Why African Norms Matter: Subsidiarity and Agency in Peacemaking

Abstract

Some studies have used the concept of norm antipreneurship to explain Africa's contestation of attempts by the United Nations (UN) Security Council and the International Criminal Court (ICC) to implement international norms, particularly the responsibility to protect and anti-impunity norms. Others have applied the norm localization concept, assuming that the African Union (AU) is, or should be, a localizing agent, and subordinating African norms to their international counterparts. Drawing on concepts of norm subsidiarity, contested subsidiarity, and agency, I argue that the AU is a subsidiary agent and not a norm localizer. It has created African subsidiary norms on temporal immunity, the right to protect, and African sovereignty, allowing Africa to contest international equivalents, establish primacy, and advance its vital security interests. The AU rejects the UN Security Council's and the ICC's attempts to enforce international norms that are inconsistent with African norms addressing the same global issues. African norms matter because they offer viable substitutes for deeply contested international norms whose robustness or survivability scholars debate. This study reframes scholarly dialogue on Africa's interactions with international norms and institutions. It brings African norms into the constructivist norms research agenda and underlines AU's substantive agency in world politics.

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Introduction

African states and the African Union (AU) contest the UN Security Council's and the International Criminal Court's (ICC) efforts to implement the responsibility to protect (R2P) and the anti-impunity norms. In Libya, the AU opposed the Security Council-mandated NATO military intervention to protect human rights and prevent atrocities. In Sudan, the AU resisted the Security Council-authorized ICC investigation to enforce the anti-impunity norm. Likewise, the AU resisted the ICC prosecutions in Kenya. Instead, in relations with the UN and its institutions, the AU claimed primacy in decision-making, African priorities, and African ownership and leadership (African Union 2007, para. 2; African Union 2011a, para. 3), asserted African norms on immunity for Heads of State and Government, the right of intervention under Article 4(h) of the Constitutive Act or "the right to protect" (Ifediora, forthcoming) and continental sovereignty (African Union 2014a, para. 9) or African sovereignty (Ifediora 2026). These responses challenge international norms and international authority.

Scholarly accounts of AU's reactions to UN Security Council and ICC interventions range from resistance to anti-impunity norms or antipreneur (see, for example, Mills and Bloomfield 2018) and hypocrisy toward humanitarian intervention norms (see, for instance, Zähringer and Brosig 2020). Other explanations involve the principle of subsidiarity in the UN governance system (see Knight 1996; O'Brien 2000; Reinold 2019). In particular, studies on the role of the AU and other African regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in implementing international norms emphasized their primacy over regional norms and the primary authority of international institutions, specifically the UN Security Council and the ICC, over regional equivalents (see Murithi 2007; Williams 2009; Akande 2009; Kuwali and Viljoen 2013; Bower 2019). From an agency scholarship perspective, some research suggests that African norms and agency matter only insofar as they

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localize international norms and that international institutions supersede them (see especially Aning and Edu-Afful 2016). Other research highlights issues of interpretation, negotiation, and the processes of international norms' emergence and application, and considers the conditions under which the AU and African states may permit their application (see Dembinski 2016; Iommi 2020; Han and Rosenberg 2021).

This paper offers an alternative explanation. I argue that understanding AU's reactions to global efforts to apply international norms, its claims of primacy, and its interpretation of subsidiarity as an African priority in peacemaking requires clarifying the character of the actors or agents anticipated in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which addresses the role of regional agencies in maintaining global peace and security. I hold that Chapter VIII envisaged *localizing* agents that would implement international norms, such as R2P and anti-impunity. However, the AU is a *subsidiary* agent that has made parallel subsidiary norms to contest their international equivalents, retain primacy, dominate governance of global threats to peace and security, and defend Africa's vital security interests. In particular, the AU has created subsidiary norms on temporal immunity, the right to protect, and African sovereignty to underpin these objectives. Unlike the AU, African regional organizations such as ECOWAS and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) are *norm localizers*. They do not create subsidiary norms; instead, they localize international norms and African subsidiary norms and institutions to fit their peacemaking objectives.

I draw on the concept of contested subsidiarity (Slaughter 2009) to reframe norm subsidiarity (Acharya 2011) and interpret African subsidiary norms on temporal immunity, the right to protect, and continental sovereignty. I follow expanded readings of African agency as distinct, unique, and challenging to global powers in international relations (Blaauw 2016; Harman and Brown 2013; Munyi, Mwambari, and Ylönen 2020) to translate AU agency within the UN-led global governance. I draw on primary data to understand and analyze norms created

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by the AU. I examine African norm-setting and policy instruments, such as decisions and communiqués of AU principal organs, including the Assembly and the Peace and Security Council.

This study makes three contributions. First, it corrects the assumption that the AU is, or should be, a norm-localizing actor in the UN-led governance system. The AU is a subsidiary agent whose subsidiary norms underpin substantive agency in global politics. African norms matter because the AU is a subsidiary actor exercising considerable agency. By subordinating African norms to international equivalents, existing scholarship effectively denies Africa's autonomy in peacemaking. Second, it identifies and specifies African subsidiary norms and presents them as alternatives to their international counterparts. It develops a conceptual understanding of African norms as norm subsidiarity in world politics, underscoring the need to reconceive the subsidiarity principle as a progressively contested concept rather than a regressively predetermined one at the UN level. It shows that subsidiarity places authority closer to the populations and regions most affected by decisions and actions. In other words, subsidiarity means that African norms and agents have primacy in peacemaking. This new reading of subsidiarity enriches the understanding of African agency in international relations. As such, it offers a fresh understanding of African agency, stressing African actors' unique initiatives in global affairs. It demonstrates the distinctiveness of African subsidiary norms, illustrating AU agency in international relations. Third, it broadens the constructivist norms research agenda on contestation by including African norms. Significantly, it shows that the AU not only contests international norms but also that African norms collide with their international equivalents. This opens up new avenues for norm collision studies.

This article has four main sections: the first defines the principle of subsidiarity, highlights the main issues surrounding its application, discusses the central distinctions between subsidiary and localizing agents, and clarifies the character of agents that Chapter VIII

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of the UN Charter anticipated. The second analyses African norm-setting and policy documents, establishes the AU as a subsidiary agent, and examines African subsidiary norms vis-à-vis international equivalents. The third shows that regional organizations, specifically ECOWAS and IGAD, are norm localizers. It clarifies and strengthens this study's central thesis: the AU is a subsidiary agent, distinct from other African agents. The fourth is the conclusion, which outlines this article's broader implications for knowledge and policy.

