

The United Nations–African Union Partnership in Peace Operations: Evolution, Institutionalisation and Contemporary Challenges (2005–2025)

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Abstract

This article examines the evolution of the United Nations–African Union (UN–AU) partnership in peace operations from 2005 to 2025, carried out primarily by the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council. The article outlines a chronological evolution of some aspects of the partnership, particularly through highlighting the various frameworks and institutional mechanisms which emerged during the last two decades, such as the emergence of African states as a cohesive actor within the UN Security Council via the A3 mechanism, as well as the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2719. The article then discusses the evolution and trends in peace operations and uses three case studies as practical examples of partnership in peace operations. It further discusses some persistent challenges, such as financial constraints, unclear mandates, geopolitical rivalries, and legitimacy, as the main impediments to the partnership's effectiveness. Finally, this article offers some recommendations on how to improve the partnership, as well as concludes that the evolution of the partnership has gone beyond institutional formalities toward a more operational and implementing phase with the advent of Resolution 2719 and the influence of the A3 mechanism, leading to a genuine recognition of African agency within the global multilateral order.

Key terms: A3 mechanism, African Union, institutional cooperation, peace operations, Resolution 2719, United Nations.

INTRODUCTION

Peace operations have become increasingly involved over the last few decades, serving as an important means for the international community to achieve peace in several regions of the world. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is mandated by the UN Charter to maintain international peace and security (United Nations, 1945). In its quest to maintain peace and security in Africa, the UNSC often collaborates with regional actors, notably the African Union's Peace and Security Council (AUPSC). This article examines the collaboration between the UN and the AU in peace operations, primarily by discussing the collaboration between the UNSC and the AUPSC. The study relies primarily on qualitative analysis of official UN and AU documents on the issue, as well as reports from international organisations. It also discusses the available literature on UN–AU peace operations.

The study first discusses the foundations and evolution of the partnership, then the contemporary architecture and landmark developments. It then briefly looks at trends and peace operations in practice, discusses structural challenges, and offers recommendations and a conclusion.

Foundations and Institutional Evolution (2005–2017)

The institutional relationship between the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) constitutes one of the most consequential partnerships in contemporary international relations. Over the past years, this partnership has evolved from tentative cooperation mechanisms into a highly institutionalised framework encompassing multiple levels of engagement and formalised consultation procedures (Ewumbue-Monono, 2016). The partnership is primarily done by the UNSC and the AUPSC. This transformation reflects broader normative shifts in international governance regarding regional responsibility and the redistribution of peace and security functions among global and regional actors (Powell, 2005).

In 2005, the newly established AU was still consolidating its institutional capacity and, as such, possessed limited operational capability for independent peace operations (African Union, 2002). On the other hand, the UN Security Council at the time

maintained its traditional posture of primary responsibility for international peace and security, leaving regional organisations/institutions confined to ancillary roles (United Nations, 2005).

More significantly, African states have increasingly coalesced into an influential force within the UNSC through the A3 mechanism, fundamentally reshaping the representation of African interests in global security governance (United Nations Security Council, 2024). This article examines the trajectory of UN–AU cooperation over this twenty-year period, analysing the institutional mechanisms established, the legal frameworks governing the partnership, the evolution of the African agency, and the persistent structural challenges that constrain effective cooperation.

The Formative Period: Early Cooperation and AU Consolidation (2005–2010)

The period from 2005 to 2010 constituted the AU's formative years as an operational institution, as the AUPSC, which entered into force in December 2003, was still establishing procedural norms and developing institutional capacity (African Union, 2002). Bokeriya has argued that the structural origins of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which was established in 2003 through the Protocol on the Peace and Security Council, were a result of a long history of the UN's delayed responses to African crises in the 1990s, leading to an African-led institution-building (Bokeriya, 2022). During this period, the AU Commission, headquartered in Addis Ababa, lacked the technical expertise, planning capacity, and logistical infrastructure requisite for independent peace operations (Ewumbue-Monono, 2016, p. 78). The UN Office to the African Union (UNOAU), established in 2010, primarily served as a liaison mechanism rather than a substantive coordination and bridging instrument (United Nations Office to the African Union, 2011). Cooperation between the UNSC and the AUPSC occurred on an ad hoc basis, driven principally by acute crisis situations (United Nations Office to the African Union, 2011, pp. 22–25).

