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Reviewing Conflict & Post-Conflict Management in Africa

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Out of the fifteen ESDP operations, five have been implemented in Sub-Saharan Africa (four in DR-Congo¹ and one in Sudan). An African Peace Facility has been established to support conflict management by African organizations. These instruments complement the previous role of the EU: political mediation in conflict and post-conflict situations and a donor role.²

This set of instruments could enable the EU to be one of the main players in conflict and post-conflict management. In this context, Africa is both an issue and a ‘laboratory’:

- 1) Africa as an issue for the EU: (a) renewed interest in energy and mineral resources in Africa. Emerging economies such as China, India or Brazil are currently developing a significant African policy in order to secure access to natural resources. Stabilizing areas where these resources are located is thus an increasing concern; (b) migrations from Africa also stem from countries affected by conflicts and ‘bad governance’
- 2) Africa as a ‘laboratory’ for conflict management: for fifteen years, multilateral interventions have mainly been deployed in Africa, although non-African conflicts might have been as violent. A ‘learning-by-doing’ process has occurred in the wake of these deployments and has shaped ways of addressing conflicts. Similarly, DR-Congo might be one of the ‘laboratories’ for ESDP, as four out fifteen ESDP operations have been implemented in this country.

These matters raise, *inter alia*, two issues regarding the role of the EU in conflict and post-conflict situations:

- 1) The EU’s relations with other international, regional or multilateral players and the political and economic ‘standard package’ the latter have developed to address conflict and post-conflict situations.
- 2) Synergies within the EU stemming from a wide range of instruments.

¹ Including the Reserve Force that will be deployed in DR-Congo in support of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations during the election period.

² The EU is often the main donor in conflict and post-conflict situations in Africa. Moreover, the 25 Member States are key donors of multilateral organizations – the United Nations or International Financial Institutions (IFIs) – that intervene in conflict and post-conflict situations. Added-up contributions of EU member states represent 32.2% of the IMF budget and 27.36% of the World Bank budget. For UN peacekeeping operations, added-up contributions represent 45% of the budget of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). The latter was 5.03 billions dollars in 2005.

I- Renewed interventionism: which role for which African ownership?

African ownership has become a key principle for the European Union and other western countries in their approach to tackling conflict situations in Africa. More than direct interventions, it favours an 'African solution to African issues' with the support of western countries.

Various experiments guided by this principle have been implemented via political mediations – in DR-Congo via an OAU mediation until 2002, in Sudan with IGAD³ in 2004, ongoing mediations in Darfur and the Ivory Coast with the African Union (AU), etc. Peacekeeping interventions from African organizations have also been supported by the EU and western countries, as for example the AU in Darfur and Burundi, or ECOWAS⁴ in Ivory Coast in 2002.

These examples of political mediations and peacekeeping operations provide a basis for reviewing the principle and efficiency of African ownership, and shed light on its contextual origins. The African ownership theme goes back to the era of the Clinton Administration and the aftermath of the Somalian fiasco, although it was also strongly supported by South Africa after the apartheid regime fell. These developments come within the scope of two previous phases of interventionism regarding African conflicts:

- 1) The failure of the New World Order approach in Africa in the early 1990s: interventions in Angola in 1992, Somalia in 1993, then in Rwanda in 1993-94 all ended in abject failure.
- 2) While the US have been highly reluctant to send troops to Africa since Somalia⁵, some traditional European players in Africa have also been reviewing – and downsizing – their African policies. African ownership has thus also been a substitute for and has camouflaged lower commitment from western countries.

This propensity to withdraw opened a significant space for African leaders advocating African ownership. However, African ownership has so far only been a qualified success, whether in terms of political mediations or peacekeeping interventions, as highlighted in particular by the Sudan or DR-Congo cases:

- 1) Political mediations and the Sudanese case: the AU mediation on the Darfur conflict is still ongoing and raises questions regarding the AU mediation team approach. Moreover, IGAD has shown its limited capacity to broker an agreement between the Government of Sudan and the southern rebellion. If a peace settlement was achieved in 2004, it came as a result of constant pressures by some western countries. Similar questions might be raised regarding IGAD and the management of the Somalian conflict.
- 2) Peacekeeping operation in Darfur: in Darfur, the AU has been implementing this first large-scale operation with a Protection Force and a Civilian Police branch. This

³ The Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which includes seven members (Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya and Uganda).

