



FILLING A LEAKING BATHTUB

Peacekeeping in Africa and the Challenge of Transnational Armed Rebellions

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FILLING A LEAKING BATHTUB.

PEACEKEEPING IN AFRICA AND THE CHALLENGE OF TRANSNATIONAL ARMED REBELLIONS

Abstract:

This research addresses the issue of transnational civil wars and United Nations peace operations in Africa and seeks to understand what is wrong with the current practices of international peacekeeping and why they underperform when confronted to transnational non-state actors. Based on a dynamic approach to armed conflicts and quantitative data, this paper finds that the current international peacekeeping practices are inadequate in the African context where porous borders and competing weak states dominate. It argues that border control should become a primary concern of every peace operation deployed in Africa.

Résumé:

Cette recherche s'intéresse aux opérations de paix des Nations Unies face aux guerres civiles transnationales en Afrique et cherche à comprendre les insuffisances des pratiques actuelles et les raisons de leur inefficacité à l'égard des acteurs non-étatiques transnationaux. Basée sur une approche dynamique des conflits armés et sur des données quantitatives, la recherche met en évidence le caractère inadéquat des pratiques actuelles en matière d'opérations de maintien de la paix dans un contexte africain où dominant tant la porosité des frontières que la présence d'Etats faibles. Le document plaide par conséquent en faveur d'un recentrage des missions de maintien de la paix sur la surveillance des frontières.

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Introduction

On 29th January 2015, the African Union decided to authorize the deployment of a 7,500-strong multinational force to fight the Boko Haram rebels in Nigeria.¹ This Islamist insurgency, so far confined to the North-East of the country, had always been regarded as a purely domestic Nigerian issue. However, what was once just a radical cult has grown to become a regional security threat and triggered a strong international response. Boko Haram, among many African insurgencies, is a perfect example of the problem posed by the transnational character of many modern armed conflicts. Civil wars cannot be equated to intrastate conflicts anymore, and the means to deal with them should be adapted in consequence.

This paper seeks to investigate the issue of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping in the context of transnational violence by revoking the traditional distinction between intrastate and interstate conflicts. Empirical evidence proves that speaking of porous borders in Africa is more than a slogan. The inability of state authorities to effectively control the flows of armed groups across international boundaries is indeed a major cause of conflict contagion and escalation in Africa.

Despite the deployment of many peacekeeping operations (PKO) since the 1990s, the United Nations has proved largely unable to address the problem of cross-border violence and adopt a regional approach to security and peacekeeping. This is surprising given that the traditional activity of the Blue Helmets was to monitor borders and cease-fire lines. The second object of this paper is thus to identify what is wrong with the current UN peacekeeping practices and why they underperform – or even protract – when facing regional crises.

The first section of this article discusses the notion of intrastate conflict and offers an alternative framework better suited for dealing with the evolving nature of armed conflicts, with regards to the actors involved and their spatial dynamics. It then proceeds to an empirical assessment of the porosity of the African borders to transnational armed groups. The next section develops the reasons why insurgents can choose to move beyond a border and why states sometimes contribute to the escalation and spread of an initially internal conflict. The last sections tackle the problem of UN PKO in a regional context and argue that despite structural and operational limitations, solutions exist for a truly regional approach of security and peacekeeping.

1. Interstate Conflicts : Not so internal !

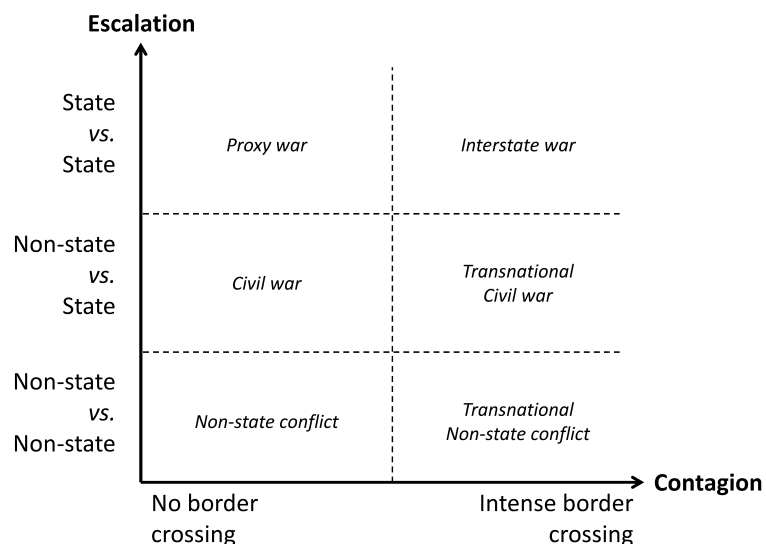
A civil war is classically defined as ‘a war fought between different geographical areas, political divisions, or ideological factions within the same country’.² However, when foreign actors (states or rebel groups) take part to the conflict, or when the conflict spills over the borders, this definition becomes misleading. Nowadays, a civil war can hardly be defined in terms of the territorial limits of a state. The assumption that the event takes place inside a single country must be relaxed, and the main difference between a civil and an international war only resides in the nature of the actors involved. While a ‘classical’ interstate war opposes states’ regular armies, an actual civil war involve at least two actors of which at least one is the government of a state.³ A difficulty remains when it comes to proxy wars,