Subsidiarity, Agents, and the UN Governance System

The concept of subsidiarity is relatively simple and easy to understand. For instance, the Oxford English Dictionary defines the word subsidiarity as "the principle that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more intermediate or local level." Similarly, the Cambridge English Dictionary defines subsidiarity as "the principle that decisions should always be taken at the lowest possible level or closest to where they will have their effect, for example in a local area rather than for a whole country." In essence, subsidiarity involves empowering or recognizing the competence of a weaker or less powerful actor in a complex, often hierarchical governance system. Despite this apparent definition and purpose, the application and practice of subsidiarity are not so evident. As Slaughter (2009, 30) puts it:

> [Subsidiarity] is a principle of locating governance at the lowest possible level—that closest to the individuals and groups affected by the rules and decisions adopted and enforced. Whether this level is local, regional, national, or supranational is an empirical question, dictated by considerations of practicability rather than a preordained distribution of power.

Indeed, subsidiarity is complex and often controversial, and determining the locus of decision-making may require extensive negotiations. As such, several studies have examined how

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subsidiarity is used and interpreted in different governance settings (for a good survey of various perspectives on subsidiarity, see Evans and Zimmermann 2014). For example, Kersbergen and Verbeek (2007) studied subsidiarity in Europe as a contested governance norm that continues to be contested and refined, even after the European Union (EU) Member States adopted the principle at the Maastricht summit. The main point is that subsidiarity's significance is context-specific, so each scholar must specify the governance setting and actors under examination.

Accordingly, this section examines subsidiarity in the global order as represented in the UN governance system established by the UN Charter, which governs relations between the UN and regional organizations. The UN-led global order stresses the Security Council's primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Essentially, the UN Charter predetermined subsidiarity at the global scale by stressing the Security Council's primacy. So, a vital interest in assessing Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which addresses the role of "regional arrangements and agencies" in maintaining global peace and security, is clarifying what the Charter meant by "regional agency," in terms of the types of agents or actors it envisioned. But to understand agent and actor types and characteristics, and to interpret regional agency in the international system accurately, the concepts of norm subsidiarity and localization are extremely helpful.

Acharya's concepts of norm localization and subsidiarity explain actors' agency in norm emergence and evolution. First, the localization model explains how local actors interact with foreign norms. The framework describes how local agents engage with, accept, or refine external norms and institutions. In particular, localization involves "the active construction (through discourse, framing, grafting and cultural selection) of foreign ideas by local actors, which results in the former developing significant congruence with local beliefs and practices." Crucially, the localization process can lead to changes to the institutional design of the

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localizing actor or the creation of "new institutions mimicking existing institutional design." Also noteworthy is that localization can "settle most cases of normative contestation" through the adaptation, by local actors, of foreign norms. Significantly, local actors rarely produce rules or institutions contradicting external norms or institutions. Instead, localizing agents strive to "strengthen, not replace, existing institutions" and accept ideas and programs that promote their goals, "without fundamentally altering existing social identity." Finally, local actors who engage in the "wholesale" localization process accept foreign norms and institutions without any modification (Acharya 2004, 239-275; for extended treatment, see Acharya 2009).

Second, and more important for this study, Acharya describes norm subsidiarity as *"a process whereby local actors create rules with a view to preserve their autonomy from dominance, neglect, violation, or abuse by more powerful central actors.*"[1] In other words, local agents produce norms, rules, and institutions to counter foreign ideas and preserve their independence because they fear control by stronger external actors. Importantly, norm subsidiarity primarily concerns "relations between local actors and external powers, in terms of the former's fear of domination by the latter" (Acharya 2011, 97-9). Regional powers, orders, actors, or agents, like the EU and the AU, are more likely to engage in norm subsidiarity. Central to this article's argument, African immunity, the right to protect, and continental sovereignty norms are subsidiary norms the AU has created to defend Africa's vital security interests against the UN Security Council and the ICC's efforts to enforce R2P and anti-impunity norms.

Notably, a local actor may engage in norm-localizing and subsidiary behavior and then becomes "complementary" or "runs in tandem" within the system. In some senses, the actor comes across as a *double agent* in the international order, implementing foreign principles

[1] Emphasis in original.

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while creating subsidiary norms (see the Conclusion component of this article below for my thoughts on the idea of the AU playing a double agent). Table I visually summarizes what this article considers the three most significant behavioral differences between subsidiary and localizing agents.

Table I**.** Behavioral Differences between Subsidiary and Localizing Agents

Subsidiary Agents	**Localizing Agents**
Develop local norms and institutions	Accept and modify external norms and institutions
Reject external norms and institutions	Take external norms and institutions
Export local norms and institutions	Import external norms and institutions

Agents in the UN System

Applying the norm subsidiarity and localization concepts to the UN-led global governance system, this subsection identifies the types and character of agents the system anticipated would assist the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security. For clarity, Chapter VIII of the UN Charter authorizes "regional arrangements and agencies," such as the EU, the AU, ECOWAS, and IGAD, to undertake "appropriate regional action" that is "consistent with the principles and purposes of the United Nations." Foundational research (see, for instance, Padelford 1954; Yalem 1962; Wilcox 1965) has argued that subsidiarity in the global order refers to regional organizations' role in advancing the Security Council's mandate to sustain global stability. The assumption is that regional organizations localize or modify global norms to maintain and support international order. This assumption underscores the realization that the universalism in peace and security management embedded in Chapter

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VII of the UN Charter and invested in the Security Council may be insufficient to tackle myriad threats. The Cold War rendered subsidiarity in the context of regionalism redundant. Still, the UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, revived the vision in the 1992 groundbreaking report on making global security governance through the Security Council more efficient. Boutros-Ghali placed regional agencies at the core of the post-Cold War international security strategy, stressing that:

> regional arrangements or agencies in many cases possess a potential that should be utilized in serving the functions covered in this report: preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping, peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding. Under the Charter, the Security Council has and will continue to have primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security (United Nations 1992, 64).

Regional organizations are invariably essential agents of the Security Council, helping create "a new global order" and address the post-Cold War's "global disorder" (see Dewitt, Haglund, and Kirton 1993; Knight 1996; O'Brien 2000; Clapham 1996). The consensus is that measures to maintain international security must center on regions without qualifying the Security Council's primacy.

