

## African Union: What are the Possible Options for Strategic Autonomy?<sup>1</sup>



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### I Summary

The current economic, political and geo-strategic dynamics, centered on the major regional groups, announce a reconfiguration of the international order in which Africa is called to play an important role through its main continental institution which is the Union African Union (AU). The AU is increasingly emerging as the continent's platform with foreign partners, and continues to face problems of dependence, governance and leadership. Therefore, in a critical and forward-looking approach, the present Policy Brief, drafted in the wake of the international APSACO conference, intends to question the AU's Strategic Autonomy and suggest concrete ways and means to achieve it.

### Introduction

The current economic, political and geo-strategic dynamics tend to reflect Africa as being at the center of the world's economic challenges in the past decades. Increasingly seen as the "last frontier<sup>2</sup> », Africa fascinates and this appeal could call for a certain reconfiguration of the international order, which would now place the continent at the heart of global issues and challenges. In order for this reconfiguration to be favorable, Africa must imperatively adopt a clear and coherent strategy and positioning in order to benefit from tangible and intangible

gains. At a time of major regional groupings, the African Union (AU) could thus remain an essential interlocutor vis-a-vis foreign partners. Furthermore, and above all, the AU can be the framework from which Africa could approach its strategic independence and political autonomy. However, the AU, which today reflects the renewal of African political thought and action for regional and global development, is still faced with a lack of human, financial and operational resources, the outsourcing of tools and operating mechanisms, leadership struggles, rivalries, and competitive issues that considerably hamper the continent's performance.

Faced with these realities, the issue of the African Union's strategic autonomy is a major issue. This raises many questions, among others, how can the African Union conceive its strategic autonomy in order to play a leading role on the international scene? In other words, how should the Union regulate its dysfunctions in order to ensure strategic autonomy in this changing world?

1. This Policy Brief follows the annual APSACO conference held by OCP Policy Center on July, 10 – 11, 2017 in Rabat.

\* The authors would like to thank Professor Rachid El Houdaigui, APSACO General Rapporteur, for his support for this Policy Brief.

2. Kufuor, John A. "Africa is the world's last development frontier" speech at the African Development Bank. 06/Jul/2012 [Online], accessed on 27 July 2016. URL: <https://www.afdb.org/fr/news-and-events/africa-is-the-worlds-last-development-frontier-john-a-kufuor-ghanas-former-president-at-the-afdb-eminent-speaker-program-9467/>.

Finally, what is AU's financial and operational leverage for optimal management? The high-level annual African Peace and Security Conference (APSACO) organized by the OCP Policy Center was held from July 10 - 11, 2017 in Rabat. It aims to conduct a serious and constructive assessment of the various probable and realistic options for Africa's necessary strategic autonomy.

*"The guiding philosophy of the European strategy for Africa is to act to strengthen the resilience of the continent's political and security related companies and institutions."*

The main interest of this policy brief is to highlight the main ideas developed during the meeting in a precise and thorough manner.

## I. Thinking about the autonomy of the African Union in a changing world

The complexity of the challenges and the volatility of the present conditions impose a reconfiguration for all the players on the international scene. In this context, the African Union, with its increasing presence, finds the necessity and the opportunity to consolidate its strategic autonomy towards and with other international actors.

### 1- The African Union and the international actors: between dependence and interdependence

**A- The European Union (EU), a global partner:** The EU is Africa's traditional and stable partner. It has developed a comprehensive strategy for security and economic relations with the continent in a context of interdependence. Four major and common challenges, with stakes that are equally strategic for both Africa and for Europe, are now at the heart of their common agenda that includes sustainable economic growth, co-management of the phenomenon of migration, climate change and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. The guiding philosophy of the European strategy for Africa is to act to strengthen the resilience of the continent's political and security related companies and institutions. The EU, which itself pursues the development of its own strategic autonomy with its partners (notably with NATO), encourages the AU in its policy of strategic autonomy

based on a local model and specific to the continent's realities. Facilitating peace support for Africa will continue to demonstrate the EU's strategic cooperation.

