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Key Developments in Global Affairs

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CHAPTER 3

Shifting Parameters of Military Crisis Management

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The nature of Western involvement in military crisis management is changing. Reluctance over sending troops into combat in faraway places induces a preference for indirect or enabling roles in Western capitals. Partnership has become a code for rapid transfers of responsibility to local forces or regional coalitions. A large Western footprint is not only costly in political and material terms. It also runs counter to the hard lessons drawn from Afghanistan. Yet whether other actors are ready to buy into the partnering model remains to be seen. Sometimes, 'leading from behind' or intervening with a 'light footprint' may not be feasible options.

Malian soldiers arrive in the recently liberated town of Douentza, 30 January 2013

In the wake of a drawn-out military campaign in Afghanistan, Western states have been searching for leaner ways to manage emerging crises and threats to global security. Cautious reactions by Western allies to France's intervention in Mali reflect a widespread preference for indirect support over direct participation in combat. While offering political and logistical support, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and Canada have repeatedly ruled out the deployment of ground troops. International consensus on the threat that triggered French involvement has been slow to translate into multilateral action. Questions of leadership and burden-sharing loom large over the unfolding operation.

In the context of global power shifts, burden-sharing in military crisis management is a salient issue. Deep cuts in defence spending and uncoordinated decision-making have raised concerns over shrinking military capabilities within the European Union (EU). Meanwhile, Europe's wider neighbourhood is shaken by social upheaval and political turmoil. The United States is showing little appetite for policing the globe where no vital US interests are at stake. In its first term, the Obama administration sought to rebalance US foreign and security policy towards the Asia-Pacific region. Unwilling to play the global sheriff, it has preferred to 'lead from behind', if at all, in recent crises. Military contributions have been limited to key enabling capabilities such as air-to-air refuelling to fill capacity gaps among coalition partners. US diplomacy has focused on placing other states in the driver's seat.

Reluctance in Western capitals over sending troops abroad stands in contrast with large-scale deployments of military and civilian personnel throughout the past decade. The policy of forced regime change pursued by the United States in its 'global war on terror' led to prolonged military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. The United States and its coalition partners deployed ground forces in large numbers to quell insurgencies and rebuild war-torn states and societies in the aftermath of combat.

A large Western footprint produced a series of unwanted side effects, however. On the ground, the visible long-term presence of foreign troops alienated the local population and provided extremists with recruitment propaganda. Western soldiers and aid agencies (and whoever worked for them) became prime targets. In Western capitals, public support for the resource-intensive effort to build viable states abroad dwindled over time. War-weary electorates and economic

worries prompted political leaders to seek a rapid withdrawal from Afghanistan in order to focus on 'nation-building' at home.

Recent developments in Libya, Syria and Mali have made it clear that the debate over foreign military intervention is far from over. Civil wars in Libya and Syria have sparked fears of regional spill-over and prompted calls for military intervention to stop regime-sponsored violence against the civilian population. In the summer of 2012, newly-elected French president François Hollande declared that France no longer intended to play Gendarme in its former colonies. Only a few months later, however, the emergence of a sanctuary for Islamic militancy in northern Mali prompted France to resort to military action in its traditional sphere of interest. Each of these crises has elicited a different response from the international community. Consistently, however, Western powers have been at pains to stress that any action must be sanctioned internationally and co-owned by regional stakeholders. Unilateral Western-led ventures would inevitably suffer from a legitimacy deficit with dire strategic consequences, as past experience has demonstrated.

Partnering with regional security organizations, neighbouring states and local decision-makers could offer a remedy for the double crisis of legitimacy and political will that jeopardizes Western engagement in international crisis management. Flexible arrangements, which allow different states and organizations to 'plug and play', promise to distribute costs and risks more evenly among participants. Niche capabilities that enable others to take the lead are in tune with current political and budgetary restraints. Yet the emerging models are no ready-made templates. Partnering raises a host of normative and practical questions. 'Leading from behind' is not always possible. To what extent other actors are ready to buy into the West's partnering paradigm remains to be seen.

A widening gap between demand and political will

Turmoil and mass violence in other parts of the world continue to threaten Western interests and shock public conscience. Yet political will to deploy military and civilian personnel over extended periods of time to manage conflicts and crises abroad is low. Fiscal pressures and war-weariness are compounded by growing pessimism regarding the effectiveness of foreign intervention.

US troops are scheduled to leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014 at the latest. Well ahead of this deadline, their combat mission is to be sup-

planted by a training and advisory role. While the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) succeeded in preventing a 'rush for the exit' among allies, many European troops have already left Afghanistan. Other troop contributors are accelerating their schedule for withdrawal. NATO's future role in crisis management remains uncertain. After a successful air and maritime campaign that ended with the fall of the Gaddafi regime in 2011, NATO member states showed no appetite for a post-conflict stabilization role in Libya. Calls by the president of the African Union for NATO to support a multinational response to the unfolding crisis in Mali fell on deaf ears.

The European Union mandated no less than 23 civilian and military missions under its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) between 2003 and 2009. This dynamism came to a halt with the deepening of Europe's financial and fiscal crisis, however. The CSDP appeared to pick up the pace again in 2012 with three new missions, but its focus had shifted to small-scale civilian capacity-building and training missions. The EU's plan to deploy a strictly non-combat mission to train the Malian army in the spring of 2013 followed in the same vein. As events on the ground threatened to overtake the deliberations in Brussels, the EU brought forward the

deployment of around 250 military trainers by a few weeks. Yet Malian soldiers were already engaged in combat alongside French troops, raising questions as to what the expedited EU training mission would achieve and how. Hesitant decision-making in Brussels and cautious reactions to calls for support by France appeared to confirm concerns over the EU's inability and, indeed, unwillingness to project power in defence of common security interests.

