THE FORMALISATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE AFRICAN UNION PARTNERSHIP IN PEACE-KEEPING: THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC EXPERIENCE

A FORMALIZAÇÃO DA PARCERIA ENTRE AS NAÇÕES UNIDAS E A UNIÃO AFRICANA NA MANUTENÇÃO DA PAZ: A EXPERIÊNCIA DA REPÚBLICA CENTRO-AFRICANA

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Abstract: This article analyses the partnership between the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) within the peace-keeping missions while taking into account the example of the Central African Republic. The article looks at the existing legal framework as well as the evolving practice and highlights the increasing formalisation of the partnership. It scrutinises the example of the Central African Republic (CAR) in order to assess how such partnership played out on the ground. Within the CAR context, the paper focuses particularly on the international community engagement with the CAR in the aftermath of the 2013 crisis. In doing so, it was possible to establish that although the peace-keeping deployment followed the growing formalisation of the UN-AU relationship; peace initiatives have been *ad hoc* and incoherent. The article concludes that the incoherence of international community engagement in the CAR has undermined prospects for long-term peace.

Key-words*:* United Nations, African Union, Regional Economic Communities, Peace-keeping, Partnership, Institutionalisation, Central African Republic.

Resumo: Este artigo examina a parceria entre as Nações Unidas (ONU) e a União Africana (UA) nas missões de manutenção da paz, levando em consideração o caso da República Centro-Africana (RCA). O artigo analisa o quadro jurídico existente, bem como a prática emergente, destacando a crescente formalização da parceria. O artigo escrutina o caso da República Centro-Africana com vista a avaliar como essa parceria se desenrolou no terreno. Dentro do contexto da RCA, o artigo se debruça particularmente sobre o engajamento da comunidade internacional com a RCA na sequência da crise de 2013. Assim, foi possível estabelecer que, embora o destacamento de forças de manutenção da paz tenha seguido pautada pela crescente formalização da parceria ONU-UA; as iniciativas de paz foram *ad hoc* e incoerentes. O artigo conclui que a incoerência do engajamento da comunidade internacional no RCA minou as perspetivas para uma paz duradoura.

Palavras-Chave: Nações Unidas, União Africana, Comunidades Económicas Regionais, Missões de Manutenção de Paz, República Centro-Africana**.**

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Introduction

Traditionally, the relationship between the United Nations (UN) and regional organisations has been based on the subsidiarity model, which under Article 24 of the United Nations Charter underlines the primary responsibility of the UN Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, in practice, following the conflicts in the Balkans and Rwanda, it was recognised the need to resort to regional bodies. Hence, subsidiarity was replaced by complementarity, which although recognizing the UN exclusive authority in the use of force, highlights the ever-increasing role played by regional and sub-regional bodies in the pursuit of global peace and security. It is against this backdrop that this paper proposes to look at the partnership between the UN and African Union (AU) by exploring how this partnership played out in the context of the Central African Republic (CAR).

The first part of the article explores the partnership between the African Union (AU) and the United Nations, as well as how the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) fit into the scheme. The article scrutinises the existing legal framework and the ensuing practice while highlighting the growing formalisation of the process. After laying down the framework for the UN and AU partnership, the second part of the article proceeds to analyse the extent to which such model has been applied in the Central African Republic following the 2013 crisis. The article looks at the peacekeeping deployment stressing the fact that, despite initial friction, the transfer from the sub-regional to the regional and international military deployment followed the general trend of growing formalisation. The article then proceeds to discuss the various peace initiatives under the aegis of different international actors emphasising their incongruencies and inability to establish clear framework for engagement. The article concludes that the incoherence of international intervention in the peace process has undermined the prospects for peace and stability in the CAR as well as contributed to a mushrooming of armed groups in the country.

1. The United Nations and Africa in Peace-keeping Context

1.1. UN and Regional Organisations

The general legal framework for international peace and security is laid down in article 24(1) of the UN Charter, which attributes to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Under Chapter VIII of the Charter, the UNSC can and does rely on regional organizations in order to perform such tasks.

