

Fejerskov, Adam Moe; Cold-Ravnkilde, Signe Marie; Albrecht, Peter

Research Report

Regional interests in African peace operations

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REGIONAL INTERESTS IN AFRICAN PEACE OPERATIONS



Table of Contents

Abbreviations	4
Executive summary	6
Introduction	11
Methodology	14
Approaching national and regional interests	19
The Horn of Africa: AMISOM, AU and IGAD	25
AMISOM emerges as a Ugandan force	27
A surge in AMISOM Operations	29
Current state of AMISOM	30
Towards a viable exit strategy?	31
Regional political interests shaping AMISOM: Ethiopia, Kenya and 'the rest'	33
Conclusion	39
West Africa: MINUSMA, UN and G5 Sahel	41
Inadequate regional responses to Mali's security crisis	43
International mobilisation and the emergence of MINUSMA	44
UN peacekeeping as counter-terrorism?	45
A plethora of security actors and interests	47
Regional political interests in MINUSMA	49
Operational consequences	50
MINUSMA and the illicit cross-border trade	55
The G5 Sahel Joint Force: a regional solution, or further fragmentation?	57
Conclusion	58
Comparative perspectives and conclusion	61
Notes	68
References	69

This report is written by Adam Moe Fejerskov, Researcher, DIIS, Signe Cold-Ravnkilde, Postdoc, DIIS and Peter Albrecht, Senior Researcher, DIIS and published by DIIS as part of the Defence and Security Studies

DIIS · Danish Institute for International Studies
Østbanegade 117, DK-2100 Copenhagen, Denmark
Tel: +45 32 69 87 87
E-mail: diis@diis.dk
www.diis.dk

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission in Mali
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
APC	Armoured personnel carrier
AQIM	Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb
AS	Al-Shabaab
AU	African Union
CONOPS	Concept of operations
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DPKO	UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defense Forces
EUCAP	EU Capacity Building programme in Niger
EUTM	European Union Training Mission in Somalia
FAMA	French and Mali's Armed Forces
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
G5 JF	G5 Sahel Joint Force
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
IED	Improvised explosive device
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IGASOM	IGAD Peace Support Mission to Somalia
KDF	Kenyan Defence Forces
MIA	Islamic Movement of Azawad
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

MNLA	Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
MUJAO	Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa
PSC	Peace and Security Council
SNA	Somali National Army
SNSF	Somali National Security Forces
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary General
TCC	Troop-contributing country
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSG	United Nations Secretary General
UNSOA	United Nations Support Office for AMISOM
UNSOM	United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
UNSOS	United Nations Support Office for Somalia
UPDF	Ugandan People's Defense Force

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The past decade has seen African countries step up their contributions to peace operations. African soldiers now constitute half of all United Nations (UN) peacekeepers across fifteen missions worldwide. Likewise, missions of the African Union (AU) have been deployed across Africa since the mid-2000s. Together, UN and AU missions include a combined total of 85,000 African troops. In many of these missions, neighbouring and regional states in close proximity to and at times directly involved in situations of conflict provide a significant proportion of mission personnel.

This report addresses the challenges arising from this development. It focuses on how the strategic regional interests of neighbouring countries involved in peace operations are shaping the ability of these missions to perform their allotted tasks. Taking into account the vast differences between AU and UN missions, the report explores the operational consequences of increasingly including and even relying on regional and neighbouring countries. To do so, it analyses two complex and important contemporary missions in Africa, the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

AMISOM first deployed to Mogadishu in March 2007. It has since expanded its operations and mandate from protecting Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in the capital to a stabilization campaign across south-central Somalia. The main challenge to the Somali government stems from Al-Shabaab, a neo-Salafi jihadist group, as well as a complex combination of historically based politics, clan identities and resource distribution. To understand AMISOM's operational effectiveness, it is crucial to grasp the regional political interests and security dynamics that are shaping the mission. The sectoral division among TCCs reflects this for a start, with Ethiopian AMISOM forces formally positioned along the Ethiopian border (as well as in the port town of Kismayo, though they are also unilaterally positioned across south-central Somalia), Kenyan forces along the Kenyan border, Burundians in Mogadishu and Djibouti in the north.

Ethiopia's role in AMISOM is special given its longstanding troubled relationship with Somalia, and it seems to be caught between strategic ambitions. Ethiopia fears a strong Mogadishu and a strong Somali army as a potential threat to Addis Ababa, yet an unstable Somalia and a free-roaming Al-Shabaab is an unviable solution, with 1616 kilometres of open borders between the two countries. Similar

border concerns also continue to shape Kenya's involvement in the wake of recurrent Al-Shabaab attacks within the country, and the strategic ambition seems to be to disrupt the group's ability to operate across the border. The interests of the remaining TCCs seem to move fluidly across a spectrum from concerns over reputation and legitimacy (Uganda) to economic compensation and fighting experience (Burundi).

Thus the strong regional interests at play shape the operational effectiveness of AMISOM to a great extent. Command and control structures are weak, with TCCs mainly acting on orders coming from their respective capitals, not from the AU. The position of force commander remains politically sensitive and was previously left vacant for an extended period, mainly because of differing opinions among TCCs and opposition to a suggested Ethiopian commander. Nevertheless, it is highly questionable what influence the commander exercises either way. While not strictly determined by TCCs' regional interests, the logistical support provided to the mission also hampers its potential by sometimes not being matched to the tasks the mission has to conduct and not being delivered with the necessary speed.

The second case described in the report is the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). In January 2013, France conducted a military intervention, Operation Serval, together with an AU-led Force, AFISMA, in an attempt to stop armed jihadist groups advancing from their strongholds in northern Mali towards the south. In April 2013, MINUSMA was authorized under a UN Security Council Chapter VII framework, among other things to stabilize key population centres and support the reestablishment of the state's authority throughout the country, and it started deploying on 1 July 2013. Today, MINUSMA figures as the world's most deadly ongoing UN mission, one in which more than 120 soldiers have lost their lives in the course of its four years of deployment.

In this case too, the regional and national interests of TCCs pose similar tensions to those in AMISOM. Despite the gradually increasing robustness of MINUSMA's mandate, neighbouring TCCs persist in their belief that the mission is not well suited to countering transnational terrorism and organized crime in the region. Thus, with limited troop capacity, it is likely that these countries will prioritize much more direct counter-terrorism operations like the G5 Sahel Force or unilateral action. Chad's government, which has threatened to withdraw its troops from MINUSMA due to the hard conditions of its deployment to sector north, has indicated that further troop contributions to MINUSMA will depend on additional external

financial and logistical support to make these forces operational. While Niger and Chad are also engaged in the fight against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin, the capacity to sustain troop contributions to MINUSMA has become an urgent question. This also points to another issue, namely the risk of creating competing security architectures that may fragment an already overstretched mission in Mali.

As in the case of AMISOM, without adequate support from either the UN or their home countries, individual TCCs are taking their own measures to ensure the security of their battalions without informing and sometimes in direct opposition to MINUSMA's nominal lines of command and control. Furthermore, Chad's reputation as a 'problem child', with a considerable number of allegations against it for violating UN codes of conduct and discipline, is another instance of the limited command and control over troops, who, when deployed for the first time in a UN operation, may largely feel abandoned on the outskirts of the mission's areas. Compared to AMISOM, MINUSMA still exerts considerable control over its troops, and much effort has been channelled into improving its command and control structures. However, countries like Burkina Faso and Niger, whose border regions are under direct attack from terrorist groups, have a stronger incentive to protect and patrol areas in their immediate vicinity before prioritizing longer-term efforts to protect civilians and to support the political peace process in Mali, despite the strategic importance for MINUSMA of creating results on the ground.

In light of these weaknesses in the two cases, it is easy to forget that there would be no AMISOM or MINUSMA were it not for significant regional contributions and leadership. The international community has shown limited willingness to engage directly in these conflicts, as long as they are more or less contained and have no direct security repercussions for Europe or elsewhere. There is no way around the problematic consequences for the missions' command and control, logistical and strategic functions, but these neighbouring states also have very legitimate concerns for their own security. In addition, neither mission is a traditional peacekeeping mission, and they both frequently claim soldiers' lives. As such, the negative effects of regional interests have to be balanced against the significant contributions made by these neighbouring states.

Regardless of the fundamental differences between the two missions explored in the report, the interests of national and regional actors represent a layer of great complexity in decision-making by Western governments and policy-makers regarding how to support them as partners. With little political support for more boots on the ground, bilateral partners have to explore other avenues of influence and contributions. Training is repeatedly mentioned as a way to build up the capacity of regional troops, particularly the regional training hubs that have been set up, such as EUCAP and EUTM in Mali and EUTM in Somalia. However, the provision of training also presents a classic dilemma of engagement, namely how capacity-building by external partners may potentially block improvements in the capacities of these countries to train their own forces themselves.

With direct military engagement being an unviable option, partnership essentially becomes a matter of providing support where it is both possible and productive. For these two specific missions, in the current context of UN reforms and potential financial cutbacks to peacekeeping operations, this means that western partners have to use their political leverage to push for sustained funding, whether to stipends, resources or other forms of support, in both the EU and the UN. This implies engagement and political support not only to the missions in relevant country representations, but also at home by furthering understanding of the need to support African countries in their efforts to further peace on the African continent.



INTRODUCTION


The past decade has seen African countries step up their contributions to peace support operations. From 10,000 by the turn of the century to almost 50,000 troops today, African soldiers now constitute half of all United Nations (UN) peacekeepers across fifteen missions worldwide. To this should be added the efforts of the African Union (AU). Eight AU missions have deployed across Africa since the mid-2000s, the most comprehensive ones being in Somalia and the joint mission with the UN in Darfur, Sudan. Combined, the AU and UN currently deploy 85,000 African troops.

Neighbouring and regional states that are in close proximity to and at times directly implicated in a situation of conflict provide a significant proportion of personnel in these missions. They often have a strategic interest in securing stability of the country in question, as well as its neighbours and the sub-region. This introduces a further set of political, economic and security concerns to those already associated with deploying peacekeeping missions (Paris 2004). Furthermore, in the case of the UN, it breaks with a long-standing principle of not allowing a country to engage in a peace support operation in a neighbouring country.

Apart from the non-involvement of neighbouring countries, three principles have guided traditional UN peacekeeping as preconditions for the deployment of missions in the past. First, deployment must be consensual, meaning that the parties to the conflict must agree to let the UN maintain a ceasefire. Secondly, the mission should be impartial in the sense that the parties to the conflict are treated equally. Finally, the use of force should be kept to a minimum (De Coning 2017). None of these principles apply unconditionally to contemporary peace operations in Africa, whether led by the UN or the AU.

The change in the direction of peace enforcement and stabilization in contexts where there is no peace to keep have been underway in the UN for some time, and it is also part of the AU's mandate in Somalia. Following on from this, it is worth pointing out that the UN and AU cannot be directly compared. Indeed, as de Coning (2017: 146) explains, there is a division of labour between the two based on their comparative advantages with respect to politics and capacity. 'The UN', de Coning notes, 'is the first to recognize that it is not well suited to undertake peace enforcement or counterterrorism operations' (ibid.). In turn, the AU does not have the UN's multidimensional capacities or its assessed contribution funding system. In other words, a range of differences between the two organizations has direct implications for the performance of their respective missions on the ground.

Doctrinal transformations and technical and political differences between AU and UN missions have been covered extensively elsewhere (see e.g. de Coning 2017; Karlsrud 2015). This report focuses instead on how regional interests shape a mission's ability to perform, interests that are vital, irrespective of the organisational differences between the AU and the UN. What are the operational consequences of increasingly including and even relying on regional and neighbouring countries to contribute to a mission? The report answers this question by exploring two complex and important contemporary missions in Africa, the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).



What are the operational consequences of increasingly including and even relying on regional and neighbouring countries to contribute to a mission?

Troop contributions to a mission from neighbouring countries are both a blessing and a curse for countries in the midst of or emerging from conflict. With no regional support or interest in intervening many operations would fail, because conflicts usually, if not always, have a regional dimension and are embedded historically in cross-border dynamics. Moreover, without it there would be no mission in either the Malian or the Somali cases, as it is countries like Kenya, Ethiopia, Niger and Chad that are bearing the burden of contributing personnel (Albrecht et al. 2017; Albrecht and Haenlein 2016; Cold-Ravnkilde et al. 2017; Williams 2016). At the same time, regional and national political interests are challenging and shaping the command and control of missions due to the different strategies of individual troop-contributing countries (TCCs). While unilateral interests are always played out in multilateral interventions, neighbouring and regional TCCs tend to respond directly to perceived national security threats, which in turn impacts substantially on operational effectiveness and strategic coherence.