Continued pressure to 'do something'
Geography and the nature of the interests at stake remain powerful factors in weighing the costs and risks of military intervention against alternative courses of action (or inaction). In addition, the experience of military embroilment in Afghanistan has left its mark on policymaking in Western capitals. As former US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates put it, anyone thinking of sending a big land army into Asia, the Middle East or Africa 'should have his head examined'. Nevertheless, threats that previously triggered military intervention by Western powers are still present in the international system. Calls for the international community to 'do something' in response to threats and civilian suffering persist. Real-time media coverage has turned into a powerful catalyst for the pressure to act.

The number of civil wars has declined over the past 25 years. However, a number of countries, which are home to around one fifth of the global population, are caught in cycles of violence and instability that hamper socio-economic development. Violence against civilians displaces thousands of people each year. The absence of law and order creates no-go-areas for humanitarian aid in places with notoriously low human development indicators. Development aid invested over decades is wasted within months of fighting. Lack of opportunity, youth unemployment and suppressed grievances are feared to facilitate recruitment by extremist groups. For these reasons, failed and fragile states have been high on Western aid agendas for a number of years. Moreover, they have increasingly been included in threat assessments that underpin national security strategies.

In a globalized world, internal conflict and instability are more than humanitarian disasters. A plethora of risks associated with so-called ungoverned space has driven Western states to expend considerable resources to stabilize fragile states. Instability threatens to spill across state borders and destabilize entire regions, thereby threatening Western energy and trade interests. A variety of transnational threats such as organized crime, trafficking and extremism find fertile ground in the power vacuums created by the breakdown of law and order. Illicit activity flourishes in lawless border areas. Weak government control provides criminal and terrorist groups with sanctuaries from which to carry out attacks directed against Western nationals and interests in the region and beyond. This confluence of dangers in a volatile neighbourhood characterizes a belt of instability that spans Mali, northern Nigeria, Chad, Libya, Sudan, Somalia and Yemen.

The past couple of decades have further seen the rise of an international agenda to protect civilians from harm beyond state boundaries. The emerging international norm of a 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) represents an attempt to institutionalise the moral imperative to protect human life from genocide and mass atrocities. However, association of the R2P agenda with military intervention and forced regime change has undermined international support for the emerging norm. Shifting constellations of national interests and calculations of military feasibility, rather than a consistent moral imperative, continue to shape international reactions to civilian suffering.

Diminishing political will

The war in Afghanistan has exemplified the limits of military power

where no meaningful political process is in place. Foreign security forces can neither build a host government's legitimacy nor compensate for the lack of it. In Western capitals lessons drawn from this experience weigh heavily on decisions over future military engagements.

In Afghanistan, the United States and its coalition partners as well as the United Nations initially opted for a 'light footprint' in the aftermath of the US-led military operation that brought down the Taliban regime and destroyed al-Qaeda bases. After 2006, however, the US and NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) switched to a resource-intensive strategy. Conventional forces were deployed in large numbers to counter the rising insurgent threat and extend the central

government's reach into the provinces. Under the Obama administration's surge policy of 2009, the number of US troops in Afghanistan peaked at around 101,000. A decade after the 9/11 attacks that had triggered the US intervention, roughly 140,000 foreign troops (US and ISAF) were still on the ground. The United States alone has spent an estimated US$ 550 billion on the war in Afghanistan between fiscal years 2001 and 2013. The military campaign has claimed over 3,000 casualties among Western troops to date, over 2,000 of them American.

The narrative behind massive deployments of troops and vast allocations of development funds to Afghanistan was a transformational one. It was aimed at turning weak governments and war-torn societies into

Public opinion in Afghanistan: Views on US presence in Afghanistan
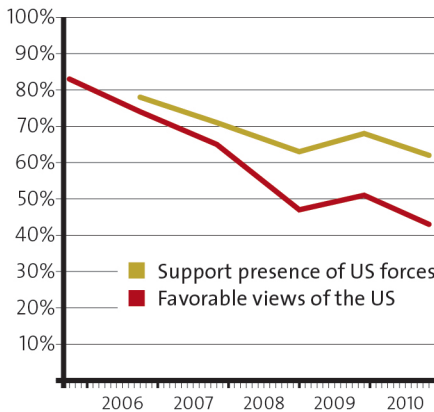
Source: ABC News/BBC/ARD/ Washington Post

Public opinion in the US: „Should the US remove troops as soon as possible from Afghanistan?"


Source: Pew Research Center

stable, reliable allies with democratic institutions and vibrant economies. The costly, long-term engagement of Western troops in Afghanistan confronted the state-building narrative with a tough reality check. It became painfully clear that political and socio-economic transformation would take decades, not years. Moreover, a foreign military presence and externally-funded state institutions and public services were hardly conducive to building an accountable and legitimate government.