Despite this legal framework, it was not until the end of the Cold War that regional actors emerged in the international peace and security arena. In fact, the format of the partnership between the UN and regional organisations is a product of the 1990s (SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT - SCR, 2011; KOOPS &TARDY, 2015), whereby the world organization has come to recognize the need to involve regional organisations in the peacekeeping process (SHAW, 2008; WHITE, 2015; KOOPS & TARDY, 2015). Moreover, article 52(1) on the UN Charter establishes that "nothing in the present Charter precludes the existence of regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security". While article 52(2) encourages dispute and conflict resolution through regional organisations and encourages Member States to seek resolution through regional mechanisms before referral to UNSC, this does not, however, imply that such organisations have priority in peace-keeping operations. On the contrary, the UN continues to be entitled to intervene (ORAKHELASHVILI, 2007) as article 53(1) consecrates the subordination of the regional mechanism to UNSC by providing that "no enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangements or by regional agencies without the authorisation of the Security Council."

Meanwhile, although Chapter VIII foresees the role of the regional organisations in the maintenance of world peace and security, the Chapter neither provides for a definition of regional organisations nor clarification on the nature of arrangements allowing for some flexibility in the implementation (SCR, 2011). This flexibility partly explains the ever-evolving nature of the relationship between the UN and African regional and sub-regional organisations, which will be explored next.

1.2. UN and Africa partnership: towards a growing institutionalisation

The UN efforts to maintain peace and security in Africa started in the 1960s with the first mission to Congo (MALANCZUK, 1997). Notwithstanding such early involvement in peace and security affairs in the continent, it was the UN failure in Rwanda that triggered the quest for homegrown solutions (IGARAPÉ INSTITUTE, 2018). As highlighted by Badmus:

> The inability of the UN peacekeeping operations to successfully resolve some of the(se) internal armed conflicts on a permanent basis instigated the need for Africa to take primary ownership of and provide solutions to its conflict and guarantee the continent´s security (BADMUS, 2015, p.4).

The UN´s inability to provide for permanent peace solutions, coupled with the Organization of African Unity (OAU), outdated objectives and inefficient conflict management records triggered a discussion that would ultimately lead to the dismantling of the old organisation and the establishment of a new entity, which in due course launched the architecture for peace and security in Africa.

Meanwhile, the OAU established on the 25th of May 1963 – through the OAU Charter, adopted 25 May 1963, 3 International Legal Materials - ILM (1964) 1116 and entered into force on 13 September 1963 –at a time when African states were fighting colonial rule and seeking independence, was a product of its time and therefore had as its main objectives the decolonisation and the protection of the sovereignty of African States (Article of the OAU Charter). In this sense, the OAU was not concerned with the protection of the individuals but rather with ensuring respect for the principle of non-interference in state internal affairs and guaranteeing the absolute sovereignty of African States (MURRAY, 2004). Consequently, given the inviolability of the sovereignty of African States (MURRAY, 2004), it should not come as a surprise the fact that the organisation failed to ensure peace and security in the continent. The end of the Cold War brought problems and challenges that the OAU was not prepared or able to respond to (BADMUS, 2015). In the aftermath of the Rwandese genocide, the OAU commissioned an International Panel of Eminent Personalities (IPEP) to investigate the events. The report highlighted that "African lives are not as highly important and valued as other lives" (BADMUS, 2015, p.72) and hence setting the motto for reforms that

would ultimately inform the philosophical underpinnings of the new peace and security architecture in the African continent (BADMUS, 2015; MURRAY, 2001).

Moreover, by the 1990s, winds of change swept across the African continent, providing an opportunity for the implementation of rule of law, democracy, and multiparty elections. In this context, the absolute protection of State sovereignty no longer held truth and Africans – both domestically and regionally – pursued in-depth reforms, which placed at the core concerns over the individual rather than the States. It was against this backdrop that the OAU was dissolved, and the African Union (AU) created with the view of promoting democracy, rule of law and human rights values, as well as ensuring peace and security in the continent.

The AU officially replaced the OAU on 9 July 2002 in Durban, South Africa, amidst "much optimism that the new pan-African unity project will break with the OAU past and provide much-needed solutions to Africa´s manifold challenges in the 21st century" (BADMUS, 2015, p.77).

Hence, albeit the fact that the immediate post-Cold War saw close collaboration between the UN and some sub-regional organisations in Africa, particularly in West Africa, the coming into existence of the AU brought new dynamics into the peace-keeping environment in the continent. In fact, the organisation sought to assert its relevance against the already established practice of intervention by the sub-regional mechanisms through the launching of new and comprehensive peace and security architecture throughout the continent.

