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The European Peace Facility in action: rethinking EU-Africa partnership on peace and security?

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Abstract

The European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU) have had and continue to maintain a long-standing partnership on peace and security, which dates back to the establishment of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) at the beginning of the 2000s. However, in 2021, the EU embarked on a different pathway of financing its activities in the field of peace and security by establishing the European Peace Facility (EPF). This new financial instrument allows the EU to directly finance (bypassing the AU) national and sub-regional military initiatives on the African continent, to finance lethal equipment for African armies and expand its scope globally.

While the vast majority of current debates and research focus solely on the „train and equip" provision of the EPF and its implications in the Ukrainian war, the EU engagement in Africa through the instrument mentioned above is scarcely assessed. Therefore, drawing on the theory of interregional security cooperation, this paper considers how establishing the EPF impacts the EU's engagement on the African continent in the security field. Empirically assessing the instances in which the EPF has been implemented on the African continent, this paper aims to answer the research question: how does the establishment and implementation of the EPF impact the EU-AU partnership on peace and security?

This paper employs a qualitative research design, namely a case study approach of inquiry and process tracing methods. The results of this approach show two distinct tendencies. First, while implementing the EPF in Africa can solve certain operational and technical aspects of the EU engagement on the continent, the EU-AU partnership must be reinforced on the political and strategic levels. Moreover, considering the plethora of international and regional actors involved in managing the security dynamics on the African continent, it is essential to prioritise the political dimension of the EU-AU partnership.

Keywords: European Union, African Union, partnership, security, EPF, interregionalism

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Introduction

The African continent is a priority for the European Union and its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Together with its Member States, the EU is the primary aid donor for the African continent and its leading trading partner (Recipients and results of EU aid, n.d.) (The European Union and Africa: Partners in Trade, 2022). Since the early 2000s, with the establishment of the AU and the signing of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, the

relationship between the EU and the African continent has gained new momentum and an institutional framework of interaction. Politically, the dialogue between the two continents has been shaped by establishing six periodic EU-AU Summits and launching the 2007 Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES).

While still a priority for both sides, only a few months after the sixth EU-AU Summit, internal and external factors affect the partnership between the two continents. Thus, both sides are currently rather concerned with domestic issues. For the African continent, the series of coups in West Africa and food security or climate impact over socio-economic-political spectrums are matters of utmost importance. Correspondingly, the EU faces the war in Ukraine and its impact on energy security. Furthermore, the international level adds a layer of effects on the overall EU-Africa relations dynamic. This is reflected in the active presence of a plethora of international/regional actors on the African continent, some of which are involved in aggressive disinformation campaigns and hybrid warfare against the European presence on the continent (Faleg & Kovalčíková, 2022).

Moreover, starting in 2020, the strategic spectrum of engagement between the two continents has undergone significant changes. Firstly, the European Commission, together with the European External Action Service (EEAS), released a communication called „Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa" that provides the two partners with the prospect of a renewed framework of interaction (Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa, 2020). However, the current official political framework between the two continents is the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) formally adopted at the Lisbon Summit in 2007 (THE AFRICA-EU STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP. A Joint Africa-EU Strategy, 2007). Moreover, with the Cotonou Partnership Agreement having expired in February 2020, negotiations for a new legal framework have started. Although a political deal was reached on December 3 2020, the Cotonou Partnership Agreement has been extended until the end of 2022 (Legislative train 06.2022 4 A Stronger Europe in the World, 2022).

Over the past two years, the EU has initiated and implemented several initiatives that directly impact the overall EU-Africa partnership. Among

these, the adoption of the „Strategic compass" has brought a significant change in the EU's level of ambition as an international security provider, as well as a more pronounced shift towards the „hard power" spectrum (A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence. For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security, 2022). Furthermore, in the pursuit of implementing this new level of ambition, the EU adopted in 2021 the European Peace Facility (EPF), which is a new off-budget instrument designed to facilitate and support the activities undertaken by the European Union in the field of international crisis management (European Peace Facility, 2022).

