



How to Spend It: New EU Funding for African Peace and Security

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
I. Introduction	1
II. The Evolution of EU Funding for African Peace and Security.....	2
A. The African Peace Facility	2
B. A New EU Approach on the Horizon.....	4
C. Rationale for the New Funding Model	5
1. AMISOM’s funding trap	6
2. Toward more funding for ad hoc coalitions	6
3. Increasing demands to support African armies.....	8
III. Potential Implications for African Peace and Security	11
A. Implications for the African Union.....	11
B. More Direct Support to Ad Hoc Coalitions	13
C. Training and Equipping African Armies	16
IV. Toward an Effective EU Funding Model for African Peace and Security	19
APPENDICES	
A. Map of EU Support to AU-led and AU-endorsed Peacekeeping Missions	22
B. About the International Crisis Group	23
C. Crisis Group Reports and Briefings on Africa since 2018.....	24
D. Crisis Group Board of Trustees	26

Principal Findings

What's new? In 2021, the European Union will introduce new ways of financing African peace and security. It will replace the dedicated fund that supported the African Union's (AU) efforts to prevent and resolve conflict with successor instruments that give the EU more flexibility in choosing who and what to support.

Why does it matter? The new instruments will allow the EU to directly finance both a broader range of African-led peace support operations and coalitions and direct training and equipment for national armies. Without careful implementation, however, Brussels could wind up making counterproductive investments that might worsen already fraught situations in fragile states.

What should be done? Robust safeguards to manage these risks will be key. The EU should insist that funding recipients develop political strategies to guide their military activities. It should continue to work closely with the AU, empowering it to play an oversight role, and refrain from giving fragile states money for lethal equipment.

Executive Summary

In 2021, the European Union (EU) will overhaul the way in which it has financed African peace and security efforts over the last sixteen years. Until now, the EU has largely channelled funds in support of these efforts through African Union (AU) structures. But the new financial tools will give the EU the option of bypassing the AU to directly pay for national and sub-regional military initiatives. For the first time, they will also allow Brussels to finance lethal equipment for African armies. With the flexibility that the EU is creating for itself comes some risk. Often, military operations to address threats to African security lack overarching political strategies to deal with the drivers of conflict or build trust among local populations. To spend its money effectively and avoid investing in military efforts that could make fraught situations yet worse, the EU should insist that the peace support operations it funds be governed by political strategies and subject to AU oversight. Brussels should also do risk assessments before financing military training and equipment for African armies and refrain from supplying lethal equipment to fragile states.

Since 2004, the EU has contributed to AU conflict prevention efforts through its African Peace Facility (APF), a fund that helps finance African-led peace support operations, capacity building for AU institutions and AU-led conflict prevention initiatives. In 2021, the EU will replace this facility as it restructures its foreign policy funds. Instead of working through the APF, it will provide financial support to African peace and security through two successor global funds: one for military and defence operations and one for development aid.

While there will no longer be a mechanism exclusively dedicated to funding African peace and security, the new arrangement will allow Brussels greater flexibility that the EU hopes will generate better results for the continent. Brussels will be able both to provide direct funding to African-led peace support operations and military coalitions, even when they are not operating under an AU Peace and Security Council mandate, and to provide bilateral financial support for military training and equipment to African armies. It had neither of these options under the previous funding arrangement.

The EU is making these changes, in part, to address some of the limitations it experienced with APF funding and to complement its own civilian and military missions on the continent. With the new flexibility, Brussels wants to avoid AU-led missions becoming too dependent on open-ended EU financial support and prevent the long procurement delays associated with channelling funds through the AU. In addition, European and member state officials see the new capabilities as an opportunity to augment bilateral support that member states and the EU are already providing for military training and capacity-building missions in places like Mali or Somalia.

But there are also possible downsides to the new approach, including that it may weaken the AU's role in peacekeeping on the continent. As money in the APF's successor facilities will no longer be exclusively earmarked for AU peace and security, a larger number of potential beneficiaries could well create competition over financial resources. Addis Ababa's oversight role in African-led peace support operations could also become more limited, as Brussels will be able to directly fund ad hoc coalitions

constituted outside the AU. The EU should not let that happen; it both needs the AU's expertise and has an interest in developing its capacity. Brussels needs a strong partner in Addis Ababa to address stability challenges on the continent that many EU leaders see as linked to European security.

The EU should also learn the lessons of ad hoc coalitions such as the Multinational Joint Task Force that is fighting Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin or the G5 Sahel Joint Force, both of which have struggled to advance enduring stability, in part, because they lack a political plan to build trust among populations, prevent exacerbation of communal tensions and lay the groundwork for provision of basic services. If Brussels increases its financial support for such coalitions, it should insist that they subordinate their military operations to political strategies and be prepared to draw from its development fund to help with their implementation. Linking the EU's civilian and military tools in this way will require strong political leadership in Brussels and better integrated strategic planning by different EU institutions.

Perhaps most controversially, the EU's new approach to funding will allow Brussels to finance military training and lethal equipment for national armies. This type of support can be especially risky in states where security forces are rife with mismanagement and corruption, making it difficult to ensure that equipment is used for the intended purpose and does not fall into the wrong hands. Militaries themselves can become a threat to stability, with the August 2020 military coup in Mali being a case in point. Before and during the provision of this kind of support, Brussels should undertake thorough risk assessments, based on intelligence from EU member states, to analyse how far its support could exacerbate conflict dynamics. In fragile states, characterised by high levels of institutional and social fragility or affected by armed conflict, where the risk of misuse is especially acute, the EU should refrain from funding arms and ammunition and focus its attention on non-lethal support.

Addis Ababa/Brussels, 14 January 2021

How to Spend It: EU Funding for African Peace and Security

I. Introduction

The European Union (EU) has been a critical donor to the African Union's (AU) conflict prevention efforts, providing funding through the African Peace Facility (APF) since 2004.¹ In 2021, as part of an overhaul of its foreign policy funds, the EU and its member states will dismantle the APF and channel the resources that once flowed through it into two more flexible successor vehicles.² While this structural change will allow the EU to continue playing a key role in supporting conflict prevention in Africa, it also creates certain risks, including that Brussels might use these new instruments in a way that entrenches a trend toward over-militarised responses to regional conflicts.

This report analyses potential opportunities and risks that the new EU funding structure could present for AU-EU cooperation and for African peace and security more broadly. It then offers recommendations for the structure's responsible implementation. With the December 2020 political agreement on the establishment of the European Peace Facility (one of the APF's successor funds) and negotiations over its implementation in Africa about to start in Brussels and member states, and with preparations under way for the next AU-EU summit, scheduled for the first half of 2021, the report aims to inform the debate around these issues in Africa and Europe. The report builds on previous Crisis Group research on AU-EU relations and UN-assessed contributions for African peace support operations.³ It also draws from interviews conducted from January to December 2020 with EU and AU officials and member state representatives in Addis Ababa and Brussels, as well as civil society experts in Europe and Crisis Group's field staff in the Sahel, Lake Chad basin and Horn of Africa.

¹ Crisis Group Africa Report N°255, *Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations*, 17 October 2017.

² EU funding for peace and security in Africa goes beyond the type of activities previously financed through the APF, ranging from development assistance programs to local civilian conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives. This type of funding falls outside the scope of this report, which covers the new elements of EU funding for African peace and security.

³ Ibid. Crisis Group Africa Report N°286, *The Price of Peace: Securing UN Funding for AU Peace Operations*, 31 January 2020.

II. The Evolution of EU Funding for African Peace and Security

Between 2004 and 2019, the EU worked through the African Peace Facility – a fund dedicated to promoting continental stability and peace – to provide €2.7 billion in financial support to the AU and other African institutions for their conflict prevention efforts.⁴ The APF was a steady and relatively predictable source of funding. In 2021, the EU will merge the APF into two larger, global funds that will have a broader range of beneficiaries and fewer restrictions on the type of assistance available. Under the new set-up, the EU will be able to directly fund African military coalitions and national armies, which was either difficult or impossible under the legal restrictions that governed the APF.

