

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC¹ into the Defense and Security Policy² of the African Union

Translation from French into English
By Dr. Hichem KADRI



Ladislav NZE BEKALE

African Union Commission, Ethiopia, nzebekale@yahoo.fr
Omar Bongo University and EM University, Gabon.

Received date: 09/12/2023

Accepted date: .././....

Publication date :.././....

Abstract:

From the African Union (AU) defence and security policy, the objectives of this articles are to establish and demonstrate the ambiguity between, the African Union actively fostering integration based on its regions or Regional Economic Communities (RECs), while the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) exhibits characteristics of being weakly integrated into Africa, particularly to the said policy. Therefore, the issue of this contribution questions the reasons for this limited integration of the UMA into the AU's defence and security policy. This article is based on a multidisciplinary approach, mobilizing international law and as well the international relations sociology. As results, the repercussions of this slow integration extend to all AU policies, especially evident in the domain of defence and security. The AU's defence and security policy faces challenges of ineffectiveness within the UMA region. The prevailing security individualism of states dominates the region, leading countries to selectively engage with specific components of the AU's defence and security system.

Keywords: African Union; Policy; Defense; Security; Arab Maghreb Union.

Résumé:

De la politique de défense et de sécurité de l'Union africaine (UA), les objectifs de ces articles sont d'établir et de démontrer l'ambiguïté entre, l'Union africaine favorisant activement l'intégration basée sur ses régions ou communautés économiques régionales (CER), tandis que l'Union du Maghreb arabe (UMA) présente des caractéristiques de faible intégration en Afrique, en particulier à ladite politique. Par conséquent, la question de cette contribution interroge les raisons de cette intégration limitée de l'UMA dans la politique de défense et de sécurité de l'UA. Cet article s'appuie sur une approche pluridisciplinaire, mobilisant le droit international et la sociologie des relations internationales. En conséquence, les répercussions de cette lente intégration s'étendent à toutes les politiques de l'UA, en particulier dans le domaine de la défense et de la sécurité. La politique de défense et de sécurité de l'UA est confrontée à des défis d'inefficacité dans la région de l'UMA. L'individualisme sécuritaire dominant des États domine la région, conduisant les pays à s'engager de manière sélective avec des composants spécifiques du système de défense et de sécurité de l'UA.

Mots-clés : Union Africaine ; Politique ; Défense ; Sécurité ; Union du Maghreb Arabe.

* Corresponding author: Ladislav NZE BEKALE, e-mail: nzebekale@yahoo.fr

¹ Regional Economic Community as an entity of African integration.

² See: <https://www.afri-ct.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Article-Nze-Bekale.pdf>

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

Introduction:

For constructivist authors, "securitization entails a process whereby a referent object of security is designated, and the sources of threats against it are identified" (Macleod, 2004, p. 44). The African Union (AU) has embraced a defense and security policy, recognizing the principal challenges and stakes for the continent, its regions, and member states. This policy is the outcome of a "sense of belonging to a shared cultural, demographic, and historical sphere: it is communal identity" (Batchom, 2014, p. 16), discernible both at the continental and regional levels. The AU presents itself as a key actor in coordinating the international socialization of African states gathered within this pan-African organization. Positioned within the global society, this role revolves around the idea of constructing a peaceful and prosperous Africa, guided by the agenda 2063, which incorporates a significant dimension of defense and security (Nze Bekale, 2020, p. 164). The primary guiding principles of African public action in the realm of defense and security are collective security and power (Nze Bekale, 2019, p. 578).

It is equally crucial to note that the implementation of African Union policies, particularly in the field of defense and security, "is reserved not only at the continental level but also for the most competent Regional Economic Community (REC). Thus, in certain respects, the division of tasks between the AU and the RECs depends on the comparative advantages of one actor over another, that is to say, on their respective competencies" (Nze Bekale, Op. Cit. p. 206). This subsidiarity "is commonly understood as the principle that allows regional organizations the initiative to intervene in the event of a crisis in their respective region or political jurisdiction. This principle is based on the recognition that RECs are sometimes in a better position to address issues arising in their member states" (ISS, 2019, p. 3). It is therefore pertinent to emphasize that the defense and security policy, like all AU policies, enjoys the support of the regions. However, legitimate questions may arise regarding the capacity and organization of all regions to adopt and implement the policies of the pan-African organization.

Among the peculiarities of African integration, the complexity of constructing a robust Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) on political, economic, and security grounds emerges. Despite the region's potential and achievements that should serve as strengths, the UMA appears to miss the opportunity for exemplariness in many sectors of African integration. Hence, one must inquire about the implementation of the African Union's defense and security policy in the UMA region. The weakness in UMA's integration does indeed impede the prospects of aligning the region with the AU's defense and security system. However, the region cannot afford to remain in this state of lethargy. The UMA countries are urged to contemplate a revival of regional integration, notwithstanding the prevailing security individualism in the region.

The individual approach chosen by UMA countries not only hampers the prospects for achieving African integration but also impedes the internalization of the defense and security policy of the pan-African organization. UMA countries seem more inclined toward a selective integration with AU policies and mechanisms. Egypt and Algeria position themselves on issues of interest to them, adopting an approach that provides explanatory arguments for a self-interested integration of AU member states.

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

1. The laborious establishment of the Arab Maghreb Union and the ineffectiveness of African defense and security policy

Security policy emerges when state [and international] officials label it as such. In doing so, they alter the nature of the problem and elevate the stakes in high politics, imbuing it with a sense of urgency and necessity" (Ceyhan, 1998, p. 7). The definition of security policy is dependent on actors, context, and institutions.