The innovations brought by adopting the EPF can be assessed from three different angles. Firstly, compared to the previous instruments, the African Peace Facility and the Athena Mechanism, the scope of the EPF is enlarged, thus having a global addressability. Secondly, the EPF has a „train and equip" provision, which will allow the EU to support the military aspects of peace support missions, including by providing lethal weapons to partner countries (Immenkamp, 2021). Lastly, the EPF can now finance a broader range of African-led peace support operations and coalitions, thus bypassing the AU (How to Spend It: New EU Funding for African Peace and Security, 2021). In this context, on September 8 2022, the EU agreed to support the SADC mission to Mozambique (SAMIM) with 15 million euros worth of collective military equipment (European Peace Facility: EU agrees support to the Southern African Development Community mission in Mozambique, 2022). While this decision should be assessed in the context of the newly established training mission in Mozambique - EUTM Mozambique - it holds an innovative character, being the first time that the EU financially engaged with an African REC in the field of security. Therefore, certain questions arise: How does the above decision impact the overall implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)? How does the EU's decision to directly support SAMIM affects AU integration in the security domain? Whilst all these questions hold their validity, reflecting certain aspects of the research matter, the main research question of this paper is how does implementing the EPF in Africa affect the EU-AU partnership on

peace and security? Furthermore, the current paper advances the research hypothesis that implementing the EPF in Africa directly affects the EU-AU partnership on peace and security, which needs to be further strenghtened from a political perspective.

While current literature and research focus primarily on the impact of the EPF in the context of the war in Ukraine, its impact on overall Africa-Europe relations is scarcely assessed. Moreover, the EU-AU partnership on peace and security has been assessed in multiple instances, highlighting its structural asymmetries. Against this backdrop, the EPF implementation constitutes the novelty factor for analysing the EU-AU partnership on peace and security.

In order to assess the topic mentioned above and to answer the research question, this paper deploys a qualitative research by employing a case study method of inquiry. Therefore, the paper advances as follows: the first part assesses the current literature on the topic, followed by the section in which the methodology of this research is presented. The main concepts of the paper, namely, the EPF and the EU-AU partnership on peace and security are being assessed from an strategic perspective. The core part of the research consists of empirical data against the backdrop of which the main concepts are being operationalised. Finally, the paper advances its results in the discussion section, concluding with final remarks and prospects for future research on the EU-AU partnership on peace and security.

Literature review

Since the early 2000s, relations between the EU and the African continent have undergone an evolving institutional dynamic. Therefore, there has been extensive research on EU-AU relations, which is now considered a subfield of the overarching EU foreign policy studies. Moreover, recently, when it comes to EU-Africa relations, traditionally associated with development and aid, these have expanded to other areas of cooperation between the two actors. In this context, the current paper envisages two significant strands of literature. The first one considers the EU-Africa relations on peace and security, namely the EU-AU partnership on peace and security. The second

category of literature envisages the implementation of the EPF within the African continent. This second category of literature is considered a distinct one, since it derives from European Studies and more specifically from the literature on the Common Foreign and Security Policy, marking a policy shift in the EU's level of ambition as an international actor and EU's orientation towards the "hard" spectrum of power. The literature review is thus organised thematically to provide a thorough understanding of the research topic.

Researching the topic of the EU-AU partnership on peace and security in the context of implementing the new financial instrument, the EPF, reveals not only the two themes of the literature review but also a potential research gap.

Within the strand of literature concerning EU-AU relations, there is a plethora of authors who have assessed the relations mentioned above through the lens of regionalism and interregionalism (Hastruup, Mah, & Duggan, 2021) (Fawcett & Gandois, 2010) (Hastruup, 2013). Within this category of literature, the vast majority of authors have considered the EU as a model of integration for the AU, therefore assessing the EU's impact on AU integration dynamics. Furthermore, EU-AU relations have been assessed by some authors within a post-colonialist framework (Gruhn, 1993) (Hansen & Jonsson, 2014) or by critically assessing the asymmetries of the partnership mentioned above in terms of trade and development (Gudz, 2015) (Khumalo & Mulleta, 2010) (Kotsopoulos & Mattheis, 2018). Narrowing down the first theme, namely the EU-AU partnership on peace and security, two tendencies are observed. Firstly, there is consistent literature written on the topic of EU crisis management in Africa that touches upon EU-AU cooperation on the matter (Koenig, 2016) (Chappell, Mawdsley, & Petrov, 2016) (Rummel, 2011). Secondly, the EU-AU partnership on peace and security is assessed in a critical manner (Gibert & Nivet, 2013) (Haastrup, 2013) (Rodt & Okeke, 2013), or in terms of evaluating its effectiveness (Plank, 2022).