A. *The African Peace Facility*

The EU created the APF in response to an AU call for external support. With its focus on supporting the AU and African sub-regional organisations in their efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts, the APF has become a central pillar of AU-EU peace and security cooperation. It has allowed the EU to provide the resources necessary to activate and sustain African-led missions to address peace and security crises on the continent, while the AU and African states have mobilised the rapid response forces necessary to address threats on the ground.⁵

The AU and African sub-regional institutions, which are with limited exceptions the designated beneficiaries under the APF, have been the main recipient of APF funding.⁶ Through the APF, the EU disbursed over € 2.7 billion between 2004 and 2019 to provide support in three critical areas under the umbrella of the AU. The first is African-led peace support operations. The second is the African Peace and Security Architecture – ie, the continent’s institutional framework for security.⁷ The third is the APF’s Early Response Mechanism that mobilises quick financial assistance for African conflict prevention and mediation initiatives.⁸ AU-recognised sub-regional

⁴ “African Peace Facility, Annual Report 2019”, Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), July 2020.

⁵ The EU can technically deploy its own multinational military units (so-called EU battlegroups) for conflict prevention, stabilisation, peacekeeping or counter-terrorism purposes, if authorised by a UN Security Council Resolution. Strategic considerations and lack of political will have so far prevented their deployment, however.

⁶ “African Peace Facility, Annual Report 2019”, op. cit. The AU recognises eight regional economic communities: the Arab Maghreb Union, Economic Community of West African States, East African Community, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Southern African Development Community, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Economic Community of Central African States and Community of Sahel-Saharan States; as well as two regional mechanisms – coordinating mechanisms of the regional standby brigades of eastern and northern Africa (namely, the Eastern Africa Standby Force Coordination Mechanism and North African Regional Capability).

⁷ The African Peace and Security Architecture consists of the AU Peace and Security Council, Panel of the Wise, Continental Early Warning Systems, African Standby Force and Peace Fund.

⁸ The bulk of the APF envelope between 2004 and 2019 was allocated to peace support operations (€2,681.2 million or 93 per cent of total contracts), while €171.8 million (6 per cent) was used for capacity building and €28 million (1 per cent) for the Early Response Mechanism. “African Peace Facility, Annual Report 2019”, op. cit.

bodies undertaking peace and security operations with an AU Peace and Security Council mandate have also been eligible to receive APF funding, but the AU must endorse any request coming from the regional bodies.⁹

More than 90 per cent of the APF has been spent on peace support operations. The instrument has contributed to the financing of sixteen African-led missions with different AU mandates ranging from ceasefire monitoring in South Sudan to supporting a peaceful, democratic transition in the Gambia and fighting Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin.¹⁰ The APF covers mission costs such as troop transport, soldiers' living expenses, communication infrastructure and medical evacuation capabilities, but it cannot pay for soldiers' salaries, arms, ammunition or military equipment and training.¹¹ From 2007 to 2019, more than €1.94 billion in APF funding was channelled through the AU into just one operation, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the lion's share of which has covered the cost of troop stipends.¹²

EU support to institutional capacity building of the African Peace and Security Architecture was designed to complement the funding for African peace operations, with a view to strengthening the ability of the AU and partner regional bodies to manage the deployment and the command and control of peace operations while also engaging more prominently in conflict prevention on the continent.¹³ Among other things, the funds earmarked for institutional support cover the training and salaries of AU Commission staff, communication and IT infrastructure, and technical support to the AU Continental Early Warning System.¹⁴ This capacity-building component has, however, remained a relatively small part of the APF (only €171.8 million between 2004 and 2018) despite regular suggestions by external evaluators, such as the European Court of Auditors, to enlarge it and better link it to the deployment of peace support operations.¹⁵

⁹ "African Peace Facility, Annual Report 2018", DG DEVCO, 2019.

¹⁰ Since 2004, the APF has funded the following peace support operations: the African Union Mission in Sudan, Peace Consolidation Mission in the Central African Republic, Monitoring and Verification Mechanism and Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangement Monitoring Mechanism in South Sudan, ECOWAS Mission in The Gambia, Central African Multinational Force, African-led International Support Mission to Mali, ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau, African Union Mission for Support to the Elections in the Comoros and AU Electoral and Security Assistance Mission in the Comoros, African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic, AU Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army, AMISOM, Multinational Joint Task Force, G5 Sahel Joint Force and AU Observers Mission in the Central African Republic, as well as a mission of AU human rights observers and military experts in Burundi. "African Peace Facility, Annual Report 2018", op. cit.

¹¹ The legal basis for the APF's establishment is the Cotonou Agreement, which regulates development cooperation between the EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific states. APF funding is therefore considered to be development funding and cannot be used for lethal equipment or ammunition.

¹² "African Peace Facility, Annual Report 2019", op. cit.

¹³ Ibid. The APF has for example begun to finance a Command, Control, Communication and Information System that can help more effectively manage African-led peace support operations.

¹⁴ The AU's Continental Early Warning System is made up of a Situation Room, which provides 24-hour monitoring of potential, actual and post-conflict situations, as well as similar centres in regional economic communities. It has also developed tools that aim to improve member state capabilities in conflict early warning and prevention.

¹⁵ This tranche of the APF has not always been used in the most strategic way to complement the support to peace operations. Instead of providing targeted training and technical assistance with a

Despite having the smallest funding window (just €28 million between its creation in 2009 and 2018), the Early Response Mechanism, which has supported about 40 different initiatives across Africa in an array of conflict situations, is widely regarded as one of the most successful programs to benefit from the fund. Through its fast-track process, the EU can respond to funding requests from the AU in as few as ten working days, enabling the AU to prepare the early stages of peace support operations and quickly mount a wide range of conflict prevention initiatives such as mediation, shuttle diplomacy, the deployment of human rights observers, fact-finding missions and measures to prevent election-related violence in the earliest stages of a crisis.¹⁶

B. *A New EU Approach on the Horizon*

European policymakers perceive many of Africa's security problems, from the expansion of jihadism in the Sahel to the effects of various African conflicts on uncontrolled migration, as a threat to European stability.¹⁷ Partly in response, the EU is in the process of overhauling its foreign policy funding tools – including the APF – in an attempt to streamline them and thereby make its external action more effective.

The EU is going to merge the APF into two global funds, meaning that Brussels will no longer have a funding mechanism exclusively dedicated to African peace and security. The APF's peace support operations component will be absorbed into the European Peace Facility (EPF), a new fund with a global scope and a budget of €5 billion for the period from 2021 to 2027, roughly twice what the APF spent between 2004 and 2019.¹⁸ Support for institutional capacity building and the Early Response Mechanism will be placed under the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument, through which the EU will channel all its global development assistance.¹⁹

long-term vision, it largely financed the African Peace and Security Architecture's basic operational costs. James Mackie, Volker Hauck, Leon Kukuk, Abebaw Zerihun and Matthias Deneckere, "Final Report: Evaluation of the Implementation of the African Peace Facility as an Instrument Supporting African Efforts to Manage Conflicts on the Continent", European Centre for Development Policy Management, Cardno and Particip GmbH, December 2017. "Special Report – The African Peace and Security Architecture: Need to Refocus EU Support", European Court of Auditors, 18 September 2018.

¹⁶ "African Peace Facility, Annual Report 2019", op. cit.

¹⁷ "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, a Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy", European External Action Service, June 2016. Despite an increase in irregular migration from Africa to Europe between 2014 and 2016 (and a parallel drop in regular migration), the majority of African migrants are residing in Africa rather than overseas. Many of these also remain, for the most part, within their regions of origin. "Many More to Come? Migration from and within Africa", European Commission Joint Research Centre, March 2018.

¹⁸ Originally, the European Commission and External Action Service put forward a budget of €10.5 billion for the period 2021-2027, about four times higher than the APF's overall spending. After a year of negotiations, in July 2020 the European Council brought the amount down to €5 billion. EU member states reached a political agreement on the European Peace Facility. "Council reaches a political agreement on the European Peace Facility", Council of the European Union, 18 December 2020.

¹⁹ "European Peace Facility: An Off-budget Fund to Build and Strengthen International Security", European Commission Factsheet, 13 June 2018; "EU Budget for the Future: The Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument", European Commission Factsheet, 14 June 2018.

