



THE NEW GEOPOLITICS OF PEACE OPERATIONS: A DIALOGUE WITH EMERGING POWERS

Africa Regional Dialogue

XENIA AVEZOV*

On 21–22 November 2013 a regional dialogue meeting of the ‘New Geopolitics of Peace Operations: A Dialogue with Emerging Powers’ project took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting, which was jointly organized by SIPRI and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), brought together a range of leading experts, government officials and representatives of international organizations to discuss the future challenges for peace operations and the roles that states from Africa can play in future peacekeeping.

A CHANGING WORLD ORDER: PERSPECTIVES FROM AFRICA

Participants primarily focused on current and future regional threats and challenges, and potential ways to address them. Some identified a broad strategic pattern towards multipolarity. At the regional level, there was a perception that lead states show a tendency towards regional hegemony in the field of peace operations. The issue of greater African ownership of peace operations in Africa also featured in the debate. Some participants expressed concern over the escalation of global threats such as resource wars, terrorism and maritime conflict. Participants further pointed to the fact that Africa is affected by global power dynamics, for example as a result of growing competition between great powers over African natural resources. Perceptions about future regional threats included terrorist acts, organized crime, proliferation of weapons and intrastate conflicts. While instability still influences a variety of states, it was argued that the number of ‘failed states’ has seen a relative decline, although the definition of a failed state was contested in the debate. One participant suggested that the process of elections often fails vulnerable populations in weak states, and that this is due to the instability caused by competition between governments and insurgent groups, which peaks during election periods.

Irregular armed conflict between non-state armed insurgent groups using religion and ethnicity to mobilize their forces was also seen as a major challenge. Groups such as the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) operate across borders, maintain regional and international alliances, and are difficult to

* This report summarizes the contents of each workshop session. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of SIPRI or of the majority of the participants.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

● In the past 20 years there has been a far-reaching shift in the nature of international conflict management. Within this context, the traditional notion of peace operations has been broadened by ever more robust missions, the expansion of mandates towards peacebuilding, and by an unprecedented growth in both the number and the size of operations.

Today, many are questioning the sustainability of the paradigm of peace operations that has emerged since the cold war. It is becoming evident that shifts in international power relations as a result of rapid economic growth in parts of the Global South are calling into question the existing structures of international conflict management, including peace operations.

SIPRI has launched the ‘New Geopolitics of Peace Operations: A Dialogue with Emerging Powers’ initiative with support from the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and in partnership with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). The initiative aims to identify potential future challenges for peace operations and new initiatives that will strengthen the legitimacy of peace operations and create greater capacity, enabling peace operations to meet these future challenges. SIPRI, in cooperation with FES, will be conducting a series of dialogue meetings around the world to support these aims.



Agenda

Day 1, 21 November 2013

Opening remarks

Keynote address

A changing world order: what implications for the future of peace operations?

Norms and concepts: a fragile consensus?

Day 1 wrap-up

Day 2, 22 November 2013

Engagement objectives: high politics and interests of stakeholders

Recent regional dynamics: the African Union, Regional Economic Communities and regional powers

A new peacekeeping landscape: peacekeeping 2.0?

Final reflections and closing remarks

contain. An expert from the Commission of the African Union (AU) noted that the Sahel region has become a safe haven for insurgents and organized crime networks, due to weak policing of national borders. One participant from Nigeria noted that because the causes of conflict have become so interconnected and the sources of violence so intertwined, restoring stability has become a complex challenge. In West Africa organized crime, the trafficking of people and drugs, oil theft, and terrorism are all mutually reinforcing and destabilizing factors. Drug traffickers attempt to take over state institutions in order to facilitate the movement of drugs through the region. Organized crime rings also fund terrorist and insurgent activity. A participant from the AU Commission stated that present security trends pose serious threats to regional security mechanisms, and that the current ad hoc responses to the various conflicts on the continent would likely determine the future configuration of the African conflict management architecture.

One expert asserted that South Africa will return to pushing for the expansion of the United Nations Security Council, while at the same time continuing to focus on forging partnerships with Brazil, Russia, India and China (the so-called BRICs countries). There is an increasing frustration in South Africa about external interventions in African affairs, including peace operations. One participant from Nigeria also noted that France had hijacked the role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Mali—due to the fact that the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) lacked capacity—but that such external interventions do not actually help in building long-term internal capacity. One participant from Senegal expressed concern about the peacekeeping activism of rich and authoritarian countries such as Chad and Nigeria and questioned whether such states' ownership of African peacekeeping is legitimate, or preferential to external intervention. The same participant also noted that as long as Africa is a stage on which external powers compete geopolitically, it will continue to be weak. Therefore, a greater emphasis must be placed on controlling and regulating African natural resources.



