THE UNWINDING OF UN PEACE OPERATIONS IN AFRICA: IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL PEACE AND STABILITY

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Abstract: *The draw downs of United Nations peace operations from the African continent require thorough arrangements that are fit to face the challenges ahead. This paper seeks to contribute to the discussion on UN peace operations in the light of recent development and apparent difficulties in ensuring stability in the aftermath of mission withdrawals. Through extensive desk research, and relying on the author's comprehensive knowledge on peacekeeping in Africa, the paper discusses the impact of the unwinding of peace operations on peace and security in Africa. It also analyses how draw downs can create space for the existing terrorist to undermine relative peace and security in mission theatres. Future prospects for peace and areas for possible improvement are outlined. The research highlights the potential challenges associated with mission closures, including but not limited to the emerging issues of democratic transitions, particularly election-related issues, SSR, DDR and reintegration of former combatants into national armies. The paper concludes that while financing remains challenges to UN peace operations, putting in place resilient structures is critical to ensuring peace and stability and prevents conflict.*

Key Words: Peace operations, Africa, Withdrawal, Stability, Sustainable peace
Research Area: Social Science
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1. INTRODUCTION

Discussions on the withdrawal of peace operations from post-conflict nations are not a recent phenomenon. Increasing demands for a systemic approach lead to the emergence of a focus on the drawdown of missions and the subsequent development of the United Nations (UN) Policy (2013) on UN Transitions. In light of the development of peace operations in Africa, including complex missions such as; the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS); and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the issue of UN withdrawal has gained new momentum (Lartey & Adu-Brempong, 2016). For instance, although the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BNUB) effectively expired in 2014, the Security Council, requested the Secretary-General to establish an electoral observer mission, upon a request from the Government of Burundi. The request by the Security Council indicated that, withdrawal of BNUB could not guarantee security in the face of tensions that arose relative to Nkrunziza's bid for third term in power. Similar apprehension is characterizing democratic transitions in

Liberia, which is preceding the end of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in March 2018 (UNSC, 2016). At the same time, although, the United Nations peace operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) reached its completion and made way for the restoration of a stable country, the May 2017 mutinies by a section of the Ivorian army raises concern about stability of the country (Elert, 2017).

As a consequence of these, the unwinding of missions in Africa seems to get many people uneasy about sustainable peace and security. Questions have been raised on whether national security forces are adequately prepared and equipped to assume full control over the security responsibilities of the state after the peacekeepers leave. Much public debate has been generated, expressing concerns regarding emerging gaps when peacekeepers withdraw without proper arrangements (ECOWAS, 2017). Against this background, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres (2017) pronounced that, exit strategies for peace operations are to be part of a comprehensive approach aimed at long-term development and stability. Regarding the future of peace and stability of African states, a key concern also arises from the complex nexus between Transnational Organized Crimes (TOC) and the growing menace of radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism across the continent. Indeed, while Africa has been grappling with TOCs for some time now, the emergence of extremist groups (eg. Al-Qaeda, Ansar al-Sharia, Ansaru, Boko Haram, Ansar Dine and Al-mourabitoun) and their mutation into terrorist groups poses a particular challenge to peacekeeping missions. For example, peacekeepers operating with MINUSMA) have suffered considerable terrorist attack over the last four years since the mission was established. Consequently, the hybrid and evolving nature of the current security threats on the continent and particularly in West Africa raises fear as to whether UN exist strategies will ensure sustained peace and stability in mission theatres, and by extension the African continent (Aning & Abdallah, 2016).

This paper therefore seeks to examine mission drawdown in Africa and implications on peace and stability in five sections. The first section introduces the general concept of UN peace operations and more specifically discusses the core functions of multi-dimensional peace operations and their merits. Section two discusses the peace operation in Africa, focusing on the nature of armed conflicts and the trends of peace missions on the continent. In section three, we analyze the impact of the withdrawal of peace operations on peace and security in Africa, highlighting how that creates space for extremist and terrorist groups to operate and undermine relative peace and stability. The fourth section examines the prospects for lasting peace, paying particular attention to West Africa- a region that is currently experiencing mission draw downs. The final section provides concluding thoughts.

