



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

The African Union cannot solve the continent's security issues alone - can the G20 come to its aid?



African leaders continue to fail to find a shared response to the enormous security issues disturbing the continent and keeping its development stuck in a series of coups, mass violence and inter-state conflicts.

The African Union (AU) summit, **held over the weekend** in Addis Ababa, did not reach a solution for joint action in calming the conflict across the continent.

Reaching such a solution was not expected from an organisation that has long had a problem imposing collective authority regarding numerous local hotspots.

But the AU is the most competent to lead the effort for a peaceful resolution of the conflict on the continent, so the summit in Ethiopia could have been an opportunity to at least hint at a shift.

At the AU summit also held in Addis Ababa 2 years ago, African leaders faced issues regarding the tide of military coups or some similar kind of unconstitutional attacks on fragile democracies.

The topic remains relevant today. The leaders simply do not have a shared answer to the fact that since 2020, there have been as many as 9 coups in Africa and that conflicts have flared up in Sudan, continued in the DR Congo, followed by the permanently unstable situation in Libya.

The crisis in the Red Sea region due to the attacks of the pro-Iranian Houthi militia on civilian and military ships inevitably affects the countries in the East of Africa, including Egypt, as one of the most influential members of the AU.

Even the host, Ethiopia, has been torn between internal conflicts and cooling off relations with neighbouring Somalia.

An unprecedented wave of coups

Since the establishment of the community of African states in the 1960s, there have been more than 200 coups. The Organisation of African Unity was founded in 1963 as an expression of the unity of young nations regarding liberation from the colonial legacy and supporting cooperation.

Since 2002, under the name of the African Union, it has not been able to find a recipe to improve collective security, much less to slow down the tendency of unconstitutional power changes.

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The Pan-African organisation denied participation in this year's summit in Ethiopia to such countries. The leaders of Sudan, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Gabon, and Niger, were absent from the meeting.

But expelling them from the club seems like the most the AU could do in disapproval of events in those countries, and nothing more.

On the other hand, the excluded do not feel much affected because their agenda of violent change of power does not consider the AU as a factor for which they should have respect.

Outdated anti-coup mechanisms

The only mechanism that the AU has to fight against a violent change of government is the 2000 **Lomé Convention**, according to which it is possible to suspend membership from the organisation in the event of a coup.

The mechanism was effective until 10 years ago. Apart from the fact that there were fewer unconstitutional takeovers then, with much less violence, the pressure from the AU influenced the coup plotters to relent and return to the constitutional framework in several cases.

Membership of the AU was then much more beneficial in terms of the international credibility of each of its members, and brought some internal legitimacy to each government.

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However, the AU lacks those qualities, and membership in the 55-member bloc became meaningless after multiple coups in the last decade.

The **last few coups in West Africa** (Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso) show the tendency of revolutionary groups seeking (and receiving) support from non-African factors, primarily Russia.

The tangible deals of coup groups with new sponsors are obviously a much bigger incentive than membership in a pan-African organisation that has failed to maintain its authority as a protector of collective security and development.

Is the way out in G20 membership?

The AU's role in protecting and promoting continental security and the principal framework for development projects has been in deep crisis.

Its internal forces are also in crisis, which could indicate that it is capable of self-regeneration because the internal national interests and member states' dynamics

significantly exceed the need for unity.

"The AU has ambitious institutional commitments and tools for mediation and peacekeeping but lacks the political and financial strength to make the most of them. Member states are looking inward, closely protecting their sovereign prerogatives rather than investing in collective security", **stated the International Crisis Group** in a report ahead of the summit in Addis Ababa.



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Therefore, the AU needs an outside incentive to preserve, not destroy, its structure of gathering the entire continent under one umbrella of shared interests.

The UN has not been that for a long time because they have been suffering from dysfunctionality. It is also symbolic that UN Secretary General António Guterres, even though he has been announced, did not appear at the AU summit in Ethiopia, allegedly due to an issue with his plane.

The only structure that appears as a possible ally in the recovery of the role of the AU is the G20, which **accepted the African organisation** as a full member at the last summit in New Delhi.

The G20 is the only global organisation which brings together countries from mutually tense areas - west and east, north and south - and which has shown that it could make decisions in the shared interest, for example, in solving the global financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, or climate change.

The membership of the AU in the G20 is an opportunity for both sides to find a new model having enough authority to stop the wave of security crises across the African continent and reach equilibrium for its 1.4 billion citizens.