A key lesson drawn by Western leaders from the Afghanistan campaign was thus that the 'heavy footprint' had proved counterproductive at several levels. In the theatre of operations, the drawn-out presence of foreign security forces provoked resentment among the local population. Reform agendas, assistance programmes and security measures informed by Western understandings of authority, efficiency or gender clashed with local values and cultures. Moreover, the visible Western presence provided militant groups with a target and a unifying narrative to recruit supporters and justify the use of violence. Large amounts of financial assistance opened the door to corruption, mismanagement and waste. Among Western voters, rising casualty numbers and rising costs dampened public support for the war effort. Opinion polls have shown declining support for the war effort both in the US and in European countries over time. In parallel, doubts over whether the war in Afghanistan had been worth fighting increased.

Public opinion in Europe: Citizens' main concerns

Results based on responses of 26 622 citizens in the EU-27
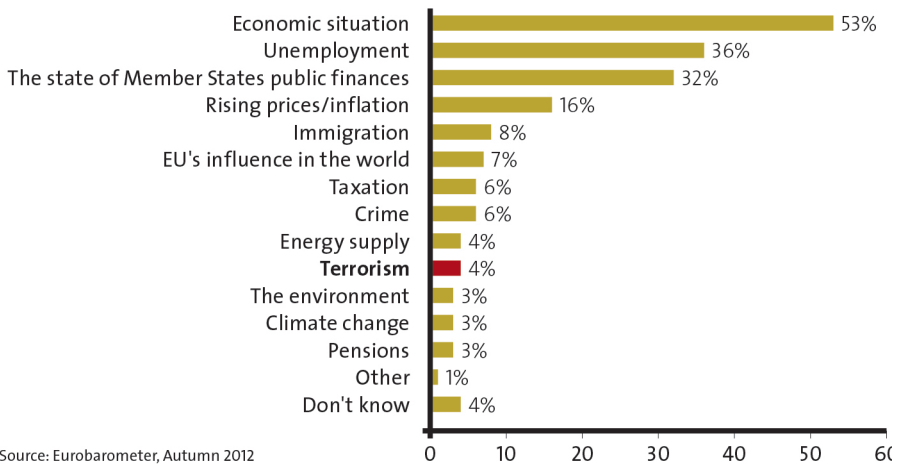
Source: Eurobarometer, Autumn 2012

Past experience with 'too light' or 'too heavy' a footprint, respectively, has informed perceptions of failure in Western policy circles. These are compounded by the absence of a shared vision for the future use of the military instrument in crisis management. The US Defense Strategic Guidance of 2012 called for 'innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches' to achieve security objectives. It illustrated a shift in US security policy toward unconventional means of warfare, including Special Operations Forces and new technologies such as drones and cyberspace capabilities, in response to emerging global threats. Meanwhile, the EU is lagging behind in its ambition to become a leader in civilian-military crisis management. Lack of consensus among EU member states over the parameters for using military force in the defence of common objectives continues to hamper the development of a meaningful common security policy. Instead, economic crisis management and questions over the future of the European Union have dominated the policy debate.

Shifting parameters of Western engagement

The experience in Afghanistan has made Western states wary to commit ground troops in response to conflict and crisis abroad. The phenomenon of 'mission creep' threatens to expand even limited commitments into controversial long-term endeavours once troops deploy in the theatre of operations. Fiscal austerity and economic worries at home further dampen the political will to engage in costly operations abroad. Consequently, the United States, France, the United Kingdom and other NATO member states have looked for leaner models of engagement, which allow them to deal with emerging threats and crises at a lesser political and material cost. They have sought to place stricter limits on the duration and scope of military engagements. This has meant operating from a distance as far as possible and avoiding a major role in the aftermath of combat operations. In post-conflict situations, expansive state- and nation-building agendas have been adjusted toward the less ambitious goals of 'stabilization'.

Building nations no more

The past decade has seen Western actors scaling down ambitions and handing over responsibility for transition processes in post-conflict countries. Open-ended goals, such as building stable democracies and addressing longstanding political grievances, were hardly conducive to devising a timely exit strategy. The concept of 'stabilization' brought overall campaign objectives in Afghanistan in line with pragmatic assessments of

what foreign intervention could hope to achieve. This was not deep political and socio-economic transformation but rather a status quo with 'acceptable' levels of corruption and violence that local stakeholders could manage without external help.

As the campaign in Afghanistan continued, the United States and its Western allies scaled back their objectives partly by design and partly by default. Commitment to improving the lives of Afghans was important for a number of troop-contributing states, like Germany, which justified their engagement on humanitarian grounds. Yet the reality on the ground corresponded poorly with the political rhetoric of democratization and modernization employed in Western capitals. Local expectations had to be managed in a struggle for credibility. Waning public support at home required the setting of achievable benchmarks for withdrawal. Hence, 'good enough' levels of governance and security that would prevent a return of insurgent rule became the benchmarks for withdrawal.

In practice, stabilization meant handing over responsibility for the pervasive security problem that impaired progress in other areas to host-nation security forces. The lion's share of reconstruction funds allocated by Western donors over the past years has gone into the training of Afghan security forces. The major problems affecting the transfer of responsibility to Afghan forces were illiteracy, drug use and high attrition rates among the recruits. A growing number of insider attacks by Afghans on Western instructors jeopardized the approach of close relations and joint operations with partner forces. In more remote parts of Afghanistan, US and coalition forces experimented with a number of local defence initiatives. Training schemes were typically run by Special Operations Forces who embedded themselves in rural communities and provided mentorship, arms, equipment and pay to local volunteers. Some of these initiatives were demobilized after their goals had been achieved. Others were stopped due to corruption or lack of local buy-in. Human rights groups voiced grave concern over a lack of accountability and oversight, abuses committed by local defence forces and the ethnic tensions they provoked in some areas.

