



# The Relaunch of Peace Enforcement

How can the New Agenda be implemented?

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International peace operations are under immense pressure. The disastrous end of the NATO mission in Afghanistan in the summer of 2021 fuelled doubts about their purpose. The military junta in Mali forced the UN mission MINUSMA to withdraw by the end of 2023. And following violent protests against MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the government insisted on a gradual withdrawal of the mission, to begin in 2024. High expectations were therefore placed on the UN Secretary General's New Agenda for Peace. Observers hoped that the New Agenda would make multilateral operations fit for future challenges. But the document is broad in scope and offers only a few specific recommendations for peace operations. One of these concerns peace enforcement operations deployed not by the UN but by regional organisations. In order to assess the prospects of success offered by this proposal, some questions need to be answered:

Where does this approach originate? How is it intended to be operationalised? And what challenges are associated with its implementation?

## Key points

- The UN's New Agenda for Peace calls for peace enforcement operations through regional organisations, in particular the AU.
- Questions remain regarding funding, the division of labour among regional organisations as well as strategic and political coherence of international efforts.
- Blurring lines between UN-funded peace enforcement and counterterrorism, which is often accompanied by human rights violations, is problematic.
- In the current geopolitical situation, regional peace enforcement missions will face many of the same fundamental challenges as UN peace operations.

## **From the Agenda for Peace to the New Agenda: More Demand, Fewer Choices**

The New Agenda for Peace published at the beginning of July 2023 describes UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' "vision for multilateral efforts for peace and security ... for a world in transition."<sup>1</sup> This description reflects the broad scope of the New Agenda. Peace operations are listed as one instrument among many. The document recommends a total of twelve "actions" in five priority areas, one of which deals with strengthening peace operations and the UN's future approach to peace enforcement (Action 9<sup>2</sup>). Even before publication, when presenting UN priorities for 2023, Guterres set the tone: "(T)he New Agenda for Peace must recognize the need for a new generation of peace enforcement missions and counterterrorist operations, led by regional forces, with a Security Council mandate under Chapter VII, and with guaranteed, predictable funding."<sup>3</sup>



***Peace operations are treated as just one instrument among many.***

But where does this demand come from and how should it be met? And are these ideas really new? First, it is worth comparing the global situation in which the New Agenda was developed with that of its predecessor, An Agenda for Peace, published by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992.<sup>4</sup> Boutros-Ghali spoke to a world full of optimism after the end of the Cold War. The 1992 Agenda was a call to member states to guarantee peace and security worldwide, driven by a "new spirit

of commonality" and, for the first time, concretely defined the tools of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace-keeping and peace-building (then still hyphenated).



***The New Agenda for Peace must recognise the need for a new generation of peace enforcement and counterterrorism operations.***

Some 30 years later, little remains of the "new spirit of commonality." The New Agenda begins with a frank analysis of current challenges in a fragmented world, in which geostrategic competition, population growth, social inequality, climate change and migration trigger or intensify numerous conflicts worldwide. At the same time, thanks to new technologies, non-state (armed) actors are acquiring ever-growing asymmetric capabilities for recruitment, financing and radicalisation, making it more difficult to find solutions to these increasingly complex conflicts. Extremist militias and organised criminal groups are cooperating across borders to threaten security worldwide, but especially in large parts of Africa, from the Sahel to the Gulf of Guinea and from eastern Congo to the Horn of Africa.

The demand is therefore clear. In the New Agenda, Secretary-General Guterres relies heavily on the involvement of regional organisations to meet this demand - and has his sights set on a specific player. When presenting his priorities for 2023, he had stated: "The African Union is an obvious partner in this regard." He considered it necessary to expand this partnership, as operational experience and the normative developments of recent decades had

shown that UN peace operations would not be able to meet the demand “for a new generation of peace enforcement missions and counterterrorist operations.”

**The proposal raises a number of questions:**

- In light of geopolitical tensions, how likely is it that such missions are mandated and if so, by whom?
- How to navigate the unclear division of labour of African regional and sub-regional organisations?
- How can respect for human rights be safeguarded, especially if it comes to a de facto fusion of peace enforcement and counterterrorism?
- Who should pay for such missions and through which financial instruments?
- And how can strategic coherence be ensured between the use of force in the context of peace enforcement and a political process (and under whose leadership)?