⁴ The Economic Community of West African States, which includes 16 West African states. Ecowas previously intervened in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

⁵ However, it should be noted that the oil in the Gulf of Guinea has recently been described as a national interest for US security.

mission has often been strongly criticized for inefficiency or alleged corruption among some of its elements. However, it would be more accurate to say that rather than failing, as some allege, the AU mission has reached its limits. In 2004, the situation in Darfur was strongly expected to seriously deteriorate. This did not occur, although the human rights situation in Darfur remains admittedly quite problematic. The AU mission, as well as highly efficient humanitarian programmes, should take credit for this 'no-deterioration' situation. Moreover, it could not be expected that a recently founded organization like the AU could implement a large-scale operation without difficulties. This underlines the vacuum stemming from western reluctance to intervene directly and the current capabilities of African organizations.

All this does not question African ownership as a principle, but raises various concerns regarding how it should be implemented:

- 3) Defining which Africans have the ownership: a major concern with the African ownership concept stems from the players that might actually be involved in its implementation. As illustrated by the Darfur example and the initial Chad mediation, some networks within the Chad regime were also involved in the Darfur conflict. In order to avoid such a situation, regional organizations have been a preferred 'implementing partner'.

However, African organizations vary significantly in terms of capabilities and efficiency. Among the regional organizations, IGAD appears as a weak structure, while ECOWAS showed more efficiency in mediating in West African conflicts.⁶ Political mediations by the AU have so far obtained limited results. A learning-by-doing process is still ongoing and is likely to require lasting and targeted support, as illustrated by the Abuja talks. This cannot be a rapid process, as the AU faces significant problems of absorption capacities. Moreover, regional organizations should not overshadow other potential players, such as civil society or African entrepreneurs.

- 4) Support to African organizations versus support to the UN? As well as African organizations, the UN is a key partner for the EU. However, these two different partnerships might lead to counterproductive 'burdensharing' between these multilateral players. In 2002, the OAU was in charge of political mediation in DR-Congo. Inadequate sharing of information and coordination with the UN peacekeeping operation in DR-Congo (MONUC) occurred. As political mediation with the warring parties and the mandate of MONUC were addressing intertwined issues, this had the effect of hindering the efficiency of both organizations. With regard to the prospect of a handover from the AU to the UN in Darfur, a similar problem could arise concerning coordination between the two organizations.
- 5) Do Africans know Africans better? Among the arguments put forward in favour of African ownership, a better understanding by Africans of African issues has been a recurrent theme. However, the diversity of African situations might lead this argument being reappraised. The South African presidency might illustrate this point. In DR-Congo, the South African mediation initially succeeded in brokering an agreement between Rwanda and DR-Congo and hosted and supported mediation among Congolese parties. However, the South-African follow-up of these two agreements was hampered by South Africa's imperfect understanding of Congolese dynamics. The Congolese President, as well as other Congolese players, has remained suspicious

⁶ However, its military interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone led to significant controversy: the behaviour of ECOWAS troops – characterised by corruption and abuse – and bias towards some of the warring parties.

towards South Africa. This situation has contributed to the limited success of South African companies in obtaining contracts in DR-Congo, in particular to exploit natural resources.

II- From war to peace: an international ‘standard package’ and the challenges of implementation

Identifying issues at stake in conflict dynamics remains a constant challenge. Conflicts in Africa often have intertwined layers – regional, national and local. They are also fuelled by a wide range of grievances, either political, social, ethnic or economic etc. In the recommendations put forward by practitioners and experts, the importance of developing a ‘comprehensive’ approach has frequently been emphasised. Both an analytical framework and a ‘standard package’ have been developed to address conflict and post-conflict situations since the early 1990s.