2017 marks AMISOM's tenth anniversary, while MINUSMA deployed in January 2013. Apart from time on the ground, a wide range of differences characterize the two missions. First, and most obviously, MINUSMA is a UN mission being pursued under a UN Security Council mandate, while AMISOM is deployed under an AU, though UN-approved mandate. The missions thus operate within different command

and control and accountability frameworks. Secondly, while they both include a number of substantially different TCCs, MINUSMA comprises personnel from a range of European, African and Asian countries. AMISOM, by contrast, currently only draws troops from neighbouring and regional countries. Thirdly, the financial and personnel support they draw from the TCCs varies substantially. AMISOM's limited capacity and resources are hampering it, despite support from the UN, EU and other bilateral donors. For its part, MINUSMA suffers from substantial inequality between its troops, which leads to uneven distributions of deaths, danger and supplies (Cold-Ravnkilde et al. 2017). At the same time, the two missions share certain important characteristics. They are both responding to Islamist-inspired insurgencies that are producing significant degrees of instability (Freear and de Coning, 2013). Also, they are being deployed in contexts where there is no peace to keep and therefore have to pursue stabilization, even though their mandates to use military force differ substantially. Finally, as this report shows, regional political interests have shaped the ability of both missions to perform significantly.

Following a brief account of how data was collected for the report, we outline how the notion of political interests is used in our analysis of regional involvement in peace support operations in Somalia and Mali respectively. The report then delves into a detailed analysis of how AMISOM and MINUSMA were established, the contexts in which they were deployed and how regional interests continually shape their ability to perform. The report concludes by showing differences and similarities in how regional interests have influenced and continue to influence the missions.

METHODOLOGY

The report is based on qualitative data collection techniques, including desk reviews of the relevant literature on contemporary peacekeeping, regional political interests, AMISOM and MINUSMA. Fieldwork took place in Ethiopia and Mali. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Addis Ababa with the AU, UN, bilateral donors supporting AMISOM, defence attachés, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) personnel, regional experts and journalists. In Mali, semi-structured interviews were conducted with MINUSMA personnel, EU and AU staff and regional experts. The case studies rely on the team members' long-term engagement in both regions.

Table 1. Comparative overview of MINUSMA and AMISOM

	MINUSMA	AMISOM
Country	Mali	Somalia
Neighbouring countries	Mauritania, Algeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Senegal, Ivory Coast	Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya
Mandate	UN	AU (UN approved)
Operational time frame	2013 to present	2007 to present
Mandated personnel	13,270	22,126
Fatalities	133 (per August 2017)	Unknown – potentially somewhere between 3,000 and 4,000 or more
Troop contributing countries	Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, China, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Liberia, Mauritania, Nepal, The Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, United Kingdom, United States of America, Yemen	Military: Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Sierra Leone Police: Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda

Table 2. Troop-contributing countries to AMISOM

COUNTRY	TROOPS
Burundi	5,432
Djibouti	1,000
Kenya	3,664
Sierra Leone	850
Ethiopia	4,395
Uganda	6,223

Table 3. Top ten troop-contributing countries to MINUSMA (as of May 31, 2017)

COUNTRY	TROOPS
Burkina Faso	1,696
Bangladesh	1,518
Chad	1,396
Togo	920
Guinea	850
Niger	850
Senegal	564
Germany	590
China	391
Cambodia	301



**APPROACHING NATIONAL AND
REGIONAL INTERESTS**

National and regional political interests are foundational issues of international politics and are fundamental to the understanding of contemporary peace support operations. In this section, a short outline is given of how the concept of political interests is used throughout the report. All states have interests, but how do they arise, who do they represent and how do they change over time?

In classic realist terms, national interests in foreign policy revolve around a state's main interest, namely its survival in anarchic struggles with other states. In this view, a state's national interest is in protecting its physical, political and cultural identities against other states (Williams 2005). A state will do this by analysing its own position in the international system and acting accordingly. This argument is only partially convincing. Certainly all states prioritize their own security and survival. Especially when countries like Mali and Somalia are faced with transnational terrorist insurgencies, an immediate priority is to seek stability. Furthermore, in so-called 'fragile' contexts, where the state's capacity to handle security challenges is limited, governments seek to assert the state's authority and can thus benefit from putting forward a terrorist narrative that necessitates military action.

However, there is no way to determine a state's interests objectively by analysing the international system. Certainly national interests are not coherent, because who in fact represents 'the national': the people, the government? Moreover, what happens if the government is autocratic? The question is pertinent when it comes to peace support operations like MINUSMA and AMISOM, where many of the TCCs involved are questionable democracies at best. Thus, because defining national interests involves analytical simplification, those interests must be unpacked (see Table 4). In this report political interests constitute a 'language of state action' (Weldes 1996) that is articulated by dominant political actors to achieve what they perceive to be their national interests. In short, they reflect a particular position. As such, the state is not a unitary actor with a single identity and a single set of interests.

In sum, therefore, national interests are not given a priori: instead they reflect processes in which dominant political actors interpret challenges to the state they represent and decide how they should respond (Steele 2008). No issue, whether threat or opportunity, is self-evident. They constantly change and are negotiated as the actors that constitute the state are transformed, whether the people, neighbouring states, non-state actors and organizations, the international community, etc. (Hunt 2017). National interests are fragmented and change over time, perhaps across different governments and through changing domestic and foreign circumstances, and are at the same time structured by the political, economic and social histories of the state.

National interests are not given a priori: instead they reflect processes in which dominant political actors interpret challenges to the state they represent and decide how they should respond.

In sum, national interests are plural and fluid. They are not necessarily internally coherent, as the interest in acting on a particular issue in one area may actually contradict other interests. In such instances, a balancing or hierarchy of interests occurs in which the multiple actors of the state in question negotiate between the different interests (see Berenskoetter 2014). However, there may also be instances in which contingent or fragmented action means that contradictory interests are pursued simultaneously. Based on these reflections, the report delves into the two cases of AMISOM and MINUSMA with the aim of comprehending the effects of national interests on both missions.

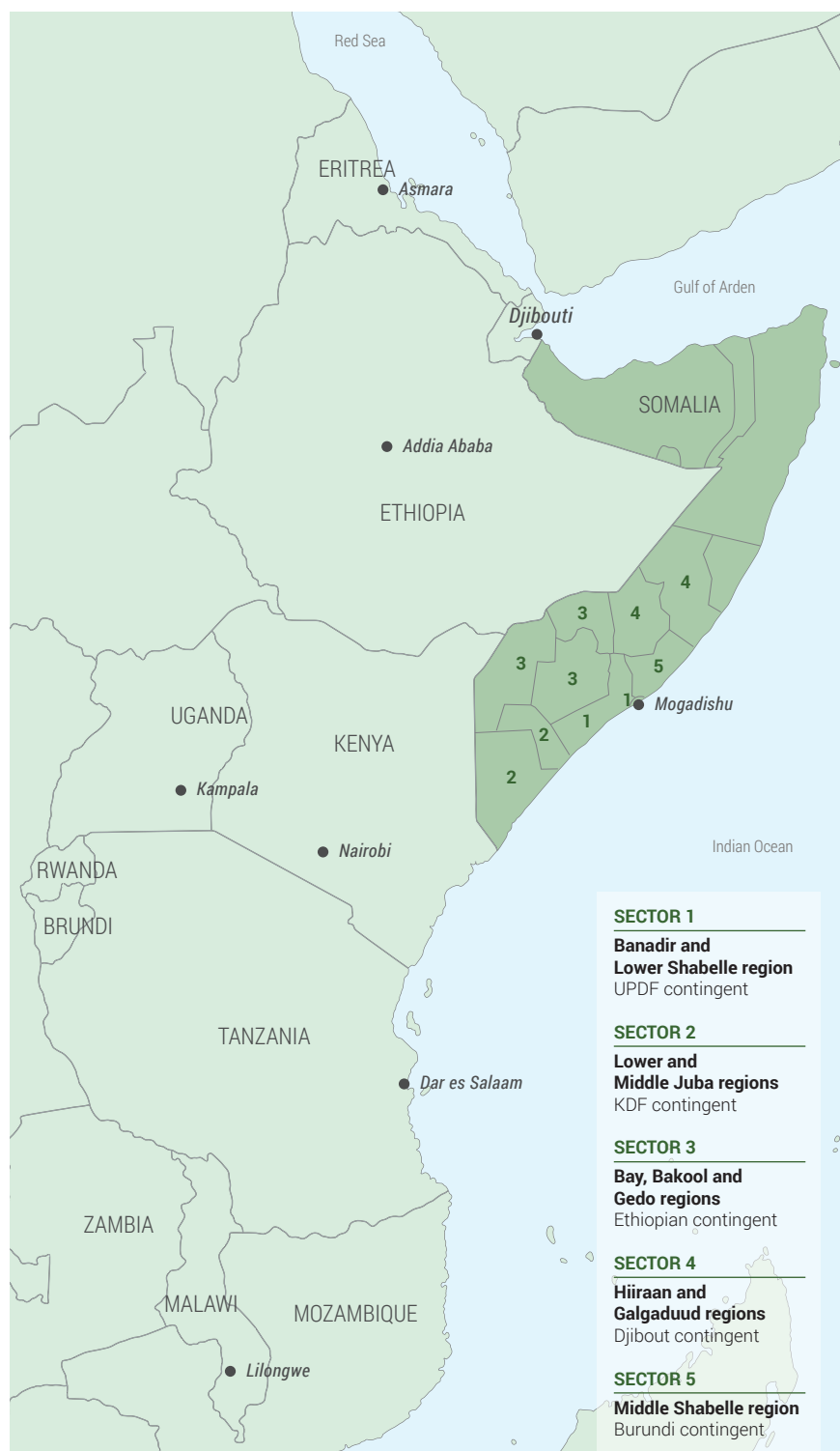
Table 4. Conceptualizing national interests in the contexts of AMISOM and MINUSMA

DIMENSION	VARIABLES	POTENTIAL EFFECT FOR INVOLVEMENT IN OPERATION
Political	Domestic interests	Both encouraging and discouraging involvement
	Demonstrating regional leadership	Encouraging involvement, perhaps also dominant role in determining strategic direction
	Responding to peer pressure	Both encouraging and discouraging for involvement
	Alternative political and strategic priorities	Both encouraging and discouraging for involvement
Security	Destabilizing spill-over risks	Encouraging for involvement as long as effectiveness in operation is somewhat high, otherwise encouraging unilateral action
	Risk to personnel deployed	Discouraging for involvement; shapes delegation of tasks
Economic	Stabilizing national and regional markets	Encouraging for involvement, but also shapes type of engagement, i.e. if a destabilized market benefits national commercial efforts, then it might encourage involvement
	Cost of participation in military or humanitarian operations	Discouraging if costs are maintained by the state, but encouraging if the allowances are high and provided by a third party
	Commercial	Commercial opportunities may encourage involvement
	Private	Opportunities for personal enrichment
Institutional	Capacity to act	Both encourages and discourages, i.e. low capacity may incite states to gain experience through involvement
	Concern with the strategic, operational and implementation capacities of the AU	Might discourage smaller states, but also encourage regional powers to actively shape the strategic direction of the operation
Normative	Reputational impact	Greatly shapes involvement and works towards many sides: reputation among donors requires radically different action than shaping reputation among regional or neighbouring states
	Preference for multilateral solutions	Encourages involvement
	Espousing specific political orders through international action	Encourages involvement, but may also encourage unilateral action if the operation is deemed too hard to influence with such orders

Source: Adapted from Hunt (2017)



The Horn of Africa:
AMISOM, AU AND IGAD



AMISOM first deployed in Mogadishu in March 2007. It has since expanded its operation and mandate from protecting Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Mogadishu to launching a stabilization campaign across south-central Somalia. The main challenge to the Somali government stems from Al-Shabaab, a neo-Salafi jihadist group, as well as an intricate combination of historically based politics, clan identities and resource distribution. As part of this complex, AMISOM's ability to deliver on its mandate is under pressure from the political interests of its neighbours, who have become increasingly engaged in the mission. Below, the report explores AMISOM's initial deployment and describes how it has evolved to where it is today, while also analysing the national and regional interests of the TCCs involved.

AMISOM EMERGES AS A UGANDAN FORCE

When AMISOM first deployed in 2007, it consisted of around 1,600 soldiers from the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF). It was deemed 'dead on arrival' by some observers, partly due to its inability to generate sufficient numbers of troops. The operation was the result of a reconciliation process under the auspices of IGAD that had itself tried to establish a mission in Somalia, the IGAD Peace Support Mission in Somalia (IGASOM). The IGAD mission failed to deploy, and one of the reasons for this emphasizes the importance of the theme of this report: neighbouring countries were excluded as possible TCCs, because of fears over how national interests might intrude in the mission and distort it.