These fundamental questions already give some indication as to why the UN has been reluctant to engage in peace enforcement in the past. A look back at the many conceptual and operational initiatives in the 75-year history of UN peacekeeping makes this clear.

## **The Use of Force in UN Missions: Experiences and Normative Developments**

**The UN Charter’s position on the use of force** | The question of whether, by whom and under what circumstances force may be used as part of a UN-mandated mission is by no means new. In fact, it is as old as the instrument of peace operations, that is, over 75 years. Although “peace operations” are not mentioned specifically in the UN Charter, Chapter VII, and in particular Article 42, authorises the Security Council, after exhausting all other means, to “take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security.”<sup>5</sup> Of the eleven current UN peacekeeping missions, four, namely the large, multidimensional missions in Africa, have a mandate under Chapter VII.<sup>6</sup>

However, it was some time before such an “action” was taken. The first UN peacekeeping mission, the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), was improvised on an ad hoc basis in 1948 to monitor the ceasefire between the new state of Israel and its neighbours. It consisted – and still consists – only of unarmed military observers. The UN sent armed units to the Sinai Peninsula for the first time in 1956 during the Suez Crisis to separate Israeli and Egyptian troops. However, this UN Emergency Force (UNEF, 1956-67) was subject to a strict “prohibition against any initiative in the use of armed force;” only self-defence was permitted.<sup>7</sup>

**First use of force in Congo** | The first occasion in which UN blue helmets used direct military force was in the UN Operation in

the Congo (ONUC, 1960-64), mandated in the wake of Congo's independence.<sup>8</sup> With a strength of over 19,000 military personnel at times, ONUC was also by far the largest UN mission to have been mandated by that time. The mission quickly became involved in fierce fighting, particularly in the pro-independence province of Katanga. ONUC achieved its mandated goals, the crisis did not spread to neighbouring countries and the territorial integrity of the Congo was preserved. And yet, the mission was heavily criticised, particularly by the Soviet Union and its allies in Africa, but also by some troop-contributing countries, as the mission resulted in 250 UN casualties.<sup>9</sup> As a result, the UN was cautious in its use of coercive military measures in the years that followed. In addition, during the Cold War, only a small number of missions could be mandated at all given the constellation in the Security Council – a situation very similar to what we are witnessing today.

the Security Council and member states did not implement this recommendation – leading to terrible crimes being committed under the very eyes of UN blue helmets, including the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and the massacre at Srebrenica in July 1995.

These incidents not only cost hundreds of thousands of lives, they also massively damaged the UN's reputation. A new approach was urgently needed to ensure the protection of the civilian population on the ground. At the end of the 1990s, following intense debates between UN bodies, member states and non-governmental organisations, a consensus developed among most, if not all, stakeholders. Blue helmets should be able to proactively protect civilians, be allowed to use force beyond strict self-defence and these so-called "robust missions" should also be equipped with the necessary military capabilities.

### **A mandate to protect the civilian population**

| Accordingly, in 1999, UN Resolution 1270 for the first time explicitly mandated a mission – the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) – to protect civilians "under imminent threat of physical violence," if necessary, by military means.<sup>11</sup> Almost all UN missions mandated since then have been tasked with the "Protection of Civilians" (POC) and over 90% of all blue helmets are currently deployed in a mission with such a mandate.<sup>12</sup> At the time, many crucial details remained unclear, such as the circumstances under which blue helmets were allowed to use a certain level of force against actors who were threatening the civilian population.

