



# AU-EU RELATIONS ON PEACE AND SECURITY

## ABSTRACT

Peace and security (P&S) is a key component of the relations between the African Union and the European Union, and is likely to continue to play a central role in the future. Yet, some significant changes are possible in the role played by the African Union due to the launch of the European Peace Fund. Against this backdrop, this paper aims to analyse the “state of the art” of AU–EU relations on peace and security and to consider its main trajectories. In this framework, it analyses some key lessons learned from AU–EU cooperation on peace and security from the last seventeen years. It then considers the main structural asymmetries and drivers between the two continents. The assumption is that asymmetries continue to play an indirect but relevant role, even if they are rarely addressed systematically or only specifically. Furthermore, the paper analyses the European Peace Facility and the current trajectory in AU–EU relations on P&S. Finally, a set of policy recommendations are provided to the AU and EU.



## AUTHOR

**BERNARDO VENTURI**  
Director and Co-Founder of the  
Agency for Peacebuilding (AP), IAI  
Research Associate

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### THE FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN PROGRESSIVE STUDIES (FEPS)

European Political Foundation - N° 4 BE 896.230.213  
Avenue des Arts 46 1000 Brussels (Belgium)

[www.feps-europe.eu](http://www.feps-europe.eu)

@FEPS\_Europe



### FONDATION JEAN JAURÈS

12 Cité Malesherbes, 75009 Paris

+33 (0)140232400

[www.jean-jaures.org/](http://www.jean-jaures.org/)

@j\_jaures

### IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



### ISTITUTO AFFARI INTERNAZIONALI

Via dei Montecatini, 17, 00186 Roma

+39 066976831

[www.iai.it/en](http://www.iai.it/en)

@IAIonline

## 1. State of the art: Trends and practices in AU–EU peace and security relations

Peace and security (P&S) is a key component of the relations between the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU). The EU is the AU's second most important financial partner on peace and security after the United Nations (UN). Compared with other topics, such as migration or even trade, overall objectives on peace and security largely converge on joint interests and priorities.<sup>1</sup> Addis Ababa and Brussels can both benefit from a common approach to address armed conflicts and violent extremism. Yet, the modus operandi, mutual perceptions and the EU's new financial architecture could increase divergencies in the coming years.

In the past, relations between the two continents were mainly based on the economic and development dimension, but issues of peace and security have progressively grown in importance since the early-/mid-1990s.<sup>2</sup> P&S gained relevance in the framework of the Joint Africa–EU Strategy (JAES) adopted at the Lisbon Summit in December 2007. The JAES was designed to address issues of common concern,<sup>3</sup> and to “jointly promote and sustain a system of effective multilateralism” – mentioning, in particular, “the reform of the United Nations (UN) system and of other key international institutions”.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Volker Hauck and Lidet Tadesse Shiferaw, “Continuity and Change in European Union-Africa Relations on Peace and Security,” *ACCORD Analysis*, March 24, 2021, <https://www.accord.org.za/?p=32199>.

<sup>2</sup> Fernanda Faria, “Crisis Management in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Role of the European Union,” *EUISS Occasional Papers*, no. 51 (2004), <https://www.iss.europa.eu/node/68>.

<sup>3</sup> Including “peace, security, democratic governance and human rights, fundamental freedoms, gender equality, sustainable economic development, including industrialisation, and regional and continental integration in Africa”, as detailed in: EU–Africa Summit, *The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership. A Joint Africa-EU Strategy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> EU–

From the EU's perspective, since 2016 and the introduction of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS),<sup>5</sup> Brussels has tried to integrate its external projection through two approaches – firstly, by enhancing the integrated approach, including more spheres of intervention and improving field coordination and policy consistency; secondly, by applying the “principled-pragmatism” approach whereby European interests and values coexist with one another. The EUGS states that the union “will invest in African peace and development as an investment in [its] own security and prosperity”.<sup>6</sup>

From the AU's perspective, the partnership on peace and security with Brussels is paramount. However, there is a perception that EU's approaches are increasingly more influenced by domestic needs and perceived threats related to extremism and irregular migration.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, many African leaders and institutions want to diversify their partners – from China to Russia or Turkey – even though those partners still have limited engagement on P&S.

While the next AU–EU Summit will not now be held until February 2022, some signals can be deduced from the communication “Towards a

Africa Summit, Lisbon, December 8-9, 2007, point 8(ii), [http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/sites/default/files/documents/eas2007\\_joint\\_strategy\\_en.pdf](http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/sites/default/files/documents/eas2007_joint_strategy_en.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, point 8(iii).

<sup>5</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, <https://europa.eu/!Tr66qx>.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> Alfonso Medinilla and Chloe Teevan, “Beyond Good Intentions: The New EU-Africa Partnership,” *ECDPM Discussion Papers*, no. 267 (March 2020), <https://ecdpm.org/?p=38799>.

comprehensive Strategy with Africa” released by the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) in March 2020.<sup>8</sup> Section four of the document is dedicated to peace, security, governance and resilience. The EU indicates that priority should be given to strategic cooperation on the main crisis areas while maintaining an integrated approach to the entire cycle of conflicts (Action no. 6). Cooperation should also focus on improving governance (Action 7) as a precondition for security and development, and on actions to increase the resilience of African countries (Action 8). Beyond two general political messages on coordination (“EU instruments and African capacities should be further aligned”) and finances (“despite progress on the AU Peace Fund, the financing of African-led peace support initiatives, including through UN-assessed contributions, remains to be addressed”),<sup>9</sup> the impression is that this document – overall, rather focused on European needs and with little attention paid to reciprocity – will not receive much attention in the future. This means that the next AU–EU Summit will ground its work on