In May 2008, AMISOM adopted a new strategic directive outlining how it would conduct a peace support operation to stabilize the country in the wake of Ethiopia's unilateral withdrawal from Somalia following the 2008 Djibouti Peace Process. However, support to AMISOM continued to be limited, and with Ethiopia officially withdrawing from Somalia, Al-Shabaab moved in to control significant swathes of territory. Furthermore, using asymmetrical tactics, Al-Shabaab attacked AMISOM positions throughout 2009 and 2010. Al-Shabaab's luck turned in the fall of 2010 when its Ramadan offensive failed and it suffered considerable casualties.

During this time, Al-Shabaab's attacks on Kampala in July 2010 prompted the deployment of additional troops from Uganda and Burundi. AMISOM launched a series of offensive operations over the next year, with a new extended mandate, allowing it to 'take all necessary measures' in its fight against Al-Shabaab. A troop increase to 12,000 was mandated in 2011 that would eventually allow AMISOM to gain control of Mogadishu.

October 2011 marked another important turning point in AMISOM's history. Up until then, mission troops had not been contributed from any of its neighbours. This changed when Kenya launched its Operation Linda Nchi ('Protecting the nation' in Swahili) and crossed the border into Somalia. A few months later, in December, Kenya officially joined AMISOM following encouragement from the IGAD heads of state, including, among others, the governments of Ethiopia, Djibouti and Uganda. Over the next few months, and fortified by the Kenyan offensive, Ethiopian forces moved back into Somalia and pushed Al-Shabaab out of a number of strategic towns, making it possible for AMISOM to move outside Mogadishu.

All of this allowed AMISOM to revise its concept of operations, which involved increasing troop levels to 18,000 and establishing an AMISOM headquarters in Mogadishu. Furthermore, four sectors were established, centred on Mogadishu (Sector 1), Kismayo (Sector 2), Baidoa (Sector 3) and the town of Belet Weyne (Sector 4).¹ The new concept of operations paved the way for UN Security Council Resolution 2036, which authorized the reimbursement of contingent-owned equipment from the UN assessed contribution funding system to AMISOM TCCs, a move that involved a creative interpretation of the UN's legal codes. It also paved the way for contributions from Djibouti and Sierra Leone.²

By the end of 2012, AMISOM had increasingly adopted a defensive position in Somalia (formally decided in April 2013 when AMISOM's Military Operations Coordination Committee recommended that the mission should not undertake further expansive operations). This was largely because it now had limited operational resources to conduct offensive operations and target Al-Shabaab strongholds (Williams 2014). As 2013 progressed, Al-Shabaab's attacks increased again, culminating in September 2013 in the attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi. By July 2013, the UN Monitoring Group concluded that Al-Shabaab had a force of about 5,000 fighters which was still largely intact because of the lack of direct military confrontation.

With Somalia once again in the international spotlight, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon issued a statement that the military gains against Al-Shabaab were at risk of being reversed and that accordingly AMISOM needed to resume its military offensive. Following extensive discussions, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2124 in November 2013, which extended the mandate of AMISOM to 31 October 2014 and called for the mission to be enhanced. Resolution 2124 increased

AMISOM's strength by approximately 4,500 uniformed personnel, while expanding the range of tasks for the UN in Somalia.³ Unfortunately, AMISOM only acquired combat troops, not the required 1,000 logistics staff.

SURGE IN AMISOM OPERATIONS

January 2014 saw the important inclusion (or re-hatting) of 4,000 Ethiopian troops who were already operating in Somalia on a unilateral basis. This marked the first time that Ethiopia had conducted military operations under the auspices of AMISOM. While effective, these troops also posed a problem for the AU because of Addis Ababa's long-standing history of confrontation with Mogadishu, an issue the report returns to in further detail below. Within AMISOM, Security Council Resolution 2124 led to the adoption of a new concept of operations from January 2014. This occurred two years after the last update and after a meeting of the heads of state of TCCs in August 2013 that had called for a new strategic concept to deal with a more aggressive Al-Shabaab and engagement with the Somali government. The latter had moved from Nairobi to Mogadishu in 2012, led by Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, and with it the UN established a political mission in Mogadishu, the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

With mobility being highly constrained, every form of movement by the mission essentially becomes a significant operation in itself.

The result was a series of major operations in conjunction with a new Somali National Army (SNA), which was starting to take shape alongside a number of clan militias. Operations Eagle (March 2014) and Indian Ocean (August to November 2014) were tasked with retaking a series of significant towns, ports and sites of infrastructure. In turn, Operation Ocean Build (November 2014) was carried out to maintain and stabilize the reclaimed settlements, working with and protecting the local population. Finally, Operation Jubba Corridor (July 2015) sought to push Al-Shabaab from its remaining strongholds. Reviews of the operations showed that, despite some progress being made, a number of significant challenges remained (Wondemagegnehu and Kebede 2017). AMISOM forces were now stretched thinly across Somalia and were unable to do much else than defend urban centres. This

was compounded by the fact that logistical support from the UN Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA)⁴ was limited, given the size of the territory it had to cover and its inexperience in delivering support to an enforcement mission like AMISOM.

CURRENT STATE OF AMISOM

Today, neighbouring countries make up half of AMISOM's TCCs, and the mission continues to operate across south-central Somalia with 22,126 personnel authorized and 21,886 deployed. In January 2017 it asked for a surge of troops for six months that would provide it with an additional 4,500 personnel. These were part of a conceived plan to 'recover the last strongholds held by Al-Shabaab, specifically in the Lower Juba region' (Irin News 2017). However, at the time of writing the request from the AU has not been met. Meanwhile, most of AMISOM's armoured personnel carriers (APCs) are apparently out of service, which entails challenges to mobility and a limited ability to project firepower rapidly to specific areas. Improvised explosive devices (IED) pose a continuous threat along supply routes as well.⁵ With mobility being highly constrained, every form of movement by the mission essentially becomes a significant operation in itself. Some interviewees during fieldwork for this report in Addis Ababa expressed concerns that this mainly prompts AMISOM to 'take care of itself', meaning that the mission is limited in its capacity to be proactive.⁶ AMISOM troops may in some cases be able to take over and liberate new territory quickly, yet this seems to occur without much actual fighting or resistance from Al-Shabaab, which then easily moves into new areas.

Al-Shabaab has certainly been weakened in recent years, though more so in its positioning and territorial access than in its actual available fighting forces and its ability to mobilize rapidly. The first part of 2017 did see a resurgence in attacks by Al-Shabaab, following in the wake of the election of Mohamed Abdullahi 'Farmajo' Mohamed as president in February 2017 (he succeeded Hassan Sheikh Mohamud). Attacks include infiltration of the SNA to carry out surprise attacks inside barracks and encampments.⁷

Similarly, by remaining on the outskirts of settlements that have been reclaimed by AMISOM, Al-Shabaab has been able to harass the population and continue its strategy of destabilization. Yet in doing so, it also seems to have lost some traction among the population.⁸ In addition to its waning popular support, it increasingly lacks access to the sea, has limited functional support and faces significant command problems.⁹

Meanwhile, AMISOM's multi-layered international support architecture, whereby the UN and bilateral donors provide a mix of financial, logistical and technical support, continues to be challenged (Wondemagegnehu and Kebede 2017). These complex arrangements have been lauded as a potential future model for African peace and stabilization operations, but they also risk greatly damaging mission cohesion by creating parallel support structures. In particular, the weakness of AMISOM's head-quarters is compounded by the fact that it is the UN Support Office for Somalia (UNSOS), UNSOA's successor (see note 3), rather than the Joint Support Operations Centre of AMISOM that distributes mission resources. This denies AMISOM one of the main functions of any military headquarters: controlling when and how to support those elements of the mission that are considered to be most in need. In addition to controlling when and where logistics can be provided, the current form of the logistics provided by the UN does not appear to be meeting AMISOM's requirements, one bilateral partner arguing that it is like 'using a hammer to fix a radio'.¹⁰

As a core donor, the EU continues to form the main source of funding for AMISOM, with 90% of its financial support going to salaries and 10% to the headquarters. It posed a challenge to the mission, then, when the EU decided to cut salaries by 20% in January 2016, from \$1,028 to \$822 per personnel. The AU responded by claiming that the move would affect the morale of its troops. The EU was putting lives at risk, it was claimed, and was not rewarding the TCCs sufficiently for the dangers their soldiers were exposed to. This first reaction was probably an attempt to appeal to other donors and see if they would be willing to step in to cover the losses. After it became clear that no one would, AMISOM turned to AU member states for additional support, but these calls have not yet been answered. Altogether, AMISOM currently costs approximately \$900 million annually.¹¹

TOWARDS A VIABLE EXIT STRATEGY?

AMISOM has announced that it will start to withdraw its troops from Somalia in October 2018 and that it expects to have withdrawn entirely by 2020, at which point it will hand over responsibility for security to the SNA. It is highly questionable whether this is realistic and indeed whether it will happen, as even a conditional drawback is subject to substantial improvements to Somalia's security sector. In short, it is unlikely that AMISOM will withdraw before a political settlement on Somalia's future has been reached that includes the federal government and regional authorities.

A stable Somalia clearly requires strong security forces. Still, to this day it remains uncertain how regional militias can be incorporated robustly into the SNA. Indeed, it is questionable if in fact an army like the SNA is able to deal with a situation in which Al-Shabaab is able to pursue an asymmetric set of tactics despite having limited means to fight a war. Nonetheless, emphasis is maintained on the SNA, both as short-term support to AMISOM and as a medium- to long-term exit strategy (Albrecht 2015). For years, the SNA has suffered from inadequate salaries, equipment (particularly force multipliers) and logistical support (Williams 2016). It currently consists of troops in largely aligned but non-integrated militias, that is, clan-based self-protection forces controlled by disparate leaders and with multiple and fluid loyalties and allegiances.¹²

Apart from AMISOM, a number of international actors are engaged in building up the capacity of the SNA, including the EU, Turkey and Bancroft Global, a private security company. Yet the relationship between AMISOM and the SNA continues to be strained (Albrecht and Haenlein, 2016). Indeed, Somalis often object that international financial support to AMISOM should go directly to the SNA instead to increase its effectiveness. Furthermore, among clans not belonging to the Hawiye, the clan that dominates Mogadishu, there is a sense that the SNA mainly serves it (Williams 2016: 43). Finally, as will be explored in the next section, Kenya and Ethiopia are often suspected of wanting to keep Mogadishu unstable in order to avoid the re-emergence of a strong and coherent Somalia state with a similarly strong army.

In 2016, Ethiopia withdrew approximately 2000 non-AMISOM-integrated forces, to the dismay of both AMISOM and the Somali government. Different reasons for the withdrawal were given, including the need for Ethiopian troops to deal with domestic uprisings taking place in different parts of the country. Another, probably related reason given by a number of interviewees in Addis Ababa was that Ethiopian troops stationed outside the country are paid in dollars and that this step was taken due to low reserves of foreign currency.¹³ Still, according to some, the country remains committed to fighting Al-Shabaab and is ready to lead an operation in the Jubba corridor in southern Somalia to push the group out of one of its last strongholds.¹⁴ Some observers close to relevant decision-makers in the Ethiopian government even noted that Ethiopia would willingly go it alone if it was provided with international support, bilaterally or otherwise.¹⁵

Meanwhile, the international community remains focused on supporting the federal government, despite its questionable degree of authority and power across Somalia's territory. This support was confirmed when Farmajo was elected president in February 2017, momentarily giving new life to the belief that Somalia could defeat Al-Shabaab and take steps towards establishing functioning state institutions. Farmajo came to power with a mission to 'build a robust Somali National Army (SNA), speed up the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)'s exit, stabilise security, curb interventions by neighbouring countries, and protect Somalia's dignity and sovereignty' (ICG 2017). Indeed, the new president launched an ambitious but ultimately unrealistic plan to defeat Al-Shabaab within two years (AMISOM 2017). Instead, numerous attacks by Al-Shabaab have shaped the environment in which Somalia's new president has taken office.

The bottom line is that AMISOM's presence in Somalia remains essential, despite the criticisms that can be raised against the organization's ability to fight Al-Shabaab. Indeed, whether a functioning federal state centred on Mogadishu is even a realistic option is still open to discussion, which in turn begs the question of who AMISOM is fighting and for whom. In this regard, regional interests and how they shape AMISOM are playing a crucial role.

