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Foreign Military Presence in Africa

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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

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Foreign Military Presence in Africa

Lieutenant-Colonel Yassin Daffa

Aim

This paper aims to discuss the impact of foreign military presence in Africa. Main focus on different occasions and situation instigating the presence of foreign militaries. Moreover, the paper will assess the position of African Union (AU) for the maintenance of peace and security. Furthermore, analyze possible measures which may be taken to ensure the continent have its capable standby force, which will intervene or settle disputes and minimize dependence from foreign military assistance.

Introduction

Africa is the second largest Continent on the earth with landmass size of "30,065,000" square kilometers[1]. The continent owns a high growing population which have a direct impact to the security challenges. It is currently estimated to have 1.3 billion population in mid-2020[2].

The history of Africa is very complex that can take thousands of pages to narrate. "Fifty four" (54) independent countries are mapping this beautiful continent till this year (2022)[3]. Many African countries' borders were established in 1884-1885 following Berlin conference, which decided the European powers to share African territories peacefully without confrontation as before[4].

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[1]   The World Fact book: World. Central Intelligence Agency.
[2] "International Indicators: Population mid-2020." Population Reference Bureau.
[3] The World Fact book: World. Central Intelligence Agency.
[4] J. D. Fage, A History of Africa, London, Hutchinson & Co. Ltd, 1978

Africa hosts many foreign militaries under bilateral or multilateral agreement, aiming to settle the unremitting conflicts arising time to time. It has been decades since these international initiatives started to support Africa in restoration of peace. Currently UN is fully engaged supporting efforts put by the AU and Regional Economic Communities/ Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention[5]. Formally many foreign forces deployed in Africa under International agreements (UN), but currently there are many foreign military bases situated in different parts under bilateral agreement conditions[6].

Foreign militaries in Africa have been very successful in the maintenance of peace and security of the continent. The achievements have been possible because of possession of enough funds and operational capabilities to compare with African forces which are mainly depend on foreign assistance. In order to achieve positive impacts, foreign militaries need to improve its engagement with AU and sub-regional communities to further strengthening joint efforts for peace and security in the continent. Moreover, African Union needs to improve its military capabilities to ensure the presence of a capable standby force ready to intervene disputes threatening peace and security in the continent.

In discussing the impact of foreign militaries in Africa, this paper will lens through the colonial militaries, United Nation (UN) troops, African Union troops, local African troops, and the impact of foreign military bases in the continent.

The impact of colonial militaries

Before colonial rule in Africa, tribal leaders were responsible for peace and security of their chiefdoms or kingdoms. There were neither systematic 'trained' soldiers nor fire arms before

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[5]   The Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Division of the AU Peace and Security Department report.
[6] Ibid

18 century. The import of fire arms into West Africa was observed between 1750 -1807, to be used in the war for gold[7]. Estimated 283,000 to 39400 guns only from England were imported per year[8]. The imports were not only in West Africa but also all parts of Africa where major slave exporting was taking place.[9] For example, estimated 50,000 guns were imported yearly to Congo in Loango which was a key slave trade area.[10] Analyzing why fire arms were imported this paper finds that, the slave sellers showed a very strong requirement for fire arms to ensure their security[11]. Fire arms import was one of the major impact of foreign military presence in the continent.

In line with fire arms, the First World War (WW1) in 1914 to 1918, highlights another significant impact. Most of African countries were colonies of European powers except Liberia and Ethiopia which were retaining their independence[12], therefore participation of Africans in WWI was influenced by the colonial rulers. Assessment shows that, about "135,000" African soldiers were estimated to serve in the main three conflicted areas within the continent while about 1465,000 laborers served as logistic support for the forces including 70,000 European South African and 50,000 Indian troops[13]. The war caused a significant number of wounded and fatalities. Approximately 750,000 civilian in Africa were killed as a result of WW1[14].

Impact of UN troops

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[7]   Journal of African History- 1980, the import of fire arms into West African in 18 century.