In order to do so, the AU had to break some of the previously ingrained principles, which prevented the outgoing organisation from taking a more proactive stand in peace and security matters in the continent. Hence, although the AU Constitutive Act recognised the relevance of the principle of sovereign equality of its members and as such the non-interference in States domestic affairs, such principle no longer held the prominence that it did in the outgoing organisation. In fact, article 3(f) of the African Union Constitutive Act underscores as one of the objectives of the AU, the promotion of peace, security and stability in the continent.

The AU Constitutive Act together with the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of Peace and Security of the African Union (2002 Protocol, adopted on 9

July and entered in force on the 26 of December 2003), which sets the legal framework for the AU Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Under this new arrangement, the African Peace and Security Council (PSC) replaced the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution (Article 22(2) of the Protocol), a mechanism that had been created by the defunct OAU in 1993 with the aim of preventing, managing and solving conflicts in the continent (BADMUS, 2015). The AU sought to a shift from "non-interference" towards "non-indifference" (ANING, 2013, p. 28; IGARAPÉ INSTITUTE, 2018) by expressly recognising the right of intervention in cases of massive human rights violations in the Article 4(h) of the Constitutive Act: "The right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity."

The 2002 Protocol establishes a three-partite relationship in which the APSA includes both the global (UN) and the sub-regional organisations (RECs) with the view of ensuring a comprehensive and holistic approach to peace and security challenges in Africa while at the same time setting the foundations for the harmonisation and coordination of activities amongst the organisations.

Despite such structure, the 2002 Protocol provides for a contradictory regime, in which the drafters sought to acknowledge the international legal order and hierarchy while simultaneously seeking to assert the relevance and primary importance of the AU in such architecture. The result is ambiguity on the responsibilities of each organisation (BADMUS, 2015; SCR, 2011). In fact, article 16(1) of the 2002 Protocol attributes the AU the primary responsibility for the promotion of peace and security in Africa and concurrently, article 17(1) recognises the UN as having the primary responsibility for peace and security in the world, in line with the already discussed article 24 of the UN Charter. In addition, Article 16(3) requires the 'regional mechanisms' to keep the AU Peace and Security Council fully and continuously informed of their activities and ensure harmonisation.

Consequently, there has been a growing and evolving partnership between the UN, AU and the RECs (BADMUS, 2015; ANING, 2008; KOOPS & TARDY, 2015), marked by an increasing formalisation and institutionalisation of the process, as an

acknowledgement of the complex peace and security settings in which such organisations operate (KOOPS & TARDY, 2015).

Moreover, in addition to the legal framework discussed in the preceding pages, a number of UNSC resolutions have stressed the partnership between the UN and AU in conjunction with the RECs, and, as such, stressing the role played by the AU Peace and Security Council and the sub-regional organisations in Africa. For instance, the UNSC Res. 2033 (2012) stressed the need to develop an effective partnership between the UN, regional and sub-regional organisations, while the UNSC Res. 2167 (2014) encourages regional and sub-regional organisations to develop the ability to deploy military forces rapidly to support UNSC-mandated operations. Through this resolution the UNSC welcomed the enhanced peace-keeping and peace-making role of these organisations, consistent with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, and the initiatives already taken in the maintenance of international peace and security by *inter alia*, the AU, Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The UNSC Res 2320 (2016) underlined the relevant role played by the regional organisation in the maintenance of peace and security. The UNSC Res 2282 (2016) underscores the relevance of partnership and cooperation between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organisations, including the African Union with the view of ensuring coherence and complementarity. To a certain extent, such resolutions have endorsed the existence of the 'African security architecture' and recognised the need to foster local ownership, as underscored by de Conning: "African is thus no longer only the recipient or host of UN peace operations, the AU and the sub-regional organisations in Africa have now become an integral part of the global peace and security architecture." (2018, p. 214)

Moreover, some key initiatives underscore the interaction between the UN and AU, confirming this growing trend of strategic partnership and institutionalised proceedings. Hence, the two organisations continue to build bridges and pave the way towards a closer collaboration through the annual meetings held by the UN Secretary-General and the AU Commission Chairperson. Since 2017, several meetings have been held and resulted in the UN-AU Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace

and Security, signed on 19 April 2017, and AU-UN Framework on Implementation of the Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030, signed on 27th of January 2018. These meetings seek to deepen the strategic partnership and enhance complementarity and convergence amongst the organisations, as well as, to monitor the implementation of the bilateral agreements and discuss specific peace and security challenges plaguing the African continent.

