



European Union Support and African Security: A Critical Assessment of the Sahel Region

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Abstract

As peace and security form the basis of EU-Africa relations in recent years, the importance of EU support is well understood in African capitals where peace and security are mentioned as one of the partnerships under the Joint Africa-EU Strategy of 2007. Yet, with conflicts that prove hard to curtail in the Sahel region, it has come under increased pressure to focus on containing perceived threats with possible domestic repercussions such as violent extremism and jihadism. However, this study examines the EU's support for African peace and security with emphasis given on the Sahel Region. It adopts some of the ideas of the regional security paradigm which assumes that the effects of security challenges in one country will gradually escalate to neighbouring states in a regional arrangement. The study employs the qualitative research method for proper analysis. Findings reveal that the EU is represented through its Special Representative (EUSR), four EU delegations, three CSDP missions, and a Regional Advisory and Coordination Cell (RACC). While the EU is implementing its comprehensive approach; limited exchange of information, different organisational cultures, and overlapping tasks as well as the lack of clear and shared strategic guidelines continue to hamper the EU's engagement in the Sahel region. Apart from the EU as an entity, France's military operation (Barkhane) has long pushed the EU and the other member states to adopt more responsibility for the Sahel region hence, the extent to which they are coordinated with each other varies. This study recommends that the EU should cooperate more with the Sahelian states and other regional actors (AU and the ECOWAS) in capacity-building strategies; emphasise the principles of Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration when a jihadist group is open to dialogue; and should encourage Security Sector Reform to build serious military capabilities in the region.

Keywords: Peace, Security, Jihadists and Sahel Region.

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Introduction

While the European Union's engagement in Africa has grown since the treaties of Maastricht (1992) and Lisbon (2007), inter-regional cooperation between the two continents has long been dominated by trade and development issues through the partnership agreements of Yaoundé and Lomé, signed with the Africa-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) group of states (Farrell, 2010; Söderbaum & Stalgren, 2010). However, with a changing international context and the low development of the ACP states, a re-thinking of the EU-ACP cooperation gained ground (Carbone, 2013:4).

Despite the emphasis on development as the main area of cooperation, Africa-EU relations increasingly focussed on security issues with the signature of subsequent agreements (the Cotonou Agreement of 2000 and its revisions of 2005 and 2010) (Arnould, 2010). The interregional partnership between Africa and the EU set out in the Cairo Declaration and the related Plan of Action of 2000 was the first clear statement concerning the inclusion of peace and security and addressed issues such as terrorism, regional conflicts, state failure and migration (Plank, 2022). The first Africa-EU Summit in 2000 constitutes a significant moment of the interregional partnership besides the symbolic character of the declaration (Olsen, 2006). In pursuing a common approach to Africa (outlined in the EU's Africa Strategy), the EU committed itself to address Africa as "one entity" and to "further reinforce the basic principles that govern this relationship, most prominently equality, partnership and ownership" (European Union, 2005). The strategy constitutes a novel approach to setting a framework for a more consistent EU policy towards Africa which moves beyond the principles embedded in the ACP-EU relationship.

During the second EU-Africa Summit in December 2007, the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) laid the foundation for a long-term strategic partnership between the two continents. The partnership was based on a shared vision and "consensus of values, common interests, and common strategic objectives" (EU & AU, 2007b:2). While it consists of eight cooperation areas (most prominently peace and security cooperation), the JAES is the main document of the Africa-EU partnership on peace and security usurping the preliminary agreements which to a great extent focused on economic development.



The Africa-EU Partnership on Peace and Security identifies three priority actions outlined in the First Action Plan: a) enhance dialogue on challenges to peace and security; b) full operationalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture; and c) predictable Funding for African-led Peace Support Operations (EU & AU, 2007a:2). Among others, they foresee the establishment of regular dialogue, consultations between institutions and organs of the two organisations, joint assessment missions, exchange of experience and a direct EU intervention in conflicts on a case-by-case analysis (Brosig, 2011:3).

As such, Africa-EU security cooperation is embedded in the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) as the main body for implementing peace and security on the continent. It is meant (as a structure that provides for peace and security and lays the foundation) for “African solutions to African problems” (Bappah, 2022). It incorporates a political decision body, the Peace, and Security Council (PSC), which legitimises and coordinates the other elements such as the Panel of the Wise, an African Standby Force, or the African Peace Fund.

Within the framework of the APSA, the African Union is tasked with the coordination and organisation of matters on the highest level, and it has the lead in crisis management. The structure heavily relies on the support of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of the five regions (North, South, East, West and Central). Each of the RECs must provide for a standby force, contribute one member to the Panel of the Wise, establish early warning systems and help to implement the APSA in the regions (Söderbaum & Stapel, 2022). In this regard, the EU has also developed strong interregional ties to the AU in general; and some of the RECs, those who have developed a rather high and ambitious mandate in peace and security.

As the Sahel became the main target of interest for the EU in recent years, authorities (EU-AU) acknowledged the security and stability of the region and intensified their peace and security (Piccolino & Minou, 2014:117). Various ministerial meetings and coordination processes were held in Brussels and Addis Ababa with the EU’s support channelled to the AU through the Regional Indicative Programs (RIPs) and within the framework of the African Peace Facility (APF) been the key mechanism for implementing the Africa-EU cooperation on peace and security.



Although, the Sahel is a complex geopolitical space, the topography of the region and a history of de facto autonomy in some areas of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso made government control hard to exercise. Sovereign functions of the state such as aiding, security and protection, development and public services have been in most cases insufficient leading to a marginalisation of populations and radicalisation of youths (as tension with the central governments intensified), short of education and employment opportunities (UNOCHA, 2017a). The study attempts the basis of EU-Africa relations on peace and security as emphasised in the joint Africa -EU Strategy since 2017 and the challenges on contemporary insecurity in the Sahel region.

A close focus on the EU's interventions in the Sahel, the paper takes the geopolitical definition of the Sahel as G5 countries, including Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad. Accordingly, the first part of the paper outlines the main drivers of vulnerability at the regional and country levels and presents a multilateral framework (EU and other European countries) for Sahel security and stability. The paper's second part appraises the implementation of an integrated EU approach towards achieving stabilisation, conflict prevention and peace-building and the prospects for the regionalisation of Sahelian strategies. While the third part of the paper provides an overview of the EU-Africa relations with emphasis given on the Peace and Security Partnership, the last segment pointed out some fundamental challenges of such a relationship and offers practical recommendations for integrated actions based on concrete and actionable priorities for the EU in supporting peace and stability of the AU with particular emphasis to border-related issues in the Sahel

Review of Literature

Regional Institutional Framework and Security Development in the Sahel Region

Although, international efforts in the Sahel have increased in the past years (led by France, the US and the EU), there are at present two core security deployments in the Sahel: France's Operation Barkhane, which is the core military deployment and the main security umbrella to ensure a minimum level of stability allowing other actors (development, humanitarian) to operate; and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which is the other core security provider, tasked with supporting the political process in Mali and carrying out a number of security-related assignments (Bappa, 2022).