## 2. Lessons Learned

Since 2004, the EU has provided funding to the AU, to African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and to other coalitions through the African Peace Facility (APF). The APF represents one of the pillars underpinning the AU–EU relationship; its goal is threefold: enhanced dialogue, operationalising the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and underpinning peace-support operations in Africa. The APSA was established by the AU as a structural and

<sup>8</sup> European Commission and EEAS, *Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa* (JOIN/2020/4), March 9, 2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52020JC0004>.

other documents and issues, as presented in the last section of this paper. However, officers of the EEAS have defined it as “comprehensive” and “still the base of our thinking”.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, they “miss a clear and similar response from the African counterpart in order to define new joint priorities for the future”.<sup>11</sup>

Against this backdrop, this paper aims to analyse the state of the art of AU–EU relations on P&S and to consider its main trajectories. In this framework, the following section will analyse some key lessons learned from AU–EU cooperation on P&S from the last seventeen years. A subsequent section is dedicated to the main structural asymmetries and drivers between the two continents. The assumption is that asymmetries continue to play an indirect but relevant role, even if they are rarely addressed systematically or only specifically. The paper then analyses the European Peace Facility and the trajectory in AU–EU relations on P&S. Finally, a set of policy recommendations is provided to the AU and EU.

long-term response to African P&S challenges, and its operationalisation has always been one of the priority actions for the Africa–EU peace and security partnership, as discussed below. Against this backdrop, what are the lessons learned from AU–EU cooperation within this framework?

Overall, P&S has been a key priority area for cooperation between the two continents.

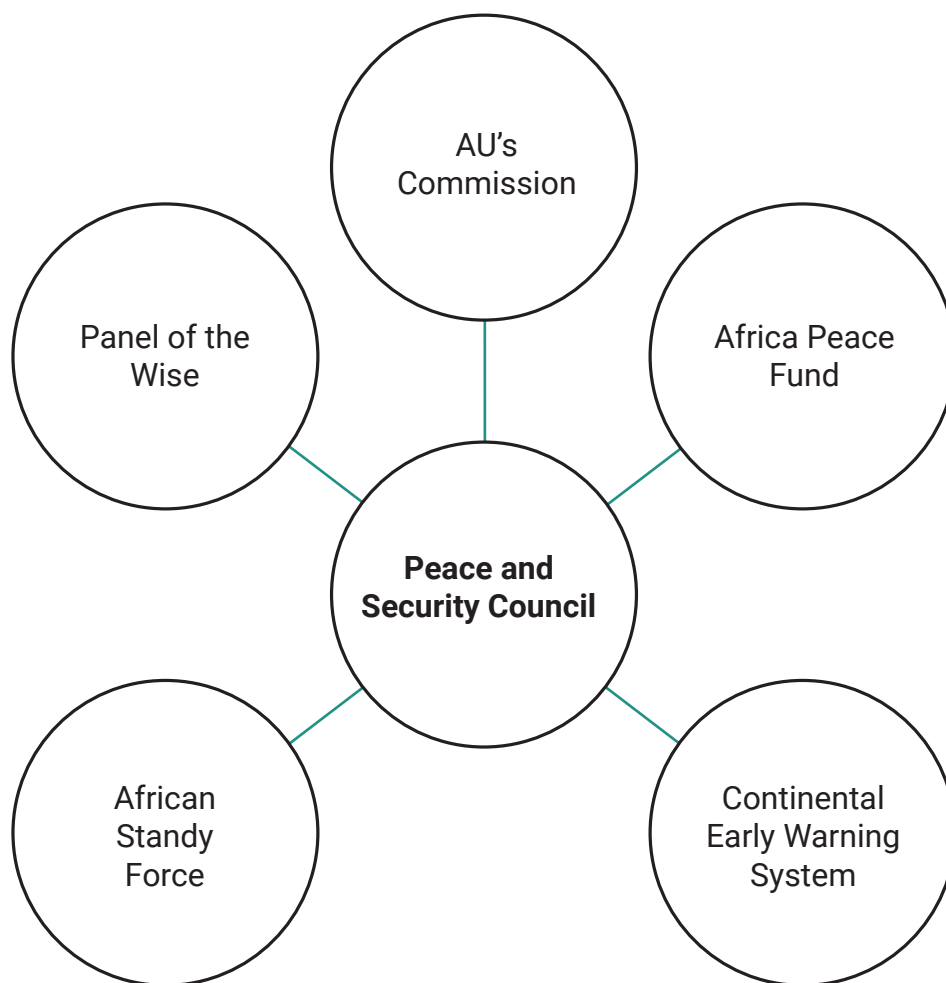
<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> IAI interview, EEAS (1), September 2021.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

Between 2004 and 2019, the EU provided approximately €2.9 billion in financial assistance to the APSA – channelled through the APF. The APF, financed from the extra-budgetary European Development Fund (EDF),<sup>12</sup> has contributed significantly to enhancing dialogue and cooperation between the EU and the AU. The facility was aimed at backing African

institutions to progress in providing “African solutions to African problems” by supporting the AU, the RECs and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) in carrying out P&S operations. For instance, this fund enables the AU to carry out Peace Support Operations (PSOs) decided on by the Peace and Security Council together with interventions authorised by the AU’s Assembly.