2. UN PEACE OPERATIONS

The United Nations constitutes an embodiment of the international community's ambition to deal with complex crisis situations around the globe. With the overachieving aim of international peace and security, the UN has put in place peace and security structures as well as peace operation mechanisms, which serve the purpose of saving 'succeeding generations from [another]… scourge of war'. Peace operations (POs) have thus become the frequently used tools to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts. With a legal basis in Chapter

VI, VII and VIII of the UN Charter and thus binding UN Security Council (SC) mandates, missions have increasingly been deployed on a world-wide scale. The operations are based on the understanding 'that an impartial presence on the ground can ease tensions between hostile parties and create space for political negotiations.' (UNDPKO, 2003, p.1).

The practice first began emerging during the era of the Cold War with the dispatch of military observers to the Middle East (UNDPKO, 2008). Peace operations have henceforth been expanded to other regions in the world, including Africa. Regional organizations, such as the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), are also engaging in peace missions under authority of, and in cooperation with the UN. Over the years, the Security Council has demonstrated, through repeated UNSC resolutions, the United Nations' willingness to further increase its partnership with regional organizations (UNSC, 2012). A particular emphasis is given to the interaction and consultation with the African Union (AU). The latter's potential in supporting and undertaking conflict prevention and crisis management within its own borders, appears as vital focus point of the partnership. Multiple cooperative operations are already in place and being constantly adjusted. The AU/ UN hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the ECOWAS mission in Guinea-Bissau and the NATO supported AU mission in Somalia (AMISOM) are among them.

Not simply the composition, but also the functions of peace operations have grown in size and become increasingly complex and wide-ranging. Peacekeepers have taken on tasks going beyond the simple monitoring of ceasefires. In order to facilitate the political process of establishing peace and security, the spectrum has been widened. National dialogue and reconciliation are being fostered and promoted. Humanitarian assistance is being undertaken and the rule of law, including an emphasis on human rights, is being protected and restored (UNSC, 2015 (b)). Likewise has the protection of civilians (PoC) become central to many missions, as for instance in UNMIL (UNSC, 2014 (b)). As MINUSMA's title indicates, a growing number of peace operations have developed from the 'traditional' model into a multidimensional set-up. A range of different components, from military and police to civil affairs, is being integrated into the missions (UNDPKO, 2003). Collectively, these different components work to deliver security, as well as political and early peacebuilding support to conflict and post-conflict countries around the globe. The multidimensional peace operations are said to be 'extremely significant and positively associated with' (Doyle & Sambanis, 2000, p.791) peace-building success.

2.1 Core Functions of Multidimensional Peace Operations

Traditionally peace operations were 'deployed as an interim measure to help manage a conflict and create conditions in which the negotiation for a lasting settlement can proceed.' (UNDPKO, 2008, p.21). With a further development in theory and practice, the functions have evolved over time alongside the dimension of the missions. From then, the UN Capstone Doctrine (2008) summarizes the core functions of multidimensional peace operations within three categories. Firstly, the creation of an environment which is both secure and stable. This includes enabling the host state to provide and maintain its own

security. Secondly, the facilitation of the political process, emphasizing dialogue, reconciliation and the establishment of functioning institutions. Thirdly, the provision of a framework that allows international actors to conduct their activities in a structured manner.

Additionally to their composition, peace operations can be distinguished in their activities. The activities practice the previously named functions. Generally speaking, the activities of peace operations are defined along the lines of the political process of the specific conflict at hand (UNDPKO, 2008). The missions' mandates hereby range from conflict prevention prior to a conflict, to peacemaking and peace enforcement during a conflict, and peacekeeping at the outset of a ceasefire, involving peacebuilding along the way. In light of the withdrawal of peace missions from Africa, it appears vital to focus on the activities of peace peacebuilding and peace consolidation approaches. The discussion mainly surrounds the question of how the measures undertaken by peacekeepers contribute to the cessation of conflicts and the strengthening of national capabilities. Subsequently, addressing whether the post-conflict governments can ensure a stable and secure future for their nations.