1.2.1. The AU and the RECs

Africa is a depository of many sub-regional organisations, some of them with overlapping goals and membership – in what has been named as "the spaghetti bowl of overlapping economic community memberships" (VILJOEN, 2012; ECA&AU, 2006; RUPPEL, 2009). The AU officially recognises eight RECs: the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and Southern African Development Community (SADC). There are at least 14 (RUPPEL, 2009). Originally established to pursue economic and social goals, from the 1990s onwards many of the RECs expanded their mandate to include areas such as human rights, peace and security, and the rule of law (VILJOEN, 2012). The RECs are a building block for peace and security in Africa and have been involved in peace-keeping activities in the continent even before the establishment of the AU (AJAYI, 2008; LUCEY & AREWA, 2016).

Hence, the launching of the APSA discussed in the preceding part, required the coordination with these already existing structures in order to enhance and maximise the peace and security framework. In fact, although the AU had a comparative advantage as the only one of the African organisations with a seat in the UN (SCR, 2011) and therefore empowered to take the lead on behalf of all African States, it was however, required to cooperate with subregional organisations, who were not only more experienced but also geographically closer to the events.

Article 3(l) of the Constitutive Act provides that the AU shall "coordinate and harmonize the policies between the existing and future Regional Economic Communities for the gradual attainment of the objectives of the Union". Furthermore, Article 16 of the 2002 Protocol stresses that "the regional mechanisms are part of the overall security architecture of the Union," encouraging the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Commission and the RECs. Hence, the lack of clarity of relationship led to signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the AU and the eight officially recognised RECs (MAKINDA & OKUMU, 2007) during the AU Summit in Addis Ababa in January 2008. The MoU primary purpose is to ensure cooperation and coordination of activities between the RECs and the AU (AU, 2008, Article II). It also reaffirmed the principle of complementarity with the view of optimising the relationship between the regional and sub-regional organisms (AU, 2008, Article IV).

Meanwhile, although the signing of the MoU reinforces the growing trend of formalisation of peace and security in the African continent, it is, however, important to underline that such a mechanism still suffers from lack of clarity evidenced by the setting of the African Standby Force. In fact, Article 13(1) of 2002 Protocol envisages the establishment of an African Stand-by Force (ASF) as an integral part of the overall APSA. The policy framework of the ASF and the military staff committee was approved by African Heads of State in Addis Ababa in July 2004 (AU, 2004), creating five regional forces, including the Central African Stand-by Force, to which the Central African Republic belongs.

However, and as previously discussed, the AU officially recognised eight RECs, and therefore as a result some members belong to more than one regional organisation. Such discrepancies and lack of coherence within the AU can be challenging and generate friction, therefore, undermining the effectiveness of the APSA (BAH et al., 2014; STRIEBINGER, 2016). In fact, the conflict in Mali and subsequent friction between the UN, AU, and ECOWAS represents, to a certain extent, an example of instances where the lack of coherence and coordination between global, regional and sub-regional mechanisms have come into play (WHITE, 2015).

Hence, although the relationship between the AU and RECs follows the global trend of increasing institutionalisation of the processes, yet a comprehensive harmonisation is required in order to enable the organisation to respond fully and timely to peace and security challenges in the continent. In fact, lack of clarity, overlap and discrepancies need to be addressed in order to smooth out the shortcomings and ensure a comprehensive, cohesive and continent-wide response to peace and security challenges in the African continent, while avoiding incongruencies and duplication of efforts.

2. The Central African Republic Case

2.1. Conflict and International Interventions: A Brief Overview

CAR has been a testing ground for several peace-keeping and peace-building initiatives involving a multiplicity of actors to the point that it has been named a "laboratory for peace interventions" (CARAYANNIS & FOWLIS, 2017, p. 220). Despite the fact that the country "has had more international intervention than anywhere else" (LOMBARD, 2016, p.213) it remains a continuous source of instability and conflict.

CAR peace-keeping and peace-building activities are made up of a mix of international, regional, sub-regional, and bilateral interventions, at times concurrent and overlapping. In fact, the country has hosted a plethora of bilateral (*inter alia*, France, South Africa, Chad, Russia), sub-regional (CEN-SAD, CEMAC; ECCAS), regional (AU, European Union - EU) and international interventions (UN) defying any attempt to fit into a specific box or peacekeeping coordination scheme.