The EPF is a significant new EU foreign policy instrument, allowing the EU to expand into areas – in particular, external military and defence cooperation – where its member states were so far only engaged either bilaterally, through NATO, or via ad hoc military cooperation initiatives. In addition to long-established multilateral partners such as the AU, the EPF will be able to support other international or regional coalitions, which could for example include Task Force Takouba in the Sahel, a European military task force placed under the umbrella of the French Barkhane operation, or the global coalition against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.²⁰ The new set-up will therefore break with the norm of channelling the majority of peace and security funding through the AU. It will also allow the EU for the first time to directly supply African and other non-EU militaries and security forces with military and defence-related assistance and equipment, including lethal equipment.²¹

As for the non-military funding, it is not yet clear how much institutional support will flow through the EU's new development instrument to the AU. As mentioned above, the APF has provided unique financial support that helped the AU to develop its own early warning system and conflict prevention tools.²² But it remains to be seen how much of this type of support will be maintained as funding shifts to the new development instrument, and if and how capacity-building initiatives will be aligned with AU needs and priorities or linked to support to African-led peace support operations in the long term.²³ For the time being, institutional support will continue to flow through the APF until 2024, when the new development instrument will likely take over some of that support.²⁴

C. *Rationale for the New Funding Model*

Many of the changes to Brussels' financial instruments are motivated by its ambition to play a more assertive role as a global foreign policy actor. Moreover, as suggested above, the EU's sixteen years of experience in financing peace support operations such as AMISOM, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad basin and the G5 Sahel Joint Force have all shaped Brussels' desire for more flexibility in the type of funding and beneficiaries.²⁵ In addition, lessons from the EU's own

²⁰ "Commission support to the Proposal from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy for a Council Decision establishing a European Peace Facility", European Commission Communication, 13 June 2018. Crisis Group interviews, EU officials, Brussels, 30 November and 1 December 2020.

²¹ The EPF also will absorb the Athena mechanism, an EU fund that currently covers most of the costs of the EU's own military operations abroad, such as its training operations in Mali and Somalia. "European Peace Facility: An Off-Budget Fund to Build and Strengthen International Security", op. cit.

²² "African Peace Facility, Annual Report 2018", op. cit.

²³ Crisis Group interviews, EU and member state officials, Brussels, Berlin, February 2020.

²⁴ Crisis Group interviews, EU officials, Brussels, 31 November and 3 December 2020. The EU signed contracts in 2020 for new phases of the institutional support program and the Early Response Mechanism, both of which will last until 2024.

²⁵ The EU also had to replace the APF because the successor of the European Development Fund, which had previously financed the APF, was integrated into the EU budget where it could no longer cover APF expenditures. Therefore, a new funding structure was needed.

civilian and military missions have also contributed to the decision to make the EPF less restrictive than the APF.

1. AMISOM's funding trap

As the recipient of €1.94 billion of financial support between 2007 and 2019, AMISOM, the AU peace support operation in Somalia, has benefitted from the largest share of APF funding so far. APF contributions, which have mainly covered allowances for AMISOM troops and for the police component of the mission, as well as international and local civilian staff salaries and operational costs for the mission's offices, have made the EU one of AMISOM's largest donors.²⁶

But during the years of support to AMISOM, the EU developed concerns about its open-ended funding of African-led missions. Some costs ballooned well beyond initial expectations. For example, AMISOM initially had a six-month mandate with a troop contingent of about 7,000. The EU's monthly contributions at that stage amounted to €700,000, mainly covering troop stipends. But an envisaged takeover by the UN did not happen and troop allowances and troop numbers rose, with the latter reaching about 22,000 at their peak. In line with these increases, APF payments jumped to €20 million per month in 2016.²⁷ Feeling trapped and wanting to manage its expenses, Brussels decided to cut contributions to AMISOM by 20 per cent in 2016.²⁸

The decision placed significant strain on the EU's relations with the AU. In the run-up, the EU had repeatedly raised concerns about its role as the principal donor for soldiers' allowances and the lack of cost sharing. Nevertheless, AU officials were not prepared for the long-threatened reduction and lambasted the EU, arguing that the cut undermined the AU's ability to fight Al-Shabaab.²⁹ Despite efforts by the AU to find alternate external financing, none was forthcoming, and four years later AMISOM is still dependent on EU funding, which is not guaranteed after 2021.³⁰

2. Toward more funding for ad hoc coalitions

In response to new cross-border security threats from armed groups, especially jihadists, African states have set up ad hoc coalition forces, such as the MNJTF fighting Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin and the G5 Sahel Joint Force, which do not fall

²⁶ "African Peace Facility, Annual Report 2019", op. cit.

²⁷ Omar S. Mahmood and Ndubuisi Christian Ani, "Impact of EU Funding Dynamics on AMISOM", Institute for Security Studies, December 2017.

²⁸ Crisis Group interview, EU official, Brussels, 11 February 2020.

²⁹ Crisis Group Report, *Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations*, op. cit.

³⁰ Ibid. Crisis Group interview, EU official, Brussels, 13 February 2020. "Proposal for a Council Decision concerning the allocation of funds decommitted from projects under the 10th European Development Fund for the purpose of replenishing the African Peace Facility", European Commission, 3 September 2020. On 3 September 2020, the EU decided to replenish the APF with an additional amount of up to €129 million, in order to enable continuation of APF activities until mid-2021, or until expiration of the Cotonou Agreement, whichever comes first. The cash infusion is likely to guarantee APF funding for AMISOM until mid-2021. EPF allocations to AMISOM after that date remain uncertain.

under the auspices of any of the AU-recognised regional economic communities.³¹ From the European perspective, there is an advantage in funding these sorts of ad hoc coalitions because (unlike in AU-led peace support operations, where external donors pay for troop stipends and equipment for peacekeepers) the affected African states commit more of their own resources in addition to troops. The EU is thus able to pay for limited assistance packages (rather than committing to long-term expenses as it did with AMISOM), reducing the operation's dependence on EU funding and, potentially, the overall costs for the EU.³²

Finding ways to finance such ad hoc coalitions via the APF has, however, been complicated because under the instrument's terms, eligible beneficiaries are limited to AU-recognised regional economic communities and sub-regional organisations engaged in peace and security operations under an AU Peace and Security Council mandate, and because the secretariats of the ad hoc missions can lack the capacities to manage APF funds. The EU had to channel money for the MNJTF through the AU Commission because the APF prohibits direct payments to individual governments, and because the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the institution that on paper has political oversight of the force, did not meet APF eligibility requirements.³³

This arrangement was far from ideal. Despite the allocation of an initial APF support package of €55 million over five years starting in early 2016, there were difficulties in procurement, which the EU attributed to weak AU processes and the AU to Brussels bureaucracy.³⁴ These delays, both in negotiating the deal in the first place and in providing funds once the program was up and running, have had an impact on the ground, including at the start of the MNJTF deployment in 2015, when lack of financing left MNJTF troops in the field undersupplied during the initial phases of the force's deployment.³⁵

The EU's experience with the MNJTF left its mark. When Brussels later looked for ways to fund the G5 Sahel Joint Force through the APF, it agreed with the AU chairperson to limit the African Commission's involvement in the procurement process to prevent similar delays. The EU asked for AU Peace and Security Council approval of APF funding to the joint force only after it had worked out the arrangement with the G5 Sahel Secretariat, and it arranged the procurement of material through external providers.³⁶

While Brussels is still committed to supporting the AU's peacekeeping efforts, the increasing interest in funding ad hoc coalitions led EU and member state officials to

³¹ Ad hoc coalitions are initiatives by groups of AU member states. The initiatives usually have AU Peace and Security Council authorisation, though the AU has no command-and-control responsibilities.

³² Crisis Group Report, *Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations*, op. cit.

³³ "African Peace Facility, Annual Report 2018", op. cit.

³⁴ An AU diplomat, however, admitted to Crisis Group that the AU's weak procurement procedures were largely responsible for delays in EU support. Crisis Group interview, AU official, November 2019.

³⁵ Crisis Group Africa Report N°291, *What Role for the Multinational Joint Task Force in Fighting Boko Haram?*, 7 July 2020.

