

**“Principle of Subsidiarity in the context of African Peace and Security Architecture:  
The Evolution of African Peace Operations and the Standby Force”**

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In 2016, four out of five regional African Standby Forces (ASF), regional brigades combined with civilian and police components, were declared fully operational<sup>1</sup>. The ASF, established for efficient and timely response to crisis in the continent, constitute one of the major pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA); the framework created resulting from the failure of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to prevent or halt mass atrocities in Rwandan genocide, constrained by the principle of non-interference.

The transition from OAU to the AU have often been described as a security paradigm shift in Africa, from non-interference to non-indifference<sup>2</sup>. However, the deployment of ASF to date, remains limited. Despite the recent effort of the AU to deploy the ASF in response to the crisis in Mali (2012)<sup>3</sup> and Burundi (2015)<sup>4</sup>, issues relating to the right to intervene, and the diverse interpretations on the principle of subsidiarity, hinder the materialization of the ASF framework.

Drawing on the resolutions and assessments of the African Union, the paper first provides an overview of the origin and development of the APSA. Second, it examines the attempts made by the Regional Economic Communities/ Regional Mechanisms and the AU to interpret the Principle of Subsidiarity. Finally, it surveys the arguments surrounding the deployment of the ASF. While past literature often focus on the inability of the ASF to conduct preventive interventions, the paper argues that ASF, despite its limitations, remains essential for the AU to utilize “coercive diplomacy”<sup>5</sup> in preventing the escalation of instability within the region, by focusing on the recent small-scale ASF missions conducted in the Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Lesotho.

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<sup>1</sup> PSC/PR/BR.(DLXX)

<sup>2</sup> Kioko, Ben. (2003). The Right of Intervention Under the African Union’s Constitutive Act: From Non-interference to non-intervention. *International Review of the Red Cross* 85, no.852, 807-825.

<sup>3</sup> RPT/Exp/VI/STCDSS/(i-a)2013

<sup>4</sup> PSC/PR/COMM.(DLXV)

<sup>5</sup> Wilén, N., & Williams, P. (2018). The African Union and coercive diplomacy: The case of Burundi. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 56(4), 673-696.