"In a broad sense, an institution is a structure of identities and interests that tends asymptotically toward stability. These structures are often codified in formal norms and derive their strength from the socialization of actors and their participation in collective knowledge" (Braspenning, 2002, p. 322). Sovereignty, international self-interest, the State, and the UN—all at their respective levels—are institutions. Their existence depends on constitutive and regulatory rules (Idem) that they formulate for their functioning and the realization of their ideals, including the AU and the UMA.

"In the dynamic pursuit of peace through the construction of a balanced defense and security system, the AU relies on Regional Economic Communities; they play a full part in implementing this policy" (Nze Bekale, Op. Cit. p. 164). Some, REC lack the capacity and political will to act when one of their member states is in crisis. Others, like the UMA, are paralyzed by internal struggles and are therefore non-functional, (ISS, Op. Cit. p. 2) even though they are considered as branches of the AU. Despite the mixed situation of the Regional Economic Communities (CER), the presentation of the state of the UMA is justified despite the primacy of security nationalisms that have become a rule within it amid African integration, which is notably paralyzed, especially in its defense and security component.

1.1 The Arab Maghreb Union: A Regional Organization in Search of Revitalizing its African Integration

As a regional organization, the UMA has established the overall capabilities necessary for managing summits and relations with member states and has appointed directors. It has not developed since its creation due to the complexity of relations between its member states (NEPAD, 2015, p. 17). Ideally, the organization should lead the integration process; according to Ducotey (2013), the UMA aims to establish genuine diplomatic cooperation among the five participating states. It also ensures the preservation of independence for all its members. Given that they face substantially similar threats (terrorism, transnational organized crime, illegal immigration), it is observed that the security asymmetry is reduced among the UMA states, even though the fall of Muammar Gaddafi caused a new imbalance in Libya (p. 68).

Security issues are not the sole challenges of the region; others significantly impede its progress toward becoming an integrated space. The obstacles, difficulties, and emerging new challenges are slowing down the integration process at the Maghreb level. These include weak economic integration, delays in the ratification of treaties, reluctance to execute adopted programs, multiple affiliations to new sub-regional entities, and divergent economic models (Hajer, 2018, p. 6). However, it emerges as

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

the unique regional organization capable of rallying all countries in the region around a vision and leading this geopolitical space towards integration in Africa and globalization.

The UMA remains synonymous with an opportunity to open up economies and societies marginalized due to their underdevelopment. The growth potential of an integrated region is acknowledged, but the political will to break out of a vicious circle, perpetuated through historical pretexts, is lacking, maintaining the region's deadlock (Martinez, 2006, p. 3). Nevertheless, the organization faces challenges of representation and legitimacy, with some AU member states, such as Egypt and the Western Sahara, still not belonging to the regional community. Therefore, it is challenging for the UMA to position itself as the representative of the AU in North Africa (ISS, Op. Cit., p. 5).

Cooperation with the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) itself is entirely lacking due to certain obstacles that continue to prevent this regional organization from sharing any vision or action with its Sahelian hinterland. Unfortunately, the strained relations between Morocco and Algeria resulted in the waste of significant potential that could have been utilized for counterterrorism efforts through cooperative efforts across the entire Sahelo-Saharan region (Abdel Kader, 2017, p. 25). In any case, the Arab Maghreb Union must be encouraged as a medium and long-term solution for sustainable development and security. However, the realization of this ambitious project requires a stronger willingness for cooperation from UMA member countries, as well as the integration of a regional dimension into all national security policies (Faty, 2016, p. 212). Functional integration among Maghreb countries is the only means to ensure security and stability for a conducive environment for development. Stability is considered a promising concept of dynamic and liberating nature (Idem, p. 211). Without being categorical, the African integration envisioned by the AU through regional blocs is one of the solutions to the numerous regional challenges mentioned earlier. "Regional agreements can help reduce the risks of conflicts within the region through increased regional trust, common defense agreements, and cooperation in key aspects of country development" (Ibid.). African integration, to which all Maghreb countries adhere, unfortunately excluding the UMA, is the appropriate framework for revitalizing and consolidating the region's integration into the Africanization of policies and globalization. It represents a triple opportunity: strengthening intra-regional ties, continental positioning, and integration into globalization through the AU. For example, in the perspective of the implementation of Africa Continental Free Trade Area, a fully integrated UMA into AU integration will facilitate the good and products circulation between African Union RECs, particularly from UMA to ECOWAS³, or from EAC⁴ to UMA. Consequently, in the current situation UMA cannot contribute to the African integration as a mean of developing African regions by trade and improving the human security. According to the AU the UMA situation as well the delay of the integration is creating, "significant bottlenecks stand in the way of deeper integration, including narrow markets, poor infrastructure networks, cumbersome administrative procedures that impede trade integration, in diversified production bases coupled with weak backward and forward linkages between agriculture and industry, as well as weak institutional and legal mechanisms for implementing regional and continental programs and projects" (AU, 2019, p. xiii).

³ Economic Community of West African States.

⁴ East African Community

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

The prospects for the revival of the UMA have led the President of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, to raise the issue, a possible sign that North Africa could eventually establish a functional regional organization. Such a development would notably enable the deployment of the North African Regional Capability (NARC) within the framework of the African Standby Force (ASF) (ISS, Op. Cit.). The UMA must become more representative by overcoming intra-regional rivalries that continue to weaken it. This is the only way for the UMA to gain the necessary legitimacy to intervene in times of crisis and to ensure coordination and command of the NARC if the Peace and Security Council (PSC) were to approve the deployment of a peace mission in the region (Idem, p. 7). There are numerous reasons to hope for a new beginning for the UMA; "in March 2018, a unique document concerning the AfCFTA⁵ was signed by the 5 Maghreb states. An action plan to revitalize and innovate the common integration strategy within the UMA has discussed possible solutions for more integration, more internationalization, and more diversification of this Maghreb integration process" (Hajer, Op. Cit.). Although current events allow for cautious optimism regarding the possibilities of revitalizing the UMA, the region must imperatively overcome its divisions perpetuated by Algeria and Morocco over the Western Sahara.

