DIIS POLICY BRIEF

East Africa: Regional Security Organisations and Dynamics

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The security situation in parts of East Africa is fragile and recently Denmark has begun to take an interest in regional security organisations.

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Three of the most important regional security organisations in East Africa are the *East African Community (EAC)*, the *East African Standby Forces (EASF)*, and the *Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)*. How should we interact with these organisations to strengthen East African security? This is a political decision.

EAC, EASF and IGAD do not only have different capabilities – they also have different conceptions of threats and solutions to regional security. For some countries in the region the conflict in Somalia represents the greatest security concern, while for others the situation in Sudan is more worrying. There is no agreement on this issue, neither on how the problems are best handled.

At the same time, different countries in the region have different stakeholder interest in the three organisations. The region is experiencing a considerable level of political tension between states that want to demonstrate their status as regional hegemon. This tension also plays out at the organisational level. As such, choosing to support one organisation rather than another is a political choice insofar as it may imply the recognition of one organisation's or specific country's definition of regional threats and solutions at the expense of others.

The internal relations between these organisations should also be kept in mind. Their ambitions and activities are not necessarily in synergy. When asked individually, the three organisations maintain that they exist in synergy. There can certainly be synergies. However, this requires that each organisation find a specific niche that other organisations are not fighting to occupy.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

When deciding which East African security organisation to support, for instance EAC, EASF or IGAD, do not only consider their military capacity.

Choosing to support one organisation at the cost of the others easily becomes a matter of choosing side.

The different organisations do not only have different capabilities – they also have different objectives, and their perceptions of security treats and solutions are considerably different from each other. At the same time they reflect different national instersts.

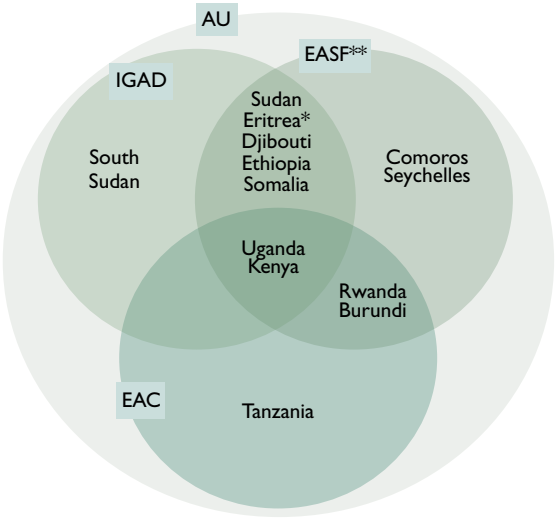
See detailed recommendations about what to consider when supporting EAC, EASF and IGAD respectively, on the back of this paper.

Altogether, a decision to provide funding to projects run by one security organisation rather than another cannot simply be made with reference to these organisations' objective capabilities.

An example of conflicting interests between regional organisations

There are conflicting interests between IGAD and EASF on the question of military deployment capacity. EASF maintains that it was a major achievement on their part that they were able to deploy 14 men to the AMISOM mission in Somalia in 2012. Yet, it was IGAD who originally had the power to initiate this mission. Both organisations claim to deserve the main credit for the mission, to gain political recognition. When supporting one organisation rather than another we should be aware of such conflicting interests.

Member countries of IGAD, EASF and EAC



* Eritrea is presently suspended from IGAD and EASF, and stands accused of support to Al-Shabaab activities in Somalia.

** Tanzania, Mauritius and Madagascar are formal members of EASF but at present they do not participate. They are also members of the *Southern African Development Community (SADC)* where they play a more active role.

EAST AFRICAN STANDBY FORCE (EASF)

Established in 2004, EASF is one of five standby forces organised under the African Union (AU) and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). It can be deployed by the AU Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) or the United Nations. The organisation has ten active member states and four non-active states (see figure above).

EASF tasks and ambitions

EASF tasks are defined within the APSA framework and include, for instance, providing military advice for political missions or participating in interventions to prevent threats to regional peace and stability.

EASF only has a standing headquarters and forces are moved across from member states during exercises or real time deployments. The organisation has a traditional military structure and a police dimension. It is mainly army driven, since some member states are landlocked and others lack an air force or naval capacity. EASF is currently seeking to develop a maritime dimension, with the Kenyan navy as the driving factor.

EASF provides a unique setting for trustbuilding: troops and heads of armed forces from different states exercise together, meet and exchange views and even sensitive information. Such activities can reduce mistrust between states in the region. In addition, the EASF structure enables bilateral arrangements between donor countries and memberstates. A recent example is the Danish support to the creation of Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) in Rwanda.

Challenges and potential

EASF is the only regional security organisation under the APSA, which is not integrated in a Regional Economic Community (REC), neither IGAD nor EAC. Instead, it is based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the signing states. This makes it easier to allow non-active members to join, but it might imply a lack of commitment as well as overlapping of interests with other regional actors and with the AU.

EASF relies on funds from both member and non-member states. The headquarters is funded by member states. Exercises, educational programmes, and real-life deployments are funded through 'Friends of EASF' – a number of states willing to fund and support EASF. Denmark has chaired 'Friends of EASF' and has, arguably, been one of its biggest contributors.

EASF is one of the best functioning forces in Africa and has the potential to contribute to security and trustbuilding between member countries. It carried out its first real deployment to Somalia in 2012 and has ambitions of being fully operational in 2015.

THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY (EAC)

The Treaty for Establishment of the East African Community (EAC), entered into force in 2000. It succeeds two previous initiatives. Initially it had three partner states – Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, and in 2007 Burundi and Rwanda were accepted. Because there is an emerging recognition of interdependence between these five countries, they all have a strong interest in fostering economic cooperation.

Security is broader than defence

The organisation also has a security dimension more prominent than is commonly recognised. The EAC Treaty contains two articles (124 and 125) dealing with defence and security respectively. From an EAC point of view the distinction between defence and security is crucial; 'defence' deals with military matters, whereas 'security' deals with much broader matters such as police reform, harmonisation of legislation, education and infrastructure.

The idea that security is broader than defence has implications for the relation to other regional security organisations and the division of work. For instance, the security activities of the EAC are much broader than those of EASF, which focuses on security mainly in a military sense. As such, there is arguably a high degree of synergy (rather than overlap) between these two regional security organisations.

Partnership fund

The EAC is managed and funded by the member states and these funds cover the daily running. The EAC also has a partnership fund through which donors fund specific projects. According to a political analyst from the EAC this partnership fund does not affect the perception of the EAC as a regionally owned organisation.

Challenges

The EAC confronts three challenges. One is that while agreements are being made at EAC meetings, the enforcement of these agreements at national level is lagging behind. Another challenge is that it might prove difficult for EAC to act on military security matters within member states. Yet another challenge is that apparently in Tanzania there seems to be a fear in the population that free movement of people – as envisioned by the EAC – might have negative effects. This fear might be overcome, for example, by allocating resources to information and avoiding politisation.

An example of an EAC security initiative that does not conflict with EASF efforts

All EAC partner states find an urgent need to reform their police forces e.g. by establishing a codex for police behaviour, establishing correctional prisons (Rwanda already has that) and reforming investigation methods.

THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT (IGAD)

IGAD was founded in 1996, ten years after the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) was established to supplement national efforts at handling recurring natural disasters (notably droughts) in the region. In 1996, this organisation was revitalised under the new name, IGAD – the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eastern Africa. It was also an expansion of the focus of the organisation, to development and regional cooperation more broadly. IGAD has eight member states (see figure, page 2).

An IGAD perspective on security

From its latest report (2007), it can be seen that IGAD now has three main areas in focus: food security and environmental protection; economic cooperation and social development and; peace and security division. Thus IGAD defines threats to regional security not only as intra- and interstate conflicts, but also as developmental, environmental and economic issues. Military deployments might be part of the solution to some of these regional security problems, but certainly not to all threats as defined by IGAD.

Ambitions and strengths

One of IGAD's main strengths is its legitimacy in the eyes of key supra-regional organisatons such as the AU and the UN. For example, these both endorsed IGAD's proposed Peace Support Mission in Somalia (IGASOM) in 2012. Compared to the EAC and EASF, IGAD has a longer history and can point to specific objectives that it has achieved – e.g. efforts to enhance drought resilience in the region. Similarly, IGAD already has a large portfolio of development partners (including Denmark). However, the military aspect of IGAD is still in its infancy.

Challenges

Critics point out that, paradoxically, for IGAD missions to succeed, it is often necessary to draw on military capacities from AU nations that are not members of IGAD. This is so because states that border a country in conflict are ineligible to deploy troops into that country – according to UN norms. This has meant, for instance, that IGAD's member state composition placed considerable constraints on its ability to act on its proposed IGASOM-mission in Somalia. In practice, only Sudan, Eritrea, and Uganda could contribute with troops. On the other hand it places IGAD in a unique situation with respect to conflicts between Sudan and South Sudan.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN SUPPORTING EAC, EASF AND IGAD RESPECTIVELY

EASF

- A continued partnership is recommended. Yet, care must be taken that EASF advisors continue only to have an advisory function so that the organisation's regional ownership is not at risk of being compromised.
- It seems favourable to support the development of Rapid Deployment Capacity in Rwanda as it could help employ ex-combatants in ways that enhance regional security rather than add to its instability.
- Although there is a notable drive in EASF, patience is still necessary, for example, with respect to the goal of FoC (Full Operational Capability) by 2015.
- Strengthen communication between EASF and AU, as well as between EASF and organisations for regional economic cooperation. This could have implications for the solidification of initiatives supported through EASF.

IGAD

- Insofar as it is acknowledged that not only inter- and intrastate conflicts represent a threat to regional stability, IGAD should still be supported in its capacity to handle developmental and environmental threats.
- Assess carefully what kind of security tasks to support through IGAD. The organisation's mili-tary dimension is relatively weak, but IGAD has substantive experience in conflict mediation.
- Support IGAD's ability to mediate conflicts between Sudan and South Sudan.

EAC

- Stronger political recognition of the EAC as an economic and security actor.
- Consider supporting partnership programmes within the EAC. This organisation looks much more broadly at security than does, for instance, the EASF. An example of this is a current EAC-initiative to refom the police. The EAC sees this reform as a critical step towards greater regional security.
- Caution: allegedly some populations fear that the free movement of people proposed by the EAC might result in unfavourable demographic shifts. This should be taken into consideration and could for example be addressed by lending support to information and awareness raising activities.

The assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the three organisations described in this brief is based on background reading, interviews and email exchanges with various East African actors.

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