

ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ / RESEARCH ARTICLE**BEYOND THE UNSC: THE RISE OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GLOBAL SECURITY GOVERNANCE**Fadi HILAL¹¹Altınbaş Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü, İstanbul,
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Abstract

The regular incapacity of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to manage international disputes due to the veto-driven stagnation among its permanent members has increasingly pushed regional organizations into critical roles in global security governance. This paper explores how regional organizations—specifically the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the African Union (AU), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—have assumed responsibilities in conflict management and diplomacy when UNSC action is blocked. It inquires whether these organizations are able to meaningfully supplement or offset the UNSC inaction, contending that although they cannot fully substitute the Security Council, they have nevertheless emerged as indispensable actors in sustaining peace and stability. Through an analysis of NATO's involvement in Kosovo and Afghanistan, the AU's peacekeeping in Sudan and Mali, and ASEAN's engagement in Myanmar and the South China Sea, the paper examines both the achievements and constraints of regional approaches. These include limited financial resources, political divisions, and continued reliance on UNSC authorization and funding. Their legal mandate, anchored in Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter and developments such as UNSC Resolution 2719 (2023), delineates the scope of their autonomy. Additionally, the rise of non-conventional threats such as cyber conflict and climate-related insecurity poses novel challenges. The study concludes, underscoring the necessity of closer coordination with the UNSC and internal reform, so that regional organizations can contribute more effectively to a decentralized and multipolar global security order.

Keywords: UN Security Council, regional organizations, NATO, African Union, ASEAN, global security governance, veto power, peacekeeping, Chapter VIII, UNSC Resolution 2719

BM Güvenlik Konseyi'nin Ötesinde: Küresel Güvenlik Yönetişiminde Bölgesel Örgütlerin Yükselişi

Öz

Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi'nin (BMGK), daimi üyeleri arasındaki veto kaynaklı tıkanıklık nedeniyle uluslararası anlaşmazlıkları yönetmedeki süreğen yetersizliği, bölgesel örgütleri küresel güvenlik yönetiminde giderek daha kritik roller üstlenmeye zorlamıştır. Bu çalışma, özellikle Kuzey Atlantik Antlaşması Örgütü (NATO), Afrika Birliği (AfB) ve Güneydoğu Asya Uluslar Birliği'nin (ASEAN), BMGK'nın harekete geçemediği durumlarda çatışma yönetimi ve diplomatik çözüm süreçlerinde nasıl sorumluluk üstlendiklerini incelemektedir. Söz konusu örgütlerin, BMGK'nın etkisiz kaldığı durumları anlamlı biçimde telafi edip edemeyeceğini sorgulayan çalışma, bu yapıların Güvenlik Konseyi'nin yerini tamamen alamayacaklarını, ancak barış ve istikrarın sürdürülmesinde vazgeçilmez aktörler hâline geldiklerini savunmaktadır. NATO'nun Kosova ve Afganistan müdahaleleri, Afrika Birliği'nin Sudan ve Mali'deki barışı koruma operasyonları ve ASEAN'ın Myanmar ile Güney Çin Denizi'ndeki diplomatik girişimleri üzerinden yapılan analizle, bölgesel yaklaşımların hem başarıları hem de sınırlılıkları ortaya konulmaktadır. Bu sınırlılıklar arasında finansal kaynak eksikliği, örgüt içi siyasi bölünmeler ve BMGK onayı ile finansmanına duyulan bağımlılık yer almaktadır. Bölgesel örgütlerin hukuki yetki alanları, Birleşmiş Milletler Antlaşması'nın VIII. Bölümü ve 2023 tarihli BMGK Kararı 2719 gibi gelişmeler çerçevesinde şekillenmektedir. Ayrıca siber çatışmalar ve iklimle bağlantılı güvensizlik gibi yeni tür tehditlerin ortaya çıkışı, bu örgütlere yönelik beklentileri daha da artırmaktadır. Çalışma, çok kutuplu ve adem-i merkezîyetçi bir küresel güvenlik düzeninde, bu örgütlerin daha etkili bir rol oynayabilmesi için BMGK ile daha yakın eşgüdüm ve kurumsal reform ihtiyacına dikkat çekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: BM Güvenlik Konseyi, bölgesel örgütler, NATO, Afrika Birliği, ASEAN, küresel güvenlik yönetimi, veto yetkisi, barışı koruma, BM Şartı VIII. Bölüm, BMGK Kararı 2719

1. Introduction

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC), established in 1945, primarily is vested with preserving global peace and security. This core mandate is enshrined in Article 24 of the United Nations (UN) Charter, which delegates to the Security Council the authority to act on behalf of all UN member states in upholding international peace and security (United Nations, 1945). The UNSC is endowed with the authority to impose sanctions, initiate military operations, and adopt binding resolutions. However, the veto power wielded by the five permanent members (P5) —the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), France, Russia, and China often impedes the UNSC decision-making efficacy. This power is enshrined in Article 27 of the UN Charter, which mandates that all substantive actions taken by the Council are required to obtain the concurring votes of the permanent members, hence giving them a

veto right over the action of the Council (United Nations, 1945). Despite the fact that the veto mechanism was initially instituted to safeguard the influence of the major powers emerging from World War II, it has many times precipitated political paralysis, failing to intervene in a crisis on time. A salient example is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) intervention in Kosovo in 1999, which proceeded without official authorization by the UNSC due to a Russian veto (Simma, 2002). Similarly, in the early stages of the Darfur crisis, delayed UNSC action necessitated the African Union (AU) to step in despite limited resources (Williams, 2021).