The second strand of literature focuses on the EU's new financial instrument, the EPF. While the EPF is a relatively new instrument, it thus becomes evident that the literature on the matter is still in its infancy. Moreover, the vast majority of research written on this matter is produced by different think-tanks as policy briefs (How to Spend It: New EU Funding for African

Peace and Security, 2021). However, three subthemes can be distinguished within this category of literature. Firstly, the initial literature written on the topic addressed mainly the "train and equip" provision of the EPF, with most authors focusing on the risks associated with this provision and its implementation in the war in Ukraine (Weapons for peace? What to expect in 2021 from the EU's new 'peace facility', 2021). Secondly, another category of literature concerning the legal stances of the EPF focuses on its impact on UN Arms Trade Treaty (Altamimi, 2022). Thirdly, and yet the most consistent part of the literature on the EPF, consists in assessing this newly financial instrument within a generic framework of analysis (The uncharted path towards a European Peace Facility, 2019).

It is against this backdrop that the EU-AU partnership on peace and security in the context of the implementation of the EPF becomes signally important to assess, this representing a gap in the current literature. Despite this existing gap in the research literature, there are several policy briefs addressing this topic from a political perspective without assessing the EPF's implementation (Hauck, 2022) (Tadesse Shiferaw, 2022) (Fattibene, 2023). With the EPF being implemented not only in the war in Ukraine but specifically on the African continent as assistance measures for both EUTMs (European Union Training Missions) but also for the first time for SADAC mission SAMIM and Rwandan troops fighting in Cabo Delgado Mozambique, the future of EU-AU partnership on peace and security needs to be assessed. Therefore, this research addresses this gap by focusing on the EPF's implementation in Africa. Thus, this research not only fills up a gap within the existing literature but also makes an addition by opening the premises on the future of EU-RECs (Regional Economic Communities) relations on peace and security.

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative single case study is to explore the impact of the implementation of the EPF on the EU-AU partnership on peace and security. Therefore, this paper is deploying a qualitative research, "understanding" being the main aim of the research. In order to answer the

research question - namely, how does implementing the EPF in Africa affect the EU-AU partnership on peace and security – the research employs the case study approach of inquiry, exploring the topic in-depth and utilising multiple sources of information to answer the research question (Yin, 2018) (Creswell & Poth, 2018) (D. & Pedersen, 2013). The main characteristic of this approach is the timeframe chosen for the implementation of the EPF, this being the main parameter for bounding the case study. From another perspective, the case study is exploratory since the epistemological focus is to produce an in-depth understanding while exploring it through multiple sources of information. From a temporal perspective, the case study will be conducted in 2022, between October-December.

In the pursuit of this approach, data will be collected through various means, abandoning the idea of articulating "a single consisted basis on which to produce knowledge" (Jackson, 2011). In terms of data collection, the paper employs data gathered through document analysis of official reports, documents and official social communication networks. In the same time, the case study approach provides the necessary framework for the researcher to explore the topic from various angles, zooming in and out on the case as needed in order to answer the research question and produce knowledge in the form of deep understanding of the researched topic.

A case study is intrinsically connected to the terms of complexity, particularity, uniqueness and special interest (Stake, 1995). While this statement in itself can provide the audience with an indication on what a case study is, why this approach is the most appropriate one to inquire the researched topic and how this approach will be implemented in terms of explicit procedures, these aspects require a detailed further clarification.