The regional institutional framework for coordination and cooperation in development and security affairs (including counterterrorism) is provided by the G5 Sahel, formed in February 2014 with headquarters in Nouakchott, Mauritania (US Department of State, 2016). The G5 deployed a joint security force (*Force conjointe du G5 Sahel, FC-G5S*) in June 2017 to address terrorism and the challenges posed by transnational organised crime in the region, endorsed by the UN Security Council resolution 2359 (United Nations, 2017d); and recently by the Alliance for the Sahel, established in July 2017 (Conseil des Ministres franco-allemand, 2017) as a joint initiative of the EU, France and Germany, in cooperation with the World Bank, the African Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to enhance the stability and development of the region.

The EU developed the concept of a ‘Comprehensive Approach’ (EU CA), understood as the strategically coherent use of EU tools and instruments for external action in crisis or conflict situations, implying the joined-up deployment of EU instruments and resources (European Commission, 2013b; Pirozzi, 2013); and, more recently, it expanded it into the concept of an ‘Integrated Approach’, which extends the scope and ambition of the EU CA and strengthens the way the EU brings together institutions, expertise and instruments, working with member states in prevention, peace-building, crisis response and stabilisation (European External Action Service, 2017a; Tardy, 2017).

It is acknowledged that the different actors are rhetorically implementing integrated strategies, practical coordination on the ground remains limited (Helly, 2015) with development initiatives often blocked by a lack of access to the most insecure (and more in need of aid) areas. Intertwined layers of vulnerability, conflict, corruption and competing interests characterise an entire region in which local communities are easy prey to criminal networks and terrorist organisations. Furthermore, while strategic frameworks for intervention in the Sahel all imply a regional dimension (for instance, the EU Strategy for the Sahel) and a strong emphasis on transnational threats, responses in the field remain embedded in national contexts or framed in bilateral agreements for security assistance.

Also, border insecurity is more prevalent in the Sahel region; three groups (the Macina Liberation Front/FLM, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara/ISGS, and Ansaroul Islam) are responsible for roughly two-thirds of the jihadist violence in the central Sahel (Pauline,



2019). The activities of these groups posed challenges to the EU's support in the promotion of peace, security, and stability in the Sahel. This paper would look at the role of the EU in African peace and security with emphasis given on the Sahel region.

The Dynamics of Trans-border Jihadist activities in the Sahel

Drivers of fragility in the Sahel are manifold, interrelated, and multifaceted, making it one of the most vulnerable regions in the world. Violent extremism over the years has been fuelled in local communities by a long list of structural drivers, including pressures for land and resources, unemployment, recurrent political crises, high child and maternal mortality, low levels of education, environmental degradation, and governance deficits (UNDP, 2016).

An unstable political environment and weak institutions have exacerbated the situation in the Sahel, widening the gap between corrupt political leaders and citizens, with almost all states undergoing long periods of military rule (Burkina Faso for instance), at the end of which democratic norms have struggled to emerge. In the upper part of the region, armed groups have taken control of territories, establishing ad hoc alliances with local leaders and among different groups such as insurgents, ethnic militias, criminal gangs, smugglers, etc. (Cooke & Sanderson, 2016:5).

As political leaders failed to reform national institutional foundations and struggled to retain their privileges, transnational criminal networks have emerged as a prominent geopolitical and economic factor in the region. Two types of trafficking are particularly disruptive to stability in the region: arms and humans. The fall of the regime in Libya (2011) reinvigorated a flow of small arms and light weapons into the region, with a surge in the trade of assault rifles, machine guns and grenades, according to United Nations (UN) reports (2017a; 2017b; 2017c). Human trafficking has exploded in the last few years, with migrants across sub-Saharan Africa fleeing towards European coastlines through open routes in the Sahel and Libya (Cooke & Sanderson, 2016).

Regarding country-specific dynamics, Mali shows the greatest risks, given the obstacles to achieving sustainable peace, the recurrence of crises and growing security threats since the secession of northern Mali, renamed Azawad by allied armed jihadist groups in 2012 (Tobie, 2017). Notwithstanding the signing of the Algiers Agreement (15 May 2015) by the Malian



state and by regional and international mediators (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, African Union (AU), France, the UN, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), OIC and the European Union [EU]) and by the Coordination of Movements for Azawad (CMA) (20 June 2015), peace is struggling to be consolidated (UNOCHA, 2016d).

While Niger and Chad have been making gallant efforts to cope with the turmoil in the region (UNOCHA, 2015), the inability of the international community to adequately address growing humanitarian pressures and security threats, combined with rising violent extremism and a spike in jihadist attacks, has contributed to weakening the state's capacity to detect, deter and contain violence within and across their borders. Niger is surrounded by the jihadist threat of the Tuareg Malian rebellion and the insurgents Boko Haram in Nigeria (suffering from repeated attacks on the islands of Lake Chad targeting military and civilians) with porous borders regularly crossed by armed groups and smugglers (Sieff, 2017).

Burkina Faso's democratic transition following the ousting of President Blaise Compaoré in 2014 exposed itself to the ongoing jihadist threats in bordering countries, witnessing a spike in terrorism. The then President Kaboré was confronted with a series of the jihadist strike by AQIM in Ouagadougou due to Burkina Faso's support to French Operation Barkhane (Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2017). The jihadist security threat, the spread of terrorist violence in Burkina Faso territory and the porous nature of the 1,000 km long border with Mali, led to the deployment of a military contingent in the north where the al-Mourabitoun group (Moktar Belmoktar) and Macina Liberation Front (Amadou Kouffia) operates (International Crisis Group, (2015).

Mauritania has thus been confronting a terrorism threat since 2005. AQIM launched a series of attacks in Mauritania between 2005 and 2011, murdering foreign tourists and aid workers, attacking diplomatic and government facilities and ambushing Mauritanian soldiers and gendarmes. A successful strategy against terrorism that combines dialogue with the terrorists and military actions has prevented the country from further terrorist attacks since 2011 (The World Bank. 2017).



Thus, the tri-border region of Liptako-Gourma between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger is one of the dangerous borders with serious security challenges. Vulnerable civilians in the region have endured repeated, ethnically based attacks and a proliferation of jihadist armed groups. While many civilians have been killed because of the violent movements, some were forced to flee their homes, and others have been displaced with acute food insecurity.

