



The Angolan Armed Forces and the African Peace and Security Architecture

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Abstract

Angola's involvement in the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is an example of a rising regional power searching for strategic affirmation. Through a participatory, influential and engaging foreign policy, Angola is committed to a strategic balance in which the Armed Forces (FAA) are an instrument of both military cooperation and conflict resolution within Angola's area of interest. This article seeks to demystify this paradigm and to reflect upon Angola's potential interests behind its participation in the APSA's framework. While being strategic to the development and affirmation of Angola's military capabilities, the APSA also enables the FAA to function as a mechanism for the assertion of the country's foreign policy at the regional and continental level. These dynamics are all the more relevant in a context where Luanda holds a non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council.

"It is equally significant that Angola responded to its post-conflict internal challenges of reconstruction by looking abroad."

Assis Malaquias (2011: 17)

Introduction

The post-independence conflict in Angola was one of the most violent in the African continent and echoed the main arguments then put forward as endogenous factors behind intra-state conflict in sub-Saharan Africa. It was only after the signing of the Luena Agreement, on 4 April 2002 – which established peace in Angola –, that the country managed to enter the path to development. The Angolan armed forces played a major role in national reconstruction and in asserting state sovereignty, in particular by providing support for national development and domestic and border security. In addition, the armed forces became a key element of Angola's

foreign policy, especially through their involvement in regional conflict prevention systems and, when necessary, by acting almost instinctively in order to protect and secure national interests at the regional and continental level (Messiant 2008: 367-370).

In this context, the Angolan armed forces have been endeavoring to improve security in the sub-Saharan region, since reinforcing external security contributes to strengthen domestic security, especially in terms of border control and maritime defense. These aspects are reflected in the documents that served as theoretical and conceptual basis for the 2003 Strategic Concept of National Security and Defense,¹ considered the cornerstone to the development of the capabilities of the ‘new’ armed and security forces. The political and strategic orientations of these ‘new’ forces point to a greater degree of participation in regional security over the coming years.² This, we believe, will boost Angola’s position at the regional level and position its armed forces not only as an active part of national foreign policy, but also as a structural mechanism allowing for greater external action and projection by the Angolan state, therefore serving Luanda’s security-related objectives, as well as the country’s development and affirmation in the sub-Saharan region (Júnior 2003: 110-111).

This article analyses Angola’s involvement in the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and seeks to answer the question: ‘How important is Angola’s presence in the African Regional Security Architecture?’ We address Angola’s foreign policy towards the African regional organizations where it is represented, identify the country’s main contributions to regional and continental security and defense, and consider participation scenarios and possible strategies to strengthen Angola’s role in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Angola’s perspective on defense and security, and its insertion in regional defense areas

The creation of a single Army and the politico-military tribulation that followed the 1992 elections hampered the materialization of what was set out in the 1991 Bicesse Accords, pursuant to which the then contending forces – Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola (FAPLA) and Forças Armadas de Libertação de Angola (FALA) – merged into a single national army. The failure to materialize that merger paved the way for one of the most difficult periods in the country’s recent history. However, the signing of the “Luena Memorandum of Understanding” on 4 April 2002 would finally mark an end to the fratricidal war in Angola. From there on a new course was set for the country’s edification and peacebuilding, strengthening the capabilities and *esprit de corps* of the FAA. Additionally, the Angolan military’s mission became constitutionally established under Article 207 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Angola and replicated in the National Defense and Armed Forces Act – Act

¹ Reviewed the 1993 Strategic Concept and Law 2/93 of 26 March, otherwise known as the National Defence and Armed Forces Law

² Participation in UN peacekeeping missions and presence in future military exercises – SADC and ECCAS regions, Gulf of Guinea, and others.

No. 2/93 of 26 March –, which was reviewed in 2012. (Leão and Rupiya 2005: 3-11, Júnior 2003: 23-24).

