

Complements or Competitors? The African Standby Force, the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises, and the Future of Rapid Reaction Forces in Africa

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ABSTRACT. In May 2013 the African Union proposed the creation of an institutional framework for a new continental rapid-response force called the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises. While the creation of the rapid-response force has offered hope as an antidote to the recent continental inaction in the face of insurgencies in places like Mali in 2013, it has undergone critical scrutiny because it seemingly duplicates—and thus arguably draws resources away from—a similar mechanism, the African Standby Force, which has been in development by the African Union and regional communities since 2003. A contemporary debate is thus emerging: Certain observers favor the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises' new, ad-hoc, slim, and voluntary approach to collective security, while others argue that the African Standby Force's preexisting—though underdeveloped—regionally based, comprehensive, and institutionalized framework should receive top priority. This article offers overviews of both institutions and the various debates currently surrounding them. In the main, it argues that while critiques that the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises is duplicative of the African Standby Force are superficially cogent, deeper analysis shows that this is not the case. Rather, the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises is a laudable stopgap measure for continental rapid-deployment capabilities until the more bureaucratically complex African Standby Force is fully operationalized. Rather than undermining the African Standby Force, the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises is instead highly complementary. Indeed, it is likely the case that some of the more successful components of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises will ultimately be incorporated into the African

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Standby Force's rapid-deployment capabilities once the latter is ready for operations in 2015 or beyond.

KEYWORDS. Collective security, the African Standby Force, ASF, the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises, ACIRC, African Union, rapid-deployment capabilities, RDC

INTRODUCTION

The notion of "collective security" assumes that a group of states with common aims agrees to pool their resources in the face of a threat to one member or to the collective to assure mutual well-being.¹ To that end, the need for an African military standby force to ensure collective security in sub-Saharan Africa has long been recognized. Early in the continent's postcolonial history, discussions of commitment to collective security via a so-called "Pax Africana" (or "African Peace") were rife and were articulated as early as 1967 by Ali Mazrui, who advocated a peace "that is protected and maintained by Africa herself."² So too was the notion of collective African security vaunted by early postcolonial leaders such as Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, who lobbied for the creation of a Pan-African army within the newly formed Organization of African Unity (OAU) to deter external aggression and to coordinate efforts against colonial occupation. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, various proposals emerged advocating the creation of a continental intervention force, such as Sierra Leone's call for an African Defense Organization (1965), Nigeria's calls for an African Defense System (1970), or proposals for an OAU Defense Force (1978–1981).³

Yet early African collective security mechanisms proved to be problematic to implement. Post-independence-era African leaders were able to exert only minimal empirical sovereignty over their new states, which meant that early African collective security was defined as nonintervention, nonaggression, and noncontestation of borders,⁴ a fact that was enshrined in the founding documents of the OAU. As a result, throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s the African international community was "ingloriously quiet" as leaders of new governments, ready to seek the benefits of newfound sovereignty—what Robert Bates calls "specialists in violence"⁵—decimated domestic populations in Rwanda (1963–1964), Katanga in Zaire (1967), Biafra in Nigeria (1967–1970), and Burundi (1972), among other instances.⁶

The reformation of "noninterventionist" continental security norms came about as a result of a multiplicity of forces in the early 1990s, and though the isolation of a single cause of such changes remains a topic for debate, three sources are frequently cited.⁷ The first cause was the breaking of the norms of nonintervention when the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) intervened in Liberia in 1990; the second was shame over

continental inaction in the face of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, which killed an estimated 800,000; and the third was the end of the Cold War, which left a security void on the continent and thus compelled African states to “get serious” about the provision of their own collective security. Together, these three phenomena—in addition to others—ushered in new thinking about the importance of African collective security and a renewed twenty-first century commitment to the “Pax Africana.”⁸

Today, this commitment to African collective security is characterized by two rapid response forces that now find themselves at the center of some amount of controversy: the African Standby Force (ASF), proposed in 2003, and the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC), proposed in 2013. While both forces are intended to help the African Union (AU) and member states rapidly intervene to protect civilians in the event of state collapse, insurgencies, or other widespread violence, some critics are arguing that the two institutions are so similar that their simultaneous existence means that they are usurping each other’s resources. As a result, they suggest, collective security on the continent is actually being harmed, not helped.⁹

Is it actually the case that the ASF and ACIRC are simply the same project with different names? More important, does their simultaneous development suggest that resources devoted to one inherently undermine progress of the other? What other impediments might need to be overcome for either force to ultimately succeed in helping to engender collective African security?

THE AFRICAN STANDBY FORCE

The framework for the ASF was adopted in 2003,¹⁰ the year after the creation of the AU in 2002.¹¹ In transitioning from the OAU to the AU, the latter created the African Peace and Security Council (PSC), which functions as the AU’s rough equivalent of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).¹² However, the PSC is just one component of the AU’s new series of institutions responsible for security, which are collectively referred to as the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). In addition to the PSC, the collective security institutions falling under the aegis of APSA include regional and continental early warning systems,¹³ a collective of preeminent advisory envoys called the Panel of the Wise,¹⁴ a financing mechanism called the African Peace Fund,¹⁵ and, most important, the ASF.

