

# Critical reflections of the african standby force

The Case of its SADC  
Contingent  
BY  
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# introduction

- Africa remains a crisis-prone continent
- Egypt, Libya, Northern Mali, Northern Nigeria, Somalia, DRC, Kenya, South Africa, Zimbabwe
- Crucial difference between OAU and AU is Article 4 h of the AU Constitutive Act which creates not only a legal basis for intervention but also imposes an obligation for the AU to intervene in order to save human life
- Closely allied to R2P – Rwandan genocide of 1994
- May 2003 African Chiefs of Defence and Security begin deliberations on how to operationalize such an intervention
- End of 2004 – ASF emerges

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# The asf

- PSC of the AU understanding the complexity of the security context in which African peacekeepers are to be deployed and insisted that the ASF not only include military elements but also civilian police and other capabilities on account of the roles they saw the ASP playing
- These include preventive deployment, peacekeeping, peace building, post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of armed combatants, and humanitarian assistance
- In the language of the UN, the ASF was envisaged to be both a Chapter 6 traditional peacekeeping mission and a Chapter 7 more robust peace enforcement mission

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# Components of a regional brigade

- Brigade HQ – 85 personnel, 15 light vehicles
- 4 Infantry Battalions – 3000 personnel, 280 light vehicles
- Helicopter Unit – 80 personnel, 10 light vehicles, 4 helicopters
- Recce Company – 150 personnel, 15 armoured vehicles
- HQ Support Company – 65 personnel, 16 light vehicles
- Military police unit – 48 personnel, 15 light vehicles
- Light signals unit – 135 personnel, 47 light vehicles
- Field engineer unit – 505 personnel, 65 light vehicles
- Logistic specialisation unit – 190 personnel, 40 light vehicles
- Level 2 hospital – 35 personnel, 10 light vehicles

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# The asf cont.

- ASF organised into 5 regional brigades: SADC BRIG, EAS BRIG, NAS BRIG, EC0 BRIG, ECCAS BRIG
- Each comprising of 5000 personnel, bringing the total to 25,0000
- Attempt to co-locate the ASF with each of the five RECs thereby reinforcing a common sub-regional identity
- Problem of overlapping memberships –Angola and DRC (southern and central brigs)
- Similarly Madagascar and Mauritius with both southern and eastern brigs
- From an operational point of view this leaves such countries over-stretched and mechanisms of coordination between respective regional brigades needed to ensure deployment of brigade is not affected in times of crisis

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## The asf cont.

- .In theory, overlapping memberships should not be a problem given the coordination between the AU and the respective regional brigade
- Conceptually, once a PSO has been launched, the PSOD of the AU becomes the strategic headquarters whilst the regional planning element becomes the operational headquarters with constant communication between the two
- However, in practice, there continues to be a lack of clarity as to where the PSOD line of authority end and where those of the REC begins
- ASF called upon to be able to deploy within two weeks from the provision of a mandate by the PSC of the AU – in practice, the lack of a strategic airlift capability prevents such rapid deployment

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# The asf cont.

- Unless the ADF is adequately resourced, it will remain a nice idea impossible to truly implement
- Another problem – assumption that the ASF will be deployed for a period of 1-2 years – after which a UN mission will replace the force.
- In practice, AU missions lasting much longer – e.g. AMISOM and instead of an AU mission leading to a UN one we are increasingly witnessing hybrid UN-AU peace missions such as that of UNAMID
- On both these counts, it is imperative that the PSC go back to the drawing board – taking on board these new realities
- Sub-regional nature of AU security architecture and scarce resources – danger of NSI predominating, SADC in DRC, Kenya in Somalia, etc

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# SADC Sf

- From SADC BRIG to SADC SF on account of multi-dimensional character of force, not only military elements – police and civilian components too
- SADC SF – steady progress, created August 2007, planning element co-located with the SADC secretariat in Gaborone
- SADC SF has already completed developing a common doctrine, operational guidelines, standard operating procedures and logistic concept – all essential to build effective cohesions between national forces
- Common training is done at the Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre in Harare
- All national forces train in accordance with UN/AU PSO doctrine

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# Challenges to the sadc sf

- Problem of inter-operability in the sphere of communications remain
- Consider here the language question (English, French, Portuguese) – investment in language training at the different military colleges should be a priority
- Communication is further hindered by the use of different types of communication equipment from original manufacturers – causing severe inter-operability challenges as was found during the recent SADC peacekeeping training exercises – Operation Golfinho
- Operation Golfinho also demonstrated that CIVPOL components lagging behind the military – undermining the multidimensional nature of the force and hampering success if deployed in theatre of operations

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# Challenges to the sadc sf continued

- Problem of national countries pledging forces which are still committed elsewhere – undermining the created of a roster of troops being contributed
- In other cases, key elements of such a force, notably the marine elements and Special Forces are not pledged by any SADC state – omissions undermine the very effectiveness of SADC SF
- SA has come to occupy a dominant role within the SADC SF – no medical battalion group, no maintenance unit or field workshop was offered by any SADC country – SANDF has agreed to provide these since no brigade plus strength force can be deployed and sustained in the field without these critical component – but already problems of SA domination

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# The SADC opdsc

- The deployment of SADF SF is not merely a technical matter. It is in important respects a political affairs – political challenges the most daunting confronting the SADC SF
- Article 8c of the SADC Protocol establishing the OPDSC stipulates that decisions shall be taken by consensus - decisions by consensus is essentially a veto – go for OAU position of consensus minus one
- Problem of absolutist sovereignty – running counter to even AU
- Problem of is security about citizens of state elites. Time and time again, the SADC leadership has answered this question in favour of the latter
- Situation these elites would allow deployment of SF are remote

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# conclusion

- ASF positive development for Africa
- Given constraints at UN level – both resource and political – establishment of ASF was ground-breaking
- Operationalized the norm of R2P or in African parlance – the notion of ubuntu – our common humanity
- Despite problems from sourcing funding, developing command and control, improving communications, overlapping memberships of the regional brigades and the danger of one state dominating the regional brigade, military officers working hard to move the concept of the ASF from the drawing board, into military academies and onto the battlefield

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# conclusion

- Greatest challenges are political, not military
- SADC political leadership had proved deficient in terms of the values it represent – preferring to keep incumbents in power as opposed to allying themselves with long-suffering citizens
- SADC political leadership seem to exist for the security of state elites as opposed to the human security of citizens under the yoke of political oppression by the likes of Robert Mugabe and King Mswati III
- SADC’s absolutist notion of sovereignty stands in stark contrast to the position of qualified sovereignty adopted by the AU
- In this scenario I do not see intervention by the SADC SF being authorised

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