[8] Ibid

[9] Ibid

[10] Ibid

[11] Inikori, J. E., "Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: An Assessment of Curtin and Anstey," Journal of African History, 17, no. 2 (1976), pp. 219–21,Google Scholar and "Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Rejoinder," Journal of African History, 17, no. 4 (1976), p. 609.Google Scholar

[12] Beaupré, Nicolas. "France." International Encyclopedia of the First World War. Eds, Daniel, Ute, Freie University Berlin, 2014. Web.

[13] War Losses (Africa) | International Encyclopedia of the First World War (WW1)". Encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net. Retrieved 24 March 2021.

[14] Ibid

The history of United Nations (UN) troops in Africa begins from 1947s, serving in various African countries following violence and civil conflicts. The most significant UN missions are those conducted in countries such as Angola, Liberia, Congo, Somalia, Sudan and Rwanda[15]. UN missions in Africa have positive and negative impact to the peace and security of the Continent. Every mission has its different impact, this paper will assess a few of them focusing on UN peace keeping missions and those conducted under the African Union mandate.

The first UN mission in Africa was -UN Operations in the Congo (ONUC) which started on July 1960 ended in 1964[16]. It was during the period of Congo's transition from a Belgium colony to its independence, when the assassination of the Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba by a firing squad occurred on 17 January 1961[17]. This was the first UN mission assessed to have negative impact to the history of Africa. The assassination of Patrice Lumumba while UN's troops are on the ground, disenchanted several African states about the usefulness of peacekeeping and the UN's ability to protect their hard won sovereignty through the colonial struggle. These countries believed that, the superpowers were using Africa as a ploy to spread their hegemony[18]. The assassination incident motivated pan-africanists, such as Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, Guinea's Sékou Touré, Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, and Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, to redouble their efforts to create Organization of African Unity (OAU) in May 1963, which was later replaced by the African Union (AU) in July 2002[19].

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[15]   Thompsell, Angela. "Past United Nations Missions in Africa." Thought Co, Jan. 28, 2020, thoughtco.com/past-united-nations-missions-africa-43309.
[16] Ibid
[17] How did Patrice Lumumba die? | Britannicawww.britannica.com/story/how-did-Patrice-Lumumba-die
[18] Karbo, T., & Virk, K. (Eds.). (2018). the Palgrave handbook of peacebuilding in Africa. eBook on 2022
[19] Ibid

UNAVEM I was the second UN mission, it was named Angola Verification Mission taking place from January 1989 to May 1991. The mission was followed by UNAVEM II (1991) and UNAVEM III (1995)[20]. The impact of this mission was to constituent the electoral process for the first time in the history of Angola including the two rival faction of the civil war[21]. It was not only a lesson for Angolans but to rest of African countries which were involved in endless conflicts.

Another UN mission was Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) which was conducted from April 1990 to March 1990 during Angolan Civil War and Namibia's transition to independence from South Africa. The impact of this mission was to facilitate democratic elections and preparations for establishment of a new constitution. At the end of the mission Namibia joined the UN membership[22]. It was followed by UNAVEM II - UN Angola Verification Mission II from May 1991 through February 1995. These two missions set an example for African politics showing the importance of rule of law and democratic elections in the continent.

The UNOSOM I -UN Operation in Somalia was another significant mission conducted from April 1992 to March 1993, which was followed by UNOSOM II starting from March 1993 to March 1995. The follow up mission was because of continued escalation of violence making it very difficult for UNOSOM to deliver required relief aid. These two mission were not successful until another initiative established by the United States of America creating a Unified Task Force (UNITAF) to help in protection and distribution of humanitarian aid[23]. Somalia remains a security

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[20]　　Thompsell, Angela. "Past United Nations Missions in Africa." Thought Co, Jan. 28, 2020, thoughtco.com/past-united-nations-missions-africa-43309.

[21] United Nations Angola Verification Mission II from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

[22] Wikipedia, Sitkowski, Andrzej (2006). UN peacekeeping: myth and reality. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group. pp. 80–86. ISBN 978-0-275-99214-9.

