

# Improving the UN's Partnerships for Peacekeeping

**BACKGROUND PAPER**  
CHALLENGES ANNUAL FORUM 2018

Action for Peacekeeping –  
Strengthening the Effectiveness of  
Future Peace Operations

28-29 Nov 2018, Stockholm, Sweden

Hosted by the Folke Bernadotte  
Academy and the Swedish Armed  
Forces.

## Summary

The ability of multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, the European Union and the African Union to be able to effectively and efficiently address contemporary security challenges is dependent on enhanced partnerships. Although these entities have partnered in the past to address peace and security challenges, improvements are needed to optimize the relationships. Reimagining the relationships between the partners to reflect the principles of equality, enhancing each partners' capabilities to better interact on pertinent issues of peace and security, the development of mechanisms that guarantee predictable, sustainable and flexible funding and better clarity on the principles of complementarity, subsidiarity and comparative advantage are essential ingredients for an improved partnership. The Secretary-General's clarion call for Action provides a new impetus to a long-standing issue that has become even more critical in the new threat environment confronting the world. Collective action is the only way to strengthen peacemaking.

## A4P and the UN-AU Partnership

The preambular sentences of the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping developed as part of the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) emphasize the need for enhanced collective action to peacekeeping. In addition, the improvement of partnerships is identified as one of the seven pillars which the A4P is hinged. In a nutshell, the principle on improving partnerships recommits all stakeholders to enhanced collaboration and planning; the provision of clear delineation of the roles of respective organisations; the provision of predictable, sustainable, flexible financing for African Union (AU) led operations; the facilitation of access by member states and national efforts to guarantee and enhance the safety and security of peacekeeping as well as to better prepare, train and equip uniformed personnel for peacekeeping. Taken together, even though the Secretary General's clarion call is on Action for Peacekeeping, it is cognisant of the fact that peacekeeping only plays a supporting role in conflict management. As

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The views expressed in this paper  
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such, the call for improved partnerships should be envisioned within the larger scope of peace making that includes efforts to prevent and de-escalate conflict, peacekeeping, mediation and post conflict recovery and reconstruction among others.

Even though the call for Partnerships is for all relevant international, regional and sub-regional organisations including the EU and the AU, the UN-AU partnership has been one of the most promising at the strategic and operational levels. The growing partnership between the UN Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the AU and the various forms of operational partnerships in the field, ranging from the light and heavy support packages in the African Union Mission to Sudan (AMIS) which morphed into the current hybrid United Nations African Union Mission to Darfur (UNAMID), the logistics support to the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) from UN assessed contribution and other forms of support, demonstrates the complexity of the partnership and the flexibility by the two institutions to guarantee peace and security. In addition, the support provided through the European Union (EU) to the UN-AU partnership particularly for operational purposes has further strengthened and enhanced the partnership for peacekeeping efforts on the continent. The partnership between the UN and the AU and to an extent the EU in the maintenance of peace and security is therefore the most robust example from which lessons can be identified to inform improvements in the UN's partnerships.

The partnership between the UN and the AU has not been optimized because despite the articulation of a number of principles, there has not been consistent implementation. In addition, the evolving security challenges confronting the international community has generated a number of new issues that requires attention to determine ways through which they would be engaged and addressed. However, even though the partnering organisations have worked on those issues at the operational level, there has been little conceptual discourse and this has created challenges at the strategic decision making levels of the partnerships. Improving the partnership between the partnership between the AU and regional organisations therefore require a consistent application of the principles on which the partnership hinges and evolving conceptual and policy alignments to the security imperatives that the organisations seek to address.

All of the elements of the pillar on partnerships in the Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping have been highlighted in one way or the other, in various reports including in the Brahimi, Prodi and High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations reports. In addition, the evolution of the partnership between the UN and the AU has already provided useful lessons for improving the UN's partnership not only with the AU but also with other regional entities. Since 2007 when it became part of the agenda of the Security Council, the UN-AU partnership has developed significantly, resulting in the development of frameworks that have enhanced coordination and cooperation between the two organisations. In 2013, a number of ways through which the

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Partnership between the UN and the AU could be enhanced was catalogued in the Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the African Union-United Nations Partnership: The Need for Greater Coherence. The Joint UN-AU Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace Operations signed in 2017 provides a joint framework of action on the full spectrum of conflict management through collaboration, cooperation and financing. The challenges that have bedevilled effective bilateral partnerships such as between the UN and the AU or trilateral relationships such as between the UN, AU and the EU or member states therefore does not arise from a lack of knowledge on what is required. The question therefore is what needs to change to improve the partnership?