This framework reinforced the notion that security and stability in Angola are currently linked to a multiplicity of non-conventional, transnational and persistent threats and risks that pose tangible threats to national and regional security. At the international level, those relate to organized crime, terrorism, politico-religious fundamentalism, the issue of arms proliferation and environmental hazards, humanitarian catastrophes and pandemics that threaten the lives of millions of human beings in Africa. At the level of the state, those are the emergence of failed-states and the multiplication of violent conflicts and civil-wars, the likes of which have become widespread and constitute, directly and indirectly, threats to regional security and stability. The need to counter these threats and risks led to the direct involvement of the Angolan state and the FAA in Guinea-Bissau, through the creation of the Angolan technical-military mission in Guinea Bissau (MISSANG-GB), whose goal was to contribute to SSR and DDR in the country. Also worth highlighting is Angola's recent role in promoting security and stability in the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

In this context, the concept of security appears to have gone through two fundamental changes: first, security does not focus exclusively on the classic state security concept, as it also encompasses human security. Secondly, risks, threats and transnational conflicts must be essentially answered on the basis of regional or international cooperation, since it is in a cooperative and collective security framework that remedies to state weaknesses and frailties should be sought after. Therefore, in order to face the present international security scene, national defense policies, as well as security and defense instruments, have to develop more adequate responses. Additionally, national defense should have as fundamental objectives not only the competence to ensure the security of the state and that of its citizens, but also the ability to project security abroad and strengthen cooperation within the framework of existing systems of alliances in order to promote internal and regional security and peace.

The fundamental objectives of Angola's defense policy are “to guarantee the defense of national sovereignty and independence, territorial integrity and constitutional powers and, through these, law and order, ensuring the freedom and security of the population against acts of aggression and any other type of external or internal threat and the development of missions in the public interest, under the terms of the Constitution and the law,” as set out in Article 207 of the Constitution of the Republic of Angola. Thus, as we have seen, the current international security context and the appropriate response by national defense policies suggest that a broader and shared notion of security will arise in the future, as well as the adoption of a more integrated and multidimensional strategy in terms of security policies. As a matter of fact, that is already reflected in the FAA's strategic and operational doctrine, definition of command and control structures and, consequentially, in its missions.

In the legislative field, apart from traditional missions, the FAA is tasked with participating in international missions, namely in collective defense systems, and will tend to participate in foreign policy support missions, notably through its integration in crisis management structures,

humanitarian missions and peacekeeping operations, within the framework of the organizations in which Angola is a member and that of the ‘Africanist’ dimension of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP).

The FAA assumes its constitutional responsibilities when performing missions against transnational aggressions and threats in accordance with the law and in coordination with internal instruments, namely security forces and services, and strategic intelligence systems. The FAA carries out a variety of missions, such as of public interest, search and rescue, maritime surveillance, and population support, especially in terms of demining, support for public provision and in cases of natural catastrophes and pandemics. The FAA does so while acting in a supplementary and complementary manner regarding Angola’s National Civil Protection Service. The FAA is also committed to protection and security programs – such as crisis management – with Member States of regional organizations to which Angola belongs.

Seeking to adapt the Armed Forces to modern times and 21st Century transnational challenges, regional military intervention is being defined as a strategic vector of Angola’s National Defense Policy. With that purpose in mind, and also aiming to modernize, operationalize and insert the FAA into the regional context, the following lines of action were created:

- Consolidate and sustain a professionalization model for the Armed Forces, while guaranteeing its sustainability based on professional and qualified human resources, as well as aiming at making the operational experience appealing and ensuring that it contributes to the FAA’s operability;
- Modernize equipment and infrastructures, so that it contributes to greater interoperability and adaptation to new missions, needs and demands, namely in terms of its participation in international military missions. With that in mind, the priority is to review the National Defense Strategic Concept and the Armed Forces and National Defense Law, towards attaining a greater degree of regional intervention within the context of regional and international organizations;
- Restructure the upper echelons of national defense and complete legislation reforms in the area of defense, thereby valorizing the military condition and contributing to the professionalization of the FAA;
- Dignify the military function, by recognizing and valorizing the military profession within the framework of the state, and encouraging the FAA to participate in missions – in financial and prestige terms;
- Ensure the sustainability of the national defense budget so as to determine a budgetary policy that guarantees a sustained investment in defense and armed forces, in order to abide by the state’s international commitments;
- Develop tactics, techniques and procedures, while integrating doctrines in line with the regional contexts where the military are inserted, namely within the framework of peacekeeping missions and crisis-response operations;

- Occupy military posts in the structures of African regional organizations, allowing for greater interaction and to follow closely developments in matters pertaining to regional defense and security;
- Support staff training and provide them with capabilities to develop military staff, observer or military advisor functions, in the context of regional military alliances and within the framework of the UN;

National defense aims to protect national citizens inside and outside national territory, and contributes to the security and well-being of the population, which implies investing in greater credibility and scope of action of its military component, the Armed Forces. Given the fact that it is a transversal policy, national defense should have a comprehensive and permanent nature, and be executed whenever and wherever the interests of the state need to be protected. This should be done by integrating military and non-military components in a unique synergy working in favor of the state and the nation.