In-and-out

The in-and-out approach adopted by NATO member states in Libya in 2011 further dissociated military action from an explicit or implied pledge to guarantee security and oversee political transition in the post-conflict phase. The intervention was authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 1973 and carried out by NATO member states

and a number of Arab partners. It saw the surgical use of advanced military capabilities to achieve a limited set of objectives. No foreign infantry troops were deployed to the ground either during the short campaign or in its aftermath.

In a war fought from a distance, air power and to some extent maritime capabilities play a primordial role. Precision-guided, air-launched weapons provide Western military organizations with a distinct advantage. Their use depends strongly on sophisticated intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) capabilities in order to limit collateral damage to infrastructure and minimize civilian losses. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) have become crucial tools for the collection of ISTAR information. Yet advanced technology only partly compensates for eyes and ears on the ground. Reliance on small, elite teams of Special Operations Forces on the ground has thus become another hallmark of this kind of warfare. In the US, for instance, the special operations budget increased from US$ 2.3 billion in 2001 to US$ 10.5 billion in 2012.

Advanced military capabilities have enabled Western armies to operate primarily from the skies in order to alter the balance of power on the ground. Although the declared objective of NATO's air campaign in Libya was

to protect civilians, Western involvement helped tip the balance in favour of the rebel forces that brought down the regime of Muammar al-Gaddafi. NATO's air campaign provided ragtag rebel forces with a secure stronghold and bought them time to get organized into a capable opposition force. While the UN authorization excluded the deployment of ground troops, Special Operations Forces sent in a bilateral capacity played a crucial liaison function. France and the United Kingdom, as well as a number of Arab states, are believed to have used covert teams on the ground to advise rebel commanders, provide logistics and guide air strikes.

NATO's swift intervention in Libya stood in visible contrast to the protracted campaign in Afghanistan. High-tech military capabilities in support of local partner forces had provided an alternative to Western boots on the ground. However, the campaign also highlighted the limited abilities of European militaries to project power even across limited geographical distances and in a fairly swift campaign. It underlined the crucial role of the unique enabling capabilities provided by the United States in the areas of ISTAR and air-to-air refuelling. Nevertheless, the 'model' campaign in Libya appeared to demonstrate how Western military power

could be used at a manageable political and material cost.

Military success in Libya depended upon a specific constellation of objectives, capabilities and opportunities. It did not provide a template that is easy to replicate, as the unfolding crises in Syria and Mali suggest. In order for Western powers to intervene from a distance and 'lead from behind', willing and capable partners must be found in the diplomatic realm as well as on the ground. None of these seem readily available in the context of international stalemate over the deteriorating situation in Syria. The French decision to take military action in Mali was presumably accompanied by the expectation that the bulk of ground forces would eventually be supplied by African nations. Yet the desolate state of the Malian army and the slow formation of an African-led ground force supplied by neighbouring states jeopardize a swift transition. To neutralize the strategic advantage of French air power, militant fighters in Mali blended into the local population. With militarily superior French troops unlikely to stay on in the long-term, all they have to do is to hide and hold out.

Growing importance of partners

Given the limited capacity and experience of other actors, advanced Western military and civilian capabilities have played a crucial role in multinational missions. Yet the growing reference to partnership in Western policy statements reflects a desire among Western states to distribute the risks and costs of international crisis management more broadly. Military training and civilian capacity-building initiatives have long been the instruments of choice for the transfer of expertise and know-how, funding and equipment to partner states. Increasingly, Western states have sought to limit their contributions to peace support operations to a supporting or enabling role. Regional organizations and local security forces are expected to take the lead in responding to security problems in their neighbourhood.

The most significant efforts to build up local partners and support regional security architectures have taken place in Africa. The continent has witnessed some of the worst civil wars and most egregious human rights violations in the post-Cold War era. Instability and criminal activity on and off its shores threaten Western trade, oil and mining companies. The twin spectres of extremism and 'ungoverned' space haunt the Sahel zone and the Horn of Africa. Yet Western states have proved reluctant to get involved in African conflicts. Coupled with the rise of a regional agenda for African leadership and ownership in security

matters, this has brought the slogan 'African solutions to African problems' to prominence.

Building capacity locally

Over the years, various bilateral and multilateral initiatives have been directed at building the capacity of local security forces in African nations. The logic of prevention aligned these programmes with the security interests of Western donors. Capable local forces were to take care of threats before they erupted into full-blown crises or spilled across borders. Thus, there would be no need for costly interventions by foreign troops unfamiliar with the terrain and risking to overstay their welcome. Capacity-building provided an opportunity for low-risk, sustained engagement with partner states. Small investments could yield potentially large returns in terms of security and stability. The multidimensional and interagency nature of capacity-building programmes was moreover in tune with the growing attention to holistic notions of security in Western policy documents.