**Figure 1 - Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).**

<sup>12</sup> The EDF is the main instrument for providing aid for development cooperation to the African, Caribbean and Pacific states and to overseas countries and territories. EDF programmes are not funded by the EU budget but were initially established by an Internal Agreement of

the Representatives of the Member States. From 2021, EDF programmes are included in the EU’s Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and thus are subject to EU financial regulations in the same way as other EU funding programmes.



The APF has also been a contested financial tool due to its roots in European development cooperation, the ultimate goal of which is to reduce extreme poverty. The EU has supported African states and regional organisations for many years through a range of civilian P&S activities, with the objective of strengthening the linkages between security and development.<sup>13</sup> In fact, EU–Africa security relations have been dominated by the “security–development nexus” mantra.<sup>14</sup> All the current main EU documents on migration also refer to development- and security-related issues.<sup>15</sup> In the 2014–17 Roadmap, for instance, peace and security comprise the first priority out of the five listed, while “human development” and “sustainable and inclusive development [together with] growth and continental integration” occupy two other slots.<sup>16</sup>

The security–development nexus is consolidated but at the same time controversial – especially for non-governmental development actors. For some stakeholders, purely security-related actions belong to the sphere of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Other decision-makers are in favour of a strong component of security in developing countries, embedded in development. The difference between “security-relevant” and “security target”

is paramount in this regard. Security-relevant development activities are usually implemented in a conflict-affected area, where security arrangements and a conflict-sensitive approach are necessary (working in conflict). Security target refers to scenarios in which P&S is the direct target of the activity (working on conflict). Clearly, many development measures are security-relevant, from education to governance, but this does not mean that the work is directly intended to influence security dynamics. While all parties agree on the need to connect the two areas, a clear distinction between their respective mandates and financial instruments is paramount.

Another lesson could be learned from the weight of the three components of the APF: African Peace Support Operations (PSOs), the operationalisation of the APSA and initiatives under the Early Response Mechanism (ERM).<sup>17</sup> The bulk of APF funding (approximately 93 percent) is allocated to PSOs, around 6 percent is spent on capacity building and approximately 1 percent goes to the Conflict Early Response Mechanism. These latter two components are, therefore, rather weak and deserve more resources in the future.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Hauck and Tadesse Shiferaw, “Continuity and Change in European Union-Africa Relations.”

<sup>14</sup> Ueli Staeger and Tshepo T. Gwatiwa, “Peace and Security in the Context of EU-Africa Relations,” in *The Routledge Handbook of EU-Africa Relations*, ed. Toni Haastrup, Luís Mah and Niall Duggan (London/New York: Routledge, 2021), 175-187.

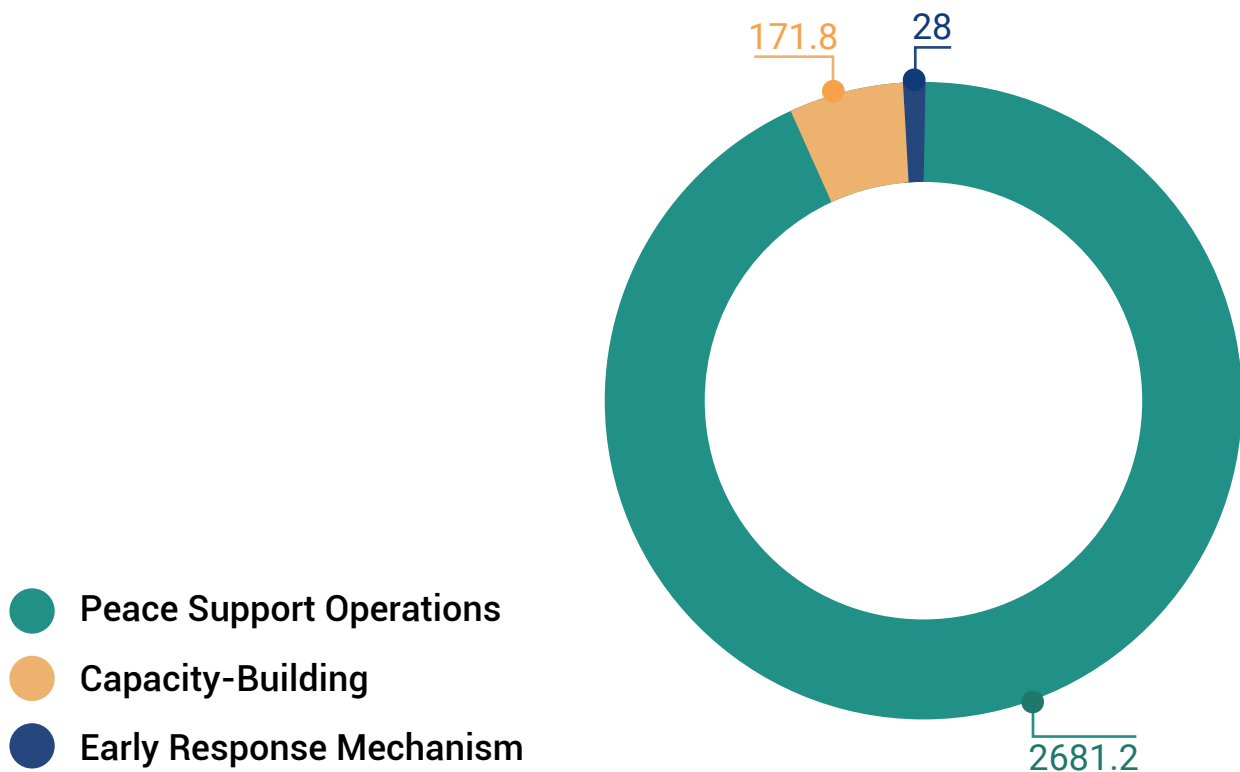
<sup>15</sup> For instance, see the documents of the European Commission: *A European Agenda on Migration* (COM/2015/240), May 13, 2015, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52015DC0240>; *The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility* (COM/2011/743), November 18, 2011, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52011DC0743>.