### **The reality check of the Brahimi Report**

| A year later, the report of a panel appointed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan



***Although ONUC achieved its goals, the mission was criticised for causing 250 deaths on the UN side.***

### **New optimism and the missions of the 1990s**

| The "new spirit of solidarity" after the dissolution of the Soviet Union led to a considerable number of new missions in Europe, Central America, South-East Asia and Africa from the beginning of the 1990s, for which Boutros-Ghali's Agenda for Peace served as the basis. It recommended that the Security Council consider the deployment of "Peace Enforcement Units" – more heavily armed than regular peacekeepers – should fighting break out again after the deployment of blue helmets.<sup>10</sup> Despite the urgent need for action in the early 1990s,

and chaired by former Algerian Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi provided a little more clarity.<sup>13</sup> On the one hand, the report confirmed the ongoing validity of the three core principles of UN peacekeeping operations: Consent of the parties to the conflict, impartiality, and the use of force only in self-defence. However, the Brahimi Report also emphasised that impartiality does not mean strict neutrality, especially towards parties to a conflict that use violence against civilians. Peacekeepers who observe such abuses should thus always consider themselves to be authorised to intervene.



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The far-sighted document also identified two central challenges that the UN has yet to solve. Firstly, a UN mission can never guarantee comprehensive protection in the country of deployment and must therefore be careful not to raise unrealistic expectations among the host government, the local population, and the global public. And secondly, the Security Council has a responsibility to ensure that “robust” missions are equipped with sufficient capabilities to enable them to fulfil their mandate and to provide them with continuous political support. Regional organisations will certainly face both challenges when trying to implement peace enforcement mandates in the future.

**The normative standard set by the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) |** The international community violated at least the first recommendation when it established

the principle of the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) at the 2005 World Summit.<sup>14</sup> Its paragraphs 138 and 139 define the three “pillars of responsibility:” First, every state is obligated to protect its population from genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Second, the international community has the duty to support states in fulfilling this responsibility. Third, if a state is unable or unwilling to protect its population or even commits mass crimes itself, the responsibility to protect transfers to the international community, which may also use force as a last resort. Six years later, R2P then formed the normative basis for UN Resolution 1973 (2011).<sup>15</sup> In it, the Security Council authorised willing member states to intervene militarily in the Libyan civil war. The implementation of this resolution by various NATO states and the subsequent overthrow of the Gaddafi regime drew such criticism that the global acceptance of the “responsibility to protect” was severely damaged.<sup>16</sup>



***The Capstone Doctrine underlined that UN peacekeeping missions – even “robust” ones – cannot be an enforcement instrument.***

**Clarifications in the Capstone Doctrine |** In 2008, the UN published the so-called “Capstone Doctrine,” drawing on its experiences from the large number of missions mandated since the late 1990s, particularly in Africa, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (MONUC, 1999-2010), Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL, 1999-2005), Ethiopia/Eritrea (UNMEE, 2000-2008), Côte d’Ivoire (MINUCI, 2003-2004 and ONUCI, 2004-2017), Liberia (UNMIL, 2003-2018), Burundi (ONUB, 2004-2006) and Sudan (UNMIS, 2005-2011).<sup>17</sup>

The doctrine made two important clarifications, which are still valid today. The first expands the third peacekeeping principle (“non-use of force except in self-defence”) to include the crucial addition “and in defence of the mandate.” This clarifies that peace operations with a POC mandate may in principle also proactively ward off threats to the civilian population. The second clarification makes a distinction between “robust peacekeeping” and peace enforcement. Whereas the former only permits a local, tactical use of force to protect civilians with the fundamental consent of the parties to the conflict, the Security Council can also authorise the latter against the will of some or all parties to the conflict, including more extensive coercive military measures. The Capstone Doctrine explicitly emphasises that UN peacekeeping missions – even “robust” ones – cannot be an enforcement instrument. Doing so might jeopardise the fundamental political function of a UN mission by acting as a de facto party to a conflict. Here, for the first time in a UN context, regional organisations or coalitions emerge as suitable actors for such peace enforcement missions.



***Despite some short-term successes, the Force Intervention Brigade did not provide a sustainable solution.***

**Testing the waters: the Force Intervention Brigade**

**|** In 2013, contradicting its own doctrine, the UN decided to deploy an enforcement element within a UN mission. As part of MONUSCO, a “Force Intervention Brigade” (FIB) was to use “targeted, offensive operations” to push back various armed groups in the east of the DRC and ultimately defeat them militarily.<sup>18</sup> Despite some short-term

successes, the deployment of the FIB, which consisted of Southern and East African special forces, did not result in lasting gains, and the situation in their area of operation remains critical ten years after their deployment. It is therefore not surprising that the UN has not replicated this particular experiment.