Building capacity for crisis management in partner nations by means of training, professionalizing and equipping African militaries has been the cornerstone of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM). The US military's regional command for Afri-

ca became fully operational in 2008. In the spirit of a 'light footprint', AFRICOM has no US forces permanently assigned to it and is headquartered in Germany. Personnel drawn together from different military services, including Special Operations Forces, operate with partner nations in small training teams and through regional exercises. AFRICOM's aims include training African forces to participate in multinational peacekeeping. It provides mentors, trainers and advisors to the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) programme funded by the US State Department. Its main focus, however, has been on strengthening counter-terrorism capacity within partner nations. The New York Times has estimated the overall cost of US programmes to combat Islamist militancy across the Sahel zone at US$ 520 to 600 million between 2008 and 2012. The Washington Post has put it at US$ 1 billion since 2005.

The EU recently launched a number of capacity-building missions in Africa under its Common Security and Defence Policy. Capacity building resonates with the EU's comprehensive approach to security that links the military instrument with broader political, economic and humanitarian measures. The EU has moreover adopted broader regional strategies
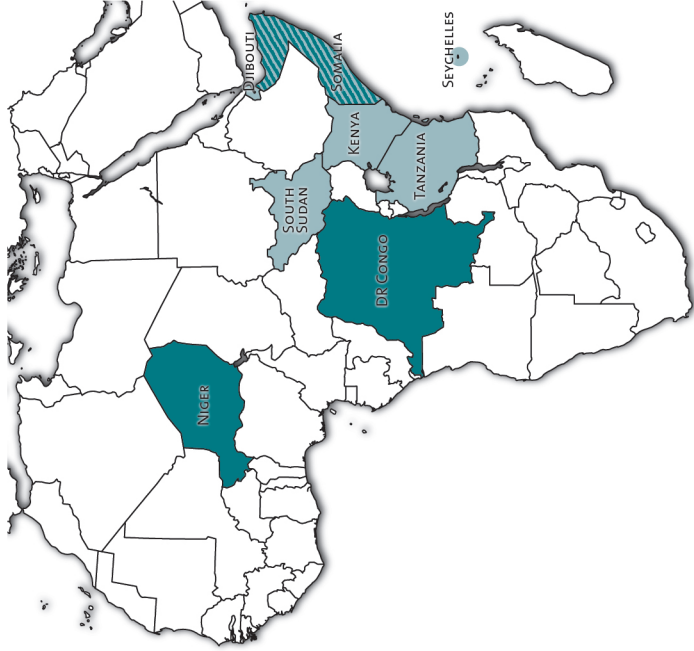
Security capacity building in Africa by the US and the EU

- US government Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) and Partnership for Regional East African Counterterrorism (PREACT)
- US government Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA)
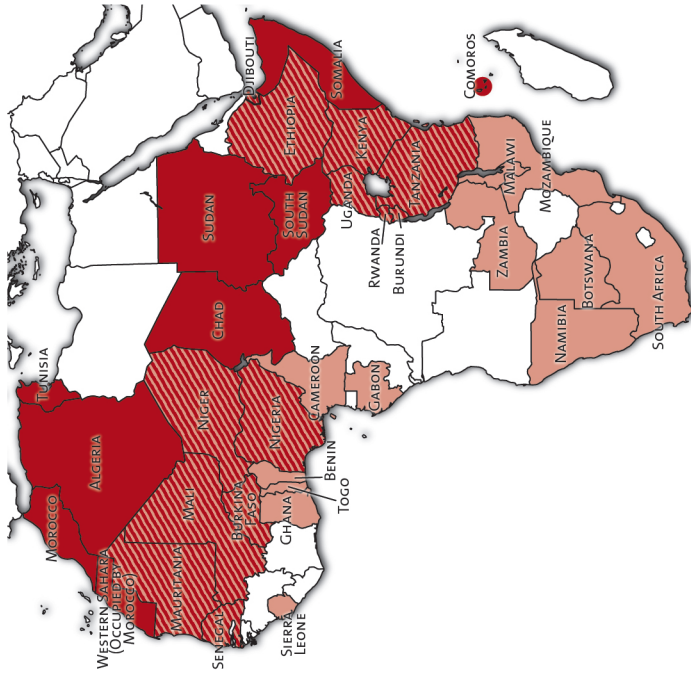
- EU CSDP security sector reform missions
- EU CSDP civilian assistance missions to improve the capacities of security forces

SEYCHELLES

DJIBOUTI
SOMALIA
KENYA
TANZANIA
SOUTH SUDAN
DR CONGO
NIGER

COMOROS
DJIBOUTI
ETHIOPIA
SOMALIA
SUDAN
SOUTH SUDAN
UGANDA
KENYA
TANZANIA
MALAWI
MOZAMBIQUE
RWANDA
BURUNDI
ZAMBIA
BOTSWANA
SOUTH AFRICA
NAMIBIA
CHAD
CAMEROON
GABON
TUNISIA
NIGER
NIGERIA
BENIN
TOGO
ALGERIA
MALI
BURKINA FASO
GHANA
MOROCCO
MAURITANIA
WESTERN SAHARA (OCCUPIED BY MOROCCO)
SENEGAL
SIERRA LEONE

Sources: US Department of State, US AFRICOM, EU External Action Service

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for the Horn of Africa and the Sahel zone with the aim of increasing coherence and the strategic impact of small, limited missions. As part of the Sahel strategy, the EU provides training for national police and gendarmerie forces in Niger. Within the strategic framework for the Horn of Africa, the EU recently launched a programme to strengthen the coastal police force and the judiciary through on-the-job training in five countries. The EU's first maritime operation off the Horn of Africa to combat piracy and its training mission in Uganda for Somali security forces complement the regional strategy.