Amid the constraints imposed by the UNSC's recurrent paralysis, regional organizations have become increasingly pivotal in addressing global security issues. Despite the UNSC as the main institution serving for resolving international conflicts, regional bodies like NATO, the AU, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have undertaken strategic roles in peacekeeping, diplomatic negotiations, as well as minor military involvement. Their emergence reflects a broader trend toward decentralization in global governance, whereby regional actors take on responsibilities traditionally held by centralized UN mechanisms (Williams, 2023). Although the latter scholarship has analysed the legal structures or institutional constraints on regional practice, little attention has been paid so far to how these actors effectively address the gaps resulting from UNSC action or inaction in geopolitically and legally diverse contexts.

This analysis explores the increasing dynamism of regional organizations in response to the UNSC deadlock or delayed response in addressing international peace and security challenges. It poses a pivotal question: to what extent can these regional actors fill the void left by the UNSC, and do they function as substitutes to the UNSC or merely act as complements to it in handling international peace and security challenges? This perspective offers an original contribution to understanding the operational relevance of regional organizations in moments when the global security architecture stalls.

The main argument is that despite the adaptive interventions of regional organizations in diverse situations, they remain unable to fully replace the UNSC's role. Their actions are often constrained by a confluence of factors, including legal restrictions, inadequate funding, internal discord, and the growing complexity of modern security threats.

The study employs a qualitative comparative case study methodology, incorporating both primary resources, including UNSC resolutions, official policy statements, and organizational documents, alongside secondary scholarly literature. The selected cases encompassing NATO's intervention in Kosovo

and Afghanistan, the AU in Sudan and Mali, and ASEAN's engagement in the South China Sea and Myanmar provide varying glimpses of regional response to the UNSC inaction. These cases have been selected to demonstrate variation in legal authority, institutional capability, and geopolitical context, offering a framework to understand how regional arrangements function in case the UNSC is unwilling or incapable of acting. The present research corresponds to the existing scholarship in the field of peace and security that underscores the utility of a comparative regional analysis in elucidating the dynamics of multilateral interventions (Bellamy & Williams, 2021).

To support this analysis, the article employs the concepts of multilateralism and regionalism, as articulated in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. It examines regional organizations' actions and their endeavors to gain legitimacy within a contested and intricate global security system. In instances where global mechanisms falter, the principle of subsidiarity encourages local response, enabling the interplay between global and regional governance in addressing international peace and security issues.

While the legal competence or peacekeeping roles of regional organizations have been discussed by scholars such as Simma (2002), Chesterman (2001), and Bellamy & Williams (2021), there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding their capacity to function as *de facto* replacements or substitutes for the UNSC in real-world conflict scenarios. This study aims to explore the evolution of regional organizations and the persistent limitations they encounter. Recent scholarship has pointed out the challenges to multilateralism and the emergence of new security governance models (Zürn, 2018), underscoring the significance and the necessity of this study.

Regional organizations have become increasingly involved in managing conflicts, particularly when the UNSC is unable to act decisively. Responding swiftly and timely, also leveraging understanding of the local dynamics, enables them to address these cases effectively. They continue to face numerous challenges as they assume additional responsibilities. Primarily, they suffer from inadequate resources, affected by political disputes and divisions, and continued reliance on the UNSC for legal legitimacy in different circumstances. Moreover, dealing with new threats such as terrorism, cyberattacks, environmental issues, and hybrid warfare will demand more financial resources, more buildings, and greater coordination with the UNSC. However, recent developments, notably the endorsement of the UNSC Resolution 2719 (2023), which authorized the UN-assessed contributions to AU-led peace missions, signal a move toward the formalization of such cooperative frameworks between the UNSC and regional organizations (United Nations Security Council, 2023). Such reforms and structured partnerships are critical for fostering a more balanced and collaborative international security order.

2. Legal Status of Regional Organizations and Their Relationship with the UN

The UN Charter, especially Chapter VIII, delineates a framework for regional organizations to participate in global security management. Article 52 articulates that regional organizations may contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, provided that their actions are in line with the UN's purposes and principles (United Nations, 1945). This provision has facilitated the engagement of organizations such as the AU, the European Union (EU), and NATO in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and mediation initiatives, especially when the Security Council faces paralysis or discord (Olsen, 2022). The rise of multipolarity and rivalry among the P5 has underscored the significance of regional engagement in addressing security challenges.

However, this authority is not without limitations, and it is circumscribed by notable challenges. Article 53 stipulates that they are prohibited from undertaking actions without prior authorization from the UNSC (United Nations, 1945). This requirement reinforces the primacy of the UNSC in the global enforcement mechanism, and such an explicit regulation bars regional bodies from acting unilaterally in taking coercive measures. Although peaceful mechanisms of dispute resolution are permissible, any military or coercive actions necessitate UN approval. NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999, conducted without the Security Council's authorization, sparked considerable debates and discussions regarding the legitimacy of regional actions and their compatibility with international law (Simm, 2002; Müller, 2022).

In comparison, the AU has primarily sought to align its actions and measures with UN protocols. The UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), established under the Resolution 1769 (2007), continues to serve as a textbook example of legal and operational synergy between international and regional institutions (Williams, 2021). More recent resolutions, such as 2167 (2014) and 2320 (2016) resolutions, have further reaffirmed the critical role of strategic partnerships, particularly in the domain of financing and authorizing African-led peace operations (UNSC, 2014, 2016).

Nevertheless, inconsistencies in politics and the law continue to persist. The example of crises in Libya or Syria, where the vetoes by the UNSC obstructed the UN action, illustrates the instability of legal clarity in responding to emergencies. In response to such impasses, some scholars endorsed the concept of the conditional delegation framework, positing that the partial and limited regional enforcement could be permissible in cases where the UNSC fails to act (Yahya, 2022). Some propose a

comprehensive revision of the Charter to better align with the modern dynamics of the fast-evolving nature of security threats (Buitelaar & Wilen, 2021). As Chesterman (2001) notes, the balance between centralized legitimacy and decentralized capacity is a central tension in modern peace operations.