***The Hippo report called for the integration into a political process and a differentiation from the fight against terrorism.***

**The primacy of politics in the HIPPO**

**Report |** Most recently, the 2015 report of the “High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations” (HIPPO Report) picked up the thread of peace enforcement again. The report urged UN peace operations to be linked to a political process and clearly differentiated from the fight against terrorism, emphasising the “primacy of politics” in UN missions.<sup>19</sup> Particularly in mission areas with no peace to keep, POC mandates would need to be closely tied to the search for political solutions. Without a political strategy, such missions would become a protracted and ultimately futile endeavour. The HIPPO report also clearly states that UN peace operations are fundamentally unsuited for military counterterrorism operations due to their political nature, disparate interests of troop and police contributors, and lack of key capabilities.

According to the HIPPO report, deploying a UN mission in parallel with an operation engaged in offensive counterterrorism – as in the case of the UN mission MINUSMA and the French Operation Barkhane in Mali – requires a strict distinction between

their respective roles, particularly when communicating with the local population. In general, utmost caution is required when deploying missions into ongoing armed hostilities, as the risk of being perceived as an active party to the conflict is simply too high. The HIPPO report also proposes ad hoc coalitions or regional actors as the better alternative.

of peace enforcement missions and counterterrorist operations.” The epicentre of this need is Africa. Almost 85% of all UN peacekeepers serve in the five UN missions on the continent.<sup>20</sup> The region also has considerable experience of its own with peace operations in various configurations, including military enforcement missions such as AMISOM (AU Mission in Somalia), ATMIS (AU Transition Mission in Somalia), SAMIM (SADC Mission in Mozambique) or the MNJTF (Multinational Joint Task Force) in the Lake Chad region.<sup>21</sup> And the region has the political will to deploy its own armed forces in such missions: Of the top 25 troop-contributing countries to UN missions in September 2023, 14 were from Africa.<sup>22</sup> It is therefore only fitting that Antonio Guterres points to the African Union as the central partner in his strategy for the regionalisation of peace enforcement.



**Guterres explicitly mentions the African Union as a partner in his strategy of regionalising peace enforcement.**

**The approach of the New Agenda: Peace enforcement through regionalisation** | This is precisely the idea that Secretary-General Guterres takes up in his New Agenda, which addresses the “need for a new generation



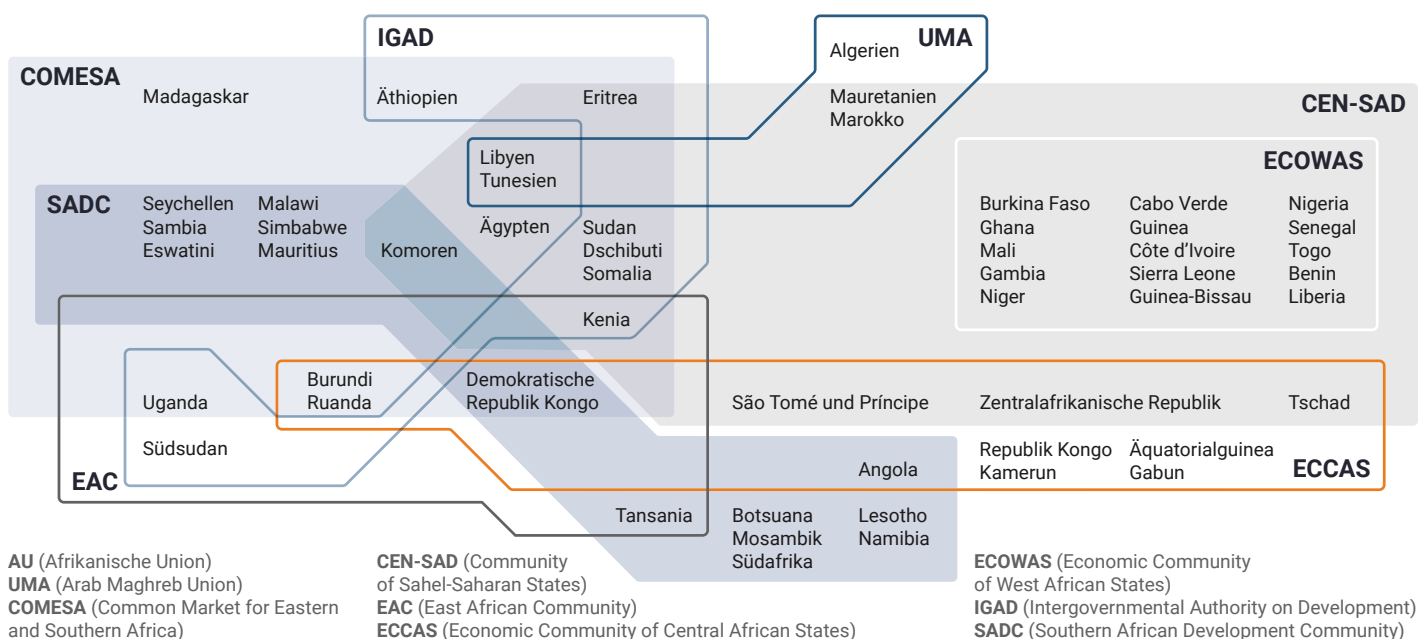
## Key Challenges of African Enforcement Operations