1.2 Security Nationalisms as a Method of Defense and Security in the Region

The primary Regional Economic Community (REC) in North Africa is the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), founded 30 years ago in Morocco, with members including Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. A genuine attempt to bring member states closer in a context of political rivalry, the UMA has been undermined by accusations of interference and antagonisms between countries vying for regional hegemony (ISS, Op. Cit.). As long as the conflict in Western Sahara between Algeria and Morocco, two key Maghreb countries remains unresolved, any new integration attempt may continue to face obstacles. Furthermore, this institution risks remaining an empty shell in the aftermath of the "Arab Spring" since Libya and Tunisia, much like Algeria today, are undergoing complete political restructuring (Ducotey, Op. Cit., p. 69). Considering these conditions, a vigorous reactivation of the UMA is not excluded given the reconfiguration of political regimes in the region. However, realism and facts demand a certain level of-headedness. As Bras (2006) emphasizes, the diplomatic exercise appears perilous, particularly in the realm of security cooperation among Maghreb states in areas where interstate disputes are particularly complex (p. 12).

In the Maghreb, the fight against terrorism, as well as defense and security, predominantly relies on excessive national securitization, in contrast to the integration of defense and security in line with the ideals of the AU. The methods primarily involve strengthened security and defense services, but this solitary approach is not without consequences at the continental and regional levels. It contributes to the continental disintegration of the fight against terrorism and the defense and security policy of the AU, which is carried out by the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). This raises the question of whether the Maghreb's solitary approach is ultimately responsible for the resulting status quo in the continental disintegration of African defense and security (Nze Bekale, 2019, p. 7). In the perspective of an integrated UMA to the defense and security of the AU policy, this will create an African defense

⁵ African Continental Free Trade Area.

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

and security system inter connected between RECs so that the AU will be in a position of having a global situation of security and defense threats over the continent. In this condition, the organization, RECs and Member states could in providing appropriate responses.

The Algerian security doctrine and counterterrorism strategy revolve around the redeployment of 40,000 soldiers along the borders to combat terrorist groups and smuggling networks, as well as drying up sources of support for terrorism. This includes the promulgation and implementation of a reconciliation law and a cultural policy of deradicalization focused on prohibiting the teaching of modules that could contribute to the entrenchment of extremist ideas⁶. Mauritania has strengthened its legal arsenal against terrorism and the prevention of transnational crime. This involves enhancing military intervention capabilities in terms of both material and human resources and intelligence, carrying out preventive strikes against the enemy in the country's eastern border areas, engaging in dialogue with terrorist groups, including those in prison in Mauritania, and ultimately establishing control over madrasas and other religious education institutions (Abdel Kader, Op. Cit., p. 19). A national security strategy cannot be established or become effective without consolidated regional agreement and cooperation based on a clear understanding of the shared interests of the various neighboring countries involved (Faty, Op. Cit. p. 223). An analysis that the Maghreb countries do not yet consider, the region's main contradiction still prevailing over the reality and the future that must be imperatively built together."

The Tunisian approach envisions "adapting to the guerrilla warfare context, restructuring the police institution, especially by keeping it away from political struggles and union disputes, strengthening intelligence services both in terms of human resources and technology. It involves adapting legislation to the nature of offenses and their context, enhancing communication in the service of countering violent extremism, drying up the financial sources of terrorist groups, and adopting development strategies to reduce sources of frustration and tension, notably poverty and unemployment (Abdel Kader, Op. Cit., p. 20).

Maghreb countries still operate in a state-centric mode of each for itself, while threats increasingly become transnational. The reality and the proliferation of challenges demonstrate that a broader concept of security is necessary to address emerging dangers due to the exponential increase in transnational flows of information and people (Faty, Op. Cit., p. 224). The new national strategy of Morocco revolves around legislative, regulatory, and institutional axes focusing on human development, the restructuring of the religious field, and participation in multidimensional international cooperation. In terms of preventing terrorism and extremism, Morocco has initiated a project to restructure the religious field, combining tradition and openness (Abdel Kader, Op. Cit., p. 19).

The mosaic of security approaches driven by security nationalisms present in the Maghreb is not without consequences in the region, as it reinforces and contributes to the continental and regional disintegration of the possibilities to anchor the AU's defense and security policy. "Libya, a major hub

⁶ Pr. Belkacem IRATNI cited by Isselmou ABDEL KADER, The challenges and security issues in the Sahelo-Saharan region, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Peace and Security Sub-Saharan Africa Competence Centre, 2017, p18.

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

of jihadist activism, is suddenly facing the terrorist threat and has been unable to define a unified strategy to combat terrorism. In the absence of this definition accepted by all, each faction formulates its policies to combat the violence of groups claiming jihadist ideology" (Idem). The fragility of Libya makes it a focal point for terrorism and security issues. When cooperation or information exchange between states is ineffective, it is not excluded that (Nze Bekale, Op. Cit.) the threat and security vulnerability of this country may intensify. Security nationalisms exert additional security pressure on fragile countries, contributing in a certain way to the rejection not only of integration but primarily of the introduction of the African defense and security policy (PADS).

1.3 Ineffectiveness of Transposing Key Elements of PADS in the Arab Maghreb

The logic of African collective security proposes to state the construction of a balanced defense and security system through the involvement of regional economic communities, which fully participate in the implementation of this policy, based on responsibilities determined not only by the protocol related to the CPS but also by complementary legal instruments (Nze Bekale, Op. Cit.). The deployment of the AU's policy relies essentially on the African Peace and Security Architecture and focuses on conflict prevention and operational elements and means. These are primarily deployed within the RECs, which are, in fact, the hinges of African integration (Idem).

