

## Peace and Security Unremitting Challenges for African–European Relations

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# Peace and Security

Peace and security rank high in the Joint Africa–EU Strategy (JAES) and the accompanying action plan.<sup>1</sup> The new Africa–EU partnership launched in December 2007 has three priorities: to increase dialogue on common challenges; to operationalise fully the African peace and security architecture (APSA); and to secure predictable funding for peace support operations. While decisive progress has been made in the latter two categories, there seems to be a lack of enthusiasm for enhancing and deepening the partnership. The priority of increasing the dialogue on common challenges has not progressed much recently, with the result that the vision of a shared understanding of security, threats and how to approach them is increasingly at risk.

The (actual and perceived) asymmetry between the two partners hampers their relationship, which, according to the JAES, should be on an equal footing. This is especially important as, over the past few years, actors other than the EU have been putting enormous effort into building close relationships with African states and, on a continental level, with the African Union. For example, the United States (US) and China are strengthening bilateral or regional ties, and do not shy away from clearly articulating their interests, which may have severe effects on the EU–AU partnership. In light of their common achievements so far, the EU and AU should try to find ways to revitalise their dialogue, in order to overcome (where possible) or to deal with these asymmetries.

The first part of this paper outlines the achievements of the joint EU–AU peace and security partnership, focusing on visible outcomes, such as the establishment of APSA, operational actions, peace initiatives and deeper co-operative structures between the two organisations. The second part concentrates on the key challenges that the two partners face within their relationship, especially the increasingly divergent approaches to the understanding of security, and the prolonged asymmetry between the two partners. As a result of both these challenges, there is a declining enthusiasm for openly exchanging views, which is essential for maintaining and deepening the partnership between the two continents – and making it special and valuable, particularly with regard to potential (perceived or actual) competitors.

### Progress: less conflicts, improved institutional framework and enhanced co-operation

In 2007, the aim of the JAES was to change the security landscape, both inside and outside Africa, in a co-operative way and to create an environment for sustainable and peaceful development. Two years later, peace and security is certainly one of the areas, if not *the* area where the African continent has achieved

<sup>1</sup> EC Commission, *The Africa–EU Strategic Partnership*, [http://ec.europa.eu/development/geographical/regionscountries/euafrika\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/development/geographical/regionscountries/euafrika_en.cfm)

the most remarkable progress so far.<sup>2</sup> A feature of the 1990s, and the early years of this century, was complex, transnational wars, which involved a multitude of different actors, such as regular armies, international peacekeepers, rebels, warlords, mercenaries, tribal militias, and criminal gangs. These conflicts were extremely brutal, affected mainly the civil population, and destroyed the physical and social infrastructure of many states and regions. They predominantly took the form of regional conflicts (in the Mano River region and around the Great Lakes), and civil wars (in Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan, Northern Uganda, or Angola).

Although civil strife and mayhem persist in some areas, for example in Chad, the Central African Republic, Darfur, parts of Southern Sudan, Somalia and eastern Congo, the present situation is completely different from that of the 1990s. While available datasets vary considerably in absolute numbers, most sources recognise the remarkable downward trend of violent conflicts in Africa. Although the numbers have been rising slightly since 2009, the improvement can be found in a decrease of battle-related deaths and the more limited geographical scope of conflicts.<sup>3</sup>

This progress results from a variety of factors such as: improved governance and socio-economic indicators (despite ongoing conflicts), an increased engagement of civil society and better humanitarian assistance to war-affected populations. In large part, the progress can be attributed to the establishment of the APSA and the increased engagement of the international community. Playing a crucial role in mitigating the suffering of millions of Africans, and preventing the continent from collapse, were the diverse mediation efforts of the UN and AU, regional organisations and African and international leaders, as well as the deployment of troops by the UN, the AU, the EU and individual states to enforce and stabilise peace. At a time when foreign interventions in national conflicts are coming under greater criticism, it is of utmost importance to emphasise the benefits of such an engagement.

The AU's progress in building APSA is undoubtedly impressive, and the structure established during the last decade can be called one-of-a-kind: APSA aims to create continental co-operative mechanisms for preventing, managing and resolving African conflicts. APSA has a central decision-making organ – the Peace and Security Council (PSC) – and a Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) for anticipating and preventing conflicts in all of Africa. A panel of the wise and a military staff committee act as advisory bodies, while the African Standby Force (ASF) is its operational arm.<sup>4</sup> ASF is envisaged as a rapid response mechanism and builds upon reaction forces assembled by the Regional Economic Communities (RECs).<sup>5</sup> ASF, and to a lesser extent CEWS, is one of the main pillars of APSA that endeavours to build a close-knit working relationship between the AU and its regional-level partners.