Ultimately, while international law provides regional organizations with a legal basis for action, their enforcement authority remains subordinate to Security Council approval. An effective model of collaboration between international and local actors does exist; however, its full potential is constrained without legislative changes and political will. These limitations also reflect a central argument in the present study: regional organizations can operate where the UNSC is deadlocked, yet they cannot supplant the UNSC's legal authority.

3. NATO's Role in Global Security

Since its establishment in 1949 as a Soviet-defence collective alliance under the North Atlantic Treaty, NATO has undergone a significant transformation, evolving from a regionally-focused organization into a more global security entity (North Atlantic Treaty, 1949). Over time, NATO has developed from a regional defense mechanism to encompass critical domains in the fields of crisis management, peacekeeping, as well as counterterrorism. By operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan, NATO exemplified its wider role in global security, which underscores its willingness to react to new dynamics of the world (Simon, 2021).

The central aspect of NATO's intervention under Operation Allied Force in Kosovo in 1999 was the attempt to halt the humanitarian crisis precipitated by the ethnic conflict between Albanians and Serb forces. Owing primarily to a Russian veto, the UNSC failed to act, compelling NATO to undertake substantial military measures. The intervention nevertheless raised profound legal and ethical questions regarding the legitimacy of using military force without the UNSC authorization, while simultaneously demonstrating NATO's readiness to act in the absence of international consensus. Article 25 of the UN Charter mandates that member states accept and implement the Security Council's decisions, thereby strengthening the Council's legal authority and highlighting the issues arising from unauthorized actions (United Nations, 1945). However, the Kosovo operation is widely regarded as a milestone for NATO, expanding its role beyond a traditional military alliance to encompass peacekeeping functions (Chesterman, 2001). This operation also prompted renewed scrutiny of the legal parameters by which regional organizations operate, particularly when the Security Council's inaction compels them to act independently of the collective security framework envisioned by the UN Charter. In this sense,

Kosovo intervention constituted a pivotal precedent to the post-Cold War identity of NATO; no longer merely a defensive alliance, it emerged as a normative actor, engaged in defining the permissible boundaries of humanitarian intervention (Wheeler, 2000).

Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, NATO's mission expanded significantly, driven by Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty (1949) stipulating that an armed attack against one member state constitutes an attack against all, thereby invoking the collective defense mechanism of the Alliance (North Atlantic Treaty, 1949). This marked the first time in NATO's history that Article 5 of its charter was activated to collectively defend against terrorism (North Atlantic Treaty, 1949). Consequently, NATO became engaged in Afghanistan and, beginning in 2003, assumed command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The stated objectives were to defeat terrorism and contribute to the reconstruction of the country and the region. Although NATO's initial mission in Afghanistan was focused on counterterrorism and stabilization of the country, it subsequently evolved from counter-terrorism to nation-building. The persistence of Taliban insurgency, Afghan ethnic intricacies, and disagreements among NATO allies posed substantial obstacles to accomplishing the mission's objectives, despite the effectiveness of the operation in destroying and dismantling the al-Qaeda cells and providing security. The protracted nature of the mission made it more challenging, underscoring the difficulties of military interventions in politically and culturally intricate environments (Mahnken & Paine, 2016; Williams, 2021). These experiences pushed NATO to reassess its strategic orientation and adapt to emerging non-traditional threats beyond conventional conflict zones.

NATO's presence in Afghanistan was also an indicator of its broader role in global security. Unlike its earlier posture as primarily a defensive alliance, it was heavily invested in global counterterrorism, peacekeeping, and rebuilding missions. However, NATO has its fair share of controversy, particularly in Afghanistan. The institution's prolonged engagement there raised questions regarding NATO's capability to sustain long-term peacekeeping missions and the odds of success in post-conflict state-building. While NATO's effort yielded successful outcomes in counter-terrorism, critics argue that the organization failed to adequately address the political and societal problems in Afghanistan, and they were left unsolved, so the mission's goals were often vague and contradictory (Browning, 2015).

As part of strengthening its role in contemporary security, in recent years, NATO has come to deal with new types of security threats, including hybrid warfare and cyber threats. In response to the rise of nontraditional security concerns such as cyberattacks and terrorism, NATO has updated its strategic

priorities. The adoption of Cyber Defense Policy in 2016 aimed to reinforce NATO's commitment to countering cyber threats and support fortifying member states' defense capabilities against such attacks (Koblentz, 2017). This development suggests that NATO is recalibrating its security framework in response to the evolving security environment and is capable of handling new threats. NATO's "2022 Strategic Concept" further institutionalized this strategy, identifying cyber threats, hybrid warfare, and new technologies as major challenges, while simultaneously reaffirming NATO's commitment to upholding the rules-based international order (NATO, 2022). This document is a legal and strategic re-framing of NATO's mission, extending its perceived mandate beyond traditional collective defense to include support of liberal international norms, even in regions not encompassed in traditional treaty-based obligations.

However, these initiatives have not managed to resolve NATO's enduring internal problems, notably maintaining the unity among its member states. While NATO's missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo indicated the alliance's capacity to lead international coalitions, they revealed deep-seated rifts among members regarding the definition of security priorities and the appropriate means of achieving them. Frequently hampered by internal divisions, the alliance's ability in timely and swiftly addressing global security issues undermined. Moreover, NATO's interventions have increased an array of concerns regarding the legitimacy of such military engagement and have reinforced the calls for reforming global security governance in both regional and international frameworks (Fiott, 2023).

