational level, it was also based on the AU's comparative advantage of being able to deploy forces quickly, for a longer time frame and with a mandate to engage in combat (AU Peace fund 2016; Stewart and Andersen 2018).

The draft resolution had significant buy-in from UN members within the UNSC and beyond but it was also caught in political dynamics within the UNSC. The US for example, had undergone a change of government in 2017 and unlike the Obama administration which was open to the idea, the Trump administration was trying to cut down its UN related costs altogether (ICG 2019). France, which had initially backed to AU's proposal quickly changed its mind when it realised its support for this resolution might undermine its negotiation with the US for UN funding for the G5 Sahel force[24].

More generally, **the P5, notably the US, had concerns that such a commitment – even when done on a case-by-case basis, could set a precedent for other regional organisations** and stretch the UN budget. They also raised questions about the AU's capacity to pay 25% of PSO costs, the adequacy of the AU's human rights and financial compliance mechanisms, and the mission command which the AU proposed would be appointed by the AU Chairperson.

The discussion on the finances made it clear that the position of the PSC on funding 25% of PSO costs in fact lacked clarity. Some PSC members, for example, suggested that the 'in kind' contributions of African troop-contributing countries go towards the calculation of the 25% AU contribution (ICG 2019). Questions were also raised on whether

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[24] Interview with former AU member state diplomat 19 May 2021.

AU member states sought to meet 25% of their PSO related costs or peace and security costs writ large[25]. Lack of clarity among the A3 and the PSC further heightened the concern of the P5 that the AU may not be able to pay for 25% of PSO expenses.

The A3 tried to assuage these concerns. They affirmed the AU's willingness and ability to pay the 25%, and that the AU would put in place strict human rights prevention and investigation mechanisms. Since the PSC was clear on the AU maintaining the overall command of the PSOs, the only concession and clarity that could be made there was that the UN's assessed contributions would only be used for AU-led and not AU mandated PSOs (ICG 2020).

The 2018 draft proposal on getting UN assessed contributions for African PSOs eventually faltered, with the A3 feeling like African PSO were being treated unfairly and to a higher human rights standard than the Blue Helmets and that the P5 were non-committal for other reasons (financial and political) than those they cited (ICG 2020). South Africa tried to revive the draft when it assumed UNSC membership in 2019, even taking the unprecedented move of organising a trip to Washington to lobby the US, but to no avail.

At the time of this study, the AU had paused negotiations with the UN and was instead reviewing its position to have clarity on the use of the 0.2% levy and the financial implications of funding 25% of expenses related to PSOs. Such a position would need to come from the Assembly but deliberation has been delayed due to COVID-19 and inability of African states to hold an in-person Summit in 2021. In the meantime, the AU is working on compliance frameworks on troops' discipline and policies on human rights, sexual exploitation and abuse – to address the concerns expressed by some members of the P5[26].

That said, as the foregoing discussion highlights, the AU-UN negotiation on financing PSOs is not only a technical or financial debate but also a political negotiation in which the two Councils defend their respective interests. **The AU wants to maintain political autonomy (by holding force command for example) and financial security**. Where it has the capacity, political will and political legitimacy to deploy PSOs, it doesn't have funds or the legal mandate to do it without UNSC support and authorisation.

The UN on the other hand wants to avoid becoming a mere financier and spectator of AU's PSOs. It wants to underline the UNSC's primacy in decision making and take on force command of PSOs to ensure its political primacy. It recognises that its peacekeeping doctrine is out of date and that UN interventions are unwelcome in most places in Africa without a sound partnership with the AU. The **two organisations therefore, are in a symbiotic relationship where, in as much as they compete with each other, they sustain each other's relevance by compensating for each other's limitations.**

AU member states, the AU and the EU

The AU-UN discussion on funding for PSOs is further complicated by two recent external developments: the growing popularity of ad-hoc regional military operations that don't need AU authorisation, and changes in EU's financial assistance to the AU which was the main source of funding for African PSOs.

In the past few years there has been a growing popularity of military operations that are not directly commanded by the AU or any of the recognised RECs under APSA. These operations, such as the G5 Sahel and the MJTF, are set up by AU member states to fight shared cross border security threats like Boko Haram in the case of MNJTF and terrorism and insurgency in the case of the G5 Sahel. These forces often work within their own states and cross over

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[25] Interview with former AU member state diplomat 19 May 2021.
[26] Interview with senior AU official 9 June 2021.

to neighbouring states based on mutual agreement. Since these are more like joint military operations, they do not necessarily need UNSC authorisation (Williams 2019). Some of these types of ad-hoc operations – for example the MNJTF and the G5 Sahel – have received PSC approval but the AU does not have direct military, political or legal oversight.

The emergence of these ad-hoc PSOs has been partly attributed to the failure of the operationalisation of the African Standby Force. But these ad-hoc 'coalitions of the willing' also offer flexibility to the member states that establish them. For example when the regional scope of a security threat doesn't overlap with an existing REC, such arrangements might be more effective than those deployed through RECs (De Carvalho and Leijenaar 2017). On the other hand, their growing popularity casts a shadow on the political and military control of the AU and raises questions on the accountability and human rights compliance of these forces.

Even if these forces operate with the principle of common defense and are not mandated and commanded by the AU, they maintain working relationships with the AU in order to tap into financial resources notably from the EU. The EU is the AU's long-standing partner on APSA and the leading financier of African PSOs. Between 2007 and 2020, the EU channeled 2.9 billion Euros to the AU, much of which (close to 93%) was used to finance PSOs such as AMISOM (Hauck and Tadesse Shiferaw 2020). Until 2020, the EU transferred its funds from its instrument called the African Peace Facility (APF), which served as the EU's main financial instrument to support peace and security efforts in Africa via the AU. **For ad-hoc operations like MNJTF and G-5 Sahel therefore, getting PSC authorisation offered access to EU funding, among other things**.