In the internal sphere, the FAA increasingly participates in missions of public interest, acting with greater proximity to citizens. In other words, by applying its capabilities, the FAA add value to their presence across the territory, promoting a closer and mutually beneficial relationship with the population. Being an active instrument of national policy, the FAA increase the potential of the state's governability, represent one of the main vectors of Angola's foreign policy, constitute a deterrence factor toward possible external aggressions and threats to air and maritime territory, and safeguard international communication lines crossing sovereign territory.

Angola's contributions to regional peace and security

Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations confers "on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security", and establishes that, in order to achieve those goals, it shall forge necessary strategic partnerships with other international and regional organizations. In this context, by securing a non-permanent seat in the United National Security Council for the 2015/2017 biennium, Angola has a "moral obligation" to contribute and think security as a global actor. This can be translated into a future increase of Angola's activities and participation in UN peacekeeping missions, primarily in Africa but also in other world regions.

In line with this paradigm, and having as a main objective to promote stability and progress in the African continent, African heads of state and government established the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). At the heart of the APSA is the Peace and Security Council (PSC) which, under the 2002 Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, is defined "as a standing decision-making organ for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts" that operates at the regional level to promote peace, security and stability in the continent. The protocol also established the African Standby Force (ASF), the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the Panel of the Wise and the Peace Fund as the main pillars of the African collective security strategy (Cillier:2005:6-12). Within

the framework of this mechanism, the operational structure designed to support peace operations is the ASF, which is made of five brigades, one in each of Africa's regional blocs, and composed of multidisciplinary civilian, police and military components. The May 2003 Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and the Military Staff Committee guides ASF's actions and readiness, while seeking to acquire capabilities in order for the ASF to be able to participate in missions mandated by the UN, AU or regional organizations, and thus to promote regional security.

Although the FAA's mission is primarily to protect national interests, they also participate in military campaigns beyond Angola's borders whenever it is required and politically defined by the executive. Coupled with the way in which it sought to contribute to internal conflict resolution in Guinea-Bissau and the DRC, the FAA's wide scope of action has allowed it to earn some degree of regional and international prestige. Angola should seek to maintain and consolidate this prestige, especially through further participation in regional peace and security mechanisms it subscribed to, in part because unilateral, ad-hoc interventions have a lesser political and strategic impact at the regional level, while being often negative for the state.

As an AU Member State and part of regional economic communities, the Republic of Angola has an 'obligation' to contribute to the ASF with a battalion. Moreover, Angola became responsible for establishing a center of excellence for tactical level training, as a result of commitments undertaken with ECCAS. This center may allow for the projection of Angola's armed forces as a regional security-provider. In terms of preparedness, we can see that the FAA have been actively participating in these regional commitments, operating on the basis of either the UN or AU's doctrine, with the objective of integrating and deploying within the framework of the regional ASF. This, in turn, implies having its own consolidated national doctrine and conducting operational training and exercises, whereby it can create and develop capabilities for the joint deployment of an African task-force. In fact, Angola and its armed forces have been developing this aspect within the regional dimension.

Meanwhile, in order to operationalize this objective, the FAA created two training centers in the field of peace operations: the Strategic-Operational Center (Núcleo Estratégico-Operacional), in Luanda's War College (Escola Superior de Guerra), and an additional one focused on tactical level training that operates out of the Peace Operations Instruction Center (Centro de Instrução de Operações de Paz), or CIOP – affiliated to the Special Forces Brigade –, in Cabo Ledo. The latter, which is tasked with supplying forces to peacekeeping missions, has already prepared a group of military observers and, in 2010, initiated the tactical preparation phase of the infantry battalion deployed in Guinea-Bissau in 2011, as well as that of the forces mobilized to the AU's ASF, in 2014.

The Special Forces Instruction Centre (CIFE) of the FAA, which shares its location with CIOP, regards peace operations as highly complex operations, given their specificity, multitude of scenarios and multinational nature. Therefore, and in order to be able to respond to the various scenarios, such operations require committed, flexible and apt forces, a good level of technical and tactic preparedness, and an elevated moral and mental state, something which can only be

attained with intensive training. CIOP's structures are still functioning and were recently bolstered with more instructors, in virtue of them being allocated to the College, rather than to the 1st Motorized Infantry Brigade, in Vale Paraíso. CIOP has continued its mission of providing training and education in the field of peace operations to military units and civilians, nationals or foreigners (Bernardino 2013: 312-324).

