



THE NEW GEOPOLITICS OF PEACE OPERATIONS II: A DIALOGUE WITH THE GREATER HORN OF AFRICA

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On 20–22 September 2015, the meeting ‘New Geopolitics of Peace Operations II: A Dialogue with the Greater Horn of Africa’ took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The dialogue focused on five main lines of discussion: (a) the conflicts and security challenges expected in the region in the next 5–10 years; (b) the appropriate peace operations and conflict management responses to these challenges; (c) the current regional capacity to address such challenges; (d) the assistance required from external actors; and (e) a case study on regional cooperation in South Sudan.

This workshop report outlines four key themes that emerged during the regional dialogue: (a) working with neighbouring countries in peace operations; (b) the continuing challenge of coordination; (c) focusing more on development; and (d) evaluating forms of international cooperation other than peace operations.

WORKING WITH NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES IN PEACE OPERATIONS

The relationship between the success of a mission and the troop contributions of neighbouring states was extensively discussed in the meeting. Participants were particularly concerned with the neighbouring countries’ ability to balance national interests with the mission’s mandates, and to maintain the principle of impartiality. A few participants felt that Ethiopia and Kenya, which provide close to half of the troops for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), are too focused on pursuing their national interests rather than on building Somalia’s long-term capacity to maintain its own security. For some, engagement in peace operations that is driven by national interest also violates the principles of impartiality. Moreover, the perception of the local population is also important. A Somali official noted that, despite the fact that Somalis generally view AMISOM as a successful mission, there is a growing frustration with the dominant presence and perceived partiality of the Ethiopian and Kenyan contingents. The lack of trust among Somalis towards Kenya’s and Ethiopia’s intentions may also be sabotaging the sustainability of the political process led by Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), in which the two countries play a leading role.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

● The ‘New Geopolitics of Peace Operations II: African Outlooks on Conflict Management’ was launched with support from the Finnish and Dutch foreign ministries and in continued partnership with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES).

The project aims to enhance understanding of how to best prepare peace operations for the diverse security environments in Africa, while promoting local and international dialogue on the future of peace and security.

In order to achieve these aims, a series of five regional dialogue meetings were organized in five African regions, followed by a global dialogue event and a variety of SIPRI publications.

This report summarizes a workshop that brought together a range of leading experts, military and government officials, and representatives of civil society and international organizations to discuss the future of peace operations and conflict management in the Greater Horn of Africa. It was jointly organized by SIPRI and FES.

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However, other participants argued that national interests do not necessarily mean that the mission objectives are jeopardized. One participant from Ethiopia argued that the country is willing to invest heavily in the success of AMISOM partly because Ethiopia has vested security and economic development interests in Somalia's stability. Another participant from Kenya noted that although it has been a challenge at times to separate AMISOM's objectives and those of past unilateral operations, great progress has been made. The objectives of the Kenyan forces deployed in Operation Linda Nchi were to secure the border and suppress al-Shabab. These were integrated into AMISOM, aligning Kenya's presence in Somalia with AMISOM's mandate.

Despite the difficulty of managing national interests, neighbouring states will continue to deploy within the region largely because of the lack of global capacity and unwillingness of other states to deploy to relatively robust missions far from home. In turn, participants from Somalia suggested that a few steps should be taken in order to alleviate some of the challenges stemming from the deployments of neighbouring countries. First, the mission should have a clearly articulated exit strategy that focuses, in particular, on building military and administrative capacities. This will help reduce public fatigue with and distrust of the involvement of neighbouring countries in the mission. Second, it was suggested that compliance with the impartiality principle should be more closely scrutinized when countries deploy troops to a mission in a neighbouring country. Third, better coordination and transparency between the many stakeholders is crucial for keeping individual contributors, including the neighbouring countries, in check.

THE CONTINUING CHALLENGE OF COORDINATION

Participants agreed that improving coordination between the many regional, national and international efforts in countries such as Somalia and South Sudan is crucial for restoring stability. In Somalia, for example, IGAD, the East African Community, the Arab League, the African Union (AU), the United Nations, the European Union, individual states within the region, and bilateral donor countries from outside the region—all have their own approaches and strategies for managing the conflict that are often poorly coordinated. To be more effective, the national strategies of bilateral donors and contributors should ideally be complemented by regional approaches, intelligence should be shared, and special fusion cells should improve communication and alignment to prevent the duplication of efforts.