**Unresolved subsidiarity** | Despite all its experience and willingness, the AU – and the various sub-regional organisations in Africa – have so far lacked several crucial elements to be able to play a stronger role. One acute problem is the unresolved issue of “subsidiarity,” that is, delineating the responsibilities of the AU and the diverse sub-regional organisations for crises on the continent. Even though AU founding documents establish its primacy in matters of peace and security in Africa, the competences of the AU and the sub-regional organisations are so broadly and vaguely defined that it is not legally possible to clearly delimit them. To make matters worse, the division of labour is not only undefined between the AU and the sub-regional organisations, but also among the latter due to African countries’ having multiple and overlapping memberships.

For example, the DRC is a member of four sub-regional organisations, allowing ample opportunity for forum-shopping.

### Lack of financial and logistical capacities

| The African regional and subregional organisations do have one thing in common: none of them has sufficient financial, nor organisational and logistical capacities for large-scale enforcement missions. Since 2007, the AU has therefore endeavoured to obtain financial support for its own and sub-regional African missions from the UN member states’ assessed contributions to the organisation’s peacekeeping budget. These efforts had previously failed due to resistance in the Security Council, particularly from the US and the UK. Now, the changed geopolitical situation following Russia’s full-scale attack on Ukraine in early 2022 has led to a rethink, and noticeably increased the strategic importance of the AU and its member states for the “West.”<sup>23</sup>





**UN funding for AU missions** | Since the beginning of 2023, the debate on UN support for African missions has made rapid progress. First, after years of controversial discussions, in February the AU member states agreed on a common position and made a number of proposals for the funding of AU missions.<sup>24</sup> In May, Antonio Guterres responded with a report setting out the UN's position.<sup>25</sup> In it, he emphasised the need for “predictable, sustainable, and flexible” resources for

the AU, specifically proposing two possible approaches: The first envisages co-financing by the UN and AU as part of a jointly led mission modelled on UNAMID (AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur, 2007-2020). The second foresees the provision of a UN support package for an AU mission consisting of financial and/or logistical elements, as in the case of AMISOM (AU Mission in Somalia, 2007-2022) or ATMIS (AU Transition Mission in Somalia, 2022 to date).

### **The hybrid model: UNAMID**

UNAMID was deployed jointly by the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council in July 2007 to support the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement between the Government of Sudan and various armed groups. With a mandated strength of almost 20,000 military and 6,500 police personnel, UNAMID was the world's largest peacekeeping operation at the time. UNAMID replaced the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS, 2004-2007) and after its end in 2020 was itself followed by the much smaller and purely civilian UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS).

