

The War in Ukraine: Implications for the Africa-Europe Peace and Security Partnership

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Abstract

This paper discusses the war in Ukraine and what the EU's increasing preoccupation with it means for the EU-Africa peace and security partnership. It does this from the angle of a new EU funding mechanism, the European Peace Facility (EPF), which is a €5.6 billion fund that came into effect in March 2021 to support conflict management and international security during the EU's seven-year budget period (2021 to 2027). The facility funds a variety of activities globally and—for the first time in the EU's history—provides a legal basis for the EU to provide not only technical and material support but also lethal weapons to partner countries. As of May 2022, the EU has pledged to provide €2 billion to support Ukraine's armed forces aside from the unprecedented economic sanctions the EU has imposed on Russia.

The creation of the EPF is inspired by the EU's ambitious Global Strategy of 2016 (EEAS 2016) and the preceding policy discourse between the EU and its member states on making the EU a “global player” and not just a “global payer”. This shift is partly a response to the emerging international geopolitical order in which the EU feels the need to assert itself and defend its interests globally. This marks a radical paradigm shift in EU foreign policy.

The paper argues that the EU's evolving foreign policy and its unforeseen use of EPF funds in Ukraine have at least two implications for Africa. First, the use of



the EPF in Ukraine raises questions about the availability of funds for African peace support operations, which the EU has been supporting for some years. It raises also questions about the way Europe and Africa will decide about funding African security priorities. The EPF allows the transferring of funds and equipment to partner countries or regional coalitions directly, without the need to go through established regional organisations like the AU. Second, the EU's changing security interests and geopolitical ambitions as well as Africa's aspirations to find its place in the new global order could alter the dynamics of the EU-Africa peace and security partnership. While the EU remains an important economic and security actor in Africa—at the bilateral and continental levels—the EU-Africa partnership struggles to thrive and go beyond money to live up to its full potential.

To meet their own aspirations, the paper argues that the AU and its member states will have to work harder to reduce their financial, security and economic dependence on non-African states. The AU and its member states will also have to avoid getting trapped in geopolitical confrontations between “the east” and “the west”. At the same time, they need to summon the political leadership the continent needs to prevent and manage internal political crises and conflicts on the continent while reducing interference from different international partners.

Keywords: European Union, Russia, War in Ukraine, Political Implications.

1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) has acted swiftly and vigorously to denounce Russia's invasion of Ukraine and support Ukrainian resistance. Aside from the unprecedented economic sanctions the EU has imposed on Russia, it has also pledged to provide €2 billion to support Ukraine's armed forces.¹ The EU could possibly increase its financial support to Ukraine. But the EU's swift and unparalleled actions thus far demonstrate that the EU is no longer solely a soft power actor but also one that deploys hard power to defend its interests.

The EU will channel the €2 billion to EU member states, which will procure protective gear, fuel, and military equipment—including lethal weapons—to pass on to Ukraine. The EU will use the European Peace Facility (EPF), which is a €5.6 billion fund that came into effect in March 2021 for this purpose. The facility funds a variety of conflict management activities and—for the first time in the EU's history—provides a legal basis for the EU to provide not only technical and material support but also lethal weapons to partner countries. This marks a radical paradigm shift in EU foreign policy.

This paper discusses the war in Ukraine and what the EU's increasing preoccupation with it means for the EU-Africa peace and security partnership. It builds on the European Centre for Development Policy Management's (ECDPM) previous work on the EU-Africa peace and security relations, the European Peace Facility and the EU's use of the EPF for Ukraine (Deneckere 2019; Hauck 2020; Hauck and Shiferaw 2020; Hauck 2022). It argues that the EU's evolving foreign policy and its unforeseen use of EPF funds in Ukraine have at least two implications for Africa. First, the use of the EPF in Ukraine raises questions about the availability of funds for African peace support operations, which the EU has been supporting for some years. Second, the EU's changing security interests and geopolitical ambitions could alter the dynamics of the EU-Africa peace and security partnership.