where states use or create armed rebel movements against a rival as a form of undercover interstate war.

Some scholars choose to keep the bounded definition of a civil war unchanged, and introduce the concept of ‘regional war complex’ (RWC) to account for civil wars that expand over the national borders. Gersovitz and Kriger⁴ define a RWC as ‘a politically organized, large-scale, sustained, physically violent conflict among large groups of inhabitants or citizens of more than one country, and in at least one of these countries, at least two groups of inhabitants or citizens must be bona fide contenders for the monopoly of physical force’.

This definition was crafted to describe the African conflicts, which feature a complex mix of civil, international, and transnational wars embedded in intense interstate rivalries. The RWC is based on the regional security complex (RSC) theory, where a RSC is ‘a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another’.⁵ A RWC is thus understood as a conflict dynamic within a RSC. Also, given the nature of a RSC, a conflict that erupts in one of the units – a state – is likely to spill over the others since the security issues are embedded into a powerful regional framework.

Figure 1 – Contagion-Escalation framework of armed conflict definition



The concept of RWC is useful in putting the notion of civil war into a regional dimension, but it imposes another rigid framework and denies its very dynamic nature. The complexity of the conflicts and their changing aspect makes difficult writing strict yet realistic definitions. Rather, a new framework accounting for these evolutions should be preferred to rigid definitions. Figure 1 shows that armed conflicts can be sorted according to two processes: escalation and contagion. Escalation refers to the nature of the actors involved in the fighting and accounts for the expansion of their organizational and military capabilities. A conflict between two organized non-state actors is the lowest form of escalation since both actors usually have limited fighting capabilities and do not possess the attributes of a state. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) defines such ‘non-state conflict’ as ‘the use of armed force between two organized armed groups, neither of which is the government of a state’.⁶ The rebels able to militarily challenge a government usually display a higher level of organization, but still below the case where two states fight against each other, which

constitute the ultimate level of escalation. The ‘contagion’ dimension refers to the spatial spread of the armed conflict, irrespective of the nature of the actors, and is measured by the intensity of border crossings.

This representation brings out the two classical types of armed conflict. International wars are fought between states and cross the borders while civil wars oppose rebels to their government inside a country. Such a framework, built around the concepts of escalation and contagion, is able to account for less classical forms of war that are so hard to define and set up a two-dimensional typology featuring six patterns of war.

A non-state conflict is fought inside a country between organized non-state actors. They can have a transnational dimension too when non-state actors fight against each other over international borders. In November 2003, combats opposed Sudanese rebels from JEM (Justice and equality movement), based in Eastern Chad, to the Khartoum-sponsored Janjaweed militias. In a transnational civil war, a rebel group fights against a government across the country’s borders, or foreign powers can intervene in another state’s civil war. A proxy war is fought between two states without their armies crossing the border. It is a special case of a civil conflict where rebels receive direct support from a foreign state such as regular troops transferred to a local rebellion, supplies, or weapons.⁷

Escalation and contagion are dynamic processes. A rebel group can engage in a non-state conflict against several other groups. Once it is powerful enough, the organization can fight against its government. If it does not defeat the state right away, it can have to engage in cross-border activities and become a transnational rebellion. A rival state might take advantage of the situation and start a proxy war by supporting the rebels operating from its territory. Ultimately, the first country can choose to fight directly against the sponsor to end its support to the rebellion. This scenario evolved through five types of conflicts, showing that a rationale based on a hermetic definition of civil war is unable to grasp the transforming nature of the conflict.

2. Locating the Porous Borders

The prevalence of internationalized internal conflicts in Africa underlines the regional character of these wars. The notion of international boundary becomes blurred since they lose their function as filter and marker of sovereignty. For this reason, we speak of a porous border when a border offers little to no resistance to the crossing of regular or rebel armed forces.

UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) v.1.5-2011⁸ was used to map border porosity in Africa. GED provides the location and the actors involved in every incidence of violence taking place in the context of a civil war in Africa between 1989 and 2010 (17,646 records of which 452 cross-border ones). Each actor recorded in a GED event was listed according to the countries where the events took place. The country where this actor was the most active was set as its home country, and its presence anywhere else recorded as a border crossing. The data were then aggregated by country to show the flows of border crossings on the continent.

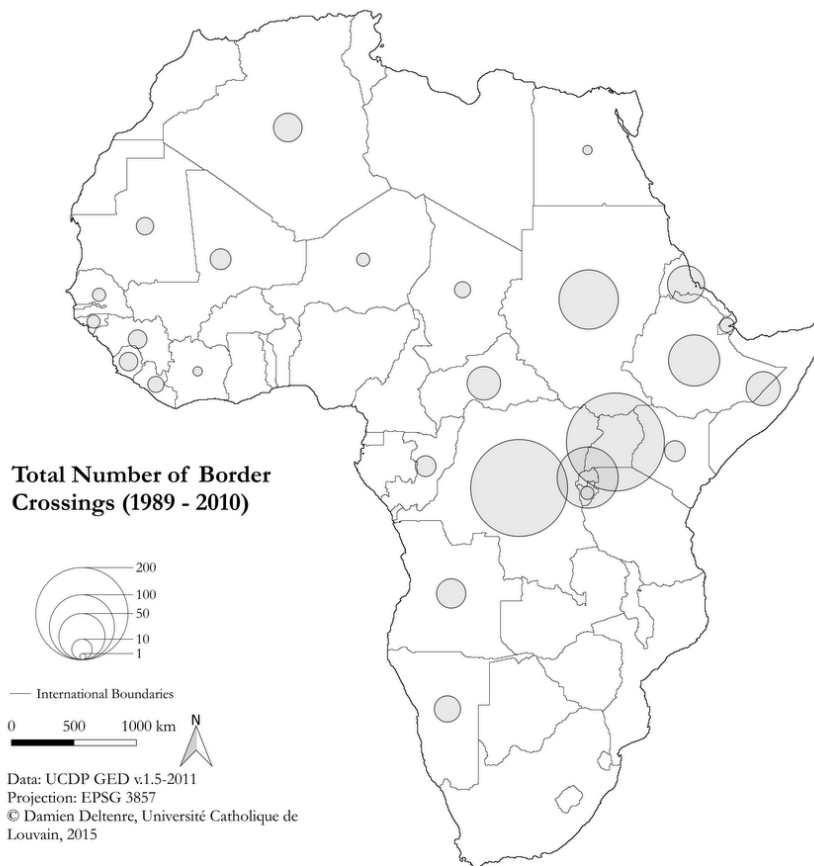
Figure 2 – Total Number of Border Crossings

Figure 2 shows many countries affected by transnational civil wars, either as origin or destination of the flows. Out of 33 countries that experienced a civil war, there was a transnational component in 26 of them (79%), and 41 out of the 142 different actors recorded had a cross-border activity (29%). Several hot spots can be identified that correspond to areas of acute conflicts, especially in the Great Lakes area. Using the number of border crossings as a measure of border porosity enlightens that porous borders are not limited to a single environment. They are located throughout Africa, irrespective of the natural environment, country size or population.

Comparing Figure 3 to Figure 4 reveals two groups of countries: those that are mostly the origin of border crossings, and those that are the destinations. There is no distinctive spatial organization of these groups. It is not surprising to see that the most 'porous' countries of each group (Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo or DRC) are adjacent to each other. There is also a rather central character of the countries towards which the border crossings are directed. The landlocked countries from the Sahelian strip and central Africa are well-represented in this group. In addition, 'origin' countries (9) are two-times fewer than the number of destinations (17), suggesting a radiative dynamic: transnational flows are not bilateral phenomena; they rather radiate from one country towards its whole neighborhood.