Employing asymmetric tactics and close coordination, violent jihadist groups (Boko Haram, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)/ the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara/ISGS, the Macina Liberation Front/FLM, and Ansaroul Islam) have amplified local grievances and inter-communal differences as a means of mobilizing recruitment and fostering anti-government sentiments in marginalized border communities. Recruiting volunteers from Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria and Senegal, jihadist groups, core violent extremist groups and jihadist movements have been exploiting these vulnerabilities to mobilise adherents, trigger upheaval and subvert national institutions (Pauline, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) developed by Buzan and Waever (2003). The theory was created and developed in 1983-2003 and studied security as a social construction (securitization). It holds that international (trans-border) security should be examined from a regional perspective to provide a theoretical justification for constructing world regions.

Like most other regional theories, security complexes address the level of analysis located between individual units and the international system. The theory posits the existence of regional sub-systems as objects of security analysis and offers an analytical framework for dealing with them. The essential logic of the theory is rooted in the fact that all the states in the system are enmeshed in a global web of security interdependence. But because most political and military threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, insecurity is often associated with proximity. The normal pattern of security interdependence in a geographically diverse transborder and international system is one of the regionally based clusters labelled regional security complexes (RSCs).



The theory hinges on the foundational premise that territoriality is a central feature of international security dynamics; and that in the post-Cold War era the regional level is a necessary feature of any coherent analysis of international security. This may be illustrated by the rise of multilateral institutions in regional settings (EU and AU) as regionalism has become an increasingly popular means of organizing comprehensive security mechanisms for many actors.

Regions to Buzan (2003), are not given by geography or culture or patterns of current events, rather, they are socially constructed by their members, whether consciously or unconsciously by the ways in which their processes of (de)securitization interlock with each other. Security complex on the other hand is a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another” (Buzan, 1983). These regional security complexes are based on the distinct and stable patterns of security interactions between states. As reflected by Buzan and Waever, the basic assumptions of the RSC theory consist of four elements:

- i. RSC encapsulates a distinct dynamic between a particular set of states within a geopolitical context. The actors in each region share the properties of their region as a structural context.
- ii. It is imperative that most of its units are autonomous. In the absence of such autonomy, a distinct regional dynamic fails to emerge as the region is easily penetrated and influenced by outside powers.
- iii. It represents a substructure of the international system, and in a similar fashion, incorporates a distinct dynamic whose security can be either facilitated or hindered by the distribution of power within.
- iv. There exists a pattern of interaction between states within the specified regional context (between amity and enmity) as influenced by various factors such as history, culture, religion, and geography) (Buzan and Waever: 2003).

Depending on certain dynamics, security complexes have been divided into three types. The first is a *conflict formation*, which refers to “a pattern of security interdependence shaped by fear of war and expectation of use of violence” (Buzan, 2003). In a *conflict formation*, relations between major powers in the region are accompanied by violence. This situation



means that states consider each other as a potential threat and build alliances to reduce the security dilemma situation (Buzan, 2003).

The second is a *security regime*, in which states take certain measures to reduce the security dilemma and reduce mutual tensions. The third type is a *multilateral security community*, where states do not expect aggressive actions from other actors and do not plan to do so themselves. The creators of RSCT believe that cooperation and integration processes can eliminate the security complex by transforming an anarchic subsystem of states into a single actor (Buzan & Waver, 2003).

Even though, the RSC theory focuses much on the power structure of states in regional security, the theory is particularly important in discussing the security complexities of the Sahel region and the role of the EU-AU as multilateral organisations in achieving regional peace and security. In other words, it provides an ample understanding of the factors necessary for trans-border jihadist activities in the Sahel region.

3.0 Methodology

This study employs the Qualitative Research Method drawing mainly from academic literature, think-tank, and policy reports as well as articles in understanding the nature of EU's support to peace and security of the Sahel region. In other words, as data for the study were collected mainly from AU Annual Reports, EU Policy Briefs, and official records from the two continents; other articles relevant to the study were utilized.

The method of analysis adopted in this study was the descriptive research method based on analytical skills. Descriptive research involves a detailed rendering of information about people, places, or events in a setting (Creswell, 2003:195). The analysis covers three phases: the nature of the EU's support of African Peace and Security Architecture; the EU's role in the Sahel; and the challenges for peace and stability in the region.

The AU Peace and Security Framework

The realisation that a prosperous Africa is contingent upon peace, security and stability predisposed Africa's Heads of State and Government to endow the new organisation with an



innovative, extended mandate, powers and institutions needed to deal with the emerging threats affecting the continent. While the Heads of State and Government of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) adopted the Cairo Declaration on the Establishment of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in 1993; the AU's legal instrument obliges States parties "to promote peace, security and stability in Africa, in order to guarantee the protection and preservation of life and property, the wellbeing of the African people and their environment, as well as the creation of conditions conducive to sustainable development" (African Union, 2002).

To assume its responsibilities with respect to peace and security on the continent, the AU relies essentially on two legal instruments: the Constitutive Act of the African Union (2000) and the Protocol Relating to Peace and Security Council (adopted in Durban, in July 2002 and came into force in 2003), which give it the power to put in place a certain number of institutions and processes. These institutions and processes primarily comprise the Peace and Security Council, the Panel of the Wise, the Continental Early Warning System, the African Standby Force and the Special Fund. These institutions and processes are the pillars which together form the AU's architecture of peace and security today. In other words, the AU security project can be understood within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)

Within this architecture, each pillar has its own functions, which are defined not only in the protocol but also in three other key documents: Framework for the implementation of the Early Warning Mechanism, as adopted by the meeting of governmental experts on early warning and conflict prevention in Kempton Park, South Africa, in December 2006; the Modalities for the Functioning of the Panel of the Wise as Adopted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia by the Peace and Security Council in its 100th meeting in November 2007; and the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security Between the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities, and the Regional Standby Brigades of Eastern Africa and Northern Africa in 2007.

The first pillar of the AU's architecture of peace and security, the Peace and Security Council is comprised of fifteen members, ten of whom are elected for a mandate of two years and five of whom are elected for a mandate of three years. The election is conducted according to the



principles of representation and equitable regional rotation and according to specific criteria as they enjoy equal rights as stated in Article 5 of the protocol (African Union, 2002).

Based on Article 6 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the PSC of the AU, the PSC perform the following functions: promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa; early warning and preventive diplomacy; peace-making, including the use of good offices, mediation, conciliation and enquiry; peace support operations and intervention; peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction; humanitarian action and disaster management, and any other function as may be decided by the Heads of State or Government (African Union, 2002).

As the second pillar of the AU's architecture, where peace and security are concerned, the Panel of the Wise was formed based on Article 11(1) "to support the efforts of the Peace and Security Council and those of the Chairperson of the Commission, particularly in the area of conflict prevention" (African Union, 2002). Composed of five highly respected African personalities from various segments of society who have made an outstanding contribution to the cause of peace, security and development on the continent, this organ essentially provides "consultative services on all issues pertaining to the promotion, and maintenance of peace, security and stability in Africa" according to Article 11(2 & 3) (African Union, 2002).