*"The strategic autonomy of the African Union is essential, especially as it is necessary for Africa's permanent representation in the Security Council and to enable the AU to fully play this role on behalf of the continent."*

**B- The United States of America (USA), a strategic partner:** The United States, as the third largest trading partner, has approached various avenues from west to east Africa, with a preference for support to African multinational forces rather than national armies. Through this multilateral approach, they provide financial and logistical assistance to the African Union troops in Somalia (AMISOM). A relative detachment of US special forces has been stationed in the Central African Republic since 2011 to track down the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, Joseph Kony<sup>3</sup>. The predominance of the American egalitarian approach with Africa is pragmatic. Indeed, they want to substitute the traditional African aid-oriented policy for an egalitarian strategic-economic partnership. The United States supports Africa in its goal of financing 25% of peacekeeping operations by 2020.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, they urge it to erect a strategic continental force to reflect local values and characteristics with a self-reliant, reliable, credible AU with growing leadership.

**C- The United Nations (UN) and China, partners:** The relationship between the United Nations and the AU is evolving as the United Nations more fully recognizes the full legitimacy and credibility of the AU speaking on behalf of Africa. The two institutions cooperate in a complementary manner in almost all political, socio-economic and security areas. The strategic autonomy of the African Union is essential, especially as it is necessary for Africa's permanent representation in the Security Council and to enable the AU to fully play this role on behalf of the continent. The joint security affairs between the two institutions are evolving as MISMA passes to MINUSMA in Mali, and MISCA to MINUSCA in CAR, as well as the mixed multinational force in the fight against terrorism.

3. Jeune Afrique (JA) with AFP. Centrafrique: the American special forces abandon the manhunt for Joseph Kony. 25 April 2017. [Online], Accessed 29 July 2017. URL: <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/432508/politique/centrafrique-forces-speciales-americales-abandonnent-traque-de-joseph-kony/>.

4. United Nations (UN). Report by the Secretary-General on possible modalities for, and provision of support for, the process of authorizing African Union peace operations. July 2017 [Online], accessed 27 July 2017. URL: <https://www.un.org/press/fr/2017/cs12871.doc.htm>.

For its part, China, which is moving forward in Africa, is pleased to work with the AU on win-win partnerships in both economic development and more recently in the area of security. The flagship instrument for promoting their cooperation is the China-Africa Cooperation Forum (FOCAC).

*"A strategic vision for the continent that is both common and global, will allow it to optimally deal with the many regional security threats that are increasingly "complex, cross-border and transnational »"*

In short, having diverse partners is a fundamental element in the AU's strategic autonomy, as it allows several approaches and perspectives, the optimization of ambitions and their achievement, and the selection and decompartmentalisation of actions. But still, should the continent first have a common vision with precise objectives?

## 2. The African strategic debate: the need for a strategic and common vision

The emergence of the African strategic debate is timely in a rapidly changing and in a realist approach of international relations. The lack of coherence and coordination between the discourse and action of African States, both within and outside the continent, results in the AU having relatively weak internal results and less influence on the international arena. Thus, upstream from the exchanges on a strategic autonomy of the African Union, a common strategic thinking and vision should be crafted. Indeed, a strategic vision for the continent that is both common and global, will allow it to optimally deal with the many regional security threats that are increasingly "complex, cross-border and transnational »<sup>5</sup>; and to better systematically benefit from present and future development opportunities. As a result, African states must -more than ever- integrate the common and global dimension of the challenges they face and fulfill the need for a convergent response in conducting their foreign and even internal policies. In this, the discourse structuring the continent's foreign policy must reflect local values and needs. The African Union will be a single continental voice within the international institutions. The delays in managing the latest crisis in the Ivory Coast,

Libya and even Mali have left the door open to all forms of "interference." However, the adoption of a strong common position would clearly have favored other outcomes and facilitated the mobilization of an inter-African force.

*"Achieving these goals would allow the AU to have continental credibility (among its own populations) and international credibility. "*

It is therefore up to the continent to establish its common strategic vision according to its philosophical perceptions of development, its geopolitical realities, and its socio-cultural identity. Strategic enfranchisement necessarily involves a conviction of a shared ideal, which itself is supported by an independent financial policy.