Regional security organizations
The involvement of regional organizations in peace support operations and crisis management has grown in frequency and importance over the past decade. Consequently, the role of the United Nations has shifted toward coordinating, supporting and providing legitimacy to the activity of regional organizations in a growing number of missions. In the case of the EU's first autonomous military mission outside Europe, a regional organization stepped up to support a fledgling UN blue helmet mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2003. NATO's deployment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to Afghanistan in 2003 saw the

exclusive responsibility of a regional organization for an operation under a UN mandate.

Increasingly, however, Western regional organizations have engaged in their own version of 'leading from behind' in peace support missions. They have sought to act as force multipliers for other regional and sub-regional organizations through the provision of funds, technical assistance and specialized military assets (e.g. strategic airlift, intelligence-gathering and surveillance technology and transport capacity). The African Union (AU) has been among the greatest recipients of capacity-building and technical support from international donors. The EU has channelled 740 million euro through its African Peace Facility, established in 2004. The great majority of funds were allocated to helping the AU and sub-regional organisations to plan and conduct peace support operations.

A new division of labour thus emerged in a number of UN peace support missions. African forces took on major operational risk while Western states limited their contributions to logistical, technical and financial support. The AU provided troops for a protection force in Darfur in 2004 under a UN mandate. It received light technical support from the UN.

Multilateral peace operations by type of organization
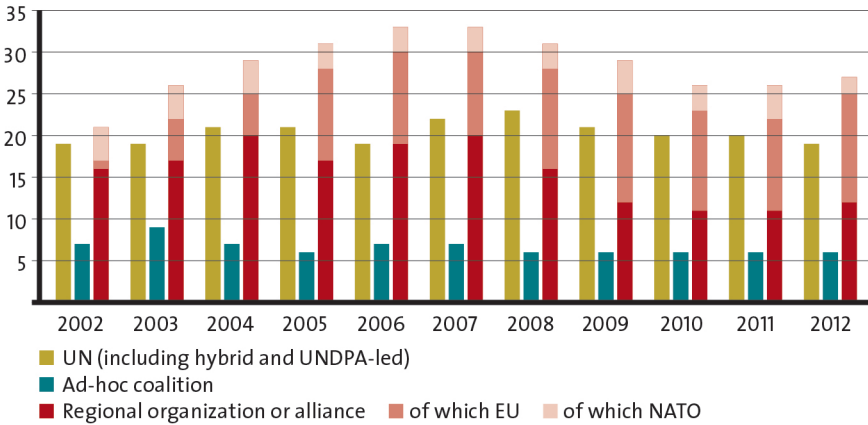
Data and definitions: SIPRI Multilateral Peace Operations Database

NATO agreed to provide training for AU peacekeepers and logistical support to airlift them into the theatre of operations. The EU contributed financially. AU troops were later incorporated into a hybrid AU-UN mission (UNAMID) in 2007. A similar distribution of risks and costs has characterized international efforts against al-Shabaab militia in Somalia. In 2007, the UN authorized a peace enforcement mission led by the AU (AMISOM) and supported it with military planners. The EU provided financial and technical support to AMISOM, covering for instance the salaries of AU troops. In parallel, EU military advisers trained Somali security forces on (comparatively safer) Ugandan territory. Finally, NATO, the EU and a number of individual states engaged their maritime capabilities to combat piracy off Somalia's coast.

Limitations and pitfalls of emerging models

In times of fiscal austerity and war-weariness, modest ambitions and greater burden-sharing could provide a way of ensuring continued Western engagement in international crisis management. Conceptually, stabilization offers a pragmatic framework for limited engagement. The prospect of sharing costs and risks through partnership with other actors makes contributions more feasible materially and politically. With a view to the legitimacy of an intervention, partnering provides an opportunity to place local and regional actors in the lead.

However, the emerging models are not without limitations and pitfalls. Limited knowledge and operational pressures raise a host of normative

concerns regarding the choice of partners. Coordination problems are well-documented and likely to increase in multi-actor missions. Moreover, the patchwork character of the emerging crisis management paradigm leaves a number of crucial gaps.

Expertise and local knowledge
Although often represented as technical assistance, capacity-building is inherently political. Partnering with foreign actors provides specific groups or segments of society with power and recognition. Selecting partners requires expert knowledge and an understanding of power constellations and domestic politics in the host country. Recruitment and promotion schemes need to take into account the ethnic composition of a country or region. Training curricula should be designed with attention to cultural specificities.

Such depth of expertise is not readily available to Western governments and security organizations. It is scarce among officials who approve programmes and funding requests. Within the organizations carrying out the actual training, in-depth knowledge is found primarily among a select group of mature, experienced instructors. It takes years of education to develop inter-cultural and language skills, not a few months of hasty pre-deployment training. Reallocating these tasks to

general purpose forces for the sake of speed and convenience increases the risk of mistakes, with grave consequences. In the absence of a thorough understanding of a country's political and social fabric, choosing whom to train and equip remains a gamble.

The Malian army, for instance, had been a major recipient of US support and a model pupil in its training programme, which dated back to the G.W. Bush administration. The participation of Malian troops trained by the US military in the overthrow of the elected government came as an embarrassment to AFRICOM. US news sources further reported that the US training programme had in part relied on ethnic Tuareg to command Malian elite units. Some of these commanders defected to the insurgency in the North, robbing the collapsing government troops of leadership, weapons and equipment.