In 2011, an organic unit dedicated to Peace Support Operations (PSO) was created within the Operations Directorate of the General Staff of Armed Forces (Estado-Maior General das Forças Armadas, EMGFAA). The unit's mission is to form a new structure for CIOP and its organizational framework – functionally linked to the new unit –, and define the two fundamental areas of peace operations – operational and training. In fact, recent projects in this field have already been developed in accordance with the new model, especially in terms of coordination with the new unit, as was the case with the preparation of the forces deployed under MISSANG-GB. As a result of this evolution, CIOP is hierarchically dependent of the Army Chief of Staff, while being functionally dependent of the Operations Directorate and maintaining a technical dependence on the Main Directorate for Preparation of Troops and Teaching (Direção Principal de Preparação de Tropas e Ensino). As such, and because the FAA felt the need for a body responsible for training in close conjunction with the operational field, studies were elaborated regarding the possible future location of CIOP (or a similar body with a different designation).

As per AU's strategic parameters, and following a period in which Angola focused on consolidating internal peace, rebuilding the country, and adapting defense and security structures, the FAA started to develop its presence in regional organizations by participating in operational exercises in the context of peace operations within the framework of the UN and/or the AU. This, in turn, paves the way for Angola's police and military forces to begin integrating peace missions in Africa in the short term. However, in our opinion, the current African and regional security dynamics require greater proactivity and pragmatism on the part of Angola. In other words, the country's presence in regional African organizations will, in the future, imply a greater level of military intervention within the purview of Angola's defense and foreign policy, suggesting a growing participation in the region and increased relevance of the FAA within the APSA framework.³

³ The AU intends to create a standby military force, i.e., a force ready for rapid deployment at appropriate notice in any crisis-hit theatre. This is contingent upon the availability of military forces with high levels of operational readiness, as well as prepared and trained for these type of scenarios and missions. The Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and the Military Staff Committee shows that the military, police and civilian components must be self-sustaining during the initial phase of operations and have the capabilities to guarantee the fulfilment of missions until logistic channels are established and supplies by the UN, the AU or a nation, are secured. The degree of logistical autonomy means that troops must be independent from any external support for a minimal period of 30 to 50 days, which in turn means that countries contributing with forces must be prepared to sustain their units with their own resources, from the moment they enter the theatre of operations until the logistics system is established by the framework nation or organization responsible for logistical support.

As for the FAA's military exercises, article 14 of the protocol relating to the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX) – ECCAS' peace and security consultative body –, bestows on the Council of Ministers of Defense and Security the competence to organize and plan regional military exercises. In doing so, ECCAS is responding to the capacity development needs of the Central African Multinational Force regarding peacekeeping operations, on the basis of international law and regional security cooperation and partnership. In this framework, FAA's participation in exercise Kwanza enables interoperability of military systems and contributes to its projection as a leader in this setting, as demonstrated by the opinion of Angolan officials interviewed during the exercise, which was carried out in the Angolan region of Cabo Ledo (Bernardino 2013: 389-395).

Regarding SADC, the regional Standby Brigade – of which Angola is part – was established in 17 August 2007, during the organization's Summit of Heads of State and Government, in Lusaka. It has made considerable progress in terms of the organization and participation of Member States in military exercises directed at peacekeeping operations. The Southern African Development Community Brigade (SADCBRIG) was established to conduct observation and monitoring missions, intervene in a Member State – in order to restore peace and security, and prevent a crisis or conflict from aggravating and spreading to neighboring regions or countries – and carry out post-conflict disarmament and demobilization missions, among others. SADCBRIG is made up of military, police and civilian members from SADC Member States, totaling around 6000, with the aim of sharing the security burden in the region and contributing to progress, security and well-being of the population.

In these circumstances, regional integration will, on the one hand, constitute an instrument of crucial importance to develop and strengthen economic interdependence between SADC Member States, thus promoting greater economic growth. On the other hand, it will become a means to ensure the participation of countries in the development of regional security. As such, educational activities and operational training have taken place at the brigade level, and Angola has actively participated, such as in the military exercises Dolphin, Tokghamo and Blue Angel – the latter focused on the air component and intra-regional strategic transport.