## 3. The African Union's financial autonomy, a central and strategic imperative

The AU's major challenge is indeed to adopt a new financing model that will help to stem its budget dependence that relies on external contributions at over eighty percent (more than 56% of the financing is foreign according to the 2015 meeting report of the African Union's Advisory Sub-Committee on Administrative, Budgetary and Financial Matters). No political, security or economic autonomy strategy can be viable as long as this challenge remains. The problem thus raises the question of the credibility and sustainability of the institution's commitments to major internal projects and in relation to international partners. This is where the second constructive step of the AU's strategic autonomy should take place. Indeed, the challenge is for the AU to give itself the means to finance the priorities that are structured by a common predefined vision, hence, the Kaberuka plan<sup>6</sup> which is the self-financing decision proposed in 2016 by Mr. Donald Kaberuka, former president of the African Development Bank and member of the AU reform committee.

The Kaberuka plan consists of a 0.2% levy on non-African imports from AU member countries. According to the plan, the early projections of the reform will make it possible to finance 42% of the AU budget by its member states in 2017 compared to 30% in 2016. Ultimately, the plan will generate 1.2 billion dollars of revenue annually. However, it should be pointed out that the institution's self-financing

5. Konadje, Jean-Jacques. African strategy: which approaches? Diploweb. 30 January 2013. [Online], accessed 27 July 2017. URL: <https://www.diploweb.com/Strategie-africaine-queelles-voies.html>.

6. African Union. Decisions and Declarations, 27th Ordinary Session, 17-18 July 2016, Kigali (Rwanda). [Online], accessed 27 July 2017, URL: [https://www.au.int/web/sites/default/files/decisions/31274-assembly\\_au\\_dec\\_605\\_-620\\_xxvi\\_f.pdf](https://www.au.int/web/sites/default/files/decisions/31274-assembly_au_dec_605_-620_xxvi_f.pdf).

program has not yet fully detailed the products to be taxed. Nevertheless, it is appropriate for all to ensure the applicability of this measure. Self-financing is even more important in building the AU's strategic autonomy, as it pursues two strategic goals: having the means for its actions and ensuring independence from the outside for better latitude on decision-making and action on global issues. In other words, achieving these goals would allow the AU to have continental credibility (among its own populations) and international credibility. The decision is thus both symbolic and pragmatic, as it takes place in a context where other international actors, in particular the European Union and the United States, want Africa to increasingly engage in terms of financial responsibility. Indeed, the EU has recently decided to reduce its contributions by 20%<sup>7</sup>, while the US administration is reducing the share of its national budget allocated to Africa.

*"As a continental institution, the AU is taking a progressive approach to the fulfillment of its action policy. However, much remains to be done. A well-structured architecture is not always a guarantee of efficiency, hence the need for reform."*

In light of the above, the AU as a continental institution is today the main architect of Africa's strategic autonomy. The organization has become the main interlocutor for the continent, both internally and externally. As such, it is necessary to analyze the main principles and mechanisms that structure it.

## II. The African Union's Practices

The linkages of the African Union can only be understood through the characteristics of its current form and its action programs.

### 1. The AU: veritably complex architecture

**A- The AU's current framework:** The African Union, which now has 55 states following Morocco's reintegration in 2017, is based on a true architecture

7. Permanent representation of France to the EU. EU external assistance 2014-2020, March 2015. [Online], accessed on 27 July 2017. URL:file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/150331\_brochure\_instruments\_aide\_exterieure.pdf.

that theoretically allows it to pursue the objectives of the continent's peace, security, integration, and economic development. According to Article 5 of the Constitution, its bodies are: the Assembly of the Union; the Executive Council; the Pan-African Parliament; the Court of Justice; the Commission; the Permanent Representatives Committee; the Specialized Technical Committees; the Economic, Social and Cultural Council; and the Financial Institutions. Among several, we note the fundamental role of the two following: the Conference and the Commission. The Assembly of the Union is the supreme body composed each year of a Head of State and a government representative of the elected Member States. It shall be held at least once a year in an ordinary session and may decide on the establishment of another body. The Commission is composed of the President of the Commission, the Vice-President(s) and the commissioners responsible for the portfolios: peace and security, political affairs, social affairs, rural development, infrastructure, energy and transport, human resources and scientific research.