Figure 3 – Number of Inward Border Crossing

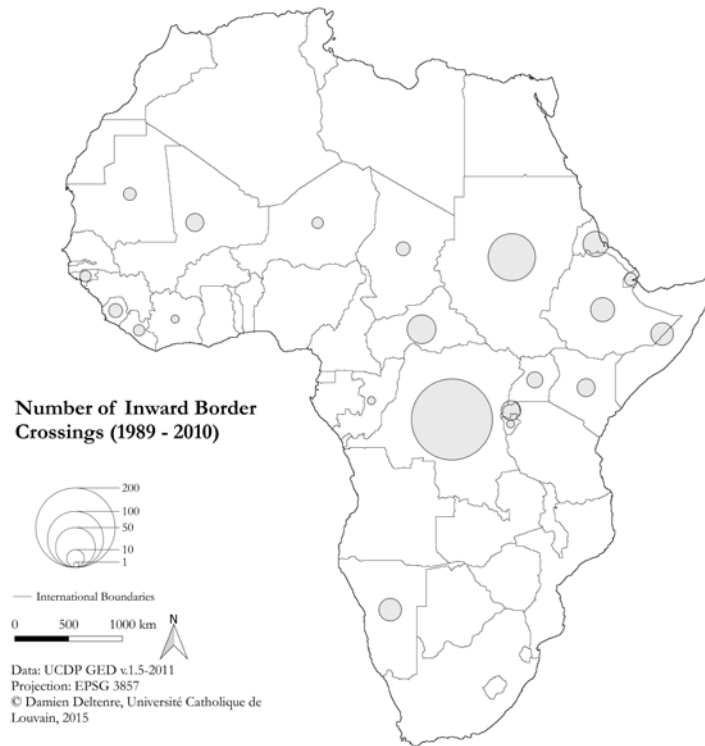
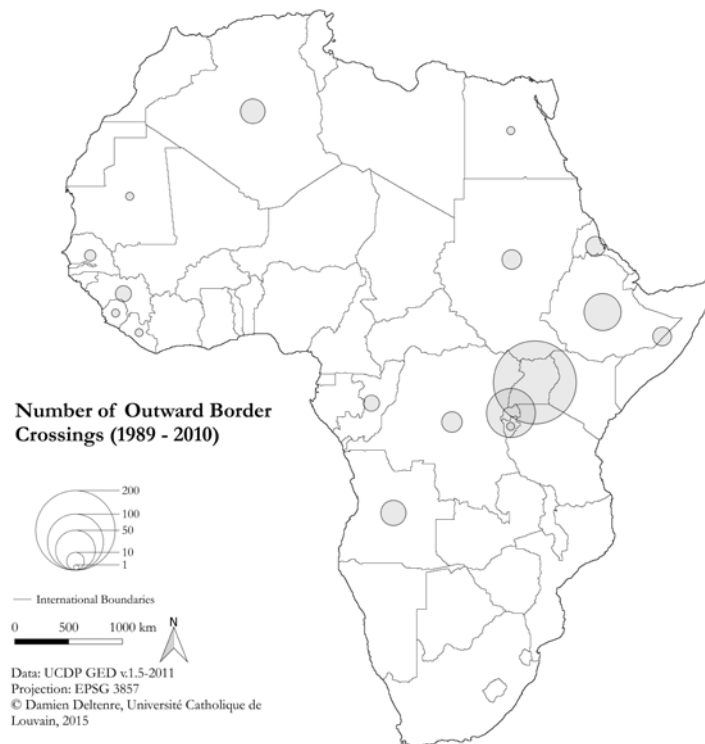


Figure 4 – Number of Outwards Border Crossings (1989-2010)



3. Transnational Dynamics of Civil War

Why do civil wars spill across international boundaries? The contagion-escalation nexus shows that, to some extent, the contagion process is pushed by the rebels. When the conflict escalates, states too can drive the contagion.⁹

Contagion by rebel initiative

Civil war is a particular form of armed conflict with a structural imbalance between the belligerents. In strict military terms, it would be foolish for a rebellion to take up arms against the state on its own ground. Insurgents can thus use methods of non-conventional warfare to alter the asymmetry, and cross-border activities take place in this effort to reduce the gap vis-à-vis the government.

Taking advantage of the limited jurisdiction of the state

Under the Westphalian paradigm of state sovereignty, the border defines the limits of the state. Would the government fight abroad against cross-border rebels, it would face international condemnation and possible retaliation from the violated country, in addition to the ongoing civil war. For the rebels, the consequences of crossing the border are usually less serious. At worst, the country in which they penetrated can become their new foe, without any more danger from their initial enemy. At best, the host country can leave the rebels alone, either because it does not want to fight them or because it is unable to do so. Crossing the border thus offers an asymmetric advantage to the rebels by providing them a safe haven where they can rest, train, and plan future operations.