The AU's inaugural major peace operation, the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB, 2003–2004), demonstrated the organisation's commitment to African-led crisis responses and its severe structural limitations (Ewumbue-Monono, 2016, p. 85). Thereafter came the

African Mission in Sudan (AMIS), which was deployed to Darfur in 2004 which further exposed these institutional constraints: by 2006, AMIS comprised approximately 7,000 military personnel — substantially below the estimated 12,000–15,000 required for effective operations (Ewumbue-Monono, 2016). These deficiencies ultimately led to the establishment of the hybrid AU–UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) in 2007 (United Nations Security Council, 2007).

It is important to note that the foundations of formal inter-institutional cooperation between both the UN and AU security councils were established during this period. For instance, the UN–AU Desk-to-Desk meetings, had commenced in 2008, and provided a technical platform for coordinating specific operations among both councils (United Nations Security Council, 2007), while the annual consultations between the UNSC and AUPSC, was inaugurated in 2007, and established a pattern of high-level engagement alternating between New York and Addis Ababa (African Union Peace and Security Council, 2007). UNSC Resolution 1809 (2008) also marked a significant milestone in formalising the partnership's cooperative ambitions, particularly in financing and collective security. This resolution was instrumental, as it called for increased engagement between the AU and the UN and on the UN Secretariat to develop a list of required capacities and recommendations for the AU to further develop its military, technical, logistical, and administrative capabilities (United Nations Security Council, 2008).

Similarly, the UN–AU Joint Task Force (JTF), established in 2010, brought together senior officials from both organisations to deliberate on peace and security matters (United Nations Office to the African Union, 2011, pp. 28-32).

During this period, the AU's normative framework governing unconstitutional changes of government was also considerably refined, articulating clear condemnations of military coups and procedures for responding to unconstitutional seizures of power (African Union, 2007). Also, the relationship between the AU and the regional economic communities (RECs) became increasingly formalised, consolidating a hierarchical architecture in which regional

organisations address sub-regional conflicts under AU oversight (African Union, 2008).

Deepening Institutionalisation and the Emergence of Formalised Frameworks (2010–2017)

The period from 2010 to 2017 witnessed a significant deepening of UN–AU institutional cooperation. The AU's Oran process, which was launched in 2012, was instituted to prepare incoming African UNSC members to advance African priorities effectively (African Union, 2013). As such, African states began to deliver joint statements in UN Security Council meetings, progressively expanding from African-specific issues to broader thematic concerns (United Nations Security Council, 2024, p. 5). The A3 thus began to crystallise as a coherent negotiating bloc with discernible UNSC influence.

By 2013, African states began cultivating more coordinated approaches to UNSC engagement. The A3 mechanism, emerging from Africa's collective experience during the 2011 Libyan crisis, had evolved into a more refined coordination instrument (United Nations Security Council, 2024).

By 2016, the UNSC and AUPSC commenced informal seminars preceding their annual consultations, providing space for members to exchange views on thematic topics (African Union Peace and Security Council, 2016). The AU's peace and security architecture reached a higher level of institutional sophistication during this period. For instance, the Silencing the Guns initiative, launched in 2016 as a flagship project under Agenda 2063, embodied an ambitious commitment to eliminating armed conflict on the continent by 2030 (African Union, 2016).

The UN–AU Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security was signed in April 2017 and constituted a comprehensive agreement establishing principles and procedures for cooperation across all phases of conflict management (United Nations, 2017). The 2017 joint framework also provided avenues for sharing information on early warning indicators, conflict prevention and management, and post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding (Institute of Security Studies Africa, 2025). According to Strydom, the 2017 Framework seeks greater support in terms of capacity building and financing for

peacekeeping operations, as the AU suffers from persistent weaknesses and a lack of capacity (Strydom, 2022). A subsequent UN–AU Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, signed in January 2018, reflected a growing acknowledgement and consensus that peace, security, and development are mutually constitutive (United Nations, 2018).

