Introduction

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Special Issue on the Evolving Nature of African-Led Peace Support Operations and African Armies

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Abstract

This special issue delves into the evolving nature of African-led Peace Support Operations and their development over the last two decades. The authors explore how states have improved their security and military capabilities to face emerging and existing threats. The papers in this issue illustrate how African-led operations have progressed and how they have been designed to stabilise states, environments, and regions. These operations have been complemented by Regional Economic Communities/ Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) and Ad-hoc Security Initiatives, which have all deployed intervention missions to tackle various challenges. The papers also note that the increasing presence of African troops in UN missions with stabilisation mandates has allowed the AU, RECs/RMs, and state military to learn through training, national rules of engagement, and civil-military relations and to contribute diverse first-hand experience in African-led Peace Support Operations and

UN peacekeeping efforts. Finally, the special issue explores whether some sub-Saharan African states have employed restructuring policies by deploying forces to African-led PSOs and UN peacekeeping operations and whether this strategy has impacted the effectiveness of their forces.

Keywords

African-led Peace Support Operations – Ad hoc security initiatives – African armies and United Nations operations in Africa

1   Introduction

The character of conflicts has changed and evolved with an array of new actors who have conformed to different forms of indiscriminate violence during periods of and out of conflict.[1] This evolutionary character to conflict but also the violence that followed had necessitated African states, the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UN PKO), Africa Union Peace Support Operations (AU PSO), and Regional Economic Community/Regional Mechanism to adapt and respond to these violent incidents and respond adequately to these challenges. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the United States and the subsequent war on terror campaign, several international Islamic violent extremist groups started to operate in Africa or connect with existing terrorist groups, which combined with existing grievances and challenges that the continent was faced with, resulting in a proliferation of challenges which required organisations like the UN and AU to adjust.[2] In most cases, international groups found a footing in places where there were long-standing grievances, isolation, centre-periphery underdevelopment, and economic and political marginalisation based on ethnic, religious and socio-political identities.[3]

As a response, across sub-Saharan Africa, countries are developing security and military capacities to deal with emerging and existing threats. While many

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1   Stathis N. Kalyvas. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

2   Cedric de Coning, Chiyuki Aoi and John Karlsrud (Eds.). *UN Peacekeeping Doctrine in a New Era: Adapting to Stabilisation, Protection and New Threats* (London, Routledge, 2017.). doi. org/10.4324/9781315396941.

3   International Crisis Group, 'Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic state' (2016). Available at: https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/exploiting-disorder-al-qaeda-and-islamic -state.

of these threats are contemporary—Islamic jihadism and terror cells—other threats originate from structural imbalances that date to how African states were formed during and after the colonial periods. Although the rivalry between groups existed before the colonial periods, competition between groups was exacerbated during colonisation.[4] Indeed, in sub-Saharan Africa, the impact of colonisation has continued to shape how societies form, distribute wealth, and structure institutions.[5]

This has resulted in new international interventions being deployed or authorised by the UN and the AU to protect displaced and often persecuted populations and the state against aggressors.[6] These new operations differed from peacekeeping doctrine in a significant manner. First, the operations were no longer required to be deployed based on the parties' consent following a ceasefire or peace agreement but only required the host state's consent. Second, the operations were no longer impartial, as they were deployed to protect the state and its people against an identified aggressor—and, in some ways, legitimised the state's actions. Finally, the use of force was no longer restricted to self-defence. However, these operations were now authorised to use force to protect civilians and the state and encouraged to do so proactively, not only to protect civilians under attack or in the face of imminent danger. This, in part, has led to an increase in the number of deployments witnessed by the two organisations over the last two decades but also resulted in apparent doctrinal differences emerging.[7] As well as the doctrinal difference, African-led missions have grown in their mission types, response and, to some degree, adaptability to rising insecurity.[8]

This represents an evolution of African missions by the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and African states. Nevertheless, the new African-led and UN stabilisation operations and African-led PSOs were based on different peacekeeping principles that characterised UN PKOs. However, the operations followed the same evolutionary path from operations that had a

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4   Robert Blanton, David T. Mason and Brian Athow, 'Colonial Style and Post-Colonial Ethnic Conflict in Africa'. *Journal of Peace Research,* 38(4), 2001, pp. 473–491.

5   Francis M. Deng, 'Ethnicity: An African Predicament' (1997). Available at: https://www.brookings.edu/articles/ethnicity-an-african-predicament/.

6   Paul D. Williams, 'The African Union Mission in Somalia and Civilian Protection Challenges', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2(3), 2013, pp. 232–265.

7   Cedric de Coning, 'Peace enforcement in Africa: Doctrinal distinctions between the African Union and United Nations'. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 38(1), 2017, pp. 145–160. doi: 10.1080/13523260.2017.1283108.

8   Andrew E. Yaw Tchie, 'Generation three and a half peacekeeping: Understanding the evolutionary character of African-led Peace Support Operations', *African Security Review,* 2023. doi: 10.1080/10246029.2023.2237482.

peace goal in Darfur and Burundi to operations that had a stability task(s) such as the deployments to the Central Africa Republic, Lake Chad Basin region, Mali, Mozambique, the broader Sahel region and Somalia.[9] The aim of these UN and African-led operations, thus, changed from pursuing and consolidating peace agreements to disrupting and degrading the military advantage and capability of insurgent groups often embedded amongst civilian populations.