³⁶ Crisis Group interview, Brussels, EU official, 5 February 2020. "On the G5 Sahel Joint Force, the AU would have preferred that the EU rejected the G5 Sahel request, but the EU wanted to go ahead".

look for a funding model that would permit this more limited arrangement.³⁷ The expiration in December 2020 of the Cotonou Agreement, which provides the overarching framework for EU relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and has been the APF's legal foundation, helped drive the timing of the restructuring effort.³⁸ So did the EU's decision to reform its external financing instruments as part of its septennial budget negotiations for 2021-2027.

3. Increasing demands to support African armies

As noted above, the new European Peace Facility provides more flexible options to finance African-led peace support operations than the APF, as well as allowing more direct funding channels for ad hoc coalitions that do not require the AU's approval or involvement.³⁹ In addition, the EPF will afford the EU new flexibility to pay for military equipment for African (and other) armies. This equipment includes arms and ammunition, which the EU was unable to fund previously.⁴⁰ The decision to take this new direction stems from the EU's ambition, shared by several member states, including Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain, which are themselves engaged in train-and-equip activities in Africa, to turn the EU into a stronger security and defence actor.⁴¹ African countries and the AU have in the past also requested EU financial support for lethal equipment.⁴²

On a very limited scale, the EU has already started to mobilise funding outside the APF to support foreign militaries through the Capacity Building in Support of Security and Development program, adopted in 2017 with an initial budget of €100 million. This initiative allows the EU to provide training, mentoring and advice, as well as some types of equipment and infrastructure improvements, outside or as a complement to its own missions and operations – but it does so under strict conditions. Because EU treaties limit the use of the EU budget for expenditures with military and defence implications, the program strictly excludes recurrent military expenditure, such as per diems or troop stipends, the procurement of arms or ammunition, or funding for training designed to contribute to the fighting capacity of armed forces.⁴³ With the EPF, which is not financed under the EU budget but through separate yearly EU member state contributions, and hence not subject to the same limi-

³⁷ Crisis Group interviews, EU officials, Brussels, 12 February and 1 December 2020.

³⁸ The Cotonou Agreement is a cooperation agreement that provides the overarching framework for EU relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. It was adopted in 2000 and expired in December 2020. On 3 December 2020, European and African negotiators reached a political deal on the text of a new Partnership Agreement that will succeed the Cotonou Agreement.

³⁹ Crisis Group interviews, EU officials, Brussels, 12 and 13 February 2020.

⁴⁰ Neither treaty rules for the EU budget nor regulations for existing off-budget instruments, such as the APF, allow funding for the purchase of lethal equipment. The EPF will not fall under the same restrictions.

⁴¹ Crisis Group interviews, EU member state officials, Brussels, 13 January and 14 February 2020.

⁴² Crisis Group interview, EU official, Brussels, 11 February 2020. Giovanni Faleg and Carlo Palleschi, "African Strategies: European and Global Approaches towards Sub-Saharan Africa", European Union Institute for Security Studies, June 2020.

⁴³ Regulation (EU) 2017/2306 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2017 amending Regulation (EU) No 230/2014 establishing an instrument contributing to stability and peace. This support financed by the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace needs to be clearly linked to development purposes to be eligible, unlike the new support under the EPF.

tations, the EU builds on this first tentative step and will be able to go much further in its support to African militaries.

This new direction has been driven by a small number of EU member states, most prominently France, which already supply lethal equipment bilaterally to African armies, but have an interest in shifting some of this function to Brussels as it allows pooling resources with other EU states to share and reduce costs.⁴⁴ Some European policymakers also supported the move toward supply of lethal equipment, but for different reasons. They believe EU involvement will lead to better regulation of European funding for weapons purchases abroad. They note that member states' bilateral supply of lethal equipment does not take place under a common oversight mechanism, while EPF funding could be subject to stricter monitoring rules than in member states.⁴⁵ After lengthy negotiations, all 27 member states agreed on the funding of lethal equipment, with the proviso that individual member states can opt out of specific funding for arms and ammunition.⁴⁶

Moreover, the EU's experience with its own civilian and military missions has fed an internal inclination to make its financial tools more flexible. European policymakers argue, for instance, that the EU has struggled to train national armies in places like Mali, Somalia and the Central African Republic because of gaps in the military's basic equipment and infrastructure, which Brussels was unable to fund through the APF because of its stringent eligibility requirements. To fill the gaps, EU missions until now either had to ask individual EU member states for voluntary one-off payments, or stand aside while third countries, such as Russia or the United Arab Emirates, step in to provide the needed equipment without European oversight.⁴⁷

Many EU officials often cite the example of Somalia to demonstrate why allowing Brussels to fund complementary initiatives is helpful. In addition to funding for AMISOM and the EU's military training mission, the EPF would allow the EU to directly finance military equipment, training and infrastructure for the Somali National Army. This change, they argue, could help national authorities take over operations from AMISOM and facilitate the mission's eventual drawdown.⁴⁸ Similarly, in the Sahel, officials believe that using EPF funding to better train and equip Malian, Burkinabé and Nigerien forces would ultimately allow European (in particular French) troops to reduce their engagement.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Crisis Group interview, EU member state official, Brussels, January 2020.

⁴⁵ Chatham House discussion during informal workshop, "European Peace Facility – Appropriate Safeguards for Military Support: Conflict-sensitive Risk Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation", hosted by the Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the European Union and the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, 26 June 2019.

⁴⁶ Nicolas Gros-Verheyde, "Facilité européenne de paix : tout proche d'un accord. La question de la fourniture de matériel létal (presque) réglée", Bruxelles2, 20 November 2020.

⁴⁷ Crisis Group interviews, EU and member state officials, Brussels, Berlin, February 2020.

⁴⁸ Crisis Group interview, EU official, Brussels, 13 February 2013. The EU has already mobilised €20 million of APF support for the Somali security forces to provide non-lethal equipment enabling them to take part in transition operations alongside AMISOM. To do so, it had to find a complicated workaround, channelling the support through the AU.

⁴⁹ In the absence of large-scale EU possibilities to train and equip Sahelian armies, several EU member states even decided to increase their military footprint in the region, by deploying a new multinational task force called Takouba under the command structures of the French Barkhane

The EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell is a strong proponent of this new approach. With the EPF in mind, he argued in a speech in Addis Ababa on 28 February 2020 in favour of the EU supplying weapons to African allies to help them defeat terrorism. On the same day, AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki also told EU officials that in response to “violence and the guns of terrorists that continuously kill civilians and sabotage positive developments, we also need guns and arms”.⁵⁰

operation. Jean-Dominique Merchet, “La force militaire Takouba, dernière invention française pour le Mali”, *L'Opinion*, 18 November 2019.

⁵⁰ David M. Herszenhorn, Jacopo Barigazzi and Simon Marks, “To be top gun on foreign affairs, Borrell says EU must buy weapons”, *Politico (Europe)*, 28 February 2020.

III. Potential Implications for African Peace and Security

As noted, many European and African policymakers see advantages and opportunities in the new, more flexible funding options that the APF's successor instruments will provide. The design of these successor instruments, however, raises many issues that the EU and its member states will have to address as they iron out the details of the new funding structure and its implementation.

A. *Implications for the African Union*

A risk for the AU in the EU's new approach is that funding for its peace and security priorities could become more unpredictable in the long term.⁵¹ On one hand, the EPF will have a budget of €5 billion for seven years. This amount is roughly three times as much as the APF's total commitments for the previous seven-year budget cycle (about €1.6 billion for 2014-2020, which include activities such as institutional capacity building that the EPF will not cover).⁵² On the other hand, while the EPF's pot of money might appear bigger, the range of potential beneficiaries is also wider, since the EPF will cover common costs of the EU's own military operations (such as the EU training missions in Mali and Somalia), security initiatives outside Africa, and potential contributions to ad hoc coalitions and national militaries in Africa, none of which the APF included.⁵³ The future of EU funding for the APF's non-military components (parts of the Early Response Mechanism and support to AU institutions), which will be integrated into the EU's new development fund, is equally uncertain after the last generation of APF-funded programs end in 2024.⁵⁴

In the short to medium term, EU and AU officials expect that a relatively large share of EPF funding will be devoted to African peace and security given the EU's strong interest in continental stability.⁵⁵ EU officials and several EU member states have explicitly advocated for preserving the APF's essence as much as possible within its successor instruments to ensure reliable support for the AU.⁵⁶

These states and officials have good reason for wishing to preserve aspects of the APF. Even though some EU and AU member states see movement away from the APF as a step toward ending the AU's disproportionate dependence on the EU, pre-

⁵¹ The APF was not fully predictable for the AU either, as the fund had to be replenished every two years. Crisis Group interview, EU official, Brussels, 13 February 2020.