The approach used within the research design method starts inductively with an empirical analysis of the instances in which the EPF has been implemented on the African continent from its establishment through the end of 2022. As an intermediate step within this process, this research envisages categorising the implementation mentioned above into four categories: assistance measures given to the AU, assistance measures given to RECs, assistance measures given to 3rd parties armies and finally assistance measures given to EUTMs.

Within this framework, the causal mechanism between the implementation of the EPF in Africa and the operationalisation of the EU-AU partnership on peace and security is being traced. Furthermore, in a deductive manner, the outcome of the process shall be assessed, namely the current state of the EU-AU partnership on peace and security. Finally, an assessment of whether a sufficient explanation has been crafted will be performed.

Overall, this research design will allow for an in-depth and detailed exploration of the relationship between the implementation of the EPF in Africa and the current state of the EU-AU partnership on peace and security. Furthermore, this approach will provide the reader with a tool of assessing the current and future challenges of the EU-AU partnership on peace and security.

The next sections of the paper focus on the strategic and the operational level of the EPF implementation. While the strategic level section operationalises the EPF's implementation through the lens of interregional security cooperation, , it uses the same framework to assess the institutional aspects of the EU-AU partnership on peace and security.

EPF and EU-AU partnership on peace and security
Strategic level

Having as a general background security studies theories and more specifically the interregional security cooperation theory, this paper assesses the interaction between two concepts: the EU-AU partnership on peace and security and the implementation of the EPF. Thus, this section introduces the framework of interregional security cooperation and operationalises the EU-AU partnership on peace and security and the EPF within this framework. While the EU-AU partnership on peace and security is a broader concept, which consists of a wide range of activities, the implementation of the EPF is a more specific one, consisting of a new off-budget funding mechanism. There is a direct connection between the two concepts, the EPF being a tool that the EU uses to support, among other issues, the EU-AU partnership on peace and security.

With the new wave of regional integration projects happening after the end of World War II and subsequently after decolonisation, a complex network of interregional relations was established among these in different policy fields. Among these, regional cooperation on matters related to peace and security is seen as being part of the overarching inter-regionalism studies, more notably of inter-organisational cooperation (Hanggi, Roloff, & Ruland, 2006) (Telo, Fawcett, & Ponjaert, 2015) (Baert, Scaramagli, & (Eds.), 2014).

Relations between the EU and AU date formally since the establishment of the AU, in 2000, as the main continental body in Africa and a successor to the Organisation of African Unity. From its inception, the AU Constitutive Act emphasises the peace of security dimension of the AU mandate, which will further reflect the organisation's ambitions to establish peace within the continent and its relations with other actors. (Constitutive Act of the African Union, 2000). The first formal document stipulating the nature of the interregional relation between the EU and the AU is the Cairo Declaration and the subsequent Cairo Action Plan of 2000 (Africa-Europe Summit under the Aegis of the OAU and the EU Cairo, 3-4 April 2000, 2000). Moreover, in 2007, the second EU-Africa Summit took place in Lisbon, while the strategic document Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) was adopted. JAES sets the stage for interregional cooperation between the EU and the AU and formalises the partnership on peace and security between the two actors.

Furthermore, the First Action Plan following the adoption of the JAES emphasises three priority actions for the EU-AU partnership on peace and security: enhance dialogue on challenges to peace and security, full operationalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and predictable funding for African-led peace support operations (First Action Plan (2008-2010) for the Implementation of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, 2008). The question of financing African-led peace support operations has been implemented since 2003 through the African Peace Facility (APF) framework. Within this framework, the AU is responsible for decision-making, planning, authorising, coordinating and disbursing all EU funds to African-led peace and security operations (Africa-Europe peace and security partnership at a crossroads, 2022). Therefore, the APF becomes

essential for operationalising the EU-AU partnership on peace and security.

The EU-AU partnership on peace and security is further developed through the Memorandum of Understanding between the Africa Union and the European Union on Peace, Security and Governance from 2018. It is within this document that it is mentioned for the first time the future changes regarding the EU-AU partnership on peace and security funding mechanism, due to be implemented from January 2021 (Council of the European Union Memorandum of Understanding between the Africa Union and the European Union on Peace, Security and Governance, 2018).