REGIONAL POLITICAL INTERESTS SHAPING AMISOM: ETHIOPIA, KENYA AND 'THE REST'

To understand AMISOM is crucially to understand the regional political interests and security dynamics affecting the mission. Throughout the history of the Horn of Africa, a foundation of regional coherence has been lacking more, perhaps, than anywhere else in Africa. State weakness has underscored the question of sovereignty as a critical issue for the leaders of the region, consequently pushing the possibility of regional cooperation aside. Conflicts in the region remain interconnected across state borders. Countries like Ethiopia and Somalia have always been deeply inter-locked politically and have sought to influence each other's internal affairs. Immediately after imperial powers departed from the region in the 1960s, tensions rose between the two countries, which culminated in conflict in 1977, when Somali troops invaded Ethiopia. The offensive inspired other groups in the region, who saw themselves as repressed with respect to territorial control.

The area of Eritrea in northern Ethiopia followed a similar pattern to Somalia, and civil war broke out there, which was to grow in the following years, alongside a conflict in nearby Tigre, challenging the central regime in Ethiopia for the next many decades. In Sudan, rebel groups in the south, led by the late John Garang, refused to support the central regime in Khartoum, and a civil war broke out in the 1960s. The conflict lasted until the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the north and south in 2005, with armistices of differing durations. Civil war arrived fairly late in Somalia. However, tensions and local conflicts intensified throughout 1980s, culminating in the overthrow of President Mohamed Siad Barre, followed by a bureaucratic breakdown that has effectively lasted until today (Lewis 2010).

In the Horn of Africa, then, national security cannot be defined outside the perimeters of regional security.

In the Horn of Africa, then, national security cannot be defined outside the perimeters of regional security. In AMISOM, the implications of national security interests are apparent if we consider the division of sectors among the countries involved. Uganda, the first country to contribute to the mission, is responsible for Sector 1 and is therefore concentrated in Mogadishu and the coastal area down to Baraawe. Burundi is officially responsible for Sector 5 north of Mogadishu, but seems to be concentrated mainly around Jowhar, with limited reach outside the town.¹⁶ As a direct neighbour, Kenya is responsible for Sector 2 covering lower Jubba, running along the border to Kenya and along the coast all the way west, near the Ethiopian border. Yet, there is speculation that the vast majority of Kenyan troops are in fact based in the buffer zone running along the 700-kilometre Somali-Kenyan border.¹⁷

Finally, Ethiopia is heavily engaged both within and outside the framework of AMISOM. Indeed, one interviewee claimed that in practice they cover more than 60 percent of AMISOM's operational areas.¹⁸ Officially, sectors 3 (along the southern part of Ethiopia's border) and 6 (centring on Kismayo) are Ethiopian-dominated, with Djibouti responsible for Sector 4, also on the Ethiopian border and north of Sector 3. In reality, Ethiopian forces are also heavily stationed in Djibouti's sector, as well as along the Ethiopian border, and they seem to roam freely across the entire operational area, including in lower Jubba and near the Jubba Valley.

Ethiopia's role in AMISOM is special given the country's history with Somalia. Conflict over the Somali-populated Ogaden region in eastern Ethiopia has a long history, but the seeds of conflict were sown when the British Empire officially gave the region to Ethiopia in 1948. Despite British promises to the Somali population that they would remain autonomous, Ethiopia immediately claimed sovereignty over the region. What followed in the latter part of the twentieth century was a series of military offensives from both sides, including the Ogaden War of 1977-1978. Formal inter-state conflict ended in the early 1990s as civil war broke out in Somalia, which allowed Ethiopia to consolidate its control of Ogaden.

Today, Ethiopian forces hold Ogaden in a tight grip, and while Somali rebel groups, including the Ogaden National Liberation Front, occasionally conduct attacks, the government maintains that there is no conflict in the region. With control over the agricultural plains of Ogaden, Ethiopia invaded Somalia in 2006 with the aim of countering the rise of the Islamic Courts Union. Seen by the international community as a response to Islamist aggression, the Ethiopian invasion remained largely unquestioned. While Ethiopia formally withdrew from Somalia in 2009, an unknown but presumably significant number of troops remained in the country, especially in the border zone between the two countries. It was some of these troops (around 4,000) who were later re-hatted as AMISOM personnel in January 2014 when Ethiopia officially joined the mission. While positive in many regards, it created some controversies among other TCCs as to whether AMISOM would increasingly become a vehicle for Ethiopia's political interests, not least the fear that the troops it was contributing would work outside AMISOM's command-and-control structures.

Apart from AMISOM, Ethiopia uses a range of different tools to influence and contain the conflict in Somalia. In addition to military troops, whose numbers and locations are not known, special forces of the Ethiopian police are involved in training local militias.¹⁹ These efforts currently occur at varied intensities, not least because Ethiopia seems to be under increasing pressure on several fronts. Eritrea is more vocal than it has been for a while, both with respect to Ethiopia and indirectly by arming and financing Al-Shabaab (for which the country is currently under UN sanctions). Eritrea's position is augmented by growing support from its northern neighbour, Egypt. After failing to convince Somalia, Somaliland or Djibouti that Egypt should be granted permission to build a military base in one of their countries, negotiations with Eritrea were announced as successful in the beginning of 2017.

The agreement is rumoured to include a naval base at Nora Island on the Dakhla peninsula, where Egypt has been allowed to deploy 20-30,000 forces (The New Arab 2017).

To the west, the civil war in South Sudan is having spill-over effects, especially in the Ethiopian region of Gambella. Over the last two years, rebel groups have repeatedly raided Ethiopian villages, killing villagers, stealing livestock and abducting hundreds of children, prompting Ethiopia to create a security zone along large parts of the border. In addition to these external pressures, Ethiopia has seen a series of domestic protests and uprisings since mid to late 2016. The majority of these incidents have been organized by opposition parties to the government and by popular groups belonging to the Amhara and Oromo ethnicities.

When it comes to its strategic outlook for a future Somalia, Ethiopia is caught between different ambitions. There is still a dominant narrative that, due to historically tense relations between Addis Ababa and Mogadishu, Ethiopia has little interest in establishing a strong consolidated central government in Somalia, let alone a functioning SNA. A strong government backed by a broad cross-section of the Somali clans would be considered a threat to Ethiopia in Addis Ababa. As an example, one of the first proclamations of the Islamic Courts Union in 2006 was to 'crush Ethiopia'. At the same time, an unstable Somalia is an unviable solution for Ethiopia, not least with 1616 kilometres of almost open borders between the two countries. President Farmajo embodies this duality. On the one hand, it is generally hoped that he can establish some stability among Somalia's clan groups, but on the other hand he is widely perceived in Ethiopia as a nationalist with a unifying agenda for Somalia that is potentially dangerous for Ethiopia.²⁰

Al-Shabaab's attacks on the Westgate shopping centre in Nairobi in 2013, and more recently on Garissa University College in 2015, fundamentally shape the Kenyan government's strategy towards Somalia. Kenya's national objective has predominantly been to disrupt Al-Shabaab's ability to operate across the border into Kenya. In practice, this has entailed a strategy of occupying key nodes in Somalia and forcing Al-Shabaab to fight on terms set by the KDF. In this fight, counter-insurgency has not been central to Kenya's preoccupation with controlling the border. Yet Kenya's interest in defending itself from instability spilling across the border from Somalia dates back to before Westgate and Garissa. Indeed, as noted above, Kenya attempted to establish a buffer zone with Operation Linda Nchi in 2011.

Apart from its focus on maintaining border security, Kenya is driven by its strategic and economic interests in maintaining control of the southern port city of Kismayo. In early 2014, it was announced that most of Kenya's troops were to leave Kismayo and would be replaced by Sierra Leonean troops. This decision was motivated by the Somali government's criticism that the KDF was working to a domestic Kenyan agenda. However, in 2015 Kenyan troops were still in charge of Kismayo, while Sierra Leonean troops left AMISOM due to the Ebola crisis in West Africa (Albrecht and Haenlein 2015). Kismayo is particularly sought after for the charcoal and sugar trade that goes through the town, the illicit trade in which Kenyan forces have been accused of profiting from.



The limited capacity and influence of the AU in AMISOM leaves open the possibility of unilateral action from the neighbouring TCCs in particular.

Al-Shabaab connects Kenya and Ethiopia within AMISOM and beyond. Neither is willing to accept the threat of a strong Al-Shabaab to their sovereignty and their populations. At the same time, the difference in strategic interests of Kenya and Ethiopia towards Somalia are pronounced. Ethiopia worries about Mogadishu's political attitude to it, regardless of who is in power, while Kenya is less interested in who is in power. In turn, while it would be unthinkable for Ethiopia to disengage from Somalia, there are regular discussions in Nairobi over Kenya's involvement in AMISOM. The opposition to President Uhuru Kenyatta's government is critical of Kenya's engagement in AMISOM, and it has expressed a wish for the country to withdraw from Somalia, focusing on protecting its own border – on the Kenyan side. In operations, there is a fundamental difference between containing Al-Shabaab and preventing it from spilling over into Kenya and Ethiopia on the one hand and then actively chasing the group with the purpose of eliminating it on the other.

What sometimes appears as a bipolar struggle for influence between Ethiopia and Kenya has been described by some as one of the main reasons for recurrent command and control problems within AMISOM – that is, one 'cannot have two captains on one ship'.²¹ The struggle is exacerbated by the fact that Ethiopia and Kenya both have forces that are not integrated into AMISOM engaged in Somalia, in different places and serving different purposes. The consequence is that sector

commanders follow orders from their capitals rather than AMISOM headquarters. The limited capacity and influence of the AU in AMISOM leaves open the possibility of unilateral action from the neighbouring TCCs in particular. At times, they only inform AMISOM of operations after they have been conducted by the respective country's AMISOM troops.²² For example, when the Kenyan base at El Adde was attacked by Al-Shabaab in January 2016 and suffered heavy casualties, their initial reaction was not to contact relatively close Ethiopian AMISOM troops, but to seek assistance from Nairobi.

There are other important interests and actors involved in AMISOM apart from Somalia's immediate neighbours. Uganda was involved in AMISOM from the very beginning and retains a strong presence in Mogadishu. One reason for the country's involvement is reputational: Uganda has been a dominant force in the region, and participation in AMISOM helps it maintain this position. Indeed, Ugandan troops initially succeeded in bringing the TFG to Mogadishu, with the support of Ethiopian forces. Secondly, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni seems to place a high value on the income, prestige and material support that comes from participation in AMISOM. Thirdly, national security concerns also play a role: the buffer zone on the Kenyan border with Somalia is in close proximity to Uganda, and, as noted above, Al-Shabaab has already carried attacks inside the country.

Burundian involvement in AMISOM is less certain, in particular because of the ongoing crisis in the central African country. On the one hand, Burundi has thus far gained substantial benefits from its engagement in the mission, financially, diplomatically and in acquiring training. On the other hand, the EU, which pays for AMISOM, has threatened to cut back its funding for Burundi's lucrative peacekeeping contingent in Somalia to try to force President Pierre Nkurunziza into talks with his opponents and away from the brink of ethnic conflict. For months, therefore, the EU remitted the 5 million euros that is paid monthly to the Burundian soldiers in Somalia and asked the AU to find a way to pay these soldiers directly, without going through the Central Bank of Burundi. While a solution was found, there is little doubt that a premature withdrawal could occur if Burundi's security and governance situation at home continues to deteriorate to the point that Bujumbura needs to recall a substantial number of troops to restore order. Furthermore, it is likely that the AU might force Burundi to leave AMISOM if widespread genocide occurs as the domestic crisis escalates.

CONCLUSION

AMISOM is not so much a delimited effort taking place within a clearly defined institutional framework as an attempt to control and shape the efforts of individual countries to combat Al-Shabaab and promote further stability in Somalia. This has an evident effect on the degree to which national interests shape tangible operational concerns such as command and control, the distribution of logistical resources, sectorization of the country and strategic coherence among TCCs.