Following the French colonisation, CAR was ruled by successive undemocratic regimes until 1993, when the country held the first free and fair elections won by Ange-Félix Patassé (MACQUEEN, 2014) and in this way followed the continental trend of changes towards democracy and multiparty elections. However, three years after Patassé's elections, the country witnessed the first of countless military mutinies that would become a constant source of instability in the country for the next decades (MACQUEEN, 2014; OLIN, 2015).

In fact, the Central African Armed Forces (FACA, French acronym) started a mutiny in 1997 over unpaid wages and President Patassé's perceived ethnic favouritism

in the military appointments (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH - HRW, 2007; INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP – ICG, 2007). Intense fighting followed leading to the intervention of the international community and ultimately to the deployment of the Inter-African Mission for the Supervision of the Bangui Accords (MISAB, French acronym), composed of francophone African nationals with the support of France. This led to the first direct involvement of the UN in CAR, in 1998, when the UNSC Res. 1159 of 27 March established the United Nations Mission in Central Republic (MINURCA, French acronym). MINURCA's mandate was to, *inter alia*, maintain peace and security in Bangui and surroundings, as well as to assist the organisation of presidential elections.

In April 2000, MINURCA was replaced by the UN Peace-building Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), which had no military component and, therefore, was unable to intervene in the security incidents such as the October 2001 failed coup attempt, led by François Bozizé. Following these incidents, Patassé sought and secured the support of the Community of Sahel and Saharan States (CEN-SAD) which deployed 300 peacekeepers in December 2001 (SMITH, 2015; ICG, 2007). One year later, a new incident involving supporters of Bozizé led to the deployment of a new regional force: the Multinational Force for CAR (*Force Multinationale en Centreafrique*, FOMUC), in December 2002, by the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC, French acronym), which was entrusted with ensuring Presidential security and assisting in restructuring the armed forces (HRW, 2007).

In March 2003, with the connivance of FOMUC forces who "received instructions to not oppose" (IGC, 2007, p.16) rebels headed by Bozizé seized power leading to another period of turmoil and instability. In fact, during the decade that Bozizé was in power several international deployments took place, including bilateral interventions by Chad and South Africa; sub-regional interventions by the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in CAR (MICOPAX) under ECCAS – established in 1983, although dormant for a certain period of time, it gained traction in 1999 after becoming one of the eight officially recognized RECs by the AU (BYIERS, 2017) – ; regional intervention through the European Union Force, as well as, international intervention with the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad

(MINURCAT) and the United Nations Integrated Peace-building Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA, French acronym) (CARAYANNIS & FOWLIS, 2017; OLIN, 2015).

It follows from the foregoing survey that the international deployment in CAR has been *ad hoc* and uncoordinated with the internal dynamics being influenced by the external regional actors, as well as the former coloniser France (MARCHAL, 2015; HRW, 2007). In fact, during this period, "peacekeeping operations in CAR have involved a mix of bilateral and regional support," (OLIN, 2015, p.194) with Chad as the kingmaker and the sub-regional organisation CEMAC taking the lead in much of the deployment during this period. It is interesting to note that although CEMAC played an important role in CAR for the first decades of political turmoil, it has been replaced by ECCAS, the main sub-regional interlocutor of the AU for the Central Africa. (for more details of dynamics between ECCAS and CEMAC, see BYIERS, 2017). Nevertheless, notwithstanding the multiplicity of interventions by bilateral and sub-regional actors and the ongoing presence of the UN in the country, by late 2013 the country fell into widespread and sectarian violence, which would prove to be the most devastating, while simultaneously placing CAR in the centre of international concerns.

2.2. The 2013 crisis and emergence of the African Union

The inconsistency and incongruencies in the approaches to the ongoing CAR crisis did not contribute to finding durable and successful solutions. Hence, the crisis that triggered the international outcry and placed CAR in the spotlight started to unfold towards the end of 2012 when a Seleka – a coalition of various rebel groups mainly composed of northerners and fighters from Chad/Darfur – began their march to Bangui with the support of the Chadian President Déby (LOMBARD & CARAYANNIS, 2015). This was followed by an outbreak of violence in March 2013 leading to Seleka's takeover of Bangui. Subsequently, in a retaliatory attack, the Anti-balaka – self-defense militia largely composed of Christian fighters – won the capital on 5 December 2013 (LOMBARD & CARAYANNIS, 2015).