Contemporary Architecture and Landmark Developments (2017–2025)

Consolidation of Cooperation Mechanisms

From 2017 to 2025, the UN-AU cooperation witnessed a significant consolidation and deepening across multiple institutional registers.

By the beginning of 2017, the President of the UNSC and the Chair of the AUPSC initiated informal monthly coordination meetings. The Secretary-General's report of August 2024 recorded nine such meetings in the preceding year alone (United Nations, 2024).

The annual UN–AU High-Level Conference became an established feature of the partnership, providing a regularised forum for the Secretary-General and the AU Chairperson to address strategic priorities (United Nations, p. 8). The UN–AU Joint Task Force meetings, which convened biannually at the senior officials' level, became standing forums for substantive discussions of strategic cooperation. The annual consultations between the UNSC and AUPSC acquired greater depth and rigour, complemented by informal seminars preceding formal sessions (United Nations, p. 10). As of October 2025, there have been 19 such annual consultative meetings (United Nations Security Council, 2025).

Over two decades later, the landscape has been fundamentally reconfigured. The AU has emerged as a recognised primary actor in African peace operations, with the UNSC formally acknowledging this status through Resolution 2719 (December 2023), which established a framework for UN-assessed contributions to support AU-led peace support operations (United Nations Security Council, 2023).

The Legal and Normative Architecture of Cooperation

The legal foundation for UN–AU on peace cooperation can be traced to Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which

recognises regional arrangements for addressing matters of international peace and security (United Nations, 1945). Article 53 of the UN Charter stipulates that no enforcement action shall be undertaken by regional arrangements without UNSC authorisation, creating a hierarchical relationship in which the UN retains primary responsibility while regional organisations possess legitimate authority to address regional conflicts, subject to UNSC authorisation (United Nations Security Council, 2024). The practical implementation of this framework has evolved considerably over the last twenty years or so, with the AU progressively and increasingly asserting primary responsibility for African peace and security while formally acknowledging the UN's overarching global mandate.

The AU Constitutive Act, adopted in 2000 and operationalised in 2002, established the foundational legal basis for the AU's peace and security approach (African Union, 2000). Article 4(h) grants the AU the right to intervene in member states in cases of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, with the February 2003 amendment expanding this provision to cover serious threats to legitimate order (African Union). These provisions constitute an explicit repudiation of the non-interference doctrine of the OAU era and embody the principle of non-indifference (Powell, pp. 18-25), reflecting the AU's determination that African states cannot remain passive bystanders in the face of humanitarian catastrophes afflicting their neighbours (African Union, 2005).

The AU's Ezulwini Consensus (March 2005) further articulated the relationship between regional and global responsibility, acknowledging that UN authorisation should accompany regional interventions while recognising that such authorisation could be granted retroactively in circumstances requiring immediate action (African Union, 2005). The subsequent multilateral frameworks, the Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security of 2017, the Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda of 2018, and the UN–AU Joint Framework on Human Rights of 2023 (United Nations, 2023) have collectively articulated the legal and normative scaffolding upon which operational cooperation now rests.

The A3 Mechanism: The Evolution of African Agency

In 2005, African states pursued largely fragmented and uncoordinated approaches to UNSC engagements, with minimal coordination mechanisms and limited structural influence over Council outcomes.

The A3, which stands for the three African elected members of the UN Security Council at any given time, evolved from a loosely coordinated arrangement into a sophisticated negotiating bloc capable of advancing coherent African positions (United Nations Security Council, pp. 4-7). The group routinely speaks with a unified voice on African issues, delivering joint statements on both country-specific and thematic matters. This evolution was mainly achieved through the Oran Process, established in 2012, which aimed to prepare African states for their rotating terms on the UNSC (African Union, 2013). It involved annual high-level seminars for incoming African UNSC members, equipping them with strategies to advance common positions and coordinate with fellow African states, as well as serving as a network among African diplomats and officials that has significantly strengthened African institutional coordination within the UNSC (African Union, p. 6).

On two occasions, the A3 expanded into the A3 Plus when like-minded Latin American and Caribbean members joined the grouping; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines participated during 2020–2021, and Guyana continued this arrangement during 2024–2025 (United Nations Security Council, p. 6). These two instances showed the importance of the A3 as a mechanism that can wield influence at the global stage. The A3 has, over time, become the institutional linchpin in fostering UNSC–AUPSC cooperation, substantially augmenting African influence within the Council (African Union, p. 4).