While existing research focuses on how sizable deployments of peacekeepers reduce violence in civil wars,[10] and other research finds that terrorist tactics are used frequently by insurgent groups.[11] This special issue and the seven articles within this issue examine the evolving nature of African-led PSOs over the last two decades while also examining the impact these UN and African-led PSOs have had on African armies over the last two decades. It also explores why certain sub-Saharan African states have employed restructuring policies by deploying forces to African-led PSOs to professionalise their militaries and examines whether this strategy has impacted their forces' effectiveness.

The first article of this special issue is by guest editors Cedric de Coning, Research Professor and Andrew E. Yaw Tchie, Senior Research Fellow at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, who set the scene with an overview of the evolution and history of African-led PSOs over the last two decades. They conclude that while African-led PSOs have developed significant capacity over this period, their military heavy approach is inadequate to deal with the multifaced challenges that these missions are tasked to address. To address this shortcoming the article recommends that African-led PSOs should be guided by comprehensive political strategies, draw on multidimensional capabilities, have flexible standby arrangements, and cautious financing, support and smart partnership arrangements. Lastly, the article emphasises the importance of context-specific and adaptive solutions, and recommends that PSOs adopt an Adaptive Stabilisation approach, which would enable them to continuously learn from experience and adapt their plans and actions to their changing operational environment.

The second article by Naila Salihu, Senior Research Fellow and Kwesi Aning, Director of the Faculty of Academic Affairs and Research, with the Kofi Annan

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9   Cedric De Coning, 'Peace enforcement in Africa: Doctrinal distinctions between the African Union and United Nations'. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 38(1), 2017, pp. 145–160, DOI: 10.1080/13523260.2017.1283108.

10   Lisa Hultman, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon, 'Beyond keeping peace: United Nations effectiveness in the midst of fighting', *American Political Science Review* 108(9), 2014, pp. 737–753.

11   Michael G. Findley, James A. Piazza and Joseph K. Young, 'Games rivals play: terrorism in international rivalries'. *The Journal of Politics* 74(1), 2012, pp. 235–248.

International Peacekeeping Training Centre, Accra-Ghana, explores the involvement of Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) in PSO over the last six decades, especially with a focus on Economic Community of West African States Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) mission deployed in 1990. They argue that although the ECOMOG enterprise was initially motivated by national interests of troop-contributing West African states, it was eventually enlarged and succeeded in protecting civilians, securing Liberia and contributing to regional stability. Finally, the authors propose that Ghana's experiences provide critical cognitive lessons in how a resource-constrained state adapted to the changing operational environments of peacekeeping theatres.

The third article by Andrea Prah, senior researcher at the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) and managing editor of the African Journal on Conflict Resolution, examines the rise of Ad hoc Security Initiatives across the African continent. The paper discusses the formation of this new type of initiative (a unique arrangement) as an alternative to UN/AU and other formal international organisations intervening in contemporary conflicts. The paper draws on examples of the Multinational Joint Task Force, the Regional Cooperative Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA), and the G5-Sahel Joint Force. The article discusses whether these arrangements can be identified as security communities, drawing from the work of Adler and Barnett (1998). The article provides the readers of international relations theory with a broader understanding of the value of African experiences in the theoretical realm. Finally, through the analysis of the missions, the paper presents a valuable discussion regarding updating the concept of security communities to address the transnationality of threats, reflecting the evolving nature of contemporary conflicts.

The fourth article by Katharine Brooks with the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Chika Charles Aniekwe with the United Nations Development Programme focuses on the Multinational Joint Task Force and argues that the MNJTF has become a regional hub of best practices. The paper examines these practices, policies and programs applied by the MNJTF to adjust to the context on the ground. By exploring and drawing on untapped material and an array of interviews from critical respondents, the paper undertakes a more in-depth examination of the MNJTF, the relationship between the headquarters and the sectors, and the impact the creation of the MNJTF has had upon the forces. Finally, the paper demonstrates how the MNJTF has innovated its way out of situational and structural encumbrances.

The fifth paper by Bitania Tadesse, Senior Policy Analyst with International Peace Institute, draws on the African Union's Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and explores how the mission seeks to address the problem of tackling

terrorism using a PSO mission. In this sense, the paper draws on the literature on counterterrorism and new insights. The paper touches on how the AMISOM experience and the evolving nature of the AMISOM mandate and operations changed and impacted AMISOM's approach to the conflict during different periods. Finally, through in-depth analysis, the paper re-examines the effectiveness and sustainability of peace support operations in countering terrorism and illustrates the shortfalls of military-heavy response. It also makes a case for the need to revisit and reconceptualise the threat of terrorism in Somalia.

The sixth paper by Andrew E. Yaw Tchie, guest editor and Senior Research Fellow at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, explores the case of Ghana and Chad and examines how their historical pasts have influence their contributions to UN PKO and African-led PSO s. The analysis in the paper discusses the formation of armies, their influence on political systems, and how peacekeeping operations have influenced their types of operations. Despite challenges, the armies adapt to regional challenges, shaping the mission's tempo and style of operations. Finally, the paper concludes that both armies have done well in their respective deployments but challenges for these armies exists when it comes to their deployments at home, especially during period of insecurity.

The final article is by Zainab Olaitan at the Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria. Using Rwanda as a case study, the article assesses whether African-led peace support operations have become more gender-inclusive. The paper argues that while several interventions have been made to ensure that PSOS on the continent improve, the same cannot be said for gender inclusion. The article argues that despite the efforts of the Rwanda state to be diverse and inclusive in its approach to society, Rwandan militaries, just like many African militaries across the continent, remain limited, and efforts at improving peace support operations on the African continent have not translated into increased representation of women. Overall, peace operations continue to be implemented in a gender-blind manner where women are, at best, ignored and, at worst, excluded from the deployment process.

Acknowledgements

Biographical Notes

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