Although the protocol setting out the organisation attributes and functioning of this group was adopted in 2004, it was only in early 2007 that the group's first members were known. They were designated by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Union in January 2007. The modes of functioning of the panel they constitute were only adopted by the Peace and Security Council in November 2007 (Olsen, 2022).

As the third pillar of peace and security of the AU's architecture, the Continental Early Warning System is an essential structure in the exercising of the AU's responsibility relating to conflict prevention on the continent. It reflects the importance that the AU Member States place on conflict prevention and early warnings. The Protocol in Article 12(2) states that: its role shall be to facilitate the prediction and prevention of conflicts through its observation and monitoring centre known as the 'Situation Room' (African Union, 2002).



Under the Protocol relating to peace and security, the Continental Early Warning System is responsible for anticipating and preventing the occurrence of conflicts by making information and analyses available to the Chairperson of the Commission to enable him to draw the attention of the Peace and Security Council to potential threats to peace and security in Africa in a timely manner (African Union, 2002). The information and analyses provided by the Continental Early Warning System are in response to the need to devise appropriate response strategies to be implemented by the AU and its institutions. The link between analysis and response is at the core of the methodological approach used by the AU Continental Early Warning System (Bappa, 2022).

While the Early Warning System of the AU favours conflict prevention over management and resolution, it came because of the international community's failure to manage and resolve large-scale violent conflicts, as made evident by the case of the Somalia and Rwanda events. Starting with this failure, a consensus was reached on the need to draw up prevention strategies through early warning models (Muntschick, 2022).

The African Standby Force is the fourth pillar of the AU's peace and security architecture. It is a group of regional standby multidisciplinary contingents, with civilian and military components ready for rapid deployment when called upon. According to Article 13(3) of the Protocol Relating to Peace and Security, the Standby Force has the mandate of performing observation and monitoring missions, peace support missions, the interventions in Member States as provided for in the Constitutive Act, the prevention and consolidation of peace, humanitarian assistance and any other functions as may be mandated by the Peace and Security Council or the Assembly (African Union, 2002).

The Peace Fund is the fifth and final pillar of the AU peace and security architecture. It provides "the necessary financial resources for peace support missions and other operational activities related to peace and security of the AU" (African Union, 2002). It is made up of essentially financial appropriations from the regular budget of the AU (including arrears of contributions), voluntary contributions from member states, and from other sources within Africa (including the private sector, civil society, and individuals), as well as through appropriate fund-raising activities.



In keeping with the Peace and Security Council Protocol, the Peace Fund may also receive voluntary contributions from outside Africa. But accepting these voluntary contributions requires the approval of the Chairperson of the Commission. He may only accept them if it has been proven they comply with the objectives and principles of the AU. The AU Peace Fund also gets voluntary contributions from many non-African partners. These partners are mainly States or regional organisations in Europe or Asia. China, South Korea, and Japan are the primary Asian donors (African Union, 2002; 2005). There are European countries such as Italy and Spain where frameworks for the joint monitoring of these voluntary contributions have been put in place.

Thus, any analysis must stress the importance placed by the Peace and Security Council Protocol on the close collaboration between the AU and other organizations. The AU is invited to collaborate with the regional economic communities through their regional mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, and resolution and by setting up regional brigades. The Memorandum of Understanding of cooperation in the area of peace and security signed between the AU and the regional mechanisms in January 2008 in Addis-Ababa bears testimony to this willingness to cooperate.

The AU is also invited to collaborate closely with the United Nations and other pertinent international organizations in maintaining peace and security. It has given and continues to give proof of its willingness to cooperate through recent experiences with the United Nations in Sudan and with the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) in Madagascar and Guinea within the International Contact Group (ICG) (Söderbaum, &Stapel, 2022). This willingness to cooperate is driven by the assumption that peace is a collective task which requires the commitment of all influential actors.

The AU Peace and Security Architecture has thus become stronger and is now fully operational in most of its components as demonstrated, for example, by their respective involvement in the search for solution to the political crises in Mauritania, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Guinea and armed conflict in Sudan and Somalia. It must be acknowledged that even if the number of conflicts has been considerably reduced, as is easily observed when comparing African geopolitical maps of armed conflicts of the late 90s and the first decade of the 2000s, the condition of peace and security remains extremely worrying in recent years.



The Africa-EU Peace and Security Partnership

When the Treaty of Lisbon entered effect and the European External Action Service was established, this partnership enables both parties to align their views and better confront the prevention, management, and resolution of the crises in Africa together. For the African partners, this entails taking responsibility of the collective security system needing to be put in place on the African continent, with the full support of the Europeans. For the EU and its Member States, it is a chance to go beyond aid policies and to participate in a global, more consistent process (Arnould, 2010).

Building on the Africa-EU Joint Strategy, as articulated in the Lisbon Treaty of December 2008, the AU-EU partnership in the peace and security domain is most evident in the process of the annual joint meeting between the AU Peace and Security Council and the EU Peace and Security Committee. The EU, however, gets involved as a result of historical factors and emerging circumstances in various areas in Africa, including election observation and monitoring, conflict prevention and resolution, humanitarian assistance, human rights advocacy, good governance advocacy (Council of the European Union, 2008). This partnership is multifaceted undertaking which combines the various instruments at the European Union's disposal: the development policies, but also the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), as well as the European Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

The Europeans' commitment to contribute to resolution of the crises in Africa has taken on a totally new dimension since 2003 with the EU's first military operation in Africa (Operation Artemis in the Democratic Republic of Congo). There have been other operations and missions since then in DRC, more recently in Chad, and today in the Horn of Africa (Julian, 2017). The EU has complemented these actions with reform missions in the security sector, whether relating to police, armies, or justice (AU-EU, 2010). Among the eight partnerships of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (Peace and Security; Democratic Governance and Human Rights; Trade and Regional Integration; Development; Energy, Climate Change; Migration, Mobility and Employment; and Science, Information Society and Space); the 'Peace and Security Partnership' is very significant (Council of the European Union, 2008). Considering its intrinsic link with the CSDP, the interest of the Member States and the considerable budgets put in place, this is the most advanced area.



The Peace and Security partnership has chosen three tasks to perform as a priority: strengthening of the political dialogue between the EU, the AU, and regional African organisations; implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA); and the financing of the AU's peacekeeping operations. Political dialogue has intensified through regular consultations on the crises and an on-going strategic dialogue. The collaboration between the AU and the EU for the International Contact Group on Guinea to help the latter restore stability and democracy as well as efforts in Mali, Niger, Madagascar, and Somalia (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Since 2009, the AU's Peace and Security Council and the EU's Political and Security Committee have met regularly. The dialogue with Regional African organisations is moving forward, namely with the SADC in southern Africa, the ECOWAS in West Africa, the ECCAS in Central Africa, the IGAD in East Africa and the AMU in North Africa. The EU Council decision of 27 October 2009 on security in the Sahel region paved the way for dialogue between the EU and the Sahel region (European Commission, 2019).