According to the vision of African defense and security policy, the RECs have committed to establishing the relevant organs. As a REC, the ECCAS, as a REC of the AU, is obligated to integrate the necessary mechanisms and instruments in the region (Ibid. p. 165). The REC is the focal point for crystallizing and implementing African policies. The AU's defense and security policy, deployed at the REC level, relies on instruments. Above all, various legal instruments (continental and regional) establish the conditions for cooperation and collaboration between the AU and the RECs in the areas of defense and security (Nze Bekale, 2018, p. 206).

The UMA initially had the mission of establishing the Northern Brigade of the FAA, but without success, as Morocco was not a member of the AU at that time. This led to the creation of the NARC, based in Egypt and independent of any REC, which was never deployed (ISS, Op. Cit.). In this scenario, it is challenging to allocate roles not only between the AU and the UMA but also among the RECs operating in North Africa (Idem).

In the context of the subsidiarity principle upon which African integration is built and within the framework of CPS cooperation, the RECs/MRs are the venue for transposing various instruments related to prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict reconstruction (Ibid. p. 211). The organization's texts are explicit about the definition and content that the AU gives to the subsidiarity principle in its defense and security system (Nze Bekale, Op. Cit. p. 581). In its role as the initiator of African public policies, especially in defense and security matters, the African Union relies on legal instruments that confer normativity on the organization's actions in this field. The application of norms and principles related to defense and security is the responsibility of specific organs at all levels of the African Union's integration system (Idem).

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the UMA region to adopt relevant legal instruments between the AU and the REC for the effectiveness of the PADS in the region. But unfortunately, the UMA didn't yet take legal instrument implementing the AU defense and security policy as we can observe in others REC as ECCAS, EAC, and ECOWAS. "The African defense and security strategy are driven by a doctrine, as the main ideas guiding the AU's action. The concept of collective security is the ambition of the continental organization to ensure the protection of its citizens" (Nze Bekale, Op. Cit. p. 203). This conception of defense and security extends to the REC, which has the responsibility to implement the PADS at its level. Several RECs are sufficiently advanced in their implementation, while the UMA lags not only in African and regional integration but also in realizing its defense and security dimensions. It can be said that collective security, as conceived by the AU, is slow to materialize in the UMA where security nationalisms dominate, while the African trend is towards collective security at the REC level.

The Marrakech Declaration (1989) regarding the creation of the AU states that it is "expected that our grouping will make our region a zone of peace and security, allowing it to contribute more to strengthening international cooperation and peace" (p. 2). However, it remained silent on the regional approach to building a peaceful space whether through the construction of a regional collective security system based on AU instruments or through a distinct regional trajectory separate from African integration. On the other hand, the idea that "an evolving Maghreb entity will allow our states to support joint action with other brother African countries for the progress and prosperity of our African continent" (Ibid.) suggests that the UMA is driven by an integration that anchors the REC in the African integration led by the AU.

Moreover, the preamble of the Marrakech Treaty specifies that the "effects resulting from this integration will enable the Arab Maghreb Union to acquire a specific weight, allowing it to contribute effectively to global balance, strengthen peaceful relations within the international community, and consolidate international peace and security." In contrast, the text does not define the conditions, let alone the instruments, mechanisms, and means leading to the preservation and maintenance of regional peace. The lack of legal instruments raises questions and further complicates the possibilities of integrating the PADS. Because "numerous legal instruments have been adopted to translate into law the cooperation between the African Union and the RECs, notably by ECOWAS, ECCAS, and SADC, but not exclusively."

"The Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security constitutes the legal instrument defining and organizing the policy of ECOWAS" (Nze Bekale, Op. Cit. p208). The will and commitment demonstrated by the legal instruments of other RECs are examples to follow for the UMA. "The Council for Peace and Security (COPAX) is the institution for political and military consultation of the member states of the region, in the promotion, maintenance, and consolidation of peace and security. The objectives of COPAX are to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts" (Ibid, p212).

The establishment of the equivalent of the CPS by ECCAS represents an additional element related to the ineffectiveness of a legal framework related to PADS and an organ with the vocation to lead regional defense and security in the Maghreb following AU policies. Moreover, "the East African

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

Community (EAC) has decided to establish a panel of eminent personalities and is in the process of creating a mediation unit. IGAD has established a mediation unit and uses its committee of ambassadors for mediation and preventive diplomacy actions. ECCAS is also developing its institutional mediation system with the assistance of the Union.”⁷ The SADC's alert system relies on intelligence; it is likely an information exchange from national focal points that transmit information to the Community's situation room weekly, which in turn exchanges information with the AU (Ibid, p220). These various examples highlight the absence of key elements of the AU's defense and security policy in the UMA. Can we conclusively conclude that the region is moving against the PADS?

2. The differentiated, interested, and coordinated integration of the UMA into the defense and security policy of the AU.

The explanation of African integration above seems to lean towards the construction of an integrated Africa, which others qualify as complex or ineffective. This is how we characterize the integration process of the AU as differentiated, and selective, but still guided by a common goal, with its main aspirations and objectives established by Agenda 2063. This framework allows for the progress of all member countries and regions towards a common ideal. However, it is observed that countries move towards this integration process at their own pace, choosing projects, policies, and legal instruments based on their interests. This is evident in the swift ratification of legal instruments that enjoy unanimous support or the slower pace for those of interest to only a few countries. The integration of defense and security is not exempt from this differentiated and selective approach; indeed, its fundamental instruments such as the regional CPS or the regional alert system have not yet been created. On the contrary, it is observed that the UMA, or at least some member states, in line with their choices, have preferred specific mechanisms. Algeria led the peace and security department for nearly two decades, and the return of Morocco has forced a reconfiguration of the balances within the AU system. Furthermore, Algeria, following a doctrine emphasizing national choices and, to a lesser extent, regional considerations, has also positioned itself as an African champion in the fight against terrorism and intelligence. National preferences and direct connection to the AU ultimately dominated the integration of the UMA, leading Egypt to host the respective headquarters of the NARC as a regional brigade of the FAA and the AU Post-Conflict Reconstruction Center.