⁵² "African Peace Facility, Annual Report 2018", op. cit.

⁵³ Crisis Group interview, EU official, Brussels, 13 February 2020. "There will be competition over resources. That depends also on the overall amount of funding for the EPF. The original proposal was €11.5 billion, a counter-proposal €4.5 billion. If it is the latter, it would be pretty tight to cover peace support operations, bilateral cooperation and the Athena mechanism. There will inevitably be more discussions about where the money goes".

⁵⁴ Crisis Group interviews, EU officials, 30 November and 3 December 2020.

⁵⁵ Crisis Group interviews, European diplomat, Addis Ababa, 26 February 2020; African diplomat, Addis Ababa, 24 February 2020.

⁵⁶ The EU and several EU member states, especially the Netherlands, Germany and the Nordic states, wanted to preserve the APF's main functions within the new global funds. Other member states were aiming for a more flexible arrangement and greater European control over how the money is spent. Crisis Group interviews, NGO expert, Brussels, 3 February 2020; EU member state official, Brussels, 14 February 2020; EU officials, Addis Ababa and Brussels, February 2020.

dictable financial support from Brussels will remain important for the foreseeable future.⁵⁷ So far, no other international donor has been willing or able to contribute comparable amounts of funding over such a long timeframe, and the AU's efforts to reduce donor dependence have borne little fruit with regard to its peace and security activities.⁵⁸ Ultimately, the operationalisation of the AU's Peace Fund and an agreement at the UN Security Council to allow the use of UN-assessed contributions to co-finance AU-led peace operations would help diversify resources for AU funding, but it remains uncertain if and when these initiatives will come to fruition.⁵⁹

Besides affecting the amount of EU financial support, the replacement of the APF with successor instruments could have an impact on AU oversight of funding decisions. The APF gave the AU considerable power to guide where and how EU money for peace and security would be spent. The fund has helped the EU streamline its support and avoid uncoordinated requests from myriad African institutions. It has also helped cement the AU's primacy in continental peace and security.⁶⁰

In general, the EU has seen bolstering the AU as serving the EU's interest because Brussels is keen to have a strong counterpart in Addis Ababa that is able to address and prevent instability on the continent.⁶¹ Still, the extent of AU involvement in decision-making, oversight and management of the new EPF funds outside AU structures will be more limited.⁶² To maintain oversight of EU funding, the AU Commission wants Brussels to channel EPF contributions to Africa through its Peace Fund.⁶³ But that would require the EU to relinquish the control it is seeking to gain through the EPF.

⁵⁷ Against this backdrop, and given the need for predictability, EU negotiators proposed to include multi-year support programs in the EPF. Crisis Group interview, EU official, 30 November 2020.

⁵⁸ The AU has sought to develop the African Union Peace Fund as a mechanism allowing it to self-finance some peace and security activities, including military deployments, but this fund is not yet fully operational. While the amount of money available through this fund is increasing steadily, reaching over €160 million, it will not be anywhere near enough to cover the AU's full expenditure on peace and security. Crisis Group Report, *The Price of Peace: Securing UN Funding for AU Peace Operations*, op. cit.

⁵⁹ "There's a threat Africa could lose funds, that the interest in Africa could be diluted. But it's up to the AU and its member states to take responsibility for their own security – by leading operations or mobilising our internal solidarity. As long as we rely on foreign assistance, not only our conflict and crisis will remain unsolved, but we will continue to suffer from external interference". Crisis Group interview, African diplomat, Addis Ababa, 26 February 2020. Crisis Group Report, *The Price of Peace: Securing UN Funding for AU Peace Operations*, op. cit.

⁶⁰ Crisis Group Report, *Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations*, op. cit.

⁶¹ "Memorandum of Understanding between the African Union and the European Union on Peace, Security and Governance", 23 May 2018.

⁶² EU officials are quick to underline that they will continue to consult with the AU, citing the 2018 joint Memorandum of Understanding on Peace, Security and Governance, in which the EU committed to continued cooperation with the AU under the APF's successor instruments. This commitment is not binding, however, and it does not apply to EPF support outside the African Peace and Security Architecture. The extent of the AU's involvement in funding decisions outside the architecture will likely be decided on a case-by-case basis. "Memorandum of Understanding between the African Union and the European Union on Peace, Security and Governance", op. cit. Crisis Group interview, EU official, Brussels, 13 February 2020.

⁶³ Crisis Group interview, African diplomat, Addis Ababa, 24 February 2020.

With large-scale EU contributions to the AU's Peace Fund unlikely, Brussels should consider other ways of establishing regular consultation with the AU about its funding for African-led peace support operations, including those that do not fall under the auspices of the AU or its regional economic communities. Such consultation will allow Brussels to draw on the AU's local experience and expertise, while also enabling the AU to maintain a measure of oversight over the external funding of peace support operations on the continent.⁶⁴ Civil society experts suggest that the EU consider inviting representatives of the AU Troika (which includes the incoming, current and outgoing AU Assembly chairpersons) to Africa-focused EPF Committee meetings.⁶⁵ Joint EU-AU risk assessments and conflict analyses could also help improve the effectiveness and decrease potential harm of projects funded under the EPF.

B. *More Direct Support to Ad Hoc Coalitions*

As outlined above, Brussels is increasingly drawn to addressing crises through short-term support to ad hoc coalitions like the MNJTF and G5 Sahel Joint Force, which the EPF enables. These ad hoc coalitions can play an important role in addressing new threats on the continent, such as transnational jihadist groups, allowing states to pool their resources and better coordinate their efforts.⁶⁶ By enabling EU direct support to these missions, the EPF can also reduce the sort of procurement delays that the MNJTF has experienced.

Still, as the EU loosens the reins on funding for coalitions, Brussels should bear in mind that these bodies are not a cure-all for stability challenges on the African continent. As Crisis Group has argued elsewhere, in recent years, international donors and African governments have often been too quick to look to security responses as a means of addressing instability in Africa, in particular in regions that face jihadist insurgencies.⁶⁷ This tendency in turn has led them to focus on standing up ad hoc missions at the expense of more comprehensive political strategies that aim at reforming local governance, increasing basic services in remote and rural areas, de-escalating local conflicts, promoting bottom-up reconciliation through local dialogues, reaching out to communities, and opening or fully exploiting lines of communication with militant leaders.⁶⁸

The Sahel is a case in point. While the official approach of the G5 Sahel governments (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) and European donors to the conflict in the region is multidimensional – acknowledging the need for devel-

⁶⁴ African diplomats also believe that even without a formal role within the EPF, the EU will have to rely on AU experience and expertise if it wants to be effective. Crisis Group interview, African diplomat, Addis Ababa, 26 February 2020.

⁶⁵ Volker Hauck, "The Latest on the European Peace Facility and What's in It for the African Union", European Centre for Development Policy Management, September 2020.

⁶⁶ Crisis Group Report, *What Role for the Multinational Joint Task Force in Fighting Boko Haram?*, op. cit.

⁶⁷ Ibid. See also Crisis Group Report, *Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations*, op. cit.; and Crisis Group Africa Report N°258, *Finding the Right Role for the G5 Sahel Joint Force*, 12 December 2017.