**B- The institution's action in terms of Agenda 2063:** On the basis of its framework, the logic of the institution's current practice rests on the seven "Aspirations"<sup>8</sup> defined by Agenda 2063, which is a program for the structural transformation of Africa approved in May 2013. It is very ambitious that through this Agenda, Africa wants to achieve its continental, sub-regional and national development. The major strategic instruments that have so far coordinated the work of the AU are inexorably aligned with the new vision of Agenda 2063, including:

- The New Partnership for Africa's Development, NEPAD, was ratified by the African Union in 2002 to resolve Africa's development problems under a new paradigm. It presents itself as a strategic mechanism guiding measures aimed at the continent's socio-economic development. NEPAD's projects include the deployment of broadband internet throughout the continent and the reorganization of agricultural production.
- The Peace and Security Council (PSC), the AU's strategic entity and mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution, has been set up with the objective of preventing risk, and creating conditions

8. AU. Agenda 2063, the Africa we want. April 2015. [Online], accessed 27 July 2017. URL: [https://www.au.int/web/sites/default/files/pages/3657-file-agenda2063\\_popular\\_version\\_en.pdf](https://www.au.int/web/sites/default/files/pages/3657-file-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf) p3-11.



conducive to the management and resolution of conflicts. Such a strategy should, according to its designers, serve to complement the continent's development objective, which is constantly hampered by the multiplication of inter and intra-state conflicts. As a continental institution, the AU is taking a progressive approach to the fulfillment of its action policy. However, much remains to be done. A well-structured architecture is not always a guarantee of efficiency, hence the need for reform.

## 2. The indispensability of flexible institutional reform

The persistence of political, infrastructural, economic and demographic challenges; criticism of the dysfunction of the decision-making bodies, and the difficult implementation of the AU decisions have resulted in a general will for reform. On January 29, Paul Kagame presented the restructuring project entitled "The Imperative to Strengthen Our Union."<sup>9</sup> The governance system should be able to provide answers to the challenges the Union faces through specific strategies.

### A- The structural measures adopted are to:

- Clearly delineate AU competencies: the African Union is currently involved in almost all areas related to the development of the continent. This lack of specific direction complicates the strategic allocation of resources and contributes to the organization's fragmentation and inefficiency.
- Revise some of the organization's roles and responsibilities in favor of the regional economic communities for effective collaboration.
- Strengthen the role of the AU Commission Chairperson. Instead of being chosen by the AU Executive Council, Commissioners could now be appointed by the Chairperson of the Commission and given more leeway.
- Precisely delineate the tasks of the AU structures: the African Union is a complex organization regrouping dozens of structures. There are 8 Directorates attached to the Commission, 31 departments and

services, 11 African Union bodies, 31 Specialized Technical Committees (STCs) and some 20 high-level committees. It will be necessary to assess and audit each of these structures for a better service delivery. Financial reform has already mentioned.

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### B- Involvement of civil society and any other actor:

Reforms must follow a careful approach that takes into account the needs of the populations. These stakeholders must therefore automatically be involved in the decision-making process. They must feel the concrete impacts of the institution's actions, as this is the key to their adherence to the AU project, which can help establish the legitimacy of the institution. As recognized in the African Union Agenda 2063, no society can reach its full potential without giving women greater autonomy and without removing all obstacles to their full participation in all areas of human activity. In order to fully take advantage of the benefits of the demographic dividend, women and youth are the groups that have been put forward in the reconfiguration of roles for the initiative to integrate and develop Africa. Their inclusion in forming great schools of excellence and think tanks will contribute to a veritable constitution of African intelligence / the African elite. Paul Kagame's declaration of May 7th resonates as a signal of awakening, both urging and determined: "There are no easy changes, the road ahead is long" and may even be "uncomfortable" but "it is important that we do not spoil this opportunity."<sup>10</sup> An opportunity to address large strategic and economic challenges in this context of globalization leads to the question: What economic development approach can be adopted?

*"It seems that the will of its states remains strongly characterized by a competitive logic and intra-regional and global competitiveness."*

9. Kagame, Paul. The imperative to strengthen our Union: Report on the proposed recommendations for the institutional reform of the Africa Union. 29 January 2017. [Online], accessed 28 July 2017. URL: [http://www.ipss-addis.org/y-file-store/content\\_files/AU\\_Reform\\_Report.pdf](http://www.ipss-addis.org/y-file-store/content_files/AU_Reform_Report.pdf).