2.1 Algeria's Control of the Peace and Security Department Since the Inception of the AU

The Peace and Security Department (renamed Political Affairs, Peace, and Security following a reform) of the African Union is regarded as the most crucial portfolio within the AU Commission and likely the entire pan-African organization. The powers vested in the Commissioner of this department make it highly coveted. Its mission involves supporting the Peace and Security Council (PSC) in carrying out its functions, implementing the Common African Defence and Security Policy (CADSP),

⁷ African Peace and Security Architecture. APSA roadmap 2016-2020, AUC, Addis Abeba, 2015.

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

and actualizing the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), including efforts in conflict prevention, management, and resolution.

The department is also tasked with promoting structural conflict prevention programs, such as the AU Border Program (AUBP), implementing the AU Framework for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD), and ensuring the coordination, harmonization, and promotion of peace and security programs in Africa. This is done in collaboration with regional economic communities (RECs), regional conflict prevention mechanisms, and international partners (AU, 2020, p. 109). Algeria held the leadership of this strategic department for seventeen years since the operationalization of the AU Commission in 2003.

In other words, the influence of this country within the AU regarding peace and security is significant due to its discontinuous management of this portfolio and the impact the country has had on the AU's defense and security policy. This monopolization is even credited with the ultra-security nature of the AU Convention on Terrorism and its Protocol. The control of the department and its impact on the CADSP extend to intra-departmental structures, providing Algeria with the latitude to influence the organization and occupation of divisions such as Crisis Prevention and Early Warning, Conflict Management and Post-Conflict Reconstruction, Peace Support Operations, Defense and Security, and the Secretariat of the PSC. Support functions of the department include program management, peace, and security financing, the "Act for Peace" campaign, communications, partnerships, and the registration service (Ibid).

While at the UMA level, the AU's defense and security policy has seen no evolution, it can be inferred that Algeria chose to position itself at the continental level and monopolize the management of defense and security issues within the pan-African organization for over a decade. As the AU is an important diplomatic negotiations organization and considering, Algeria has been among the main contributors to the AU budget for years, the country probably used it to negotiate its holding the Peace and Security Department for years.

"Decisions made by AU member states, whether at the AU level or in their respective RECs/MRs, largely respond to national political objectives and interests, with AU member states seeking a delicate balance between the principles of sovereignty and non-indifference" (Desmidt, Hauck, 2015, p27). The Western Sahara issue is one of the reasons motivating Algeria's continued presence in this department, and its discontinuous leadership in this role positioned it as a player capable of influencing AU decisions on this matter. "The prolonged absence of Morocco from the pan-African institution allowed opponents of the Kingdom to push through one-sided decisions in favor of other parties and entirely out of sync with the evolution of the UN settlement process. This freeze in the African reference framework was carried out under the influence of the Algerian presidency of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), which has persisted since the creation of this body in 2003 (Loulchki, 2019, p1).

The return of Morocco to the AU has transposed the opposition with Algeria, as mentioned in the President of the Commission's report on the Western Sahara issue (2018), stating, "the impact of the conflict on the functioning of the AU, as evidenced by multiple incidents during activities organized within the framework of its programs and meetings with its international partners. This situation is

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

even more damaging as it occurs at a time when the AU is working to accelerate the continental integration process" (p. 2).

Upon its return, Morocco's priority was to divest this department of the Western Sahara issue. As a result, in Resolution 693 (XXXI) of July 2, 2018, adopted based on the PSC report, the Conference of Heads of State and Government decided "to establish an African mechanism comprising the AU Troika, namely the outgoing, current, and incoming presidents of the AU, as well as the Chairperson of the Commission, to provide effective support to the efforts led by the United Nations, encouraging the parties to show flexibility, mobilizing as broad support as possible for the efforts undertaken by the United Nations, and reflecting, in close consultation with the United Nations, on the content of the desired compromise. This mechanism will regularly report on the execution of its mandate to the Union Conference and as needed, to the Peace and Security Council at the level of Heads of State and Government. The Conference decides that the issue of Western Sahara will only be addressed within this framework and at this level."

Morocco's positioning may have also influenced Algeria's decision not to present a candidate for the head of the new Department of Political Affairs, Peace, and Security. Indeed, Morocco would likely have worked in opposition to Algerian aspirations. Considering, the distribution of departmental portfolios within the AU is based on the regional distribution, we think that if Algeria had once again applied for this department Morocco would have opposed the regional level. And for good reason, he considers that Algeria has instrumentalized the organ and the department in favor of the Saharawi cause.

2.2 The Fight Against Terrorism and Intelligence: Algeria's Other Strategic Choices

Security cooperation among Maghreb states appears currently unlikely in areas where interstate disputes are particularly heavy, notably the issue of Western Sahara (Bras, Op. Cit. p. 12). This is exacerbated by the return of Morocco to the AU, turning the organization into an additional battleground for the Western Sahara conflict. It is worth noting, however, that Morocco's evolution outside the AU has facilitated the consolidation of Algeria's positions on continental security issues such as terrorism.

Former President Bouteflika was designated by his peers as a champion in the fight against terrorism for several years. Under his leadership, "the African Union, as well as sub-regional organizations, have established and developed numerous cooperation programs, particularly in terms of awareness, experience and information sharing, intelligence exchange, specialized training, and technical assistance" (Bouteflika, 2019, p.3).