The Akosombo Conference held in Ghana in 2009 strengthens the relations in a trilateral framework between the EU, the AU and the African regions. At the same time, these relations are being strengthened with the African states most involved in regional security (such is the case of Nigeria and South Africa), with which regular political dialogue sessions are held (Arnould, 2010). While the dialogue held with different States by virtue of Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement often encompasses the questions of peace and security which supports the objectives of this partnership, initiatives such as the one which associates the 5 States of the Arab Maghreb Union and 5 States of the Southern EU helped to further the dialogue (European External Action Service, 2016).

As the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) develops, four key principal areas of activity have been selected: conflict prevention; training and validation of the Africa Stand-by Force; equipping and transporting the latter; and post-conflict reconstruction. The objective as regards conflict prevention is to reinforce the capacities of the political-military structures of the AU and of regional organizations, as well as complementarity with the EU (Magalhaes and Oliveira, 2021).



Thus, two examples will be cited as an illustration: the support given to the Continental Early Warning System, in particular by means of the European Union's Situation Centre (SITCEN), the Joint Research Centre of Ispra and certain European Union Member States, namely the map making carried out by Germany; and the Franco-British initiative on putting in place a Common Interactive Watch and Anticipation Mechanism (MIVAC) (Gilles, 2021). To improve the interaction between the AU and African regional organisations, the EU offers its support to the regions' AU liaison offices in Addis Ababa (AU-EU, 2010).

The objective in terms of training and validation of the Africa Standby Force (ASF) is for the latter to acquire an initial operational capacity, as provided for in the AU Protocol on Peace and Security. The organisation focuses on the AU's ability to plan and conduct peacekeeping operations. After the support provided to AMIS in Darfur, the EU's current support for AMISOM in Somalia and the MICOPAX in the Central African Republic are very much in line with this object (AU-EU, 2010).

The training and assessment of the ASF are done in the framework of the AMANI AFRICA training cycle which commenced in November 2008 in Addis Ababa. Centred around the concept "Strengthening African Peacekeeping Capabilities" (EURORECAMP), the two-year cycle, which transferred an initially French programme to a European setting, aims to assist the AU in the process of certifying the ASF Africa Stand-by Force and in training African decision makers, whether military or civilian (African Union, 2017; Kahsu and Yohannes, 2021).

While series of exercise (Command Post Exercise) involving the AU's Department of Peacekeeping Operations takes place, another key activity in this regard is the programme of support for African training centres. Depending on the outcome of a joint EU-AU study, the programme is meant to strengthen African training capabilities. Thus, improving the logistical and equipment capabilities of the Africa Stand-by Force remains a problem, particularly where funding is concerned. As has been identified (Tardy, 2016), the EU's aid instruments do not permit the funding of this type of expenditures, which are purely military in nature.



In terms of post-conflict reconstruction, the objective is to share the experience acquired by the two parties, notably in the areas of security sector reform, disarmament, the fight against the illicit circulation of small arms, drug trafficking and terrorism. It is hoped that the exchange of expertise, analysis and experience would enable the AU to consolidate its doctrines and concepts in these areas (African Union, 2018).

Regarding instrument, the Africans and Europeans have formed implementation groups which unite the AU's Commission and Member States and the EU's Commission and General Secretariat of the Council and Member States. Leaders have been appointed for each of the partnerships. This responsibility lies with the EU Council in the case of the "Peace and Security Council" (European Commission, 2011). The initiatives are relayed on the ground through the representation of the EU at the AU and through representation before the United Nations.

However, the main sources of funding are funds managed by the European Commission. The Peace Facility for Africa, with nearly EUR 400 million represented by the European Development Fund (10th EDF), is the key financial instrument of the partnership. Parts of these funds are allocated to cover the salaries of AMISOM soldiers. The rest is reserved for strengthening Africa's peacekeeping capabilities. Indicative regional programmes are also planned for all of Africa's regions and include the security dimension (European Commission, 2011).

Moreover, the 'Instrument for Stability', the objective of which is to respond to a situation of urgency, crisis or emerging crisis, accounts for nearly EUR 250 million and can be mobilised as a complement to the EU's crisis management actions. This, is what was done in Chad to support the training of Chadian police officers by the UN (African Union, 2018). Thus, the creation of the Peace Fund at the AU level, where AU Member States deposit their financial contribution, is noteworthy.

The EU-AU's Support to Peace and Stability of the Sahel

While the EU has long been a key partner to Africa, the evolution and widening of security threats in both continents have made the EU and AU more tangibly interdependent (particularly in relation to violent extremism, migration and forced displacement). On the



other hand, the EU has provided funding to the AU, to African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and to other coalitions through the African Peace Facility (APF) (European Security Strategy, 2003).

Though, the APSA was established by the AU as a structural and long-term response to African peace and security challenges, its operationalisation has always been one of the priority actions for the Africa-EU peace and security partnership. Between 2004 and 2019, the EU provided approximately €2.9 billion in financial assistance to the APSA channelled through the APF. As a framework for managing the financial support of the EU for the AU's peace and security architecture, it has allocated €200 million to the peace keeping operations and €35 million to strengthening the AU's capacities (Council of the European Union, 2020).

In the meantime, the main instrument of the EU-AU partnership has been the financing of the APSA and African peace operations. Since its creation in 2004, the African Peace Facility (APF) of the European Development Fund (EDF) has financed African operation to the tune of over €1.6 billion, with the largest share being allocated to AMISOM in Somalia (which absorbed €510 million for 2014 and 2015). The APF was raised to €900 million in late 2015 for the years 2014-2016 (from an initial amount of €750 million), with an extra €150 million needed for the second part of 2016 (European External Action Service, 2016).

Thus, there are two other components of the APF. One aims at supporting the operationalisation of APSA through capacity-building of the AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs), the financing of AU Commission staff salaries, support for the AMANI Africa training and exercise cycles, support for African Training Centres, etc. with about €55 million in 2014-2016. The other one supports the AU Early Response Mechanism (ERM) through the immediate funding of conflict prevention, mediation, and crisis management activities with around €15 million over the same time period (Council of the European Union, 2021).

The APF, financed from the extra-budgetary European Development Fund (EDF), has contributed significantly to enhancing dialogue and cooperation between the EU and the AU. Aiming at backing African institutions in providing "African solutions to African problems", the APF represents one of the pillars underpinning the AU-EU relationship with the goal of



enhancing dialogue, operationalising the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and underpinning peace-support operations in Africa. The fund for instance, enables the AU to carry out Peace Support Operations (PSOs) decided on by the Peace and Security Council together with interventions authorised by the AU's Assembly (African Union, 2018).