Resource availability

Crossing a border also offers additional resources to the rebellion. Civil wars almost invariably channel large flows of refugees to the neighboring countries, and the camps are often located in border areas. A large number of uprooted and impoverished people located so close to the border can provide the rebels with a huge recruitment pool. Humanitarian aid coming to the camps is a precious source of food and medical supplies for them. Refugee camps have thus sometimes become lawless areas where rebels controlled entire settlements, their supplies, and population.¹⁰

Chad, facing the crisis in the neighboring Darfur insisted to move away the refugee camps it hosts. Most of the 12 camps located on its territory are only 60 to 80 kilometers inside Chad, even 7 kilometers for the closest one. Chadian president Déby advocated for the relocation of the refugees some 500 kilometers inside the country.¹¹ However, moving refugees so far inside the country can open the way to a permanent settlement, a consequence that not all hosts would accept.¹²

Regional cause and irredentism

Africa is a mosaic of ethnic groups whose geographic distribution transcends international boundaries. When one component of a transnational community starts a rebellion, it can trigger an uprising in the whole region leading to a series of civil wars that disregard the state boundaries.

Mali and Niger experienced Tuareg insurgencies in the 1990s and 2006-08. Each time, ethnic solidarity and shared grievances triggered violence in both sides of the border as members of this transnational minority rebelled against their respective governments.¹³

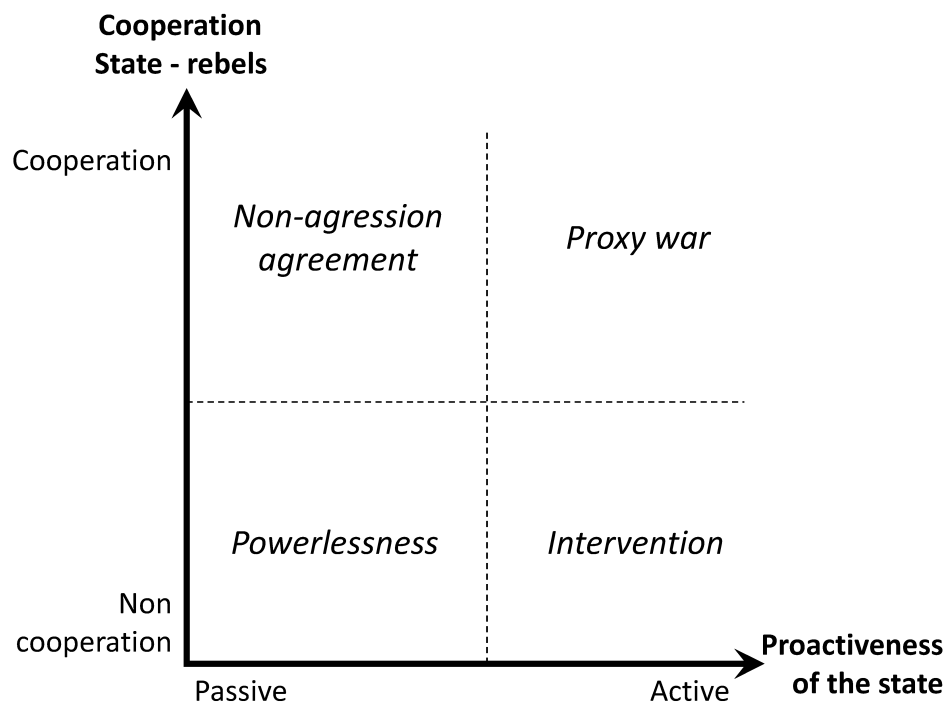
Support of a friendly government

Rebels can also seek contagion of the conflict because they are supported by a friendly government in a neighboring country. This is ideal since it provides them a safe haven, supplies, armament, and even trained recruits. A state's behavior can thus become decisive.

Contagion by state initiative

One can identify four general dynamics in relation to two dimensions of state behavior (Figure 5). 'Proactiveness' measures to what extent a state adopts a passive or active stance towards the existence of rebels within its territory or in another country. The level of cooperation indicates whether the government cooperates with the rebels.

Figure 5 – Cooperation-proactiveness Framework of State Involvement in Civil Wars



Power vacuum

Many African countries combine low GDPs, weak militaries, and vast areas. Some lack the necessary means to exert control over their land and deter rebels from using their territory as a safe haven. The security apparatus is also focused on the core of the country, especially the capital and the large cities.¹⁴ If a rebel group is active in a neighboring country, the power vacuum created by the government's weakness is an advantage. They can establish their base out of reach of their foe, and risk no harm from the host state.

Passing the buck

Weak states can accommodate to the new situation by securing a pact of non-aggression: the rebels are granted the use of some inner border regions as rear base for their rebellion, provided they will not harm their host. Such an agreement can prove useful for the government. It has no way of ousting the rebels from its territory, yet it can ensure that they will not create chaos. This solution does nothing to (re-)establish state control in the rebels' sanctuary, but it can prevent the country from becoming a theater of war too. Amadou Toumani Touré's Mali is suspected to have concluded such a pact with AQIM (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb). Until 2011, northern Mali was used as a safe haven for the group, but all operations took place outside the country.¹⁵

States that make such deals acknowledge their weakness and secure their own position, knowing that this behavior will pass the buck to the neighboring country, which will bear alone the task of fighting against the insurgents.