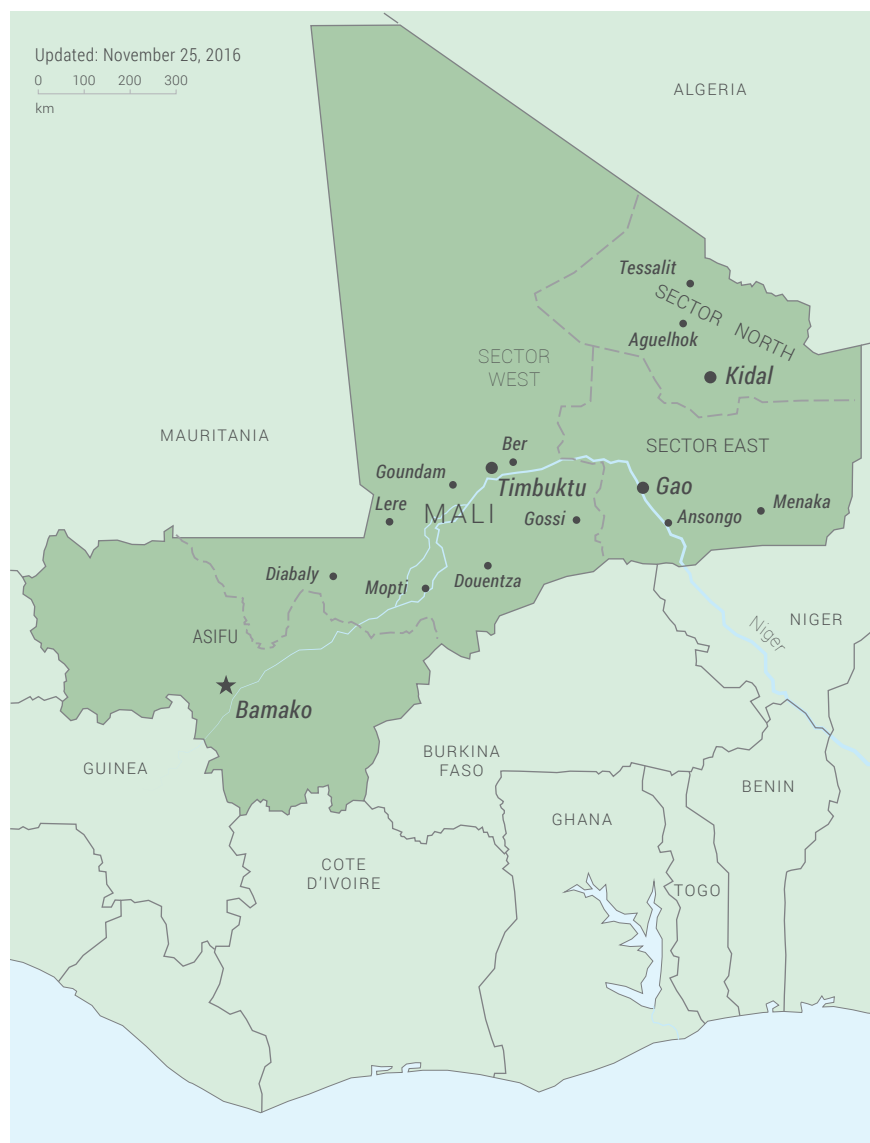
AMISOM is not so much a delimited effort taking place within a clearly defined institutional framework as an attempt to control and shape the efforts of individual countries to combat Al-Shabaab and promote further stability in Somalia.

In light of such weaknesses, it is easy to forget that there would be no AMISOM without significant regional contributions and leadership. There is no willingness on the part of the broader international community to engage directly in Somalia, as long as the conflict appears to be contained and has limited direct implications for European security. There are problematic consequences for Ethiopian and Kenyan interests in Somalia, but these countries also have very direct and legitimate security interests in Somalia.

AMISOM is not a peacekeeping mission, as AU diplomats and westerners who finance it sometimes like to imply, because there is no peace to keep. Indeed, while no official statistics exist, several thousand soldiers have been killed in action. As such, the negative effects of the influence of regional interests have to be measured against the fact that AMISOM does not genuinely plan, initiate or carry out operations. Individual TCCs do, because they see strong self-interests in doing so.



West Africa:
MINUSMA, UN AND G5 SAHEL



In January 2013, France conducted a military intervention into Mali, Opération Serval, together with an AU-led force, the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA). Their aim was to stop armed jihadist groups advancing from their strongholds in northern Mali towards the south and, ultimately, the Malian capital Bamako. In April 2013, MINUSMA was authorized under a UN Security Council Chapter VII framework to stabilize key population centres and support the reestablishment of the state's authority throughout the country. Deployment began

on 1 July 2013. Today, MINUSMA figures as the world's most deadly ongoing UN mission in which more than 130 soldiers have lost their lives. The high death toll for a UN mission reflects the fact that it has become the target of armed terrorist groups fighting the Malian state and the external security forces that support it.

INADEQUATE REGIONAL RESPONSES TO MALI'S SECURITY CRISIS

Mali's security crisis kicked off in January 2012, in the aftermath of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) bombings in Libya and the fall of the Qaddafi regime. It was ignited when a loose coalition of armed Tuareg groups, led by the Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, MNLA), returned to Mali from Libya, and were inadequately handled by the weak and illegitimate Malian state.

In the beginning of the resurrection, the Tuareg separatists fought alongside militant jihadists with affiliations to Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and took control of the three northern regions of Mali, declaring an independent state, Azawad. However, the alliance did not last, and the Tuareg groups were soon defeated by the militarily and economically superior jihadist militants, whose aim was and still is to impose control over Malian territory through the implementation of fundamentalist Sharia law. Meanwhile, frustrated soldiers in the Malian army staged a coup d'état resulting in a temporary power vacuum in Bamako, which facilitated enhanced jihadist control over the northern territories.

Immediately after the coup on 22 March, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the then-president of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré, took a leading role in arranging regional talks and planning a military intervention in support of the Malian government in the form of the ECOWAS Multidimensional Force (MICEMA). However, due to disagreements between ECOWAS, Algeria and Mauritania about taking military action, this option did not come to fruition. Furthermore, Compaoré was accused of playing an ambiguous role in the Malian conflict. At the same time as being in dialogue with the armed groups in northern Mali, he was also involved in the release of AQIM-held European hostages through his personal advisor, a familiar figure in Tuareg and Arab political circles (Lecocq et al. 2013). In September 2012, quoting French intelligence sources, the magazine *Jeune Afrique* (2012) reported that jihadist groups had received shipments of armaments via Ouagadougou and that wounded MNLA fighters were receiving medical treatment in exile in Burkina Faso.

The two influential states of Algeria and Mauritania were opposed to ECOWAS's plans for military intervention and rejected attempts by Compaoré to mediate between the parties. In June 2012, the AU started to play a more active role. Among other initiatives, it gave the military operation a continental identity by changing it from a regional to an AU-led force, AFISMA, thereby hoping to overcome Algeria's initial reluctance to intervene militarily (Thérout-Bénoni, 2013). In September 2012, Algeria initiated its own negotiations with the AQIM-affiliated Ansar Dine, led by Iyad Ag-Ghali. Algeria had previously played a central role as mediator in the Tuareg rebellion and is familiar with the dynamics of Mali's internal conflicts. Nevertheless, in 2012 Algeria refrained from taking a leading role in the military solution and continued to insist on negotiations. Both Algeria and ECOWAS tried for a long time to build bridges between the MNLA and Ansar Dine but were taken aback by the latter's decision to launch a military offensive against southern Mali in January 2013 (ICG 2013: 18).

Initially, Compaoré's efforts did create results. In June 2013, the leaders of the MNLA and groups within the Mouvement Islamique de l'Azawad (Islamic Movement of Azawad, MIA) signed a peace agreement with the Malian transitional government in Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, the so-called Ouagadougou agreement. The agreement's main objective was to ensure that elections could be held in July-August 2013 to enable the return of constitutional authority. The agreement also contained a commitment by the rebel side to respect the territorial integrity of Mali and to combat terrorism. Still, the agreement ended after deadly clashes between government forces and armed groups during a visit by then Prime Minister Moussa Mara to Kidal in May 2014. In June 2014, after considerable public protests in Burkina Faso, which forced Compaoré to step down, Algeria took charge and led the Algiers peace negotiations (2014-2015), which in turn led to the 'Bamako Agreement' of June 2015 (Boutellis and Zahar 2017).

INTERNATIONAL MOBILISATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF MINUSMA

During 2012, the international community ignored calls for help from Mali and the neighbouring countries of Niger and Senegal, which were worried that the crisis would spill over into their countries. The government of Niger was particularly uneasy due to its own history of Tuareg insurgency and the concern that it too could become a target of terror attacks due to its strategic cooperation with the US (Bøås and Utas 2013). The efforts by ECOWAS, the AU and the UN were not sufficient to stop the crisis, which had become critical in January 2013. ECOWAS sent the first

proposal for a military intervention to the UN Security Council in September 2012, but the proposal was rejected due to a lack of approval from Bamako, poor planning, and concerns that ECOWAS lacked the capacity to carry out the mission. Only on 20 December did the Security Council finally approve ECOWAS's mission.

On 10 January 2013, as the jihadist groups threatened to attack the capital, Bamako, France launched a military intervention, Opération Serval. Following ECOWAS's and the AU's inadequate responses to the Malian crisis, an AU-led operation, the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), was finally deployed to support French and Malian troops in recovering the north of the country and moving towards stabilization activities. In February 2013, the European Union also deployed a training mission (EUTM Mali) in order to train, assess and advise Mali's armed forces, which until April 2017 mainly took place in the military region headquarters garrisons, Malian military schools or at the training centre in Koulikoro.

The launch of Opération Serval was instrumental in pushing the jihadists out of their strongholds in Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal. France initially denied any kind of long-term engagement in Mali, but at the same time it was concerned that AFISMA would not be able to retain hard-fought gains of Opération Serval. Thus, France put pressure on the UN Security Council to authorize the deployment of a UN mission, leading to the formation of MINUSMA, mandated to support 'the transitional authorities of Mali, to stabilise the key population centers, especially in the north of Mali and, in this context, to deter threats and take active steps to prevent the return of armed elements to those areas' (UN Security Council 2013b: 15.i). However, the precarious security situation in Mali, which is characterized by an asymmetrical threat environment, actually requires a counter-terrorism intervention that the UN has so far been both unable and reluctant to undertake (Boutellis and Fink 2016).

UN PEACEKEEPING AS COUNTER-TERRORISM?

Initially, the Security Council acknowledged that 'the United Nations is deploying a peacekeeping operation in a new geopolitical context with asymmetric threats not previously encountered in a UN peacekeeping environment' (UN Security Council, 2013a). Indeed, MINUSMA deployed alongside a French counterterrorism operation that was authorized to intervene in support of the UN upon the request of the Secretary General. In this way, the UN avoided giving MINUSMA an explicit counter-terrorism mandate. However, the mission was de facto engaged directly in fighting terrorism, without the adequate means or mandate to do so (Cold-Ravnkilde, 2017).

Consequently, the French counter-terrorism operation, which is separate from MINUSMA, which can provide support in extreme circumstances, remains a necessity for the mission. Maintaining French involvement has also been a way to establish a clear de jure distinction between the UN mission's core mandate of peacekeeping and France's peace enforcement and counter-terrorist activities (UN Security Council 2013a: 99-100). However, taking into account the evolution of the UN Security Council Resolution in mandating MINUSMA and how MINUSMA is perceived in the eyes of local populations, maintaining this distinction has failed in practice.

Jihadist groups have quickly adapted to the changed circumstances by relocating themselves to rural areas that are inaccessible to external and Malian security forces, while they have continuously been splintering into new factions and constellations.

Certainly, MINUSMA's and France's abilities to quell jihadist activities in Mali and stabilize the country are still in question. Opération Serval and AFISMA initially had some success in clearing the northern cities of terrorists and killing a number of key commanders. But jihadist groups have quickly adapted to the changed circumstances by relocating themselves to rural areas that are inaccessible to external and Malian security forces, while they have continuously been splintering into new factions and constellations. For instance, on 2 March 2017, the main leader of Ansar Dine, Iyad Ag-Ghali, appeared in a video along with prominent AQIM clerics to announce the formal merger of Mali's main jihadist groups in a new coalition, the Jama'at Nusrat ul-Islam wal-Muslimin (Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims or JNIM). Although conflicts occasionally occur within the coalition's leadership, in general its strategically minded and opportunistic jihadist leaders have been effective in reconfiguring and adapting to new circumstances. Among other measures, they are increasingly recruiting through local ethnic and social affiliations and by using local Imams like Amadou Kouffa in the rural areas of central Mali and Imam Ibrahim Dicko, leader of Ansarul Islam, a new Burkinabe jihadist group that emerged in 2016 with bases in the border region between Mali and Burkina Faso (see Sandor 2017). Consequently, attacks have increased in central Mali and along the borders of Burkina Faso and Niger. As progress in the implementation of the 2015 Bamako peace agreement has been almost absent, and as attacks on UN

peacekeepers, the French forces, the Malian army and humanitarian organizations have increased and become more sophisticated, the UN has come under pressure from both the Malian governments and neighbouring TCCs to move towards a more robust mandate.

A PLETHORA OF SECURITY ACTORS AND INTERESTS

As suggested above, diverse government and non-government armed factions with competing, often incompatible agendas continue to shape the political context in which MINUSMA operates. Indeed, regional dynamics and interests are to a large extent directly reflected in the TCCs that constitute MINUSMA. Following large-scale international interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, European soldiers have returned to UN peacekeeping. However, African countries remain the largest troop contributors to MINUSMA. The predominance of West African troops in MINUSMA stems from the regional interventions that preceded it. In the process of deploying MINUSMA, the AFISMA forces were re-hatted into the UN-led force. In the process of re-hatting AFISMA to MINUSMA, the latter inherited 6,300 of its initially mandated 11,200 troops, which largely came from countries neighbouring or close to Mali. In 2017 about 4,000 of MINUSMA's troops still come from Chad, Niger and Burkina Faso, countries that are challenged by, among many other issues, deep poverty, bureaucratic fragility and security threats from secessionist and jihadist armed factions.

