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SIPRI Workshop Report

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

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On 28–30 October 2015, the 'New Geopolitics of Peace Operations II: A Dialogue with Southern Africa' took place in Maputo, Mozambique. The dialogue focused on five main lines of discussion: (*a*) conflicts and security challenges expected in the region in the next 5–10 years; (*b*) the appropriate peace operations and conflict management response to these challenges; (*c*) the current regional capacity to address such challenges; (*d*) the assistance required from external actors; and (*e*) two case studies on military intervention in the context of peacekeeping in Cote d'Ivôire and eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

This workshop report outlines three of the key themes that emerged during the meeting: (*a*) assessing the appropriateness of peace operations for Southern Africa; (*b*) gaining independence from external assistance; and (*c*) reforming the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

ASSESSING THE APPROPRIATENESS OF PEACE OPERATIONS FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

When evaluating the security landscape in Southern Africa, participants suggested that, despite the complex challenges that the region faces, the probability of high-intensity conflicts erupting in the near future is low. It is also unlikely that the region will experience traditional security threats such as interstate conflicts; instead it will most probably continue to experience low-intensity intrastate conflicts and other non-traditional security challenges, such as those related to environmental degradation, organized crime and piracy. In this context, the primary drivers of instability will continue to be wealth inequality within and between populations, lack of access to services, the weakness and irresponsiveness of states and state institutions, as well as other human security issues. Conflict management efforts in the region should not, therefore, merely be military-centred solutions that focus on short-term responses to acute crisis, but human security-centred solutions that focus on sustainable peace in Southern Africa. In particular, participants called for increasing governments' effectiveness, reforming electoral and security systems, as well as addressing systemic social inequalities and poverty.

For the most part, peace operations were not seen as the optimal tool for addressing the types of security challenges that Southern Africa is tackling.

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 Southern Africa. It was jointly organized by SIPRI, FES and the Southern African Defence and Security Network (SADSEM).

PROJECT PARTNER

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At the same time, participants were mainly referring to peacekeeping or peace support operations which always have a relatively large military or police component and are generally aimed at managing conflict intermediately rather than fostering sustainable peace in a holistic and long-term manner; special political missions or peacebuilding missions, which may be more relevant for the region, were not discussed. Some participants also noted with concern that attempting to solve the governance, development and inequality challenges in the region through peace operations would securitize the regional agenda on these issues. Finally, others were concerned that peace operations and the organizations that deploy them simply do not have the sufficient capacity to address the types of non-traditional security challenges and systemic issues confronting the region.

A minority of participants had a different perspective. They suggested that peace operations could remain relevant if stakeholders would modify the peace operations agenda to better target the type of challenges foreseen in the region. One participant, in particular, called for international and regional stakeholders to shift away from short-term and reactive responses that aim to restore and maintain negative peace; instead, peace operations should aim for positive peace by considering aspects of both human and traditional security. The same participant suggested that this approach is not necessarily relevant to Southern Africa alone but could be extended to other regions experiencing more acute conflict. He also noted that the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACRIC), a multinational force designed to rapidly respond to conflict escalation in Africa, should ideally incorporate a human security agenda in order to contribute to lasting peace.

In the end, although peace operations were generally not regarded as the most appropriate tool for Southern Africa, they were still considered highly pertinent to addressing more dire conflicts in other regions. Some participants warned, however, that Southern Africa might still require peace operations in the future. They argued that the increasing aspiration for better democracies and opportunities among populations in the region could eventually lead to an 'African spring'. One participant noted that in Botswana, for example, wealth inequity and limited access to services has led to an accumulation of frustration that might ultimately cause instability and conflict in a country that has been long considered a haven for peace in Africa.

GAINING INDEPENDENT FROM EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE

Despite Southern Africa's relative prosperity, the region still receives external assistance by means of development assistance and military capacity building. While Southern African stakeholders strive to gain independence from external assistance and to acquire African ownership over the peace and security agenda in the region, most participants also argued that they would probably need assistance with building their capacities in the short and medium term. Currently the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) do not have sufficient financial or military means to deploy operations on their own. Several participants suggested that their countries would prefer to deploy with African-led missions, but can only do so in instances where their troop contributions are reim-

bursed. While it is agreed that SADC, for example, will reimburse member states that deploy within its Brigade, the organization's ability to provide reimbursements is limited because member states often fail to fulfil their pledges. This dynamic explains why some member states prefer to deploy with the UN, which provides consistent reimbursement as well as modern equipment and logistics for each mission.