A pre-requisite for improving the partnership between the UN and continental and regional bodies is appreciation by the partnering organisations of the strengths and limitations of one another. Whilst the UN has the legal mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security and as a result, the legitimacy to engage in the full spectrum of peace making efforts, it is constrained by its legal and normative frameworks in addressing some of the contemporary security challenges that are characterised by asymmetric threats. Regional organisations such as the AU on the other hand that have innovated and developed response mechanisms to address such threats are confronted with significant resource constraints. Indeed, an example of leveraging on the strengths of one another is visible in the practice that has developed between the UN and the AU in addressing security challenges through an arrangement where the AU utilizes its legal provisions to mandate operations and the UN authorizes and provide capability support for the operations as in the case of the AMISOM. The development of these first response mechanisms, some of which are offensive, has been a welcome relief for the UN, which constrained to act, has endorsed such initiatives by legitimising them through authorizations and in some instances, resource support to bolster the capabilities of regional and sub-regional entities such as the AU, RECs and coalitions of member states that are willing and able to confront such threats.

Notwithstanding the example of AMISOM and AMIS above mentioned, there is no consistency in the cooperation between the two entities. Even though the UN has provided political support to the AU and its regional entities like the Economic Community of West African States and ad hoc coalition initiatives such as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) for Boko Haram in their efforts to address the challenge of violent extremism and terrorism on the continent, there has not been any substantive material support to these operations. Yet, today, through the efforts of the MNJTF, Boko Haram has been significantly degraded thereby invariably reducing the threat of the spread of terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin. Whilst these new response models provide the UN with a tool for implementing its responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, they also pose dilemmas to the UN's doctrinal principles of peacekeeping namely consent, impartiality, and non-use of force except in self-defence (and in defence of the mandate) and raises critical questions on the nature of partnerships within these contexts.

Unlike classical or even contemporary peacekeeping operations, which are deployed after an agreement, has been reached, deployments to address contemporary security threats often take place in the heat of conflict, when there is no peace to keep. In the new threat environment, consent is not always sought, the use of force has become the norm as efforts are made to degrade the enemy (usually characterized as terrorists) and there is partiality towards those aiding in the defeat of the “enemy”. In addition to this challenge, is the new development; particularly in relation to the ad hoc security initiatives, of the deployment of national troops, fighting as part of a peace operation but located within their national borders.

Critical to improving the partnership between the UN and regional organisations notably the AU and the EU is the recognition that the partnership is fundamental to the ability of each partner to attain its set objectives as well as the attainment of the shared goals of the collective. The partnership between the UN and other continental and regional entities can be improved if it is hinged on four main principles that are respected. These are: Interdependence, Transparency, Complementarity and Result-Orientation.

### **Interdependence**

The pre-eminence of the UN as the global body responsible for the maintenance of peace and security is uncontested. In the same manner, the interdependence of the various multilateral platforms is also established. Without a doubt, the UN’s ability to effectively fulfil its mandate especially in the maintenance of peace and security is highly dependent on the support of continental and regional entities. Conversely, regional entities are also dependent on the UN for support in guaranteeing peace and security within their domains. As a result, even though the UN has a global mandate and a lot more resources comparatively, it is the shared need and mutual benefits of the partnership to all that should guide its partnerships. The recognition of the value and importance of all entities to the partnership must be acknowledged and upheld. Inherent in the principle of interdependence is mutual respect underpinned by trust. Respect for the political capital and material resources brought by each partner must inform and shape decision-making processes.

### **Transparency**

The principle of transparency is hinged on commitment and mutual accountability to ensure that the partnership is able to deliver on its expected goals. This means that there is need for clarity on policies, processes, organizational culture, strengths, challenges, strategic interests and any other reasoning that underlie decision-making. Transparency in a partnership means that assumptions are rooted in verifiable facts and certainty on agreed upon expectations by all Partners. Effective consultation in a timely manner is the vehicle for driving transparency. This means that continental entities like the AU, which are significantly dependent on their regional entities the Regional Economic

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Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), must have clearly defined structures that allow them to articulate with a degree of certainty, assumptions that can underpin their relationship with the UN and others. There is therefore a need for clarity between the UN and AU at one level and the AU and the RECs/RMs on the other. The principle of transparency also needs to be applied to resource allocation, management and reporting.