2. The War in Ukraine: The Use of the European Peace Facility

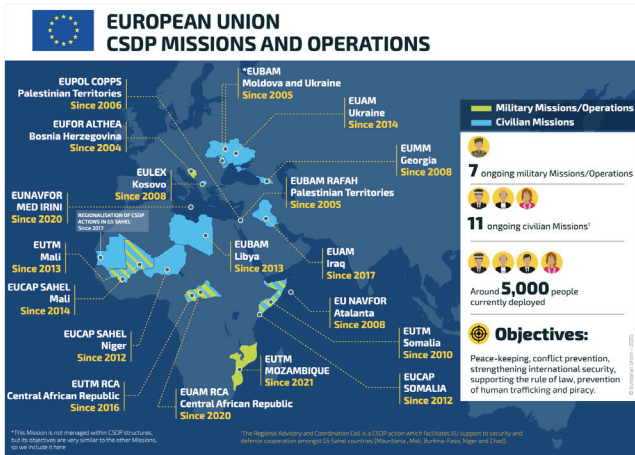
On Sunday, 27 February 2022, four days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen and Joseph Borrell, EU foreign policy

1 As of 13 May 2022

chief and head of the European External Action Service (EEAS), announced sanctions on Russia. They also pledged an emergency package of €500 million in support of the Ukrainian armed forces, including for the procurement of lethal weapons. A few weeks later, the European Council doubled this amount and authorised a total of €1 billion to be provided to Ukraine (Council of the EU 2022). On 13 April, the EU tripled this pledge, committing to give a total of 1.5 billion to Ukraine to strengthen the country's defensive capabilities against Russia's aggression (Council of the EU 2022). On 13 May 2022, during the G7 meeting, Borrell made yet another proposal to provide €500 million in military support to Ukraine, pushing the total pledge to Ukraine at the time of writing to €2 billion (EEAS 2022).

This money to support Ukraine's defence forces comes from the European Peace Facility (EPF). The EPF is a separate €5.6 billion fund set up to support conflict management and international security during the EU's seven-year budget period (2021 to 2027). It was formally established in March 2021 by the EU's Foreign Affairs Council. The fund is different, or "off-budget" in EU jargon, because some legal provisions prohibit the use of the regular EU multiannual budget for activities of a military nature. The EPF—set up as a separate fund—provides the legal basis for the EU to supply technical and military support to partner countries globally and to finance the EU's military and civil peace missions, the so-called CSDP missions (see graph below). The EPF will also be used to support regional organisations and their forces, such as the former African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) (now the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS)), which is one of the biggest African peace support operations.

While €5.6 billion seems like a lot of money, given the many engagements that need to be funded through the EPF, and considering the price of (sophisticated) lethal weapons, the scope of activities resourced via the EPF is limited (Hauck 2020).



Source: EEAS 2021

Two developments inspire the EPF. First, it results from the EU’s ambitious Global Strategy of 2016 (EEAS 2016) and the preceding policy discourse between the EU and its member states on making the EU a “global player” and not just a “global payer”. This shift is partly a response to the emerging international geopolitical order in which the EU feels the need to assert itself and defend its interests globally.

Second, the EPF builds on the EU’s experiences with the African Peace Facility (APF), through which the EU provided financial support to the peace and security activities of the African Union (AU). This ranged from institutional support to the AU’s African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), financing preventive diplomacy and mediation, and supporting the deployment of peace support operations (PSOs) such as the AMISOM and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). Between 2004 and 2020, the EU provided a total of €2.7 billion to the APF to fund the aforementioned activities and especially AMISOM stipends, which took the lion’s share of the APF funds (EC 2019a).

While the EPF builds on the APF, it is different from the APF in three ways: (i) the EPF is a global instrument and hence not geographically limited to Africa; (ii) it permits the transfer of military equipment, including lethal weapons; and (iii) the EU can transfer funds and equipment to partner countries or regional coalitions directly, without the need to go through established regional organisations like the AU.

With these arrangements, the EPF provides flexibility to the EU and enables it to support operations at both bilateral and regional levels without intermediaries such as

the AU (Frisell and Sjökvist 2021). This in turn enhances the political weight of the EU, even if the EU's military role in international affairs remains limited so far. The EPF, therefore, signals an end to the era in which the EU saw itself primarily as a global soft power actor.