Since 1999, with the 35th Summit of African Heads of State and Government convened in Algiers, the African Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism was adopted. This was followed in 2004 by the Additional Protocol to this convention, strengthening its scope in the fight against terrorism, along with the adoption of the African Plan of Action against Terrorism. The latter

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

served as a roadmap to organize and harmonize national and continental efforts to combat terrorism (Idem). This led to the establishment of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism in Algiers, an entity deeply rooted in the framework of counterterrorism, subject to reorganization under the AU reform to adapt to the changing challenges of the fight against terrorism.

The CAERT represents "a comprehensive approach reflecting the will of African states to combine their efforts in the fight against terrorism. Its objective is to implement concrete, urgent, and collective action to counterterrorism in general. Specifically, the African Union established CAERT to centralize information and studies on terrorism" (Abdel Kader, Op. Cit. p23). The primary function of the Center is to conduct studies and research on terrorism and violent extremism, developing strategic policy options and operational plans for review by policymakers. The Center provides training and organizes workshops, seminars, and symposiums as part of its mandate to enhance capacities in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. Additionally, the Center maintains an updated database on terrorist groups and their activities in Africa, along with a list of experts in the fight against terrorism on the continent (AU, Op. Cit. p203). In 2019, "as part of this high mission, Former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika submitted to his African counterparts a Memorandum outlining the areas around which the African Union could [re]organize the fight against terrorism and violent extremism" (AU, 2019, p3). Moreover, this document proposes a revision of the AU's doctrine⁸ on combating terrorism, outlining the guidelines for the future African strategy against terrorism.

Through the consolidation of its continental positioning and engagement within the AU on security-related issues, Algeria has not only hosted the CAERT but has also played a pivotal role in establishing an African mechanism for police cooperation, offering to host the headquarters of this structure in Algiers. According to the Protocol on COPAX, the African Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL) aims to develop a harmonized African strategy for combating transnational organized crime, terrorism, and cybercrime in the implementation of relevant AU policies (Article 3-d). It is also a mechanism designed to establish a framework for police cooperation at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels among the police institutions of the member states (Article 3-a). In fulfilling its mandate, two functions appear essential: assisting the police institutions of member states in establishing a framework for cooperation among police institutions at the national, continental, and international levels (Article 4-a). This reflects an effort to strengthen integration into the AU's defense and security system outside the regional framework of the UMA.

Algeria leverages the African Union to assert its regional leadership in the fight against terrorism and position itself as a privileged partner in international collaborations (Bras, Op. Cit. p10) against

⁸ -The development of African architecture to combat violent extremism and terrorism.

- The development and enrichment of African standards for preventing and combating violent extremism and terrorism.
- Addressing the issue of foreign terrorist fighters and their return or movement to the African continent.
- Tightening and drying up the numerous sources of terrorism financing, including the informal sector.
- Prevention and combating radicalization and de-radicalization policies.
- Promoting political, institutional, and judicial frameworks that foster democracy, good governance, human rights, rule of law, social justice, and socioeconomic development.
- Developing regional and international cooperation.

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

terrorism. During the first general assembly of Afripol, "organized by the Algerian General Directorate of National Security (DGSN) in Algiers in May 2017, Algeria was elected to chair this Mechanism of African Police Cooperation for two years, while the positions of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd vice-presidents were respectively assigned to Uganda, Nigeria, and the Central African Republic, with Zambia holding the position of rapporteur."⁹ Assuming the presidency of this mechanism confirms Algeria's inclination to take on more prominent roles within the AU system, particularly in areas that are of particular interest to the country. Some member states expressed their specific expectations for this mechanism during the event; Imad Khalifallah Mohamed Khir, the Director-General of International Cooperation of Sudanese Security, asserted that "the fight against terrorism will be a top priority on Afripol's agenda, as it is one of the most dangerous crimes threatening the security and stability of African countries."¹⁰

"The priority of African security cooperation lies in the exchange of information and practices, as well as the sharing of experiences among countries," affirmed the Mauritanian security official. This indicates that the aspirations of member states regarding this mechanism are well-known, and the issue of terrorism is at the forefront of concerns. The proximity to CAERT is likely beneficial in managing security issues. Indeed, cooperation between the two AU entities is indispensable for strengthening the defense and security vision of the pan-African institution. The strategic role of Afripol prompted Algeria to seek a second term at the helm of the General Assembly of this mechanism. It was re-elected to preside over the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (Afripol) for a new term after the proceedings of the 3rd General Assembly in October 2019. This meeting provided an opportunity for member states to adopt the strategic plan of the mechanism.

2.3 The NARC and the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Centre: Egyptian Choices

In the event of a conflict, whether for prevention or deterrence, the organization has military mechanisms at its disposal to react quickly and mobilize troops within the framework of the African Standby Force (Nze Bekale, Op. Cit. p590). The organization of the military aspects of the AU's defense and security strategy includes, among other elements, a Staff Committee, an African Standby Capacity as a temporary solution for conflict management, and the African Standby Force (Idem). This "force based on five regional standby forces poses certain difficulties related, on the one hand, to numerous heterogeneous security challenges and, on the other hand, to a two-tier model of regional integration (African Union-AU / Regional Economic Communities-RECs)" (IRSEM, 2011, p1).

Two additional coordination mechanisms have been established to manage the regional standby brigades of the African Standby Force in East Africa and North Africa, namely, the Eastern Africa Standby Force Secretariat (EASF) and a North Africa Regional Capacity (NARC) (Desmidt, Hauck, Op. Cit. p7). Consequently, "the limits of its operationalization, beyond capabilities, are also related to

⁹ See: https://www.econostrum.info/L-Algerie-prend-la-presidence-d-Afripol_a23204.html Accessed on October 22, 2020.