In its early incarnation in 2003 the ASF was the mechanism that provided the most hope for the provision of continental collective security given its ability to provide the AU with a continental rapid-deployment capability (RDC). Its stated goal was straightforward: by leveraging the intelligence gathered from the continental and regional early warning systems, the ASF would be

ready and able to be deployed as a rapid response force anywhere on the continent within fourteen days.¹⁶ Apart from its rapid-deployment functions, the ASF was also mandated to “conduct, observe, and monitor” peacekeeping missions and support operations and would include military, police, and civilian components.¹⁷

As conceived, the ASF would be composed of five multidimensional (military, police, and civilian) regional brigades of 5,000 troops each,¹⁸ and the ASF could thus draw from nearly 25,000 soldiers from around the continent and would be ready to be deployed by 2010. Given that the troops would come from five African regions—north, west, central, east, and south, as delineated by the AU¹⁹—the regional economic communities (RECs) in each of these serve as general, though not absolute, institutional guideposts for the operationalization of ASF brigades. This is the case in West Africa, Southern Africa, and Central Africa.²⁰ However, regions have also created what are known as regional mechanisms (RMs) specifically for the management of the ASF operationalization in East and North Africa, which operate in conjunction with—though outside of the exclusive purview of—the RECs.²¹ Though each brigade would be regionally based, all troops would remain in standby in their host country until deployed.²²

Despite the early optimism associated with the development of the ASF, as of October 2014 the force had yet to reach full operational deployment capability. Analysts note that even at its inception, “AU member countries were slow in committing troops to the ASF” and have since proven equally slow to do so.²³ Delays have plagued the ASF since its conception. The ASF was initially envisaged in two phases. Phase 1, which was to be completed by 2005, was delayed until 2008, while phase 2, which should have theoretically been completed by 2010,²⁴ is yet to finish as of October 2014.²⁵ Currently, the ASF is slated to be fully operational by 2015, though an independent report released in early 2014 by Nigerian scholar and diplomat Ibrahim Gambari assessed that “at the current pace and scope of effort, it is unlikely [that full operational capability] will be achieved by the end of 2015.”²⁶ A primary cause of the lack of ASF operational ability is a lack of buy-in from certain regions. The West African brigade (ESF, the ECOWAS Standby Force) and the Southern African brigade (SSF, SADC Standby Force) are unquestionably the most prepared, owing to the backing of regional hegemony Nigeria and South Africa, respectively. For its part, the East African brigade (ESF, East African Standby Force) seems genuinely prepared to deploy by late 2014,²⁷ though results are to be determined. For their part, the Central African brigade (FOMAC, Force Multinationale d’Afrique Centrale),²⁸ and the Northern African brigade (North African Regional Capability) are the least prepared to deploy, and are the regions that are being looked to as the major impediments to the ASF’s readiness.²⁸

THE AFRICAN CAPACITY FOR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO CRISIS

ACIRC was first proposed in an April 2013 report from the AU Commission chairperson, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, for two interrelated reasons. The first was the nonfunctionality of the ASF, which led directly to the second: France's successful unilateral Operation Serval intervention in Mali in January 2013,²⁹ which served as an embarrassment for the AU and member states, which ostensibly had a force (the ASF) intended for just such a purpose.³⁰ The aforementioned report highlighted the AU's "inability, despite its political commitment to Mali"³¹ to adequately confront the deteriorating situation and thus admitted that in spite of previous efforts, the ASF's "RDC capability is yet to be operational."³²

As such, ACIRC was created as a stopgap measure to provide the continent with a rapid deployment capability while individual regions are standing up the ASF ahead of the 2015 deadline.³³ According to the 2013 report, ACIRC would be responsible for "stabilization, peace enforcement and intervention missions; neutralization of terrorist groups, other cross-border criminal entities, armed rebellions; and emergency assistance to member states within the framework of the principle of non-indifference for protection of civilians."³⁴ Compositionally, ACIRC is intended to have some 5,000 continental troops, of which 1,500 would likely be deployed at any one time and would be composed of a variety of standard and specialist troops from various countries.³⁵ Each unit would be able to deploy within ten days of its mandate and would theoretically be able to self-sustain for 30 days thereafter.³⁶ The initial proposal forwarded in the April 2013 report suggested that ACIRC would be composed of:

Three tactical battle groups, comprised of three infantry battalions of 850 troops each, an artillery support group and light armor elements, as well as an air wing of 400 troops, which would include strike aircraft and helicopters and logistical support, including strategic airlift capabilities. The unit would have a 10-day notice of movement.³⁷

Notably, the logic behind ACIRC is that it is an entirely voluntary force that would be stood up as needed, drawing on troop contributions from various countries as conflicts necessitated, with each country making its own decisions regarding number of troops and amount of material, equipment, and/or monetary funding. It is, in other words, what Cédric de Coning has called a "coalition-of-the-willing" model, wherein deployment is contingent on a lead nation assuming preponderant responsibility.³⁸ Yet not all are content with the proposal for the creation of ACIRC, especially given the historical efforts undertaken in the development of the ASF.