2.2 Merits of Peace Operations

Peace operations have made vital contributions to international peace and security. Overall, international activism in the form of missions is being named as an important tool 'designed to stop ongoing wars and prevent old ones restarting' (Mack, 2007, p.3). There are different ways in which peace operations are being effective. First of all, they have a preventive influence on the breakout and reoccurrence of conflicts. Peace operations have ended or even prevented genocides and mass killings when countering and restraining perpetrators (Krain, 2005). Fortna (2008, p.125) even finds that operations in the form of peacekeeping can reduce the risk of repeated war 'by 75% –85% or more when peacekeepers are present'. Strategically designed intervention missions are said to improve peace prospects and influence the period of peace after a conflict has ended (Doyle & Sambanis, 2000). Second, peace operations can contribute to the cessation of fighting and reduce the lethality of war. A study on the effectiveness of UN operations shows that 'the commitment of 10,000 peacekeeping troops has the effect of reducing battlefield violence by over 70 %' (Hultman, Kathman & Shannon, 2014, p.750). In addition to the drop in hostilities, enforcement operations are capable of ending ongoing violence (Doyle & Sambanis, 2000). Third, well-designed missions can limit the spatial aspect of conflicts. Especially in already volatile regions, where countries have experienced the resurgence of violence such as Congo DRC, the spread of conflicts across borders can take a toll on regional stability. Findings show that especially peace operations are effective in securing borders and able to reduce the likelihood of sparking a conflict in neighboring countries (Beardsley, 2011). Lastly, peace operations can have a positive effect on building stable democratic peace and increasing economic development after a conflict has come to an end. The cases of Sierra Leone and Liberia are good example in this regard. Fast economic growth after the cessation of fighting and the regaining of an average income level is being associated with international assistance (Gates et al., 2012). In summary, well-executed peace operations can save lives and contribute to durable peace and stability. Accordingly, the subsequent sections will focus on the possible

effect of the unwinding of peacekeeping missions in Africa. Are they leaving behind a structure fit for the continuity of peace within nations?

3. PEACE OPERATIONS IN AFRICA

The Fund for Peace's Fragile State Index (2017) lists 178 countries according to 12 indicators such as the security apparatus, economic inequality and Human Rights. Fourteen out of the top twenty nations on the index are located on the African continent. Fragile states are generally more prone to the emergence of armed conflicts. In order to prevent the sparks of violence and adapt peace operations to local conditions, one has to take into account the impact of armed conflicts and their effects on the local societies in Africa.

3.1 Armed Conflicts

There is a distinction being made between international armed conflicts and non-international armed conflicts. With an increasing number of intra-state conflicts, international humanitarian law has been further developed. Evidence are contained in Article 3 and the Additional Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (2017) has indicated that 'about 80% of the victims of armed conflicts since 1945 have been victims of non-international conflicts'. Correspondingly, peace operations have traditionally been used as a tool to deal with inter-state conflicts, but they have increasingly become a tool for intra-state conflicts and civil wars. The range of actors participating in armed conflicts has hence diversified. Primary actors are not only government armed forces, but furthermore, non-state actors like dissident armed forces and armed groups, such as separatists, paramilitaries, rebels, terrorists, extremist groups and warlords. The UN, non-governmental organizations and regional bodies can be considered as secondary actors. Their focus often relies on maintaining and restoring peace and security, and caring for the victims of armed conflicts. The so-called shadow parties, support primary actors in a covertly manner, thereby influencing the balance of power during an ongoing conflict. Among them are foreign governments and organized armed groups who are aligned with different warring parties (The New York Times, 2017).