Considering the geographical proximity of the Sahel to the southern neighbourhood, the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel aimed to prevent the potential spill-over effects of terrorism, illicit trafficking, radicalisation, and extremism spreading in West Africa since 2011 (European External Action Service, 2011). Adopted on 21 March 2011 and encompassing Mauritania, Mali and Niger, the EU comprehensive approach was extended to Burkina Faso and Chad on 17 March 2014 (European External Action Service, 2018).

The regional stability of the Sahel, the prevention and countering of radicalisation, the creation of appropriate conditions for youth, the regulation of migration flows, the border management and fight against illicit trafficking and transnational organised crime were all priorities set out in the EU Sahel Regional Action Plan 2015-2020, which implements the EU comprehensive approach. Considering the interconnection of poverty, domestic instability, state fragility, demography, food crises, fragile governance, trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants and radicalisation, EU priorities are carried out by three EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, three main EU development funds and one EU humanitarian assistance instrument in the Sahel (European Commission, 2019b).

Given the importance of irregular migratory movements from Niger through the Sahel, the Council Decision 2012/392/CFSP launched the civilian CSDP mission EUCAP SAHEL Niger in Agadez and Niamey. EUCAP SAHEL Niger aims to manage border and migration flows, supporting the interoperability of the Nigerian Police, Gendarmerie and National Guard, strengthening the technical competences of Niger's security actors and Nigerian security forces' training policies, management of human resources and logistics for fighting terrorism and organised crime (European Council, 2021).

EUCAP Sahel Niger expenditure was intended to be covered by about €24,355,000 between 16 July 2012 and 15 July 2015 according to Council Decision 2014/482/CFSP (European Commission, 2016). Council Decision 2016/1172/CFSP extended the mission mandate until



15 July 2018 and agreed on a budget of €26.3 million for the first-year mandate (European Commission, 2019a). While the civilian CSDP mission EUCAP Sahel Mali was launched by Council Decision 2014/219/CFSP, the need is to improve governance practices thereby tackling the ongoing Malian domestic crisis with cross-borders and regional repercussions. Based in Bamako, EUCAP Sahel Mali aims to enable Malian authorities to restore and maintain the constitutional and democratic order as well as the conditions for a lasting peace in Mali and to restore and maintain the authority and legitimacy of the state throughout the Malian territory (European Commission, 2015).

The mission provides experts in strategic advice and training to the Malian Police, Gendarmerie and National Guard and the relevant ministries in supporting reforms particularly in the security sector (Julian, 2017). A budget of €36,675,000 was allocated between 2014 and 2017 based on Council Decision 2017/50/CFSP although the mandate was later extended to two years with a budget of €29.7 million for the first-year period (Council of the European Union, 2017). Similarly, a “non-executive military mission” EUTM Mali was launched on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution, such as S/RES/2085/ by Council Decision 2013/34/CFSP. Deploying 580 servicemen and women from 23 EU member states, EUTM Mali aims to contribute to the restoration of their military capacity with a view to enabling them to conduct military operations to restore Malian territorial integrity and reduce the threat posed by jihadist groups without being involved in combat operations (EUTM Mali, 2022; Council of the European Union, 2013). The main target is to provide military training and advice to the Malian armed forces.

The mandate of EUTM Mali was extended three times, it benefited from a budget of €12.3 million between 2013 and 2014; (Council of the European Union, 2013), €27,700,000 between 2014 to 2016 (Council of the European Union, 2014) and €33,400,000 between 2016 and 2018 (Council of the European Union, 2016). Also, the EU’s Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (ICSP) supports several security initiatives and peace-building activities in the region focusing mainly on transborder threats (European Commission, 2018a).



On the other hand, the interconnection between security instability and socioeconomic failures in the Sahel, led the EU to supplement its CSDP missions in providing financial assistance to the countries in the region. The basic aim is to tackle demographic pressure, institutional weaknesses, and governance failure, weak socio-economic infrastructures, and insufficient resilience to food and nutrition crises (European Commission, 2018c).

As far back as 2015, the EU Trust Fund for Africa approved a budget of about €1,001.8 million for the Sahel and Lake Chad area (European Commission, 2018b); and the 11th European Development Fund/EDF (under the National Indicative Programmes 2014-2020) allocated €1.15 billion to West Africa and mandated the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and ECOWAS (with the implementation of the 11th EDF) to address peace, security and regional stability, regional economic integration, resilience, food, and nutritional security issues in the Sahel (European Commission, 2015). While the implementation of the EU's Regional Action Plan (RAP) is carried out with the primary responsibility of coordinating key international and regional partners (Council of the European Union, 2015), the coordination takes place between the European External Action Service (EEAS) geographical departments (focusing on Western Africa and units in charge of logistical and technical aspects) in order to coordinate the activities conducted on the ground by the different EU missions in the Sahel. Thus, the presence of the EU High Representative, the EEAS General Secretary and the EU Special Representatives for the Sahel at the UN General Assembly is also a way to coordinate with the UN missions.

As such, Coordination between the EU missions in the Sahel (and other regional and international actors present in the region) welcomed the establishment of a Joint Task Force for Mali by the AU, ECOWAS, the EU and the UN (UNSC Resolution 2100/2013) in order to coordinate actions and responses to jihadist threats spreading in northern Mali. This coordination mission was entrusted to MINUSMA (S/RES/2085, S/RES/2164) and formally respected in article 7 of the mandate for EUTM Mali (2013/34/CFSP) (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). Finally, to ensure effective cooperation at all levels, the leadership of international police missions to Mali (both EUCAP and MINUSMA) meets on a quarterly basis for strategic security purposes, while EUCAP Head of Operations and MINUSMA Deputy Police Commissioner meet on a monthly basis (Dijkstra et al., 2017). In general, the



leadership of international military missions to Mali (MINUSMA, EUTM and French Operation Barkhane) meets at the operational and national military level on a biweekly basis and established an exchange of liaison officers (MINUSMA and EUTM).

Other European States in the Sahel

The French military mission (Operation Barkhane) took over from Operation Épervier (since 1986) and Operation Serval (which was triggered in 2013) at the request of the Malian government to contain the northern jihadist attacks threatening Bamako. While Operation Barkhane came into force on the 31st of July 2014 aims to counter terrorism and fight the jihadist armed groups throughout the Sahel region (unlike Operation Serval, which was limited to Mali), the operation is based on three permanent support bases in Mali (Gao), Niger (Niamey) and Chad (N'Djamena) due to the cross-border nature of the jihadist threat across the region (Tobie, 2017; United Nations, 2017d).