<sup>16</sup> The 2014–17 Roadmap is the main outcome of the

2014 fourth EU–Africa Summit. See African Union and European Union, *Roadmap 2014-2017*, 4th EU–Africa Summit, Brussels, April 3-4, 2014, point 6, <http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/en/node/7911>.

<sup>17</sup> The ERM is a quick-reaction funding mechanism providing the AU, RECs and RMs with immediately available funds to prevent and manage violent conflict. The EU is committed to approve or reject requests for ERM support received from African partners within just 10 working days.

<sup>18</sup> More information is available on the website of the Africa–EU Partnership: <https://africa-eu-partnership.org/en/financial-support-partnership-programme/african-peace-facility>.



**Figure 2 - APF contracted amounts per type of activity, 2004–2019 (in million euro).**

Source: European Commission, African Peace Facility. Annual Report 2019 (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020), 10, <https://op.europa.eu/s/s5Vg>.

The EU also conducts nine Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions in Africa (out of a total of eighteen) – three of them in the Sahel and three in Somalia.<sup>19</sup> The COVID-19 crisis has reduced personnel on the ground and the number of actions, but the missions have continued to be operational. Furthermore, in July 2021 the European Council adopted

a decision to set up an EU military-training mission in Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique),<sup>20</sup> also with strong input from the Portuguese EU Presidency. Many lessons could be learned from CSDP deployment in Africa. A key issue that could be paramount for future cooperation between the two continents is to establish stronger connections between the technical

<sup>19</sup> The current missions are: EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) in Libya; EUCAP Somalia, assisting that country in developing self-sustaining capacity for the enhancement of maritime security; EUCAP Sahel Mali and EUCAP Sahel Niger, supporting the internal security forces in those countries; EUNAVFOR Atalanta, countering piracy off the coast of Somalia; EUTM Mali, a training mission for the Malian armed forces; EUTM RCA in the Central African Republic, to contribute to the country's defence-sector

reform; and EUTM Somalia, a military training mission in Somalia; and EUTM Mozambique.

<sup>20</sup> The aim of the mission is to train and support the Mozambican armed forces in protecting the civilian population and restoring safety and security in Cabo Delgado Province. Council of the EU, "Mozambique: EU Sets Up a Military Training Mission to Help Address the Crisis in Cabo Delgado," *Press Releases*, July 12, 2021, <https://europa.eu/!VJ4fuw>.

work of the mission and the broader political vision. Governance, for instance, is mentioned relatively often in CSDP policy documents but receives limited consideration in all its components. This recognition of the importance of governance reform to peace and stabilisation is still in its early stages. For example, EUCAP Sahel Mali has supported the government's security-sector reform (SSR) – despite the fact that Mali has yet to undertake comprehensive SSR<sup>21</sup> – by offering training to the country's judicial police and in intelligence gathering and counterterrorism.<sup>22</sup>

Another dimension that deserves to be mentioned here is the fact that policy dialogue on security and other issues has been jeopardised by insufficient communication and coordination at all levels – technical, senior official and political. As a consequence, its impact is still very limited.<sup>23</sup> For instance, this is the case for the annual joint meetings between the EU's Political and Security Committee and the AU's Peace and Security Council, which have been organised every year (alternatively in Brussels and Addis Ababa, but virtually in the last couple of years) since October 2008. These meetings have focused on P&S issues of common concern – especially EU support for AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs), as during the last one: the 12th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting in October 2020.<sup>24</sup> In practice, they

have functioned well as consultative forums mainly to discuss the ongoing conflict and crisis situations in Africa, as well as the EU's support for the AU on P&S matters.

Finally, the EU Council has adopted regional strategies for the Horn of Africa, the Gulf of Guinea and the Sahel; and the EU has a bilateral trade pact with South Africa. The tendency of these frameworks has been to give considerable attention to the EU's security concerns despite many references to an integrated approach. This is quite evident in the Sahel, where the EU supports two key regional initiatives: the G5 Sahel itself and the Alliance for the Sahel. The support for the G5 Sahel remains predominantly in the fields of security and defence. Established in February 2014 and originally presented as a vehicle for strengthening the bond between economic development and security, the G5 soon became heavily focused on security concerns. All these lessons are also tied to structural asymmetries and drivers that are still heavily present – but often neglected – in the AU–EU Partnership.

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<sup>21</sup> Bernardo Venturi, "An EU Integrated Approach in the Sahel: The Role for Governance," *IAI Papers*, no. 19|03 (2019), <https://www.iai.it/en/node/9957>.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Lebovich, "Halting Ambition: EU Migration and Security Policy in the Sahel," *ECFR Policy Briefs*, September 25, 2018, <https://ecfr.eu/?p=4211>.