MedFlag exercises, carried out together with U.S. Armed Forces, intend to provide support to populations, while also having a direct impact on the preparation of military staff and on their interaction with civilian organizations ready to act in contexts of crisis, conflict or war. This, in turn, requires training, organization and planning in times of peace, so as to better understand how prepared these organizations are in the face of conflicts, which can be extremely valuable in situations of national need, such as natural catastrophes and pandemics. Therefore, Medflag represents a significant step towards the new role the FAA will play in the Angolan society in times of peace and also in helping to rebuild the country. This exercise aims at providing joint-combined medical training and humanitarian assistance, and involves the joint participation of Special Forces (commandos and marines) – including Angolan Navy divers, and U.S. AFRICOM medical teams and Navy units.

Strategic aspects of Angola's involvement in the African peace and security architecture

Global conflicts, especially in the sub-Saharan region, are frequently the subject of academic reflection and specialized geopolitical analyses. In this setting, it is generally accepted that regional African organizations have been the principal agents of development, security and regional defense in the continent. Nonetheless, the establishment of the APSA is a rather different approach to that pursued in Africa in the 20th century, especially in regards to the introduction of proactive mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of regional conflicts. This becomes all the more relevant when considering that in an increasingly globalized world, insecurity and underdevelopment in Africa affect global stability and security, sending shockwaves across different geopolitical regions.

Furthermore, the establishment of the APSA constitutes a 'Pan-Africanization' of the security sector. In other words, the APSA covers the entire continent by operating at the regional and sub-regional level, while promoting politico-strategic cooperation between states and organizations with the ultimate goal of improving people's living standards.

In their area of intervention, regional organizations are responsible for the security of Member States and conflict prevention – the latter being also represented in the Early Warning System –, thereby placing them at the center of the regional and continental security context. These organizations are thus the focal points and main interlocutors for strategic cooperation policies regarding security in Africa. In this framework, the AU has assumed a more intervention-oriented nature, in contrast to its ineffective predecessor. The continent-wide organization has set up structures and mechanisms directed at ensuring an appropriate level of success in the management of regional conflicts, and is now the axis for security and defense cooperation strategies in Africa.

CEWS connects units that monitor tense situations in the field to other sub-regional mechanisms, which in turn are linked to supranational politico-strategic decision centers. This mechanism provides an opportunity for Angola to project itself in the context of cooperation for peace in the sub-Saharan region, in particular by helping to establish situation centers and exchange strategic information within the interregional network of operations. Although the CEWS network is not yet complete, it is intended to become the most reliable indicator for assessing threat levels and regional conflicts. CEWS ability to monitor developments in emerging crisis makes Angola's involvement more of a necessity, rather than a priority. In fact, not only will it help guarantee the country's own security and that of the region, but also enable it to influence the level of conflict in Africa.

At a time when peace and security are strategic priorities for Africa – since security and development are closely linked –, the implementation of conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, and notably the establishment of the African Standby Brigades, become strategic priorities in which Angola can play an important role. Angola has actively participated in SADC and ECCAS, thus creating an ambivalence and apparent vagueness in its foreign policy's strategic line of action, which has nevertheless served it well, namely in terms of enabling it to

define regional priorities and, as such, to assert the potential of its military. Far from being a problem, this is an articulated solution for Angola's internal security and defense dilemmas – such as border control, especially in the north and east, but also in the south –, and provides an opportunity to develop itself as a multi-faceted regional power. By acting simultaneously on both regions, Angola is faced with a number of opportunities that the FAA are preparing to absorb into their capability-development strategies, thus contributing to project the country as a rising regional power (Almeida 2011: 170-171).

As a member of two different sub-regional organizations, Angola is sustaining a structured and strategically useful dichotomy that, in terms of regional security, is designed to contribute to a better and clearer definition of its regional foreign policy. Where SADC is concerned, Angola appears to be focusing on a greater level of commitment and political and diplomatic visibility in the context of post-2013 relations with Jacob Zuma and South Africa. In fact, Angola has participated in, and directed resources to, SADCBRIG's regular operational maneuvers. The Dolphin military exercise, which is SADC's biggest, includes elements of the Angolan armed forces and national police, as well as some civilians, and is designed to train the participants for humanitarian intervention in emergency situations. The Blue Zambezi military exercise aims at developing capabilities for airborne insertion of human and material resources into the region. This exercise, which essentially involves the air forces of SADC Member States, has counted on the active participation of Angola. An example of Angola's active engagement was the military exercise it organized in Cabo Ledo, in 2012, and which was praised by the international community.

