

# Dual Capabilities and African Development Forces

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« You see, in the life there are no solutions.  
There are only moving forces; we have first to create them,  
then solutions will appear».

Saint-Exupéry (*Vol de nuit*)

Despite the economic and social development of two diametrically opposite poles on the Mediterranean bank and at the southern limit of the continent, **the Sub-Saharan Africa** (in which we include the African Horn) today remains **the most wounded area of the world**, as for the number of conflicts, displaced people or refugees or poor people who are starving and who need an external food aid, without taking into account those who have no drinking water, no education and are exposed to pandemic. Of course, **some islands of development** still exist and the Sub-Saharan Africa knows some outstanding success stories. Thus, the part of that continent in the world exchanges is slowly growing (3% in 2007), as well as its economic development rate which was above 5% during the last years. However everybody is aware that **this progress is frail, indeed even artificial** (cf. the last report 2007-2008 of the UNDP), since mainly dependent on raw material exports (oil<sup>2</sup> – Africa

would conceal **15% of the world reserves** –, scarce ore, woods, etc.) and that it is hardly used to try to solve **the basic problems of Black Africa**. Those problems are of various nature: lack of infrastructure, of production assets and above all transformation means, the results of changing societies, younger and younger and less and less rural, (by the year 2015, more than 51 or 52% of the Sub-Saharan African population will live in towns or suburbs), the food dependence, as an outcome of the inadequate nature of the economic policies which do not match the uncontrolled population increase (population in Kenya has grown from 8,5 millions in 1960 up to 35 today...), the overexploitation of natural resources, leading to the speeding up of deforestation or overexploitation until the soils are worked out with *in fine* the global outcomes of the global warming, the irreversible destruction of wildlife or even migrations of populations which can change into non aggressive invasions.

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<sup>2</sup> Thanks to the American program known as *Agoa* (*African Growth Opportunity Act*), the African exports to the USA have increased by 33 % in 2006. But the farm products slice (+ 17 %) only meant 1 % of trade while gas and oil exports raised up for more than 80 %!

# Freedom of speech



SIRPA Terre/ADC CHESNEAU

Because **Africa**, despite all these difficulties, **is bursting with a surprising vitality**: if 60% of its population is less than 30 years old, it is also the main part involved in conflicts (child soldiers, rapes, sexual slaves, etc.), AIDS, illiteracy, the utmost poverty or even unemployment. In such a context, how could we imagine that such a **youth, organized in «African forces for development»**, might be tomorrow **a hope for the continent** and more specifically a peace tool and a vehicle of development? Would Africans be able to set up such an education system? Would the international community and in particular the African Union see a slightest interest in it? And are there available financial means to be dedicated to it, specifically at the international level?

## Youth movements for development actions<sup>3</sup>

First, **a number of youth movements are involved worldwide in actions promoting development** and belong to the International Association for National Youth Service (IANYS). Founded from an American initiative launched in 1992, this institution virtually gathers around a dedicated site and in more concrete terms

during a bi-annual international conference, all the **civic programs of young volunteers** – 48 of which 15 deal with Africa – for which it seeks to ease as well as even to encourage exchanges. The 8<sup>th</sup> **IANYS** conference will take place in November 2008 from the 19<sup>th</sup> till the 22<sup>nd</sup> in Paris, at the United States foundation. Unfortunately, this association which is exclusively English-speaking seemed to be ignored both by French as well as African authorities which nevertheless have just openly declared for such programs as shows the recent **African Youth Charter**, adopted in November 2006 by the African Union. Indeed this one underlines the support to be provided to such programs by the African themselves – the managerial staff of which might be ensured by the military and under the responsibility of a ministry other than the Defense one – and describes the **missions which could be assigned to them**:

Article 15, paragraph h: **Sustainable Livelihoods and Youth Employment**: «*institute national youth service programs to engender community participation and skills development to entry into the labor market*»,

and

<sup>3</sup> Intermediate headings have been added by the editing staff.

Article 18, paragraph f: **Peace and Security:** “mobilize youth for the reconstruction of areas devastated by war, bringing help to refugees and war victims and promoting peace, reconciliation and rehabilitation activities”.