<sup>23</sup> There are a number of technical difficulties, such as the issue of changing interlocutors – the membership of the AU's Peace and Security Council is rotating, whereas all EU member states are always part of the EU's Political and Security Committee – as well as the different approaches

of the respective presidencies. Some commentators also point out that the agendas of these meetings are too long and very ambitious, and, as a consequence, meetings are rushed as they only last a day. Consequently, there can be no in-depth discussion or common analysis – a situation exacerbated by political sensitivities on certain issues.

<sup>24</sup> Council of the EU, "EU-African Union Relations: Joint Communiqué of the AU Peace and Security Council and the EU Political and Security Committee," *Press Releases*, October 26, 2020, <https://europa.eu/!kY77Td>.



### 3. The main structural asymmetries

Despite the narrative on “Africa rising” and a “partnership among equals”, EU–Africa relations remain asymmetrical and the EU and its member states continue to impose forms and formats of relations on its African peers. These asymmetries play a central role in P&S.

African partners’ dependency on foreign funds has been considered one of the key factors jeopardising the continent’s aspirations to provide “African solutions to African problems”.<sup>25</sup> The AU’s institutions have shown a limited capacity for absorbing external funding, which is also connected with the proliferation of funding sources and reporting rules. On average, the AU collects 67 percent of assessed contribution annually from its member states. However, each year on average around 30 member states default either partially or completely. As recognised by the AU, this creates a significant gap between planned budget and actual funding, which hinders the effective delivery of its agenda.<sup>26</sup> This financial asymmetry clearly plays a heavy role in P&S – all the more so because of the AU’s struggle to find significant co-funds to match EU resources. Addis Ababa has been progressively gathering African resources for the AU Peace Fund,<sup>27</sup> and is trying to mobilise UN-assessed contributions

for AU operations, but this has thus far been hindered by the United States.<sup>28</sup>

Tied to financial limitation, another asymmetry is represented by the AU’s limitations in sufficiently bargaining for its preferences. For instance, in 2011 the Africans unsuccessfully lobbied for an African solution in Libya but met resistance from the EU delegation to the AU and Brussels. This was perceived by many AU diplomats and policy-makers as an affront to their agency in Africa. A similar situation of bypassing the AU and even the RECs can become more frequent with the new European Peace Facility (EPF), as presented in the next section.

Furthermore, the tendency on the part of the EU in recent years to securitise and externalise the migration agenda has further reinforced the African perception of a one-way dialogue – ultimately aimed at imposing the EU’s agenda on its counterpart. Since the Valletta Summit (11–12 November 2015),<sup>29</sup> dominated by the EU’s migration agenda with its strong focus on security aspects, migration has become not just a priority<sup>30</sup> but also something of an obsession for the EU.<sup>31</sup> This asymmetrical relationship can also be detected in the EU’s intention to modernise African security, and

<sup>25</sup> Nicoletta Pirozzi, Nicolò Sartori and Bernardo Venturi, *The Joint Africa–EU Strategy* (Brussels: European Parliament, 2017), <https://op.europa.eu/s/s5VS>.

<sup>26</sup> African Union website: *Why Introduce a Levy?*, <https://au.int/web/en/introduce-levy>.

<sup>27</sup> The Peace Fund – established by the AU’s Assembly in July 2016 – is an integral part of the African Peace and Security Architecture, established to provide the necessary resources for peace-support missions and other operational activities related to P&S. The resources of the Peace Fund are to be made up of financial appropriations from the regular budget, voluntary contributions from member states and other sources.

<sup>28</sup> Medinilla and Teevan, “Beyond Good Intentions.”

<sup>29</sup> The Valletta Summit produced a political declaration and an action plan, including the establishment of an Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa, made up of €1.8 billion from the EU budget and European Development Fund, combined with contributions from EU member states and other donors. See Africa–EU Partnership, *2015 Valletta Summit on Migration*, November 18, 2015, <http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/en/node/8325>.

<sup>30</sup> The framework document for the EU is: European Commission, *A European Agenda on Migration*.

is encapsulated in the notion of a security–development nexus as defined by the EU Global Strategy and operationalised through the African Peace Facility Instrument.<sup>32</sup> The EU has failed to incorporate context and local needs into the development of its African security agenda, pursuing unrealistic long-term goals. If it wants to remain a relevant partner in African security matters, it has to find a new balance in its agenda-setting and create space for “African agency” within its security system.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, asymmetries in accountability and structure have a significant impact on P&S.<sup>34</sup> In terms of accountability, for instance, while the AU has offered the EU a seat on the Board of the AU-managed African Peace Fund, together with the UN the AU has no comparable institutional

mechanism to signal its concerns.<sup>35</sup> This structural asymmetry could therefore affect the broader partnership including in the area of peace and security. The EU also laments the fact that the AU misses a specific strategy because Agenda 2063 and the document “Silencing the Guns” are “good documents, but too generic”.<sup>36</sup>

Overall, these asymmetries are likely to persist in the next few years. Moving forward with an abstract rhetoric of equal partnership, the EU risks underestimating this risk. Instead, making them explicit could help to overcome some of these difficulties. This approach could be decisive for the European Peace Facility, especially in terms of African agency, as elaborated in the next section.

#### 4. The way forward: the European Peace Facility and other trends

P&S will remain “one of the strongest drivers of institutional cooperation and an area carrying a great potential”<sup>37</sup> to achieve common objectives and deliverables.<sup>38</sup> Yet, how can AU–EU cooperation promote a joint and sustainable approach to peace and security over the coming years?