From the outset, UNAMID suffered from being the result of a compromise between the government of Sudan, the AU and the UN. The government actually wanted to prevent any, but especially a UN-led mission in Darfur. At the same time, the administrative, logistical and financial capabilities of the AU were inadequate to continue AMIS. The UN, on the other hand, would have preferred to extend the mandate of the existing UNMIS (UN Mission in Sudan, 2005-2011) to Darfur, but the government refused. The result was the first and so far only “hybrid peacekeeping mission” with joint leadership by two international organisations.

Operationally, UNAMID was a typical UN peace operation in terms of its structures and processes. However, in the first few years of its existence in particular, it was hampered by a great deal of friction between the two organisations. Day-to-day cooperation between the much larger and more experienced UN and the AU with its less developed capabilities proved difficult. In addition, the diverging priorities of the UN and the AU allowed the government of Sudan to play them off against each other. It was only in the last years of the mission that the UN and AU succeeded in coordinating their dealings with the host government and thus utilising their comparative advantages – the UN's greater resources and the AU's greater political legitimacy.<sup>26</sup> Overall, UNAMID is therefore less a success story than a cautionary tale, but one that offers a wealth of valuable insights for future UN-AU hybrid enforcement missions.

## The support model: AMISOM/ATMIS

AMISOM was deployed in the same year as UNAMID. In contrast to UNAMID, AMISOM was an AU-led enforcement operation from the outset. Its task was to fight the Islamist militia al-Shabaab in the centre and south of Somalia. It was staffed primarily by East African states (Ethiopia, Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya and Uganda) that provided troops as well as smaller police and civilian components. With a strength of 18-20,000, AMISOM has consistently been one of the largest international missions worldwide over the 13 years of its existence. Although it was able to drive the Islamists out of most population centres with very heavy losses of its own, it was never able to defeat them militarily. In April 2022, the AU replaced AMISOM with ATMIS, which itself will be gradually reduced by the end of 2024 and is envisaged to then transfer its tasks to Somali security forces.

In Somalia, the AU's known capability gaps were addressed differently than in Darfur. Financially, the EU covered all personnel costs incurred by the troop contributors. The EU assesses that it has provided about 2.5 billion euros over a period of 15 years.<sup>27</sup> Through its Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), the UN in turn supplied all consumables such as food, water and fuel, medical infrastructure and evacuation, transport services, construction measures, as well as communication and IT support. At the same time, the UN also deployed an Assistance Mission to Somalia (UNSOM), which provided political support for the Somali peace process.<sup>28</sup>

The long-standing disputes between the AU, EU and UN over the amount and quality of the financial and logistical support packages, as well as the AU's difficulties in aligning the various interests of troop contributors into a common approach, offer several insights for comparable future missions in an AMISOM/ATMIS-type set-up – but also serve as a warning of future disputes between the organisations.

In late December 2023, the UN Security Council finally adopted Resolution 2719.<sup>29</sup> It enables the AU to request support from UN assessed contributions for its own peace support operations. To do so, the operation must be authorised by the UN Security Council and designed and planned together with the UN. Moreover, the AU must comply with UN human rights standards, meet UN requirements for financial supervision and be subject to review by the responsible committees of the General Assembly – as are UN peacekeeping missions.<sup>30</sup> In each case, the UN Security Council will determine the appropriate format of UN support, with Resolution 2719 clearly favouring the

Support Package model. Finally, the resolution also emphasises that the UN will cover at most 75% of the costs of an AU mission, leaving at least 25% for the AU to contribute.

While the adoption of Resolution 2719 is fundamentally positive, it remains to be seen whether the AU will be able to fulfil the various UN standards in the foreseeable future. This will in any case require considerable capacity building within the AU Secretariat, whose staff is both less numerous and less experienced compared to the UN headquarters. The Security Council has also reiterated clearly that it would not allow the blank checks that the AU would

have preferred under any circumstances but would only reimburse expenses with precise documentation and on the basis of the infamous UN Contingent-Owned Equipment Manual.<sup>31</sup>

**Political challenges** | Assuming that these more technical issues can be resolved, how likely is such a regionally-led peace enforcement mission in the near future and what are its chances of success? There are certainly plenty of potential areas of deployment on the continent: Sudan, the Eastern DRC, or Somalia. But can the enforcement approach of the New Agenda, combined with a UN-AU funding mechanism, remove other hurdles that have so far prevented regional military interventions? If the current New Agenda proposal is to be successful, it is important to understand why previous UN-led conventional peace-keeping missions have failed to achieve sustainable success in some locations.

