



The EU in Somalia – beyond Atalanta

by Julien Daemers

The Joint Communication on the EU's 'comprehensive approach' to external conflict and crises issued on 11 December 2013 argues that this approach 'has already been successfully applied as the organising principle for EU action in many cases in recent years, for example, in the Horn of Africa [...]'. In Africa the European Union has notably been heavily involved in Somalia, in particular in supporting the country's security and stability. Media attention has primarily focused on the success of the EU's first naval CSDP operation Atalanta in combating piracy off the coast of Somalia, complemented in July 2012 by a regional EU maritime capacity-building mission, EUCAP Nestor. Furthermore, this year the EU takes over the chairmanship of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia.

These efforts have been conducted in parallel with the EU's continued engagement in support of Somali security on land through its financing (since 2007) of the stipends of the AU Mission (AMISOM) troops fighting Al-Shabaab (AS) and through its training (since 2010) of one third of the Somali National Army (SNA) with the Training Mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia) – not to mention the Instrument for Stability (IfS) and other development-related programmes.

The international community also stepped up its support in September 2013 during the Somalia New Deal Conference co-hosted by the EU and the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) by endorsing the Somali Compact highlighting state-building priorities and establishing new rules for the donors' engagement in the country.

Facing a deteriorating security situation, on 12 November 2013 the UN Security Council unanimously approved Resolution 2124 requesting a 20% increase in AMISOM troops (from 17,331 to 22,126 uniformed personnel) and allowing the SNA to have access to the UN logistical support package for joint SNA-AMISOM operations. The repercussions of this new resolution might impact on EU actions in the region and provide impetus for the EU to overcome the difficulties it encounters in financing AMISOM and supporting the development of the SNA.

Insufficient leverage

A troop increase of 20% is not an easy undertaking, as troop contributions within AMISOM reflect a very delicate political and regional balance. For the military component, until December 2013 the AMISOM troop-contributing countries have been Uganda (36%), Burundi (31%), Kenya (22%), Djibouti (6%) and Sierra Leone (5%).

Ethiopia, the most influential player in Somali internal security and politics, publicly offered in November 2013 to provide troops that would account for the bulk of this 20% increase, which would make it the second-biggest contributing country within the mission. Ethiopia would then re-hat part of its forces already deployed in Somalia into AMISOM and then receive stipends amounting to \$1,028 per month per soldier. It would also replicate what Kenya recently did by re-hatting its own Somalia-based forces into AMISOM in

July 2012 – a win-win situation, combining financial savings with political gains in terms of regional power. However, this would not increase the total number of soldiers combating Al Shabaab in Somalia nor would it improve AMISOM's overall counter-insurgency capacity.

Since 2007, the EU has been contributing up to €423 million to AMISOM via its African Peace Facility (APF), mainly for the payment of troops' stipends. At the request of the African Union, the EU has funded them up until 31 December 2013, but has not yet committed to any further funding. But this instrument is under significant financial pressure as the APF has also financed African missions in Mali (until July 2013) and currently in the Central African Republic. The APF reserves are not unlimited and the EU's efforts to encourage non-traditional donors to share AMISOM's financial burden have not borne fruit. On top of this, the international community still expects the EU to continue financing AMISOM troops until October 2014, i.e. the end of the current mission's mandate.

On the one hand, that leaves the EU with very limited room of manoeuvre for reducing its financial contribution to AMISOM as it is committed to supporting African peace operations with the APF. On the other, despite this sizeable contribution the EU does not have any leverage on AMISOM's operational command or its troop architecture.

Faced with this state of affairs, the EU has recently adopted a pragmatic approach. It has been allocated a permanent seat at the AMISOM Military Operations Coordination Committee (MOCC) in charge of drafting the new Concept of Operations. Even if it may not be influential enough to shape the geographical deployment of the mission, it is still a relevant forum to influence the drafting process, hence ensuring that the EU is in a stronger position to complement its financial contribution to AMISOM with political input into its planning process.

Joined-up efforts

In addition to increasing the troops ceiling, the UN Security Council Resolution opens up – for the first time – the possibility for the under-equipped SNA to have access to 'the provision of food and water, fuel, transport, tents and in-theatre medical evacuation' provided by the UN 'only for joint SNA operations with AMISOM and which are part of the AMISOM's overall Strategic Concept'. This 'exceptional support' would bestow a *de facto* capacity-building role on AMISOM soldiers. Somali soldiers will be able to apply their skills in theatre, notably in counter-insurgency tactics.

This, in turn, would complement the activities EUTM Somalia has carried out since 2010 in training approximately one third of total SNA troops, i.e. 3,600 soldiers. This division of labour would occur just while EUTM Somalia is reducing its training activities proper and shifting to mentoring and providing strategic advice to the Somali Ministry of Defence and Chief of Defence. For that purpose, the mission finalised the relocation of all its assets from Uganda to Mogadishu on 4 December.

This access to UN logistical support might also encourage the Mogadishu-based Somali security institutions to continue reforming in order to retain full command and control over their forces. Facing heavy international pressures, the Somali Federal President started this reform process on 27 August by creating a National Security Council to oversee these institutions. The Somali Compact approved in Brussels on 16 September clarified the security tasks of the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice. Creating a mirror National Security Committee in Parliament to guarantee civilian oversight over the SNA is also under discussion. Momentum has been building up.

After the relative inertia of the FGS in autumn 2013, encouraging signs came from Mogadishu in December when the President appointed a new Prime Minister only a week after the incumbent lost a confidence vote in Parliament after a dispute with the President over the clan-based composition of his Cabinet.

Clearly, no international efforts will be successful without the commitment and the ability of the FGS to earn the trust of the population and secure the support of clan leaders for their reforms. More visibility for the Somali National Army as well as actions in line with AMISOM human rights standards might be useful steps in that direction. However, providing basic services to the population remains crucial for the stability and legitimacy of this federal government in the long run, as its 'honeymoon' is definitely over after 18 months in power.

Somalia has indeed been a test case for the EU's comprehensive approach by progressively increasing and fine-tuning complementarity, coherence and consistency between the different EU instruments. The new AMISOM mandate nevertheless points to the fact that EU tools are not currently being used to their full potential and that their eventual effectiveness is heavily dependent – ultimately – on other partners' efforts.

Julien Daemers is an Associate Fellow at the EUISS.