Certainly, the framework of the EU’s Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021–27 – the “ceiling” and budgetary system that determines

economic commitments for each policy area – will impact on the EU’s cooperation with Africa. In terms of development funding, the resources allocated through the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) will be similar to the previous MFF (over €70 billion for seven years). Approximately €900 million of the NDICI is dedicated to “global stability and peace” and €2.8 billion is specifically for “rapid response actions’, to respond to crises world-wide”.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Mahamadou Danda, “The Security–Migration–Development Nexus in the Sahel: A View from Niger,” in *The Security-Migration-Development Nexus Revised: A Perspective from the Sahel*, ed. Bernardo Venturi (Brussels and Rome: Foundation for European Progressive Studies and Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2017): 52, <https://www.iaj.it/en/node/8764>.

<sup>32</sup> Bernardo Venturi, “The EU and the Sahel: A Laboratory of Experimentation for the Security–Migration–Development Nexus,” in *The Security-Migration-Development Nexus Revised: A Perspective from the Sahel*, ed. Bernardo

Venturi (Brussels and Rome: Foundation for European Progressive Studies and Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2017): 111, <https://www.iaj.it/en/node/8764>.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Jacopo Resti, “AU-EU Institutional Relations: Towards a New Era?,” *FEPS Policy Briefs*, 2021 (forthcoming).

<sup>35</sup> Hauck and Tadesse Shiferaw, “Continuity and Change in European Union-Africa Relations.”

<sup>36</sup> IAI interview, EEAS (1), September 2021.

<sup>37</sup> IAI interviews with EU and AU officials, August 2021.

<sup>38</sup> Resti, “AU-EU Institutional Relations”.

Clearly, this programme has a global perspective, but a significant part of it will be devoted to the African continent. The instrument also contains provisions to fund “civilian peace and security-related reforms and initiatives” in Africa, mostly under bilateral and regional cooperation agreements.

Brussels’ ambition in foreign policy has pushed for more flexibility in its financial instruments due to constraints, mainly technical (such as financial flows), with the African Union. This aspiration has already emerged during previous financial supports, such as AMISOM, the G5 Sahel Joint Force and Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad Basin.<sup>40</sup> Brussels and the EEAS in particular have been eager to reach two objectives: firstly, to build a partnership on P&S with ad hoc groups without limitation to AU-recognised Regional Economic Communities and sub-regional organisations; secondly, to enter into direct military assistance with individual African governments.

Against this backdrop, the most significant novelty is the launch of the European Peace Facility (EPF), an extra-budgetary fund that can finance security means. This development will impact on the way in which the EU engages on P&S in Africa. In financial terms, Brussels will not have a specific financial tool for Africa. The new EPF budget (€5 billion) can be used beyond Africa, and this could create a degree of uncertainty. Continuity in financial support towards Africa is expected,<sup>41</sup> but it could affect

the relations and leverages between the two continents.

The first change anticipated is that the EPF, as extra-budgetary, can finance security means – including lethal arms. This turn could have various effects, and the way in which it will be implemented remains crucial. The EU’s foreign-policy chief, Josep Borrell, hinted at the idea that if the EU wants to play a global role it should use hard power (like military force) in addition to soft power.<sup>42</sup> Yet, analysts suggest that providing security-sector assistance in fragile contexts often does not contribute to stability in the long term. For instance, a country like Mali could potentially be eligible for these funds (it has already received training, vehicles and equipment), but the two coups d’état in August 2020 and May 2021 clearly showed its instability and possible misuse of such sensitive resources.

Notably, the existing legal framework has thus far limited the use of EU budgetary resources to financial assistance to the armed forces of partner countries. The Capacity Building in Support of Security and Development (CBSD) policy has tried to address this funding gap and enable the financing of training, equipment and infrastructure to military actors. CBSD has been criticised by various organisations because they regard it as contributing to the securitisation of EU development policy.<sup>43</sup> In fact, the use of the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) for funding CBSD activities sets a

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<sup>39</sup> Hauck and Tadesse Shiferaw, “Continuity and Change in European Union-Africa Relations.”

<sup>40</sup> International Crisis Group, “How to Spend It: New EU Funding for African Peace and Security,” *Africa Reports*, no. 297 (January 14, 2021), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/node/15989>.

<sup>41</sup> IAI interview, European Commission, September 2021.

<sup>42</sup> See for instance: “EU Pushes for More Defence Autonomy

amid Afghanistan Fallout,” *Al Jazeera*, September 2, 2021, <https://aje.io/jmte89>.

<sup>43</sup> Julian Bergmann, “Capacity Building in Support of Security and Development (CBSD): Securitising EU Development Policy?” *DIE Briefing Papers*, no. 24 (2017), <https://www.die-gdi.de/en/briefing-paper/article/capacity-building-in-support-of-security-and-development-cbsd-securitising-eu-development-policy>.

precedent for using development instruments within the EU's budget for financing direct assistance to military actors.<sup>44</sup>

As the EU does not only work with partner countries who are “champions of democracy”, in contexts in which the legitimacy of security actors is questioned (like Chad or the Central African Republic) there is a risk that the Union finds itself as an (indirect) actor in the national politics of third countries. Furthermore, examples from the Sahel show how a significant part of the armed vehicles shipped by the EU to the G5 Sahel countries has, within a few short months, fallen into the hands of irregular groups.<sup>45</sup> Things like this can negatively affect the EU's global role and reputation.