All potential deployments would take place in extremely difficult environments. Conflict parties often lack clear internal hierarchies and frequently shift alliances. Many are driven by religious extremism and are therefore unwilling to participate in any political peace process. Some of these parties receive support from neighbouring states, other state actors or transnational criminal organisations. At the same time, since Protection of Civilians mandates became the norm, mandate implementation has become increasingly demanding and expectations have risen among member states, host governments and affected populations. Actual or perceived failure to protect the civilian population therefore directly threatens the legitimacy of a mission in the eyes of these actors. The example of the East African Community Regional

Force (EAC-RF) shows how quickly this can happen. The EAC-RF was deployed at the express request of the DRC government in November 2022 to support the national army in the fight against various armed groups in the east of the country. Less than a year later, in October 2023, the government called on the EAC-RF to leave the country – amid claims of its inefficiency and following massive popular protests.



***Actual or perceived failure to protect the civilian population therefore directly threatens the legitimacy of a mission.***

At times, consent of host governments to the presence of a mission can be fragile or partial. Often, they would welcome military support of their national security forces in the fight against “terrorists,” but they dislike parts of the mandate, particularly the human rights provisions, and show only limited willingness to carry out necessary reforms that could address structural causes of conflict. A mission’s situation becomes particularly precarious when a significant proportion of the attacks against the civilian population are committed by the security forces of a host government or its allies, such as the (former) Wagner Group, as is the case in Mali, eastern Congo and the Central African Republic.

## Counterterrorism and peace enforcement |

Upon closer inspection, African states' call for peace enforcement by African regional and sub-regional organisations is in many cases tantamount to a desire for support in the fight against terrorism. And indeed, the presence of Islamist terrorist groups in many of these states is the greatest security threat. At the same time, blurring the lines between peacekeeping and counterterrorism harbours further challenges that the UN has not yet been able to overcome, and which would certainly not diminish in the context of AU-implemented enforcement missions. Missions with a counterterrorism mandate – which the New Agenda explicitly provides for – would become an active party to the conflict alongside the host government. This raises the question of whether peace enforcement is merely intended to ensure the survival of a regime, which is problematic in light of the growing number of coups and other unconstitutional changes of government and sometimes poor governance on the continent. This further complicates decisions of the AU and UN to launch and support such missions and makes them politically contentious.



*The call from African states for peace enforcement is de facto a call for support in the fight against terrorism.*

It is unclear, moreover, how to closely integrate regional peace enforcement operations into a political peace process that is managed by another actor. The New Agenda for Peace and Resolution 2719 envisage a division of labour in which the UN remains responsible for driving forward political processes. The “primacy of

politics” remains a central element of all UN-mandated missions, as only political solutions can stabilise conflicts in the long term. Care must therefore be taken to ensure that these instruments are closely linked. The cases in which missions led by (sub-)regional organisations have succeeded in achieving military progress, such as in Mozambique (SAMIM) or Somalia (AMISOM/ATMIS), were ultimately characterised by a lack of strategic coherence and sustainable political solutions.



*Even missions with military progress ultimately lacked strategic coherence and sustainable political solutions.*

## Outlook

So, can UN-funded African enforcement operations achieve more in the highly complex and violent conflicts described above than traditional, multidimensional UN peacekeeping missions? The UN's decision in principle to fund African missions is a welcome development but will probably not be sufficient to overcome the enormous challenges.

Two further factors give reason for scepticism: Firstly, there is no sign of any great demand for enforcement operations on the part of potential host countries. The governments of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Cameroon and Sudan, for example, have so far relied primarily on internal solutions based on military force alone rather than an AU mission, however mandated and financed. And secondly, it is unclear whether a political consensus on a concrete mandate for a regional mission

could even be reached in the deeply divided UN Security Council. Developments in the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East currently offer very little hope that these tensions will ease.