Nevertheless, the integral part of NATO in invigorating international security has been illustrated by its engagements from the former Kosovo up to Afghanistan, yet its continued relevance is bound to the intricacies of navigating complex geopolitical and military terrains, especially in the absence of unified global mandates. In the face of emerging security threats like cyberattacks and terrorism, maintaining cohesion among member states and alignment measures of NATO's actions with international law will be highly critical for the organization to sustain its role in global governance. These dynamics not only will shape NATO's future operations but also determine its capacity to adapt to evolving conceptions of collective defense and to position itself within a shifting global order (Efstathiou, 2022).

4. The African Union's Peacekeeping Efforts

The AU, established in 2002 as the successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), plays a crucial role in addressing peace and security issues in Africa. The Peace and Security Council (PSC), responsible for conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict reconstruction, oversees the

majority of the AU's peacekeeping operations. While the AU has made significant progress in promoting regional stability, there are numerous significant obstacles to its peacekeeping initiatives, such as persistent underfunding, failure to meet troop commitments, and dependence on the backing and financing of the UNSC (Williams, 2021).

The AU functions under the guidelines of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter and the Constitutive Act of the AU (African Union, 2000), which both empower and constrain its activities. Although the Charter acknowledges the importance of regional arrangements in ensuring peace and security, it mandates that any enforcement measure—especially those involving military interventions—obtain prior approval from the UNSC. This institutional arrangement indicates a structural imbalance between regionalism and global authority. The AU is capable of engaging in activities to maintain peace and security, but its enforcement power remains contingent upon decisions taken by the Security Council. Article 103 of the UN Charter reinforces this hierarchy by stating that obligations under the Charter take precedence over any conflicting obligations arising from other international agreements, further emphasizing the AU's subordinate position under international law (United Nations, 1945).

Building on its institutional mandate, the AU undertook its first major peacekeeping operation in the Darfur region of Sudan, where protracted ethnic violence involving Sudanese government forces had led to widespread displacement of people and significant loss of lives. In response, a joint military and political initiative between the UN and the AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) commenced its operations in 2007. The scope of the mission suffered from chronic underfunding, a shortage of qualified personnel, inadequate logistic support, and, above all, the Sudanese government's persistent resistance to accommodating an international presence. The complexity of the conflict further hindered these peacekeeping efforts (Fabricius, 2022). This experience brought major challenges into light, underscoring insufficient funding to conduct extensive peacekeeping operations on its own. For example, UNAMID at its peak deployed over 26,000 uniformed members and had an annual budget of nearly \$1.4 billion, whereas the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) operated with over 13,000 personnel and an annual budget of about \$1.2 billion (United Nations, 2023). Such figures highlight the significant financial pressure on AU-UN hybrid operations and demonstrate the AU's reliance on ongoing international funding.

Similarly, in response to the escalating Islamist insurgency in the north in 2012, Mali, the AU authorized the African-led International Support Mission (AFISMA). AFISMA was supposed to assist the Malian government in regaining regional control. Despite facing a series of challenges in terms of

military coordination and resource mobilization, the mission was vital in providing support to the country. AFISMA was subsequently integrated into the MINUSMA, authorized by the UNSC, thereby illustrating once again the AU's reliance on the UNSC for both operational support and political legitimacy (Murithi, 2013).

A lesser-known yet instructive case is the International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA), launched by Africans in December 2013. MISCA was established to deal with the escalating violence and state collapse following a coup in the Central African Republic. Although it was hampered by its logistical and funding constraints, MISCA proved to the AU that it can respond in the early stages of complex emergencies. This mission set the stage for an operational advance of the UN-led operation 20 years later and represented a crucial event in the history of AU-UN transitions in peacekeeping. MISCA exemplified the AU's effort to optimize its responses to conflicts despite structural reliance on external global actors (Williams & Boutellis, 2014).

The institutionalization of peacekeeping mechanisms has been extended beyond specific cases, such as Sudan and Mali, to include broader frameworks like the African Standby Force (ASF) and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) (African Union, 2015). These initiatives were designed to enhance the AU's rapid deployment capacity without being wholly dependent on external actors' issues. However, despite the ASF's longstanding planned operation, the ASF's achieving full operational readiness has been hampered due to financial constraints, political divergence among member states, and logistical challenges (Amani Africa, 2025). Although the ASF was involved in some limited field exercises and command post simulations, it has yet to be tested in a full-scale deployment, raising concerns over the AU's ability to conduct an independent, rapid response in complex emergencies.

These constraints highlight the asymmetry in the AU-UN relationship. Despite the AU's growing assertion of regional leadership, its peacekeeping autonomy remains curtailed by the UNSC's overarching authority. Scholars contend that this reliance reflects wider conflicts in global governance, wherein regional entities must navigate a delicate balance between asserting legitimacy and acquiescing operational subservience (Chesterman, 2011).

While the AU is getting progressively engaged in addressing African security affairs, interventions in Sudan and Mali have revealed the AU's boundaries of its participation on the continent. The dependence of AU on external financing and logistical assistance imposes severe limitations on its

independence and the AU's ability to conduct peacekeeping missions independently (African Centre for Strategic Studies, 2023). Furthermore, the AU has suffered challenges in mobilizing adequate troop contributions or logistical support, which tends to result in operational delays and reduced field effectiveness (Williams & Boutellis, 2014).