Within the UN system, partnership with regional organizations in peacemaking entails control or, as the Security Council stated, "the requirement for oversight by the Security Council for operations authorized by the Security Council and under the Security Council's authority consistent with Chapter VIII of the Charter" (United Nations 2016, para. 6). In essence, the Security Council's dominance is inherent in the structure of the international order, reflecting the realist tradition that emphasize tangible power and preponderance of dominant actors' ideas, and it obscures and marginalizes weaker actors' beliefs, such as African actors (Zartman 1967; Taylor and Williams 2004). The UN-based international order is hierarchical,

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so subsidiarity must be understood in that context, even though it contrasts with the general understandings discussed above. Here, the regional agents matter insofar as they serve UN principles. In other words, regional agency in Chapter VIII involves localizing global norms and principles, such as R2P and anti-impunity.

Agency Scholarship Critique

Agency scholarship in international relations emphasizes different forms of power and highlights less powerful actors' ability to drive systemic or structural change. This notion of power and influence often appears in constructivist social thought about the structure of the international system (see Hollis and Smith 1994; Ruggie 1998; Barnett and Duvall 2005). From a constructivist viewpoint on power and agency, scholarship on African agency in global politics stresses African actors' capabilities despite international structures that constrain or obscure their actions. As Brown (2012, 1904) notes, African agency helps counter "narratives of Africa that present the entire continent as perpetual victim and lacking political initiatives." Beswick and Hammerstad (2013, 480) explain that African agency involves the "assumption of African actors wielding real agency – making decisions based on their own imaginations and perceptions of aims and interests." Vickers (2013) shows that "African countries are no longer passive players in international relations" because the "African Group has been far more active and assertive" in multilateral negotiations on security governance. As I argue, Africa's substantive agency is evident in parallel African norms that contest their international counterparts, establish primacy, dominate global governance, and advance Africa's security concerns, objectives, and interests. My analysis of African norm-setting and policy instruments follows these expanded readings of agency, and explains why African norms matter, the AU's responses to UN institutions' efforts to implement international norms, and its interpretation of subsidiarity as grounding African primacy in peacemaking.

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African Subsidiary Norms

This section operationalizes the concepts of subsidiarity and African agency to study African subsidiary norms on temporal immunity, the right to protect, and African sovereignty, and to translate the AU's interpretation of subsidiarity and primacy claims. It examines African norm-setting instruments and policy documents to show that the AU acts as a subsidiary agent, creating norms that contest their international counterparts, shape global governance, protect the continent's vital security interests, and advance African priorities. Existing empirical studies, such as Ndiaye (2016) and Nathan (2017), have captured the complexity of the primacy dispute. In particular, Nathan (2017, 166-7) paints a clearer picture:

> The African Union's position is contradictory, promoting subsidiarity in terms of AU-UN relations, but not in terms of AU-REC relations, whereas the United Nations has an ambivalent stance, content to support the maxim of "African solutions to African problems" unless a particular conflict is of great concern to the UNSC [UN Security Council], in which case the primacy of the Council prevails. It is only the RECs [Regional Economic Communities] that wholeheartedly endorse the principle.

Explaining these seemingly apparent contradictions in AU behavior requires determining agent type, which is possible only by applying the norm subsidiarity model. So, my focus on African norm-setting and policy instruments is to develop a conceptual understanding of AU normative behavior and to translate primacy claims and interpretations of subsidiarity into African priorities.

The AU as Subsidiary Agent

The AU is Africa's premier regional organization. It occupies a unique position in the global order, bridging the UN and eight African subregional organizations known as Regional Economic Communities (RECs), as well as two Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention,

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Management, and Resolution.[2] This prime position carries the dual responsibility of making African norms through instruments and policies and asserting and defending them in Africa's relations with the international community, including the UN. The AU also must coordinate the RECs' policies to align with African norms.

To fulfill these responsibilities, the AU has created subsidiary norms on immunity, the right to protect, and continental sovereignty, and has adopted policies that assert these norms in joint peacemaking efforts with the UN Security Council and the ICC. This analysis shows that the AU designed these subsidiary norms to advance Africa's interests and concerns, different from UN principles. Specifically, the AU created the right to protect in Article 4(h) of the Constitutive Act and rejected the R2P principle (Ifediora, forthcoming). The AU also established the Heads of State and Government temporal immunity norm in the Malabo Protocol, contrasting with the Rome Statute's international anti-impunity norm. Finally, the AU asserted the African sovereignty norm to underpin its legitimate authority to make decisions on interventions, contradicting the UN Security Council's primary role in maintaining international peace and security. The deliberate and purposeful construction of these three vital African subsidiary norms indisputably established the AU as a subsidiary actor and demonstrates original agency in international politics and peacemaking. Significantly, the immunity, right to protect, and African sovereignty norms underscore subsidiary-norm behavior.

[2] The RECs are the Arab Maghreb Union, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and the Southern African Development Community. The RMs are the East Africa Standby Brigade Coordination Mechanism and the North Africa Regional Capability (African Union 2008a).

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Africa's norm-setting instruments are organized under what the AU Assembly[3] described as "a Pan-African Architecture on Governance" based on "African Shared Values" (African Union 2010a, para. 1). The Assembly defined African Shared Values as "democratic governance, popular participation, the rule of law, human and peoples' rights and sustainable socioeconomic development." The objectives are to ensure "greater synergy between peace and security matters and governance and democracy, [and] that developments in the terrain of shared values feature prominently in" deliberations on peace and security interventions (African Union 2011b, para. 4).

The Pan-African Architecture on Governance or African Governance Architecture (AGA) has three pillars: 1) the norm-setting instruments, such as the Constitutive Act, the Protocol Establishing the Peace and Security Council, Protocol on the Amendment to the African Court on Human and People's Rights, the African Model Anti-Terrorism Law, the Lomé Declaration for an OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government, and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance; 2) the norm implementing institutions, including the Assembly, the Peace and Security Council, the African Union Commission, the RECs, the African Court, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the African Peer Review Mechanism, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, Planning and Coordinating Agency; and 3) the norm interaction mechanisms, involving the African Governance Platform like civil society groups, non-governmental organizations, and youth groups. AGA has five tangible clusters: 1) democracy, 2) human rights and transitional justice, 3) governance, 4) constitutionalism and the rule of law, and 5) humanitarian affairs.