In late 2007, Angola also helped prepare and implement a Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of SADCBRIG. The memorandum represented a significant step in the introduction of this regional prevention and security mechanism, and also in supporting the establishment of the SADC Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre in Harare, Zimbabwe. The center has administered a substantial amount of training courses on peacekeeping operations for members of the region's armed forces, including those from Angola.

Furthermore, it is worth looking at Angola's military capabilities. According to 2015 data in *The Military Balance*, an annual publication by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), the Angolan armed forces – which have been under a politically-oriented restructuring since 2007 – currently comprise around 107,000 personnel, of which 100,000 are in the Army (93%), 6,000 in the Air Force (6%) and 1,000 in the Navy (1%), plus 10,000 paramilitary elements. Regarding weaponry, the Angolan armed forces are equipped with material from different sources, most of it of Russian, Cuban and Chinese origin, acquired during the war between MPLA and UNITA. The Army has 300 armored vehicles (Soviet T-54s, T-55s, T-62s and T-72s), more than 1,000 reconnaissance and combat vehicles, and light infantry personnel carriers, and 1,400-plus artillery pieces of different origins, calibers and operability, as well as anti-tank and air-defense systems.

The publication also notes that the Angolan Navy has 22 ocean patrol vessels, plus amphibious vehicles, a small navy's aviation contingent and an equally small but growing force

of marines. This shortfall is one of Angola's main weaknesses in terms of maritime security capability, considering the vast maritime and coastal area over which it is the sovereign power.

The Angolan Air Force is relatively powerful when considering the general capabilities in the sub-Saharan region. It has 83 fighter aircrafts and 104 attack, multirole and transport helicopters, most of Soviet origin. While this provides the Air Force with a good strategic capability for intra-theatre transport and support for ground maneuvers and maritime operations, it is also strategically relevant in the current context of regional national armed forces, constituting an important contribution to the APSA. Such capabilities are clearly visible in Angola's participation in recent regional military exercises, such as the SADC's Dolphin and Blue Zambezi exercises, and the ECCAS' Kwanza exercise, not to mention the FELINO military exercise, conducted by the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP) – the 2011 exercise took place in Angola.

While the Angolan armed forces are still being consolidated and restructured, their naval capability is considerably small at present. Therefore, it becomes necessary to boost development and investment in new equipment and specialized crew training, so as to find a workable balance between operability and representation among regional armed forces. Doing so is a wager on the future, since security and defense are three-dimensional – army, navy and air force – and vital for Angola's vast maritime region.

The land component, the Army, seems to have surplus personnel and a number of problems in terms of equipment and training. It would be advisable to reduce and optimize resources in order to guarantee less but better equipment, thereby improving operability. Furthermore, the Angolan Air Force has a considerable degree of capability in regional terms. Pilots and support personnel have been trained in a number of countries, which has contributed to maintain an appropriate level of proficiency and enable deployment in the African theatre of operations, namely within the context of African regional organizations. Being an important asset in the regional context, Angola has to make the most out of its Air Force in the near future, if it is to affirm itself as a key African security-provider.

The Angolan armed forces have been undergoing restructuring and resizing since 2007 and are preparing to take on new challenges, something which will not only reinforce Angola's internal security and defense responsibilities, but also assert the FAA as an active player of the country's foreign policy for the sub-Saharan region and Africa as a whole.

Angola's strategy in SADC

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is a sub-regional economic organization officially founded at the Southern African Development Coordination Conference held in 1980 by the so-called front-line countries – Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia, later joined by South Africa and Zimbabwe in 1994. The name was changed in 1992 to the present denomination – SADC – and the Member States were merged into a regional common market confined to Southern Africa. In terms of cooperation in the area of defense, in mid-2001 SADC established a Protocol on Politics, Defense and Security, which would serve as a tool for

dealing with political, defense and security challenges in the region. In addition, the Inter-State Defense and Security Committee, consisting of the Ministers of Defense from each Member State, was set up with the purpose of contributing to greater regional security.