The 2015 Bamako peace agreement was signed after a little less than a year of peace talks. However, the process was disrupted several times by fighting on the ground among its signatories, the Malian government, a northern-based secessionist Tuareg-led alliance, the Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) that the MNLA is part of, and a coalition of pro-government militias known as 'the Platform'. Furthermore, ongoing confrontations among the armed groups, coupled with constantly changing composition and alliances, have characterized both the peace negotiations and implementation of the agreement (for an overview, see Boutellis and Zahar 2017: 26). Finally, the deal excluded the jihadist factions, including AQIM and Ansar Dine, both considered terrorist groups by the international community. However, due to the fluidity between so-called terrorist armed groups and compliant armed groups, attempts to distinguish between them has failed in practice and hence severely challenged disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) in Mali (ibid.).

In Mali's northern and central regions in particular, since independence in 1960 the state governed from Bamako has been associated with the abuse of power rather than with the provision of basic services and protection. In the past two decades, northern Mali has also become a centre of trafficking in drugs, people and arms. Thus, the inclination of the armed groups that dominate the north to work towards establishing law and order sanctioned by the Malian state is limited. This situation, combined with a constantly changing map of actors involved in the conflict in Mali, creates immense obstacles to pushing the peace agreement forward.

Diverse government and non-government armed factions with competing, often incompatible agendas continue to shape the political context in which MINUSMA operates.

Furthermore, MINUSMA's mandate has increasingly become more 'proactive and robust' in order to counter and deter terrorist threats to the mission. However, governments in the region around Mali that deploy their forces in MINUSMA share the perception that the UN is doing too little to combat terrorism and organized crime. Meanwhile, France and the EU are also looking for ways to support regional efforts to combat terrorism, organized crime and irregular migration in the region. Thus, in consultation with France, the AU and ECOWAS, the so-called G5 Sahel countries, including Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Chad, have requested a more direct counter-terror mandate from the UN and have increased border controls in an attempt to respond to the rapidly evolving security challenges that are perceived to be emerging both within and outside Mali.

Countries in the region around Mali benefit from and peddle the narrative of terrorist threats to boost their own authority. European strategic interests in the Sahel reach beyond countering terrorism to include control of irregular migration from sub-Saharan Africa to the Mediterranean. The EU, France and the UN all contribute financially, militarily and politically to the plethora of military operations that are currently being undertaken in the Sahel and are thus directly shaping regional states' motivations to engage. Given the regional states' important contributions to MINUSMA, the next section discusses their motivations in making these contributions. It also explores the implications of deploying yet another parallel structure, the G5 Sahel Joint Force, in what the International Crisis Group has called 'a security traffic jam' in Mali and how it might affect MINUSMA.

REGIONAL POLITICAL INTERESTS IN MINUSMA

The root causes of the conflict in Mali are to be found in the local and historical context. However, the failure of regional diplomacy and security politics has also played a role in the escalating crisis (Klute 2012; Lecocq et al. 2013). Prior to 2012, the most striking obstacle to dealing with security threats has been the inertia of Mali's political leaders in the face of the threats posed by AQIM and organized crime (Cold-Ravnkilde 2013). During the period when the MNLA and Ansar Dine were formed in 2010-2011, the lack of regional cooperation on security shaped the deteriorating situation in northern Mali. For example, regional action taken by an Algerian-led joint military operation, the Comité d'Etat-Major Opérationnel Conjoint (CEMOC), to tackle the presence of militant Islamist groups came to a halt due to tensions between Morocco and Algeria and between Algeria and Libya before the fall of Gaddafi (Boukhars 2012).

European governments contributed further to regional tensions between Algeria, Mauritania and Mali by paying huge sums in ransoms for hostages while at the same time pressing the governments of Mali and Mauritania to release indicted members of AQIM in return for the release of hostages (Lecocq et al. 2013). In February 2010, for instance, the government of Mali released a prisoner from Mauritania, one from Burkina Faso and two from Algeria in return for the release of a French citizen, Pierre Camatte, thus creating a diplomatic crisis between Mali, Mauritania and Algeria (Jeune Afrique 2010; Lecocq et al. 2013). Furthermore, the long-standing competition between the two regional great powers, Algeria and Morocco, in and beyond Western Sahara, have blocked regional security collaboration, not least the AU's role in managing the crisis. In December 2014, the African Union launched its own regional peace and dialogue initiative known as the Nouakchott Process, which brought together eleven member states from across the Sahel and Maghreb in order to strengthen and coordinate security cooperation within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the Sahelo-Saharan region. Much like previous initiatives in the region, however, the effectiveness of the APSA is hampered by the persistent rivalries between its member states.

During the initial phase of MINUSMA's deployment, a common perception among the European and regional contingents was that achieving peace in Mali could prevent instability from spilling over into neighbouring countries. However, apart from suffering considerable losses, MINUSMA remains a target of armed jihadist groups fighting against the Malian state, despite significant support from the three

major external security players operating in the region, the UN, the EU and France. Furthermore, MINUSMA is characterized by a historically high deployment of specialized and well-equipped European forces with experience of counterterrorist operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

However, partly due to a number of caveats regarding where and how the European TCCs may deploy in the mission, the European contingents' experiences in countering asymmetrical threats have not benefitted the mission as a whole. As such, the high death tolls in MINUSMA are related to, among other problems, the African forces' limited training, equipment and logistical support in countering asymmetrical threats (for further discussion see Albrecht et al. 2017). MINUSMA, overstretched in covering Malian territory that is almost twice the size of France, has suffered from a lack of armoured vehicles and adequate aerial support (particular in sector north, where the mission never had the air assets it requested), and of troops since its inception, despite attempts by the UN peacekeeping department to call for more help from UN member states. In January 2017, Egypt, for example, promised to contribute a combat convoy battalion, but it is still not operational. Canada has been hesitating over its pledge to send troops to a UN mission for more than a year (Vanderperre, 2017).

OPERATIONAL CONSEQUENCES

There is a general consensus among the African states that are contributing to MINUSMA that the UN is doing too little to provide sufficient security for their troops. Meanwhile, high-ranking MINUSMA military staff claim that neither the number of soldiers nor the mandate constitute the main challenge to achieving results on the ground.²³ Rather, the major obstacles are limited capacity and a lack of equipment and training for the African forces. Consequently, they are inadequately prepared to respond to attacks against them, yet they are deployed in the most volatile areas of Mali. Regional TCCs' motivations to counter the immediate security threats are likely to influence their willingness and ability to sustain troop contributions to MINUSMA. However, in a mission context, where command structures are diffuse and decentralized, often being a matter of negotiating rather than command, TCCs' diverging political interests can create conflicting agendas in the execution and planning of tasks (see Cold-Ravnkilde et al. 2017; Albrecht et al. 2017).

While MINUSMA's military component primarily operates in Mali's northern regions, jihadists are increasingly attempting to turn northern Burkina Faso and western Niger across the border from Mali into a jihadist stronghold. Soum province in Burkina Faso, for instance, has faced a steady increase in terrorist attacks in recent years. Particularly since the change of government in Burkina Faso in 2015, jihadist groups active in northern Mali have carried out a range of attacks in Burkina Faso's border regions in addition to the 2016 attack in the capital of Ouagadougou. While Burkina Faso has accused Mali for not being able to contain its security problems within its own borders,²⁴ the increasing insecurity in the border regions between Mali and Burkina Faso is closely tied to political changes in the latter's central government. The country's former president, Blaise Compaoré, played an ambiguous yet efficient role in managing jihadist groups. He was often directly or indirectly involved in negotiating ransoms and freeing European hostages held by AQIM (Lemine Ould Salehm, 2016), but he was also well known for indirectly helping the jihadists gain official recognition and medical treatment, which has allegedly led AQIM's leadership to disregard Burkina Faso as a target. In 2012, Compaoré also led the mediation team that negotiated the initial ceasefire agreement in Mali. However, in 2014 he was forced to resign after popular protests against his attempts to alter the constitutional two-term presidential limit. AQIM and other jihadist groups now seem to be taking advantage of the situation around Mali's borders, where Burkina Faso's relatively weak army and police forces are ill-equipped to counter jihadist tactics, including their use of IEDs and landmines.

In response to multiple attacks in June 2016, Burkina Faso initiated discussions with the UN and Mali's president to redeploy one of its two battalions, each containing 850 soldiers, on its borders with Mali. The fact that MINUSMA has produced very modest results has undermined the regional TCCs' trust in the mission's ability to impact positively on regional stability. Indeed, it has weakened their political will to make troop contributions to MINUSMA. Discussions with Burkina Faso culminated in 2016, when MINUSMA's leadership accepted redeployment of its troops in the border region. In sum, it is evident that managing the interests of neighbouring TCCs – for instance, in securing their borders – is crucial to maintaining regional support for a mission that is facing a range of challenges in terms of safety measures for its troops.

Niger also shares porous borders with Mali, and given the country's limited capacity to control its borders effectively, it remains a centre for the illicit trafficking of drugs and humans. Like Mali, Niger faced a number of Tuareg rebellions throughout the

1990s and 2000s, but has so far been more effective in managing the Tuareg insurgency although maintaining a delicate balance of power between Tuareg groups in the north and the capital of Niamey is an ongoing exercise. Apart from bordering Mali to the east, the country faces challenges from Libya's growing instability to the north and the Boko Haram insurgency to the south. Fighting militant jihadist groups in Mali constitutes an important priority for Niger's government. The Niger contingent was initially the only one in MINUSMA that was deployed on its own border, tasked with providing security and protection for civilian staff.²⁵

While MINUSMA's military component primarily operates in Mali's northern regions, jihadists are increasingly attempting to turn northern Burkina Faso and western Niger across the border from Mali into a jihadist stronghold.

For a TCC to deploy on its own border within a mission area is against UN regulations. This has implications for the command and control of MINUSMA, because it might be asked whether the Nigerien forces share the same agenda as or are communicating adequately with force headquarters in Bamako.²⁶ In 2016, for instance, a Nigerien battalion commander defied MINUSMA's nominal lines of command and control by withdrawing its troops from securing a DDR cantonment site because it was rumoured that the Nigerien camp was under imminent attack (Albrecht et al. 2017). Furthermore, having Nigerien companies close to home in Asongo and Ménaka has created a number of problems for the mission, with soldiers de facto going absent without leave in their own country. Furthermore, according to sources within MINUSMA, some of the companies are so badly equipped that they are unable to respond to an increasingly dangerous security situation. There are several examples in which Malian forces have been in direct combat with terrorist armed groups, while the Nigerien MINUSMA battalions have done nothing to support them or to protect local communities. As a MINUSMA staff officer explained, 'They are mandated to protect civilians, but they do not leave their bases. They are not willing to risk their lives for some Malian villages'.²⁷ This is known to the terrorist groups, who meanwhile are growing stronger and more capable of carrying out coordinated attacks as the one on the MINUSMA initiated joint patrol base in Gao in January 2017, where more than 70 people died.²⁸

Indeed, like Burkina Faso, Niger is increasingly being targeted by jihadists on its border with Mali. For example, between February and March 2017, twenty security force personnel were killed near a Malian refugee camp close to the border with Burkina Faso. The country remains in an almost permanent state of emergency. State authorities regularly close down local markets, and vehicles are banned from crossing the border from Mali to avoid terrorist infiltration. The Boko Haram insurgency in southern Niger has caused more than 20,000 deaths and the displacement of over 2.5 million people since 2009. Niger's contribution to the Western-supported multinational joint effort against the group puts enormous pressure on Nigerien military resources (Cold-Ravnkilde and Plambech 2015). Indeed, it is questionable how long the country can withstand the multiple pressures it is under. In 2013, the International Crisis Group dubbed Niger 'another weak link in the Sahel'.

Niger's geopolitical importance goes beyond either Mali or the Sahel in general. In 2016, Niger became a major recipient of European Emergency Trust Funds, specifically because the country is a key passage for migrants (Lucht 2017). This reflects the fact that the EU's interest in controlling terrorism and migration into Europe is more important than Niger's compliance with human rights. The fight against Boko Haram in Diffa, for instance, has led to numerous cases of extrajudicial arrests and incarcerations, while the EU Capacity Building programme in Niger (EUCAP Sahel Niger) is in the country to provide training and technical assistance to its security forces. Undoubtedly, these dynamics work against the establishment of legitimate state institutions capable of providing public services and thus contributing to long-term stabilization in the Sahel (Cold-Ravnkilde and Plambech 2015).