[3] The Assembly is the highest decision-making organ in the AU system and comprises all 55 Heads of State and Government of the Member States.

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In addition, the Protocol establishing the Peace and Security Council (the Protocol) 2002 identified five central norm-implementing institutions: The Peace and Security Council, the AU organ in charge of the day-to-day responses to threats to regional peace and security; the AU Commission, or the Secretariat; the African Standby Force; the Peace Fund; the Panel of the Wise; and the Continental Early Warning System. These institutions, including the RECs, are broadly called the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the dynamic, continent-wide blueprint for peacemaking (for scholarly perspectives on APSA, see Engel and Porto 2010; Vines 2013).

The Protocol is Africa's norm-setting instrument that establishes in Article 16 the AU's primacy over peace and security on the continent, and Article 7 mandates the Peace and Security Council and the Commission to "develop policies and action required to ensure that any external initiative in the field of peace and security on the continent takes place within the framework of the Union's objectives and priorities." These provisions empower the AU to create norms subordinating foreign principles and clarify the Assembly's decision that the initial framework on relations with the UN "constitutes a first concrete step towards meeting the priorities of the African Union" (African Union 2007, para. 2). Significantly, the institutional mandate and the Assembly's policy action demonstrate a claim to the primacy of African norms in peacemaking, portraying the AU as a subsidiary actor.

Specifically, Article 17 of the Protocol addresses relations with the UN. It acknowledges the Security Council's "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security," and provides that:

> Where necessary, recourse will be made to the United Nations to provide the necessary financial, logistical and military support for the African Union's activities in the promotion and maintenance of peace, security and stability in Africa, in keeping with the provisions of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter on the

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> role of Regional Organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security.

This provision shows that the AU envisages a complementary partnership in which the UN provides resources to advance African "priorities" in peacemaking and in maintaining international peace and security.[4] In essence, Article 17 clarifies the AU's interpretation of "cooperation based on complementarity" in the current partnership framework with the UN: the UN complements or supports Africa's priorities, particularly "political solutions" (African Union 2017b, 2-3). The UN Secretary-General has noted that the framework "serves as the foundation of a structured, systematic and predictable partnership rooted in the shared values" of the UN and the AU (United Nations, 2022, para. 77). Yet, the AU policy actions aim to subordinate international norms to African norms. Notably, the Assembly does not contest the Security Council's primary responsibility for international peace and security, but it does assert the primacy of African norms in peacemaking, demonstrating subsidiarity.

The AU Peace and Security Council has further developed the concept of complementarity in the Common African Position on UN Review Peace Operations, adding that "partnership on the basis of division of labor" guides subsidiarity. The Council underscored African "priority-setting," noting that the AU and the UN "need to engage in dialogue to establish a mutually agreed division of labor to foster coherence and limit competition" (African Union 2015c, para. 6).[5] The outcome of that dialogue is the current framework for partnership, which observed that "the United Nations and African Union recognize that their efforts must be combined in a complementary and mutually-reinforcing manner [and] a clear division of labor and consultation are essential for implementation"

[4] For more details on the AU's interpretation of partnership with the United Nations, see African Union (2012) and African Union (2013).

[5] For a helpful discussion of African common positions as an agency, see Zondi (2013).

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(African Union 2017b, 3). Importantly, the AU Peace and Security Council interpreted "division of labor" as reinforcing African priorities, noting that "The AU has a very limited in-house capacity to support its own missions and will therefore have to rely on outsourcing and partnerships" (African Union 2015c, para. 25). The phrase "its own missions" refers to African initiatives, which the UN must advance. The AU's policy behavior indicates no intention to follow or implement international norms that contradict African priorities, and it has consistently pursued African primacy, exercising subsidiary agency in the global order.

Three significant normative actions by the AU strongly support norm subsidiarity and real agency in the international order. These are 1) the Heads of State and Government immunity, 2) the right to protect as enshrined in Article 4(h), and the Assembly decision asserting continental sovereignty. The first two norm-setting instruments parallel UN norm-making mechanisms, but the norms they created differ substantially, and the continental sovereignty policy is an unprecedented claim in the international system, as no comparable assertion has been made by a postmodern political actor. I will now consider each of these three norms in detail.

The Temporal Immunity Norm

The Assembly adopted the Protocol on the Amendment to the Statute of the African Court of Justice and Human Rights (the Malabo Protocol) in 2014, creating immunity for serving African Heads of State and Government. Pertinently, Article 46 provides that:

> No charges shall be commenced or continued before the Court against any serving AU Head of State and Government, or anybody acting or entitled to act in such capacity, or other senior state officials based on their functions, during their tenure of office.

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The Malabo Protocol parallels the Rome Statute adopted by the UN Member States in 1998 and entered into force in 2000 to the extent that both Statutes broadly seek to prevent and punish core crimes, such as genocide and aggression, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The crucial difference is what is now known as the anti-impunity norm enshrined in Article 27 of the Rome Statute, which states that:

> This Statute shall apply equally to all persons without any distinction based on official capacity. In particular, official capacity as a Head of State or Government, a member of a Government or parliament, an elected representative or a government official shall in no case exempt a person from criminal responsibility under this Statute, nor shall it, in and of itself, constitute a ground for reduction of sentence.

Both Statutes have similar objectives but contradictory norms. Customary international law recognizes the validity of the immunity norm for sitting senior government officials, but the pursuit of justice, regardless of the official status of the persons involved, has taken precedence since the Rome Statute enshrined anti-impunity, although the new international principle has generated robust academic exchange over its applicability (see, for instance, Wirth 2002; Akande 2009; Gaeta 2009; Akande and Shah 2010). The significance of the African immunity norm is that it demonstrates subsidiarity and the AU's subsidiary normative behavior, and it explains why the AU resisted UN Security Council and ICC efforts to enforce the nonimpunity norm.[6] The rationale for making the immunity norm is even more instructive.

The Peace and Security Council explained that the immunity norm was created because of African leaders' concerns that the UN Security Council-mandated investigations in Sudan, as well as the ICC prosecution in Kenya, may jeopardize African-led peace efforts and transitional administrations in societies emerging from war and violent conflict. Thus, the AU

[6] For a helpful discussion of difficult relations between the ICC and the AU in the context of norm contestation, see Bower (2019).