Proxy war

State direct support to rebel groups is surprisingly far more documented. This scenario differs from the previous one in that the government actually chooses to help the rebels. The support is a way to reach a political objective against another state or a rebellion based abroad. The rebels will serve the state's interests in fighting another government, without the cost of openly declaring war. Since the UN international regime condemns wars of aggression, proxy wars where rebel groups fulfill a state's revisionist ambitions is a convenient way to hurt a neighbor without suffering a wide international condemnation.¹⁶

The 2003-10 Chad-Sudan indirect conflict over Darfur is a prominent example of proxy war. While Chad-sponsored JEM rebels operated from bases in eastern Chad, they faced the retaliation of Sudan, which supported the Chadian rebels installed in Darfur. This indirect war greatly aggravated the humanitarian crisis in Darfur and threatened regional stability. International pressure applied in 2010 on the rebels' sponsors proved the most effective way to reduce the magnitude of this conflict.¹⁷

Do it yourself!

Interventions occur when a state takes active measures against a rebel group in its own or its neighbor's territory. A government can be victorious against the rebels and push them across the border. The government fighting against the rebels can also send its forces abroad to attack them inside their sanctuary, having its neighbor's permission or disregarding its sovereignty. In 2009, 4,000 Rwandan soldiers was allowed to move into DRC to attack FDLR rebels who had been harassing Rwanda for years from their Congolese bases.¹⁸

The data support this scenario: out of the 452 recorded border crossings, 60% are caused by regular forces of states. While states represent only 23% of all the recorded actors, they constitute 59% of the actors involved in cross-border activities.

4. UN peacekeeping principles and state-centricity

Civil wars, through the dynamics of escalation and contagion have a high potential of becoming regional issues, and thus a threat to international stability in Africa. As guarantor of international peace and security, the UN has long been a major actor on the continent. However, despite intense efforts and the deployment of very strong PKOs – in 2014, Africa

represented 9 out of 16 missions and 80% of the budget and personnel deployed¹⁹ – the UN has largely failed to address the transnational dimension of civil wars.

Aware of the problem, Roland Paris recently stressed the need to tackle the problem of cross-border conflicts and rethink peacekeeping practices which still fall within a state-centric perspective:

*International borders in much of the world are boundaries more in name than in fact because webs of de facto political influence and control [...] transcend these boundaries [...]. To what extent can [peace operations] address trans-boundary matters if they are expected to operate solely within the territorial 'container' of the state [...]?*²⁰

In the UN doctrine, the essence of peacekeeping was originally border management. Traditional peacekeeping consists in the interposition of Blue Helmets between regular armies along a cease-fire line, and in the monitoring of this provisional boundary. The beginning of the 1990s, witnessed the deployment of more ambitious peace operations. Beyond monitoring, the Blue Helmets are not passive observers anymore. Through multidimensional PKOs, the UN is involved in prolonged state-support and state-building operations, while the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine suggests that the Blue Helmets should take part to the conflict when it comes to protecting civilians.

The emblematic failures of several missions (i.e. UNOSOM in Somalia, UNPROFOR in the Balkans, and UNAMIR in Rwanda, see Appendix for acronyms' definitions) and the seemingly never-ending deployment of heavy missions (in DRC, MONUC, then MONUSCO, has been deployed for 16 years, without being able to put an end to the conflicts) has drawn attention on the fact that PKO are by design more actor-oriented than task-oriented. The operations are often crafted according to what the actors are ready to accept, instead of the means required to put an end to the conflict situation. A mission deployed in a context of low or formal consent from the host authorities is thus doomed because it will be deprived the means to accomplish its objectives. However, political pressure can push the Security Council to launch the operation, even though the conditions for its success are clearly not met.

UNOMUR was deployed in Uganda in 1993 to prevent weapons and ammunitions from crossing the border into Rwanda, as Ugandan president Museveni was suspected of supporting FPR rebels against the Rwandan government. This mission was created on request by both countries.²¹ However, Rwanda had lost control of most of its border and the rebels rejected the presence of UN observers on the Rwandan side. UNOMUR was thus only deployed on the Ugandan side in front of the FPR-controlled area. In April 1994, UNOMUR wanted to extend the zone of operation to the whole border, but Uganda denied the access to its easternmost part. It took more than two weeks of discussions with the Ugandan authorities to finally allow the mission to deploy over the whole border.²² This example shows that UNOMUR's capabilities never matched the high ambitions set in its mandate, but the mission was deployed anyway and considered 'a factor of stability in the area'.²³

A major cause of UN's inability to tackle cross-border conflicts is the very nature of the organization, deeply embedded in the Westphalian paradigm of state sovereignty and state-centricity. The UN is fundamentally an intergovernmental organization. Article 4 of the UN charter defines statehood as a condition for membership up to a point that it is now considered the ultimate source of external recognition of a polity's sovereignty. The mere

nature of the UN makes it thus difficult to experiment creative PKOs transcending such a state-centric view of the world.

