

## Peacekeeping in Africa: The EU at a Crossroads

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### Executive Summary

- > Africa is host to the largest number of peacekeeping operations in the world, and will continue to rely on external military and peacekeeping support.
- > The diversification of security players on the African continent as well as the European Union's internal challenges, mainly related to Brexit, force the EU to redefine its role as a peacekeeping and peacebuilding actor in Africa.
- > To remain a significant security actor on the African continent, the EU needs to clearly define its identity as a value-driven security player, decide on the type of missions it wants to focus on and clarify and structure its cooperation with African partners and other international players in the field.

The European Union (EU) is involved in global peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities mainly through its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions. Africa has been the main region of EU activity. Since its first operation on the continent in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2003, missions have been deployed in almost a dozen African countries. Africa is also the only region where the EU deploys as many civilian as military operations, which are involved in a wide range of activities, such as police training, anti-piracy and border surveillance.

The African continent is currently host to the largest number of peacekeeping missions, including eight United Nations (UN) operations, nine EU CSDP missions and several African-led initiatives, with more than 120,000 troops deployed. Since 2006, Africa is the only region in the world with a continuously growing number of both peacekeeping operations and personnel deployed (SIPRI 2017).

This trend is likely to continue since Africa remains the region the most prone to conflicts, with many fragile countries and asymmetric and complex threats, including intrastate conflicts, cross-border disputes, violence against civilians and active terrorist groups (Arnould 2017). These threats require rapid reactions and deployment of missions with war-fighting mandates. Moreover, African countries rely heavily on external military and peacekeeping support, mostly because a lack of resources limits their ability to independently respond to security threats.

The EU is currently facing both external and internal challenges that call into question its role as a peacekeeping and peacebuilding actor in Africa. Externally challenging is the significant diversification of security actors on the continent. African states and African regional organizations are becoming more active, but also new international actors have become engaged, particularly China. Internally, the withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the EU and the CSDP, as well as the implementation of the 2016 EU Global Strategy (EUGS) have strategic implications for the EU's peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities.

This policy brief discusses the potential impact of these external and internal factors on the EU's role in African peacebuilding and peacekeeping, and suggests steps to maintain its position as an important security actor.

## A crowded security landscape in Africa

In the early 2000s, CSDP missions in Africa were mostly bridging missions before the arrival of UN forces. Since 2010, EU military missions started to focus more on training and assistance. The EU Training Mission in Somalia was the first military training operation followed by other missions in Mali and in the Central African Republic (CAR). In theory, military missions should be followed by civilian ones, which then focus on capacity-building and on enabling third countries to manage and prevent crises themselves (Zandee 2015). Even though this system is far from perfect, often with delays regarding the deployment of civilian missions and overlap with other initiatives, the training and capacity-building components (nowadays understood as actions aimed at 'building resilience') became the EU's signature initiatives. Since the current security threats in Africa are more violent and developing more rapidly, old and new security actors active on the continent are trying to adjust to these circumstances.

### *Peacekeeping as an African activity*

Among the emerging security actors in the field of peacekeeping are African states and African regional organisations. African-led peacekeeping operations have some significant advantages over large UN operations with a comprehensive mandate and EU missions, given that African organisations have more freedom to mandate missions. The African Union (AU) has a less rigid definition of the non-interference principle than, for instance, the EU. This means that it can intervene more easily in cases of mass atrocities, war crimes and crimes against humanity in one of its member states.

In recent years, the AU and its regional communities conducted several peacekeeping missions, the most well-known being the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), which deployed over 100,000 personnel. The AU has also created a strategic framework on peacekeeping, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The organisation has been willing to engage in active conflicts where there is 'no peace to keep' yet. It has been able to react rapidly, like in the cases of CAR and Mali where the UN authorised the AU peace support missions as bridging operations. The UN Security Council is less hesitant to authorise interventions driven by the AU, as this implies that the African-led missions, instead of the UN peacekeeping operations, would become associated with the brutal combat that is sometimes necessary to stabilise conflict situations.

The fact that peacekeeping is becoming more of an 'African activity' is not only apparent in the growing number of African-led operations, but also in the significant growth of troop contributions to UN missions. As of 2016, the top 20 list of UN troop contributors has been headed by Ethiopia with more than 8,000 troops, followed by eleven other African states. The list does not include any Western country.

However, this 'African solutions to African problems' approach has some major flaws. First, even though African countries contribute up to 60 percent of the troops to peacekeeping missions, they contribute less than one percent to the AU peacekeeping operations budget and less than half a percent to the UN peacekeeping budget. The AU's African Peace Budget is mainly financed by the EU, the EU's member states and the United States (US). The EU constitutes the main source of funding for the AU and its Regional Economic Communities (REC) through the African Peace Facility (APF), which has received € 2 billion in total since 2004.