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argued and canvassed for the UN Security Council's cooperation in implementing Africa's immunity norm:

> The UN should support the AU in the latter's efforts to articulate more fully the intersection and prioritising of peace, justice and reconciliation as it obtains on the African Continent, and should view the AU's efforts as a contribution to the global search for principled responses to the challenges of the new conflicts the world faces. The UN should support the AU's efforts to enhance its capacity to prosecute and adjudicate serious crimes. The UNSC should treat with the seriousness they deserve the AU's decisions and requests to defer cases before the ICC in order to ensure that peace efforts are not undermined (African Union 2015b, para. 28).

Here, the AU opposed the Security Council and the ICC enforcement actions in Sudan and Kenya and claimed primacy in decision-making. The African immunity norm prioritizes peace over justice, an idea the AU Commission inserted into the current framework for partnership with the UN: "Cooperation in response to conflict will be based on agreed principles, including the primacy of political solutions" (African Union 2017b, 5).

In sum, the AU's normative actions to create and advance the African immunity norm underscore subsidiarity and agency in the UN-led governance system, rather than localizing behavior that may lead to the localization of the international norm of anti-impunity. Importantly, although the immunity norm leaves much to be desired, it matters because it explains Africa's subsidiarity and agency in international politics, and why the AU interprets the subsidiarity principle as African primacy in peacemaking.

The Right to Protect Norm

The Organization of African Unity (OAU), the AU's predecessor, adopted the Constitutive Act in 2000. Article 4(h) establishes "The right of the Union to intervene in a

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Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity," making it a substantial subsidiary action and agency in human rights protection (for some scholarly perspectives on this point, see Packer and Rukare 2002; Kioki 2003; Abass and Baderin 2002). While "the right to intervene" or the African right to protect norm shares similar objectives with R2P, it is a distinct human rights-protection regime of international security governance and the basis of the AU's primacy claim (for an extensive discussion, see Ifediora, forthcoming).

The right to protect is part of the OAU reforms that led to the AU's formation. Specifically, the Assembly agreed to create the right to protect after Muammar Al-Qaddafi proposed, at the 1999 Sirte summit on OAU reforms, an African state endowed with continental sovereignty. In other words, African leaders compromised between those who supported a sovereign continental government and those who wanted an empowered regional organization with an inherent right to intervene (see especially Kioki 2002, 811-2; see also Djinnit 2021). In essence, the right to protect norm is an exceptional outcome of African negotiations to empower the AU with the legal and legitimate authority to use force to protect human rights. Thus, the right to protect is the African subsidiary norm on protecting populations from atrocities, demonstrating originality, exceptional norm-making ability, and agency. From this perspective, the view that the AU is a norm-entrepreneur rather than an antipreneur is noteworthy (Murithi 2016).

Following the UN General Assembly endorsement of the R2P norm five years later, some studies have argued that Article 4(h) localized R2P (see, for example, Williams 2009); others have subsumed the African subsidiary right to protect norm under R2P (Murithi 2007; Mwanasali 2010), and others have interpreted Article 4(h) as African agency in R2P (Aning and Edu-Afful 2016). These studies assume that the AU is, or should be, a localizing agent in the global order, which justifies subordinating the African subsidiary right-to-protect norm to

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R2P. However, other scholars, such as Weiss and Welz (2014, 891), have underlined the crucial distinction, noting that Article 4(h) is "Africa's home-grown version of the responsibility to protect." This perspective underscores the AU's real agency.

The parallel between the right to protect and R2P is that both norms seek to prevent atrocities and protect human rights, but their differences matter for understanding subsidiarity and AU agency in peacemaking. For example, global actors still contest R2P and question its robustness, so the outcome remains to be determined (Badescu and Weiss 2010; Zähringer 2013; Welsh 2019). Conversely, beyond implementation challenges, such as lack of capacity, will, or conditions for operationalization (see Cilliers and Sturman 2002; Kuwali 2008), the normative character of the right to protect is uncontested.

From the norm-subsidiarity viewpoint, AU policy holds that the right to protect is the only legitimate basis for using force to protect human rights in the international system, so Article 4(h) underpins the Assembly's primacy claims. The AU policy compares Article 4(h) to Article 51 of the UN Charter, not R2P – the former deals with the protection of human rights and the latter with self-defense, thus:

> With regard to the use of force, it is important to comply scrupulously with the provisions of Article 51 of the UN Charter, which authorise the use of force only in cases of legitimate self-defence. In addition, the Constitutive Act of the African Union, in its Article 4 (h), authorises intervention in grave circumstances such as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Consequently, any recourse to force outside the framework of Article 51 of the UN Charter and Article 4 (h) of the AU Constitutive Act should be prohibited (African Union 2005, 6; see also African Union 2026, para. 4).

The paragraph above explains the basis of the AU's primacy claims: because the African subsidiary right to protect norm is the only legal ground for using force for human protection, the Assembly has priority in decision-making. This policy explains why the AU opposed the

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UN Security Council-authorized NATO intervention in Libya under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and insisted on mediation and diplomacy. Crucially, the policy shows norm exportation, a characteristic unique to subsidiary actors. Thus, the right to protect and R2P are parallel norms in international security governance, as shown in Figure I.

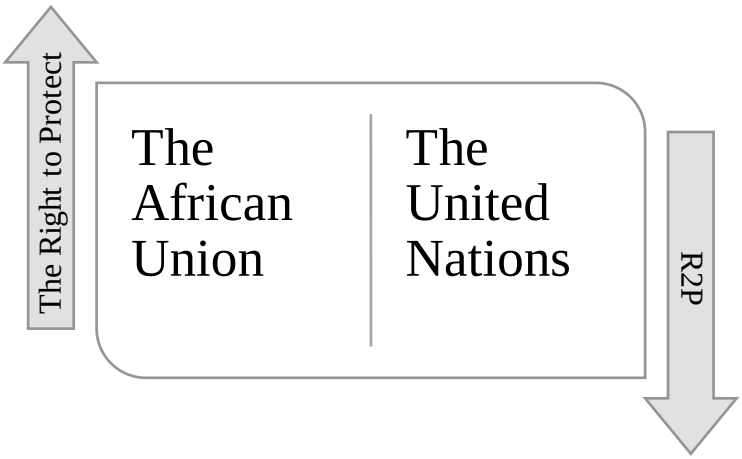


Figure I. Parallel International Norms on Human Rights Protection

As such, the AU has rejected R2P as a legal basis for using force to protect human rights. The AU policy qualifies R2P with the state sovereignty norm, noting that "It is important to reiterate the obligation of states to protect their citizens, but this should not be used as a pretext to undermine the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of states" (African Union 2005, 6). The AU policy position indicates norm rejection, not an endorsement (see Bellamy 2006, 157-162), subordination, or localization of R2P. The right to protect norm matters because it underpins AU subsidiarity and agency in international affairs and explains the primacy claim.