[23] United Nations Security Council Resolution 794 from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

fragile country as criminals and terrorist groups such as Al-Shabab take advantage of the situation jeopardizing stability of the country.

Another significant UN mission was ONUMOZ - UN Operations in Mozambique established from December 1992 to December 1994. This mission helped in concluding the civil war by a ceasefire, creating a room for the government of Mozambique and the major factions (Mozambican National Resistance- RENAMO) to disband their troops. Moreover displaced people were resettled and situation allowed a democratic elections after many years of civil unrest.[24] The mission successfully managed to secure and paved a peaceful road to negotiation and finally law and order was restored.

Almost all other UN missions in Africa had related outcomes. This paper assessed that, there were total 90 peace operations in Africa conducted in Africa between 1947 -2013[25]. It is very unfortunately that conflicts still exists in different parts of the continent. UN missions have done a lot to maintain peace and security in Africa, these efforts should be appreciated by all peace lovers, what is more worth is to reform these initiatives to the best approach in order to have a sustainable solution of endless conflicts.

In the article about "peacekeeping successes and failures in Africa", written by Dr. Debay Tadesse Senior Researcher in the Conflict Prevention Program, ISS Addis Ababa highlighted that, "in some cases conflicts prevented through intervention often the solution imposed was a military solution without addressing the underlying issues" of African's conflicts[26]. It has been witnessed

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[24] A History of United Nations Missions in Africa – https://www.thoughtco.com/past-united-nations-missions-africa-43309
[25] The total number of peace operations worldwide during this period was 175. See Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, "Trends in Peace Operations, 1947-2013" in Joachim Koops et al (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2015).
[26] By Dr. Debay Tadesse, Conflict Prevention Program, ISS Addis Ababa Peacekeeping successes and failures in Africa – Relief Web https://reliefweb.int/report/angola/peacekeeping-successes-and-failures-africa

in deferent occasions that military intervention help to stop conflict for a while and the same conflict reoccurs. For example, In Somalia military intervention helped in containing the security situation to help humanitarian assistance, but unfortunately wasn't a lasting stable security solution. In 1993 Mohamed Farrah Aidid waited until when US troops withdrew from Somalia and subsequently in June 1995 declared himself President of Somalia[27].

In line with UN missions in Africa, the European Union (EU) has been an important partner for the maintenance of peace and security in African. Since 2000s, EU increased its peacekeeping activities in Africa under its framework of defense and security policy, the main focus on the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and Central Africa[28]. Moreover, the European Union is a major facilitator in funds and capacity building to the African Union, which has a significant impact to the economy and security of the continent.

The impact of the AU troops

Before the creation of a new African Union in 2004, peace operations were conducted by the sub-regional economic communities. However, from 2004 to 2014 the African Union led fifteen (15) missions, authorizing deployment of over 60,000 troops and over 400 civilian experts.[29] AU's peacekeeping missions being conducted by local African troops, enjoys smooth participation due to the fact that, environment and culture diverse have no great impact for them. However, there are some caveats affecting conduct of African troops in the theater of peacekeeping operations, the most significant challenge is being more dependent on external assistance to deploy and sustain. Many aspects require bilateral and multilateral assistance packages mainly for; training and

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[27]   https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Mohamed_Farrah_Aidid
[28] Peace Operations in Africa: Patterns, Problems, and Prospects Paul D. Williams
[29] Ibid

equipment to enhance peacekeeping capabilities.[30] It is these facts which suggests importance for African countries to unify their efforts and create a common objective by using their available resources to improve capacity in the maintenance of law and order in the continent. Sustainable peace needs a sound political will to deal with identified root causes of the conflicts in Africa.