The effects of armed conflicts are diverse and have a toll on the whole of the society as exemplified in Congo DRC, Sudan and Mali, where scores of people face threat of attacks and death on a daily basis. The reduced level of human capital does not only spring from battlefield deaths, but also from population displacement and refugee streams due to ongoing violence and persecution characterized by human rights violations (UNDP, 2006). Vital physical infrastructure is being affected, such as the energy, telecommunication, transportation and health sector. Overall, 'social, political, and economic institutions are indelibly harmed.' (Gates et al., 2012, p.1713). The ICRC (1998) labels such conflicts, which are marked by the decay of fundamental state structures, as 'anarchic'. In this context, the breakdown of government structures comes along with weakened state institutions. With regard to the economy, the loss of human capital and the destruction of infrastructure leads to a change in structure and prolongs the recovery to the status *quo ante bellum* (Serneels & Verpoorten, 2012). Thus, armed conflicts are additionally associated with food insecurity and

the deprivation of social services. Civil conflicts on the African continent alone since the mid-1960s have cost more than '$120 billion worth of agricultural production.' (Messer & Cohen, 2004, p.3). The conflicts take a special toll on the younger generation, thus influencing the future of nations. Davis and Kuritsky (2002) argue that sub-Saharan African countries with a violent past experience a ten percent higher infant mortality rate than those without. In terms of education, a decrease in enrolment rates can be traced to armed conflict (Diwakar, 2015). The dramatic effects of armed conflicts highlight the need for well-implemented peace operations.

3.2 Trends of Peace Missions in Africa

The proliferation of peace operations in Africa has been ongoing since the 1990s, due to the increased response to African armed conflicts. Boulden (2013) identifies two trends of post-Cold War UN politics; increased cooperation with regional organizations and advancement of discussions on, and activity of peace operations in Africa. Firstly, the emphasis on cooperation with regional African bodies has become evident through reports emphasizing partnerships and the interaction with the African Union. The Report on the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (2015, p.62), for instance, emphasizes the role of regional organizations and the strengthening of the UN-AU partnership, overall highlighting 'the centrality of Africa for UN peace operations'. The annual joint consultative meeting between UNSC and African Union Peace and Security Council are examples for this trend and indicate the significance attributed to the development of peace operations in Africa. Secondly, regarding the United Nations' action profile on the continent, out of the seventy authorized peace operations 31 (44%) have taken place in Africa. There are currently eight operations running on the continent and with 23 completed missions in the past, Africa has become the continent with most deployed missions overall (UN, 2017). According to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute as of 2017, Africa hosts 75 percent of personnel employed for peace operations (Avezov, Van der Lijn & Smit, 2017). The deployment to African states is additionally being reflected upon throughout the increase in SC meetings on African issues (Boulden, 2013).

As the make-up of missions has developed world wide, so have peace operations in the whole of Africa. Tardy and Wyss (2014) distinguish between sequential, parallel and integrated operations. Their schema assist in understanding the composition of UN missions in cooperation with regional actors. Sequential operations are relatively frequent and require a regional organization to act as a first responder. An example from West Africa is Liberia, where the establishment of UNMIL followed efforts of ECOWAS to achieve a peaceful settlement (UNSC, 2003). Parallel operations are characterized by their division of labour. The United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office and the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau are among efforts combining multiple actors with parallel functions. In comparison, integrated missions are based on a stronger coordination and shared responsibility. The AU/ UN hybrid peace operation in Darfur is a rare example for a peacekeeping mission made-up of force components from Africa and the rest of the world (UNSC, 2007). One can firmly state that operations have assumed various shapes and sizes and will most likely continue to

do so in the future. Shifting the focus point to West Africa, there are currently two UN peace operations in place, namely UNMIL in Liberia and MINUSMA in Mali. While the operation in Liberia has moved on to handing over security responsibilities to the government, the peacekeepers in Mali are yet concerned with the monitoring and implementation of a ceasefire (UNSC, 2015 (a) & (b)). In light of the drawdown of UNAMIL and the recent completion of UNOCI, the next chapter will outline the positive and negative aspects of the drawdown of missions.

4. IMPACTS OF THE WITHDRAWAL OF PEACE OPERATIONS

The unwinding of peace operations from post-conflict states can be discussed in light of the structures and conditions peacekeepers leave behind. Is the local government prepared and able enough to take over the responsibility previously cared for by the peacekeepers? Based on the nature of African economies and their weak capacities to rebuild institutions after the outbreak of war, one can always anticipate the implications of mission draw down on peace and security.