The A3 has become a sophisticated multilateral instrument, crystallising into a cohesive negotiating bloc capable of advancing coherent common positions (United Nations Security Council). The A3 functions as an informal bridge between AU summit decisions and AUPSC deliberations on the one hand, and UNSC deliberations on the other, having evolved from coordinating positions on African issues to proactively sponsoring UNSC products on major African strategic priorities (United Nations Security Council, p. 7).

Most consequentially, the A3 jointly sponsored Resolution 2457 (February 2019) on Silencing the Guns in Africa and Resolution 2719 (December 2023) on the financing of AU-led operations (United Nations Security Council).

Resolution 2719: A Watershed Moment

Resolution 2719, adopted on 21 December 2023 by the UNSC, represents the most consequential single development in UN–AU cooperation during the period under review. The resolution establishes a framework for UN-assessed contributions to support AU-led peace support operations mandated by the AUPSC and endorsed by the UNSC, thereby addressing what had long been among the most contentious issues in UN–AU relations: the sustainable and predictable financing of AU-led operations (United Nations Security Council, 2023). The resolution represents the culmination of more than fifteen years of protracted negotiations, following the recommendations of the Prodi Report of 2008 (United Nations, 2008) and overcoming sustained resistance from key UNSC members, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom.

The resolution requires, amongst other things, that AU-led operations supported by UN assessed contributions comply with detailed human rights and financial accountability frameworks (United Nations Security Council), and establishes a presidential statement mechanism for authorising UN support, making way for a procedurally more flexible modality than formal resolutions while preserving essential UNSC oversight (United Nations Security Council).

Peace Operations in Practice: Evolution, Trends, and Case Studies

UN Peacekeeping in Africa: Scale and Transformation

Since 2016, UN peacekeeping missions in Africa have been in decline in terms of size and numbers, budgets, and the number of personnel deployed (Petrini & Pepe, 2024). With the closure of MINUSMA and MONUSCO, only four operations remain on the continent, including in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, the disputed Abyei region, and Western Sahara, as compared to a decade ago, when there were more than twice as many (Petrini & Pepe).

UN peacekeeping mandates underwent substantial transformation during this period. Early operations were primarily oriented toward monitoring ceasefire agreements and facilitating disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration processes (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2010). However, subsequent operations have increasingly incorporated complex, multidimensional mandates ranging from state-building, security sector reform, civilian protection, and support for political transitions (United Nations Peacekeeping, p. 23). The UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC/MONUSCO), deployed continuously since 1999, represents the longest-running such operation on the continent, while MINUSMA in Mali (2013–2023) exemplifies the acute operational challenges posed by environments characterised by Islamist militancy, regional tensions, and severely constrained state capacity (Renwick, 2015).

The Growth of AU-Led Operations

Since its creation, the AU has progressively become an independent actor in continental peace operations. The African Mission in Burundi (AMIB, 2003–2004) and the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS, 2004–2007) constituted the AU's inaugural independent peace operations, demonstrating its institutional commitment even as they exposed persistent resource deficits. The AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM, 2007–present) represents the most consequential AU-led operation to date and has uniquely sustained without a transition to UN command (African Union Peace and Security Council, 2007).

AMISOM evolved significantly over its operational life, expanding in scale, incorporating additional troop-contributing countries, and adapting to shifting security dynamics, achieving meaningful successes in degrading Al-Shabaab's territorial control while confronting chronic resource constraints. These evolutions led to a change in the mission from AMISOM to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) in 2022, and later to the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) by 2025. A brief analysis of the AU's efforts in the Central African Republic, Somalia, and Sudan is presented below to highlight some of the practical partnerships.