An example for an area where coordination should be improved is the training and capacitation of the Somali National Armed Forces (SNAF). One participant gave the example that at a single checkpoint you may see Somali forces wearing five different uniforms, having been trained by five different countries, following separate doctrines, and even being paid different salaries. While states often want to use their own training standards, the contributions, such as training, should also be part and parcel of a comprehensive strategy for how they translate into long-term stability. Improving alignment with a comprehensive strategy for training and increasing communication among stakeholders could also build regional capacities and facilitate trust and cooperation for future endeavours. Moreover, stakeholders should



improve coordination with other sectors such as education, healthcare, and food assistance in order to make training efforts—as well as traditional military capacity building—more sustainable. Better coordination might also eliminate redundancy and help shift contributions to other high-need areas such as improving the administrative and institutional capacities of the Somali Government. Some argued, however, that it is ultimately the responsibility of the host state to engage its international partners in a way that ensures better coordination and benefits the country.

FOCUSING MORE ON DEVELOPMENT

Many participants felt that conflicts within the Greater Horn of Africa are primarily rooted in poverty, inequality and the lack of access to basic services. Economic and institutional development—in particular, programmes that focus on generating employment and providing basic services—is imperative to preventing future conflict. The majority of participants noted with concern that the current peace operations agenda in the region is too focused on security and military solutions and is, therefore, insufficient. Root causes need to be tackled in order to address future conflicts. While building up national armed forces, securing borders between countries and combating terrorism for the purpose of maintaining security are important, these solutions are ultimately temporary without corresponding improvements in infrastructure, public health, education and employment. One participant from Kenya pointed out that peace operations without development create fatigue among the population and are essentially an expensive short-term solution. A participant from Ethiopia noted that reinvigorating efforts to develop state capacities and institutions is particularly important in cases involving rapid deployment, where they tend to get pushed aside. Participants from military backgrounds, however, generally disagreed with the notion that peace operations in the region are too focused on their military tasks.

Participants had different perspectives on whether peace operations themselves should expand to include more development responses. Some, primarily from civil society backgrounds, suggested that, ideally, the region should increase its capacity for development activities outside peace operations because operations like AMISOM are already stretched for resources and lack sustainable funding. Furthermore, the development agenda in the region could potentially become securitized if it is mainstreamed into existing peace operations. Other participants suggested that development activities should be incorporated into the mandates of peace operations, especially given the fact that many states in the region already predominantly invest in military approaches. In the end, most participants agreed that more resources should be added to address development challenges in the region whether inside or outside of peace operations.

UNDERSTANDING PEACE OPERATIONS IN THE BROADER INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION CONTEXT

In general, participants agreed that much progress has been made in managing and stabilizing conflicts in the region in the last decade and that

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international and regional actors should now focus their efforts and capacities on post-conflict reconstruction and prevention. Regional frameworks should, therefore, work towards a common strategy on economic development and empower individual countries and local administrations so that they can provide better livelihood programs. Preparing states for future challenges that might destabilize the region and exacerbate poverty and inequality, such as food insecurity and degradation of grazing land due to droughts, were also considered important for a forward-thinking outlook. Furthermore, the AU and IGAD should increase regional cooperation on humanitarian aid since the proliferation of refugees and internally displaced people remains a great challenge in the region.

The discussion on the need to emphasize development in the region as a way to prevent future conflicts suggests the possibility that reactive peace operations may become less relevant to creating long-term stability. Participants pointed to other forms of cooperation that would contribute to sustainable peace—such as the need for building on innovative regional capacities that would prevent violent escalation while fostering economic development. One participant noted IGAD's already comprehensive Conflict Early Warning Response Mechanism (CEWARN) as a good starting point. CEWARN collects data on potential early signs of conflict, provides analysis, and assists IGAD with formulating responses to potential conflict. Several participants suggested that IGAD and other regional organizations should improve border demarcation, since border disputes will likely remain a primary driver of conflict in the region. While demarcation itself may create additional tensions between bordering states, one participant noted that IGAD should slowly build capacity that would prevent such tensions as well as use existing good offices and early-warning frameworks such as CEWARN to prevent escalation.

Some argued that allowing the free movement of people and trade within the region might improve the economy and help mitigate conflict by allowing ethnic groups to freely interact with their kin. While many of the participants agreed that free trade in the region would be beneficial, some were concerned that it might also exacerbate cross-border security threats such as piracy, illicit activities and insurgency attacks.

Overall, it was clear that peace operations alone are regarded as insufficient to ensure stability and growth and that focusing on conflict prevention and economic development will become increasingly relevant conflict management strategies in the future. The need for developing these and other forms of cooperation were seen as complementary to peace operations. In other words, international and regional efforts should not only deal with conflicts reactively but should also aim to prevent them from occurring in the first place.