East of Niger, Chad has become a critical military power in the Sahel and is trying to consolidate this position in different ways, in particular by leading the fight against terrorism in the region (Lecoutre 2016). The country has deployed soldiers to the Central African Republic, Mali and more recently the Lake Chad basin to fight Boko Haram and is host to significant numbers of western military personnel.

Due to historical ties between France and Chad, the latter has become a strategic partner in France's war on terror in the Sahel. This was demonstrated in Mali during Opération Serval in 2013, when Chad contributed 1800 soldiers to AFISMA to stop a jihadist take-over in the country's northern region. The Chadian contingents were subsequently rehatted as MINUSMA forces, which has provided Chad with an influential position in the mission. Indeed, President Idriss Déby has garnered some

international legitimacy, despite his heavy-handed approach to political opposition at home. When Opération Serval was replaced by a longer term French mission, Opération Barkhane, its headquarters were based in the capital of Chad, N'Djamena, which in turn reflects the strong political ties between MINUSMA and France's counterterrorist efforts in the Sahel. MINUSMA's current SRSG, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, is from Chad. Despite these efforts, others have questioned the role of the Chadian forces, and as one interviewee proclaimed: 'At the moment, everybody is romanticizing Chad's role in fighting terrorism, but the way its army is organized is like militias. In fact, Chad does not have an operational force'.²⁹

Like Niger and Burkina Faso, Chad manoeuvres 'between ambition and fragility' (ICG 2016). The authoritarian regime of President Idriss Déby has survived several coup attempts from within its own army, which is fundamentally fragmented. Because Chad receives considerable financial and technical support from France and the US, the elite element of Chad's army is well equipped and trained. This part of the army consists largely of Muslim, non-Arabic tribesmen. The other part of the army is more differentiated in ethnic origins, is poorly equipped and receives close to no training. It is nonetheless troops from this part of the army that have been deployed as part of MINUSMA in Aguelhoc and Tessalit in Kidal region, the most dangerous part of the mission area.

After almost four years as the only permanently deployed infantry battalion in Aguelhoc and Tessalit, some Chadian soldiers appear to be losing the motivation to be deployed in some of the most exposed areas of the mission area.

According to military officers in the headquarters of MINUSMA, soldiers from Chad have demonstrated great courage and a rashness often bordering on what is permitted within MINUSMA's mandate (Albrecht et al 2017: 71). However, after almost four years as the only permanently deployed infantry battalion in Aguelhoc and Tessalit, some Chadian soldiers appear to be losing the motivation to be deployed in some of the most exposed areas of the mission area. Without adequate support and supplies in harsh conditions, the soldiers are under considerable physical and psychological pressure (ibid.). In sum, Chad is a political challenge for MINUSMA because of the fatalities that the country is experiencing and because of a lack of discipline among its troops in Mali. However, acting on these circumstances has proved a considerable challenge.

Leading figures within MINUSMA are putting pressure on the SRSG, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, who is from Chad, to formally report incidents involving soldiers from Chad to UN headquarters in New York. However, openly pushing to repatriate soldiers from his own country is politically problematic, if not impossible, to the SRSG, who previously served as Chad's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Chad's incentives for contributing troops to MINUSMA do not just derive from an ambition to be a military power in the region. The government is also seeking to export potentially destabilizing elements within its own army to the Malian desert. This has the potential to hamper mission cohesion, as unwanted elements with little experience of UN operations are likely to increase problems of control and command in the mission. Further destabilization of mission cohesion has come with Chadian president Idriss Déby's threats to withdraw troops from MINUSMA. He claims they are overstretched and blames the West for inadequate financial support. Withdrawing the 1200 Chadians from the MINUSMA would make it impossible for the UN to meet its troop ceiling. Indeed, without Chad, Sector North (Kidal) would be non-operational since only Chad is willing to serve in this part of Mali. The poor conditions that Chadian soldiers currently deploy under may even exacerbate abusive behaviour against the civilian population, thus trading long-term stabilization for short-term gains.

MINUSMA AND THE ILLICIT CROSS-BORDER TRADE

In addition to the differences in national political interests, general mistrust between different national units further impedes efficient collaboration between the TCCs within MINUSMA. In particular, this is related to the importance of illicit cross-border trade in Mali. In the Sahel, smuggling a number of low-value goods consumed all over the region has been practiced for centuries in organised social and family networks. However, the multi-directional flows of high-value good like guns, cars, narcotics and people have put pressure on the existing social structures that regulate the trans-Saharan trade. Areas that the French colonizers had otherwise dubbed Mali inutile have rapidly increased their geopolitical value due to the influx of these goods, consequently increasing the political and economic stakes in controlling them.

The smuggling of high-value goods is mainly controlled by transnational criminal networks that are becoming increasingly dangerous and militarized. The economic opportunities that these goods provide have also been a key factor in the competing

political claims and continuous reconfigurations of the armed groups (Strazzari 2015). At the same time, it is widely recognized that Malian state officials have been involved in the illicit drugs trade and have taken shares of the ransoms paid to release European hostages. Thus, the Malian state's intractable complicity has allowed jihadist groups and organized criminal networks to consolidate their authority within its territory. Because organized crime constitutes a root cause of conflict in Mali, the fact that MINUSMA has not been mandated to combat it has been met with significant criticism.

It is well-known that MINUSMA personnel deployed in trafficking hotspots may engage in small-scale illicit activities. However, to what extent they also benefit from illicit trade more broadly is not documented beyond persistent rumours. For instance, in 2016 a civilian advisor in Gao, Mali, explained:

” Burkina knows everything, Niger knows everything. They don't give reports to us. They don't look particularly engaged, but they know everything. Every government has an interest in what is going on in northern Mali – Colombians [drug traders] came in 15 years ago and made the North a free-for all among the armed groups. And everybody is involved; everyone has a finger in the pie. Either you have your troops here to collect money, and ensure that the situation is stable enough to keep business as usual – or you facilitate passage [of illicit trade] as it goes across your border. The information you give is little, but every piece of information you think is important to your government, you will send it home. ”

(quoted in Albrecht et al. 2017)

Though such allegations of direct involvement in illegal smuggling needs further analysis, MINUSMA is also involuntarily contributing to the political economy of the insurgency. Due to the absence of an armored combat convoy battalion, MINUSMA is still depending on private transport companies for logistic operations between sector East in Gao and sector North in Kidal. It is well known that there are close ties between network of local 'transporteurs' and jihadist groups, and that MINUSMA is often in situations where it has to negotiate deals with the local transport companies to avoid attacks on their convoys, which are still frequent (Albrecht et al. 2017).

THE G5 SAHEL JOINT FORCE: A REGIONAL SOLUTION, OR FURTHER FRAGMENTATION?

In light of UN Security Council Resolution 2359 of 21 June 2017, which welcomed the deployment the G5 Sahel Joint Force, regional states' expressions of commitment to fighting terrorism has been perceived as a real opportunity to strengthen regional security (UNSC 2359 on G5 Sahel Joint Force). In February 2017, the G5 Sahel countries, consisting of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, announced that they would deploy a regional force of 5,000 personnel to combat terrorism and drug and human trafficking, with a particular focus on the porous borderlands between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger (the Liptako Gourma region), between Mali and Mauritania, and between Chad and Niger. This announcement was made after the three countries of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso created the so-called G3 Force under the auspices of the regional Liptako Gourma authority, which will now be integrated into the G5 Sahel Joint Force. The regional force will deploy alongside the French anti-terror Operation Barkhane, consisting of 4,000 French soldiers deployed in the five countries, and, MINUSMA, whose mandate, however, is limited to Mali. While France as penholder for the Sahel in the Security Council pushed for the G5 to be authorized under a UN chapter seven mandate, the term 'welcoming' implies that the UN will not provide the force with financial or logistical support. The full authorization of the G5 Sahel Force was heavily resisted by the US and the UK, who wished to cut back expenditure on peacekeeping operations. Without financial and logistic support from the UN, the G5 Sahel Force will have to rely on bilateral and multilateral partners for support. It is currently unclear to what extent the force is going to be fully operational. Each member state has pledged 10 million euros, and the EU has pledged 50 million euros out of an adjusted budget from 423 down to 230 million euros.

While the command and control structure of G5 Sahel force is still under development, the willingness of the Sahel states to deploy their troops has been interpreted as a positive sign of ownership.

The motives behind the creation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force have been widely debated by analysts, with explanations ranging from it being an exit strategy for the French, to an attempt to circumvent the regional power competition between Algeria and Morocco in a new regional security architecture (Manuel, 2017). However, while

the African and European countries' different motives in encouraging the deployment of the G5 Sahel Joint Force require further enquiry, France is likely to try and benefit from having a regional force in the image of Barkhane. While the command and control structure of G5 Sahel force is still under development, the willingness of the Sahel states to deploy their troops has been interpreted as a positive sign of ownership (Cold-Ravnkilde 2017). The G5 Sahel initiative started in 2014, with Mali and its neighbours Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Mauritania grouping together to increase security and development collaboration in the region. However, although the regional state actors often emphasize the development as necessary for security, European countries have pushed the groups towards a more strict focus on security cooperation.

On 13 April 2017, the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) endorsed the concept of operations and authorized the deployment of the G5 Sahel force for an initial period of twelve months, with the possibility of renewal. As such, there is a shared understanding and incentive amongst the neighbouring TCCs that fighting terrorism is a top priority through enhanced border patrols and intelligence cooperation. Strengthening border controls, for instance, has already been a de facto priority for the regional forces working in MINUSMA, to the extent that at times it has undermined MINUSMA's nominal lines of command and control.

The multiple structures that parallel MINUSMA raise the question of to what extent the UN provides an adequate answer to the concerns of the neighbouring states, which are in dire need of measures to prevent terrorist activities. The question also remains to what extent this collaboration will be sustainable without the inclusion of Algeria, which shares a more or less uncontrolled border more than 1370 kilometre long with Mali and which has consequently been against foreign military intervention in Mali until the possibilities of a negotiated solution had been exhausted, a strategy that has been de facto overruled by a French push for military intervention.

CONCLUSION

Given Mali's complex security situation, which is characterized by terrorist armed groups strategically targeting the UN, Mali's armed forces and, to the extent possible, Operation Barkhane, the adequacy of MINUSMA's mandate and its ability to respond to and monitor terror attacks have been in question ever since its initial

deployment in 2013. The stabilization of Mali required an offensive mandate beyond the scope of the traditional UN peacekeeping Chapter VII (in the Charter of the UN) that is based on the principles of obtaining the consent of the parties to a conflict, impartiality and the non-use of force, except in self-defence or in defence of the mandate (UN 2008). Although MINUSMA's mandate has been made more 'proactive and robust' by Security Council Resolution 2295 of June 2016 (UN Security Council, 2016), the neighbouring states especially have been pushing for a more direct anti-terrorist mandate so as to protect themselves from a spill-over from the security threats in Mali. Conversely, the argument of high-level officers in MINUSMA has continually been that the robustness of the mandate is not the problem but the lack of capacity on the part of the troops involved, not least those from the neighbouring countries. Furthermore, there are also perceptions in the UN, and in the New York DPKO in particular, that in general UN peacekeeping is neither configured nor equipped for offensive operations, including CT ones. Officers in MINUSMA, however, tend to regard such perceptions as detached from the reality on the ground.³⁰

In the meantime, the lack of progress with MINUSMA in terms of a much delayed DDR process and a lack of political will to implement the peace agreement while terrorist attacks are increasing is making the G5 states eager to deploy the G5 Sahel Joint Force by the end of 2017. However, a number of challenges remain for an additional military engagement to be meaningful. For instance, MINUSMA still uses most of its resources on force protection and logistical operations, which prevents it from carrying out other crucial tasks in its mandate, like protecting civilians, creating the right conditions for humanitarian assistance and carrying out the much-delayed peace agreement. Furthermore, it is not clear how the same poorly equipped and trained soldiers being funded from different sources are going to become a game changer in the fight against highly adaptable terrorist groups. Finally, strengthening the anti-terror framing of security issues does not address the fact that many of the root causes of instability in the Sahelian countries are fed by the presence of corrupt unaccountable state security forces who have little to offer their populations in terms of protection.



**COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES
AND CONCLUSION**

National and regional interests are a fundamental reality shaping the operational effectiveness, strategic direction and ultimately the parameters for success in the case of both AMISOM and MINUSMA. These interests heavily influence and often distort command and control structures, institutional coherence and coordination, as well as the distribution of logistical resources and decision-making powers. Yet, they are also highly facilitative in both launching and sustaining such missions and are absolutely crucial to their success. Without the strong regional and national interests of neighbouring countries especially, neither of the two missions are likely to have materialized, and they would certainly not have been able to make the progress they have made in recent years. As this report shows, such interests also influence missions across radically different levels, sometimes undermining the execution of specific operations, while at other times leading to the initiation of parallel or competing institutional arrangements or even new missions at much higher political levels.