NORMS AND CONCEPTS

Africa was the origin of many of the norms and concepts used in peace operations today, and therefore the majority of these norms are generally accepted, although approaches and points of view on implementation vary. While there are no African alternatives to international norms, there is a greater emphasis on mediation, reconciliation and restorative justice through truth commissions. Many participants saw the evolution of the use of force in peace operations towards robust missions, and greater emphasis on the protection of civilians (POC) and the responsibility to protect (R2P), as a reasonable development given experiences in the region. The genocide in Rwanda was highlighted as the event that caused the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to move from a position of non-interference towards non-indifference based on responsible sovereignty. Today, the AU fully embraces the legitimacy of the use of force to protect civilians when a state fails to do so. Several participants also argued that the term ‘peacekeeping’ is itself outdated, given the shift towards more robust mandates that require compromise on once non-debatable peacekeeping principles such as impartiality. Therefore, many in Africa refer to peacekeeping missions as ‘peace support operations’, acknowledging that recent peace operations such as the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have shifted away from traditional peacekeeping. Despite these developments, the implementation of norms is often disputed due to disagreements over operationalization in specific cases or divergent interests.

Participants stated that many in Africa had a negative view of the application of R2P in Libya. At the political level, the AU felt that it had been marginalized by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) during the intervention. The operation was also seen as a precedent for regime change in weak states, which made some in Africa uncomfortable. One participant highlighted the perception that there is a double standard in how norms such as R2P are operationalized. For example, the United States and the European Union (EU) previously lacked interest in humanitarian intervention in Africa—and this prevented them from sending troops to Rwanda, Somalia and Darfur—but were later willing to intervene in Libya based on political and national interests. Such ‘double standards’ were seen by some as further reasons for ensuring greater African ownership of peace operations. One participant from Senegal noted that both POC and R2P should be further operationalized, and their scope more clearly defined, because peace operations cannot always fulfil their mandate—as was the case in the conflict in the DRC. One participant from Rwanda noted the importance of emphasizing the ‘responsibility to prevent’, rather than just focusing on R2P interventions when the conflict has already escalated.

Some viewed ‘human security’ as a concept that is clearer and more aligned with the multidimensional nature of peace operations, and one which could complement the concept of POC. It was noted that authoritarian and failed states in Africa are major sources of human insecurity. Another participant suggested that the trouble with theoretical concepts such as human security is that they do not take into account the reality on the ground. While it is true that failed states play a role in human insecurity, in many cases they are the only legitimate bodies that can be used to regain stability. One participant



from Ethiopia also reinforced the role of regional organizations such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) as having more legitimacy and interest in solving conflicts closer to home, including the border conflict between South Sudan and Sudan.

The overthrow in 2013 of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, the country's first democratically elected president, was also briefly discussed. Some participants viewed this as yet another example of international double standards, with Western powers failing to denounce what, according to them, was clearly a coup d'état. The AU views unconstitutional changes of government as severe violations of international law. However, one participant from Egypt argued that the ousting of President Morsi was in fact a legitimate and democratic process, because he had attempted to destroy the judiciary system in Egypt in order to create yet another authoritarian state, and the great majority of Egyptians were in favour of his removal. Therefore, the AU should have not suspended Egypt's membership in the organization.

Participants had different perspectives on the International Criminal Court (ICC). Some believed that the ICC should be strengthened and enabled to complement peace operations by coordinating the arrests of war criminals. Others saw the ICC process as an insufficient and, at times, counterproductive method for bringing justice to victims of war crimes. One participant from Nigeria suggested that the problem with the ICC is that it focuses on retribution rather than reconciliation, and that compensating victims and encouraging reconciliation and forgiveness would be far more conducive to long-term stability. To that end, there was a suggestion that traditional customs, such as the Gacaca courts, should be used initially in order to try and resolve these issues, and that the ICC should be used only as a last resort. While there was support for this approach, some participants remained sceptical that traditional customs could address the current conflict challenges on their own. One participant noted that negative attitudes towards the ICC are unjustified because it is already used as a last resort, and African states themselves often request ICC assistance. Summarizing the discussion, one participant asserted that the origin of norms is irrelevant—the core issue is not whether they are accepted but rather whether they work. In this context, operations are often mandated too late, the military often lacks capacity, and the methods prescribed often fail to achieve stability.