- **Reviewing mainstream analytical framework:** conflict situations have often been associated with ‘*failed states*’. In the wake of a conflict, a ‘*war economy*’ is often perceived as a key factor in conflict dynamics. These two successful concepts have often been extrapolated to non-African conflicts. It might be useful however to re-examine how helpful these two concepts really are:
 - 1) Failed states and violence: as illustrated by the Sudanese example, an efficient state apparatus might unleash more violence than a failed state. Implementing massive violence often requires functional structures. In the Sudanese case, efficient intelligence services have been instrumental in fuelling local ethnic tensions and coordinating paramilitary groups that repress civilians. Similarly, in Rwanda in 1994, the genocide could not have been implemented without highly efficient administrative structures. Failed states might lead to endemic violence, but functional states are a pre-condition for massive violence. This draws attention to the role of the state and its destabilizing potential. More than the state, governance – and check and balance systems – is the crucial issue.
 - 2) Failed states as an opportunity? Failed states often stem from bad governance and predatory practices by rulers. For some nationals, a failed state might also provide opportunities, as the predatory governance is circumscribed by the collapse of the state. DR-Congo and Somalia provide two examples of opportunities for a specific – but essential – category: businessmen. Although the two situations have differences, both Mogadishu businessmen and Kivu entrepreneurs (Eastern DR-Congo) have increased their investments in a failed state situation. If wars have been a constraint for them, they have also relieved them from the predation of the state apparatus.
 - 3) The war economy: an overestimated dynamic? The idea of a war economy has become a broadly shared concept. According to this theory, the predation of resources is the engine for conflict dynamics and its beneficiaries are prone to maintain a war situation of which they can take advantage. However, such an approach raises three issues:
 - a. It overlooks pre-war economic governance, which often plays a central role in fuelling heterogeneous grievances. Redistribution of resources is rare, clientelism and nepotism tend to fuel ethnic prejudices and the economic environment may be hostile to private entrepreneurial initiatives.
 - b. It focuses on ‘*greed*’ and overlooks diversity of grievances.

- c. It contributes to stigmatize economic entrepreneurs – as they are associated with predation.

However, economic entrepreneurs often have an ambivalent agenda in wartime. Conflicts provide opportunities – e.g., reduced presence of the state, new trading routes or markets (including for smuggling weapons) – but also hinder investments, threaten assets or increase racketeering. In order to address these constraints, various entrepreneurs in the Kivu have implemented a *de facto* and successful DDR⁷ process. Up to 3,000 former combatants have been demobilized through their active lobbying and some of them have been granted employment.

- **Establishing a ‘standard package’:** in spite of the limits of these two concepts, they have often been at the centre of the international approach. Technical approaches designed to ‘fix’ failures of the state have prevailed in the current ‘standard package’ of international community. The latter includes both a political and an economic formula that is replicated from one country to another.
 - 1) The political formula of international interventions: in the approach to addressing conflicts, a similar diplomatic sequence prevails in each situation:
 - a. Its first step focuses on negotiating a ceasefire.
 - b. This is followed by a brokered power-sharing agreement.
 - c. A transitional period is a pivotal third stage.
 - d. It ends with elections – usually presidential and general elections.

This sequence provides a replicated framework for stabilizing a war-torn country. In order to deal with the fallout of a conflict, various tools are implemented during the transitional period: DDR, Security Sector Reform (SSR), Rule of Law and Human Rights monitoring, as well as Child Protection and Humanitarian Programmes. In spite of the comprehensive principle, this approach tends to favour a technical implementation of each programme and often leads to juxtaposed programmes rather than to an overarching political approach.

- 2) The economic formula of international intervention: a highly consistent set of ideas usually prevails in post-conflict phases. Two patterns are recurrent:
 - a. An ever-lengthening list of reforms to be achieved.
 - b. An approach often based more on ideology than on the realities that pertain in a post-war country.

International Financial Institutions (IFIs) recurrently promote respect of their macro-economic standards for public expenditures and deficits, privatizations, liberalization of trade and reform of the economic environment... However, this formula has recently evolved to compensate some past mismanagements and lessons learned from recent emerging economies:

- a. Reforms and economic mismanagement: in the wake of the Washington consensus of the mid-1980s, reforms supported by IFIs occasionally weakened local economies. In the post-conflict phase in Mozambique, for example, IFIs campaigned for and obtained a liberalization of a key sector of the economy: cashew nuts. A rapid implementation followed. This did not take into account the adaptative capacities of the local economy. A loss of productivity ensued and led to 10,000 workers losing their jobs.

⁷ Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration of former combatants.

- b. Bringing the state back in: following the economic rise of various Asian countries, the economic role of the state was partially rehabilitated in the late 1990s. It appears as a balance between the 1960-70s approach – the state as the engine for development – and the Washington consensus. The state is not *the* engine of economic growth, but has a significant role to play in fostering economic recovery. Fiscal policy has an especially crucial role to play to provide resources for the government while supporting economic recovery and making available resources for social programmes.