To conclude, the EU-AU partnership on peace and security refers to the joint efforts that both organizations make in order to promote peace, stability and security on the African continent, consisting in a range of activities. Among these, the EU is the leading supporter of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), supporting a range of actions such as peace support operations, capacity building and conflict prevention.

The newly adopted financial instrument, the European Peace Facility, was indeed established in early 2021, starting on March 22 2021, as an off-budget mechanism (Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/509 of March 22 2021 establishing a European Peace Facility, and repealing Decision (CFSP) 2015/528 , 2021). The EPF consists of two pillars, one for military operations and the other for assistance measures. In contrast, each pillar has its administrator: the Foreign Policy Instrument Director for assistance measures and an administrator within the Council General Secretariat for the operations (Service for Foreign Policy Instruments. European Peace Facility, 2022). In addition, the EPF has been established based on other financial mechanisms, such as the Athena mechanism used in the past to finance the costs of EU military operations and the APF. Therefore, the EPF brought two significant innovations: firstly, it allowed the EU to directly finance national and sub-regional military initiatives and secondly, it expanded its scope globally.

Moreover, the EPF brought another innovation through its "train and equip" provision, which allows for the "supply of military equipment or platforms designed to deliver lethal force" (Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/509 of March

22 2021 establishing a European Peace Facility, and repealing Decision (CFSP) 2015/528 , 2021). While this provision has gained the most public attention, if implemented, it will have to comply with the Integrated Methodological Framework (IMF) for assistance measures under the EPF (Questions and answers on the European Peace Facility's Integrated Methodological Framework, 2021). Even if the IMF is not a public document, its fundamental principles underline the issue of compliance, the human security dimension, as well as post-delivery control subject to monitoring done by the EEAS and EU Delegations at both HQ and field level (Questions and answers on the European Peace Facility's Integrated Methodological Framework, 2021).

While the EPF has already been implemented in Ukraine and throughout various instances on the African continent, its implementation raises some controversies related to the future of EU-AU partnership on peace and security. Therefore, within the over-arching framework of inter-regional security cooperation, the EPF implementation's causal effect on EU-AU partnership on peace and security will be assessed. The following section of the article will further elaborate on the methodology utilised to establish the link between the two concepts.

EPF and EU-AU partnership on peace and security Operational level

Background of the EPF implementation

The adoption of the EPF was based on a report made by the European Court of Auditors in 2018, according to which the EU's support for the APSA has been assessed (The African Peace and Security Architecture: need to refocus EU support, 2018). The report highlighted that overall, "the EU's support for the APSA has had a poor effect and needed refocusing", the vast majority of the APF being directed towards covering its basic operational costs, namely staff salaries (The African Peace and Security Architecture: need to refocus EU support, 2018). The report also emphasises two aspects. Firstly, a clear gap exists between the strategic and operational levels of the EU-AU

partnership on peace and security, implemented through APSA. Secondly, within the same partnership, while the AU is the main decision-making actor and responsible for planning, authorising, coordinating and disbursing all EU funds to African-led peace and security operations, the same AU has had a weak financial ownership of the APSA, its funding being heavily dependent on the support of donors (The African Peace and Security Architecture: need to refocus EU support, 2018).

Moreover, the EPF was adopted in march 2021 after several years of negotiations and debates at the European level. Although in February (17th-18th) 2022, the AU-EU Summit took place, the question of the EPF was missing from the agenda (Africa-Europe peace and security partnership at a crossroads, 2022). Furthermore, on the African continent and even at the AU level, there have been scarce debates about this financial shift, brought by the implementation of the EPF.