THE ASF AND ACIRC: COMPLEMENTS OR COMPETITORS?

The central debate surrounding the ASF and ACIRC is whether they are simply the same entity with different names. That is, are the two not so similar that their mutual standup is a zero-sum game in which states' contributions to one inherently signal a loss of funding or support for the other? On one hand, some claim that ASF and ACIRC are functionally equivalent and that their duplication is obvious and bad.³⁹ One report notes that "critics are . . . concerned that the ACIRC may draw attention away and undermine the investment that has been put into launching the ASF,"⁴⁰ while another suggests the ASF sounds "remarkably similar" to the ACIRC.⁴¹ As another emphasizes, "A focus on enhancing the rapid-deployment capability within the ASF to full operational levels would surely make more sense than an independent new structure" like the ACIRC.⁴² Others have looked back in history to show that not only are the ASF and ACIRC similar to one another, but, indeed, are simply replications of previously failed attempts at creating a pan-African standby force. As African security analyst Comfort Ero asserts:

This rapid reaction force is a rehashing of an old debate we heard in the 1990s and the early 2000s. Some officials in Addis ask simply: if the AU has been unable to agree on a standby force over the past decade, is it reasonable to expect it now to organise a more complex and more costly rapid reaction force? The fundamentals are not very different for both of these forces.⁴³

Johan Potgieter, another African security analyst has assessed:

We here in [Africa] are too quick to reinvent the wheel. Let us rather develop the [ASF] concept to its logical conclusion before we start with a new concept. The development of the ASF . . . [has come] a long way, and many arguments for and against the current concept were exhaustively examined. Let us finish the job first, before we start a new one.⁴⁴

And finally, as Peter Fabricious has forwarded: "One might legitimately ask why the AU did not just accelerate the establishment of the ASF rather than creating this new bureaucracy."⁴⁵

However, other security analysts and member states are ardent fans of the simultaneous ASF and ACIRC development, viewing them as complements to and not competitors with one another.⁴⁶ Indeed, multiple differences exist between the two forces. At the broadest level, advocates of both institutions underline the fact that ACIRC is intended to fill only one specific gap of the ASF's mandate: namely, its rapid-deployment capability.⁴⁷ While the ASF is slated to have a wide range of security responsibilities (including offering military assistance to governments, deploying stand-alone or joint peacekeeping missions, and cease-fire monitoring, among others), ACIRC is intended only to substitute for the ASF's current lack of an RDC. Moreover, the ASF has a much broader mandate, to include military, police, and civilian components (e.g.,

political affairs officers, human rights advisors, public information officers,⁴⁸ and experts in forensic affairs and children's affairs, etc.), though ACIRC would be exclusively security-centric, composed of military personnel and advisors.⁴⁹ Instead of serving as a wholesale replacement of the ASF, then, ACIRC would seek to fulfill only the ASF's scenario six, acting as an "immediate combat intervention based on a humanitarian imperative to save lives, typically involving stopping or preventing emerging genocide, crimes against humanity, atrocities or war crimes by armed rebel forces."⁵⁰ Put simply, rather than replacing the ASF, ACIRC fills in only one nonfunctioning part of the larger ASF framework: its RDC.

Second, despite the fact that the ASF and ACIRC would both be composed of multinational forces, they would fundamentally differ in the nature of how troops would be drawn up for combat. The ASF has mandated that countries contributing to the 5,000-person regional brigades earmark, train, and be prepared to deploy special units explicitly for ASF operations. In contrast, ACIRC does not demand that nations earmark special units for potential rapid deployment. Because ACIRC's structure is far more flexible and ad-hoc, countries are able to offer whichever units they want to contribute.⁵¹ In short, the ASF is more rigorous in its preparation schemes than ACIRC, though ACIRC is far more nimble.

Third, ACIRC and ASF differ regarding their potential sources of funding. Because the ASF falls under the aegis of the AU's PSC, it is funded, in large part, by AU member states and, specifically, the African Peace Fund. In contrast, troop commitments to ACIRC would be drawn from countries on a case-by-case basis: individual member states—not the AU as an organization—would primarily foot the bill for the operationalization of ACIRC. As Algerian Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, the commissioner for peace and security of the AU, has underlined, "The individual countries supplying troops and equipment would be responsible for paying for the deployment; we are not going to take it from the AU budget. We are not going to ask for partners to fund these [ACIRC] operations."⁵²

