

Conflict and Collaboration between the African Union and the United Nations

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The purpose of this study is to analyse the current relationship between the African Union and the United Nations and to examine the changes that have occurred since the beginning of their collaboration. Despite ongoing cooperation, a number of conflicts between these two organisations remain unresolved. This reflects a broader challenge within the contemporary system of global governance, where international organisations often face limitations in terms of authority and influence, even in the case of the United Nations. Many of these issues are rooted in the structure of international law itself, which from the outset has not always provided international organisations with a strong or clearly defined position among other actors in international politics.

The partnership between the United Nations and the African Union began in 2002 with the establishment of the African Union [4]. Today, this relationship plays a crucial role in addressing political, economic, and security challenges across the African continent. While both organizations cooperate closely in peacekeeping, diplomacy, and development, their partnership also reflects tensions related to funding, institutional responsibilities, and approaches to conflict management. Therefore, the interaction between the AU and the UN illustrates both collaboration and challenges in responding to Africa's complex security environment.

The issue of ensuring peace and security in African states became particularly acute in the 1990s and early 2000s. During this period, socio-political and economic problems on the continent including widespread poverty, dissatisfaction with government policies, ethnic and religious tensions, territorial disputes, and competition for natural resources—often escalated into armed conflicts of varying intensity. Because of the complexity and diversity of these conflicts, the UN's response to crises in Africa was sometimes delayed, which caused dissatisfaction among African states.

As a result, African leaders sought to create their own mechanisms for responding more quickly to threats to peace and security. In 2003, the AU established the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), based on the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council adopted in Durban in 2002. APSA brought together institutions and mechanisms designed to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts on the continent. Its central body, the Peace and Security Council, works alongside several supporting institutions, including the Continental Early Warning System, the African Standby Force, the Panel of the Wise, and the Peace Fund. Together, these mechanisms enable the AU to conduct conflict prevention, peacekeeping, mediation, and post-conflict reconstruction activities, as well as promote democracy, good governance, and human rights.

At the same time, Africa demonstrates significant development potential. According to Parfait Onanga-Anyanga [2], in recent years, several African countries have made progress in democratic governance through free and credible elections. Peaceful transitions of power have occurred in Botswana, Ghana, Mauritius. And Gabon has also experienced a peaceful political transition. African Union election observation missions have noted increasing participation of women and young people in electoral processes, reflecting gradual strengthening of democratic institutions.

Economic development also highlights Africa's resilience and opportunities for growth. The continent's young population, abundant natural resources, and expanding consumer markets create strong prospects for development. One of the most important initiatives in this area is the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTEA), which aims to promote intra-African trade, accelerate regional economic integration, and support inclusive and sustainable development. The UN supports these initiatives through development programs and international cooperation.

Despite these positive trends, several regions of Africa continue to face serious security challenges. Conflicts are often intensified by weak state institutions, violent extremism, organized crime, unequal resource management, climate change, and food insecurity. The Horn of Africa illustrates how these factors can overlap. Political transitions in the region have sometimes stalled, while territorial disputes and climate-induced insecurity have worsened humanitarian crises. The ongoing conflict in Sudan represents the largest humanitarian and forced displacement crisis in the world.

In this context, cooperation between the AU and the UN is essential. As emphasized by Fatima Kyari Mohammed [1], the partnership between the two organizations is based on the principle of complementarity. The African Union provides regional knowledge and rapid political engagement, while the United Nations contributes global legitimacy, financial resources, and experience in peacekeeping operations.

In situations where traditional UN peacekeeping missions may not be appropriate, AU-led peace support operations can play a crucial role. An important step in strengthening such cooperation was the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2719 (2023), which created a framework for financing AU-led peace support operations through the UN system. This mechanism is intended to improve the sustainability and effectiveness of peace operations and strengthen national capacities for long-term peacebuilding.

In conclusion, the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations demonstrates both the opportunities and challenges of international cooperation. While Africa shows progress in democratic governance and economic development, ongoing conflicts and humanitarian crises continue to threaten stability. Through coordinated diplomacy, peace operations, and development initiatives, the AU and the UN work together to promote lasting peace and security across the continent.

Источники и литература

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