Second, the coordination within and between regional organisations is far from perfect. While the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) are considered as somewhat coordinated, in the East and in the Horn of Africa, the countries belonging to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) are consumed in power struggles. They often do not manage to formulate a common response to these security threats. During the conflicts in Somalia and in the Eastern part of the DRC, neighbouring countries have intervened militarily, bypassing the existing missions of the AU and the UN.

Third, APSA, which was created in 2002, has only existed on paper, mainly due to a lack of funding. At this point, the African Standby Force (ASF), the core part of APSA, is still not operational.

Finally, most of the African countries are contributing to international peacekeeping missions with a national agenda. The largest troops contributors are authoritarian regimes like Chad, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda, and such international recognition gives them a certain legitimisation. Another motivation to participate in peacekeeping operations is to ensure that soldiers receive a decent salary in order to prevent military coups.

Despite these problems, African-led missions could become the future of peacekeeping, and should not be

underestimated. This growing activity of the African actors is already influencing the EU's role in the field and will continue to do so.

With a greater focus on African-led missions, the EU may easily be forced to play the sole role of a donor. This was already visible in 2016, when the EU cut its allocation for soldier allowances in AMISOM by 20 percent, which provoked harsh reactions by African countries alongside threats to withdraw their soldiers.

To prevent this degradation of its role, the EU could focus on training activities to become more of an expert and skills provider. If the EU focuses on enhancing the capabilities of African countries by training security forces, this can help them to better respond to security threats. This in turn would qualify as a resilience-building initiative by the EU, whose importance is highlighted in the EUGS. However, considering the number of African authoritarian states, it may also lead to an increase of violence towards civilians. Balancing the training of military staff while still ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law may be a daunting task.

#### *Other international actors*

China is becoming a well-established security actor on the African continent, gradually shifting from its policy of non-interference to 'constructive involvement'. This is visible through a sharp increase of its troop contribution to UN operations (around 1,500 peacekeepers as of 2016, which is over 15 times higher than ten years ago) as well as its willingness to send troops to more dangerous places like Mali and South Sudan.

Moreover, Chinese presence in Africa also motivates other Asian actors, especially Japan and India, to increase their security-related involvement on the continent.

The growing presence of China in Africa can have significant implications for the EU. First, China, just like the EU, prioritises acting through African regional organisations and already donated millions of dollars to AMISOM while increasing its military aid to the ASF to \$100 million. Even though these sums are still significantly lower than the contribution by the EU and its member states, it is possible that the African partners will in the future be more keen on accepting Chinese contributions, as they do not come with conditions regarding the lack of rule of law or democratic conduct.

Second, peacebuilding operations usually aim to protect or to create peace and democracy. China's peacekeeping

engagement, linked to a democratisation agenda, may have unintended domestic implications, preventing further participation in new operations. The EU's CSDP missions driven by an agenda to defend human rights, rule of law and democracy may in this sense have an advantage, as the EU is a more coherent and well-established defender of these values.

Third, Chinese private security companies are more involved in protecting the Chinese workers overseas than in peacebuilding and peacekeeping. They cost the same as local security providers, and significantly less than Western ones. If these private security companies start being used in a broader peacekeeping sense, they could become competition for the EU counter-piracy missions and a more cost-effective alternative for the deployment of the rapid on-land groups.

#### **Internal Challenges**

The EU's changing role in peacekeeping is not only determined by factors in the international area but also by recent changes within the Union. The ongoing discussion on whether the EU should focus more on the military or civilian component of CSDP missions is fuelled by the possible implications of Brexit.

#### *The impact of Brexit*

Brexit will have several consequences for EU peacekeeping activities in Africa. The UK, together with France, is responsible for over 40 percent of public defence investment in the EU and is one of five EU member states spending two percent of its Gross Domestic Product on military expenditure. The UK is also the third largest contributor to the APF.

Yet, more significant than this financial aspect are the strategic consequences of Brexit. The UK has been actively advocating for other member states to support AMISOM financially and was assisting the AU in drafting the strategy for Somalia (which has been listed as a key priority for the UK for its EU-related security activities). After Brexit, the AU will have to negotiate separately with the UK and with the EU, which increases the burden for an already understaffed and underfunded institution. This may force it to look for other contributors.

The CSDP has always been driven by the UK and France. While the UK has frequently been leaning more towards the capacity-building component of CSDP missions, France was more focused on military aspects and championed a more proactive military engagement. This

latter was opposed by the UK desirous of avoiding duplication with NATO actions (Faleg 2016). With the UK outside of EU structures, French leadership becomes possible, and might result in a higher number of military missions. In its military interventions in Africa, France has already used force in more proactive ways (such as in Mali and CAR) and not just for self-defence purposes or for the protection of activities falling within its mandate.