Fourth, centralization of control would be fundamentally different: whereas ASF has regions (and their brigades) serving as the cornerstone of collective security, ACIRC would be centralized within the AU. Specifically, ACIRC would be monitored within the AU's PSC, which would solicit troop contributions in instances of potential state collapse, whereas ASF relies on regions as its primary troop-contributors. To the extent that ACIRC would shift contemporary African collective security initiatives to the continental level and away from the region, Romain Esmenjaud believes that the ACIRC is likely to create tension between the leaders of regional organizations and those in the AU, the former of which might interpret the shift to ACIRC as undermining their capacity for management of local security affairs.⁵³

Fifth, ACIRC would have a far wider range of potential intervention scenarios than the ASF. In short, given that ASF doctrine is based on UN doctrine (which allows for conflict prevention and peacebuilding but very limited engagement in peace enforcement), the ASF will be similarly limited to these activities once it stands up. In contrast, ACIRC, which is based on African states' experiences in recent peace missions in places like Mali and the Central African Republic, explicitly allows for peace enforcement, thus making it more commensurate with contemporary African security imperatives.⁵⁴

In sum, though ASF and ACIRC are intended to accomplish similar goals, they differ substantially, particularly regarding complexity, scope of mission, and nature of funding, which leads them to be more complementary than adversarial.

WHO IS GOING TO PAY?

Assuming that the simultaneous development of ASF and ACIRC is in fact beneficial, other challenges remain: the most important hurdle facing both the ASF and ACIRC is the question of funding, which has historically been one of the main stumbling blocks for the AU generally. As one anonymous embassy staffer relayed, when it comes to the provision of collective security, "The AU is far more willing than able."⁵⁵

While regions, as discussed, are showing differing commitments to the ASF, states are showing varying financial commitments to ACIRC. At the initial ACIRC planning meeting hosted by South Africa in November 2013, only four African presidents were in attendance: the sponsor, Jacob Zuma of South Africa; Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni; Tanzania's President Jakaya Kikwete; and Chad's President Idriss Déby.⁵⁶ Other states, including Ghana, Angola, Niger, Ethiopia, Algeria, and Sudan sent lower-level representatives.⁵⁷ At that meeting, South Africa pledged a motorized battalion of 1,500,⁵⁸ while Chad, Tanzania, Uganda, and Ethiopia also pledged to contribute an additional 1,500 troops each.⁵⁹ To date, a total of twelve countries—Algeria, Angola, Chad, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mauritania, Niger, South Africa, Senegal, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda—have agreed to participate.⁶⁰ Some observers are quick to note that the most ardent financial supporters of the ACIRC are also the continent's militarily strongest states, suggesting (perhaps hyperbolically) that ACIRC might simply be a "tool aimed at legitimizing interventions by the strongest" to approaching a form of "African imperialism."⁶¹

Notably, while South Africa has thus far been ACIRC's undisputed champion, Nigeria has been absent from most discussions on ACIRC.⁶² Observers note that while Nigeria was initially a proponent of ACIRC, it has since cooled

on commitments. Officially, Nigeria has emphasized that its trepidation about ACIRC relates precisely to the question of duplication (it would prefer to stand up the ASF first), with Nigeria's Deputy Foreign Minister Nuruddeen Mohammed emphasizing that the country was not "allergic" to military solutions for the resolution of conflicts.⁶³ However, other motives might be at play. Primarily, Nigeria could be reluctant to commit its troops and equipment in other contexts when it needs them to combat its own domestic Boko Haram insurgency.⁶⁴ Moreover, it has also been suggested that Abuja does not like the idea that, as the largest country on the continent, it might one day be expected to take on substantial (and thus costly) financial or logistical leadership roles in the command of ACIRC.⁶⁵ Whatever the reason, most agree that Nigeria's lack of substantial participation is a problem for ACIRC, with Solomon Dersso describing its absence as a "major gap," given its extensive leadership in interventions within the context of Western Africa's regional economic community, ECOWAS.⁶⁶

The absence of Nigerian enthusiasm for ACIRC is particularly noteworthy given its status as one of the AU's largest African fund contributors, which have historically been limited to the so-called "Big Five": South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, Libya, and Algeria, each of which contributes approximately 15 percent of the African-derived funding of the AU's annual budget.⁶⁷ However, the "Big Five" essentially became the "Big Two" since the ouster of Moammar Qaddafi, who was infamous for his funding of the organization for personal self-aggrandizing purposes.⁶⁸ Notably, it is also the case that many smaller countries fail to pay their AU dues on time: an AU report in 2008 noted that only twenty-nine of the then fifty-three member states were up-to-date on payments.⁶⁹

Various proposals have been forwarded to rectify the AU's historical funding crisis. Some have suggested that certain large and medium African countries need to step up their contributions to the AU and, by proxy, its collective security mechanisms. Prime on this list of "undercontributing" countries are Equatorial Guinea⁷⁰ (which has the highest per capita income on the continent), Angola⁷¹ (which contributes very little to peacekeeping outside of Lusophone Guinea-Bissau), and South Africa⁷² (which, opponents argue, could do more). One proposal that was put forward in Abuja, Nigeria, in March 2014 suggested that each AU member contribute 0.5 percent of its annual budget to the AU.⁷³ A second suggestion has been that countries should impose a "peace tax" on individual African citizens, which would ultimately underwrite collective security initiatives.⁷⁴ Interestingly, a third proposal to help the AU and support a combination of the ASF and ACIRC was the suggestion of "tourist taxes": these include a \$10USD "Pan-African visa" levied for non-African citizens entering sub-Saharan Africa⁷⁵ and a \$2USD "hospitality tax" for hotel rooms.⁷⁶

CAN AFRICAN STATES REACT QUICKLY ENOUGH TO VIOLENCE?