Timeframes
Capacity-building and training have grown from largely preventive strategies to a means of building up local partners for immediate crisis management. Yet experience with security sector reform shows that sustained, long-term engagement is required to build security forces that are not only capable but responsible and accountable to their civilian leaders. To

ensure civilian oversight, trainers need to work closely with host nation authorities. Control mechanisms need to be in place to guarantee that security forces are not turned into private militias by local powerbrokers and to ensure that they do not turn against the communities they are supposed to protect. In the absence of a sustainable budget plan to continue salary payments when external funding stops, these dangers increase.

The practice of propping up partner forces through a short-term infusion of training and equipment dissociates capacity-building from the broader political context. Timetables are defined by the desire of external actors to limit their engagement in scope and time. Political realities within the recipient state are of secondary concern in light of pressing operational demands. Moreover, the focus on building capable security partners relegates efforts to support the development of a political road map to the side lines.

Multilateral debates over the international response to the crisis in Mali initially revolved around a two-step approach. First, the divided and run-down Malian army would require substantive training and reform. Second, the international community would provide logistical and financial support for an African-led military mission to help restore government control in the north. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon asked for political, human rights and operational standards to reach agreed benchmarks before engaging the force in offensive operations. Longer timeframes, a wider strategy of supporting democratic institutions and concerns over respect for international standards of conduct equally transpired from the EU's plans for a training mission.

However, swift military action by France vastly accelerated the timeline for the deployment of African ground forces. Concerns over operational and legal standards faded into the background as operational pressures to avoid a prolonged unilateral offensive by the French intensified. Reports of abuses committed by Malian units against ethnic groups surfaced after the initial phase of the military campaign. They not only undermine the legitimacy of France's local partners but seriously jeopardize the path towards a long-term political solution.

Compatibility with civilian approaches
Shifting parameters of Western engagement in military crisis management have implications for civilian approaches to conflict resolution. The blurring of lines between civilian and military spheres in conflict and post-conflict situations has long been a

major concern as well as an inescapable reality for humanitarian and development agencies. Reluctance to engage in costly military operations may prompt Western states to pay greater attention to civilian instruments such as conflict prevention, early warning, mediation and conflict resolution.

Conceptually, civilian and military approaches increasingly build on the same linkages between development and security. Working with partners, moreover, promotes local ownership, which has become a key principle in civilian peace-building and development aid. However, while military and civilian organizations may share overarching goals on paper, differences in priorities prove problematic in practice.

Capacity-building in the security sector, for instance, is situated at the civilian-military nexus. The establishment of AFRICOM has intensified long-standing concerns over the militarization of US development assistance and diplomacy on the African continent. Critics have equally pointed out that security concerns have come to dominate the capacity-building programmes initiated and financed by the EU.

Stabilization policies equally raise questions over compatibility with civilian peace- and state-building approaches. Short-term measures to create stability are intended to be compatible with the longer-term goals of peace- and state-building. Yet stabilization is a more conservative policy than conflict transformation, which seeks to address the underlying grievances that led conflict to break out in the first place. In practice, stabilization programmes have privileged top-down approaches by working through state institutions and elites in the host country. This can compromise projects at the grassroots level seeking to build peace from the bottom-up. Civilian peacebuilders relate the principle of local ownership to civil society. In the logic of stabilization, it mostly stands for a speedy transfer of responsibility for security and governance to local partners. Almost by definition, these are host nation security forces and state authorities.

Coordination and leadership

Growing complexity in crisis management has led to a search for institutional arrangements to ensure coordination among a widening range of actors. Institutional links between regional and international organizations have emerged over time, as the partnership between the UN and the AU in a number of peace operations illustrates. Yet in practice, coordination remains largely ad-hoc. Uncer-

tainty over how much risk partici-pating states are willing to accept in a given mission makes it difficult to institutionalize cooperation arrange-ments. Rather, the division of labour in any new mission emerges out of political bargains within and among states and organizations. Local au-thorities face a considerable challenge in dealing with a complex web of in-terlocutors.

Numerous coordination problems have been observed even among small numbers of fairly homogeneous ac-tors. Although the Western state-building missions of the past decade were centralised under US leadership, strategic coherence remained an elu-sive goal. Ensuring political cohesion, agreeing on joint priorities, sharing information, pooling resources and bridging differences in organizational cultures proved highly challenging. Considerations related to capacity and legitimacy point to more diverse constellations of actors in future crisis management missions. There is little reason to believe that coordination will be any easier to achieve among a more diverse set of actors in modular or 'patchwork' missions.

The UN is likely to remain the default option for providing an institutional framework where other actors lack the capacity or political legitimacy to take on a leading role. Western regional security organizations are looking into an uncertain future against the backdrop of financial crisis and low public support for defence spending in Europe. NATO's ability to rapidly mount a multinational military op-eration and ensure command remains unparalleled. Crisis management is one of three core missions enumer-ated in NATO's strategic concept of 2010. However, there is little con-sensus among its members regarding priorities and missions beyond Af-ghanistan. The EU has increasingly attempted to embed its CSDP mis-sions within broader regional strate-gies. As long as its contributions are oriented towards small-scale support and training missions, however, this is unlikely to translate into institutional leadership.