Also, three detachments of the operational military partnership based in Mali (Ansongo, Timbuktu) and Niger (Tilabéry), contributes to the flexibility of the Operation (military units). The aerial coverage of the area is ensured by seventeen combat and manoeuvre helicopters, eight Mirage 2000 C/D/N, from six to ten tactical and strategic airplanes and five drones spreading over two military air bases in Chad (N'Djamena) and Niger (Niamey) (Ministère de la Défense, 2017). Since 2017, Operation Barkhane develops the capability to conduct operations (using a terrestrial, air-land and air component) simultaneously throughout its area of jurisdiction with about 4,000 soldiers operating from a single Joint Theater Command stationed in N'Djamena (Chad). Thus, the threats of transborder jihadists pose a logistical challenge to the Operation (Ministère de la Défense, 2017:14). As part of the French Sahel strategy, Operation Barkhane aims at ensuring that partner states (Sahel) acquire the capacity to ensure their security autonomously.

In implementing the French Sahelo-Saharan Strategy, the French Development Agency (development counterpart of Operation Barkhane) plays a critical role with the strategic aim of tackling three priorities set out in its 2015 Action Plan: the promotion of growth in economic activity and employment opportunities for youths located on the outskirts of cities and in agglomerations, responding to demographic challenges; and contributing to balanced



territorial development and food security with the commitments of about €1,687 million in 2014 (Agence française de développement, 2015:15-22).

Other European countries are also present in the Sahel. Germany in the past few years has been increasing its role in the Sahel and particularly in Mali by contributing to the deployment of German personnel to MINUSMA (from 650 to 1,000 in 2017), the provision of liaison officers, tactical air transport capabilities and support with mid-air refuelling. Through the Bundeswehr, Germany has also provided about 350 soldiers to the EU training mission for the Malian army based in southern Mali. This includes the provision of surveillance and reconnaissance forces to protect specific sites, as well as other forms of military support in the fields of command support, logistics and medical service (European Commission, 2018c).

While the fight against criminal networks and stabilisation of the entire Sahel region are top priorities for Italy, its presence in the Sahel has grown recently, with a specific geopolitical interest in Niger, given the strategic importance of the country for the fight against illegal trafficking of migrants that reach the Mediterranean through Libya (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). In this respect, Italy's contribution has been centred on development initiatives and political support, with a general reluctance towards deploying troops on the ground. Even though, the Italian contribution to multilateral missions (both MINUSMA and EUTM) has been relatively small, Italy deploys seven soldiers in MINUSMA (Ministero della Difesa, 2015a), twelve in EUTM Mali (including military instructors) (Ministero della Difesa, 2015b) and four in EUCAP Sahel (Ministero della Difesa, 2015c). However, the Italian Government in 2017 launched a non-combat military mission to Niger comprising 470 soldiers, whose mandate is to train and build the capacities of Niger military personnel that will participate in the G5 Joint Force, as well as facilitate the control of borders between Niger and Libya though it is a bilateral agreement for military cooperation between Italy and Niger (Ministero della Difesa, 2017).

Within the EU and UN frameworks, Italy supported the creation of the joint force of the G5 Sahel and played a key role in the definition of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. Italian embassy in Niamey, Niger (been the first in the Sahel region opened on 3 January 2018) was intended to focus specifically on security, migrant flows, and partnership



for development across the Sahel (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). While the Italian approach to foster development in the Sahel focuses mostly on the fight against desertification, its contribution to development aid amounts to €50 million for Niger, €10 million for Chad, €5 million for Burkina and €5 million for Mauritania (Cardarelli, 2017:30-32).

Other European countries like Denmark, the Netherlands and the UK are strategic important actors in the Sahel. They all provide development assistance and contribute in the fields of Security Sector Reform (SSR), Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), transitional justice, and reform of the *Comités consultatifs locaux de sécurité* (CCLS) (USAID, 2018). In addition, a support for border management in the LiptakoGourma region of Niger, Mali and Bourkina Faso was implemented by the Danish Demining Group (DDG), which covers the strengthening of police capacities and border authorities through technical expertise. Denmark and the Netherlands have also supported the governance of the security sector in the region by assisting the Security and Defence Commission of the Malian Parliament.

Challenges facing the AU-EU Peace and Security Partnership

The Africa-EU Security Partnership is facing several challenges, both in its substance and how it is implemented. While the main functions of the Peace and Security Council are promoting peace, security and stability, preventing and resolving conflicts, consolidating peace and post-conflict reconstruction processes, humanitarian action and disaster management; its role as the key actor in a new architecture of stability in Africa remains limited by the weakness of the legal instruments at its disposal, and the difficulty of enforcing its decisions due to the AU's lack of material resources and human resources (Olsen, 2022).

Another great challenge for Africa is that of integration on the continent. In practice, many African nations favour bilateral relations at the expense of the AU, which is making progress in terms of its overall structure. While the AU and regional organisations signed a Memorandum of Understanding in July 2008, to reinforce ties between the two regional and continental entities, this memorandum calls for certain autonomy of the regional organizations in how they use their crisis management capacities (regional standby brigades, etc.) for continental integration (Bappa, 2015; 2022).



Despite the narrative on a “partnership among equals”, EU-Africa relations remain unequal, unbalanced and lopsided; and the EU and its member states continue to impose forms and formats of relations on its African peers. African partners’ dependency on foreign funds has been considered one of the key factors jeopardising the continent’s aspirations to provide “African solutions to African problems”. The AU’s institutions have shown a limited capacity for absorbing external funding, which is also connected with the proliferation of funding sources (Muntschick, 2022). This creates a significant gap between planned budget and actual funding, which hinders the effective delivery of its agenda.

While improving coordination among the commitments and policies of member states and institutions remain the key challenge for the EU, the general coordination of all European actors involved (state and institutional) find it difficult with the new European External Action Service provided for in the Treaty of Lisbon. The EU’s second challenge is to adapt its financial instruments to fragile situations which lie in coordinating instruments as well as improving responsiveness particularly with regard to the Peace Facility for Africa. The third challenge is to adapt its structures to its foreign policy ambitions (Söderbaum, &Stapel, 2022). The strategic partnership between the EU and Africa is dependent on the EU’s foreign relations structures and crisis management structures.

On the other hand, while the EU’s support to African peace, security and stability demonstrates the European commitment to African-led security governance, shortfalls in the operationalisation of APSA are well known (*inter alia* non-full operational capability of the African Standby Force, uneven levels of operational capacity of RECs/RMs, AU-RECs coordination and decision-making problems) and Europeans remain by and large sceptical about African medium-term operational and financial real capacities (Plank, 2022). Also, as the Peace and Security Council has (since it entered operation in March 2004) mainly focused on conflict management and resolution almost at the expense of conflict prevention, post-conflict reconstruction and post-conflict peace building; this has been so due to the frequent outbreaks of disruptive crises and violent conflicts in the continent. In fact, the Peace and Security Council was born amidst conflicts, making conflict resolution its inevitable first task (Söderbaum, &Stapel, 2022). As the Peace and Security Council was circumstantially compelled to act as a fire brigade, conflict prevention has consequently not been pursued as it



should be (essentially to detect and deactivate potential causes of crisis and conflicts).