The African Sovereignty Norm

As mentioned in the preceding subheading, the African continental sovereignty norm is embedded in the right to protect, which describes a compromise between African leaders who argued for the American style of government and those who insisted on reforming the

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OAU and creating a stronger continental union with the right to intervene in the Member States to protect human rights. The compromise did not extinguish the ambition and vision of continental sovereignty; it only delayed the Assembly's official claim until 2014. If the sole intention were to create a superstate in Africa, continental sovereignty would function like state sovereignty: the Assembly would consolidate power, and external actors, such as the UN Security Council, would have to respect its authority. The purpose was to make the Assembly the only legitimate and legal authority for decisions on military interventions, directly challenging the UN Security Council's Chapter VII powers, which have governed international peace and security since 1945 (for more discussion, see Ifediora 2026).

Today, the African sovereignty norm underpins AU primacy claims over decision-making on all aspects of intervention or peacemaking, although the Assembly formally asserted the principle in 2014 in the context of enforcing the African immunity norm relating to the ICC investigations and prosecutions in Sudan and Kenya. The Assembly had made several unconsidered requests to the UN Security Council and the ICC Prosecutor to defer, suspend, or terminate the proceedings against Presidents Omar al-Bashir and Uhuru Kenyatta and Deputy President William Ruto. In the history-making decision, the Assembly underlined:

> the need for the UN Security Council to reserve a timely and appropriate response to requests made by the AU on deferral in accordance with Article 16 of the Rome Statute under Chapter VII of the UN Charter so as to avoid the sense of lack of consideration of a whole continent.

Otherwise, the Assembly decided that:

> the African Union and its Member States, in particular the African States Parties to the Rome Statute, reserve the right to take any further decisions or measures that may be necessary in order to preserve and

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> safeguard peace, security and stability, as well as the dignity, *sovereignty and integrity of the continent* (African Union 2014a, 8-9; African Union 2015b, para. 16c).[7]

The passage has two main points. First, I described the Assembly's decision as *history-making* to underscore that the idea of continental sovereignty is an unprecedented claim by a postmodern state actor in the international system and raises several significant theoretical and practical questions, albeit outside the remit of the current article. Some scholars have anticipated that the EU would be the first postmodern state actor to declare sovereignty (see Bifulco and Nato 2020; Brack, Coman, and Crespy 2021; Roch and Oleart 2024). Second, and more importantly, the claim focuses on "the right" to make "decisions" or take "measures" to protect continental sovereignty (see Ifediora 2026), indicating the Assembly's understanding that the African sovereignty norm exists in Article 4(h) and that the UN Security Council and the ICC were actively violating the principle by refusing to comply with the deferral, suspension, and termination requests. African sovereignty directly challenges the Security Council's international authority and legitimacy, demonstrates AU subsidiarity and agency, and explains the primacy claim.

African Localizing Agents

This section supports this study's central argument that the AU is a subsidiary agent unlike other African regional organizations. It operationalizes the norm localization concept to show that other African regional organizations, or RECs, are norm localizers. It clarifies that regional organizations accept the subsidiarity principle in the UN-led governance arrangement mainly because they are norm localizers. However, they are not "wholesale" localizers, nor do

[7] Emphasis added.

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they accept norms and institutions "wholeheartedly" (Acharya 2004, 239-254; Nathan 2016, 166-7); instead, they modify foreign norms to fit their needs. So, this section clarifies RECs as localizers of primarily African norm-setting instruments and norm-implementing institutions, as well as international norms.

The analysis focuses on two of the eight existing RECs, namely, IGAD and ECOWAS, and runs in two parts: the first part concentrates on AU relations with regional organizations to 1) highlight that these African agents have accepted AU primacy in peacemaking based on the concept of division of labor and 2) demonstrate how IGAD and ECOWAS localize African norm-setting instruments and norm-implementing institutions. The second part emphasizes the basis of relations among the UN, the AU, and other regional organizations in peacemaking and illustrates how ECOWAS localized the right to protect and R2P norms.

Division of Labor in AU-RECs Relations

The UN, the AU, and the RECs have embraced the principle of subsidiarity in peacemaking, though they interpret it differently (as the preceding section shows, the AU interprets subsidiarity as consolidating the Assembly's primacy). However, the AU and the RECs have accepted a division of labor in their relations, and the RECs have recognized the AU's primacy in peace and security. Division of labor means the AU will formulate continental peace and security norms and policies, and the RECs will work with AU institutions to harmonize and implement them in the subregions. From this perspective, the harmonization procedure is a form of norm "localization process." In essence, the AU and the RECs adopted subsidiarity, but implementation challenges led them to pursue a common interpretation, resulting in the division of labor.

The AU and the RECs first introduced the principle of subsidiarity in the 2008 Memorandum of Understanding on their relations in peace and security (African Union 2008a).

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Article IV of the Memorandum of Understanding established "the primary responsibility of the [African] Union" in maintaining and promoting "peace, security, and stability," and underlined "the principle of subsidiarity." The assessment study on APSA's effectiveness emphasized subsidiarity and "division of labor" (African Union 2010b, 196). The APSA Roadmap embraced subsidiarity but recognized that the lack of a shared understanding of its implications requires clarification. Accordingly, the Assembly adopted Paul Kagame's recommendations on AU institutional reforms, stressing that "There should be a clear division of labor in line with the principle of subsidiarity" (African Union 2017a, 54-55). Finally, Article 3 of the Protocol on AU-RECs' relations provides that the objective is to "promote cooperation in all fields and sectors in line with the principle of subsidiarity" (African Union 2020c, A; African Union 2020a,b).