This is one reason why a focus on broader human security is key for the new EPF. A focus on state security might achieve stability from the EU's perspective but might also have a negative impact locally. For instance, it could lead to less democratic space for local populations or could empower some political actors over others. Human security should also be combined with significant consultation and work with local populations and civil-society organisations.

Another effect of the EPF is that the EU can operate on peace and security in Africa without

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<sup>44</sup> Julian Bergmann and Mark Furness, “EU Financing for Peace and Security Post 2020 – Towards a European Peace Facility (EPF)?” ETTG Blog, March 6, 2018, <https://wp.me/p9qfAP-9F>.

<sup>45</sup> Twitter post by @ocisse691, April 18, 2020, <https://twitter.com/ocisse691/status/1251500836636839936>.

<sup>46</sup> The reinforcement of the partnership's regional dimension was accomplished through the so-called Akosombo process – named after the inaugural meeting's location in Ghana – which, since November 2010, has brought together the EU and AU RECs/RMs on peace and security issues at the level of senior officials and chief executives. The Akosombo process has partially improved

the approval of the AU or RECs.<sup>46</sup> This turn could destabilise the partnership and the AU's role in coordinating P&S measures on the continent.<sup>47</sup> According to various EEAS officers, Brussels will maintain established cooperation principles with the AU – yet, this attitude could change in the next few years if divergences or practical difficulties (e.g. on the administrative and financial issue) were to emerge. This political trajectory is not foreseen by EEAS staff working on these issues,<sup>48</sup> and confirmation of this comes from the fact that the first round of EPF programming is in agreement with the AU. However, the same sources have not excluded the possibility that the EU might play a stronger role on P&S in Africa at the bilateral level.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, from Addis Ababa's perspective, funding for its P&S priorities could become more unpredictable in the long term. Also, for this reason, Addis Ababa would like to convey the EPF's support for the AU through its Peace Fund.<sup>50</sup> Yet, this position appears far from Brussels' intention with the EPF.

Moreover, the EPF could undermine conflict prevention, dialogue, negotiation and mediation efforts on the continent.<sup>51</sup> Notably, these civilian instruments have been supported by the AU while African governments often push for more military cooperation, and some member states

working relations among the partners, especially in terms of programme-support coherence.

<sup>47</sup> Hauck and Tadesse Shiferaw, “Continuity and Change in European Union-Africa Relations.”

<sup>48</sup> IAI interview, EEAS (1) and EEAS (2), September 2021.

<sup>49</sup> IAI interview, EEAS (2), September 2021.

<sup>50</sup> IAI interview, AU's diplomat, July 2021.

<sup>51</sup> Meressa Kahsu Dessu and Dawit Yohannes, “EU-Africa Relations: Refocusing the Peace and Security Cooperation,” *PeaceLab*, June 15, 2021, <https://peacelab.blog/2021/06/eu-africa-relations-refocusing-the-peace-and-security-cooperation>.



also directly benefit from existing direct-funding arrangements from the EU.<sup>52</sup> With the new EPF instruments on the one hand to finance military cooperation and the possibility of bypassing the AU on the other, the risk could arise of the African continental organisation being progressively sidelined.

This outcome would also be due to the EU's political development in the global landscape. Surprisingly enough, the AU–EU new course is likely to be influenced by the changes occurring after the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. While geographically distant, the West's withdrawal from and NATO's long-term failure in Afghanistan has accelerated the EU's elaboration of the "strategic autonomy" concept. This does not mean that the EU will act alone – multilateralism and partnership will continue to guide its actions – but it means that many internal and external EU stakeholders will push harder for a military capacity. This could be followed by a stronger role of the European Council and member states in foreign policy, and in AU–EU relations.

Some signals already indicate this direction. For instance, discussions underway in Brussels show the relevance of some regional Team Europe Initiatives<sup>53</sup> that relate to Africa (approximately 41 percent of the overall number),<sup>54</sup> with some EU member states leading in those.<sup>55</sup> Charles Michel, the President of the European Council, travelled to Angola and Rwanda in March 2021 and has displayed specific attention towards Africa. In an interview published in September

related to his strategy, he stressed,

I am very convinced, for example, that one of the key issues is our relationship with Africa. On this issue, the European Union has an enormous capacity for action and many tools, but we sometimes lack coordination and consistency in the manner in which we deploy our resources. We have a trade policy, a visa policy, a development policy, technical expertise... These are all tools at our disposal, of course, but perhaps we lack a unified command of their deployment.<sup>56</sup>

This attitude seems a call for a stronger role of the European Council on Africa, but the EEAS staff interviewed do not foresee this trend.<sup>57</sup>

In conclusion, the EU will continue to dedicate close attention and financial resources to its partnership with Africa on P&S. Yet, the launch of the EPF could impact on the way in which the EU engages on peace and security in Africa – especially in terms of the AU's legitimacy. This dynamic could also leave less space for the priority in the partnership of conflict prevention and other civilian instruments that are usually promoted more strongly by the AU than by individual African governments.

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<sup>52</sup> Medinilla and Teevan, "Beyond Good Intentions."

<sup>53</sup> Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) are joint activities by the EU, its member states and European development-finance institutions focused on a specific sector.

<sup>54</sup> Samuel Pleeck and Mikaela Gavas, "Getting to the Bottom of the Team Europe Initiatives," *CGD Blog*, May 12, 2021, <https://www.cgdev.org/node/3129714>.