From a financial point of view, the EPF's total budget is 5.69 billion EURO in current prices for the period 2021-2027, while the annual ceilings were 420 million EUROS in 2021 and 1.132 billion EUROS in 2027 (Anon., 2022). Since the war in Ukraine started, only throughout 2022, the EU has granted more than 3 billion EUROS from the EPF budget to Ukrainian Defence Forces through assistance measures or implemented through its OPS pillar (Anon., 2022). While this fact emphasises specific changes within the EU foreign policy that go beyond this research's scope, it further shows the limits and overall lack of predictability and sustainability in the long run of the EPF.

EPF implementation in Africa and APSA

The first assistance measure implemented through the EPF in July 2021 took the form of a general programme for support to the AU in 2021, its objectives being those of "reduce the incidence, duration and intensity of violent conflicts in Africa and to strengthen the role of the African Union (AU) regarding peace and security on the African continent" (COUNCIL DECISION (EU) 2021/1210 of July 22 2021 on an assistance measure taking the form of a general programme for support to the African Union

under the European Peace Facility in 2021, 2021). The assistance measure totals 130 million EUROS and includes the following actions: supporting the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram (January 1 – June 30 2022), supporting the G5 Sahel Joint Force (January-December 2023), supporting the Somali National Army (January 2022- June 2023) and support the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) (July-December 2021) (Anon., 2022). This assistance measure was seen as ensuring a transition from the APF to the EPF and was thus followed by a multi-annual general programme for 2022-2024.

The second assistance measure implemented through the EPF, whose overall beneficiary is the AU, took place in April 2022 and consists of a multi-annual general programme for 2022-2024. The total reference amount is 600 million EUROS, covering several objectives: supporting the Somali National Army, supporting ATMIS (African Union Transition Mission in Somalia), supporting the MNJTF against Boko Haram, supporting SAMIM (SADC Mission in Mozambique) (Anon., 2022). The assistance mentioned above would finance actions approved by the Political and Security Committee (PSC) until December 31 2024. Within these assistance measures, the AU can request support for individual Peace Support Operations such as SAMIM, thus quickly addressing security issues emerging on the continent. In addition, although funding for SAMIM has been granted through the AU, the EU now has the possibility to provide bilateral financial support for military training and equipment to African-led peace support operations even if they do not operate under the AU Peace and Security Council mandate (How to Spend It: New EU Funding for African Peace and Security, 2021).

Another category of assistance measures implemented through the EPF on the African continent are the ones supporting military units trained by EUTMs. The first assistance measure of this kind was implemented on July 30 2021, in the case of trained forces by EUTM Mozambique, followed by a similar one implemented in the case of EUTM Mali (Anon., 2022). These assistance measures come to address capability shortcomings faced by both missions.

Finally, in July 2022, through the EPF, the Nigerien Armed Forces were supported with an assistance measure of 25 million EUROS, followed by another assistance measure supporting the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania implemented in December 2022 (Anon., 2022). Furthermore, in December 2022, the Council decided on an assistance measure under the EPF to support the deployment of the Rwanda Defence Force in Mozambique (COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2022/2354 of December 1 2022 on an assistance measure under the European Peace Facility to support the deployment of the Rwanda Defence Force in Mozambique, 2022).

Discussion

The empirical analysis emphasises several aspects. Firstly, there is a continuity in EU funding within the EPF for African-led Peace Support Operations under the mandate of the AU PSC. Most funds directed at the African continent are still being channelled through the AU. From this point of view, one can acknowledge that the EU-AU partnership on peace and security continues without any difficulty in terms of financial challenges.

The EPF allows the EU to directly finance RECs' military initiatives such as SAMIM in Mozambique. Although the funding to SAMIM was granted through the AU, this serves as an example of current and future challenges within the APSA. According to AU sources, there has been no formal cooperation nor coordination between SAMIM and Rwandan troops intervening in Mozambique, as was the case between SADC and AU concerning the same issue (Top-level discussions were needed before troops marched into Mozambique, 2021). This case opens up a whole discussion about the future of APSA and possible AU-RECs tensions or fragmentation tendencies, particularly on security matters. Therefore, formal coordination and cooperation mechanisms between all stakeholders must be further emphasised.