A cross-border approach to peacekeeping is further complicated by the regional balance of power and the deep interstate rivalries that characterize some parts of Africa. Although the Darfur crisis has obvious transnational components, the intense distrust between Chad and Sudan long prevented any coordination towards a regional response to the conflict. Only March 2010 saw both countries starting to cooperate through the coordinated deployment of 1,500 troops-strong joint military unit on each side of the border.²⁴ In addition, the UN usually negotiates the status agreement allowing the deployment of the PKO with the state in need – the weak one – while the neighbors are not consulted since they do not need assistance on their territory, even though cross-border mechanisms are obviously fueling the conflict. The UN's bargaining power vis-à-vis the stakeholder states has thus important operational implications for the mission's mandate. A regional mission deployed in countries with different power levels would hypothetically end up with a variable-geometry mandate.

Finally, Security Council's procedures themselves prevent the adoption of a regional approach to conflict resolution. Although undeniable progress have been made recently (e.g. regarding the fight against the Lord's Resistance Army or LRA²⁵), its agenda remains mostly incremental. Security issues are dealt with as they pop-up. Sudan, Darfur, Chad, and South-Sudan are treated as separate points in the agenda despite the obvious regional dimension. This leads to a scattered approach of regional security, which is aggravated by the rigid reporting procedures: the Secretary General published ten reports about Sudan in 2007 while the mission in Chad reported only four times in the meantime.

5. UN peacekeeping and cross-border issues in Africa

The UN's state-centric approach and its inability to deploy regional responses to transnational crises in Africa is a key to understand why so many operations underperformed despite important financial and human means.

In the Great Lakes region, the UN deployed five PKOs but generally failed to provide a secure environment for the population. UNOMUR was launched in 1993 and quickly followed by UNAMIR in Rwanda. The missions were unable to prevent the Tutsi Genocide in 1994 in the aftermath of which the regional instability transformed into a generalized interstate war involving at least seven countries.²⁶ Since 1999, MONUC (renamed MONUSCO in 2010) is deployed in DRC, and between 2004 and 2006 ONUB intervened in Burundi. Apart from Uganda, almost all Great Lakes countries had their own UN PKO. But, except for UNAMIR which absorbed UNOMUR, these missions had neither political nor operational coordination although there was a clear transnational dynamic in this series of multiform conflicts.

The Sudan-Chad-Central African Republic (CAR) area is another example of UN's underachievement. The UN deployed UNMIS in 2005 to cope with the Sudanese civil war. With the aggravation of the situation in Darfur, operation UNAMID took over its African Union predecessor, just before the creation of MINURCAT. Such a proliferation of new missions demonstrates that UNMIS was unable to account for the transnational dimension of the conflict, although its mandate included: 'To monitor transborder activities of armed groups along the Sudanese borders with Chad and the Central African Republic in particular through regular ground and aerial reconnaissance activities'.²⁷

However this new setup created the ideal conditions to address the transnational dimension of the Chad-Sudan conflict since three UN PKOs were now deployed on both sides of the border. Unfortunately, the missions were never properly coordinated, neither at the political level nor on the ground. No common structure was implemented to rationalize the work of the Blue Helmets, and each operation was strictly limited to the territory on which it was initially deployed. Although they had to monitor the border, they were not allowed to cross it. In case of emergency, they still had to wait for their counterparts of the other mission to intervene. In February 2008, a EUFOR Chad/CAR patrol (MINURCAT's European side-mission) penetrated by mistake three kilometers inside Darfur. Sudanese soldiers engaged their vehicle killing one French peacekeeper and injuring another.²⁸

This example demonstrates that adopting a regional approach to peacekeeping should not consist in deploying missions on either side of a problematic border, hoping the Blue Helmets will be able to patch the leaks. To be efficient in reducing the transnational component of a conflict, the PKO should transcend the border. The deployment should be based on the actual geographical footprint of the conflict, regardless of the state borders. Ideally, UN troops on the ground should have a single chain of command and be allowed to cross the border whenever they need. In Rwanda and Uganda, the merger of UNOMUR and UNAMIR almost accomplished such conditions, but the misfit mandate of UNAMIR and the dramatic reduction in the personnel following the outbreak of the Tutsi genocide denied the missions any chance of success.