Similarly, there is inadequate managerial and operational capacity in the APSA as the AU Commission itself operates with a skeleton of manpower in many areas of its mandate. The shortage is more critical in the planning and management of peacekeeping operations. Due to a shortage of competent personnel and contingents (troops), most of these missions do not operate up to the level required by their respective mandates (Bappa, 2022). As a result, and due to other contributory factors, the situations that are targeted to be put under control remain elusive and in deterioration in some cases.

Correspondingly, there is precarious funding for peace support operations in the APSA. Since 2004, no Peace and Security Council authorized peace support operation has escaped the problem of precarious funding in all aspect's operations. In fact, the bulk of that funding has come and continues to come from outside of Africa. The AU Peace Fund is too small a financial arrangement to face the enormous demands from peace support/peacekeeping operations in Africa (Plank, 2022). As for external funding, it has the risk of being unpredictable and the political conditions under which it is often provided. The funds are often earmarked for certain activities and that does not provide fund utilization flexibility to the AU.

Beyond the question of its impact on African capacities, issues relate to: the total and increasing APF budget and the sustainability of the effort on the EU side; the fact that the APF is largely not eligible for official development assistance (ODA); the hypothetical adaptation of the APF to allow for the funding of non-lethal equipment to African countries (in the context of the Capacity-Building for Security and Development initiative); and its possible 'budgetisation' remains debatable (Bergmann, 2022). As such, while the AU Peace and Security Council face enormous limitations when it comes to moving troops, equipment, and material to a theatre of operation within a set time, the same limitation intervenes, though with less gravity, with respect to returning troops, equipment and material back to the point of origin (Olsen, 2022). More acutely also, logistical limitations (shortage of logistical capability) negatively affect the rotation of troops in the field.



Even though the EU has achieved a lot in terms of conceptualising its strategies in different parts of Africa, its ability to think and act at a strategic and pan-continental level remains limited. Policy dialogue on security and other issues has been jeopardised by insufficient communication and coordination at all levels (technical, senior official and political) (Müller, 2022). Consequently, its impact is still very limited. For instance, this is the case for the annual joint meetings between the EU's Political and Security Committee and the AU's Peace and Security Council, which have been organised every year (alternatively in Brussels and Addis Ababa) since October 2008.

Although, the Sahel offer examples of progress in terms of comprehensive approach as well as of the EU's willingness to prioritise its policies, yet the difficulties observed in the operationalisation of the 2015 Joint Communication on Capacity-building for Security and Development (CBSD) attest to lasting and latent intra-institutional tensions. A state-centric approach and the prevalence of some key member states' foreign policies tend to limit what can be achieved at the institutional level (Bergmann, 2022). There is a mismatch at the institutional level between the independence and prerogatives of the European Commission, on one hand, and the political and institutional weakness of the AU Commission on the other (Bappa, 2015).

However, the presence of the EU in the Sahel has posed a variety of operational challenges which include sustainability of the EU's commitments and efforts in the long-term peace and stability of the region; proper and effective coordination among the EU actors; and their capacity to build trust and support from local populations. While the EU proposed a variety of strategic approaches to solve multi-dimensional challenges in the region, the main limits of these strategic frameworks have to do with competition among organisations in obtaining financial resources to implement the action plans and the shortage of expertise and operators for execution and monitoring (Helly et al., 2015:2).

Similarly, the results in terms of coordination among international actors of the EU are questionable as competition for resources (human and financial) continue to be a major limitation in the execution of the strategic frameworks. This is because, each strategic actor defines the geographic and thematic priorities for intervention according to their own needs, interests and perceptions. In other words, cooperation between the EU and its member states



has been complex due to strong interests maintained by strategic key actors in the Sahel region (France, Italy, Spain) and the reluctance of other states to support the deployments of EU CSDP missions (such as Poland and the Nordic countries).

While the presence of multiple security providers (example, Barkhane, EU CSDP missions) make collaboration difficult in concrete terms (given that transaction costs grow exponentially as multiple chains of command, mandates and military/security personnel overlap in the same theatres), civil society in Mali sees the presence of the foreign actors (France) operating in the security domain as problematic and questions its effectiveness (Tobie, 2017:10). Robust military engagements by France undermine trust and contribute to radicalising part of the population (International Crisis Group, 2015). The situation is similar in the humanitarian field, where ineffective coordination and prioritisation of needs among different EU actors, have in many cases prevented effective responses and the capacity to save lives.

The most critical gap is the inability of the EU and its member countries to achieve collective outcomes. Building and supporting resilience, including by addressing the underlying drivers of crises in G5 Sahelian countries, has been challenging. A common understanding of risks and vulnerability has emerged but combined or coordinated assistance struggles to happen. The reinforcement of national security and judicial systems for the fight against terrorism and organised crime and greater local ownership in fulfilling those tasks are a long way from being achieved (Edwards, 2016). Lack of reconstruction, recovery and the ineffectiveness of security actors to contain threats have also become main concerns in the local populations, which undermines the perception (and the trust) of communities towards EU's interventions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As interdependence between Europe and Africa (on both economic and security matters) is gaining stronger, the last decade has seen a general move towards peace and security partnerships. This is marked by the institutionalisation of their relationship through EU-Africa summits, high-level political dialogue between the EU Political and Security Committee (PSC) and the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), as well as meetings between the European Commission and the AU Commission. While the EU PSC and the AU



PSC conducted their first joint mission in 2015 (to Mali) as a further expression of inter-institutional cooperation in crisis management, various channels aimed at promoting a broader dialogue on issues of common concern such as terrorism, organised crime, piracy, and migration.

Since 2016 and the introduction of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), the EU has tried to integrate its external projection through two approaches: firstly, by enhancing the integrated approach including more spheres of intervention and improving field coordination and policy consistency; secondly, by applying the ‘principled-pragmatism’ approach whereby European interests and values coexist with one another with emphasis given to peace, security, and prosperity.

The New AU-EU Peace and Security partnership indicates that priority should be given to strategic cooperation on the main crisis areas while maintaining an integrated approach to the entire cycle of conflicts. Cooperation should also focus on improving governance as a precondition for security and development, and on actions to increase the resilience of African countries.

As a result, the following recommendations should be considered for the AU-EU partnership on peace and security for the stability of the African continent.

- i. The EU should avoid a direct military presence and intervention and cooperate more with Sahelian states and strong regional actors in the region (AU and the ECOWAS for example) in capacity-building strategies.
- ii. Security Sector Reform (SSR) is needed in most Sahelian countries that have neither the logistical nor the financial resources to build serious military capabilities.
- iii. The EU should emphasise the principles of Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) particularly when a group (jihadist) is open to dialogue.
- iv. The EU (through the AU) should invest in a youth policy that would provide young people with better professional opportunities and career advice for future development.



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