Moreover, although the international presence in CAR has been a constant for over two decades, it was the 2013 crisis that triggered the AU direct interest in the

country. In fact, as recalled by Carayannis and Fowlis "the AU paid little attention to the crisis until the summer of 2013, when it became increasingly clear that the subregional ECCAS was unable to manage it, which increased the pressure on the AU to intervene" (2017, p. 224). During the 385th Peace and Security Council, on 19 July 2013, the AU authorised the deployment African-Led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA, French acronym), which was to incorporate the regional ECCAS forces MICOPAX that were in CAR since 2008.

However, the AU deployment faced many challenges, including resistance by ECCAS. Notwithstanding the fact that AU and RECs had signed the memorandum of understanding as discussed in the first part of this article, tension remains as to the role played by the two organisations on the ground. Furthermore, it is also important to recall that the sub-regional organisation (especially some of its members, namely Chad) had a longstanding practice of meddling into CAR political and security situation and was, therefore, unwilling to let go of the prerogative by allowing the AU interference. In fact, although, the MISCA was supposed to incorporate ECCAS forces, it was met with resistance by the latter, leading to rivalry and competition between the forces (OLIN, 2015; CARAYANNIS & FOWLIS, 2017)) and, as such, hindering the AU initiative to bring stability to the country.

Meanwhile, despite the escalation of the violence, the UN was reluctant to send an international peacekeeping mission, given the AU´s eagerness to act independently (SCR, 2013). In fact, while Russia, the United States and the African members of the Security Council believed that MISCA should be prioritise in solving the conflict in CAR, other members of the UNSC, particular France were in favour of a UN peace-keeping mission (SCR, 2014). The UN's resistance is understandable if we take into consideration the dynamics explained in the first part of this article, and recall that, the two organisations – UN and AU – wherein the process of drawing a different type of working relationship, based on collaboration and partnership. Furthermore, the AU was in the process of asserting its relevance in the overall peace and security scheme in the continent.

Therefore, the UN decided to endorse AU and French efforts by authorising the deployment of MISCA and the French peace-keeping forces through the UNSC Res.

2127, adopted on 5 December 2013. Furthermore, as the crises continued to unfold, the UNSC, in its Res. 2134 adopted on 28 January 2014, authorised the deployment of EU forces.

Nonetheless, it was not until 10 April 2014 that the UNSC Res. 2149 authorised the transformation of the AU MISCA mission into the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). The mandate recognised the important role played by the AU, ECCAS, and EU, encouraging close collaboration amongst the stake-holders. MINUSCA´s mandate has been renewed yearly ever since, given the ongoing instability.

While it was clear that only a united international framework with direct and inclusive dialogue between the government of CAR and the armed groups would be advisable as a way of achieving peace and security in the country, the previous analysis indicates that bringing together international actors under the same umbrella continued to represent a challenge. In fact, the multiplicity of external factors involved in CAR, sometimes with unclear agendas (KNOOPE & BUCHANAN-CLARKE, 2017; ICG, 2017) represents a challenge to a concerted and unique international approach to peace-keeping and as such with the potential of weakening the prospects for peace and security.

2.3. Post-2013 Peace Initiatives

In the aftermath of the December 2013 crisis, along with the international military presence, political initiates have also been launched. Notwithstanding the fact that both the security and political processes should be harmonised in order to ensure lasting solutions, the approaches to these processes in CAR was different. In fact, while the peace-keeping deployment followed a path that reflects the growing institutionalisation of the partnership between the global (UN) and the regional (AU) organisation previously described, the mediation of the peace process followed a different route.

Hence, several fragmented, overlapping, and at times competing peace initiatives were attempted and yet failed to fully accomplish the objective to bring long-lasting peace and stability in the country. The following gives an account of the main peace initiatives and how the lack of coordination amongst the international actors led

to a multiplicity of initiatives, which were detrimental to the goal of achieving long-lasting peace in the CAR. Several organisations were involved in the peace process, both locally and internationally. Here we focus on the main initiatives, bearing in mind their relevance towards the partnership between the UN and the AU (for an account of internal mediation processes, see VIRCOULON, 2017; ZAHAR and MECHOULAN, 2017).