10. Aglietti, Stephanie. The African Union countries are examining institutional reform in Kigali. Jeune Afrique (journal). 8 May 2017. [Online], accessed 29 July 2017. URL: <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/435999/politique/pays-de-lunion-africaine-se-penchant-reforme-de-linstitution-a-kigali/>.

### III. Rethinking the African Economic Development Model

The structural challenges facing the African continent's economy are enormous. Despite this situation, it seems that the will of its states remains strongly characterized by a competitive logic and intra-regional and global competitiveness. This competitiveness is the main issue in the crafting and implementation of African economic policies.

The global macroeconomic context is characterized by a decline in growth so that this situation affects the African economy and does not allow it to improve its numbers in terms of productivity and trade with the rest of the world.

#### 1. Afro-optimism in the face of contrasting economic realities

In a context of globalization, a streamlined African economy is the result of breaking with poorly distributive economic rentier systems. Thus, there is an urgent need to improve the African economic framework. This can only happen by federating efforts and harmonizing regional integration policies.

*"Africa alone will account for 30% of the world's population, and every other birth will be African. Such a demographic forecast is both hopeful and dreaded."*

In this sense, the industrial sector remains essential to the continent in order to transition away from an economy based on the export of raw materials<sup>11</sup>. Some African economic locomotives have been able to establish a standard model, as in the case of Ethiopia, Rwanda and Morocco, where the automotive, aeronautical and agro-industrial industries are increasingly developing. However, the need to rethink the African development model is an obligation of the states, by implementing inclusive economic policies that aim at the development of regional value chains to encourage the competitiveness of the economies of the countries on the continent.

11. Masimba Tafirenyika, Industrialization: Africa's failure? August-November 2016. [Online], accessed 28/Jul/2017. Url : <http://www.un.org/africarenewal/fr/magazine/ao%C3%BBt-novembre-2016/industrialisation-l%E2%80%99%C3%A9chec-de-l%E2%80%99afrique>.

While traditional partners naturally occupy their traditional place, currently, China is positioning itself as an essential economic interlocutor on the continent. This is despite the fact that no one could predict that China, after 40 years, would be the world's largest economic power. China, which has benefited greatly from its human capital, is today one of the first foreign investors in Africa. The volume of Sino-African trade has increased 20-fold since the 2000s. The Chinese have considerable resources to accelerate the industrialization process in Africa and finance infrastructure projects.

Therefore, China's African policy is pragmatic, since it is interested in raw materials more than infrastructure (the construction of highway, railway, and air networks are strategic projects for the African States). In its relational approach, China avoids any kind of discourse on democracy or the rule of law in economic negotiations with its African partners. This economic realism allows it to broaden its partnerships and diversify its resources.

For Africa, this Chinese pragmatism may well be a source of inspiration in its quest for an economic model that responds to its current and future challenges, such as that of population growth.

#### 2. Population growth and the challenge of development

By 2050, the African continent will have about 2.8 billion inhabitants out of a world population estimated at 9.8 billion<sup>12</sup>. Africa alone will account for 30% of the world's population, and every other birth will be African. Such a demographic forecast is both hopeful and dreaded, all the more so because it is considered to be the fastest population growth of all regions.

Public policies and current interventions by government authorities in Africa can increase the chances of achieving the potential gains of rapid population growth in the region and accompany its economic take-off<sup>13</sup>.

It should also be noted that another fundamental challenge is food, which makes food security one of the

12. United Nations (UN). World population is expected to reach 9.8 billion in 2050 and 11.2 billion in 2100, according to the UN. 27 June 2017. [Online], accessed 28 July 2017. URL: [http://www.un.org/apps/newsFr/storyF.asp?NewsID=39703#WXuZ5Yg1\\_IV](http://www.un.org/apps/newsFr/storyF.asp?NewsID=39703#WXuZ5Yg1_IV).

13. World Bank (Report). Africa's demographic transition: dividend or disaster? 22 October 2015. [Online], accessed 27 July 2017. URL: <http://www.banquemondiale.org/fr/news/press-release/2015/10/22/africas-population-book-can-propel-the-regions-economic-take-off>.

main priorities of the African countries' public policies. These countries are obliged to jointly base their efforts on the principles and values of "African solidarity" and in accordance with the "African solutions to African problems" approach, in order to address issues such as food security, electrification, education, and demographic control for the continent.