The AU's relationship with the UNSC remains pivotal to its peacekeeping effectiveness since peacekeeping operations are authorized and funded by the UNSC. Despite the AU's increasing engagement role in conflict management across the continent, its operations consistently require the support of the UNSC. This dependency is starkly revealed in Sudan and Mali cases, where the AU peacekeeping efforts were integrated within UN-led missions, and the UNSC constituted a central part in both the mandate and funding of these missions. Such dynamics have brought questions to the AU's autonomy and its capacity to act independently from external control (Williams, 2021).

UNSC Resolution 2719, adopted in December 2023, set an essential basis under which the UN would directly fund AU peace support operations by administering UN-assessed contributions. This development was a significant milestone in the AU's history and brought international acclaim for African peacekeeping management and the AU's role advancement in global security governance (Security Council Report, 2023). The barriers to maintaining the sustained implementation of AU peace support operations include the demands for accountability and UN standard conformity from other actors, alongside the donor states' political considerations. To consolidate these gains, the AU should adopt measures to enhance its institutional overall transparency and improve its operational planning capability to exploit these advancements (African Centre for Strategic Studies, 2023).

To overcome its institutional limitations, the AU must strengthen its financial and logistical capacities while striving for greater legal clarity and strategic parity in its relationship with the UN. Without such advancements, its ability to respond effectively to future emergencies will remain fundamentally constrained. Despite persistent challenges, particularly in funding, AU peacekeeping missions continue to play a vital role in managing regional conflicts. The organization has shown its abilities in its operations by deploying troops, peacekeeping missions, and post-conflict rebuilding missions. Nevertheless, to establish itself as a legitimate and independent peacekeeping mission, the AU is required to close persistent financial gaps while simultaneously enhancing the processes of troop mobilization and operation planning. Some scholars have argued that unless the relationship between the AU and UN is reformed, the prospect of African-led missions playing a strategic role in leading missions may not materialize, but instead, may continue serving in a subordinate, supportive role

(Yahya, 2022). Building a sustainable peacekeeping capacity will require the AU to develop its peace and security architecture further and secure stronger, more consistent funding for its institutions (Security Council Report, 2023).

5. ASEAN's Role in Regional Security

Founded in 1967, ASEAN has indeed been instrumental in fostering collaboration, peace, and stability in Southeast Asia. Its primary objectives encompass promoting political stability, regional economic integration, and enhancing cooperation among member states. Unlike AU or NATO, ASEAN approaches regional security in a non-interventionist manner. Scholars such as Ba (2009) and Jones & Smith (2007) argue that ASEAN's 'soft institutionalism' contributes to both its resilience and its limited enforcement capacity in security matters. ASEAN's emphasis on diplomacy and consensus rather than coercive measures distinguishes the organization from other players in the international security landscape (Acharya 2014).

Although ASEAN is neither a military alliance akin to NATO nor institutionally embedded within the UN system, it operates under a broader framework of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which encourages regional arrangements for maintaining peace and security. However, ASEAN lacks a formal enforcement mechanism or UN-authorized operations, rendering its engagement more aligned with diplomatic initiatives than with direct conflict resolution (ASEAN, 2008).

ASEAN is heavily involved in the South China Sea disputes, which constitute one of the most controversial maritime areas in the world. The region is subject to several overlapping territorial claims by China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei. The issues between these governments revolve around fishing rights, oil exploration, and military presence. ASEAN has sought to position itself as a broker by facilitating negotiations aimed at preserving peace among the claimant states. The 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) is the cornerstone of these efforts as a major tool in promoting mutual trust and peace among the parties (ASEAN, 2002). While ASEAN's involvement has helped to avert the outright conflict, it has not succeeded in resolving the territorial dispute. Separately, ASEAN's consensus-based strategy has enabled the member states with divergent interests to maintain unity. However, ASEAN has little influence on the most powerful player in the region, China. Despite its involvement in the ASEAN-led dialogues, China has not aspired as actively as it has pursued the forceful measures of militarization and construction of artificial islands in the disputed regions. This illustrates the limits of ASEAN's conflict management when confronted

with assertive great powers with diverging interests from the bloc (Heydarian, 2020).

The 2021 military coup in Myanmar provides another illustrative case of ASEAN's role in regional security. ASEAN's long-standing principle of non-interference has restrained the organization from forging a strong stand against the Myanmar Military Junta. However, ASEAN has tried to mediate between the junta and the opposition groups through the initiation of the Five Point Consensus. Under this agreement, the violence was to stop immediately, humanitarian assistance was going to be provided, and a dialogue process was to be initiated to resolve the crisis peacefully (PeaceRep, 2023). Despite these efforts, the military junta has not been willing to shoulder the agreement, exposing ASEAN's limited leverage within the international community. Critics argue that ASEAN's limited ability to enforce the Five Point Consensus raises concerns about its normative legitimacy and long-term effectiveness (Roberts, 2020). However, ASEAN has not been reluctant in its diplomatic efforts to campaign for peace, even in the toughest situations. Kurlantzick (2022) refers to the organization's actions as a struggle between protecting its fundamental non-interference principle and addressing the internal crises among its member states.

The apparent division within ASEAN over the Myanmar crisis has been widening as Indonesia and Malaysia advocating for more forceful action, and others favour a more diplomatic approach. Additionally, during Indonesia's 2023 chairmanship, the conflict was more commonly articulated as a regional stability issue, prompting a more assertive approach through 'Track 1.5' and 'Track 2' diplomacy. Despite the refusal of Myanmar's military junta to accede to ASEAN's Five Point Consensus, Indonesia's diplomatic response signals an incremental shift in how ASEAN interprets the non-interference norm and implies that the principle might be softening because of the length of continued internal conflict (Olsen, 2023). The Myanmar issue raised a broader question of whether ASEAN's diplomatic credibility can be sustained in the face of repeated failures to influence internal member conflicts. This situation brings a new paradox since ASEAN's dependence on informal diplomacy maintains unity at the cost of losing normative rope at times of imminent crisis, when international institutions such as the UNSC cannot come to its rescue.