In line with the established tradition in the sub-regional, initial mediation efforts were held by ECCAS, which proved to be incoherent. Hence, in June 2014, at the margins of the African Union Summit in Malabo, the ECCAS heads of State requested the UN and the AU to set up an international mediation under the leadership of the President of Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso (ECCAS, 2014). Subsequently, during the fifth meeting of the International Contact Group on the Central African Republic, which took place in Addis Ababa, on 7th July 2014, it was established an International Mediation Group for CAR under the leadership of Sassou Nguesso and comprising of UN, AU and ECCAS representatives (AU, 2014b). Under the auspices of ECCAS and Sassou Nguesso leadership the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (Brazzaville Agreement) was signed in Brazzaville (UN- S/2014/762) on 23 July 2014. The signatories committed to immediate cessation of hostilities and the establishment of a follow-up monitoring mechanism made up of representatives of the political and armed groups, the transitional authorities and members of the international community (UN - S/2014/562)

However, Denis Sassou Nguesso in his capacity as the international mediator for CAR crisis together with the government of Kenya, launched parallel peace talks (the Nairobi Talks) from December 2014 to April 2015, which led to the signing of two peace agreements between the former CAR presidents Bozizé and Djototia (ABBINK et al., 2015; VIRCOULON, 2017; UN - S/2015/936). In fact, following the signing of the first Nairobi peace agreement on 22 January 2015, CAR Transitional Authorities and the international community denounced the agreement as falling outside the Brazzaville agreement (VIRCOULON, 2017).

Interestingly enough, ECCAS – to which the Denis Sassou Nguesso the International Mediator was part to – issued a public statement exhorting partners to

remain within the Brazzaville follow-up mechanisms and to refrain from any peace talks outside such framework as they would be deemed void (ECCAS, 2015). As a consequence of this international condemnation of the first Nairobi agreement, the International Mediator issued a letter to the Kenyan president denouncing the agreement. (NGUESSO, 2015). Furthermore, despite the fact the international community and local authorities were gathered around the consultations in preparation for the Bangui Forum, the International Mediator continued his efforts within the Nairobi Talks framework, which led to the signing of a new peace agreement on 14 April 2015. Once again, and transitional authorities and international partners, including the UN, rejected this agreement. In fact, in the resolution that renewed MINUSCA´s mandate two weeks later, on 28 April 2015, the UNSC not only reiterated its support to the Brazzaville agreement but also encouraged ECCAS and its Mediator to support the peace process as outlined in the agreement. As noted, through such support, the members of the Security Council were "implicitly rejecting ongoing talks between some rebel leaders taking place outside of this transitional justice process in Nairobi" (WHAT´S IN BLUE, 2015).

Meanwhile, in compliance with the Brazzaville follow-up mechanism, the transitional government launched a comprehensive and wide range consultation process that included not only the armed groups but also the Central-African society, namely civil society organisations and religious groups. The consultations, with the support of the international partners, led to the Bangui Forum, which brought together over 600 participants and was the most inclusive peace effort. The Bangui Forum resulted in the adoption of the Republican Pact for Peace, National Reconciliation and Reconstruction in CAR, and the signing of an agreement on the principles of disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration by nine armed groups (S/2015/576).

Following the Bangui Forum, a relatively peaceful (HOWARD, 2019) period followed, allowing the holding of elections. The elections and the appointment of a new government in April 2016 brought an end to the transitional period and with it the end of international mediation process led by the ECCAS under the leadership of the Sassou Nguesso (UN, S/2016/1032).

However, towards the end of 2016, a new outbreak of violence surfaced throughout the country (HOWARD, 2019; ICG, 2017), leading to a new round of peace talks at the initiatives of several actors, including the Sant'Egidio community, Sudan/ Russia and the African Union. This led to a new round of peace initiatives with "divergent agendas, institutional rivalries and different approaches" (ICG, n.253; UN, S/ 2017/639; UN, S/2017/1023).

Hence, the AU launched the African Union Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR in January 2017 during its 28th summit with the aim of reconciling the government and 14 armed groups and with the support of ECCAS, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, Angola, Chad and Congo (AU, 2017a). The AU initiative aggregated earlier attempts by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Angola and Chad into one single framework (UN, S/2017/639). The AU led-mediation was endorsed by the UN, with the President of the Security Council acknowledging "the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation Agreement between the Government and all armed groups in the CAR" and encouraging all partners to work together in order to achieve peace in CAR (UN, S/PRST/2017/5).