Case Study: Central African Republic

AUPSC rapidly deployed the AU Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) in 2013–2014, following the political crisis and instability of 2013, caused by fighting between the *Seleka* and *Anti-Balaka* movements (International Federation for Human Rights, 2013). MISCA's deployment demonstrated the AU's rapid African crisis response capacity before giving way to the UN's MINUSCA in 2014, establishing a model of sequential cooperation in which the AU's bridging capacity precedes expanded UN engagement (United Nations Security Council, 2014). The Central African Republic exemplifies both the potential and the structural limitations of UN–AU cooperation. MISCA's rapid 2013 deployment demonstrated the value of African crisis response capacity, yet resource constraints necessitated UN engagement.

The transition to MINUSCA in 2014, however, did not resolve the underlying political and security dynamics: the security situation had continued to deteriorate, with persistent violence, mass displacement, and humanitarian crisis extending even to the present date (United Nations Security Council, 2024) (United Nations Security Council, 2024). MINUSCA has encountered severe operational challenges, including systematic attacks on peacekeepers and deteriorating relations with the host government (Ewumbue-Monono, 2016). The Central African Republic's case demonstrates that transitions from AU to UN operations do not automatically ensure sustainable peace, and that military peacekeeping cannot substitute for political dialogue and governance reform (Ewumbue-Monono).

Case Study: Somalia

The situation was a little different with Somalia, as AMISOM was the first mission to be deployed in Somalia, mandated to address the threat of Al-Shabaab, including through offensive operations, collaborate with the Somali security forces, assist in the provisioning of humanitarian assistance, and aid in stabilisation, reconciliation, and peace-building efforts (International Peace Institute, 2023). AMISOM has represented a distinctive case of prolonged AU-led operation with UN logistical support but without transfer to UN command. Despite meaningful successes in degrading Al-Shabaab's capabilities and supporting state institution-building, the mission has

confronted persistent operational challenges, including inadequate resources, limited technical capacity, and questions regarding long-term effectiveness (International Peace Institute, p. 37). It is important to note that in the case of Somalia, the peace operation changed from AMISOM to ATMIS in April 2022 as an effort to support the Federal Government of Somalia in the implementation of the Somali Transition Plan and to transfer security responsibilities to the Somali security forces and institutions (African Union Peace and Security Council, 2022).

ATMIS ended in December 2024 and was replaced by AUSSOM, which came into effect on January 1, 2025, with a clear mandate to stabilise, secure and support state-building priorities, aiming to transfer full security responsibilities to Somali security forces by December 2029 (African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia, 2026). This new mission was endorsed by both the AU and UN security councils, first by the AUPSC on 1 August 2024 and subsequently authorised by the UNSC on 27 December 2024, under Resolution 2767, for an initial period of 12 months (African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia). The establishment of AUSSOM is important as it highlights the first mission established after the UNSC Resolution 2719, being an AU mission funded by the UN, thus presenting for the first time an enhanced partnership between both the AU and UN security councils.

Case Study: Sudan

In Sudan, two instances could be discussed. First, the conflict in Darfur, which erupted in early 2003, was one rooted in decades of economic marginalisation and ethnic tension between non-Arab farming communities and Arab nomadic groups. This was further compounded by the drought-driven land disputes of the 1970s and the consolidation of Omar al-Bashir's patronage networks (Ewumbue-Monono, 2016). The newly established AUPSC in 2004 was eager to assert the principle of African solutions to African problems and, as such, authorised the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), the first and largest mission mandated by the AUPSC. Despite the operation being chronically under-resourced and under-equipped, and confronted with a host government hostile to its presence from the outset (Ewumbue-Monono).

Following joint AU-UN assessment missions to Darfur in December 2005 and June 2006, both organisations concluded that AMIS required urgent reinforcement and that a transition to a UN-mandated operation was necessary. Despite sustained resistance from the Sudanese government, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1769 in July 2007, authorising the AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which became fully operational in January 2008 (United Nations Security Council, 2007). The Darfur experience exposed significant institutional limitations in the AU's peace and security architecture, raising fundamental questions about African states' capacity to manage continental crises without substantial external support from the UN or other international actors.