ASEAN's engagement in Myanmar, albeit through weak enforcement capacity, reflects a broader trend in which regional institutions have sought greater space to intervene when the UNSC becomes tied by political gridlock. While this is a profound diplomatic function, it also underscores ASEAN's inability to rely on anything but soft tools like consensus and persuasion. This dynamic underscores the level of restrictions that regionalism has in the contemporary international laws since enforcement actions

continue to be subject to authorization by the Security Council under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter (United Nations, 1945). Specifically, Article 103 of the UN Charter strengthens this hierarchy by stating that, if there is a clash between a member state's duties under the Charter and any other international treaty, the duties under the UN Charter take precedence (United Nations, 1945). Scholars have observed that such a legal system reduces regional institutions' standing with moral weight, yet limited operational strength at moments when multilateral action is most urgently required (Chesterman, 2011).

In terms of regional security, the non-interventionist posture of ASEAN has been a strength and a limitation at the same time. On the one hand, its existence has fostered trust and cooperation among its member states, minimizing the possibility of conflicts in the region. At the same time, this principle has hampered ASEAN's performance in taking action in instances of political unrest and violation of human rights. The Myanmar crisis demonstrates how ASEAN's reluctance to intervene directly may undermine the potential of the body to resolve security crises in a timely manner. In responding to the region's increasingly complex regional security threats, ASEAN may need to review its non-interference principles to fit well with the political realities of the 21st century (Acharya, 2014).

Apart from conventional state-based confrontations, ASEAN faces many non-traditional security challenges, such as cybersecurity, sea piracy, climate change, and health emergencies. In response, the organization has implemented mechanisms such as the ASEAN Plan of Action on Cybersecurity Cooperation and expanded the scope of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to include dialogue on disaster response, environmental resilience, and pandemic management. These measures represent a gradual but carefully developed broadening of ASEAN's security agenda to deal with 21st-century threats, even though the implementation is uneven across member states. This raises questions about whether ASEAN's consensus-driven model is agile enough to meet the urgency of such evolving security challenges. Furthermore, the flexibility of operations of ASEAN continues to be defined in its founding ideas enshrined in the ASEAN Charter (ASEAN, 2008) that emphasize the states' sovereignty and non-interference, restricting chances of institutional reform and collective action.

ASEAN's role in providing security in the region has relied on diplomatic approach, consensus, and respecting sovereignty. This approach continues to prevent or contribute to regional stability in occurrences like the South China Sea but has less often worked in responding to acute crises like Myanmar. As ASEAN moves forward, it will have to recalibrate its principles to respond to shifting geopolitical realities whilst maintaining its role as a stabilizing force in Southeast Asia (Heydarian,

2020). To maintain relevance and diplomacy, ASEAN must reconcile its foundational norms with the region's growing demand for more responsive and assertive conflict resolution mechanisms (ASEAN, 2016).

6. Challenges Faced by Regional Organizations

Regional organizations are instrumental in conflict management, peacebuilding, and security issues within their respective regions. These institutions undergo significant obstacles that render them ineffective, including financial limits, intra-organizational fragmentation, and overdependence on the UNSC for legitimacy and funding resources (Roberts, 2020).

A major challenge is the general absence of sustainable financial resources. Both the AU and ASEAN are quite dependent on external funding support from the UN, EU, and the US. This acquires such independent financial mechanisms and limits their ability to engage in long-term peacekeeping missions. The AU is also one example of repeated funding shortfalls in its peacekeeping operations in Darfur and Mali. Yet this reliance on external support is indispensable to the AU, but it undermines its autonomy of action, and above all, delays the ability to take decisive action (Coleman, 2020). Also, member states' domestic economic challenges are reducing their willingness to fund regional initiatives (Williams, 2011).

In addition to financial constraints, regional organizations are increasingly overwhelmed by non-traditional security threats, such as cyberattacks, terrorism, pandemics, and climate-related crises. These transnational challenges often require rapid, specialized responses and cross-sector collaboration, which many regional bodies are not institutionally equipped to deliver. ASEAN, for example, has expanded its agenda to address cyber and health security, yet continues to face resource and coordination barriers (Caballero-Anthony, 2019). Similarly, while the AU recognizes the strategic significance of climate change, its frameworks remain primarily conflict-centered (Aminga & Krampe, 2020). As the nature of regional threats evolves, these gaps in adaptive capacity pose substantial limitations to the effectiveness of regional organizations in the contemporary security governance structure.

In addition to structural and financial limitations, internal political dynamics also obstruct collective action. Furthermore, political fragmentation hinders decision-making processes within regional organizations. The AU and ASEAN are comprised of diverse systems of governance, economic

interests, and even divergent security priorities. Within such a heterogeneous environment, achieving a consensus is a formidable challenge. These differences slow down responses to crises. For instance, the AU has not intervened quickly in the fight in Darfur and South Sudan because of member state political interest resistance (Williams, 2011). Similarly, ASEAN's self-imposed principle of non-interference generates tensions, particularly in relation to the political crisis in Myanmar and competing interests among members in the South China Sea (Roberts, 2020). This lack of cohesion diminishes the credibility and effectiveness of regional organizations.