African leaders are benefitting from European security concerns over terrorism, organized crime and illegal migration to boost their own security apparatuses.

Through their willingness to deploy troops, African leaders are advancing a narrative of security threats that demand stabilization efforts and a joint effort by African and international partners, ultimately aimed at boosting state authority and national security apparatuses. Furthermore, Africa's own peace and security institutions, like the AU and the RECs, are also giving a top priority to leading counter-terrorism efforts. For instance, Africa's regional peace and security mechanisms have adopted a more proactive stance on interventionism through the deployment of stabilization operations aimed at ending armed violence and restoring state authority (De Coning, Gelot and Karlsrud 2015). Mali and Somalia are cases in point in this regard. The African prioritization of military intervention and counter-terrorism capabilities is strongly supported, and at times initiated, by the AU's international partners, such as the EU, which is increasingly aiming to externalize its own border controls to the states in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Hence, in terms of regional state interests in AMISOM and MINUSMA, including in counter-terrorism, African leaders are benefitting from European security concerns over terrorism, organized crime and illegal migration to boost their own security apparatuses.

For neighbouring or regional TCCs involved in both MINUSMA and AMISOM, we see a multiplicity of often conflicting interests coming into play and shaping the missions. In MINUSMA, the immediate threat of the armed jihadist groups operating in Mali and its border regions have led its neighbours to engage militarily in efforts to deter them. The mission was initially deployed to sustain military goals and appeared to be the best organizational framework for doing so. However, due to the limited progress in stabilizing Mali during its four years of deployment, neighbouring TCCs' future involvement will depend on MINUSMA's ability to manage the interests of these countries by, for example, securing their own border regions. Furthermore, despite the gradually increasing robustness of MINUSMA's mandate, neighbouring TCCs remain under the impression that the mission is not well suited to countering transnational terrorism and organized crime in the region.

Thus, given the limited troop capacities, it is likely that these countries will prioritize much more direct counter-terrorism strategies like that embodied in the G5 Sahel Force. As already flagged by Chad's government, which has threatened to withdraw its troops from MINUSMA due to the harsh conditions of their deployment in sector north, further troop contributions to G5 Sahel will depend on additional external financial and logistical support to make these forces operational. While Niger and Chad are also engaged in the fight against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin, increasing the capacity to sustain troop contributions to MINUSMA has become an urgent question. This also points to another issue, namely the risk of creating competing security architectures that may risk fragmentizing an already overstretched mission in Mali.

In AMISOM, the risk of the destabilizing effects of the Somali conflict far outweigh the risks to the deployed personnel and determine the TCCs' involvement, with several of these states likely to have suffered casualties in the thousands. Economic interests likewise influence the mission at different levels, with compensation for troops integrated into AMISOM being an important political pull for all of the TCCs involved, but also with the prospects for personnel enrichment shaping, for example, Kenyan involvement and the likelihood of a Kenyan presence beyond the buffer zone into Kismayo and elsewhere. While Kenya and Ethiopia do not seem greatly focused on reputational effects, legitimizing their presence in Somalia with hard security interests, the presence of Ugandan forces, for example, seems to be premised more on normative and reputational issues, though of course also with its own security interests in mind. It might also be fair to say that the weak institutional form and

operation of AMISOM in fact serves as a pull for several of the involved TCCs, Ethiopia and Kenya in particular being likely more open to integration into AMISOM as long as the command and control structures are weak and they are given room for unilateral engagement and decision-making.

Aside from these general considerations regarding the impact of regional and national interests in the missions, three specific areas of impact run across the two cases: command and control structures, strategic coherence, and institutional structures.

Command and control. For AMISOM, country sectorization means that individual TCCs are seen to be taking care of their individual sectors, often without informing or being instructed by AMISOM headquarters (taking orders from their capitals instead), nor much coordination or communication with the other TCCs. Furthermore, Kenya and Ethiopia both have non-integrated troops inside Somalia on a unilateral basis, in the case of Kenya mainly around its border and buffer zone, while Ethiopia has troops more or less across south-central Somalia. In what appears as a self-perpetuating circle, the weakness of command and control in AMISOM continues to provide further room for unilateral action by the TCCs, again undermining the mission headquarters' ability to provide strategic direction and instruction.

For MINUSMA, without adequate support from either the UN or their home countries, individual TCCs are taking their own measures to secure battalions, without informing MINUSMA's nominal lines of command and control and sometimes in direct opposition to them. Furthermore, Chad's reputation as a 'problem child', with considerable number of allegations of violating UN codes of conduct and discipline, as well as its limited experience of UN missions, is also an expression of limited command and control over troops, who, deployed for the first time in a UN operation, to a large extent feel abandoned on the outskirts of the mission's areas. Compared to AMISOM, MINUSMA still exerts considerable control over its troops, and much effort has been channelled into improving command and control structures. However, countries like Burkina Faso and Niger, whose border regions are under direct attack from terrorist groups, have a stronger incentive to protect and patrol areas in their immediate vicinity before prioritizing longer-term efforts to protect civilians and supporting the political peace process in Mali, despite the latter being of strategic importance for MINUSMA in creating results on the ground.

Strategic (in)coherence. In AMISOM, we see pronounced differences of opinion when it comes to the strategic direction of the mission. This leads to incoherence both in the way Al-Shabaab is being targeted and in the capacity-building of national security and political institutions, including the SNA. There is a vast difference between following a strategy of containment and one of elimination in dealing with the insurgents. Ethiopia in particular is worried about the rebel forces that could eventually take the place of Al-Shabaab in case of the latter's dissolution, particularly concerning the emergence of new contacts or networks in the form of 'global' Islamist groups or stronger relationships with groups in the Ogaden. More concerning, perhaps, are the consequences of a strong Somali federal government and army that could challenge Ethiopian authority and territory.

In Mali, though its ambitious multidimensional integrated stabilization mandate has peace consolidation as a strategic priority, in terms the mission's overall coherence, this objective creates some obstacles. For instance, the Bamako peace agreement of 2015, which sets out the overall strategic framework for MINUSMA's activities, does not include the jihadist groups. Therefore, efforts to engage with them politically or militarily have largely been absent from MINUSMA's mandate except when they pose a direct threat to the mission. As such, a coherent strategic framework for countering threats while supporting the return of the Malian state to the northern territories has been absent. Instead of being able to provide overall support to stabilization in Mali, MINUSMA has come to rely on multiple other military operations to handle terrorism, like Operation Barkhane and the G5 Sahel force, which all have separate concepts of operations and different lines of command and control.

Despite attempts, primarily for political reasons, to maintain a de jure distinction between these operations, from the perspective of the jihadist groups on the ground that are aiming to destroy the Malian state and the international and regional efforts to support it, this line of division does not exist. Thus, before external efforts to engage in Mali pile up militarily and politically, a more coherent framework based on the actual situation on the ground needs to be put in place. A new and more coherent strategy for MINUSMA is needed in order for the UN to make a meaningful contribution in a de facto terrorist environment and to avoid a plethora of institutional security arrangements creating competing parallel structures.

Institutional structures. Although the deployment of the G5 Sahel Joint Force was welcomed by the UNSC on June 25, a number of challenges have emerged for MINUSMA. Whether and how the regional troops of the G5 SJF will be better prepared to meet terrorist threats than those deploying in the MINUSMA force is still not clear. Chad's threat of a possible troop withdrawal could pose a substantial challenge to the already overstretched MINUSMA force. Furthermore, the existing challenges in MINUSMA in terms of logistical support for and training and capacity of the forces will not be addressed by simply re-hatting the troops into a new Force, even though an African force is perhaps less politically sensitive to soldiers losing their lives in the Sahel. While the African Union's Nouakchott process attempted to create a framework for coordinating the many security initiatives in the Sahel, if training and funding of G5 Sahel is channelled directly from the EUTM in Mali and the EUCAP in Mali and Niger, the AU's aspirations to have a coordinating role in the region could be undermined. Still, the possibility of Algeria possibly playing role in joint patrols in northern Mali is being discussed. Yet, attempts to create a common framework that also include both Algeria and Morocco, despite long-term power competition between the two, might be an over-optimistic but still necessary path to creating long-term security cooperation in the Sahel.

As a potential partner of the missions, national and regional interests present a layer of great complexity in decisions of whether to support and how to do so.

There are fundamental differences between the two missions explored in this policy report concerning their respective mandates, institutional structures, resources and levels of international support. Regardless of these dissimilarities, however, as a potential partner of the missions, national and regional interests present a layer of great complexity in decisions of whether to support and how to do so. Given its almost non-existent interest in boots on the ground, a country like Denmark needs to explore other avenues for influence and contribution. Training is repeatedly mentioned as a way to build up the capacity of regional troops, particularly the regional training hubs such as the EUTM in Mali and the EUCAP missions in Mali and Niger. But the provision of training also presents a classical dilemma for engagement, namely how external partners should not take over the training of local forces and thus potentially block improvements in the capacities of these countries themselves.

For most Western partners, direct military engagement is an unviable option not to be recommended. Functioning as a partner essentially becomes a matter of providing support where possible, trying to understand the national and regional interests at play and building on areas where these appear productive. In the case of these two specific missions, this means using one's political leverage to push for sustained funding, whether for salaries, resources or other forms of support, from both the EU and the UN. This implies engagement and political support not only for the missions in relevant country representations, but also at home by furthering understanding of the need to support African countries in their efforts to achieve peace in the continent.

NOTES

- 1 The organization of sectors was modified with the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 2124, when the number of sectors was expanded to five, centred on Mogadishu (Sector 1, Uganda), Dohhey (Sector 2, Kenya and Ethiopia), Baidoa (Sector 3, Ethiopia), Belet Weyne (Sector 4, Djibouti) and Jowhar (Sector 5, Burundi).
- 2 Sierra Leone's contribution to AMISOM ended after the Ebola breakout at home in early 2014. Its troops left quietly in early 2015 (Albrecht and Haenlein 2015: 31).
- 3 Specifically this relates to the political mission, UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), and the UN Support Office for AMISOM, UNSOA. UNSOA was established in 2009 with bases in Mombasa and Mogadishu. It was tasked with providing logistical support to AMISOM, in effect replicating the Integrated Support Services usually found in UN peacekeeping missions. The big difference, however, was the need to merge the different authority structures of the UN and the AU and to overcome bureaucratic differences between the two organizations.
- 4 See note 3.
- 5 AMISOM briefing in the AU, April 2017.
- 6 Interview with European Defence Attaché, Addis Ababa, April 2017.
- 7 AMISOM briefing in the AU, April 2017.
- 8 Interview with Defence Attaché, Addis Ababa, April 2017.
- 9 Interview with Defence Attaché, Addis Ababa, April 2017.
- 10 Interview with Bilateral partner, Addis Ababa, April 2017.
- 11 Interview with EU official, Addis Ababa, April 2017.
- 12 Interview with Defence Attaché, Addis Ababa, April 2017.
- 13 Interview with IGAD official, Addis Ababa, April 2017.
- 14 Interview with former Ethiopian military official, Addis Ababa, 2017.
- 15 Interview with former Ethiopian military official, Addis Ababa, 2017.
- 16 Interview with IGAD official, Addis Ababa, April 2017.
- 17 Interview with Defence Attaché, Addis Ababa, April 2017.
- 18 Interview with former Ethiopian military official, Addis Ababa, 2017.
- 19 Interview with Bilateral partner, Addis Ababa, April 2017.
- 20 Interview with IGAD official, Addis Ababa, April 2017.
- 21 Interview with IGAD official, Addis Ababa, April 2017.
- 22 Interview with Defence Attaché, Addis Ababa, April 2017.
- 23 Authors' interview, MINUSMA staff, June 2016
- 24 Author's interview, Bamako, September 2017
- 25 Mauritania also wanted to deploy 1800 soldiers with MINUSMA on its border, but this was refused by the Malian government. Previously in 2010 relations between Mauritania and Mali had become tense when, without the consent of the Malian government, French and Mauritanian forces launched a joint military operation against AQIM fighters, who they believed were holding a French hostage on Malian soil (Al Jazeera, 2010).
- 26 Authors' interviews, MINUSMA officer, June 2016
- 27 Author's interview, Bamako, September 2017
- 28 Author's interview, Bamako, September 2017
- 29 Author's interview with AU official, June 2017
- 30 Authors' interview, MINUSMA, Bamako June 2016

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