⁶⁸ Crisis Group *EU Watch List 2018*, 31 January 2018. Comfort Ero and Jean-Hervé Jezequel, "L'UE doit faire de la gouvernance le cœur d'une stratégie de stabilisation du Sahel à long terme", Crisis Group Commentary, 9 November 2020.

opment, humanitarian aid and governance reform – they have given de facto priority to the military response. The G5 Sahel’s Western backers have for several years focused more on making the G5 Sahel Joint Force operational than on prioritising the implementation of political strategies, promoting governance and community reconciliation, or carrying out development programs.⁶⁹

In the Sahel, the over-emphasis on the military response in the absence of clear political strategies has corresponded with an alarming increase in the alleged indiscriminate use of force against civilians and other forms of abuse by the militaries and self-defence groups nominally allied with governments in the region.⁷⁰ The prioritisation of military approaches has moreover created conditions favourable to the development of armed vigilantes (civilian self-defence groups that form to protect their communities from non-state or state actors or to combat insurgents), which has stoked intercommunal conflict and at times facilitated jihadist recruitment, arguably playing into militants’ hands.⁷¹

Other regions, such as the Lake Chad basin and Somalia, show similar trends. Since the beginning of military operations against Boko Haram, security forces’ alleged abuses have angered communities and, in some cases, fuelled support for militancy, although whether abuses took place under MNJTF operations is hard to ascertain.⁷² In Somalia, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Assistance Mission in Somalia reported that 11 per cent of civilian casualties between 1 January 2016 and 14 October 2017 could be attributed to Somali state actors and 4 per cent to AMISOM, while state actors were also responsible for executions, sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary arrests and abductions.⁷³ Such abuses can only erode the population’s trust in these military operations.

The EU should consider ways in which it can encourage the development of closer linkages between the military operations it funds and overarching political strategies that aim to improve local services and build trust among the populations of conflict-affected regions. It might do so by aligning its funding for African-led military operations under the EPF with financial support for the development and implementation of political strategies that govern these operations. To this end, EPF funding should go hand in hand with funding under the EU’s new development instrument.

⁶⁹ Crisis Group *EU Watch List 2018*, op. cit.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Crisis Group Africa Reports N°287, *Burkina Faso: Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020; and N°289, *Sidelining the Islamic State in Niger’s Tillabery*, 3 June 2020. In Niger, counter-terrorism strategies seeking to weaken jihadist groups are neither illegitimate nor unfounded, but the way they have been conducted since 2018 has often enflamed the situations they seek to calm. These strategies have, for example, accelerated the militarisation of border communities and fuelled the stigmatisation of the Peul nomadic group, whom other locals often regard as the Islamic State’s closest collaborators on the ground. They have also led to killings of civilians who are accused of being or are mistaken for Islamic State elements.

⁷¹ See, for example, Crisis Group Africa Report N°261, *The Niger-Mali Border: Subordinating Military Action to a Political Strategy*, 12 June 2018; and Crisis Group Report, *Sidelining the Islamic State in Niger’s Tillabery*, op. cit.

⁷² Crisis Group Report, *What Role for the Multinational Joint Task Force in Fighting Boko Haram?*, op. cit.

⁷³ “Protection of Civilians: Building the Foundation for Peace, Security and Human Rights in Somalia”, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, December 2017.

In the MNJTF's case, the EU could for example press Lake Chad basin governments to take steps to enable the force to better support the AU's 2018 regional stabilisation strategy, which aims to improve services and create new livelihoods in conflict-affected areas, when the EU mobilises additional financial assistance for the task force, even if such support may be limited due to the security context in the Lake Chad basin.⁷⁴ It could complement this support with funding for implementation of the AU strategy. In the Sahel, EU development, peacebuilding and conflict prevention spending could support bottom-up reconciliation between the central state and nomadic communities, and between local authorities and ethnic or religious groups, in parallel with the provision of EPF-financed security and military support.

Combining military instruments with the support the EU can provide in other areas will be a challenge in itself. In order to ensure the EU delivers these initiatives coherently, it will require stronger leadership by the EU's High Representative, increased coordination among all EU bodies governing the different support initiatives and, most notably, careful planning by the EU Council to align military tools with political strategies, peacebuilding priorities and broader development objectives.

Additionally, as the EU is giving itself greater flexibility to fund ad hoc missions, it should also develop procedures to mitigate the risks of potential human rights abuses. Oversight and accountability frameworks for the coalitions are currently insufficient. Soldiers from participating African states in these missions are accountable primarily to their national authorities, which often have poor enforcement records, meaning that civilian oversight bodies have little if any meaningful power to curb abuses. For example, Crisis Group has reported on how the Lake Chad Basin Commission has struggled to exert authority over the MNJTF or halt rights violations by the force's soldiers or national armies operating in the area.⁷⁵

The EU has already started providing financial support to the AU and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to develop a human rights compliance framework, under which the institutions work with troop-contributing governments and the mission secretariats to draw up codes of conduct, develop monitoring and investigation mechanisms, and carry out disciplinary processes to hold perpetrators in the force accountable. They started to roll out this compliance framework in existing missions, including in the G5 Sahel Joint Force.⁷⁶ The EU should continue funding these AU efforts through the APF's successor instruments. The EU could also require that any mission receiving financial support from the EPF work with the AU on human rights compliance, setting norms for the transparency and accountability of troop deployments in order to protect civilians from abuse.

⁷⁴ Crisis Group Report, *What Role for the Multinational Joint Task Force in Fighting Boko Haram?*, op. cit.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Crisis Group Report, *The Price of Peace: Securing UN Funding for AU Peace Operations*, op. cit. "African Peace Facility: African Union peace and security operations boosted by an additional €800 million from the European Union", press release, European Commission, 22 July 2019. EU officials have raised concerns about slow progress in implementing the human rights compliance framework. Crisis Group interview, EU official, Brussels, 11 February 2020.

C. *Training and Equipping African Armies*

As noted, the EPF will give the EU greater flexibility to fund training and equipment, including weapons and ammunition for military and security forces in countries outside the EU.⁷⁷ While the amount of EPF funding available for the equipment and training of African armies would be very modest (based on current commitments, the EPF ceiling leaves approximately €300 million per year for additional activities such as military missions or operations, new peace support operations and bilateral assistance measures in Africa and elsewhere), in particular in comparison to spending by other governments such as the U.S., direct military support would be a departure from Brussels' past practice, which has generally left bilateral military support in the hands of EU member states.⁷⁸ As a result, this change has become something of a lightning rod for debate about the merits and demerits of funding for African militaries.

The primary argument in favour of the new approach is that African armies are often understaffed and underequipped to deal with new threats on the continent. Providing more training, advice, non-lethal equipment and other resources to select African militaries might therefore, in certain circumstances, be useful, especially if it is complementary to other EU initiatives, such as its civilian or military missions, and embedded in broader political engagement between the EU and the partner country.⁷⁹ Those circumstances, however, are likely to be much more the exception than the rule.

For one thing, in many unstable or conflict-affected countries, such as Nigeria, Mali or Burkina Faso, the army's lack of appropriate equipment and training is often instead linked to mismanagement or political factors. These problems cannot easily be fixed by simply providing additional resources. In Nigeria, for example, corrupt procurement and poor maintenance result in serious equipment and logistics deficits.⁸⁰ In Burkina Faso, former President Blaise Compaoré – seeking to boost his personal power – confined the army and gendarmerie to secondary roles while boosting the capacity of the Presidential Security Regiment. Heavy and sophisticated weapons were transported to this unit's headquarters, gunpowder magazines were emptied and a large part of the army was deprived of ammunition and training from the second half of 2011.⁸¹

For another thing, European governments have a less than perfect record when it comes to assessing whether the militaries they are supporting will be bulwarks of stability or agents of instability.⁸² An example of how things can go wrong is the Au-

⁷⁷ "Council reaches a political agreement on the European Peace Facility", op. cit.

⁷⁸ Hauck, "The Latest on the European Peace Facility and What's in It for the African Union", op. cit.

⁷⁹ See, for example, Crisis Group Report, *Burkina Faso: Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, op. cit. "The defence and security forces' [in Burkina Faso] lack of human and material resources is an obstacle in the fight against insurgency. Examples include the lack of special units trained in asymmetric conflicts and the weakness of air assets".

⁸⁰ Crisis Group Report N°237, *Nigeria: The Challenge of Military Reform*, 6 June 2016.

⁸¹ Crisis Group Report, *Burkina Faso: Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, op. cit.