OBJECTIVES OF ENGAGEMENT: REGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

African troop-contributing countries participate in peace operations for a variety of reasons. While financial reimbursements do factor into their participation, political objectives such as playing a regional leadership role and gaining standing in the international community are increasingly driving African states' participation. For example, Senegal participates in peace operations as a way to maintain good relations with great powers but also has a long tradition of peacekeeping. Economic considerations for participation include individual or institutional profit from troop reimbursements, fostering economic integration within regions in Africa, and facilitating prosperity through stability. However, economic motivations are often not the sole reason for a state's participation. A Ghanaian participant noted that Ghana's participation in peace operations is partly driven by troop reim-



bursments, however, its participation in the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) is also driven by fears of the spillover of conflict from its neighbour. Regional and domestic security and normative considerations also influence individual countries' contributions to peace operations. In addition, participation provides training opportunities and improves military moral.

Egypt

According to one participant, Egypt's participation in peace operations ceased following its involvement in the 1960–64 UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC), and did not resume until the early 1990s, when UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali convinced Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to return to UN peacekeeping. Since then, Egypt's participation in peace operations has been primarily based on political and security motivations, and it has largely contributed troops to African missions as a way to promote regional security.

Politically, Egypt has also sought to gain a greater international standing within the UN and other international bodies. In the past, Egypt's contribution was also seen as a way to contend for a permanent seat on an expanded UN Security Council. Participation in peace operations is also seen as a way to strengthen Egypt's position in the Arab world and it would have a general positive economic influence. However, Egypt's current domestic instability could negatively influence the country's willingness and ability to participate in future operations.

Nigeria

Nigeria contributes troops to peace operations based on its commitment to international peace and the protection of African people worldwide, with a special focus on contributing to peace and security in Africa.

At the political level, advancing the country's standing in the international community and showcasing its regional leadership are strong incentives for participation. For example, Nigeria's chairmanship of the UN General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C34) was partly made possible by its substantial contribution to peace operations. Additional incentives include the possibility of Nigeria becoming a member of the UN Security Council, and the prestige associated with troop contributions. Nigeria's participation in ECOWAS also helps the country safeguard its regional and domestic security, and actively prevent escalation of conflicts in its immediate neighbourhood.

At the economic level, a participant from Nigeria noted that the perception in the country is that Nigeria's contribution surpasses what it receives from the UN. Still, there is an understanding that in the absence of peace and stability, economic development will be severely undermined in the region.

Uganda

Uganda's participation in peace operations is based on its foreign policy priorities, which focus primarily on East Africa, with the rest of the African continent as a secondary priority. Contributing to peace operations is also



seen as a way to gain military prestige and advance the country's international standing. At the same time, participation can be used as a bargaining tool—the international community depends on Uganda's substantial contribution to the important and complex AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), and would therefore be less inclined to question Uganda's alleged involvement in supporting rebel groups or looting resources from the DRC. Committing troops to peace operations is also a way for Uganda to insulate its large military from domestic affairs. While Uganda's participation is also driven by the troop reimbursement it receives, there is a perception that the country's significant participation has not led to greater economic benefits such as access to new markets or better trade relations with host countries.

South Africa

Due to the lack of significant public interest in foreign policy in South Africa, its position on peace operations tends to vary, depending on the political leadership. While President Thabo Mbeki made the issue of African ownership of peace operations a priority, President Jacob Zuma has been generally reluctant to engage on the issue, although this is changing.

In general, South Africa views regional leadership as one of the main incentives for participation in peace operations. For example, South Africa's participation in Burundi was partly driven by its investment in the peace process, where it provided resources, expertise and a leadership role. South Africa also invested in the peace process in the DRC, but it could be argued that this was also guided by the interests of South African businessmen who benefit from stability in the Great Lakes Region.

Some believe that South Africa's recent participation in the FIB provided by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has also been driven by South Africa's view of Rwanda and Uganda as conflict spoilers in the DRC, its history of contribution to the conflict, and its SADC membership obligations. However, South Africa's need to resolve its internal economic and social challenges effectively limits its participation in peace operations. In fact, South Africa's policy on peace operations is becoming increasingly contradictory, with the country stepping away from participation in peace operations while also pushing for greater African ownership—which might require South Africa to actually increase its contribution.