*" Following the traditional inter-state wars, Africa faces various insecurities linked to food and environmental crises, political instability in states, asymmetric threats of terrorism, organized crime, piracy."*

Moreover, the relationship between democracy and development in Africa is increasingly emphasized. The challenge of development thus leads to the question of democracy on the continent and necessitates an analysis of its concrete impact on the processes of socio-economic transformations of African societies. It should be noted, however, that this issue is not unanimous among the African elite. While some do not see the existence of democracy as a necessary condition for development, others encourage the promotion of democratic mechanisms as a single solution for the continent's economic take-off because experience has shown that democratic institutions are better suited at maintaining the great political and economic balances of states. This makes political participation an essential element for the consolidation of the rule of law and good economic governance. It is a moral responsibility of the African political elite to fulfill its obligations.

On the other hand, the other major challenge facing the continent and which conditions the achievement of its strategic autonomy is undoubtedly that of collective security.

## IV. Collective security in Africa: issues and perspectives

The issue of collective security emerged as one of the central issues in the discussion of AU strategic autonomy. In fact, the main objective was to highlight its major challenges and perspectives, following the critical presentations of collective security systems in development on the continent.

### 1. Changing threats and the need for a "solidarity-based and inclusive security" approach

Security threats on the continent have undergone major changes in recent years. Following the traditional inter-state wars (almost absent on the continent today), Africa faces various insecurities linked to food and environmental crises, political instability in states, asymmetric threats of terrorism, organized crime (in the Sahel and Libya, in northern Nigeria with Boko Haram, and in East Africa), piracy (in the African maritime waters of Africa's Atlantic coast including the Gulf of Guinea and the Gulf of Aden). In addition, there is the potential for a threat that could originate from poorly managed population growth on the continent in the years to come. In June 2017, the Global Peace Index noted deterioration in the security situation in sub-Saharan Africa (although it is ahead of Russia, EurAsia, South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa).<sup>14</sup> This regression is mainly related to the new threats mentioned above. These have a real impact on the daily life of the African people and the future of the continent in the coming years, particularly in the area of security.

For this reason, APSACO stressed the need to go beyond the predominant classical security approach. This is narrowly limited to military responses and is based on the stato-centric paradigm. It is therefore necessary to emphasize the states' socio-economic development, by putting the individual at the heart of all efforts. However, this development requires focus. Each state will have to rationally identify the sectors (one, two or three) in which it has a comparative advantage, and rigorously develop them.

*" As such, it would be important to assert continental leadership that is equally "solidarity-based" under the umbrella of these leading states on the continent, beyond any national interest."*

This move towards a comprehensive security approach must lead to a different imperative for the foundation of any collective security system. It is necessary for African states to harmonize their views about the threats they face.

<sup>14</sup> Ecofin Agency. Classification of the most peaceful sub-Saharan African countries, per the Global Peace Index (GPI). 2 June 2017. [Online], accessed 20 July 2017. URL: <http://www.agenceecofin.com/gouvernance-economique/0206-47847-classement-des-pays-d-afrique-subsaaharienne-les-plus-pacifiques-selon-le-global-peaceful-index-gpi>.

It is a question of evolving towards a veritable "security complex" as defined by Bary Buzan as "a group of states whose primary security concerns are so closely linked that the security of any of them can not be separated from that of the others."<sup>15</sup> From this perspective, it is thus necessary for Africa to give concrete meaning to the principle of "solidarity" by moving towards the practice of "solidarity-based and inclusive security" both at the subregional and continental levels. The place and role of the leading states is important.

## 2. The issue of continental leadership: the indispensable role of leading African states

Although Africa's approach to international order is still governed by the principle of the states' sovereign equality, it should be noted that in recent years, with the advent of the African Union, some states have played a leading role in continental institutions and especially in terms of security. These states, Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa and Angola, accounted for the bulk of military spending on the continent out of a total of 37 billion dollars in 2016 according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Moreover, according to Global Fire Power, in 2017 military spending was among the top seven spending categories. These countries also have the best military personnel, equipment and logistics in Africa. As such, it would be important to assert continental leadership that is equally "solidarity-based" under the umbrella of these leading states on the continent, beyond any national interest. Already, while Alpha Omar Konaré was the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, he called on these locomotive states to take responsibility for the conduct of continental affairs.