4.1 Implications for Peace and Security

The readiness of Africa to confront the development and stability of post-conflict states and emerging security issues in the region is being put to the test once more in 2017. There are anticipated transitional issues in several aspects of mission drawdowns, since sustainability has proven tough to attain in the aftermath of interventions. Hudson (2013) names four pillars vital to post-conflict reconstruction: legitimate security, justice, functioning institutions, and social and economic well-being. Concerns that security sectors of post-conflict nations are not adequately capable of taking over the tasks are predominantly being voiced. Security forces are expected to fill the roles of peacekeepers. Yet, the fear persists that they are not trained for the tasks at hand (Hudson, 2013). Inadequate numbers of well trained and experienced personnel in the security sector can have an impact on the functioning of institutions and the maintenance of a peaceful environment. Issues of law and order arise when the Security Sector Reforms (SSRs) have not been diligently implemented.

For example, the SSR program in Liberia is currently rebuilding the 2,000 men Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) (Ministry of National Defense Liberia, 2017). Additionally, officers of the Liberian National Police (LNP) are being trained by UNMIL (UNSG, 2017). Nevertheless, there are voices being uttered that the number of security forces is too low to ensure adequate security for the people. The concern includes subsequent low level of security forces outside the capital (Podder, 2016). This is evident in that smaller countries that possess little man power and lack adequate funding for armed authorities face tougher tasks. Liberia, just as any other nation facing the unwinding of a peace operation, is threatened by internal, as well as external dangers. With understaffed security forces the price of violence can fall again and give way to increased lawlessness and the increase in the number of unsatisfied citizens in form of rebel groups and armed militias (Gompert, Oliker, Stearns, Crane & Riley, 2007). Concerning threats from the outside, civilians of the region are being terrorized by terror organizations like Boko Haram (Pham, 2012). The add-up of

security issues requires the full attention of governments when strategically initiating a durable peace. Institutions and armed forces need to be established in a suitable manner, before the peace operations leave.

The pillar of post-conflict justice goes hand-in-hand with law enforcement and well-functioning institutions. Peace operations have contributed to the initiation of processes which assist the population in coming to terms with their past in order to move on to a brighter future. Tribunals and Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have become such tools of the international community. In Liberia for instance, the Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation has been initiated (UNSG, 2017). The mechanism appears vital, although political and financial commitment, as well as functioning state institutions are necessary to make most of its potential. Corruption constitutes one issue that has the potential to undermine the effectiveness of governments and weaken state institutions. The topic is reoccurring in SC resolutions dealing with the unwinding of missions.

Economic and social well-being is central to a stable future development. The UN acknowledges the negative impact that the unwinding of peace operations can have on socio-economic aspects of the host country (International Peace Institute, 2012). Governments of post-conflict African nations would be well-advised to set in motion mechanisms that counteract these impacts. The danger that post-conflict states fall off the screen of the different UN organs should be kept in mind. The countries should be continuously monitored, coordinated action by stakeholders should be ensured and the 'funding gap' after the end of missions should be largely avoided (UN High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, 2004). Although the drawdown of missions appears challenging and has made different stakeholders worried, the picture is not at all that bleak.

There are positive developments marking the transition period. Policies aimed at the mentoring of security and government institutions, appear to improve structures. The internal security environment of Liberia for instance has been said to benefit from the UN Mission and is set to handle future challenges (Gompert et al., 2007). If the root causes of the previous conflict have been addressed and command structures have been improved, the hand-over of responsibility can mark a proud moment in self-sufficiency. The focus should lie upon state security, rather than on the security of the government at hand. On the way to full independence from peace operations, citizens of the state become ready to partner with the government and individual organizations, contributing to the development of their nation.