In addition to these political and strategic rationales for establishing the EPF, the EPF also adds operational and bureaucratic value. For example, financial and technical assistance provided to African PSOs via the APF strengthened their functional capacity and sustained them for years (AMISOM ran for more than a decade). However, there was a sense that because African PSOs have combat-oriented mandates, they would need “force multipliers” such as modern artillery to be effective (Mr Mulongo in an interview by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies 2018). The EPF is meant to fill in this gap.

3. Political and Financial Implications of the War in Ukraine for EU-Africa Peace and Security Partnership

The EU is one of the AU's major peace and security partners and the most significant financial contributor to the APSA and the African Union Commission (AUC) (Pharathlathe and Vanheukelom 2019). As mentioned above, African PSO operations like AMISOM (now ATMIS) have financially relied on EU funding and were funded through the APF. When the APF was dissolved upon the introduction of the EPF, the EU had, in principle, committed to continuing its financial support to the AU and African PSOs but without earmarking funds for Africa.

As the EPF is a global instrument, the lack of designated funding for Africa had already raised concerns, as had the fact that the EU can support the military of partner countries and their PSOs in Africa directly, without any political engagement by the AU (Hauck and Shiferaw 2021). In the last EU-AU summit in February 2022, the two institutions renewed their peace and security partnership and promised to maintain a consultative partnership based on the AU-EU MoU of Peace, Security and Governance (2018). But they fell short of introducing formal mechanisms to ensure predictable financing for African PSOs and a role for the AU in deciding or monitoring the use of the EPF in Africa.

Before the war in Ukraine, the EU had made specific pledges to the AU Mission

in Somalia (AMISOM, now ATMIS), the military component of the G5 Sahel Force;² the PSO in Gambia (ECOMIG); and the MNJTF of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (which supports the fight against Boko Haram in Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria and Niger). All of these were to be financed by the EPF.

The EPF was scheduled to disburse its funds incrementally from €420 million in 2021 to 1.3 billion in 2027 (EP 2022). The EU's decision to provide €2 billion to Ukraine constitutes approximately 35% of the seven-year EPF budget. It is almost four times more than the EU intended to spend in 2022. The EPF's disbursement schedule does indeed need to be flexible, but the current situation begs not only a revision of the EPF's disbursement plan but also calls into question the EPF's capacity to finance African peace and security efforts at the same scale throughout the ongoing EU funding period, which ends in 2027.

Amidst these concerns, in April 2022, the EU allocated €600 million to support the African Union and its peace and security objectives for a period of three years. This is a substantial contribution and can be taken as an affirmation of the EU's commitment to continue supporting peace and security in Africa. This decision is, however, a far cry from earmarking a portion of the EPF for Africa throughout the seven-year budget. It also contrasts with the €2 million allocated to the Ukraine war within three months.

Predictable financing has been on the AU's agenda for some years and is among the core objectives of the AU institutional reform process chartered in 2018. Through this institutional reform, the AU devised a formula according to which member states would raise enough funds to reduce the organisation's financial dependence on partners. The formula, known as the Kaberuka plan—named after the AU's High Representative for Financing the African Union and the Peace Fund, Dr Donald Kaberuka—proposed that member states introduce a 0.2% levy on eligible imports to meet their financial obligations to the AU (Apiko and Miyandazi 2019). According to this formula, the proceeds collected from this levy would amount to \$1.2 billion, covering 100% of the AU's operational costs, 75% of its programmatic costs, and 25% of the AU's peace and security expenses in 2020.

The reform process also included a revitalisation of the African Peace Fund, which was set up in 1993 to fund the peace and security activities of the AU's predecessor—the Organisation for African Unity. While the Fund was to be replenished from the AU's regular budget, as well as contributions from civil society and the private sector,

2 Covering Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger

it never, since its establishment, had the necessary funds. With the AU reform process, member states are to make a regular contribution to the fund, either from the 0.2% levy they introduce or voluntary contributions, to finance some of the AU's preventive diplomacy and mediation work.