Whether considering the models of ASF or ACIRC, another question still remains: do willing states even have the capacities to react quickly enough? Because both the ASF and ACIRC are intended to stem violence expeditiously, the ability to act rapidly is imperative, though African institutions' inabilities to do this have been a major stumbling block.⁷⁷ Two facets have historically delayed reactions: slow decision making and the lack of suitable equipment and personnel.

At one level, decision-making procedures within the AU have been too slow to adequately react to instances of mass violence.⁷⁸ While many cite member states' lack of political will and the difficulty in reaching consensus among states in the AU Commission as dragging down the AU's reaction time,⁷⁹ it is also the case that the AU remains politically hamstrung by its relationship with non-African international organizations regarding mandating responsibility. In short, although the ASF Policy Framework 2.2 states that the AU PSC is itself "a legitimate mandating authority"⁸⁰ for peace enforcement operations, the same clause nevertheless simultaneously urges that it is still "expected that . . . the AU will seek UN Security Council authorization of its decisions."⁸¹ As such, though it need not necessarily receive UN approval, the AU has historically requested permission from the UNSC before deploying any intervention forces for the purposes of garnering international legitimacy for its actions.⁸² But, because arriving at UNSC approval decisions can be a lengthy process, the AU can be forced to remain immobile, even if it seeks to act.

Apart from its relationship with the UN, the AU is also somewhat constrained in its decision-making process in its relationship with the European Union (EU). The AU's Peace and Security Council is funded in large part by the EU's African Peace Facility, which mandates that the AU submit a detailed plan about the nature of its proposed intervention to the EU Commission, which is subsequently circulated among the EU Political and Security Committee, which determines the "political appropriateness of the intervention requested."⁸³ While the African Peace Facility also includes an early response mechanism (ERM), which has made gains in facilitating more rapid reaction, more streamlining in decision making could still be worthwhile.⁸⁴ In other words, in dealing with both the UN and the EU, the AU must currently make calculations on whether to respond quickly but risk reduced international community legitimacy and funding or respond slowly but be assured of continued international assistance and legitimacy necessary for the ultimate perpetuation of its missions.

Beyond the delays in deployment caused by lack of African funding, another overriding impediment to rapid deployment has historically been—and continues to be—airlift capacity. The need for airlift capacity is logical: rapid reaction forces deploying from around the continent frequently need to

be airlifted, not driven, to their final destinations. While African states can generally meet their airlift needs for light operations such as airdrops and air-land operations,⁸⁵ multiple observers have noted that medium and heavy airlift capacity, necessary for the movement of vehicles, for instance, remains a major deficiency for both the ASF and ACIRC.⁸⁶ Given the costly nature of such capabilities, smaller African countries tend to rely on less expensive but outdated aircraft, such as Soviet-era Antonovs, though frequently look to larger states like South Africa, Egypt, Angola, and international partners to shoulder the main responsibilities. Beyond simply the lack of heavy airlift vehicles, other issues, including the need for reliable and proximate logistics bases for ASF's airlift operations⁸⁷ and relatively few landing strips capable of accommodating such aircraft, remain problems.⁸⁸

Various other factors contribute to delayed responses. First, fears remain about the quality of African armies themselves, which are sometimes under-trained and thus lack discipline and professionalization⁸⁹ or are simply beholden to the whims of the regime in power,⁹⁰ both of which can impinge on quick and effective deployment if the extant chain of command is ignored.⁹¹ A second lingering issue is how to quickly integrate members of different national armies with varying capabilities, doctrines, armaments, and languages, a task that some are optimistic can be overcome.⁹² Third, Paul Williams has noted the problems posed by the ASF's structure: namely, there is no operational level of command to mediate between the regional brigades and the AU's Peace and Security Directorate, thus potentially retarding reaction times.⁹³

In looking to the future, another potential impediment to the eventual success of ACIRC in particular is sustained member state interest, given that the conditions that facilitated its proposed genesis may wane substantially as time progresses. Most observers have argued that ACIRC was created as a result of African "discomfort," "frustration," and even "embarrassment" at French interventions in Mali and the Central African Republic in 2013, when the AU theoretically should have been in the lead of peace operations with the ASF.⁹⁴ Yet, while the tendency for African states to create new collective security initiatives in the face of external (neo)colonial encroachment has been a common theme in the continent's postcolonial history, most such initiatives have failed to gain much ground, becoming nothing more than what Romain Esmenjaud refers to as illusory "anti-imperial phantoms."⁹⁵ Or, as Benedikt Franke has written, "As soon as states' shock over their vulnerability thus the felt need for action receded, so had their enthusiasm for tackling all the . . . obstacles . . . associated with continental security cooperation."⁹⁶ Given that ACIRC's genesis was what Romain Esmenjaud refers to as a "rather hasty, emotionally-driven decision," whether ACIRC will be befallen by the same fate is yet to be seen.⁹⁷