Unfortunately, it therefore appears unlikely that the approach outlined in the New Agenda for Peace and Resolution 2719 will significantly improve the precarious security situation in Africa, where conflicts have produced tens of thousands of deaths and millions of displaced persons in recent years. It is more likely that the latest twist is only part of the ongoing cyclical process in which different approaches to crisis management have alternated for decades, in the line with the bigger geopolitical picture. Large, purely military operations, small political missions, ad-hoc coalitions of the willing, extensive deployments with broad mandates to protect the population and combat the causes of conflict – have all been tried and tested before.

It is also sobering to realise how lessons learned have been implemented. The Brahimi Report, the Capstone Doctrine or the HIPPO Report all accurately analyse the challenges, draw appropriate conclusions and make concrete recommendations for action. What remains unclear is how these can be put into practice against the will of national governments, whose lack of commitment to reform is backed by allies in the region and members of the UN Security Council. Without a fundamental change in the political dynamic, the current approach to regional peace enforcement will likely remain nothing more than “old wine in new bottles.”

- [1] [UN Webpage](#).
- [2] [A New Agenda for Peace](#).
- [3] [As of 06 February 2023](#).
- [4] [An Agenda for Peace, January 1992](#).
- [5] [UN Charta](#).
- [6] These are: [MINUSCA \(Central African Republic/ CAR\)](#), [MONUSCO \(Democratic Republic of the Congo/DRC\)](#), [UNISFA \(Abyei\)](#) und [UNMISS \(South Sudan\)](#).
- [7] [Summary Study of the Experience Derived from the Establishment and Operations of the Force, 1958](#).
- [8] [ONUC also marked the first use of an arms embargo and a no-fly zone by the UN](#).
- [9] <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/past/onucf.html>.
- [10] [An Agenda for Peace, p.26, §44](#).
- [11] [UN Resolution 1270, October 1999](#).
- [12] In total 16 Missions: [UNAMSIL \(Sierra Leone\)](#), [MONUC \(DRC\)](#), [UNMIL \(Liberia\)](#), [ONUB \(Burundi\)](#), [UNOCI \(Côte d'Ivoire\)](#), [MINUSTAH \(Haiti\)](#), [UNMIS \(Sudan\)](#), [UNIFIL \(Lebanon\)](#), [UNAMID \(Darfur\)](#), [MINURCAT \(Chad\)](#), [MONUSCO \(DRC\)](#), [UNMISS \(South Sudan\)](#), [UNISFA \(Abyei\)](#), [MINUSMA \(Mali\)](#), [MUNUSCA \(CAR\)](#), [MINUJUSTH \(Haiti\)](#); see: [The Protection of Civilians in UN Peacekeeping, 2020, p.3](#).
- [13] [Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, August 2000](#).
- [14] [2005 World Summit Outcome, October 2005](#).
- [15] [UN Resolution 1973, March 2011](#).
- [16] [Maluwa, Tiyanjana, "Stalling a Norms Trajectory?: Revisiting UN Security Council Resolution 1973 on Libya and its Ramifications for the Principle of the Responsibility to Protect", 2023](#).
- [17] The full name of the document: [„United Nations Peacekeeping Operations – Principles and Guidelines“](#).
- [18] [UN resolution 2098, March 2013](#).
- [19] [Uniting Our Strengths for Peace – Politics, Partnership and People: Report des High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations, June 2015](#).
- [20] As of December 2023, the top 25, provide 80 % of the troops and police contributions for UN peace operations with 57,500 (out of 72,600 in total). The 14 African countries accounted for 42 % of the top 25 with 24,300 uniformed personnel. [Troop and police contributors | United Nations Peacekeeping](#).
- [21] See the list on pp. 13 of the Security Council Report, [„The Financing of AU Peace Support Operations: Prospects for Progress in the Security Council“, April 2023](#).
- [22] [As of May 2023](#).
- [23] [The new "US Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa" \(August 2022\) is emblematic of this](#).
- [24] [Consensus Paper on Predictable, Adequate, and Sustainable Financing for African Union Peace and Security Activities](#).
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