By February 2022, member states had contributed \$252 million to the Peace Fund against the planned \$400 million by 2020 (AU 2022). This is encouraging yet insufficient to meet the financial needs of the AU by its own standards. Moreover, even if the African Peace Fund met its financial objectives in the Kaberuka plan, the amount would be nowhere near that needed to run PSOs. Much of the fund's resources would therefore be limited to funding preventive diplomacy and limited aspects of force deployment (ISS 2021; ISS 2022). Therefore, the AU will continue to rely on international partnerships for some time.

In due recognition of this fact, in 2018, the AU started negotiations with the United Nations (UN) to secure 75% of the funding for AU-mandated PSOs from UN-assessed contributions. The AU reasoned that maintaining global peace and security is the primary mandate of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and that when the AU deploys PSOs, it does so on behalf of the UNSC. The AU hoped to get a commitment from the UN that AU-mandated PSOs would, in principle, receive substantial UN finances even if the particular PSOs that would be funded from UN-assessed contributions would be determined on a case-by-case basis. The AU's proposal was met with several questions: who would have force command (the AU or the UN), how could the AU cover the remainder of the costs (25%), and were the AU's human rights compliance measures up to standard (Shiferaw 2021)? The negotiation was suspended after a draft UNSC resolution proposed by the AU in December 2018 failed to be endorsed by some members of the UNSC—notably the US. The AU is yet to reformulate its position and re-engage with the UNSC in the hope that the current Biden-led government in the United States (US) might be amenable to its proposal.

While the EU's increasing political and financial attention on Ukraine deepens the financial precarity of securing funding for African PSOs, the AU's concern over developments in Europe is not solely financial. With a rapidly and dramatically changing security landscape at its borders, the EU's security priorities and global ambitions are changing. The speed at which EU member states came together to unanimously agree on tough sanctions against Russia and the fact that the EU decided to use the EPF to pay for the procurement of military supplies—beyond the military equipment that various EU and Western countries have sent to Ukraine bilaterally—are political acts

that demonstrate the impact of this war on the EU's foreign and security policy.

4. It Is Not Just about Money: Political Implications of the War on the EU-Africa Partnership

The EU's ambition to "play hardball" to secure its political and strategic interests was captured in the statements from the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the EU Commission (HR/VP) Borrell (2022), who opined that the war in Ukraine "has given birth to a geopolitical Europe". But this ambition precedes the war in Ukraine. The 2016 Global Strategy mentioned above was set to transform the EU into a global player and not just a payer. Echoing this objective in one of her first speeches as President of the EU, Von der Leyen spoke of her vision to lead the "geopolitical commission", which "Europe urgently needs" (EC 2019b). Similarly, the EU's recent investments in enhancing defence innovation and logistics in the Union and grand infrastructure projects such as the Global Gateway, which resembles China's Belt and Road project, demonstrate the new role the EU is carving out for itself (Bilal et al 2021; Csernatoni 2021).

How the EU will go about realising these ambitions will be challenged within the Union. The final decision on foreign policy issues in Europe lies with the 27 EU member states, and depending on the topic, EU member states might have diverging policy priorities. But the steps taken at the overall Union level promote more harmonisation among EU member states on foreign policy and will inevitably translate into the EU's peace and security interests in Africa.

As global power shifts in favour of new actors, including China, Russia, Turkey and the Gulf states, Western actors increasingly face tough competition for global influence, including in Africa. Europe's partnership with Africa and influence there is important not just for the security and prosperity of Europe but also for Europe's global positioning. Against this backdrop, a geopolitical EU, together with the more dominant EU member states, will likely pursue their security and economic interests in Africa more vigorously. This could go in two directions. On the one hand, it could be the "boost" that would transform the EU-Africa partnership from a donor-recipient relationship to an interest-based partnership. But on the other hand, the EU's geopolitical interests may not always align with Africa's. The latest changes to the EU's financial instruments and the set-up of the EPF, in particular, raise two critical issues in this regard.