CONCLUSION

The creation of ACIRC should be viewed as a welcome development. ACIRC is, in many ways, a far less ambitious endeavor than the ASF: rather than creating an entirely new, complex, and multifaceted bureaucracy, ACIRC is simply a stopgap measure, essentially a troop solicitation mechanism to fill in for the ASF's RDC, which is desperately needed as the ASF continues to become more institutionalized. Far from replacing, duplicating, or undercutting the ASF, it is a pragmatic complement to fill in where the ASF has failed to act over the past eleven years since its ostensible inception.

Despite being a complementary component to the African security landscape, ACIRC is not without its drawbacks. A key problem is the lack of preparedness of rapid-reaction troops. Whereas the ASF demands that countries train specific units for possible intervention, ACIRC's looser, ad-hoc structure means that institutionalization of the chain of command, harmonization of objectives, and integration of combat units will remain far less clear than it would under the aegis of the ASF. Furthermore, the same facets that make the ACIRC attractive—notably, its slim nature—are potential shortcomings: the lack of police, civilian, and nonmilitary personnel—components that the UN considers essential for such operations—could serve as a real weakness, particularly in situations in which the initial force does not ultimately become more multidimensional with assistance from the UN or AU.⁹⁸ Finally, ACIRC will inevitably suffer from a lack of predictability. Given its “coalition-of-the-willing” model, it will be impotent unless some lead state views it to be in its interest to direct the operation. Nevertheless, ACIRC's potentially unpredictable nature is better than the ASF's very predictable course of action, which, currently, is best described as inertia.

In concluding, it bears asking: if ACIRC continues down its current path of development, is it likely to simply be a temporary fix that will disappear once the ASF is functional? Most likely, rather than ever being replaced by any “new” RDC within a future iteration of the ASF, facets of ACIRC will simply come to be adopted as components of the ASF's RDC. One can imagine, for instance, ACIRC's evolving voluntary troop solicitation mechanisms being melded to and applied within the ASF's regional contexts, once ACIRC's mechanisms are streamlined at the continental level. Instead of somehow undercutting the ASF's RDC, ACIRC might rightly be thought of as being an alternative vision of the ASF's RDC, simply being incubated by a leadership structure outside of the strict confines of the ASF as such.

Given its complexity and historical dilemmas, the ASF and its RDC are still likely years from standup. In the meantime—and despite the aforementioned issues—ACIRC offers a viable option for a quick, flexible, less bureaucratic, and voluntary contribution mechanism by which states can react to insurgencies or

other collective security threats. While it is far from perfect, the development of ACIRC is welcome, complementary to ASF, and far better than the alternatives.

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NOTES

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9. See for instance "African Union: Continental Standby Force," *African Research Bulletin* (March 2014): 20042; "African Union: 22nd Meeting," *African Research Bulletin* (February 2014): 20017; Johan Potgieter in "Long Road to an African Rapid Reaction Force," *IRINnews*, February 21, 2014, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/99683/Long-road-to-an-African-rapid-reaction-force>; Comfort Ero in Elissa Jobson and Patrick Smith, "African Union: Building the Pax Africana," *The Africa Report*, January 30, 2014, <http://www.theafricareport.com/North-Africa/african-union-building-the-pax-africana.html>; Peter Fabricious, "Does the Unwieldy Label of the African

Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises Conceal a Real Determination to Act?" *Defence Web* (November 8, 2013); Andre Roux, "New 'Super' Combat Brigade: Creation of an African Elite?" *ISS Africa*, June 14, 2013, <http://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/new-super-combat-brigade-creation-of-an-african-elite>.

10. AU Commission, *Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and Military Staff Committee* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union, May 15, 2003).

11. Despite its institutional emergence in 2003, the structure of the ASF is surprisingly similar to a plan proposed by Sierra Leone in 1965, at the OAU Defense Commission's Third Ordinary Session. Namely, the ASF draws on the idea that African security cooperation should be premised on the existence of a standby force composed of earmarked units from individual states as opposed to previous proposals in the 1960s by the likes of Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah, who advocated for a centralized standing army. For more, see Benedikt Franke, *Security Cooperation in Africa: A Reappraisal* (Boulder, CO: FirstForumPress, 2009), 55, 153.

12. However, given that no member of the African Union PSC exerts a veto power—despite Nigerian and South African attempts during its creation to afford themselves one—the body should not be understood as precisely equivalent. For more, see Thomas Kwasi Tiekou, "Explaining the Clash and Accommodation of Interests of Major Actors in the Creation of the African Union," *African Affairs* 103, no. 411 (April 1, 2004): 249–267.