The establishment of the Mutual Defense Pact, in 2003, and the strategic decision to set up the SADC Standby Force Brigade (SADCBRIG) – in which Angola has played an active role since its inception – represent two particularly significant developments in terms of activities pertaining to regional security. In 2004, SADC adopted its Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ on Defense, Politics and Security (SIPO), which was aimed at identifying the organization's main security and defense weaknesses, and resulted in some corrective measures being proposed. SIPO set up two bodies for that purpose: the Interstate, Politics and Diplomacy Committee, comprising Ministers of Foreign Affairs; and the Interstate Defense and Security Committee, made up of the Ministers of Defense, Public and State Security.

Today, SADC is a sub-regional organization containing a vast number of programs associated with development support, security and defense. The integration of security and sustainable development strategies in the region has facilitated consistent economic growth and improvements in regional security – mostly due to the economic and financial success of South Africa and Angola, despite recent setbacks –, transforming SADC into a highly successful regional organization in Africa.

As we have seen, the Dolphin series of military exercises has allowed for the use of military, police and civilian forces, as well as resources, in operational training activities, in order to foment greater interoperability between the contingents of Member States in the SADCBRIG. Angola has devoted particular attention to this aspect, as demonstrated in recent years by its growing commitment to regional dynamics, namely Angola's participation in the SADCBRIG and involvement in joint and combined military exercises.

If we compare the main capabilities of SADC Member States' armed forces, we find that Angola is not in a superior position. In fact, the region's military power is South Africa. The figures may be misleading, however, as we must not forget South Africa's economic capacity in terms of GDP, which reflects on its financial and industrial capability, population, education, and growing armaments and defense industry. That alone gives South Africa a clear advantage over any other country in the organization. Nonetheless, when compared to SADC's other members – excluding South Africa –, Angola's armed forces have higher combat potential in all branches (land, air and sea), notably in terms of its army component.

On the other hand, the Angolan Air Force's fighter and transport aircrafts and helicopters provide a clear quantitative and qualitative advantage, only surpassed by the South African Air Force and equaled by that of the DRC. SADC countries' naval component is very small and the Angolan Navy is within the average of most countries in the region that possess a navy and/or coastguard (Idem: 570-572).

Some theoretic reflections advocate the need for Angola to maintain organized and prepared armed forces capable of facing up to the country's main current and future threats. Equally important to assess is whether that should be pursued when considering the financial and

personnel restrictions associated with the restructuring and resizing of the Angolan armed forces, and the adverse economic and financial context it is currently experiencing. Although such adjustments are in fact essential for the sustainable development of the armed forces, it is nevertheless necessary to step-up investments in health, education and the manufacturing sector. Given that a reduction in the defense and security budget appears to be an inevitability, it is necessary to know how and where to disinvest – or rather not invest – without affecting the essentials and, at the same time, preserving the operational standards needed for the Angolan armed forces to play their part in African regional organizations and fulfil their sovereignty duties enshrined in the Constitution.

Professionalization is one of the most used means to address this conundrum. However, it is likely that the end of compulsory military service might pose a dangerous risk to a country like Angola, where the armed forces are the main providers of citizenship training and also one of the drivers of national unity and cohesion. One should bear in mind that one of the key factors behind the successful reconstruction of the Angolan armed forces following the civil-war was the creation and promotion of a sense of national identity.

The Angolan armed forces, currently undergoing much needed restructuring, face the challenge of doing more with less while continuing to be an instrument of the state's regional foreign policy and, at the same time, a vehicle for the country's affirmation as a major African power.

Conclusions

Angola has an active and comprehensive regional foreign policy, of which the armed forces participation within the context of SADC are an integral part. The answer to the central question – "How important is Angola's involvement in the African Regional Security Architecture?" – is contingent on the extent to which the government's political priorities are in line with its aspirations to become a regional power in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In order to answer this question, we need to reflect on Angola's recent history and the role of the armed forces in the defense of national sovereignty. The main concern for the Angolan executive since independence has been its land and maritime borders. Although the Army, or its derivative border control force and national police, had as its initial task to make war in order to attain peace, it is currently more involved in supporting the country's development.

The air force is a significant asset for the prevention and resolution of conflicts within the APSA in general and SADC in particular. There is also a need to enlarge and lend operational consistency to the navy, which is still seriously small. In fact, maritime security and the integration of a naval component within the APSA is one of the main challenges for Angola and regional organizations.

The Angolan armed forces are paving the way to become, in the future, more professional, interventional and operational in the sub-Saharan region, thereby becoming a tool for Angola's foreign policy and for the assertion of its position within SADC. This, in turn, will eventually

help strengthen and create the right working conditions for the African Peace and Security Architecture.

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