

Introduction

In the aftermath of the international community's failure to act against the genocide in Rwanda, there has been increasing interest in, and a growing number of initiatives for conflict prevention, management and resolution in sub-Saharan Africa. With the disengagement of the international community from African issues, particularly after the failed intervention in Somalia in 1993, African states and organisations have taken up much of the burden of peacekeeping and crisis management in the region. They have established institutions and mechanisms to deal with crisis management but they all, without exception, face serious (financial, operational and to some extent also political) constraints.

The international community has responded to the Africans' willingness to take responsibility for dealing with the security problems of the continent, and their limitations, with a number of bilateral and multilateral initiatives aimed primarily at reinforcing African capabilities to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts in the region. On some occasions, critical ad hoc support was given to United Nations (UN) and African-led peace support operations. The most significant capacity-building initiatives have actually been bilateral: France, the United Kingdom and the United States have developed furthest their assistance programmes to support African capabilities.

Since the early 1990s, the perceived failure of development policies and the increasing number of violent conflicts in the region, particularly internal ones, have to some extent put greater pressure on European policies towards the

region. The disruptive impact of conflicts on the region has negative consequences for the European Union's cooperation and development efforts in Africa. They also have a direct impact on the EU in areas such as migration, organised crime and, more recently, on the perceived risk of creating 'safe heavens' for terrorist organisations. This has further accentuated the need for a more active European policy and for more immediate actions to contain and resolve violent conflicts that hinder European and international efforts to support development in the region. The EU-led Operation *Artemis* in Bunia (Ituri district, Democratic Republic of Congo), under French command as framework nation, was perceived by many as a test case for the EU's capabilities and political will to engage and successfully lead this kind of military operation. Its importance may well lie beyond the immediate results of the operation, that is, the stabilisation and pacification of Bunia and surrounding areas to allow for the return of internally displaced persons (IDP), the resumption of humanitarian support and open the way for the reinforced UN mission (MONUC) that took over on 1 September 2003. The impact of this operation is likely to be felt not only internally within the EU, but also in relations with other actors and partners: with African countries and regional organisations, but probably even more so in relations with the UN, NATO and the United States.

Chapters 2 and 3 of this paper focus on, respectively, the root causes of violent conflicts and instability in sub-Saharan Africa,¹ and the various regional and international (bilateral and

¹ Sub-Saharan Africa comprises 48 countries: all African states with the exception of North African countries (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia).

multilateral) efforts undertaken so far to reinforce regional capabilities in Africa to prevent and deal with internal and cross-border conflicts. Chapter 4 deals with EU policy towards Africa and how the EU is trying to adapt and respond to challenges in this region. Operation *Artemis*, its context, objectives, organisation and outcome are the subject of chapter 5. Chapter 6

analyses its impact on EU crisis management policy and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The paper ends with some remarks on the prospects for EU crisis management policy towards Africa in the aftermath of Operation *Artemis* and of the most recent developments in European security and defence policy.