While most of the EU funding channelled through the former APF went to covering troops stipends (mainly AMISOM's), the new EPF implementation improves the efficiency of spent funds by directly financing capacity-building

initiatives and addressing capability shortcomings of both EUTMs and trained forces. In fact, assistance measures to foreign defence forces have been granted until now with an emphasis on supporting existing measures within the framework of the EU integrated approach to external conflicts and crises in operational environments where several other EU instruments were being implemented.

Moreover, the EPF implementation on the African continent during its first year of existence shows another aspect. Besides continuing to address security challenges in Somalia and the Sahel, the EU is addressing two other security concerns impacting the EU security and global security: terrorism in Mozambique and Niger and migration in Niger and Mauritania. By prioritising these theatres, implementing the EPF enables advancing a more geopolitical EU in Africa.

The main factor related to the EPF implementation that might affect the future of the EU-AU partnership on peace and security is its implementation in Ukraine. Ukrainian Forces have been the primary recipient of the EPF until now, with most of the EPF funds already being spent. This current state of affairs raises a fundamental question about the overall sustainability of the EPF and thus predictability of funding which is one of the core dimensions of the EU-AU partnership on peace and security. Moreover, this situation could add an extra layer of frustration to AU-EU relations since the AU has already tried to search for additional funding for its PSOs within the Peace Fund – United Nations pillar of APSA.

The implementation of the EPF in Africa is still in its infancy. However, it shows both positive and negative aspects; thus, it can impact the EU-AU partnership on peace and security in the long term. Firstly, the EPF implementation shows a continuity of the EU-AU partnership, with the vast majority of funding for the African continent being directed through the AU. Secondly, the main negative aspect related to this implementation refers to the war in Ukraine and, therefore, EPF's sustainability and predictability of funding in the long term. While the EU is committed to its partnership on peace and security with the AU, and while the war in Ukraine is still ongoing, it is clear that the EU leadership is preoccupied with addressing this

issue. The current EPF implementation in Africa presents both threats and opportunities. While this could represent a catalyst for the AU to implement the Kigali Financial Decision and thus gain more ownership of its funding, it can also open up the pathway for other international actors with different agendas to step in and leverage the current situation.

Conclusion

The implementation of the EPF in Africa reveals several aspects. Firstly, until 2024 there is a continuity of funding African PSOs within APSA. Therefore, from this point of view, the EU-AU peace and security partnership is not subject to any concern. Secondly, the EPF implementation in Africa addresses certain capability shortcomings of existing EUTMs. Therefore, EPF is an efficient enabling instrument for the EU's training missions deployed on the continent.

Thirdly, granting assistance measures to third countries' defence forces from particular theatres such as Mozambique, Niger, or Mauritania reveals the EU's commitment to addressing its citizens' security concerns (terrorism and migration). Moreover, these measures should also be seen as a practical dimension of advancing EU actorness and tackling global security challenges.

Furthermore, while the implementation of the EPF in Africa and especially in Ukraine, can potentially impact the EU-AU partnership on peace and security in terms of its financial dimension, this partnership should not be questioned. As the EPF implementation goes further, it is expected that the issue of financing the APSA should be further addressed by both the EU and the EU, as well as prioritising the deepening of the political dimension of the partnership. Subsequently, it can provide to the African leaders the incentive to further deepen the collective African decision-making on peace and security.

With a vast number of international and regional actors interested and involved in Africa and in the context of a shift in the geopolitical landscape, it becomes signally important for the EU to address the EPF's sustainability in the long run and to ensure its African counterparts of its continuous support.

Although, Europe's foreign and security policy shift regarding peace and security financing has addressed several shortfalls of its engagement on the African continent, it holds the potential of opening up a gap to be filled by other actors. In the context of significant disinformation campaigns led on the African continent against Member States and the EU, and with some African states fearing that this financial change might signal an increased European militarism and interventionism, the strengthening of the EU-AU partnership in all areas becomes of utmost importance.

This current state of affairs regarding the EU-AU partnership on peace and security can further open the debates and research on the AU's financial aspects, its coordination with regional blocs and its global influence as a full member of the G20.

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