If France indeed manages to reorient CSDP operations towards greater military engagement, this might lead to a weakening of the EU's position, particularly if limited efforts are made to strengthen the EU's military capabilities. Other actors, notably African organizations, possess more suitable capabilities for a rapid deployment of small-sized military units, due to UNSC support and more limited checks and balances regarding troops deployment. With the UNSC preferring to give its mandate to missions that are headed by regional organizations, the EU might be left out of the main peacekeeping activities in the region.

#### *Blending EU civilian and military components*

Blending different components of civilian and military missions could be an option to overcome the challenge related to EU capabilities. It is already visible that the mandates of both types of missions are becoming more blurry and overlapping, and this trend will most likely continue.

The EU Global Strategy puts more emphasis on the military aspects of the CSDP. The November 2016 Council Conclusions on implementation in CFSP and CSDP include the establishment of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) as an operation centre exclusively for non-executive missions. On the one hand, the creation of the MPCC can be perceived as a first step to a more developed EU military headquarters structure and a shift towards a more 'military' CSDP approach (Tardy 2017).

On the other hand, the MPCC itself emphasises training and advisory military missions, which have a strong capacity-building component. All non-executive missions are currently taking place in Africa: in the CAR, Mali and Somalia, which indicates that there is a need for more capacity-building military initiatives in the region.

Another step towards a greater military focus is the November 2017 establishment of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PeSCo). As a legal framework for cooperation between its member states, PeSCo implies

that its members commit to raising their defence spending and make their assets available for EU operations.

For now, military operations fully depend on member state contributions and the budget of civilian missions is not very high (approximately €225 million in 2016). Since 90 percent of EU development support must comply with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) criteria for Official Development Aid, this is problematic. Contributions to security-related sectors have to be justified in each case, but these restrictions are already being bypassed. For example, the military training mission 'EUTM Somalia' has already received funding through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), which is the EU's civilian development instrument, by claiming the funds as a contribution to AMISOM. The APF is more flexible because it does not fall under the general EU budget but is a part of the European Development Fund (EDF). APF as the main contributor to APSA was already used for the African Union operations 'International Support Mission to the Central African Republic' (MISCA) and 'African Union Mission in Somalia' (AMISOM), but it is constrained to regional missions.

Further blending of the mandates of civilian and military missions would not only pose significant financing challenges but also certain risks regarding possible overlaps with existing EU development assistance initiatives. The European Commission plays the main role in civilian crisis management activities. Even though it is not directly involved in delivering the programmes, its role as a donor for the other agencies means that it has a significantly larger budget (IcSP only comprises €327 million). The task division between the activities of the Commission and CSDP is already a source of internal tensions, and an increasingly blurred differentiation between military and civilian missions may lead to further fragmentation and duplication of actions.

#### **Conclusion**

To remain an important security player on the African continent, the EU needs to identify what kind of security actor it wants to be and what type of actor it effectively can be.

First, if the EU decides to be an actor driven by a value-based agenda, it should clearly present its peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities as promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Since the majority of

the actors in the peacekeeping field in Africa have a poor track record when it comes to respecting these values, like the African states and China, the EU is perceived as a coherent democracy and human rights defender. However, sticking to such a value-driven agenda in a principled way would make cooperation with less value-driven states more intricate. This could eventually leave the EU on the side-lines of activities in Africa, and thus be counterproductive in promoting its values. A pragmatic approach, as underscored in the EUGS would allow for a more strategic behaviour even if it means re-interpreting – on a case-by-case basis – the EU’s normative agenda.

Second, having in mind the current need for shorter, military-focused operations to respond to security threats in Africa, the EU should define what types of missions it wants to focus. Since the EU does not have its own military capabilities and the military CSDP missions have so far not been very complex, the EU has essentially two options. The first option would be going into the direction of strengthening the common capabilities and militarising the CSDP to compete with the more militarised African-led missions. The establishment of PeSCo and the MPCC can already be interpreted as a step towards this option. Yet, since the membership of PeSCo is voluntary, the

results of this initiative are uncertain. The second option would be to merge the civilian and military mandates in only one type of missions, leading to military training missions with a strong development component. This would result in strong opposition from some member states regarding the sources of funding, and would require a change of EU funding rules (for instance, to allow for having missions financed by the IcSP). It would nevertheless create a ‘niche’ for the EU without the necessity to compete with the African missions.

Third, the EU should establish clear rules for its relations with other security actors on the continent, the local ones in particular. To avoid being labelled as simply a donor that is easily replaceable, the EU should be clearly identified as the provider of necessary skills and ‘know-how’. It should actively support the AU’s efforts to increase the self-funding of its peacekeeping initiatives by providing expertise and logistics. This should be done both to enforce the EU’s role as a knowledge and skills provider and also to prevent other actors, like China, from strengthening their influence – based on financial support that comes without political conditionality – in the region in ways that would marginalize the EU’s role on the continent.

## Further Reading

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