### **Complementarity**

The UN and the regional entities have individual strengths that need to be leveraged towards the realization of the goals of the partnership. A clear division of labour based on the principles of equality and transparency is critical to minimizing competition among partners and enhancing cooperation. Given the political nature of the entities in the partnership, strategic interests will be a key consideration in all efforts. As a result, the quest for plaudits by all involved must be acknowledged and factored into efforts at identifying comparative advantage and labour division. In Somalia, the military successes achieved so far has been as a result of the application of the principle of complementarity: with the African Union providing troops generated from member states, the EU providing financial support for sustenance and the UN providing logistical support for the operations. Complementarity must be utilised alongside the practical dimension of subsidiarity; which means that the entity closest to the challenge is most likely to have the leverage to address it. In this vein, the principle of complementarity goes beyond a division of labour to include strengthening members of the partnership to enable each one to be able to rise to the occasion and better perform their assigned tasks/responsibilities.

### **Results-Orientation**

Partnerships are established to achieve set objectives and goals. The UN's partnership with other multilateral entities is to facilitate the creation of a secure, peaceful and prosperous world for all. The partnership between the UN and other regional entities must therefore be tooled to be able to deliver on its objectives. Calibrating internal processes in the various entities is important for optimizing the political and operational responsiveness of the partners.

### **Improving the UN's Partnerships**

There is a need to reimagine partnerships between the UN and other entities, notably the AU to reflect the principles of respect and trust that go beyond documents to practice at all levels of engagement. As the holder of some of the purse strings, the UN through some of its powerful member states, have taken decisions that hurt the ability of African states to effectively respond to peace and security challenges on the continent - in essence, picking and choosing through the determination of what missions to pay for - which interventions are of importance. Although prioritization is critical in the allocation of scarce resources, the considerations for such prioritisation should include the views

expressed by all partners. Even though the EU and bilateral partners have provided some support to the MNJTF, a lot more is still required to meet the operational needs. Again, although bilateral partners have stepped in to support the G5 Sahel, the UN through the instrumentality of the United States of America (which has since then provided support bilaterally to the G5 Sahel Force) rejected the request for support for the G-5 Sahel force that is battling jihadists in the Sahel region. Of particular interest to this case is the fact that in the face of the UN's inability due to its legal and normative constraints to confront the terrorist threat confronting Mali and the larger Sahel, five countries of the Sahel – Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger- constituted a force that alongside the French led operation Barkhane, seek to address the terrorist challenge whilst the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission to Mali (MINUSMA) focuses on supporting the implementation of a political solution to the problem. The failure to support the G-5 Sahel and the unilateral decision of the UN to draw down in Somalia, ignores the security realities on the ground and discounts Africa's interests in the partnership.

Enhancing the ability of each partner to engage constructively is essential to improving the partnership between the UN and the continental and regional entities. Consultations between partners need to be at the same level, with comparable knowledge and expertise. This has not always been the case at all times as some of the UN's partner organisations are understaffed. Using the AU as a case in point, even though coordination structures such as the meetings between the UN Security Council and the AU's Peace and Security Council and the desk-to-desk meetings of the technocrats of the two organisations exist to foster cooperation and collaboration, the AU is often underrepresented not just in numbers but also in technical expertise during such meetings. Again, whilst both institutions have liaison offices, the AU's observer mission to the UN pales in comparison to the UN's office to the AU in Addis Ababa. Of particular note is the fact that even though Africa is host to the largest number of peacekeeping operations, the AU's Observer mission to the UN, which is the interface between the AU headquarters and the UN, does not have a peace and security expert. Yet, it is in the corridors of the UN in New York that the details of peacekeeping mandates are worked out. The AU must therefore as a matter of urgency, revamp its observer mission to the UN especially with personnel with knowledge on the full spectrum of the continent's peace and security endeavours and the UN system.

The provision of predictable, sustainable and flexible resources, including funding for AU peace operations is fundamental to improving peacekeeping partnerships. The UN's inability to address contemporary security threats has left it quite dependent on continental and regional response mechanisms to fulfil its mandate of maintaining international peace and security. In practice, given that most of the situations of insecurity are unfolding in Africa, the African Union and its regional entities have become the first responders. Whilst practice has shown that UN mandated peace operations be funded through assessed contributions, there is no unanimity on funding for UN authorised and

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UN recognised peace operations. Even though assessed contributions have provided predictable and sustainable funding, the politics that have fraught accessing those funds have often led to delays and insufficiency.