⁸² Crisis Group has previously written that such assessments require a deep understanding of the military's level of political cohesion and professionalism, the nature of its internal divisions and the

gust 2020 military coup in Mali, which followed more than seven years of European (and other international) investment in training and advising the Malian armed forces. Critics of the new policy raise concerns about the EU's capacity to conduct such assessments appropriately, particularly given that the institutions are relatively inexperienced in providing military support to non-EU countries.⁸³ While EU institutions have invested in conflict sensitivity and conflict risk assessments as part of their conflict prevention and peacebuilding work and development assistance, experts and external evaluators argue that these assessments have been a “piecemeal process” so far.⁸⁴

In addition to concerns that EU-funded lethal equipment could fall into the wrong hands or be misused by the military and security forces who receive them – which are shared by many in civil society and some EU member states (including Ireland and Austria) – some commentators offer further cautions.⁸⁵ Arms control experts warn about the long service life of weapons, in particular small arms, citing the example of South Sudan where “rifles manufactured in the 1960s [are] still in service more than 50 years later”.⁸⁶ These experts also highlight that stockpile management systems are often insufficient in fragile countries where corruption is rife. They suggest that Niger and Somalia – occasionally cited by European officials as countries where they might use EPF to finance training and equipment – are countries where reforms to defence procurement and management systems are needed before a lethal assistance program can be responsibly implemented.⁸⁷

Given the potential pitfalls, some EU officials would prefer not to go down this road and believe that Brussels' money would be put to better use if spent on non-lethal equipment, helping plug capacity gaps in communication and intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance technology, troop mobility or base protection.⁸⁸

But on the whole, European policymakers seem to be leaning in the direction of what at least on its face looks like a more muscular approach to security policy. One European diplomat in Addis Ababa described this trend as a result of domestic demands to “fight terrorism” and the “realisation that development aid does not deliver as much as one hopes for” with regard to a country's stabilisation.⁸⁹ Where European governments would previously have been more cautious, they are increas-

extent to which it enjoys public trust. Crisis Group Special Report N°2, *Seizing the Moment: From Early Warning to Early Action*, 23 June 2016.

⁸³ Summary report of informal workshop, “European Peace Facility – Appropriate Safeguards for Military Support: Conflict-sensitive Risk Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation”, op. cit.

⁸⁴ Hauck, “The Latest on the European Peace Facility and What's in It for the African Union”, op. cit. “The EU has started to strengthen its corps of security advisers at headquarters and field levels, but, compared to other multilateral and bilateral actors supporting military cooperation, it is still considerably behind on numbers”.

⁸⁵ See, for example, “The Proposed ‘European Peace Facility’”, letter from the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office to EU Political and Security Ambassadors, 27 February 2020; Lucia Montanaro and Tuuli Rätty, “EU's new €10bn ‘peace facility’ risks fuelling conflict”, *EU Observer*, 27 November 2019; and “European ‘Peace’ Facility: Causing harm or bringing peace?”, Joint Civil Society Statement, November 2020.

⁸⁶ Klem Ryan, “EU weapons exports will backfire”, PeaceLab Blog, 27 August 2019.

⁸⁷ Crisis Group telephone interview, arms control expert, 9 October 2020.

⁸⁸ Crisis Group interviews, EU officials, Brussels, 5 and 13 February 2020.

⁸⁹ Crisis Group interview, European diplomat, Addis Ababa, 28 February 2020.

ingly ready to accept the risks of propping up national armies – and with them undemocratic governments – to support efforts to counter terrorist threats.⁹⁰ While EU officials acknowledge that they cannot completely eliminate the risks of misuse, they place considerable weight on the safeguards the EU will have in place such as the International Small Arms Control Standards and related risk mitigation measures.⁹¹ They also note that any funding decision for military training or equipment under the EPF needs to be unanimously approved by all EU member states – allowing any member state to block a potentially risky decision.⁹²

As Brussels goes down this road, however, additional safeguards would be warranted. Ideally, the provision of lethal weapons would be conditioned on a satisfactory risk assessment and conflict analysis that takes input from local populations and civil society into account, as well as robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.⁹³ The EU should also commit to refraining from or ceasing the provision of lethal assistance if the receiving government fails to make sufficient progress in developing a political strategy for conflict resolution, meeting benchmarks for human rights compliance, or putting in place a sufficient stockpile management system.

The assessment of whether these minimum requirements are met would need to be done jointly by EU officials with the necessary background and overseen by the EU's political leadership.⁹⁴ Making this happen will be difficult given the fragmentation of expertise among EU institutions, but it will be a key factor in ensuring that these safeguards are rigorously implemented.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Crisis Group interviews, EU member state official, Brussels, 14 February 2020; EU official, Brussels, 8 December 2020. “Council reaches a political agreement on the European Peace Facility”, op. cit.

⁹² Crisis Group interview, EU member state official, Brussels, 14 February 2020. Hauck, “The Latest on the European Peace Facility and What’s in It for the African Union”, op. cit.

⁹³ Summary report of informal workshop, “European Peace Facility – Appropriate Safeguards for Military Support: Conflict-sensitive Risk Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation”, op. cit.

⁹⁴ Crisis Group telephone interview, arms control expert, 9 October 2020.

⁹⁵ Hauck, “The Latest on the European Peace Facility and What’s in It for the African Union”, op. cit.

IV. **Toward an Effective EU Funding Model for African Peace and Security**

The shift from the APF to its successor funding instruments presents opportunities for more flexible EU support to peace and security in Africa, but – if not balanced with clear political strategies and robust oversight – it also risks promoting militarised responses that could perpetuate or exacerbate instability. During their sixteen years of cooperation through the APF, the EU and the AU have learned important lessons that can help mitigate these dangers. In close consultation with the AU, the EU and member states should therefore consider the following steps:

- **Maintain strong support to AU peace and security efforts.** The AU remains the primary regional institution for preventing conflict and crises in Africa. Given the EU's and member states' strong interest in increasing stability in Africa, including by countering terrorism, they should continue to commit sufficient, predictable EPF resources to the AU and its peace and security architecture – including through multi-year commitments. EPF financial support will continue to be essential in order to maintain existing AU-led missions and enable the deployment of new ones, for the foreseeable future. Ideally, Brussels should eventually channel some of this money through the AU's own Peace Fund. Moreover, the EU should draw on its new development fund to replace APF funding (when it phases out) for programs that strengthen the AU's early warning system and mediation and early response capacities.
- **Preserve an oversight role for the AU.** The EU should make a political commitment (for example, in the form of a political declaration at the margins of the next AU-EU Summit in 2021) to continue to consult systematically with the AU when it considers whether or not to finance African peace support operations, including state-led coalitions. The AU can play a central role in setting norms and developing codes of conduct for troops in these coalitions. It could also help monitor compliance with due diligence and human rights standards and encourage accountability – borrowing from work it is already doing as part of its own reforms, which it is undertaking with financial support from the EU.⁹⁶ The EU could make support to African peace support operations conditional on the submission of troops to the AU's human rights accountability framework.
- **Create incentives for the adoption of clear political strategies for African-led peace support operations.** Even limited operations can develop their own dynamics and breed resistance in local communities if they are not planned carefully.⁹⁷ Military operations therefore need to be subordinated to political approaches that emphasise building trust among the civilian population and de-escalating local conflicts through dialogue (including, where advisable and possible, with insurgent groups). The EU and its member states should provide incentives to ensure that the peace support operations it finances, including AU member state-led initiatives such as the MNJTF or the G5 Sahel Joint Force,

⁹⁶ Crisis Group Report, *The Price of Peace: Securing UN Funding for AU Peace Operations*, op. cit.

⁹⁷ Crisis Group Report, *Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations*, op. cit.

are subject to clear overarching political strategies that are agreed to by the host state, troop contributors and external backers, and are in tune with local needs. The EU could for example insist that governments take steps to develop and implement such strategies before it decides to mobilise further payments. Brussels could add negative incentives, such as the suspension of funds, should military operations divert from mutually agreed and shared objectives. In parallel, the EU could provide financial support for the implementation of such political strategies through its development fund.