Critical gaps

The first gap left by the reluctance of Western states to put boots on the ground concerns rapid response. Cri-sis response requires capable and well-equipped forces able to deploy rapidly in high-risk environments in order to protect civilians or to provide an entry point for a longer-term peace support operation. Even considerable finan-cial, logistical and planning assistance from Western countries is unable to close that gap. The timelines involved are inevitably longer.

A quick survey of multilateral rapid reaction initiatives is not encouraging. A multinational Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG) created as a rapid reaction tool for UN peacekeeping was disbanded in 2009. After assuming operational readiness in 2000, it never managed to mobilize enough support from its 23 members to deploy a full brigade. Instead, its deployments in six UN peacekeeping operations were limited to planning assistance and capacity-building. The EU's initiative to create a rapid reaction force under its Common Security and Defence Policy in the form of multinational EU Battlegroups has been even less successful. Lack of commitment by member states and political divisions regarding their use has meant that no Battlegroup has been deployed to date. Due to commitment gaps, only one Battlegroup is likely to remain on standby for most of the time over the coming years. On paper, the AU's African Standby Force (ASF) counts five regional brigades on standby in a complicated six-month rotation system. Lack of clarity over authorization, command and funding has meant that only a small detachment of 13 ASF officers to assist the AU mission in Somalia has been deployed so far. Political and logistical obstacles aside, it is uncertain whether ASF brigades could intervene with speed and decisiveness. Many African militaries have been trained and equipped mainly for peacekeeping missions, not offensive operations.

The second gap concerns the need for capable security forces, military and police in the aftermath of a crisis to ensure stability in the long term. Armed factions made up of insurgents or former regime forces may seek to control territory, threaten civilians or disrupt the political process. Irregular fighters have to be disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated into society. The formal security sector is often also in need of reform. The shift from a combat to a stabilization mission stretches the timeline for the deployment of ground troops. Holding territory and building up local institutions are long-term strategies. They lead precisely to the kind of long-term, visible footprint that Western states are seeking to avoid.

The post-conflict transition period in Libya after the fall of the Gaddafi regime illustrates the dangers of this gap. Upon the successful completion of a campaign fought mainly from the air, NATO member states showed little appetite for engaging in long-term assistance. Regional organizations better suited to the task from a political point of view, such as the African Union or the Arab League, lacked operational capacity. Eventually, the UN mounted a light support

mission. It proved helpful in coordinating a complex web of bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes for election preparations, transitional justice, human rights concerns and economic recovery. Yet this patchwork model left a vacuum in the consolidation of security within Libya and at its borders. Weapons and members of the former regime's security forces infiltrated neighbouring countries, further destabilizing the Sahel zone. Islamist militant groups who seized control over the north of Mali were able to put their hands on sophisticated military hardware to defend their bases. The acceleration of the crisis in Mali displaced hundreds of thousands, threatening to deteriorate the security situation in neighbouring countries.

Future crises: Local ownership, uncertain leadership

Attitudes to international crisis management in Western capitals are changing. The shift owes something to perceived lessons from past experience but equally to the current climate of fiscal austerity and war-weariness. The war in Afghanistan has thrown into sharp relief the unintended consequences of excessive involvement by Western powers in other countries. In combination with political and budgetary constraints, this has led Western states to largely eschew an overt role in international crisis management. The gap between the demand for robust crisis management and the West's political will for sustained engagement is widening.

The outcome is not a consistent, predictable template. Responses to emerging crises remain highly contingent on geography, politics and history. The French intervention in Mali demonstrates how changing threat perceptions can swiftly reverse declared policies. In terms of intentions – if perhaps not always in practice – a trend toward placing regional and local actors in the lead through partnering and 'leading from behind' is apparent. In dealing with conflict and post-conflict situations in other parts of the world, the United States and European powers have thus sought a limited role focused on enabling or supporting other partners.

New partnering arrangements may indeed enable a more diverse range of actors to 'plug and play' in crisis response missions. Operations owned and led by local and regional actors are likely to be more sustainable and benefit from greater political legitimacy. In the absence of strong leadership, however, such patchwork missions are bound to remain fragile. Where responsibility for security is transferred to partners who are not (yet) ready to accept it, the outcome may be worse than the initial crisis.

Leadership appears to be in short supply, however. In the context of a global power shift toward the Pacific, the United States' geostrategic outlook has shifted from counter-insurgency in Central Asia and the Middle East to securing access at sea, in space and in the cyber realm in defence of vital US interests. Western security organizations look rather unlikely to fill the resulting gap. The EU continues to underperform in the area of defence and security. Speculation about a renegotiation of the United Kingdom's terms of membership – one of the two sole significant military actors within the Union – hardly helps. Scarred by Afghanistan, many NATO members are unwilling to take the Alliance into a new crisis without a clear exit strategy. China, India and Brazil, finally, have recently become more important players in UN peace operations. Yet troop contributions alone tell us little about the readiness of this diverse set of actors to take on a broader role in global crisis management. They hardly stand for a unified approach, in particular when it comes to leading or participating in coercive operations.

A light Western footprint may indeed provide a recipe for the right mix of international, regional and local engagement in international crisis management. Past experience calls for a sober assessment of the limitations of military power in bringing about peace and stability. Yet there are cases where too little, rather than too much, external involvement could exacerbate an emerging threat or crisis. Learning lessons from past experience is smart. Applying them in a dogmatic manner without regard to specific circumstances is not. ●