¹⁰ See: <http://www.aps.dz/algerie/57683-les-travaux-de-la-premiere-ag-d-afripol-sanctionnes-par-des-decisions-importantes-qui-constitueront-une-feuille-de-route-pour-les-responsables-de-police-africains>. Accessed on October 22, 2020

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

political choices" (Idem, p2) and to the context of an organization and functioning not only of the member states but also of the REC. "The UMA initially had the mission of establishing the North Brigade of the FAA, but without success, as Morocco was not a member of the AU at that time. This led to the creation of the NARC, based in Egypt and independent of any REC, which has never been deployed. It remains to be determined whether the command of the NARC should be ensured by the AU or by REC" (ISS, Op. Cit. p6). However, like all other instruments related to the AU's defense and security system, they are inoperable due to opposition among AU member countries that have chosen to refuse the implementation of mechanisms inherent to African integration at the regional level. This situation is symptomatic of the "lack of political will that some states may show within the AU, particularly regarding peace and security issues, manifested notably by the lethargy suffered by" (IRSEM, Op. Cit. p3) the institutionalization of African defense and security policy in the UMA region. As a result, the regional brigade of the North African REC remains inactive, just like the entire political and institutional framework related to it. The NARC serves as an additional example highlighting the integration problems within the UMA, particularly the uncertainties of regional construction of the PADS.

Thus, despite Egypt's positioning to host the NARC, it remains non-operational. Additionally, the country has also decided to host the African Union Center for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development. This raises questions about the future of this institution.

As an emanation of the defense and security policy, specifically within the framework of the African Union's Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy, the latter serves as a "guideline for the development of comprehensive policies and strategies aimed at consolidating peace, promoting sustainable development, and paving the way for growth and recovery in countries and regions emerging from conflict. Given the specificities of different conflict situations, this policy is designed as a flexible model that can be adapted to affected regions and countries to assist them in their efforts in the areas of reconstruction, security, and growth" (AU, 2012, p2). This AU structure aims to be both academic and operational, offering, from its inception, training sessions and support to AU member states in post-conflict situations. In this regard, "the PCRD Center will serve as the AU Center of Excellence for the implementation of PCRD programs in Africa."

The main objective of the Center will be research, awareness, training, and capacity building to support the operational efforts of the Commission. Thus, the Center will address the gaps identified by the Commission in recent years. The implementation process can only succeed if it is based on research and continuous training, considering the experience gained" (Ibid, p4). In the perspective of operationalizing the PCRD Center, the AU Conference urged the Commission to "make efforts to mobilize resources, including sufficient and sustainable funds, to establish the African Union Center for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development, aimed at consolidating and preserving peace in Africa"¹¹ and to complete the launch process of the African Union Center for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development, including the recruitment of its staff in 2020-2021.¹²

¹¹ "Decision on the implementation of the decision Assembly/AU/DEC.710(XXXI) on the African Union Center for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Doc. EX.CL/1192(XXXVI)."

¹² Idem

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

The Council [PSC] has urged the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts (REC/RMs) to take the issues of PCRD more seriously and comprehensively. In this context, the Council emphasized the importance for REC/RMs to adopt a systematic approach to PCRD, as well as to establish appropriate mechanisms for the implementation of PCRD with all necessary resources.¹³ Although some inertia has been observed in implementing the main components of PADS in the Maghreb, the CAERT and AFRIPOL, which are depoliticized entities providing administrative, operational, and academic functions, may indicate that the functioning of the CRDPC will not be significantly hindered. Thus, this structure could serve as further evidence of a selective integration of the UMA, or at least its member states, into PADS. As noted for Algeria, which selected specific components of the AU policy, intelligence, and counterterrorism, Egypt has opted for the FAA brigade and the CRDPC.

Conclusion

The African continent is re-energizing around a revival of African integration with the adoption of Agenda 2063. The almost unanimous membership of AU member states in the ZELCAF is indicative of a renewed commitment of the African States Community to building a prosperous and peaceful Africa. However, this apparent optimism is tempered by the slow adoption, not only of African integration by the UMA but also of specific AU policies. In conclusion of this contribution, it appears that African integration will be difficult to achieve in the Maghreb region due to the contradiction over the Western Sahara issue, which hinders consensus in the region and within the REC. The AU's defense and security policy, particularly its main components, is not currently feasible in the region, as the opposition between Morocco and Algeria does not allow it. If African integration is compromised there, as is the case with PADS, it can be inferred that the realization of related subsidiary instruments and mechanisms is also compromised in the region. As a result, a trend has emerged in the Maghreb, observable in other regions and member states, towards selective integration into certain AU policies, mechanisms, and instruments. This attitude is interpreted as differentiated and interested integration in the sense that member states ultimately choose integration issues of national interest. The UMA thus proves to be a particularly favorable ground for this dynamic of African integration.

The difficulty in transposing the entire defense and security system of the AU seems to lead countries to prefer direct integration into specific mechanisms, instruments, and policies. Algeria chose to monopolize the Peace and Security Department for about two decades, and the return of Morocco has likely prompted a reconsideration of its ambitions to remain at the helm of this strategic service. It is also noteworthy that Algeria positioned itself at the forefront of the fight against terrorism within the AU; its former President Bouteflika was designated a champion in counterterrorism and intelligence management. The country naturally hosts CAERT and AFRIPOL, emblematic AU bodies in the fields of counterterrorism, intelligence, and police cooperation in Africa.

¹³ "Communiqué of the 670th meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council, dedicated to a public session on the theme 'post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) in Africa', Addis Ababa, March 30, 2017."