These **civic services or African forces for development** would have therefore a **double capability**, both in the national framework of the battle for development and at the regional or national level in support of peacekeeping forces in a multinational framework of a humanitarian action or the reconstruction of a State.

**Organized through schools for jobs dealing with long-lasting development, and under the supervision of military**, these units would primarily be tasked to **teach the young volunteers in the following priority fields** in Sub-Saharan Africa:

- agriculture<sup>4</sup> (support to the populations – in areas where the work power has sometimes disappeared due to AIDS, malaria or malnutrition – for harvests, dams and canals buildings, the anti-locusts struggle, etc.);
- health and medical actions (male and female nurses, midwives, veterinary surgeon’s assistant, ambulance men, etc.) carrying out a focused action in favor of births control, fight against AIDS or even against African endemic diseases;
- building (free clinics, schools, covered markets, stalls, etc. using local material and skills);
- developments of tracks, roads and structures in remote or left in masse areas (loss of part of harvests due to the isolation of some areas);
- water management (plumbers’ training, wells sinking, putting in pumps, water conveyance and re-process, etc.);
- electrical power developments (putting up generators, solar panels, dispatching networks in refugees camps, buildings fitting, halls, etc.);
- elimination of illiteracy, re-socialization of AIDS orphans, of displaced people and other refugees, etc.

## The strengthening of already existing African forces

Contrary to a generally accepted idea, **it would be less a matter of creating something ex nihilo than to strengthen such already existing forces**, sometimes taking benefit from a solid experience, as old as this of our **SMA**<sup>5</sup> developed in our overseas dependencies. This is the case of the **Zambia National Service (ZNS)**, which is probably less known than the French-speaking models such as the Beninese civic service, the Madagascar development support service (**SMAD**) or even the **SMA** from Djibouti, all inspired by our **SMA**. Created in 1963 and therefore as old as this one, the **ZNS** has, above all, taken advantage of the Zambian political stability which managed to set up **an original model free from any criticism or suspicion about political riggings or violence**. This young volunteers institution under the supervision of military is earmarked to serve populations, and often in the farthest areas of a country vaster than France. Thus, under the control of the ministry of youth and sports, and being directly supported by the President of the Republic, in a strict legal framework, this institution fulfils all the traditional missions of a civil service and has even recently carried out an experience which attracted a lot of attention to the benefit of the re-socialization of street kids.

Therefore from now on, the **ZNS**, already a **IANYS** member, might be **a model for African youth to be the actor of its own development** by putting its capabilities, its dynamism and its enthusiasm available to the international organizations or agencies which are committed in reaching the Millennium Development Goals of which we know that none of them will be reached by the deadline of 2015.

Provided we help it to reach the status of a continental model by removing obstacles which impede its development...

## The constraints upon the creation of such African development forces

Thanks to recent studies carried out in co-ordination with the research center of the Military Academy of Saint-Cyr Coëtquidan<sup>6</sup> and supported by the General commanding the COFAT<sup>7</sup> and the Saint-Cyr foundation, we can henceforth **identify the hindrances to**

<sup>4</sup> «Within five years, the African countries cereal importations have been multiplied by three... This deterioration [...] affects 48 African countries out of 53... » - Salée, la facture alimentaire ! in Jeune Afrique n° 2488, 14-20 September 2008.

<sup>5</sup> **SMA – Service militaire adapté: draffees-oriented specific civil-military service.**

<sup>6</sup> Its action is organized around three poles of excellence: ethic and standards of conduct, security and the European Union, global action and land forces.

<sup>7</sup> Commandement de la formation de l’armée de terre: (Army) Basic and Advanced Professional Military Education Command.