4.2 Implications on the Emergence of Extremist and Terrorist Groups

There is no doubt that peacekeepers have suffered considerable attacks from notable terrorist groups such as AQIM, Al-Shabab, 'anti-balaka' militia group, Ansar Dine and MUJAO. At the same time, however, withdrawal of peacekeepers without assessing the effectiveness of security and justice institutions can create conditions in which more criminalities, including; transnational organized crimes, extremism and terrorism can emerge, thrive, and undermine state authority and challenge the efficacy of regional and global organizations such as the AU and the UN. Currently, the UN Security Council has passed resolution 2363 for the drawdown of UN-AU Hybrid mission in Sudan, arising from United

States' pressure to cut down cost and ensure efficiency. In the first phase of the drawdown, which starts from January, 2018, the troop is expected to be reduced from 15,485 to 11,395 and police from 3,403 to 2,888. Based on further assessment to be submitted by the office of the Secretary-General together with the African Union Commission in January 2018, the number of troops will further be reduced to 8,735 and the police 2,500 by the first half of 2018 (UNGA, 2016). While this is significant to reduce the cost of UN peace operations and to prepare the Sudanese government to take lead in the security governance of the country, the apprehension is that there may be security lacuna, which can be exploited by terrorist groups. This apprehension is heightened by the threat of terrorism across the continent. In 2013, the killing and beheading of twenty-one civilians in Beni Territory, North Kivu in Congo DRC was described as terrorist act and had great impact on peacekeepers and future drawdown plans (Aning & Abdallah, 2016).

But central to the discussion of mission drawdown and its impact on the spread of terrorism should be understood within the context of West Africa, where UNOCI, for example has completely exited from Cote d'Ivoire and UNMIL in Liberia is at the final phase of its drawdown. Although Cote d'Ivoire is relatively peaceful after the drawdown of UNOCI, the issue of ex-combatants and the quest for re- integration into the formal national army is already creating tension in the country and can potentially be a basis for extremist and terrorist to hijack state institution and undermine the security of the country. Liberia, although has successfully conducted election in October, 2017, the limited number of security forces can constitute a challenge when UNMIL finally departs from the country. Consequently, as missions plan to draw down, the expected outcome for the UN should not be about reduced financial burden, but more important for the UN is to ensure that legacy of peace and stability left behind can be sustained through the development of robust state institutions capable of preventing and responding to the evolving threat of extremism and terrorism.

5. PROSPECTS FOR A LASTING PEACE

5.1 The Foundation of Sustainable Peace and Security

When the transition period has been well managed by the peacekeepers, but also the host government and the citizens, the foundation for sustainable peace and security is said to take off. A comprehensive approach which creates, identifies and fosters structures necessary for the maintenance of peace is vital for the success of peace operations. Addressing the root problems identified within the economy and socio-cultural behaviour in a cooperative manner is key to a durable foundation (UNSG, 1992). The UN Transition Policy (2013) highlights five key aspects which make the unwinding of peace operations a success. Emphasis should be given to early planning of the transition, a well-integrated and structured presence of the UN, engagement with national stakeholders, development for national capacity, and a clear line of communication.

The development of national capacity should have an additional focus on an effective Security Sector Reform process. Together with the improvement of the economy and political

competencies, reforms and training of the military and police contribute to a stable environment. The effective oversight of security institutions is hereby essential. In light of the withdrawal of UNOCI from Côte d'Ivoire, the UN Security Council (2016, p.1) emphasized the need 'to sustain well-functioning and accountable government institutions, especially in the security and justice sector'. Not simply a country's own security, but furthermore the regional security architecture of the continent plays a role in post-conflict stability. Cooperation in the region is therefore to be considered vital to durable peace and security.

Concerning the engagement of national stakeholders, the entire society has a part to play in the future. The maintenance of good governance in the form of liberal democracy, has a duty to respect human rights and to act in a transparent and open manner. The sustainable development of a nation includes the engagement of both men and women on the economic, social and political sphere (Heinecken, 2013). Overall, the peace operations ought to encourage a government to foster a vibrant, active and progressive civil society.