The conference thus grasped this evolution recognizing the capacities of these states to challenge them to act towards the affirmation of true solidarity continental leadership capable of endowing Africa with its "self-pacification capacity."<sup>16</sup> This requires the ambient diversity of the armies to be managed in order to evolve towards practical Interoperability.

15. Buzan, Bary. *People, state and Fear*. (1983). Colchester. ECPR Press, 2007, p.190.

16. Mazrui, Ali. *The African Conditions: Insearch of Pax Africana*. BBC (radio). 12 December 1979. [Online], accessed 20 July 2017. [http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/rmhttp/radio4/transcripts/1979\\_reith6.pdf](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/rmhttp/radio4/transcripts/1979_reith6.pdf).

## 3. The diversity of armies and the thorny issue of interoperability

Interoperability "is the ability of different military organizations to conduct joint operations. The difference may be situated at the level of nationalities or weapons (land forces, air, naval forces), or both." It allows forces, units or systems to work together. It requires them to share a common doctrine and procedures, as well as their respective infrastructure and bases, and to be able to communicate with each other."<sup>17</sup>

*"African states could therefore set up a "Connected Forces Initiative (CFI)" adapted to African realities."*

Interoperability implies strategic interconnection on the one hand. That is, in the areas of sovereignty, vision of national interests, threats, determination of military expenditures, establishment of military and defense alliances, technological equipment, and development of local military industries. On the other hand, it demands that military organizations be interconnected tactically. The aim is to harmonize the armed forces' different military equipment and logistics, command and control, differences in doctrines and resource shortfalls.

It therefore conditions the establishment and activation of effective common defense forces on the continent. Therefore, African states must define a "doctrine and common means" of defense, as well as measures obliging all states to cooperate. In this sense, the leading states must play a decisive role in creating synergy among the armed forces and training the military elites, while enabling the weaker states to acquire equipment similar to their own.

From this perspective, Africa can draw inspiration from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which has made some progress on the issue. African states could therefore set up a "Connected Forces Initiative (CFI)"<sup>18</sup> adapted to African realities. The analysis made of the evolution of the collective security system under construction in the G5 Sahel showed the emergence of initiatives in this direction, despite group limitations. However, the African Architecture of Peace and Security will also be necessary to make this a reality, in particular

17. NATO. *Interoperability in joint operations*. (Report). July 2016. [Online], Accessed 27 July 2017. P. 1. URL: [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_publications/20120116\\_interoperability-fr.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120116_interoperability-fr.pdf).

18. *Ibid.*



for the component of the African Reserve Forces.

As noted in the beginning, the question of self-financing remains central to building a collective security system in Africa. Estimated in 2016 at US\$37.9 billion, total African military spending remains one of the lowest in the world. In fact, there was a decline of around 1.3% from 2015<sup>19</sup> (due to the oil price crisis)<sup>20</sup>. This shows the close relationship between the development of security means and economic development, hence the need for African States to establish a system for pooling military budgets. This could concern specific programs that are essential to collective security, including ongoing training, ad hoc training, and the development and purchase of equipment and technologies.

Finally, we must cite the role of international cooperation with partners like the United States, the European Union, emerging countries and many others. However, it should be oriented towards the strategic priorities defined by the AU in its construction of an African collective security system.

## **Conclusion: AU Strategic Autonomy: the indispensable collective structure to be built**

In light of the above, it appears that the present and the future of constructing Africa must be fundamentally based on achieving the continental institution's strategic autonomy. This autonomy guarantees internal and external credibility. It must be anchored in African realities while avoiding any kind of mimicry and/or wait-and-see behavior. The new elements concerning the international order, in particular the sovereigntist assertion by the classical and emerging powers, must challenge African decision makers to accelerate the formation of a strategic whole. The key to their success is through the mutualizing of their efforts at all levels (State, AU, and subregional organizations) and by focusing on strategic sectors for socio-economic development. But an "Africa of States" alone will not succeed in building this "strategic autonomy" without the effective participation of a "People's Africa" (civil society and African citizens) in decision-making. These decisions cannot be concrete unless they reflect and truly meet the expectations of the African people.

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