The impact of local foreign militaries

The impact of local Africa's military intervention in conflicted areas and their outcomes is an important aspect to be discussed. Many Africans believe that Africa's problems will be solved by Africans.[31] There are many factors causing unrest and insecurity in many Africa's conflicts, some of the reasons assessed to be, dictatorial regimes, corruption, and mismanagement of natural resources[32]. These few mentioned factors have been the key aspects which trigger coups in the most African countries[33]. Coups have been a common phenomenon in Africa since 1960s to 1990s after the independence of most of African countries[34]. Peace and security in all African sub regions, such as West Africa, North Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa, and East Africa have been challenged by unpredictable coups. This paper will mostly focus on the intervention of Tanzania's military campaign in Uganda in 1978. Records shows that, there were five military takeovers in Uganda until 1986 when the last one was planned and commanded by President Yoweri Kaguta Museven[35].

Tanzania's military operations in Uganda had a significant impact for Uganda's security after its completion in 1979. Idi Amin forces invaded Tanzania in 1978 and annexed some parts

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[30] Ibid

[31] African problems must be solved by Africans Ramaphosa https://www.africanews.com/2020/02/07/african-problems."As Africans we would always like to see African problems being resolved by Africans.

[32] Military interventions in Africa - an overview https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/military-interventions-in-africa

[33] https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/military-interventions-in-africa-2020-08-21 by Hassan Isilow and Felix Tih.

[34] Military interventions in Africa - an overview - Anadolu Agency, AA Ankara - 21 Aug 2020.

[35] Ibid

of the Kagera region in Tanzania. This seizure of land was a major reason for Tanzania's military operation in Uganda.[36] Although there were some legal aspects questioning legitimacy of the war by different scholars, Tanzania seems to have used it's right to defend sovereign and its borders according to the international laws[37]. Tanzania's intervention in Uganda, was believed to be a self-defense operations from Amin's inversion, but also countering intervention of some external militaries during the conflict including Libya's troops[38]. In a research conducted by Mambo, Andrew, Schofield and Julian, researchers on "military and civilian diversion" argued that, both civilian and military regimes will normally never divert militaries over which they have some control[39]. Not only Idd Amin used his military to violate human rights in Uganda, but also violated international laws and sovereignty of neighboring countries including Tanzania. The point of legitimacy of foreign military operations in Africa and elsewhere is a complex diplomatic domain as in many cases, the issue of overlooking international laws have been assessed including Kagera War. This paper does not intend to assess the Kagera war to find who was right or wrong, but highlights its consequences and the impact of military interventions. There was a big question that, in the situation of Idi Amin's authoritarianism violating human rights and international laws who was supposed to intervene and why there was no immediate action to stop him? It was a point of highlighting the presence of some weakness in the entire international political and legal systems which leads some individual states to take action on their own. Idi Amin's regime was collapsed after he flew his country to Libya leaving a room for democratic space to take part. From the time Amin's regime was removed, Uganda and the entire East Africa region remained calm.

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[36]   The Kagera War by Stapleton, Timothy: War and Conflict in the Twentieth Century, 2018
[37] Burrows, Noreen. "Tanzania's Intervention in Uganda: Some Legal Aspects." The World Today, vol. 35, no. 7, 1979, pp. 306–10, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40395128. Accessed 9 Apr. 2022.
[38] Ibid
[39] Journal of Political and Military Sociology; DeKalb Vol. 35, Iss. 2, (Winter 2007): 299-0_6.

The impact of foreign military bases in Africa

There are many reasons for the presence of foreign military bases in Africa. Many of the bases exist under bilateral agreements[40]. It is assessed that, positive outcomes have been signaled by foreign troops in Africa. Although it is difficult to generalize how much have been achieved to date, but looking at few examples can justify how much these bases help to secure peace and security of the respective sub regions.

For decades, East Africa and the general area of the horn of Africa, particularly in the coast of Indian Ocean (Djibouti and Somalia), the Gulf of Aden and the Gulf of Guinea, piracy activities eroded maritime security with high effect in arms, drugs, human trafficking, illegal unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and pollution at the sea[41]. Maritime piracy and armed robbery in the Indian Ocean caused great damage to the economy of all member countries in the region and the entire global economy for years until 2008, when the European Union devoted to maritime security in Africa[42]. The impact of maritime piracy in Africa had a significant global security threat which drew attention to all great powers including the US. This fact was one of the major reasons for the presence of foreign military bases in Africa[43].