The second instance is the Sudan crisis — particularly the conflict that erupted in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, as it has exposed significant structural limitations in the capacity of the UN–AU partnership to respond effectively to major continental crises (United Nations Security Council, 2024, p. 8). Despite generating massive displacement and widespread allegations of atrocity crimes, the UNSC has been unable to mount a coordinated response, with geopolitical rivalries and divergent strategic interests among permanent members effectively paralysing Council action (United Nations Security Council). The AU has advocated for African-led solutions and advanced its own roadmap for political resolution, yet its implementation capacity has been severely constrained (Institute of Security Studies Africa, 2022). This second Sudan case illustrates how geopolitical considerations fundamentally shape international responses to African conflicts, with the crisis receiving markedly less international attention and resources than comparable conflicts in other regions.

These three scenarios provide a brief account of the types of cooperation between the AUPSC and the UNSC on peace operations. Usually, it starts with an AU-led initiative that is later taken over by the UN. Somalia has been somewhat different, as it was never fully taken over by the UN.

Structural and Contemporary Challenges

Financing and Resource Constraints

Notwithstanding the significant progress represented by Resolution 2719, financing remains a pervasive and structurally embedded challenge in UN–AU cooperation. The resolution’s implementation framework remains incomplete, with the human rights and financial compliance frameworks still under development (United Nations Security Council, 2023). The AU’s structural dependence on voluntary contributions engenders chronic resource unpredictability, constraining the organisation’s capacity for sustained operations (AMANI Africa, 2017). Proposals for AU-assessed contributions have encountered sustained resistance from member states apprehensive about escalating financial obligations (AMANI Africa). The African Peace Fund remains chronically underfunded, and the AU Peace Facility, managed through the African Development Bank, falls significantly short of operational requirements (African Development Bank, 2020).

More recently, Jung has argued that the real issue is not merely a technical or logistical one, but rather deeply rooted in a “legitimation struggle” (Jung, 2025).

Mandate Clarity and Doctrinal Divergences

A further structural challenge resides in fundamental doctrinal divergences regarding the appropriate scope and character of peace operations (United Nations Security Council, 2024, pp. 8-9). Whereas UN doctrine emphasises the consent of the parties, impartiality, and the non-use of force except in self-defence, the AU has demonstrated a greater institutional willingness to undertake robust enforcement operations when circumstances demand. (United Nations Security Council) These divergences have generated operational complications: in several instances, the UN has proven reluctant to authorise enforcement operations that the AU considers necessary for civilian protection (United Nations Security Council), while the AU has at times criticised the UN for excessive caution in responding to humanitarian emergencies.

According to Jung, the issue of mandate is also one of legitimacy, with the UNSC claiming ultimate global legal authority, shifting the AU to a secondary or

subsidiary role that must adhere to traditional UN peacekeeping principles (Jung, 2025). On the other hand, the AU counters this by highlighting historical injustices, noting that the UN Charter was written during the colonial era and that Africa lacks permanent representation on the UNSC. The AU further advances the notion of “African ownership,” claiming superior political and cultural legitimacy on the ground as an “internal” actor representing the continent’s population (Jung, 2025).

Geopolitical Rivalries and Double Standards

Geopolitical rivalries among permanent UNSC members have created significant structural impediments to effective UN–AU cooperation (Institute of Security Studies Africa, 2022). The strategic interests of the permanent members of the ‘P5 routinely condition Council engagement with African conflicts. Recent crises such as Sudan have received inadequate UNSC attention, in part owing to the preference of the ‘P5 dealing with other global priorities, notably Gaza and Ukraine (United Nations Security Council, 2024, p. 8).

African states have long articulated concerns about systemic double standards in the UNSC’s engagement across different regional crises (Institute of Security Studies Africa, 2022). For instance, in a UNSC meeting on 16 March 2022, Gabon’s representative, speaking on behalf of the A3, called on the European Union to demonstrate the same humanitarian commitment, consistent with international humanitarian law, toward Africans displaced by security and climate crises as was extended to refugees from Ukraine (Institute of Security Studies Africa). In the Sahel, divergent interests of France, Russia, and the United States materially influenced Council responses to unconstitutional seizures of power in West Africa and its 2023 decision to terminate the peacekeeping mission in Mali (United Nations Security Council, 2024). Similarly, although the A3 in itself offers benefits of collective engagement through common positions and joint statements, the geopolitical and institutional dynamics within the UNSC still threaten to disrupt bloc dynamics (Carvalho & Singh, 2021). Some of these dynamics include historical connections between A3 countries and their former colonisers, pressure on investments and aid, and attempts to maintain neutral