But in 2020, the EU changed the modality of its financing to African peace and security efforts. It collapsed the African Peace Facility (APF) and other instruments into a new facility: the European Peace Facility (EPF). **The EPF which has a budget of 5 billion Euros for 2021-2027, has a global geographic reach (not limited to Africa) and in terms of its legal set-up permits the EU to transfer funds and also material – including lethal weapons – to African PSOs directly, without the need to pass through the AU (Hauck and Shiferaw 2021)**. This may empower AU member states and appear attractive to some who can throw their weight on ad hoc operations or wish to receive direct military support from the EU to tackle terrorism and security threats in their countries. But the new approach also risks undermining the AU's role as a continental peace and security actor. **It also takes away the AU's leverage vis-a-vis ad-hoc coalitions and incentivises ad hoc coalitions over AU or REC-led PSO.** In addition, the EU's new approach opens up the space for the EU and its member states to pursue geopolitical interests in Africa through ad-hoc coalitions.

The AU's current negotiation with the UN is to secure UN funding for 75% of costs related to AU-led PSOs, applied on a case-by-case basis. This means ad-hoc operations by member states cannot count on UN funding through this arrangement. This might therefore incentivise member states to find regional or continental solutions through RECs or the AU in order to secure funding for such military operations. In doing so, the AU could maintain some leverage over ad-hoc operations and it might also lead to innovative approaches to integrate these ad-hoc operations into the APSA for both coherence and practical, financial reasons.

5. Conclusion and implications

The AU has emerged as a key peace and security actor in Africa and is an indispensable partner in global peace and security governance. It enjoys considerable political legitimacy among African states, has a permissive peacekeeping doctrine, and has developed technical and bureaucratic mechanisms for conflict prevention and management through APSA. This has allowed the AU to take on roles that were previously within the sole remit of the UN.

The AU recognises its comparative advantages over the UN and increasingly seeks to be the primary decision-making body on Africa. However, the UN maintains legal legitimacy over the AU, especially when it comes to authorising the use of force, and has considerably greater financial resources than the AU. **In as much as the two organisations complement each other, and work towards better cooperation and effective peace and security partnership, they also compete with each other for primacy and power**. The latter is particularly pronounced with regards to the hierarchy between the UNSC and the PSC, the representation of Africa at the UNSC, as well as financing of African PSOs authorised by the UN. These add a political layer to the AU-UN peace and security partnership which already experiences coordination, capacity and bureaucratic setbacks.

Implications

As the membership and formal set-up of the UNSC is unlikely to change in the short to medium term, the AU has paid particular attention to the role of the A3 in representing collective African positions at the UNSC. It has put in place mechanisms to ensure the A3 are purview to the discussions of the PSC. This can be further improved by capitalising on the monthly PSC chair to UNSC chair meetings as an opportunity to communicate the PSC's agenda, and stay abreast of the UNSC's agenda in order to proactively prepare African positions.

The AU has also built the human resources of the AU mission to the UN to strengthen communication between Addis Ababa and New York. This is helpful but much of the PSC-UNSC relationship falls on member states or the A3. It is therefore equally important to have well resourced and dedicated A3 delegations in Addis Ababa and in New York. This might entail revisiting the criteria through which the A3 are selected. **There is merit to treating all states equally and focusing on regional representation more so than technical or financial capacity of member states. But there is no denying that UNSC membership is expensive and taxing and that the A3 would need to have the capacity and the will to deliver on the growing responsibility placed on them.**

At the same time, the AU and African states need to build on the momentum of the informal institutionalisation of the A3 as an influential block in the UNSC. In addition to having regular coordinating meetings among themselves and with the PSC, the A3 should also experiment with regular informal meetings with other groupings such as the P5 or the P10 in the UNSC. **The A3's recent approach to including small island states into the A3 constellation, to make the 'A3 + 1' is a laudable move. Engaging with the veto wielding members of the UNSC more systematically will also add value.**

The AU also stands to benefit from systematising ad hoc diplomatic and public engagements such as visiting the capitals of P5 and increasing the public engagement of the A3 in New York. All of these informal arrangements have the capacity to alter power dynamics within the UNSC in favour of the A3. This might allow the A3 to become pen holders on African issues in the short to medium term.

When it comes to financing of PSOs, the AU should clarify its position and re-engage the UNSC on the topic. One of the pending issues – whether and in what ways the AU would be able to cover 25% of PSO costs – may have been further compounded by the economic impact of the COVID-19. The pandemic may have affected AU member states' ability to raise funds through the 0.2% as proposed in Kaberuka's plan. While this presents a practical challenge for the AU, **the political change in the US and the current administration's good will towards the UN might open up space for the AU to relaunch the negotiation.**

As for International partners who support the AU and the AU-UN partnership, the main take-away is to resist the temptation of framing the challenges of the AU-UN peace and security partnership in purely technical terms. Technical and financial support to the AU – for example the PSC secretariat – would indeed help the AU to be proactive in engaging with the UN. There is also room to support the public and informal diplomacy of the A3 in New York by facilitating the visibility of African positions and profiling the perspectives of African stakeholders in public or informal events/platforms that shape the global peace and security agenda.

However, to effect more transformative changes in the AU-UN partnership, international partners would need the political commitment of their capitals to back the AU's demand for fair and proportional representation in the UNSC, and predictable funding for AU-led peace support operations. **Improving the technical aspects of the partnership will certainly help. But in the long term, addressing the political and fundamental limitations of the partnership would be necessary to ensure the effectiveness of peace and security management in Africa.**

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