It might be noticed that such an approach recalls the role of the state in Western Europe after the two World Wars. However, with regard to the political formula, a propensity to adopt a technical approach remains frequent. In a way that is similar to the political formula, this often leads to juxtaposed programmes in the implementation phase. Moreover, the economic formula can be disconnected from the political approach.

- **Limitations and paradoxes of the ‘standard package’: the challenges of implementation.** The two formulas as such provide a framework for international interventions. As much as their content, the way that they are implemented is crucial. Several paradoxes and some limitations might ensue from the ‘standard package’ approach:

- 1) Bringing governance back in: as a reaction to the issue of failed states, ‘*re-establishing the authority of the state*’ has become the key principle in international interventions. This tends to overshadow a ‘*good governance*’ approach. However, the role of the state can be quite ambivalent. The factions in control of the state can benefit from its rebuilding to resume predatory practices. A sustainable stabilization also requires improved governance and more checks and balances.

DR-Congo is a convincing case study in this regard. Significant improvements have occurred in this country compared to the situation that prevailed during the war. However, corruption remains high and civilians continue to experience major human rights abuses. Freedom of expression is at risk, as journalists are often harassed. Improving governance is likely to be the key issue of the post-transition period in order to avoid renewed grievances creating a breeding ground for future conflicts.

- 2) Abiding by discourse, but avoiding changes: African leaders and reforms. African leaders have developed a sophisticated capacity for adapting to international discourse without implementing actual changes. Apparent adherence to international standards might be an instrument to obtain more financial support.

In post-genocide Rwanda, a high degree of insecurity prevailed in Kigali: over a hundred cars were stolen in a few months, and several NGOs and international organizations were robbed of several million US dollars. The Rwandan authorities were stressing the need for financial support from the international community, which they insisted was essential for ‘*re-establishing the authority of the state*’. This they got. However, most of these robberies were coordinated and implemented by the Rwandan intelligence services so as to re-equip the Rwandan army.

- 3) Corruption: an overlooked issue. Corruption is a key factor in weakening institutions and leading to state failures. However, although it has been a significant theme in the discourses of international players, it is not much reflected in the design of their programmes. In the early 1990s, at the peak of the international intervention in Angola, corruption was strongly condemned by the international community. Strong

statements requesting a rapid and major change were made. Fifteen years later, Angola is still rated as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. In the ‘standard package’, there is hardly any programme to address this complex issue. In DR-Congo, it must be underlined that EUSEC has proved itself to be an innovative programme by addressing a key part of this matter within the Congolese army (see below).⁸

- 4) The limits of a short-term approach: either ‘failed state’ or ‘bad governance’ issues have deep and ‘sustainable’ causes. However, the ‘standard package’ focuses most of its resources on the transitional period. Over a three-year (DR-Congo) or six-year period (the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan), major interventions have been implemented: peacekeeping troops, institutional reforms, monitoring of human rights, etc. Following elections, an abrupt downsizing of the international presence often follows. The power-sharing agreement ends (as will occur next July in DR-Congo). Nevertheless, experience shows that outbreaks of violence often occur after the elections (Angola in 1992, Burundi in 1993). A ‘soft-landing’ of international presence is thus likely to be necessary both to address post-election tensions and follow up on possible improvements of governance. Budgetary constraints⁹ and apparent stabilization frequently preclude a ‘soft-landing’. If the US Administration is unusually reluctant to downsize the UN mission in Liberia, they appear to have no such misgivings for the post-election phase in DR-Congo.

III- Innovative and supportive role of the EU: a way forward?

The various instruments of the EU provide significant opportunities to play a role in reviewing and readapting international instruments. In addition to the EU’s major role as a donor, targeted operations and programmes offer significant opportunities. Various challenges and proposals emerged from the seminar in order to contribute to ongoing reflection on this issue.

- 1) Building on ESDP experience: both reforms of key institutions such as the Congolese army and targeted military deployment such as the *Artemis* operation in DR-Congo highlight the EU’s capacities to innovate on two key issues:
 - i. A pragmatic and targeted approach towards the corruption issue: although corruption is often an overlooked issue, EUSEC has been successful in assessing and addressing this issue within the Congolese army. As in many Congolese institutions, significant corruption stems from overestimated staff numbers. The heads of each institution then embezzle wages of ‘phantom civil servants’. Along with South African experts, EUSEC made a preliminary assessment of the actual number of soldiers. This aimed at establishing a functional chain of payment to ensure an actual payment of the troops. Congolese leaders claimed to have a 350, 000 strength army. It was then reassessed at 150, 000. A second assessment by EUSEC brought this figure down to 90, 000. This has enabled a significant improvement in payment of soldiers (multiplied by 2.4 at \$24 a month) and has limited opportunities for corruption. It might also contribute to a decrease in human rights abuses, as unpaid soldiers usually extort their food from civilians.
By focusing on a specific segment of a key institution, EUSEC has been successful in tackling part of the corruption issue. It thus provides a template for a similar

⁸ This approach has similarities with the UK programmes in Sierra Leone in the post-conflict phase.