First, the EPF allows the EU to finance the provision of equipment, including

lethal weapons, to countries in Africa. This marks the first time the EU can do this, ending an era in which the EU saw itself primarily as a soft power actor in the world. While decisions regarding the EPF will be made through consultation among EU member states, there is a risk of its instrumentalisation by some of the heavyweights within the EU—for instance, France—even if some EU member states are wary of the use of the EPF. Further, the EU's military assistance and support in procuring lethal weapons could entangle the EU in partner countries' internal politics, especially in contexts where the military or the incumbent lack popular and political legitimacy. Recent military takeovers in Mali,³ Chad and Burkina Faso—which constitute three of the five G5 Sahel forces—have made this concern more palpable.

Second, the EU's ability to decide on the use of the EPF in Africa without formal and political consultation with the AU risks sidelining the AU, which is the ultimate peace and security coordinator on the continent. It also takes away from the two decades of investments that were put into building and operationalising the APSA—including by the EU. The fact that the EU can bypass the AU doesn't mean it will, and the EU has stated its intentions to continue working closely with the AU. Yet, without a formal role for the AU, there is no guarantee that the EU's actions will always align with the AU's objectives.

These challenges should be juxtaposed with the AU's reactions. The lack of a strong objection from the AU or its member states during or before the last EU-AU summit in Brussels (17–18 February 2022) indicates that there appears to be a divergence between continental interests and national interests of AU member states. Some of the AU's member states stand to benefit from the EPF and the financing, training, equipment and weapons that can be mobilised from it. Therefore, they are likely to overlook how the EPF can enhance the EU's peace and security role in Africa—possibly at the cost of the AU.

This exemplifies one of the structural predicaments of the AU as an intergovernmental organisation—its decisions do not supersede those of its member states. Therefore, when there is tension between continental and national interests, member states prioritise their national interests. Member states, and not the AU Commission, are the most important decision-makers in the AU's partnerships with external actors. Decision-making at the AU—be it at the level of the AU Peace and Security Council or the AU General Assembly of Heads of States and Governments,

3 At the time of writing this article, the Government of Mali declared that it was stepping out of the G5 Sahel Force and leaving all of the G5 Sahel organs (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1118582>).

which are the two most prominent political bodies of the AU—is based on consensus. This process, therefore, allows member states to create alliances among themselves over shared agendas. It also allows some of the more prominent or more politically influential members of the Union to steer discussions in one way or another. While it is hard to pinpoint which of the AU's member states or political heavyweights stand to benefit from the new arrangements of the EPF, it is worth noting that the growing number of states on the continent facing terrorism and serious challenges to state security might have made the EU's offer more interesting.

The implications of the EU's global geopolitical positioning and its current absorption in the war in Ukraine do not begin and end with the EPF. Africa's aspirations to find its place in the new global order and strike partnerships with a multiplicity of new and old actors might impact the nature of the EU-Africa partnership. While the EU remains an important economic and security actor in Africa—at the bilateral and continental levels—it is not the only one. It is also not necessarily the most preferred one. The EU's financial support to the AU is unmatched, yet the EU-Africa partnership struggles to thrive and go beyond money to live up to its full potential (Shiferaw 2022).

The EU has been increasingly trying to double down its efforts in the EU-Africa partnership to compete with the multiplicity of global players in the past 20 years. But neither the EU nor its member states are at peace with Africa's diversification of partners. Europe has qualms with China's growing interests not only in commerce but also in peace and security in Africa. China's military base in Djibouti—one of the most strategic locations in the world—diversifies the type and number of actors that claim relevance in the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Aden. But its presence causes unease in the US, which also has its own navy base in Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti. This discomfort with China's growing global influence and partnerships in Africa is no longer limited to political elites in the US or European capitals. Media and political narratives in Europe are often replete with simplistic narratives about “China's new scramble for Africa” while portraying the EU as a values-based actor which stands on the higher moral ground (Karkare et al. 2020; Soulé 2020).