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## the creation of such African development forces:

- 1) First they suffer from **a bad picture**, often being grossly depicted halfway between a boy-scouts troops and militias composed of child soldiers, when they are not simply ignored by media as well as security institutions; **this lack of interest** is all the more less understandable that our country has long been a trailblazer in the involvement of the military in education activities (children reared by the army, Workings for youth, *SMA* military schools, “second chance defense system”...).
- 2) **An intellectual strong dislike which condemns the actual principle of a double capability** while our own forces have been developing since nearly thirty years a robust culture of humanitarian aid and protection of populations, even creating dedicated public safety units, testing this principle with new equipment<sup>8</sup>.
- 3) Scorning the fight for the development to the only benefit of peacekeeping operations or the reform of the security systems is an **assessment mistaking the African theater and its specificities**: not only this youth makes up the big crowds of the future

influxes of immigration or ideological indoctrination, but, in addition, only such forces are likely to integrate a great number of young women whereas the female population constitutes from now on more than 50% of any Sub-Saharan African country populations. They are those who have to play a major role as for the birth control, aids prevention or support to AIDS orphans and other abandoned children.

- 4) Finally, **the disparagers of this project always claim that no fund would be used to support African forces**, be they exist for development. However, during the international seminar organized in November 2006 by the French embassy in Lusaka (Zambia) and chaired by Mr Wiltzer, who was at that time High Representative for peace and conflicts prevention, two African organizations have funded more than one third of this event. Indeed, the ACBF (African Capacity Building Foundation) and the COMESA (a common market grouping together around twenty countries of Southern and Eastern Africa), have shown a particular interest, the first one in the framework of its 2D3R action<sup>9</sup> and the other one to support a project dealing with gender equity. In other words, these

<sup>8</sup> «A Caracal helicopter was tested as a water-bomber», in *Armées d'aujourd'hui* n° 325, November 2007, p 54.

<sup>9</sup> Demobilization, disarmament, repatriation, resettlement, reestablishment, reinsertion (DDRRR or 2D3R).

organizations have first and foremost taken into account the missions which could be assigned to these forces more than the only structures which are wrongly said to be solely military ones in order to justify **a systematic negative answer.**

**It appears therefore that the main effect to be looked for is to have a justified place for such African forces for development, acknowledged in the framework of the think tank dealing with the reform of the safety systems (RSS) and more precisely in the heart of the African Union peace and security architecture, so as,**

being recognized as state-approved as well as a stability medium, they might be eligible for two types of funding:

- those in favor of the capacity to support the development activities carried out on the national territory while giving greater importance to youth education and professional training,
- but also those to the benefit of peacekeeping operations as well as the rebuilding of a country exiting a crisis.

**B**ecause of scarce action means, should we refrain from taking part in this «political-institutional engineering area»<sup>10</sup> while, among all the western nations, France is the only one to have at her disposal a so invaluable laboratory such as the SMA? She is above all the most involved nation in the conflicts prevention and solving in Africa<sup>11</sup>, not only due to her mere military presence (pre-positioned forces, military attachés network, military cooperation actions, etc.) but also owing to the initiatives she multiplies in favor of peacekeeping and development, as she recently did in Madagascar<sup>12</sup> ? Conversely, should we be fully involved in it with as much determination as intellectual boldness to suggest to the European Union a new approach aiming at considering the RECAMP<sup>13</sup> concept not as the only program of reinforcing the African peacekeeping capabilities but actually be the enlarged frame of the African capabilities to keep the peace?

**With a rich military expertise on the African theatre and a long tradition of building hope within the African populations<sup>14</sup>, the Army would thus echo the French vocation, yesterday humanist and humanitarian today, that General De Gaulle has summerized in the following few words:**

***A single cause: the human being;  
A single necessity: the world progress;  
A single duty: the peace.***

10 Cf. «Re-building together», in *Doctrine special issue 2008/1*.

11 Appointing in August 2007 a «High Representative for conflicts prevention in Africa».

12 «The Malagasy armed forces in support of the rural development», in *Armées d'aujourd'hui* n° 327, February 2008.

13 *Renforcement des capacités africaines de maintien de la paix : Reinforcement Program of African Peacekeeping Capabilities*.

14 Cf. Proceedings of the symposium organized in November 27 and 28, 2003, in Fréjus on this subject, Editions Lavauzelle, Panazol, 2006.