Meanwhile, parallel to the AU initiative, the Community of Sant´Egidio sponsored peace talks that led to the signing of a peace agreement (Rome Agreement) among 13 armed groups on 19 June 2017 (S/2017/639). However, although the groups agreed to an immediate cease-fire, the conflict intensified on the ground, rendering the agreement obsolete (ICG, 2017).

Immediately after the Rome Agreement, CAR's international partners met in the European Union headquarters in Brussels and pledged to adopt a joint approach to the CAR crisis and to support the AU initiative (EU, 2017). Moreover, during the 29th summit of AU heads of State and Government, the organisation reaffirmed its support to the AU-led initiative while simultaneously welcoming the Rome Agreement (AU, 2017b). Meanwhile, the organisation adopted its roadmap for peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic at a ministerial meeting held in Libreville on 17 July 2017. However, the Government of CAR, after having endorsed the AU roadmap issued a decree creating a follow-up committee for the Rome Agreement (UN, S/2017/1023) and thus contributing to further misunderstanding between the two mediation processes.

In the meantime, at the High-Level Ministerial meeting on CAR held at the margins of the 73rd United Nations Assembly-General Session, which took place on 27 September 2017, participants endorsed the African Initiative as the only framework, agreeing to an integrated approach, and avoiding the promotion of parallel initiatives. In the subsequent renewal of MINUSCA´s mandate, the UNSC stressed that the AU Initiative was the "main framework for a political solution in the CAR" (UN, S/Res/2387 (2017)).

However, notwithstanding this stance by the international community, Russia, in partnership with Sudan, launched a parallel initiative, the so-called Khartoum Talks (ICG, 2019; UN, S/2018/1119). Therefore, throughout 2018, while the AU consultations were taking place, the Russian Federation and the Sudanese government held parallel peace talks.

For the time being, although the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR began its activities in November 2017 (UN, S/2018/729), it was only one year later that most of the parallel initiatives were incorporated into the African Initiative (UN, S/201/922). This consolidated and coordinated approach eventually led to the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (UN, S/2019/145) between the government and 14 recognized armed groups on 6 February 2019 in Bangui.

The foregoing analysis gives an account of the major political dynamics towards peace and stability in CAR and the role played by international partners in the process in the aftermath of the 2013 outbreak of violence. In doing so, it is important to highlight the growing number of local armed groups in the process. In fact, while in 2014 armed groups that took part in the signing of peace agreements were around 8; in February 2019 the number had grown to 14 (DUKHAN, 2017; INTERNATIONAL PEACE INFORMATION SERVICE, 2018). One of the consequences of the growing visibility of the conflict in CAR and the fragmented approaches to peace consultations was the continuous fragmentation and emergence of new armed groups, with further thwarting the overall goal of peace and stability in the country.

The peace attempts reveal two major trends. First, despite reiterated calls for a combined and coordinated approach, in practice, the approaches were fragmented,

revealing the lack of coordination or the inexistence of a single understanding of the peace process, even among the main actors. In fact, according to the UN Panel of Experts on Central African Republic, at least three concurring agendas can be highlighted. A first group favoured the Bangui Forum and hence advocated for justice at the core of the peace process; a second group of actors underlined the need for amnesty as the way for peace and reconciliation; whereas a third group sought to balance the quest for justice with the needs for peace and reconciliation (S/2017/1023). Second, while the official narrative was one of the reiterated calls for coordination, unofficially some of these same actors were pursuing different goals and, as such, undermining the efforts within the official framework.

Conclusion

The partnership between the UN and AU in the context of peace-keeping is mostly a result of changes that happened in the international arena in the last decades, which have come to shape and change the way in which these two organisations interact with each other. As this new partnership evolved, it had also to take into consideration the role of the pre-existing structures such as the RECs. Such considerations often represented a challenge, particularly in the implementation.

Despite the existence of the legal framework for engagement designed to bring together international actors involved in peace-keeping in Africa and its growing institutionalisation and formalisation, the CAR case illustrates well how the politics on the ground continues to represent a substantive danger to the effectiveness of such mechanisms. In fact, the foregoing analysis of the CAR situation underscores that any attempt to draw a straight line of interaction between sub-regional, regional, and global organisations is blurry and fails to fully capture the nature, dynamics, and challenges to the peace processes in Africa. Whether the existing mechanisms are successful when applied to the conflicts and insecurity on the ground is yet to be confirmed. What has been noticed in the case of CAR is that, while international interventions and actors continue to mushroom their approaches are yet to generate permanent peace solutions.

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