Similarly, the EU carefully watches Russia's security partnerships with countries like the Central African Republic (CAR) and has criticised Russia's presence in Mali. The diplomatic fallout between Mali and France, for example, has partly to do with France's accusations of Mali's military junta's partnership with Russian private security company Wagner Group (Surk 2021). While the military coups in Mali, first in 2020 and then again in 2021, were popularly backed, they had aggravated Mali's African (ECOWAS,

AU) and European partners. Yet the accusation of Mali's collaboration with the Wagner Group escalated things with Mali's European partners. The Malian government denies the allegations and insists the security partnership is with the Russian state and that it is within the privileges of its sovereignty to choose its partners (Perelman and Boisbouvier 2022). France has since announced it will withdraw its forces from Mali (VOA 2022). The EU has frozen its military training programme for Mali's army (VOA 2022) based on the argument that it was not prepared to train Mali's soldiers, who would then operate under Malian/Russian command. On 23 March 2022, Human Rights Watch reported that the killing of 300 civilians in the Malian town of Moura was allegedly committed by Malian and Russian soldiers (Human Rights Watch 2022).

In Europe (and the US), the abstention or absence of 25 African countries on the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution denouncing Russia's invasion of Ukraine was interpreted, by and large, as alignment with Russia and as evidence of Russia's growing influence in Africa (Murphy 2022; Walsh and Eligon 2022). This is despite 28 countries, or 51% of African countries, voting for the resolution and only one country (Eritrea) voting against the resolution. The reasons for Africa's vote are far more complex and multi-layered (Gbadomosi 2022; Ogunmodede 2022; Luce 2022; Kifukwe and Lebovich 2022). The very expectation that African countries ought to vote, not based on their *realpolitik* but in alignment with the West, is one of the fundamental problems characterising Europe-Africa relations.

The continuation of the devastating war in Ukraine and the intensification of confrontations between Russia and the West have left many African countries worrying about being pulled into one camp against another. As Western economic and political sanctions against Russia mount, there is incredible pressure on African states to distance themselves from Russia (Gramer 2022; Du Plessis 2022; Eguegu 2022; Chanson 2022). The US, for example, recently passed the Countering Malign Russian Activities in Africa Act, which tasks the Secretary of State with devising a plan to "counter such influence and activities effectively, including through appropriate United States foreign assistance programs" (Fabricius 2022; Senate of the United States 2022). The continent, however, aims to diversify its partners and benefit from the differentiated comparative advantage each provides.

5. Conclusion

Going forward, the EU-Africa partnership will need a lot of diplomatic efforts, a change of expectations and respect for diverging positions to rebalance existing disharmonies. The EU would need to accept that African countries will diversify their partners and might choose to work with those that the EU is in competition with or doesn't approve of. The EU can, in turn, decide on the intensity and scope of its cooperation with such countries. But the AU and African countries will increasingly push back on European bids—perceived or real—to dictate who can and cannot partner with Africa.

In the EPF, the EU has created an instrument that allows it to choose the type and depth of its partnership with African countries based on its own criteria without being tied to the AU. To counter this and meet their own aspirations, the AU and its member states will have to work harder to reduce their financial reliance on the EU and other donors. This would require mobilising member states to pay their membership dues to the AU by providing them with the assistance they need and applying diplomatic pressure and sanctions when deemed necessary. Recently, the AU sanctioned South Sudan and Tunisia and suspended their right to speak at the AU for failing to pay their membership dues (Mono Danga 2020; *North Africa Post* 2020). This is one of the ways in which the AU is building its enforcement mechanisms. But the economic impact of COVID-19 and rising oil and food prices due to the war in Ukraine are likely to present deeper financial challenges to those AU member states which depend on oil and grain imports.

The AU and its member states will also have to avoid getting trapped in geopolitical confrontations between “the east” and “the west”. At the same time, they need to summon the political leadership the continent needs to prevent and manage internal political crises and conflicts on the continent while reducing interference from different international partners. But this is easier said than done. The interests of political actors within member states, across countries in the regional blocks, or across the continent vary. This opens up opportunities for alliances where political actors in a country work with external actors—within the region or internationally—that share their interests. The situations in Libya and Somalia are examples in this regard. The political role of transcontinental political actors in Libya, for example, has not only sidelined the AU but has also made it incredibly difficult to arrive at political settlements arranged at regional or continental levels.

Therefore, the AU and EU should re-examine the nature of their partnerships

to ensure their shared objectives align. Each partner should also be aware of the geopolitical interests of the other. Furthermore, both parties should note that regardless of how they wish to frame it, the EU-Africa partnership cannot remain unaffected by geopolitical developments—including the changing positions of Europe and Africa in the world.

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