<sup>55</sup> IAI interview, civil society expert, September 2021.

<sup>56</sup> Gilles Gressani, "Elements for a Doctrine: In Conversation with Charles Michel," *Groupe d'études géopolitiques*, September 8, 2021, <https://geopolitique.eu/en/2021/09/08/charles-michel>.

<sup>57</sup> IAI interview, EEAS (1) and EEAS (2), September 2021.



## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

Considering the above analysis, peace and security is likely to remain a priority in Africa–EU cooperation due to the many common security challenges affecting the two continents. However, the EU’s approach, which is currently heavily based on the security–development nexus, should be revised – both to attenuate the tendency to divert resources originally allocated to development cooperation and poverty reduction to issues such as border control and maritime security, and to target security initiatives based on the immediate needs of African institutions and governments. These needs – include developing capabilities for conflict prevention and conflict resolution, as well as predictable funding for African peace and security interventions – could be undermined by the EU’s new financial architecture. However, as room for manoeuvre is still large, the way in which the EPF will be implemented and new practices unfold will make a significant difference. As a result, the following recommendations should be considered:

### For the AU–EU Partnership

- **Dedicate significant resources to mediation, structural conflict prevention and peacebuilding.** Future AU–EU cooperation needs to maintain and strengthen mediation and conflict-prevention strategies and programmes. APF funding should dedicate more resources to capacity building and conflict early response. At the same time, PSOs’ main objective should remain the promotion of conflict prevention and human security. In practice, enhanced cooperation on conflict prevention can be achieved by elaborating joint plans and assessments, strengthening inter- and intra-institutional cooperation and early-warning mechanisms, improving information flows, and capacity building for middle- and

lower-level peacebuilding officials.

### For the AU

- **Develop a strategy with the EU on peace and security.** African leaders should spell out the fourth aspiration mentioned in Agenda 2063 on “A peaceful and secure Africa”. This vision should also reflect the continent’s expectations for its partnership with the EU. The AU will have to develop its own approach in order to further operationalise the African Peace and Security Architecture in a way that addresses its limitations and lessons learned so far. For example, the AU could leverage on lessons learned from its work dedicated to “silencing the guns” in 2020. The development of a proper AU strategy on P&S will facilitate mutual understanding during the next AU–EU Summit and for a renewed joint strategy.
- **Conduct internal reform in order to coordinate efficiently on peace and security.** The AU’s internal reforms have gained importance within the framework of strengthening African collective action related to the emergence of new challenges such as increased organised crime, hybrid threats, terrorism and forced migration. The AU should complete the ongoing restructuring of its commission and increase its partnership-management capacities. At the same time, it should liaise with EU institutions in Brussels in regular formal and informal meetings.

### For the EU

- **Maintain a mechanism of co-decision with the AU for peace and security policies and operations in the continent.** Avoiding shortcuts and any major bilateral engagements with African countries on P&S will prevent

destabilising the partnership and the AU's leading role in promoting peace. For instance, the EU should avoid playing a stronger role on P&S in Africa at the bilateral level bypassing the AU or RECs. Against this backdrop, the EU should also avoid making funding for P&S priorities more unpredictable in the long term and it should convey the EPF's support for the AU through its Peace Fund.

human development. Coordination between the thematic, regional and national envelopes of the NDICI must be ensured. Coherence is crucial in the support provided for reforms of the security sectors and governance programmes aimed at addressing the root causes of violent conflict.

- **Avoid slipping towards over-militarised responses to African conflicts.** Before even considering an EPF assistance measure, the EU should develop a broad political strategy designed to prevent future crisis, increase human security and address the root causes of violent conflicts. This strategy should be based on a specific economic analyses and gender-sensitive conflict analyses and should be developed in coordination with local and international actors, also including diverse local civil society actors. EPF assistance measures should be therefore used only as a last resort.
- **Ensure high levels of transparency and accountability.** Continuous transparency on the support provided through EPF assistance measures will be paramount to enable accountability and oversight towards both the local populations in the partner countries and EU citizens. The EU should address two accountability gaps. Firstly the EPF is not formally subjected to the European Parliament's oversight due to its inter-governmental and off-budget structure. Secondly, it is unclear whether the reports of the ad hoc College of Auditors for the EPF will be publicly accessible.
- **Ensure coherence with the rest of EU external action.** P&S policies should be fully coherent with all other areas of Africa-EU cooperation, from addressing the global climate crisis to

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## About the author



### BERNARDO VENTURI

Bernardo Venturi is Associate Fellow at IAI, where he focuses on Africa, civilian crisis management, EU external relations, peacebuilding and development. He is also Director and Co-Founder of the Agency for Peacebuilding (AP). He has 15 years of experience as a scholar and a practitioner, publishing extensively on peacebuilding, security, Africa affairs and European Union foreign policy. He consults for international organisations and NGOs and he lectures in several MA courses and international training programmes.

Bernardo obtained his PhD in 2009 from the University of Bologna, where he also held a post-doctoral research fellowship. Periods of study and research led him to the Chulalongkorn University in Thailand, to the Moldova State University, to the Oslo's Peace Research Institute (PRIO) in Norway, to the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) and to the Sussex University in the UK. Among his past positions, he also contributed to the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) serving as Steering Committee member and he was a Lecturer for five years at the Marist College, Florence Branch Campus.

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