5.2 Prospects for the Nations of West Africa

When considering the most recent withdrawals from West Africa, the cases of Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire come to mind. The post-conflict recovery of Sierra Leone has been heralded as being among the most successful cases after the end of a peace operation (UNSG, 2014). However, there exists a fear that the government in Côte d'Ivoire will not able to maintain a stable and peaceful security situation in the aftermath of the recent peace operation (UNSC, 2017). This apprehension is corroborated by the May 2017 mutinies by a section of the Ivorian army over allegedly lack of government's commitment to the payment of agreed bonuses. The seeming division between supporters of the former President Laurent Gbagbo, and those who are affiliated to the rebel group Forces Nouvelles des Forces Armées (FAFN), with which current President Ouattara is associated remains a challenge (Elert, 2017). Liberia, as the country is facing the subsequent drawdown of peacekeepers, is additionally being under observance of the international community. Elections, which are often chosen as a tool for a smooth transition, due to the legitimacy and mandate transferred to the new leaders, are of importance here. Open, transparent and free elections are key and so far Liberia appears to live by it, except the current electoral impasse that has to be cleared before the re-run of the presidential election between the two leading contenders: George Oppong Weah and Joseph Baokai. Economy wise, future increase in economic activity in Liberia, supported through the growth of the mining industry, is expected (US Central Intelligence Agency, 2017).

In regard to regional cooperation, the consensus remains that the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union remains crucial. There is, and will be in the future, room for increasing the capacity of regional cooperation. Organizations, such as ECOWAS, are key to ensure stable peace in the regions. The African Peace and Security Architecture continues to be a vital framework for the protection of civilians and their human rights. As Zondi (2017) writes 'a lasting peace must accompany the building of national unity, regional cohesion and continental integration'. Nevertheless, the UN recognizes the constraint which regional organizations are facing due to scarce resources (UNSC, 2014 (a)). In order for

regional organizations to serve the intended purpose, the under-resourced operations should be avoided if possible. Accordingly findings show that the increase in spending and the enforcement mechanisms in mandates go hand-in-hand with the reduction of conflicts (Hegre, Hultman & Nygård, 2015). Hence, the cooperation with regional organizations should be undertaken in a manner to make use of their full capacity, if need be by increasing the financial support of the international community.

6. CONCLUSION

The unwinding of UN peace operations in Africa as pertains in other parts of the world has become increasingly necessary. Indeed, over the past years, especially after the demise of the Cold War and the emergence of intra-state conflicts, the United Nations has invested huge sums of financial resources into peace operations across the globe. For instance, in the 2016/2017 fiscal year, the General Assembly approved the appropriation of $7.86 billion for 15 peacekeeping operations (UNGA, 2016). The yearly contribution and appropriation of such amount has become a burden for the UN, but more disturbingly to key contributors such as the US. Consequently, while the drawdown is imperative to reduce the burden on the UN in terms of financial, material and human resources, it is important that host countries are adequately prepared to establish structures and institutions to maintain and sustain existing peace. The apprehension however is that post-conflict states in Africa do not have the resilient structures capable of sustaining the level of peace and security left behind by the UN peacekeepers. In other words, the capacity to return countries to *the status quo ante bellum* is often limited. The recent mission draw downs in Africa, including; UNOCI in Cote d'Ivoire, UNMIL in Liberia and BNUB in Burundi are significant to mention. Whereas, Liberia is at the final stages of the drawdown process, there is fear that if the democratic processes are not managed well, including transfer of power, there could be pocket of violence that can undermine the relative peace and stability in the country. Although Cote d'Ivoire has made significant strides in its socio-economic transformation after the post-electoral crisis of 2010-2011 and the subsequent withdrawal of UNOCI, the existing polarization along Outtara-Gbagbo lines and the challenges of DDR and SSR pose a potential danger to the country's progress. In Burundi, although the BNUB was replaced with the United Nations Electoral Observation Mission in Burundi (MENUB), to follow and report on the electoral process before, during and after the 2015 elections in the country, challenges emerged that warranted the need for the AU to intervene. However, a deep schism between African Union Commission (AUC) and the member states prevented the deployment of a 5,000 strong African Prevention and Protection Mission in Burundi (MAPROBU), worsening security situation (International Crisis Group, 2016). As Sudan prepares to begin the drawdown process in January 2018, questions remain about the resilience of state institutions to maintain peace and security in the country. All in all, UN mission withdrawals should always ensure that resilient structures are left behind to sustain relative peace and stability. Failure to do that will most likely lead to relapse of conflict, negating the huge financial investment.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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