13. Ademola Abass, *Protecting Human Security in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 259.

14. Omar A. Touray, "The Common African Defence and Security Policy," *African Affairs* 104, no. 417 (October 1, 2005): 645.

15. Herbert Wulf and Tobias Debiel, "Systemic Disconnects: Why Regional Organizations Fail to Use Early Warning and Response Mechanisms," *Global Governance* 16 (2010): 525–547.

16. Martin Plaut, "African Union Missing in Action in Conflicts from Mali to South Sudan," *The Guardian*, January 6, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/jan/06/african-union-missing-action-conflicts-mali-south-sudan>.

17. Aleksandra Dier, *The African Standby Force: Put to the Test* (Zurich: Center for Security Studies, November 2010).

18. Cédric de Coning, "Enhancing the Efficiency of the African Standby Force: The Case for a Shift to a Just-in-Time Rapid Response Model?" *Conflict Trends (ACCORD)*, no. 2 (2014): 34.

19. Earlier iterations of plans for the ASF included a sixth brigade that would be based at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. However, this plan was rejected in 2003, supposedly after strong dissent from South Africa.

20. Dier, *The African Standby Force*.

21. In the case of East Africa, the RM was created as a result of states' memberships in multiple RECs, whereas in the North Africa, the RM was created as the result of no extant REC.

22. "African Standby Force Field Exercise in Lesotho This October," *DefenceWeb*, February 17, 2014, http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=33649:african-standby-force-field-exercise-in-lesotho-this-october&catid=56:diplomacy-a-peace&Itemid=111.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Cédric de Coning and Yvonne Kasumba, *The Civilian Dimension of the African Standby Force* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Peace Support Operations Division of the African Union Commission, 2010), <http://www.accord.org.za/our-work/peacekeeping/publications/771-the-civilian-dimension-of-the-african-standby-force>, 15–16.
25. The ASF has seen three iterations of roadmaps (versions I, II, and III) beginning in 2005. See AU Peace and Security Council, *Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Operationalisation of the Rapid Deployment Capability of the African Standby Force and the Establishment of an “African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises”* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union, April 30, 2013), 6, 7, 9.
26. Elissa Jobson, “AU Summit: Conflicts to Overshadow Economic Theme,” *Financial Mail*, January 31, 2014, <http://www.financialmail.co.za/features/2014/01/30/au-summit-conflicts-to-overshadow-economic-theme>.
27. “Kenya Says E. Africa Standby Force to Attain Fully Deployment Status in 2014,” *Hiiran*, April 4, 2014, http://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2014/Apr/53865/kenya_says_e_africa_standby_force_to_attain_fully_deployment_status_in_2014.aspx.
28. For a comprehensive overview of regional developments in standing up ASF forces, see Franke, “*Security Cooperation in Africa*,” 153–182.
29. EU Peace and Security Council 2013, *Report of the Chairperson*, 59.
30. Esmenjaud, “The African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises.”
31. AU Peace and Security Council 2013, *Report of the Chairperson*, 22.
32. *Ibid.*, 24.
33. *Ibid.*, 25, 26.
34. *Ibid.*, 28.
35. *Ibid.*, 29.
36. *Ibid.*, 27, 39.
37. *Ibid.*, 35.
38. De Coning, “Enhancing the Efficiency of the African Standby Force,” 35.
39. For examples, see Adebajo, *Towards a New Pax Africana*; Dersso, “The Quest for Pax Africana”; Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace*.
40. Garth Cilliers, “Africa Watch,” *The Intelligence Bulletin*, February 9, 2014, <http://www.theintelligencebulletin.co.za/articles/africa-watch-1486.html>.
41. Jobson, “AU Summit.”
42. Roux, “New ‘Super’ Combat Brigade.”
43. Jobson and Smith, “African Union.”
44. “Long Road to an African Rapid Reaction Force.”
45. Fabricious, “Does the Unwieldy Label of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises Conceal a Real Determination to Act?”
46. See for instance Esmenjaud, “The African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises”; Solomon Dersso in “Long Road to an African Rapid Reaction Force” 2014; AU Peace and Security Council, *Information Note on the Implementation Status of the Decision of the Assembly of the Union on the Establishment of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: 2013).
47. AU Peace and Security Council 2013, *Report of the Chairperson*, 24, 25.