Funding through Trust Funds funded through voluntary contributions that are expected to support UN endorsed and recognised peace operations has not served such peace operations well. In such instances, whilst the AU, RECs/RMs and their member states as well as other multilateral partners such as the European Union and bilateral partners have provided capabilities to the best of their abilities, there has been very little predictable support from the UN. Bilateral assistance, which has helped in supporting some of the initiatives that the UN has not been able to support, has been instrumental in ensuring that the AU is able to undertake some of its responsibilities. However, these forms of assistance are not always predictable, flexible and adequate. The AU's effort to fund some of its peace operations is a step in the right direction that is long overdue. However, given the financial situation of most African countries African peace operations will still require significant support in the short to medium term. Support for addressing security threats especially on the African continent must not be considered as favours but rather, as part of the efforts to address global contemporary security threats. The transnational nature of contemporary security threats proves that no state, region or continent is insulated. The only way to guaranteed security is collective security. A more workable format is therefore required on the corresponding responsibilities that accompany the various nomenclatures used to classify peace operations such as "authorised" "recognised" and "endorsed." There is no doubt that continental organisations need to do more to support the peace operations and the AU's efforts to provide more funds to its mandated and authorised peace operations will go a long way to relieving some of the tensions that have characterised discussions between the UN and the AU on funding African peace operations.

In the effort to improve the UN's partnerships, there is need for critical reflection on an emerging phenomenon in peace operations – the deployment of national troops operating from their national territories as part of peace operations. The high human cost of addressing contemporary security threats have led to reluctance by member states to deploy into theatres of operation where they have little strategic interests. The emerging trend has been a paradigmatic shift from the traditional practice of sending uniformed personnel from countries far away from the situation of insecurity to keep peace; to deploying national troops usually along territorial borders, to address the threat. It is imperative to bear in mind that even though the maintenance of territorial integrity is the responsibility of states, the operations of the G5 Sahel Force is not merely to maintain the territorial integrity of its participating states but also to complement the efforts of the French Operation Barkhane, which has an antiterrorist mandate. Degrading the terrorist armed group in Mali and the Sahel in general is expected to facilitate the efforts of the United Nations Mission in Mali. The G5 Sahel Force is therefore a complex support mechanism for addressing the terrorist threat in the Sahel. Whilst this phenomenon is relatively new; it appears to be one of the emerging

models for addressing contemporary asymmetric threats. The UN and its partners must therefore engage and begin a dialogue on ways to engage with such endeavours.

Linked to the above is the need to strike a needed balance between the need to uphold the normative and policy frameworks of the Organisation whilst at the same time ensuring that the requirements of contemporary peace operations are provided for in a timely manner. It is noteworthy that the UN's human rights due diligence policy (HRDDP) provide a guide to ensuring that UN support to non-UN forces is consistent with the charter provisions and international law. The HRDDP has been utilized as a tool for engagement to support the strengthening of existing AU compliance policies and the development of additional ones to guide the high intensity peace operations that the AU has been engaged in. However, the innovation in the partnership has also resulted in new developments that require consideration. For instance, in the case of AMISOM where the AU is the mandating authority and the UN provides logistical support including to the national forces that fight alongside AMISOM forces, which entity bears responsibility to eliciting compliance from the Somali national forces and to what extent should their infractions be part of the risk assessment evaluating the potential risks and benefits in giving or withholding support to AMISOM?

Much progress has been made in unpacking and practicing the principles of complementarity subsidiarity and comparative advantage but a lot more clarity is still needed. The efficiency in complementarity lies in effective engagement that allows for the identification of the political, social and economic considerations that should drive the leadership, sequencing and prioritization of interventions. Recognition of these considerations must guide the interpretation of subsidiarity and in turn, determine which entity has comparative advantage. The three principles, which are interrelated and interdependent, must be interpreted together to facilitate coherence in the partnership.

## Conclusion

The Secretary-General's call comes at a critical time for the UN and its partners because of the transnational nature of contemporary security threats challenges. This call also comes at a time when multilateralism in general is under threat and the need for the UN and other multilateral entities to ensure that multilateralism as a principle is adhered to. There is already recognition that none of the entities can win on its own and so now more than ever, an improved partnership between the UN and other multilateral entities engaged in peace making is absolutely crucial to among others, demonstrate legitimacy, coherence and credibility.

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