For most participants, the implications of African stakeholders persistently depending on external actors for managing conflict on the continent as a whole is concerning. While African states in general contribute large quantities of troops to the UN, they feel their voices are not sufficiently heard in decision-making and planning processes. In addition, they generally feel that African stakeholders should be leading conflict management on the continent because they have a better understanding of the security situation and are the most affected by it. Many claimed that ownership over the peace and security agenda in Africa will only be possible with African-led operations that are independent of external assistance. One participant stressed, however, that African states should not call for greater African ownership over decision making while at the same time refusing to take responsibility for contributing. Beyond the issue of ownership, some were concerned that external assistance usually came with foreign interests. Even the AU is not free from external influence as it is currently primarily financed by the EU and its member states, the United States, and China—whose interests might not always be congruent with the interests of African states and populations. Moreover, one participant noted that in recent years the number of external stakeholders that provide funds or capacity for maintaining peace and security in Africa has multiplied, and that managing the complementary interests and expectations is a challenge.

Most participants recognized that in the area of peace operations, Southern Africa and other regions in Africa will continue to depend on external advice, training, diplomatic assistance, logistical support and equipment for the years to come. Looking to the future, participants suggested two potential paths towards independence from external assistance in the long run. The first is that African states and external actors need to improve coordination and dialogue on how to move from short-term funding that does not generate tangible African capacities to sustainable funding that gradually facilitates independence from funding. Specifically, there is a need to evaluate how short-term funding or capacity assistance could translate into long-term gains for African capacities. Technical assistance will also be needed in order to guide and train African stakeholders on how to create their own sustainable funding model. The second is that the provision of logistical support for deployment of operations should be accompanied by additional means and training to build-up African capacities.

REFORMING THE AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

Several participants called for the need to reform the APSA in order to address future challenges to peace and security in Southern Africa and in Africa as a whole. Four primary approaches to do so were identified.

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Improve cooperation between the AU and the regional economic communities (RECs)

Some participants suggested that the AU and the SADC, for example, have a different understanding about conceptual as well as practical dimensions of peace operations. Improving communication and consultation within APSA is, therefore, paramount. On an operations level, some argued that the principle of subsidiarity, which is supposed to guide the division of labour between the AU and the RECs, lacks clarity and consistency. An AU official suggested that tension and competition between the AU and the RECs is indeed hampering cooperation and coordination within the APSA. She noted that one approach to moving beyond the current tension is for the APSA to first focus on planning for long-term peace and security needs and then slowly improve cooperation between the AU and individual RECs by building complementary capacity to tackle future challenges.

Improve the REC's ability to effectively respond

Others argued that a more effective path to improving the APSA is a bottom-up reform of the individual RECs, with an emphasis on increasing both their efficacy and accountability. A couple of participants stressed the importance of improving SADC's ability to respond to crisis in a timely manner. It was noted that the organization often fails to intervene partly due to member states' unwillingness to prioritize common regional security concerns and follow through with their pledges. It was also suggested that while SADC often carries out exercises for deployment, it is seldom that it actually deploys. Others suggested that REC agendas should also reflect regional needs. For SADC specifically, this would mean more focus on peacebuilding, state building, and conflict prevention versus its traditional focus on post-conflict military deployment.

Include civil society in the decision and policy making process

Several participants stressed that in order to improve the APSA structure, civil society would have to be more involved in shaping the policies on existing regional frameworks and approaches to peace and security. Many were sceptical, however, about whether the AU or SADC would be open to closer cooperation with civil society. They suggested that the broader inclusion of local communities and civil society in shaping policies would depend on the political will of individual states.

Improve the APSA by increasing its funding and capacity

Some suggested that ultimately more capacity and funding will be needed in order to improve APSA, without additional capacity these organizations would not be able to rise to the challenge of creating sustainable peace in Africa.