48. "Africa: AU Prepares Its Shock Troops," UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, May 31, 2013, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201305311495.html?viewall=1>.
49. AU Peace and Security Council 2013, *Report of the Chairperson*, 26.
50. AU Commission 2003, *Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and Military Staff Committee*.
51. Dier, *The African Standby Force*.
52. "Africa: New Military Force for Africa—The African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC)," Government of Ethiopia, May 29, 2013, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201305311180.html>.
53. Esmenjaud, "The African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises," 176.
54. *Ibid.*, 174.
55. Anonymous embassy official #1, interview, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 16, 2014.
56. "African Union: Rapid Response Unit," *Africa Research Bulletin* (November 2013): 19935.
57. Jobson and Smith, "African Union."
58. Fabricious, "Does the Unwieldy Label of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises Conceal a Real Determination to Act?"
59. Cilliers, "Africa Watch."
60. Liesl Louw-Vaudran, "Concerns over Readiness of New African Strike Force" *Mail and Guardian*, July 4, 2014, <http://mg.co.za/article/2014-07-03-concerns-over-readiness-of-new-african-union-strike-force>.
61. Esmenjaud, "The African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises," 176.
62. Indeed, the differences of opinion between South Africa and Nigeria are likely to be an enduring issue into the future since their divergent opinions extend far beyond the question of rapid-deployment institutions. Some have noted that Nigeria is non-plussed with the fact that South Africa—not Nigeria—is the African representative in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, China, India, and South Africa) group, despite the fact that in April 2014 Nigeria surpassed South Africa as the largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, each views its region as its sphere of influence: Nigerian policymakers talk about a West African "Pax Nigeriana," whereas South Africa has, since its democratization in 1994, been the undisputed leader of its own region and has been seen as potentially more aggressive since South African Dlamini-Zuma took over as the AU chairperson.
63. Cilliers, "Africa Watch."
64. Esmenjaud, "The African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises," 176.
65. Carien du Plessis, "SA Wins—and Loses—on African Stand-by Force," *City Press*, February 2, 2014, <http://www.citypress.co.za/news/sa-wins-loses-african-stand-force/>.
66. "Long Road to an African Rapid Reaction Force."
67. Paul D. Williams, *War and Conflict in Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2011), 66.
68. Berouk Mesfin, interview, Institute of Security Studies, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 15, 2014.
69. AU Executive Council, "Twelfth Ordinary Council," Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 25–29, 2008.

70. Jobson and Smith, "African Union."
71. Annette Leijenaar, "Africa Can Solve Its Own Problems with Proper Planning and Full Implementation of the African Standby Force," *ISS Africa*, January 21, 2014, <http://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/africa-can-solve-its-own-problems-with-proper-planning-and-full-implementation-of-the-african-standby-force>.
72. "Long Road to an African Rapid Reaction Force."
73. Cilliers "Africa Watch."
74. David Musyoka, "Delay of Africa Standby Force Costly," *Hiiran*, December 4, 2012, http://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2012/Dec/27155/delay_of_africa_standby_force_costly.aspx.
75. Ibid.
76. Jobson, "AU Summit." (2014). However, these suggestions were rejected by African countries dependent on tourism as a source of revenue, which led to backlash by proponents of the taxes like Michelle Ntab of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies, who lamented, "Some of the small states saw it as a burden, which really means integration is not a priority for them since adding a few dollars to an air ticket will not harm anyone."
77. Musyoka, "Delay of Africa Standby Force Costly."
78. In addition to the OAU's inaction in places like Nigeria, Zaire, Uganda, and Rwanda, as noted in the introduction, the AU's most notable failure to act has been in Mali in 2012–2013.
79. "Long Road to an African Rapid Reaction Force."
80. Interestingly, the same clause suggests that in the same way that the AU should receive prior approval from the United Nations for any peace enforcement operation, so too should the regions seek AU permission for any peace enforcement operations.
81. AU Commission 2003, *Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force*, 2.2.
82. However, Carolyn Haggis has suggested that existence of article 4(h) of in the AU's Constitutive Act (which explicitly allows for intervention into member states) "suggests that African leaders do not view UNSC authorization as necessary for the legitimate use of force on the African continent." For more, see Haggis, "The African Union and Intervention," 2.
83. European Commission, "African Peace Facility Annual Report 2012," 13–14.
84. African Union and European Commission, *9th Meeting of the Joint Coordination Committee of the African Peace Facility* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: June 3, 2014).
85. Roux, "New 'Super' Combat Brigade."
86. De Coning 2014, "African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises"; Roux, "New 'Super' Combat Brigade"; Williams, *War and Conflict*, 164.
87. Leijenaar, "Africa Can Solve Its Own Problems."
88. "Africa: AU Prepares Its Shock Troops."
89. Herbert M. Howe, *Ambiguous Order: Military Forces in African States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2004).
90. Solomon Hailu, *Promoting Collective Security in Africa: The Roles and Responsibilities of the United Nations, African States, and Western Powers* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2011), 64.

91. Leijenaar, "Africa Can Solve Its Own Problems."
92. Mesfin, interview.
93. Williams, *War and Conflict in Africa*, 164.
94. De Coning, "African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises," 35; Esmenjaud, "African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises," 175.
95. Esmenjaud, "African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises."
96. Franke, "The African Standby Force," 56.
97. Esmenjaud, "African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises."
98. Roux, "New 'Super' Combat Brigade."