Foreign militaries occupy land in different sub - regions of Africa. In most cases foreign military bases are establishment under bilateral agreement as an internal concern for national interest as long the land occupied is not for free. It has been observed that, hundreds of US dollars are paid per year in the respective countries. For example, regardless of its land mass size, Djibouti

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[40]   The 601th meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council on early warning and horizon scanning
08 June 2016
[41] Piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Africa; EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service: Eric Pichon with Marian Pietsch Members' Research Service PE 635.590 – March 2019
[42] Ibid
[43] Ibid

willingly hosts many foreign military bases not only because of its strategic geographical location but, it makes more than $300 million annually[44]. Theo Neethling, Professor of Political Science, Department of Political Studies and Governance, University of the Free State, highlights in his article "Why foreign countries are scrambling to set up bases in Africa" lists some few examples of these military bases. US has approximately 7,000 military personnel on rotational deployment in Africa[45], helping in joint operations with African troops against jihadist groups including Al-Shabab.

Moreover, foreign militaries have a greater impact in African politics. As military coups still exist in Africa, constitutional political leadership still threatened in some security unstable countries such as Comoros, South Sudan and Mali just to mention a few. Foreign militaries have been a key mechanism helping in securing democratic elected civilian leadership in some unstable African countries when a need arise. One of the examples was in 2008 when African union 1,500 troops from Tanzania, Sudan, Libya and Senegal helped President Ahmed Mohamed Sambi to restore Anjouan from Col Bakar rebellion[46].

Conclusion

This paper concludes that, foreign military presence in Africa has a great contribution in the maintenance of law and order making not only Africa but also our world, the best place for humankind.

Bilateral agreement between foreign militaries and some countries in Africa, has pros and cons for the AU. Assessment shows that, it would be stronger and effective if agreements involve

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[44]   This Tiny African Country Has the Most Foreign Militaryhttps://ng.opera.news/ng/en/politics/
[45] Why foreign countries are scrambling to set up bases in Africa Published: September 15, 2020 https://theconversation.com/why-foreign-countries-are-scrambling-by Theo Neethling
[46] BBC NEWS | World | Africa | Comorian rebel remanded in news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/Africa/7331766.stm

available regional and sub-regional organizations in order to having a common understanding and build trust among member states. African Union should manage disputes and insecurity within the continent, but it may be not successful if challenges, including lack of capable and strong standby force is not addressed.

This paper assesses that, UN forces will remain to be a reliable option in settling disputes in Africa, but it would be more effective if its mechanics and approaches are reviewed to mitigate conflicts in a more suitable way to have lasting solutions. Perhaps some of the conflicts needs more political missions than military. The need for sustainable peace is highly required in order to create a suitable environment for economic activities. Africa must search for a proper solution of complex problems by targeting the root causes, avoid stopping disputes instead sustainable solutions. For example, the South Sudan's, dispute reoccurred several times immediately after peacekeeping operations terminated.

Foreign military bases have its importance for the interest of global peace and security. It must be appreciated but also more important, if agreement involves the African Union to strengthening and join efforts for the betterment of the entire continent's security. Many debates and arguments during African Union security meetings highlights, the aspect of bilateral agreement as a challenge and weakness to the member states. Africa needs lasting peace and security, therefore sub-regional organizations should join their efforts, to improve African Union capability in handling challenges facing the continent. In the same line African Union must decrease its economic dependence from foreign systems instead establish a strong mechanism to use internal resources blessed with to have a strong and powerful economic and political Union.

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16. Ibid
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41. Piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Africa; EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service: Eric Pichon with Marian Pietsch Members' Research Service PE 635.590 – March 2019

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43. Ibid

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