positions amid significant power dynamics (Carvalho & Singh 2021).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: This article discusses the evolution of the UN–AU partnership in peace operations, using case studies. It has been shown that peace operations in Africa generally begin as AU-led initiatives before being taken over by the UN. However, despite the UN–AU partnership progressing from tentative episodic cooperation to a highly institutionalised framework encompassing multiple levels of engagement, formalised consultation procedures, and innovative financing modalities, it still faces several challenges, such as financing, doctrinal differences, legitimacy, and African ownership, that hamper its effectiveness. Although these challenges constrain the partnership's effectiveness, the real issue remains the discussion of the balance between African ownership and legitimacy, and international accountability norms, which continues to generate institutional tension in this partnership.

The adoption of Resolution 2719 in December 2023 constitutes a breakthrough moment, representing the culmination of more than fifteen years of difficult negotiations and reflecting the structural maturation of the partnership. The rise of the A3 as a cohesive and institutionally consequential force within the UNSC represents another defining development, as African states have evolved from fragmented engagement in the UNSC to sophisticated, unified advocacy. The policy choices that would be made in the coming years regarding the implementation of Resolution 2719, as well as in the development of a robust compliance framework and the deepening of institutional coordination, would be determinative as they would either decide whether UN–AU cooperation on peace operations evolves toward a genuinely networked multilateralism or devolves into fragmented and incoherent responses.

The future of the partnership between these organisations would depend less on any single institutional reform and more on whether the underlying legitimisation struggles over authority, doctrine, and capacity can be navigated cooperatively rather than competitively. Moving forward, both organisations need to move away from more

declarations of intent towards a more systematic, results-oriented, and institutionally accountable collaborative effort that includes early warning for post-conflict reconstruction, as well as clarity on subsidiarity and genuine complementarity.

Finally, this article has shown a brief evolution of the dynamics of the cooperation between UN–AU with regards to peace operations, highlighting a few challenges but ultimately the adoption of the Resolution 2719 by the UNSC and the consistent and coordinated role of the A3 within presents hope for the partnership, particularly as these two factors echo the significance of the AU as a being recognised as a major actor in peace operations in Africa.

Recommendations: The full implementation of Resolution 2719 represents an immediate priority and is recommended. The resolution's incomplete implementation framework, particularly with respect to human rights and financial compliance mechanisms, must be expeditiously operationalised through a collaborative, iterative process that adequately addresses accountability concerns while respecting African agency and avoiding externally imposed standards perceived as neo-colonial. Fully implementing Resolution 2719 would lead to the development, establishment and enforcement of a genuine burden-sharing arrangement that allows the AU to sustain operations beyond initial deployment without collapsing into UN dependency.

The UN and AU should systematically strengthen institutional coordination mechanisms to transcend pro forma engagement and achieve substantive strategic coordination. The diverse cooperation platforms created over the preceding two decades should be used for candid exchanges and the forging of shared analytical frameworks for addressing pressing peace and security challenges. The annual UN–AU High-Level Conference should focus on strategic priorities, including the financing architecture, mandate clarity, and the balance between African ownership and international accountability norms. The Joint Task Force meetings should be mobilised for substantive operational planning discussions to yield better results.

The UN and AU should invest in structured efforts to reconcile doctrinal divergences regarding peace operations, including questions concerning the appropriate use of force, the relative merits of enforcement versus consent-based approaches, and the balance between civilian protection and sovereignty. Shared guidelines for joint assessments, integrated analysis, and coordinated field operations should be collaboratively developed.

Develop and/or reinforce existing mechanisms to enhance African ownership, decision-making authority, and operational autonomy. This requires strengthening AU institutional capacity, establishing

predictable financing mechanisms, and ensuring African states possess a genuine voice in peace operation decisions. The AU should pursue a diversified strategy for financial autonomy, including AU-assessed contributions, alternative funding mechanisms, and systematic resource mobilisation from African states and international partners. The international community should give serious consideration to modalities for direct support to AU operations that preserve African political agency and decision-making authority.

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