<sup>2</sup> For an in depth assessment see Africa Progress Panel, "From Agenda to Action Turning Resources into Results for People", Geneva, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Harbom, L & P Wallensteen, "Armed Conflicts, 1946-2009". *Journal of Peace Research* 47, (4): 501-509, 2010; Human Security Report 2009.

<sup>4</sup> The ASF will consist of five regionally based standby brigades. See Gillier, J & J Pottgieter, Johann. "The African Standby Force". In: Engel *et al.*, *Africa's new peace and security architecture: towards an evolving security regime?* Farnham *et al.* Ashgate: 111-141. 2010; Dersso, S, "The role and place of the African Standby Force within the African Peace and Security Architecture". ISS Paper 209, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Particularly the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Union du Maghreb Arab (UMA).

The new structure is based on a framework of norms and principles, which gives the AU a wide-ranging authority to intervene in African conflicts that far exceeds that of its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU). With the adoption of its Constitutive Act in 2000<sup>6</sup>, the AU has undergone a paradigm shift, as the principle of non-intervention and the formerly sacrosanct respect for sovereignty have been restrained considerably. According to Article 30 of the Act, the AU can suspend a member in the case of 'unconstitutional changes of government', while Article 4(h) provides for the right to intervene in a member state 'pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity'. Member states have therefore recognised – at least formally – that sovereignty is not a safeguard for rulers but a responsibility to protect their citizens' lives. Although competing with the still-enshrined principle of non-interference in domestic affairs (Article 4(g)) and not yet applied, Article 4(h) at least provides more room for manoeuvre than ever before.<sup>7</sup> Since 2007, the AU has suspended four member states due to unconstitutional changes of government, which demonstrates an increased willingness to implement the AU's principles.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the organisation has deployed numerous peacekeeping operations during the last decade.<sup>9</sup>

However, the AU could not have raised its peace and security profile to such an extent without the assistance of its main external partner, the EU. While the EU has already invested heavily in the original build-up of the new AU structure, JAES is aimed explicitly at raising the relationship between the two continents to a higher level: It envisages a 'strengthened political partnership' based on a 'consensus on values, common interests and common strategic objectives' – a partnership of equals from continent to continent, where both partners recognise and respect each other's needs and concerns for co-operative working on solutions.

Since 2007, the EU has channelled about € 700 million into the continental APSA, specifically via the Africa Peace Facility.<sup>10</sup> The biggest share, up to 70 per cent, has thereby been dedicated to continuing continental or regional peace missions, such as the AU mission in Sudan (AMIS), the AU mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the AU missions in the Comoros (AMISEC/MAES), and the two regional missions in Central African Republic (FOMUC<sup>11</sup>/MICOPAX<sup>12</sup>). A much smaller amount has been spent on capacity-building and evaluation and monitoring. Moreover, currently four EU missions are deployed on the African continent with a personnel strength of almost 2 400:<sup>13</sup> the EU advisory and assistance mission for security reform in the Democratic Republic of Congo (since 2005); the EU police

6 See Constitutive Act of the African Union at [www.africa-union.org/root/au/Aboutau/Constitutive\\_Act\\_en.htm](http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/Aboutau/Constitutive_Act_en.htm)

7 See Sturman, K & A Hayatou, "The Peace and Security Council of the African Union: From Design to Reality". In: Engel *et al.*, *Africa's new peace and security architecture: towards an evolving security regime?* Farnham *et al.*: Ashgate: 57–76, 2010; Murithi, T, "The African Union's transition from non-intervention to non-indifference: an ad hoc approach to the responsibility to protect?" *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* (Bonn) 1: 90–106, 2009.

8 See Franke, B & S Gänzle, African developments: Continental conflict management – a glass half full or half empty? Briefing Paper 7/2010.

9 The African Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB, 2003–04); the African Union Mission in the Comoros (AMISEC, 2006); the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM, 2007–ongoing); the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS, 2004–07); the Hybrid AU–UN Operation in Darfur (UNAMID, 2007–ongoing); the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in Central African Republic (MICOPAX lead by ECCAS, 2008–ongoing).

10 See [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/acp/regional-cooperation/peace/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/acp/regional-cooperation/peace/index_en.htm); Bello, O, *The EU–Africa partnership: at a strategic crossroads*. Madrid: FRIDE, 2010; Pirozzi, N, "Towards an effective Africa–EU Partnership on Peace and Security: Rhetoric or Facts?" *International Spectator*, 45, (2): 85–101. 2010.