- **Refrain from funding lethal equipment for African armies in fragile states.** While the EPF will in principle allow for the financing of lethal equipment to EU partner countries, the EU should refrain from this type of support in fragile states, looking to the countries so defined by the World Bank because of their high levels of institutional and social fragility or affected by violent conflict.⁹⁸ As EU officials acknowledge themselves, the inefficiency of some African militaries rarely stems from a lack of arms and ammunition, and the risk of misuse cannot be fully eliminated despite robust safeguards. This is especially the case in fragile countries with weak institutions and ongoing armed conflicts. In these states, the dangers of misuse and destabilisation so often outweigh the potential gains, the EU would be well advised to invest its peace and security budget for Africa in other initiatives, such as institutional support, capacity building and the continent's early response mechanisms.
- **Perform thorough risk assessments, based on EU member states' intelligence.** Whether it pays for lethal equipment or not, the use of EPF funding for military assistance to national armies will be one of the most significant changes as the EU moves forward with the new funding structure. It should make funding decisions only after undertaking thorough risk assessments and conflict analyses, and determining whether the recipient government has a robust political strategy to deal with the existing conflict, its army is making progress on human rights compliance, and the military has adequate stockpile management systems in place. Policymakers should among other things evaluate the risk that EU support could bolster security forces' ability to threaten governments, especially weak and discredited administrations; whether divisions among security forces could lead to infighting; whether the military may, because of its composition, be inclined in crisis situations toward violence against specific ethnic groups; and whether the forces in question command public trust.⁹⁹ Given that the EU's own intelligence resources are limited, its member states should share their national intelligence analysis of political dynamics in national security forces, of their formal and informal command and control structures, and of their track records in the use of

⁹⁸ "Classification of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations", World Bank, 9 July 2020. The World Bank's list of fragile African states in financial year 2021 includes Somalia (high-intensity conflict); Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria and South Sudan (medium-intensity conflict); and Burundi, the Comoros, the Republic of Congo, Eritrea, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sudan and Zimbabwe (high institutional and social fragility).

⁹⁹ Crisis Group Report, *Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations*, op. cit.

force, as well as any assessment of earlier bilateral cooperation with EU member states in order to help EU institutions assess potential risks that EPF funding could entail. EU officials should complement this intelligence with comprehensive input from local civil society organisations.

- **Put robust monitoring mechanisms in place.** Brussels will need systems to prevent EU-financed training and equipment from being used by unaccountable or abusive security and military actors.¹⁰⁰ In a first step, the EU should ensure it has the appropriate human resources with expertise in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, human rights and arms control, in order to undertake thorough and regular monitoring and evaluation of the military assistance provided. Secondly, the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that it is setting up ought to take the views and perspectives of a broad range of actors into account, in particular local populations, including women, youth and civil society organisations. Should there be credible signs that the training and equipment provided is causing harm to local populations or stability, the EU should immediately suspend the funding for these activities. Finally, the actions funded under the EPF should be submitted to regular political scrutiny from the EU Council under the oversight of the Political and Security Committee, as well as the European Parliament.¹⁰¹

For its part, the AU should ask itself what it would like to see coming out of the reforms that are under way in Brussels. The AU Commission should ensure that member states are aware of the changes and adopt a common position on how the AU would like to see them implemented, in order to present a united African front when the time comes for discussion with the EU. Member states should – where they can – develop their own assessments of the potential consequences of the planned changes.

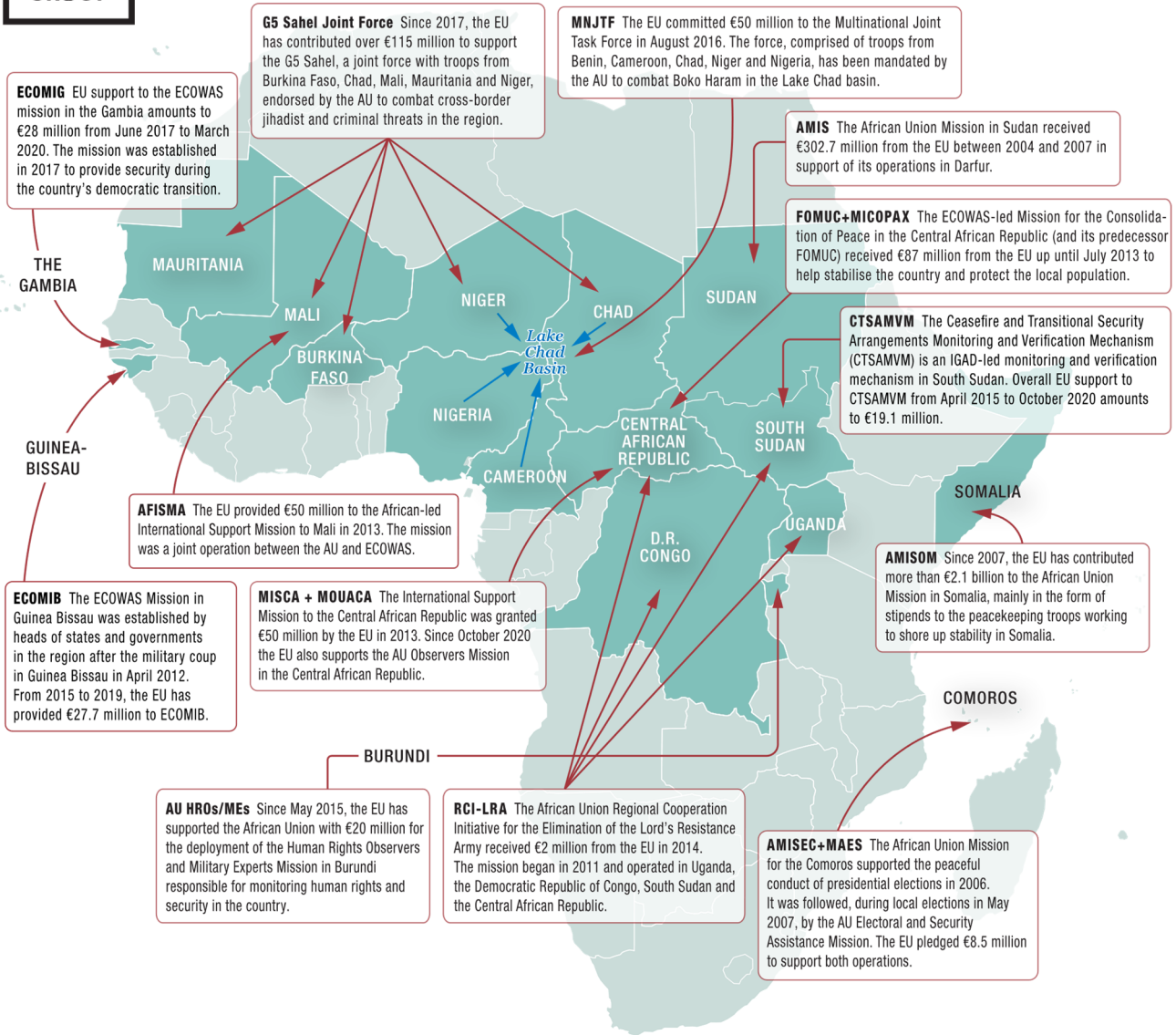
Finally, policymakers in both Addis Ababa and Brussels should build the case for the AU continuing to play a central role in guiding peace and security efforts in Africa. While the EU clearly wants more flexibility to work directly with coalitions and national militaries on the continent, Brussels will need help and expertise to ensure that its investments do not go awry. Bolstering the AU's role in providing this insight is a promising way to nurture its institutional capabilities and encourage the deepening of a partnership between Brussels and Addis Ababa that serves both African and European interests.

Addis Ababa/Brussels, 14 January 2021

¹⁰⁰ Crisis Group Report, *Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations*, op. cit. "Oversight and monitoring mechanisms to react quickly, beyond internal auditor's management and control function as described in the EPF proposal to the Council (Council of the EU 2018) still need to be established". Hauck, "The Latest on the European Peace Facility and What's in It for the African Union", op. cit.

¹⁰¹ Summary report of informal workshop, "European Peace Facility – Appropriate Safeguards for Military Support: Conflict-sensitive Risk Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation", op. cit.; Hauck, "The Latest on the European Peace Facility and What's in It for the African Union", op. cit.; Béatrice Godefroy and Daniel Chinitz, "More Good Than Harm: Why the EU Must Learn From Others' Mistakes to Ensure Better Protection of Civilians through European Peace Facility (EPF) Activities", CIVIC, 29 August 2019. The European Parliament will have no formal oversight role, but it has expressed its wish to be involved through regular briefings from EU institutions.

Appendix A: Map of EU Support to AU-led and AU-endorsed Peacekeeping Missions



Appendix B: About the International Crisis Group

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 120 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

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