⁹ In particular for the Department of Peace-Keeping Operations of the UN.

approach that could be undertaken in other key institutions –such as fiscal bodies or the judiciary.

ii. *Artemis* in Ituri: small can be powerful. In spite of a limited number of deployed troops, *Artemis* has had a major impact at three levels:

- a) Improving the human rights situation in its area of deployment.
- b) Defusing tensions between Rwanda and Uganda – on the eve of war at that time – by showing an international commitment to engage Ugandan and Rwandan proxies in Ituri.
- c) Paving the way to reinforced UN capabilities and a stronger mandate.

Beyond an appropriate use of force on the ground, the EU flag played a significant role in the success of this mission. Targeting troops under the EU flag was perceived as attacking the main donor in the region and a ‘coalition’ of key states. Each of the key states transmitted strong messages to regional stakeholders to facilitate the *Artemis* operation.

The deterrent impact of the EU flag, reinforced by political messages from EU Member States to Congolese and regional players, could demonstrate its effectiveness once again with the coming deployment of EUFOR DRC in Kinshasa.

2) A flexible approach in EU relations with African organizations: as the efficiency and capabilities of African organizations vary, relationship with a single organization could limit the EU’s room for manoeuvre. Support to the African ownership principle necessitates maintaining the possibility of choosing an appropriate African counterpart according to its capabilities and the issues to be addressed.

3) Systematizing regional approaches: most of the current and past African conflicts have a regional dimension: DR-Congo and the Great Lakes region,¹⁰ Sudan and its neighbours,¹¹ the Mano River conflicts in West Africa.¹² A systematized regional approach is necessary to contain spill-over as well as to achieve a stabilization process within national boundaries.

4) Improving national check and balance mechanisms: civil society is a constant partner in conflict and post-conflict situations. However, it should not sideline other key players, such as political parties and private entrepreneurs. Political parties are often weak structures in post-conflict Africa. This contributes to weakening the role of Parliament as part of a check and balance system.

A balanced role of the state and improved economic governance could also benefit from informal checks and balances deriving from an increased autonomy of private entrepreneurs. So far, they are rarely interlocutors of international staff. However, their involvement is crucial for economic recovery, as well as improving economic governance. International political support against state predation, conditional on abandoning spoiling activities (*inter alia* smuggling of weapons and funding armed groups), can lead them to support improvements in economic governance and peace processes.¹³ By combining economic and political approaches, a main donor such as the EU could have a key leverage on national entrepreneurs: making access of national

¹⁰ Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.

¹¹ Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda, Libya, Chad. Recent developments in Chad show increasingly intertwining conflicts between Sudan, Chad and Central African Republic.

¹² Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, as well as Ivory Coast.

¹³ MONUC briefly implemented such an approach in 2003 and at the beginning of 2004 with limited but concrete results.

entrepreneurs to rehabilitation contracts conditional on their concrete support to DDR and other international instruments and objectives.

- 5) Taking into account local conflicts within a country: local tensions are often a breeding ground for national rivals to mobilize combatants or pursue divide-and-rule strategies (Darfur, Kivu and Ituri in DR-Congo). However, up to now only limited instruments exist to address these dimensions.
- 6) An overarching political approach by the EU: complementarities and synergies among the various EU instruments are essential to optimize EU conflict and post-conflict management initiatives. This issue has recently been amplified by the active African policies pursued by emerging economic powers (China, India, Brazil). China has a quite different set of conditionalities from the EU when dealing with African leaders: it focuses on opening up markets and access to natural resources while avoiding raising any matters relating to governance. This can provide African leaders with an alternative to European conditionalities. Maintaining leverages in conflict and post-conflict situations would be strengthened by the ongoing process of coordinating aid policies between EU Member States and the Commission. This could provide a stronger financial basis for supporting requests for improved governance.

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