NATO, though considerably more institutionally developed and better resourced than ASEAN and the AU, is not devoid of challenges. The organization has frequently grappled with internal discords concerning strategic priorities, burden-sharing, and the legitimacy of interventions, particularly those conducted without direct UNSC authorization, such as in Kosovo (Simma, 2002). Divergent positions among member states have often hindered consensus and complicated mission planning or operational adjustments, notably during protracted engagements such as Afghanistan (Efstathiou, 2022). Moreover, NATO's expansion into less conventional domains like cyber defense and hybrid warfare has demanded new forms of coordination and resource commitments that lack uniform support across the alliance (Fiott, 2023). These challenges underscore that even highly capable regional actors like NATO must navigate internal disagreement and ongoing questions of legitimacy.

Compounding internal divisions are external geopolitical pressures that further challenge regional unity. The influence of major power rivalries on regional cohesion and independence is also becoming another growing challenge. The intensifying competition between the world powers like the US, China, and Russia is having an impact on regional organizations, and the pressure in the form of external measures helps deepen the domestic rift. That explains why ASEAN is reluctant to confront China over the South China Sea, and the AU entirely relies on Western and Chinese funding streams that can limit policy autonomy (Roberts & Habir, 2022). External actors often politicize aid, peacekeeping support, or trade deals, thereby hindering consensus and undermining the credibility of these bodies as unbiased and unified players in conflict resolution in the region (Roberts & Habir, 2022).

The reliance on the UNSC for both legitimacy and resources presents a significant impediment. Regional organizations are partitioning and or alleviating conflicts at an increasing rate. Nonetheless, they frequently require approval for coercive measures from the UNSC to operate on an international scale. For instance, UNAMID could not become fully operational without the UNSC mandate (Murithi, 2013). Similarly, the AFISMA was put under a UN peacekeeping operation after a resolution was

passed (Chesterman, 2008). This dependence hampers the freedom and flexibility of regional organizations to act decisively and execute them in a timely fashion, especially when the scope of the UNSC is divided or in a stalemate due to the vetoing of the permanent members (Zyberi, 2020).

The absence of a robust cooperation mechanism between the UNSC and the regional organizations complicates coordination in conflict responses. While the UNSC plays a pivotal role in authorizing peacekeeping missions, it refrains from delegating authority to regional organizations due to concerns regarding their capability and impartiality (Gartner, 2020). This hesitation leads to delays and inefficiencies in addressing regional emergencies.

Regional organizations continue to endure persistent challenges stemming from financial constraints, internal fragmentation, and overdependence on the UNSC. Enhancing their effectiveness requires reforms that strengthen their fiscal autonomy, build political cohesion among member states, and foster institutional engagement with the UNSC. Advancing these areas is critical not only to their credibility as security actors but also to the development of a more balanced and responsive global security architecture (Coleman, 2020).

7. The Future of Regional Organizations in Global Governance

Regional institutions such as the AU, ASEAN, and NATO are crucial to international governance as the complexity of the world's problems increases. Their capacity to improve legitimacy, adapt to emerging security concerns, and collaborate with different actors and organizations, such as the UNSC, will shape their future roles. To increase their efficacy internally and concerning other international institutions, several significant reforms are required (Roberts & Habir, 2022).

A primary challenge for regional organizations is their limited financial capacity. For example, both the AU and ASEAN members have funding constraints that delay peacekeeping operations and economic limitations restrict the progress of any security initiative (Murithi, 2013). Addressing these shortcomings requires more solid funding mechanisms, such as contributions of member states, as well as the partnership of the private sector and international financial institutions. Therefore, enhanced harmony in resource-sharing, like the one between the AU and the EU model, offers a pathway to decrease the dependency on external donors as well as to increase the independent functioning of organizations (African Union, 2025; Williams, 2011).

Another major challenge concerns the process of decision-making in regional organizations. Many organizations, including ASEAN, suffer internal challenges that obstruct their ability to take decisive measures. ASEAN faces limitations in crisis intervention under its non-interference principle because the member states pursue different interests in both Myanmar's political turmoil and the South China Sea disputes (Acharya, 2014). Similarly, diverse member priorities within the AU complicate its peacekeeping operations in comparable ways. To improve decision-making, regional organizations need to speed up their decision processes by creating precise guidelines for interventions. In the case of AU, reforms to the Peace and Security Council could foster rapid decision-making and provide sharper intervention mandates by relaxing the current unanimity requirement (Murithi, 2013).

Another persistent challenge for regional organizations is their dependence on the UNSC for mandates and legitimacy in responding to crises. A viable approach to this obstacle is for regional groups to explore whether it is possible to run independently while remaining aligned with the UNSC's endeavor to maintain global peace and security. This balance is governed by Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which authorizes regional arrangements to act in matters of peace and security while requiring the Security Council's authorization for enforcement measures (United Nations, 1945). Despite the UN peacekeeping reforms, the AU's relations with the UNSC increased its influence in the Sudanese war. That would allow regional groups to undertake action with some funding and credibility from the UN. Such clearer cooperation procedures would permit autonomous regional players to act unilaterally, conforming to the rules on human rights and international law (Simma, 2002). In situations where the UNSC is deadlocked, regional responses may still gain international legitimacy when seen as necessary and effective in addressing urgent crises (Zyberi, 2020).

Evolving international security threats compel regional organizations to adapt to a new spectrum of challenges, including cybersecurity, climate change, and terrorism, among other issues. Cybersecurity, for instance, is prioritized by NATO, which helps to highlight the fact that contemporary conflicts extend beyond conventional warfare, and hence organizations began to identify the new form of conflict (Koblentz, 2017). This change is part of the overall evolution of NATO as an organization that focuses not only on conventional threats but also on emergent ones (Fiott, 2023). Moreover, as Browning (2015) suggested, the growing importance of the role of climate-related security threats, such as those related to connections between climate change and conflict in the Sahel, highlights that regional bodies need to expand their security conceptions. To tackle regional security issues, regional entities need to create an all-encompassing strategy that combines reactions to both traditional and non-traditional threats, enhances intersectoral collaboration, and boosts their ability to handle new

challenges (Browning, 2015).