11 Force Multinationale en Centrafrique

12 Mission de Consolidation de la Paix en République Centrafricaine

13 See <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.aspx?id=268&lang=en>

mission for the Democratic Republic of Congo (since 2007); and, in Somalia, the EU naval force operation 'Atalanta' (since 2008) and EU training mission (since May 2010). On 30 September 2010, the EU mission in support of the security sector reform in Guinea-Bissau, which had been active since 2008, was closed down, having completed its mandate. The EU has also played a key role in improving predictable and sustainable funding of peace-support operations led by African organisations, for example within the G8 or UN.

Together, the AU and EU have been major contributors to UN peace management and peacekeeping processes and operations. By acknowledging the UN's overarching position as principal global peace and security organ, mutually beneficial collaboration between the three organisations has progressed significantly in the last years. Furthermore, the EU and AU have stepped up efforts to coordinate and co-operate with the diverse African RECs, which are a cornerstone of APSA, through establishing and/or strengthening RECs liaison offices to the AU (and vice versa), as well as enhanced funding of Regional Indicative Programmes (RIPs), particularly in West African countries. Moreover, the operationalisation of CEWS and ASF was brought forward by (in the case of the latter) successfully implementing the Amani training cycle tasked with improving ASFs' decision, command and control structures. They have also worked out common strategies and positions relating to specific areas, such as the illicit trafficking of arms and the handling of small arms and light weapons. Moreover, a trilateral AU-RECs-EU roadmap is in progress, which will continue, stabilise and boost co-operation procedures, furthering the full operationalisation of the continental APSA.

What has made co-operation easier is the fact that both partners have a stock of institutions to build on, and regard peace and security as a strategic priority and a prerequisite for further development. Thus, they have an intrinsic motivation to co-operate on this issue, and can be applauded for their joint efforts and successes, which surely can be a model for other thematic partnerships within JAES.

### **Challenges: diverging perceptions of security and persisting asymmetry**

Nevertheless, severe challenges remain, as many root causes for the complex, transnational conflicts ravaging the continent are still in place: widespread poverty and social inequality; increasing competition for scarce resources, such as water and land; continued social and political exclusion in many African countries, where the experience of violence is often fresh and the seek for revenge alluring. Warlords, criminal gangsters and other war profiteers have a massive interest in instigating new, reviving old and escalating other conflicts. Peace and security is far from guaranteed in Africa, and yet the attention of the international community, including the EU, seems to diminish and is diverted by other challenges.

Moreover, two major obstacles hold back the further deepening of the AU-EU peace and security partnership: increasingly divergent approaches to the understanding of security, and continuing asymmetry between the two (ought-to-be) equal partners, accompanied by a decline in enthusiasm for exchanging views on common challenges. These setbacks are deeply interconnected, as asymmetry can heavily hamper any ambition of pursuing a frank dialogue based on an equal footing.

Despite the affirmation that their partnership is based on a 'consensus on values, common interests and common strategic objectives', the assessment of threats takes very different paths in Africa and Europe. The growing gap, between the Europeans' perception of a stable, peaceful Africa and the Africans' knowledge of how fragile the present situation is, does not result solely from European ignorance. It reflects, above all, the divergent security interests and different approaches to security: European security concerns are, firstly, the effects of international Islamic terrorism on their societies, followed by organised crime, especially drug dealing, human trafficking and piracy. A special worry is maritime security in African coastal waters, be it around the Horn of Africa or along the West African coastline. The classical security threat of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is still seen as a top priority, at least within the European security community. And, if asked, the European public would probably add to this list migration from Africa to Europe: many European societies do not regard the influx of African migrants as an asset, but as a danger to social cohesion, cultural identity and job security. In contrast, Africa's conflicts and wars do not appear to be an immediate threat to Europe's security. Beyond these commonsense perceptions of security threats, there is a growing awareness that Europe's security could be undermined by the rise of new constellations, resulting from the shifts in global power – China and other states emerging as new superpowers, diminishing the influence of EU and other western partners such as the US – and an increasing competition for critical raw materials. In addition, the emergence of a new form of international, African-based terrorism, arising from protracted misery in some African regions, cannot be excluded.

