

Conclusions: prospects for EU crisis management policy on Africa

Despite the welcome reaction to Operation *Artemis* from different African and international actors, as well as within EU institutions, it is not likely to bring major changes to EU policy on Africa and to the EU approach to crisis management in the region. The EU will remain attached to the essential principles of its well-established policy. Addressing the root causes of conflict and instability in Africa will remain the priority and conflict prevention the privileged approach. Political will for further EU engagement in Africa already remains a key issue for an EU of 15 member states; the upcoming enlargement is certainly not likely to make Africa a higher priority.

However, it is difficult for everything to remain exactly the same after Operation *Artemis*. Short-term military operations are not the long-term solution for African problems, but they may at times be necessary and instrumental in creating the minimal conditions for long-term instruments to be used. How to derive the maximum benefit from such short-term military operations to enhance long-term goals is a key issue where there is room for improvement, whether they are EU-led or conducted by the UN or other regional organisations. There is also a need for better coordination of EU policies and with the bilateral initiatives of EU member states. It is, however, necessary that the latter are willing to put their national interests in second place when it comes to defining priorities in Africa. This may prove to be a major challenge, although one can say that, to some extent, things have improved. The same goes for coordination with international organisations/actors and the UN in particular.

A likely impact of Operation *Artemis* may be a further boost of EU policies aimed at developing and reinforcing African capabilities to deal with conflict-related situations in the region and a greater support to peace operations by the UN and African regional and subregional organisations in the continent. That is currently a high priority of EU dialogue with the African Union and other African organisations. It has been also high on the agenda in EU dialogue and cooperation with other international organisations, particularly with the UN, but also the G-8 and the OSCE. Programmes or initiatives that have proved successful in building African national and regional capacities for crisis management ought to be expanded, taking into account the serious lack of capabilities of most African states and organisations (e.g. command and control, logistics, specialised skills like engineering and medical services, communications and movement control). One could for instance envisage programmes like the French RECAMP, or other bilateral initiatives by EU member states that are focused on building African capacity for crisis management, becoming 'European' programmes. The French government would apparently be open to such a possibility, if the EU shows political interest. This could lead to further expansion and integration of this dimension into a broader European policy towards Africa. Other possibilities could be for the EUMS to provide military or civil-military advisers to African organisations, or support them with relevant information for peace operations (e.g. intelligence information, imagery from the EU Satellite Centre). Some of these 'scenarios' or possibilities are currently being discussed within the EU.

However, unlike many bilateral initiatives, the EU should continue to focus primarily on dialogue and cooperation with and development of African regional and subregional organisations. Reinforcing African organisations (and their capabilities) is in itself an important confidence-building measure in a continent torn by conflicts, where internal and regional threats are sometimes hard to separate.

Training and programmes for the reinforcement of African capabilities to deal with conflict-related situations ought also to take into account the context in which African forces are likely to operate, and, in most cases, that is not the traditional peacekeeping context. African forces have in recent years been operating in rather complex conflict situations where peace-making and peace enforcement skills have often been required. Yet some of the initiatives aimed at reinforcing their skills and capabilities are sometimes too focused on traditional peacekeeping.

There is of course a selfish interest in the whole issue of developing African capabilities for conflict-related activities. Europeans are less willing to engage in peace support missions in Africa now than they were in the 1980s or early 1990s. They have continued to be involved, but more on their own and in very specific and limited types of operations or, as in the last few years, in support of regional efforts (particularly when there has been a high risk that those regional efforts could fail). Operation *Artemis* is

a good example of the type of military engagements Europeans might eventually be willing to undertake in Africa, in the future: short, precise, limited in scope. Whether EU member states would be willing to intervene more often under the EU banner rather than on their own, remains to be seen. However, given the positive experience of Operation *Artemis* and the recent agreements on ESDP (of December 2003) for a fairly flexible approach to the political control of EU-led military operations, it may become increasingly difficult for EU member states to justify, politically, engaging in such operations alone or without at least consulting the EU. Furthermore, there may be some significant political advantages in carrying out a military operation under the EU banner, namely in terms of perceived neutrality, but also in terms of a comprehensive approach to conflict-related situations, to the extent that the EU can back such operations with supporting policies at the civilian level in post-conflict situations, given the wide range of instruments that it has at its disposal.

A more open dialogue with African actors could lead to a more effective use of resources and probably to more flexible and innovative approaches to crisis management in the region and building the capabilities of African actors. Much depends on the latter, too. There have been many European/international and African initiatives and plans to deal with problems in the region. It is to be hoped that those initiatives will be followed by effective action.