Paul Kagame's recommendations on institutional reforms of the AU provided insights into the AU-RECs' politics of subsidiarity. Kagame's report, which the Assembly endorsed, recommended that the "African Union should focus on a fewer number of priority areas, which are by nature continental in scope, such as political affairs, peace and security, and Africa's global representation and voice" (African Union 2017a, para. A). The Assembly's decision aligns with the AU Commission mandate to formulate peace and security norms and harmonize RECs' policies with the principles. Article 8 of the Protocol on Relations stipulates that the Coordination Committee, including the Assembly Bureau, the AU Commission Chairperson, and the RECs' CEOs, is "responsible for coordinating and harmonising policies … in the field of peace and security" (African Union 2020c).

This means that division of labor guides subsidiarity in AU-REC relations in peacemaking. The AU retains primacy and increasingly declares that the RECs "serve as its building blocks" (African Union 2023, 144) for Africa's peace and security norms or, as the AU Chairperson for 2020, Cyril Ramaphosa put it, "It is imperative that we strengthen the

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RECs as building-blocks for Africa's continental integration" (African Union 2020a, online source). As the basic units of integration and peacemaking, the Assembly has urged "the RECs to promote African Shared Values [on] democracy, governance and popular participation" (African Union 2011b, para. 10) through localizing or harmonizing African norm-setting instruments and norm-implementing institutions. Table 2 illustrates ECOWAS and IGAD localization efforts.

Table 2. Localization of African Norm-setting Instruments and Norm-implementing Institutions

AU Institutions/Instruments	ECOWAS	IGAD
Panel of the Wise	Council of Elders or the Wise	Roster of Experienced Diplomats and Respected Public Figures
Peace and Security Council	Mediation and Security Council	Council of Ministers
Continental Early Warning System	Regional Peace and Security Observation System or Early Warning System	Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism
Peace Fund	Peace Fund, replaced the Community Levy	Special Drought Fund/Rapid Response Fund/ Mediation Fund
African Standby Force	ECOWAS Standby Force	Eastern African Standby Force
Norm-setting Instruments	Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, supplementary to the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security	Protocol on Democracy, Governance and Election

Although ECOWAS and IGAD mimic African norm-setting instruments and norm-implementing institutions, they are not "wholesale" localizers in the sense that they take and adapt regional and global norms and institutions, which explains the occasional disagreements

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in peacemaking intervention strategies (see Nathan 2017). The RECs do not create norms to counter the AU or the UN, so norm contestation leads to localization or harmonization. ECOWAS's policy on the use of force for human rights protection illustrates the localization of the African right to protect and R2P norms.

ECOWAS, the Right to Protect and R2P Norms

Although the AU represents Africa's external relations, the RECs exercise agency in international politics and so can engage with non-African organizations, including the UN, under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. Article 25 of the Protocol on AU-RECs' relations deals with the latter's 'external relations' and provides that:

> a regional economic community may enter into co-operation agreements with other international organizations or with third countries provided that such agreements do not conflict with the objectives of the Constitutive Act, the Abuja Treaty and the treaties (African Union 2020c).

ECOWAS, one of the more active RECs, has explicitly defined its relations with the UN and AU in peacemaking. Article 40 of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) notes that "The three bodies [the United Nations, the African Union, and ECOWAS] cooperate on the issues of peace and security on the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity in accordance with the provisions of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter (African Union 2008b)." Article 41 of the ECPF indicates that ECOWAS has modified or localized the right to protect and R2P norms:

> ECOWAS is imbued with the necessary supranational powers (acting on-behalf of and in conjunction with Member States, AU and UN), as well as the legitimacy to intervene to protect human security in three distinct ways, namely: a. the responsibility to prevent; b. the responsibility to react; and c. the responsibility to rebuild.

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ECOWAS has accepted that some of its power to intervene comes from the AU and the UN. However, ECPF also stressed the "legitimacy to intervene to protect human security," meaning ECOWAS can protect human rights with or without AU and UN cooperation. ECOWAS's formulation aligns with the African subsidiary right to protect norm on the legitimacy of the mandating authority and with the R2P norm as constructed by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) through its three protection responsibilities. Nevertheless, ECOWAS's construction falls short of completely adopting either the right to protect or R2P as outlined in the General Assembly resolution (United Nations 2005, paras. 138-40) that endorsed the ICISS's framing (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001, chaps. 3-5). Thus, Article 41 of the ECPF exemplifies the localization of the right to protect and R2P, as it did not create a new norm but instead modified existing regional and global principles to fit ECOWAS's human security, or people-centered security, governance objectives in peacemaking.[8]

In sum, unlike the AU, African regional organizations like ECOWAS are norm and institutional localizers as envisioned in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. The evidence in this section supports this study's central thesis that the AU is a subsidiary agent in the UN-led governance arrangement and highlights the distinctions in African regional organizations' agency in global politics.

Conclusion

Unlike existing research that explained the AU's negative reactions to efforts by the UN Security Council and the ICC to implement international norms on the continent using

[8] Article 4 of the ECPF notes that, as "the new ECOWAS Strategic Vision to transform the region from an 'ECOWAS of States' into an 'ECOWAS of the Peoples,' the tensions between sovereignty and supranationality, and between regime security and human security, shall be progressively resolved in favor of supranationality and human security, respectively."

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concepts like norm antipreneur, agency, and localization, this article offered an alternative explanation, arguing that the AU is a subsidiary agent that has created subsidiary norms to claim primacy in peacemaking, dominate governance of global challenges, and defend and promote Africa's vital security interests in international fora. It adopted new conceptual readings of contested subsidiarity and substantive agency and used Africa's norm-setting instruments to demonstrate this thesis.

African subsidiary norms on immunity, the right to protect, and continental sovereignty are crucial for deepening and sharpening our understanding of African agency in global politics and, therefore, matter. These African subsidiary norms parallel their international equivalents on anti-impunity, R2P, and international organization (specifically the UN Security Council) authority (or sovereignty as transferred authority), but they differ in substance, which explains the AU's primacy claims. Thus, when the UN Security Council and the ICC seek to apply R2P and anti-impunity norms while the AU asserts immunity and African sovereignty norms, this is not just norm contestation but also norm collision. Existing research on norm collision focuses on clashes between international norms (see, for instance, Gholiagha, Holzscheiter, and Liese 2020; Kreuder-Sonnen and Zürn 2020). This insight suggests pathways for future studies on dimensions of norm collision. To be clear, the AU contests anti-impunity by claiming primacy of African subsidiary norms and seeking to implement them, which led to norm collision in Sudan and Kenya. Norm collision also occurs when the AU Assembly claimed primacy over the Security Council's international authority on decision-making on interventions in Africa, especially regarding the right to protect and R2P, as in Libya. So, this article makes two substantial contributions to the knowledge of 1) African agency, and 2) African subsidiary norms in international relations.