The African perception of security threats is markedly different from this European perspective. Personal security, which is the norm for Europeans, hardly exists for many ordinary Africans. Africans are not only threatened by the violence perpetrated by soldiers, but also assaulted by gangsters, religious sects and ethnic communities, warlords and "big men" and, last but not least, their own state. Therefore, in Africa, state and non-state actors emphasise the notion of human security, applied in a very broad sense that resembles the definition of human development. International terrorism – one of the main security concerns in Europe currently – has claimed victims in Africa but very few compared to the other challenges faced by Africans. Non-proliferation is not seen as a major issue, as Africa is free of weapons of mass destruction. Although organised crime certainly affects the majority of Africans, for many it also constitutes the only available mode of survival. Migration from Africa to Europe is perceived as an opportunity, not as a threat, and the same can be said for global power shifts and the competition for scarce resources. From an African perspective, the emergence of China, India, Brazil and others as important partners in many sectors, diminishes the dependence on the US and Europe and provides additional bargaining chips. The competition for scarce resources is not perceived as a threat; quite the contrary, increased prices and values benefit the many African countries that depend on the export of raw materials.

The very different perceptions of security risks do not make for easy co-operation between AU and EU in the field of peace and security. In addition, notwithstanding the 'equal partnership' mantra, their co-operation suffers from a substantial asymmetry between both entities, which has an institutional, operational and contentual expression.

Institutionally, the AU is far weaker than the EU. It still depends on outside support for establishing and maintaining its core organs and field operations, as its peace fund is usually empty due to non-payment of its member states. Currently within the AU, the burden of financial and troop contributions is borne by a few members, such as Nigeria, Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya.<sup>14</sup> The AU is also not even able to absorb and fully make use of the financial flows received from its main partners.<sup>15</sup> The PSC is permanently understaffed and struggles to fulfil its many tasks, while the EU's growing delegation staff at AU's headquarters undermines still further the already overstretched African capacities.<sup>16</sup> The implied danger is that EU-funded projects and programmes are not really owned by the AU, but based on European proposals and implemented in European ways. Thus the institutional asymmetry clearly results in an operational one.

The co-operation frameworks, such as the European neighbourhood policy, the Cotonou partnership agreement with African countries south of the Sahara, and the trade, development and co-operation agreement with South Africa, severely undermine the goal of JAES to treat Africa as one, divert already limited capacities of African actors, and advocate fragmented policies that are not favourable for the intended comprehensive approach.<sup>17</sup> To compound the situation still further, the EU's policies are hampered by its persisting polyphonic set up, specifically with regard to Africa: The interests of some states, such as Great Britain or France, are linked to their close-knit relationship with certain countries or regions, while others, particularly Germany, certainly pursue their interests in Africa, but rarely make them explicit. The European institutions – parliament, commission and council – also tend to define their own positions and policies with regard to Africa. The lack of transparency of positions taken by European actors, member states and EU institutions, of alliances and conflict lines between them, as well as the complex decision-making process makes it extremely difficult for African partners to deal with 'the EU'.

Finally, most of the norms and principles guiding peace and security issues are the product of European, or at least Western-based, concepts. Particularly controversial are those that refer to certain governance and democratic standards, which are generally regarded as being interdependent with sustainable peace and security. Rhetorically, African leaders echoed these norms very much in the past years. Yet, on the one hand, the conditionality the EU often attaches to its funding reinforces the African perception of a one-way dialogue and, again, undermines the notion of want-to-be-equal partners. And, on the other hand, justifiable doubts persist over whether African leaders wholeheartedly support the softening of the principle of non-interference, are committed to non-violent conflict settlement and have truly internalized the significance of governance as cause for conflicts. While membership of the EU requires compulsory compliance with certain democratic standards, notwithstanding AU's improved record

14 Franke, B & S Gänzle, *African developments: Continental conflict management – a glass half full or half empty?* Briefing Paper 7/2010.

15 See United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2008/178, 14 March 2008; United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2008/186, 7 April 2008; Dersso, S, "The role and place of the African Standby Force within the African Peace and Security Architecture". ISS Paper 209, 2010.

16 Bossuyt, J & A Sherriff, Andrew, *What next for the Joint Africa-EU Strategy? Perspectives on revitalising an innovative framework*. Maastricht: European Centre for Development Policy Management, 2010; Lieb, J, *Die EU-Delegation bei der Afrikanischen Union: Lehren für die nächste Phase im Aufbau des Europäischen Auswärtigen Dienstes*. Berlin: SWP, 2010.

17 See Pirozzi, N, "Towards an effective Africa-EU Partnership on Peace and Security: Rhetoric or Facts?" *International Spectator*, 45, (2): 85-101. 2010.