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

Egypt has embraced a similar approach, choosing to host the headquarters of the Northern Brigade of the FAA and the AU Center for Reconstruction and Post-Conflict Development. However, this method of bypassing regional integration and the implementation of key aspects of PADS in the Maghreb in favor of direct integration into AU instruments is not without risk and consequences. This is especially true when dealing with the management of security issues, challenges, crises, and conflicts, as seen in the case of Libya, which is left alone to cope with the disintegration of its institutions and state. This situation has led to a weakening of Libya's institutions and military, making it an extremely vulnerable country. In this regard, regional solidarity through PADS could have enabled the region to better organize and assist Libya.

References:

- Abdel Kader Isselmou. (2017). Rapport de synthèse des études pays sur les défis et les enjeux sécuritaires dans l'espace sahélo-sahélien [Summary report of country studies on security challenges and issues in the Sahel-Saharan region]. Dakar: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
- BATCHOM, P. E. (2014). La sécurité collective en Afrique post-Guerre froide. *Res Militaris*, 4(2), 1-22.
- BRAS, J.-P. (2007). Le Maghreb dans la "guerre contre le terrorisme": enjeux juridiques et politiques des législations "anti-terroristes". *L'Année du Maghreb*, 2, 447-467.
- BRASPENNING, T. (2002). Constructivisme et réflexivisme en théorie des relations internationales. *Annuaire Français des Relations Internationales (AFRI)*, 3, 314-329.
- CEYHAN, A. (2006). "Analyzing security: Dillon, Waever, Williams and the others." **Cultures & Conflits*, 31-32, 1-17.
- DESMIDT, S., & HAUCK, V. (2017). "Conflict management within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA): Results of an analysis of interventions conducted by the African Union and Regional Economic Communities to resolve and prevent violent conflicts in Africa during the period 2013-2015." **ECDPM**, Occasional Paper No. 211, 51p.
- DUCOTEY, FJM. (2013). The security challenges between Europe, the Maghreb, and the Sahel: The mirages of integration. Institutional analysis of actors, issues, threats, and prospects. Master's thesis in Defense Studies, Canadian Forces College, 88p.
- FATY, El Moustapha. (2016). Security and stability policy in the Maghreb. Doctoral thesis in Law, University of Reims, 405p.
- GUELDICH, H. (2018). "African Integration and Regionalism: Where is the African Union today?" Proceedings of the study day on November 1st, 6p. Retrieved from <https://www.ceja.ch/wpcontent/uploads/2018/12/compte-rendu-de-la-journee-d-etude-du-1er-novembre-2018.pdf>
- INSTITUT d'ETUDES de SECURITE (ISS). (2019). Report on the Peace and Security Council, No. 113, 24p.
- LOULICHKI, M. (2019). "The position of the African Union on the issue of the Sahara: the beginning of a change." Policy Centre, Policy Brief, 19/10, 7p.
- MACLEOD, A. (2004). "Security studies: from dominant constructivism to critical constructivism." *Cultures & Conflits*, 54, 13-51.
- MARTINEZ, L. (Ed.). (2006). Algeria, the Arab Maghreb Union, and regional integration. Alger: National Institute of Strategic and Global Studies (INESG), 41p.
- NEPAD. (2015). Implementation plan for the development of the capacities of African Regional Economic Communities. Johannesburg: African Union.

“The Arab Maghreb Union: Ambiguous Integration of REC into the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union” Ladislav Nze Bekale

- NZE BEKALE, L. (2020). "The Regionalization of the Defense and Security Policy of the African Union Tested by the Impotence of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)?" *International Journals of Sciences and High Technologies*, 19(2), March 2020, pp. 163-177.
- NZE BEKALE, L. (2019). "The principles and instruments of the defense and security policy of the Union." *French Yearbook of International Relations (AFRI)*, 20, pp. 573-598.
- NZE BEKALE, L. (2019). "Is the counter-terrorism policy of the African Union resilient?" *Vigies Afriques*, 2(1), CEIM, University of Quebec in Montreal, pp. 2-15.
- NZE BEKALE, L. "Regionalization: a structuring factor of the defense and security strategy of the African Union," in *Cahier du CUF*, No. 4, University of Szeged, pp. 197-233.
- Statuts du Mécanisme africain de coopération policière (AFRIPOL). *Traité instituant l'Union du Maghreb Arabe*.
- UA. (2020). *Guide to Silencing the Guns in Africa*. Addis Ababa: CUA.
- UA. (2020). *Décision sur la mise en œuvre de la décision Assembly/ AU / DEC.710 (XXXI) sur le Centre de l'Union Africaine sur la Reconstruction et le Développement Post Conflit Doc. EX.CL/1192(XXXVI)*
- UA. (2019). *Rapport de l'intégration africaine 2019 : Vers une Afrique intégrée, prospère et en paix*, Addis Abeba, CUA, 142p.
- UA. (2018). *Rapport du Président de la Commission sur la question du Sahara occidental*, Addis Abeba, CUA, 8p.
- UA. (2017). *Communiqué de la 670ème réunion du Conseil de paix et de sécurité de l'UA, consacré une séance publique au thème "la reconstruction et le développement post-conflit (RDPC) en Afrique"*, Addis Abéba, CPS, 5p.
- UA. (2019). *Rapport de son Excellence Abdelaziz Bouteflika sur l'épineuse question de la lutte contre le terrorisme et l'extrémisme violent en Afrique*, Addis Abeba, CUA, 6p.
- UA. (2012). *Rapport sur la création d'un Centre de reconstruction et de développement post conflit*, Addis Abeba, CUA, 8p.
- UMA. (1989). *Déclaration de Marrakech relative à la création de l'Union du Maghreb Arabe*, 5p.

Sites Internet Sites:

www.aps.dz

www.econostrum.info