Ethiopia

Participants in the session stressed that Ethiopia's participation in peace operations is largely driven by its concerns over national and regional security as well as economic considerations. While some view Ethiopia's contributions to peacekeeping in Somalia as somewhat controversial, the Ethiopian Government views its involvement as a legitimate response to threats posed by the Islamist group Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahideen (Mujahedin Youth Movement, or al Shabab). It is also driven by a desire to protect civilians in Somalia with ethnic ties to Ethiopia.

One participant stressed that according to the country's foreign policy, economic integration and stability in its immediate region are preconditions for development in Ethiopia, and Ethiopia would therefore contribute to



any mission that helps protect economic and democratic development in the region. Ethiopia's participation is also driven by the need to improve access to resources in East Africa and the Great Lakes region.

Rwanda

Rwanda's participation is motivated by the pan-African sentiment of supporting peace and security on the continent. The country's experience of genocide and the failure of the UN to help have also served as primary motivations for contribution as the country hopes to prevent a similar situation from occurring elsewhere. This was the context in which Rwanda sent its first contingent to the AU–UN hybrid mission in Darfur in 2007.

RECENT REGIONAL DYNAMICS

Participants discussed the current dynamics within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)—a structure established by the AU to deal with prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa—with regards to peace operations. The interpretation and implementation of the principle of subsidiarity (i.e. that decisions should be made by the least central unit within the greater organizational structure when possible), was discussed by participants. In addition, issues such as the legitimacy of interventions, and relations between the different bodies in APSA were discussed.

A presenter from West Africa explained that APSA envisions greater cooperation between the AU, the UN and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The AU's Peace and Security Council is a standing organ that functions as an intermediate body between the UN and the RECs. Meanwhile, the RECs would be better positioned to provide early warning, and would have the capacity to deploy quickly and prevent escalation of violent conflicts in their own neighbourhoods. The same speaker noted that the principle of subsidiarity allows individual RECs to deploy without waiting for AU approval. However, the challenge with subsidiarity is that the AU and individual RECs (e.g. ECOWAS) often disagree on how to intervene. Disagreements on approaches to conflict interventions, and the often-competing interests of the RECs and the AU, constitute significant challenges to subsidiarity.

One participant from Nigeria noted that discussing subsidiarity is like discussing coordination—everyone champions it but no one wants to submit to it. The mechanisms through which the principle of subsidiarity works would remain unclear, and the decision-making process between RECs and the AU would be broken. Ideally, the AU would be a forum in which decisions are made on general strategy, and individual decisions by RECs would be fed into this forum. However, competition between large states and an unwieldy bureaucracy would prevent such coordination. In order to create incentives to work through the AU system, according to the participant, there should be a better effort to deal with these challenges. The speaker also noted that the ECOWAS command and control system is quite sophisticated, that the organization prides itself on often being called first to deploy, and that it even has capacity to deploy police. Therefore, perhaps the AU could learn more from RECs such as ECOWAS and give them space and credit when it is due.



A presenter from IGAD noted that the organization has been involved in peace support and mediation, but still lacks the capacity to significantly contribute as a regional organization. However, if IGAD and the East African Community (EAC) integrated, they would form a much stronger East African REC, since the two organizations would be able to complement each other's capacity. The same participant also argued that it makes sense to strengthen the RECs if regional organizations are more efficient than the AU.

One participant stated that the SADC Brigade had been ready for deployment since 2005 but had not been used until the deployment of the current FIB in the DRC. While only three SADC member states are deploying to the DRC, the brigade optimizes the subsidiarity principle as it is deploying under both the UN and the AU. The main challenges for SADC would include selective engagement by its members, the difficulty in reaching consensus within the organization, and a weak early-warning system. The organization's decision-making structure would also pose a challenge: unlike ECOWAS, which has a commission, SADC has a troika. When the troika is chaired by smaller countries, decision making becomes more difficult, as larger countries within SADC have more decision-making power. For this reason, early warning within SADC has never really worked.

Some stressed that greater cooperation between RECs and the AU on peace operations is crucial. One expert even asserted that RECs such as ECOWAS are weakening the AU by increasing fragmentation in the region. One Nigerian participant replied that ECOWAS has elaborate mechanisms in place to address conflict and instability in West Africa, particularly when it comes to issues such as organized crime, corruption and migration due to instability. Furthermore, organizations such as ECOWAS would possess the legitimacy to assist in conflicts that take place in their region because their member states are directly affected.