Reforms that respond to evolving security dynamics are essential for regional organizations to survive in the international system of global governance. Enhancing the efficiency of regional organizations in addressing global challenges necessitates modifications in financial viability, decision-making processes, cooperation with the UNSC, and adaptations to new security threats. Simultaneously, these reforms must preserve alignment with international norms and maintain robust multilateral accountability to prevent unilateral overreach (Simma, 2002). Since the global system continues to become more complexly interdependent, it will be imperative to incorporate regional organizations into the larger authorities of worldwide governance (Murithi, 2013).

8. Conclusion

The commitment to global security governance has undergone significant changes in recent years, particularly regarding security challenges that extend beyond the UNSC and are tackled by regional bodies like NATO, the AU, and ASEAN. This article has examined how regional organizations are increasingly complementing—and at times compensating for—the limitations of the UNSC in global security governance. While these institutions have demonstrated the capacity to act where the UNSC is constrained, their effectiveness remains limited. In this regard, enormous budgetary constraints, political fragmentation, and the consistent need for UNSC legitimacy and support are required to make such forces effective.

These setbacks, nevertheless, have not prevented regional organizations from demonstrating their utility in dealing with critical global security issues. NATO security operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan, the AU in Sudan and Mali, and ASEAN in the South China Sea and Myanmar are just indicators of the rising prominence of regional actors as providers of peace and stability. However, the success of these agencies largely depends on their ability to be innovative and adapt to the evolving global security landscape. This analysis sought to answer whether regional organizations can meaningfully supplement or compensate for the UNSC inaction; the evidence suggests that while they cannot replace the UNSC, they are indispensable partners in maintaining global peace and security. These findings are further supported by the cases examined in this study. The AU's operations in Darfur and Mali were frequently delayed and undermined due to insufficient and unsustainable funding, reflecting the organization's reliance on external donors and its limited logistical autonomy. In the case of ASEAN, the failure to implement its Five-Point Consensus in Myanmar highlights the bloc's

inability to act decisively in the absence of enforcement mechanisms and its continued adherence to the principle of non-interference. NATO, although more advanced institutionally, has faced internal disagreements over strategic priorities during long-term missions such as in Afghanistan, and its intervention in Kosovo without UNSC authorization has raised questions regarding legitimacy. These instances demonstrate that, although regional organizations have gained significance and have intervened when the UNSC cannot act, they still encounter essential limitations concerning political unity, financial autonomy, and legal clarity within international law. Even though they function in various regions and under unique institutional frameworks, the AU, ASEAN, and NATO all represent the wider trend of regional organizations assuming responsibilities typically designated for the UNSC, often lacking the complete legal, financial, or political backing necessary for enduring efficacy.

Regional organizations need to solve critical key hurdles to realize their full potential. Organizations such as AU and ASEAN need to create self-sustainable funding structures to reduce dependence on the UNSC and external donors, since financial independence stands as an essential requirement for operational effectiveness. Additionally, organizations must look for ways to develop effective internal processing methods that ensure quick and decisive decision-making capabilities guide their actions. The non-interference principle within ASEAN requires reevaluation, given modern political scenarios across the 21st century.

Furthermore, it is necessary for regional organizations to enjoy a closer link with the UNSC. While regional organizations are increasingly leading in peacekeeping and conflict resolution, the UNSC cannot be completely supplanted by regional organizations in global security. Coordination on complex emergencies that require fast and coordinated actions could be improved if a more formal and structured partnership existed between the two. The status of regional organizations under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter should be clarified to define both the responsibilities and legal constraints of these organizations, particularly when UNSC authorization is absent or delayed. By working closely, they can strengthen the global security stage formed by regional organizations and the UNSC. Recent developments, such as the adaptation of UNSC Resolution 2719 (2023), which established a reliable and sustainable funding source for AU-led peace operations via UN-assessed contributions, represent a significant milestone in formalizing cooperation between the region and the UN system, while providing an additional legal foundation for regional UN engagement.

As part of future reflection, regional organizations should be ready to confront emerging and new security challenges, including cybersecurity, climate change, and terrorism. The emphasis on cyber

defense in the activities of NATO and the growing concern about security threats associated with the climatic conditions and trends in the AU illustrate how the organizations adapt to deal with the modern realities. The regional bodies must continue to strengthen their security architectures to remain relevance, expand their expertise, and collaborate more with international agencies like the UNSC. This study contributes to a better understanding of regional dynamics influencing the emerging structure of international peace and security through combining the comparative analysis of the AU, ASEAN, and NATO. Though NATO currently manifests the possibility of high-impact operations regardless of a UNSC mandate, AU demonstrates the prospect of regional ownership constrained by resource limitations, and ASEAN reflects exclusivity as rotating around diplomacy directed by endogenous rules and norms: the mixed exemplars represent the various avenues regional bodies take to fill the gap when the UNSC fails to take action.

Finally, the future of global security governance substantially depends on enhancing the contribution of regional organizations to global security governance via reform efforts involving financial independence of the organization, effectiveness of the decision-making process, and increased involvement and engagement with the UNSC. By adapting to emerging security threats and aligning more cooperatively and consistently with the broader global institutions, regional organizations can assume a central role in the development of peace, stability, and security, and contribute meaningfully to an increasingly interconnected world. Regional organizations can only realize this potential of being the essential foundations of a more responsive and inclusive global security order through sincere reform and enhanced multilateral synergy.

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