First, this article enriches scholarship on African agency in international relations. African subsidiary norms are a unique component of AU agency, and subordinating the right

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to protect to the R2P principle and the immunity norm to anti-impunity overlooks Africa's original initiatives in global peacemaking. In many ways, studies that subsume the African subsidiary norm on the right to protect under R2P effectively deny AU agency: Africa's initiative and decision-making competence to create unique norms and institutions for human rights protection. They also deny the international community the opportunity to learn what makes African subsidiary norms exceptional: the right to protect is robust, stable, and uncontested (see Ifediora, forthcoming). Likewise, the Heads of State and Government immunity norm underpins the AU's agency in global politics of international criminal justice and related matters. Although idealistically regressive, the immunity norm contributes to a better understanding of norm subsidiarity in the international order and peacemaking. It enriches our empirical understanding of how subsidiary actors in the international system make rules not only to preserve their independence and manage fears of external domination, but also to assert primacy, shape governance, and protect and promote vital interests in global settings. The Malabo Protocol, an immunity norm-setting instrument, has set the standard for regional atrocity-prevention initiatives through investigations and prosecutions. When operational, the African Court becomes a crucial component of the global struggle to prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing, as well as other crimes that threaten international peace and security, such as corruption and money laundering. Indeed, the Malabo Protocol has established pioneering regional norms for addressing these crimes and related matters. Lastly, the African sovereignty norm is unmatched in the history of the international system. The AU is the only postmodern state actor, the only regional organization ever to claim sovereignty over a continent. The AU has made a groundbreaking declaration that underpins the Assembly's substantive agency, so the continental sovereignty norm matters.

Second, this article expands the norms subsidiarity concept by conceptualizing African subsidiary norms and explaining why the AU claims primacy in decision-making on

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peacemaking interventions. As a subsidiary actor, the AU creates norms to retain autonomy, protect and defend Africa's vital security interests, challenge external norms, and dominate governance. Recognizing the AU as a subsidiary actor enriches our understanding of its primacy claims and the causes of contestation with the Security Council and the ICC. More importantly, this study challenges the assumption that the AU is a localizer by using the new readings of the norm subsidiarity model to show that the AU is a subsidiary agent, while Chapter VIII of the UN Charter anticipated norm localizers. To sharpen and deepen this new thinking about the AU as a subsidiary actor, this article went beyond the main research question and methodology, applied the localization framework, and examined the RECs, establishing them as localizers. This fresh thinking will inspire future studies on the RECs, as the ECOWAS and IGAD examples have initiated a research agenda on how we study African regional organizations as critical actors in international politics.

The knowledge that the AU is a subsidiary actor has a secondary implication for policy and practice in the sense of whether and how African partners, including the UN and the EU, can persuade the AU to become a double agent and resolve the problem of norm collision. By *double agent*, I mean the possibility that the AU agrees to implement international norms, rather than localize them, on a case-by-case basis. My notion of double agency builds on the AU's remarkable normative flexibility, as shown by the ongoing modification of the norm on unconstitutional changes to government, once one of Africa's few near-sacrosanct norms. The Lomé Declaration on an OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes to Government and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance prohibit coup d'états and ban perpetrators from participating in subsequent government or elections. However, after widespread protests in North Africa between 2010 and 2011 that led to resignations and the military removal of a few Heads of State and Government, the AU altered the norm to accommodate people's aspirations for freedom, security, human rights, and good governance.

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In a rare open session, the Peace and Security Council invited African civil society groups to address the implications of "popular uprisings in Africa." These groups "expressed understanding" for irregular changes to government: "In circumstances where governments fail to fulfill their responsibilities, are oppressive and systematically abuse human rights or commit other grave acts and citizens are denied lawful options," and called for a "review of existing normative frameworks" involving:

> … appropriate refinement of the definition of unconstitutional changes of government, in light of the evolving challenges facing the continent, notably those related to popular uprisings against oppressive systems, taking into account all relevant parameters (African Union 2014e, 2, 3-4).

The AU Assembly and Peace and Security Council adopted the recommendations of the AU High-level Panel for Egypt that studied the question of popular uprisings and specified conditions under which the AU should accept unconstitutional changes to government, including:

> (a) the descent of the government into total authoritarianism to the point of forfeiting its legitimacy; (b) the absence or total ineffectiveness of constitutional processes for effecting change of government; (c) popularity of the uprisings in the sense of attracting significant portion of the population and involving people from all walks of life and ideological persuasions; (d) the absence of involvement of the military in removing the government; (e) peacefulness of the popular protests (African Union 2014b, para. 8; African Union 2014c, para. 83).

A new African norm has emerged: the people can change their government through unconstitutional methods if the government acts irresponsibly. Although the Peace and Security Council noted that the lifting of sanctions in the case of Egypt "does not constitute a precedent in terms of adherence to norms which stipulate that perpetrators of unconstitutional changes of governments cannot participate in the elections held to restore constitutional order"

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(African Union 2014d, para. 8), it reacted cautiously to similar events in Zimbabwe, Mali, Sudan, and Guinea. Egypt seems no exception; it is becoming the new African norm. This normative adaptability to popular demands shows that the AU can change or modify ostensibly firmly rooted norms.

This normative flexibility suggests the Assembly would likely revise the problematic immunity norm under appropriate circumstances. The African people, involving civil society groups, convinced the Assembly to change a norm that previously favored regime security and stability. In some ways, the triggers and catalysts for such norm-altering conversations may have external beginnings through strategic dialogues and engagements with the AU. Specifically, the UN Security Council could explore its role in implementing the right to protect norm, so the Permanent Five (P5) may turn to the AU when facing the twin problems of legitimacy and veto-induced paralysis. Similarly, the ICC Prosecutor may engage in similar exchanges with the African Court Prosecutor on the immunity norm. The African people convinced the AU to change a significant norm on regime security and stability. In that case, the international community can do the same, but it requires the UN Security Council and other global actors to make their ideas more influential and compelling. Ultimately, an unambiguous division of labor between the UN Security Council and the AU will better sequence African subsidiary norms and their international counterparts in peacemaking.

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