Some participants called for more clarity on the division of tasks and responsibilities between the AU, RECs and the UN. One participant suggested that the UN should help regional organizations reach a point where they possess enough capacity to tackle peacekeeping without assistance from the UN. Another participant suggested that the only way to ensure African ownership of African peacekeeping is for Africa itself to generate that capacity and limit outside intervention in African affairs. At the normative level, African concepts would have more room to evolve once outside intervention is limited. One participant from Nigeria noted that African organizations are not currently given respect or leading roles, but are rather assigned to clean up violence and stabilize an area so that the UN or France can come in and hijack the operation. Given that it is responsible for international security, the UN should play a role in assisting peace operations in Africa, but the RECs and the AU would be responsible for regional security and should therefore be given the space, resources and respect to fulfil that role.

CONCLUSIONS: PEACEKEEPING 2.0

Participants discussed cooperation between the UN and regional organizations in Africa and the different shape that these partnerships might take in the future. One presenter argued that the decision-making and governance structures of the AU–UN partnership should be further clarified in order



to strengthen international governance structures in Africa. Currently, there is an absence of guidelines for the partnership, the application of Chapter 8 of the UN Charter is vague, and the doctrines and points of view of both organizations often diverge. A clear division of tasks would better address the complexity of modern conflicts. However, operationalizing this type of system will be a challenge. Some questioned whether giving more authority to more actors would actually improve the efficiency of peace operations. Others suggested the dismantling of regional organizations that have not produced results.

One participant from Nigeria stressed several important considerations for resolving potential future challenges between regional organizations. In order to have more ownership and control over peace operations in Africa, African states should mobilize their own financial resources and capacity. It would therefore be crucial to mobilize political will and increase support from the richer states in the region. It would also be important to standardize training for peace operations across regional organizations. While improving coordination efforts will lead to greater trust and cooperation between the AU and the RECs, acknowledging the divergent points of view of different bodies and respecting each country that participates would be crucial to building trust. The same participant noted that ECOWAS and other RECs ultimately want to be recognized as stakeholders by both the AU and the UN.

A question was raised about why the UN only emphasizes a closer partnership with the AU when discussing the conflict in Somalia (in which the UN would suddenly expect the AU to take the lead). An expert from the UN suggested that the UN seeks leadership from the AU on Somalia because it will probably not be able to mobilize political will for taking peacekeeping casualties, whereas African peacekeepers have traditionally been more willing to suffer casualties in order to address instability in the neighbourhood. One participant noted that the focus should not be on the AU–UN partnership but rather on how the AU and African stakeholders in general can generate the resources and capacity to carry out standalone operations. At the same time, South Africa is perceived to be a poor country currently lacking the capacity to lead on these matters, preferring to focus on its own nation building.

Several participants emphasized the fact that African local ownership and leadership on the issues facing the continent will be crucial. There was also a general agreement that dependence on external intervention results from a lack of African resources and capacity. A couple of participants suggested that moving ahead with plans for creating an African rapid response force would reduce dependency on external actors, such as France, and could therefore be a step in the right direction. One participant from Uganda suggested that airlift capacity would be crucial for any potential African rapid response force. The need for better technology to prevent and manage conflicts on the continent was also mentioned. One participant from Egypt, commenting on the lack of airlift capacity in Africa, asserted that it might not be realistic to completely abstain from making use of Western assistance.

One participant from Rwanda stressed that perhaps the whole approach to peace operations should be re-evaluated, as the current model is simply too expensive and unsustainable. Instead, perhaps more resources could be spent on preventing conflicts from worsening, whether through diplomatic measures such as mediation or by deploying before conflicts erupt in order

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to prevent escalation. The same participant suggested that the recent escalation of conflict in the Central African Republic could have been prevented by such means, and that it would have been much less expensive both in financial terms and in terms of human suffering. Regional approaches would often fail because they would get hijacked by the UN, but mediation and preventative diplomacy could provide a means to regain African ownership. Reinforcing this notion, one participant noted that new conflicts will require new thinking and that peace operations will not be sufficient if entire regions within the continent fail. Finally, one participant suggested that prevention, mediation or dialogue will not be able to address the kinds of conflict that Africa currently faces.

PROJECT PARTNERS



STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Signalistgatan 9
SE-169 70 Solna, Sweden
Telephone: +46 8 655 97 00
Fax: +46 8 655 97 33
Email: sipri@sipri.org
Internet: www.sipri.org