Since the beginning of the Malian crisis in 2012, the Sahel-Sahara security complex is a primary concern in Africa. Transnational dynamics are clearly a factor in this desert area where border is a rather abstract notion. Although the rebels' area of activity stretches from Mali to Libya, UN's response to the crisis was to deploy MINUSMA in April 2013 with a mandate limited to the Malian territory,²⁹ even though the government of Niger advocated in favor of a cross-border operation extended to North-West Niger.³⁰ However, after the success of operation Serval launched in January 2013, France transformed it into operation Barkhane in August 2014. It is deployed over five different countries with a single mandate and a single command. The French operation is thus framed to tackle transnational threats and demonstrates the operational feasibility of a cross-border deployment.

6. UN awareness and action

As far as UN action in Africa is concerned, a conceptual breakthrough is still awaited in terms of regional approach to peacekeeping. In areas like the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region and the Sahara-Sahel, the UN regional approach remains far too rhetorical and lacks operationalization on the ground. When conflicts are regional, armed groups routinely conduct cross-border operations and states are unable to exercise proper control on thousands kilometers of remote borders, peace operations can no longer remained locked in the same state-centric paradigm they used to be so far.

On the political and institutional level, despite Security Council briefings and meetings with a region-based agenda as well as the appointment of regional Secretary-General Special Envoys, peace operations mandate and Secretary-General Representatives remain country-based. Even in the remarkable case of South Sudan gaining independence, the UN redesigned its forces configuration to make sure that each individual mission operates on one and only one state territory. Deployed since 2005, UNMIS was therefore split, in July

2011, to create UNMISS.³¹ The UN's state-centric logic goes so far that a specific mission (UNISFA) was created to cope with the Abyei area³², which is disputed by both states. Would this area be assigned to either UNMIS or UNMISS, the UN would probably have been accused of partiality in supporting the claims of Sudan or South Sudan. In similar contexts, the UN Security Council and Secretary-General should consider ways to surpass their conventional state-centric approach and consider the deployment of multi-country cross-border peace operations with a single Secretary-General Representative and a single chain of command and reporting to the UN Security Council.

At the operational level, country-based mandates lock up UN soldiers of a given operation within the borders of one specific country while armed groups easily benefit from border porosity to increase their mobility, escape from military moves from regular armed forces and enter back later on random locations of the same border.

In addition, multidimensional mandates incorporating SSR (Security Sector Reform), DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration) and the protection of civilians tend to favor excessive scattering of UN peacekeepers within the country instead of concentrating them on border monitoring tasks when the latter is obviously needed. MONUC and MONUSCO have shown dramatic exposure of the inefficiency of such a desperate chase for mitigating the effect instead of concentrating manpower shutting up the origin of the problem.

Only Resolution 2098, adopted by the UNSC on the 28th of March 2013, following the Addis Ababa agreement signed on the 24th of February, prioritized the issue of border control in MONUSCO's mandate by tasking the military component of MONUSCO including the newly created Intervention Brigade to 'Monitor the implementation of the arms embargo [...] and in particular observe and report on flows of military personnel, arms or related materiel across the eastern border of the DRC, including by using, [...] surveillance capabilities provided by unmanned aerial system'.³³

Conclusion

The goal of this article was to critically examine the UN state-centric approach to peacekeeping in Africa in view of the cross-border nature of the bulk of the conflictuality on the said continent. Therefore, it first debunks the idea that civil wars are always one country's own internal problem. The recent conflicts in Libya, Mali, and Nigeria all contradict this obsolete understanding of civil wars. This paper showed the dynamic nature of armed conflicts and the mechanisms by which they evolve from an intrastate insurgency to a regional interstate conflagration. The second part of the study evidenced the claim that transnational conflicts are a common feature of Africa, and that while rebel groups make an intensive use of borders, states too tend to move into each other's territories. If insurgents find operational advantages in retreating behind a border and favor the contagion of the conflicts, states as well can trigger escalation by embedding the existing civil conflict into a proxy war.

The risk is high to see internal conflicts trigger regional wars, as it was dramatically illustrated by the Great Lakes war of 1998-2003. However, international organizations such as the UN, despite a long and heavy involvement on the continent still face structural and operational limits that make them unable to cope with the transnational nature of many African conflicts. The UN is deeply embedded in a state-centric approach to security inherent to its

intergovernmental nature which prevents it from deploying task-oriented operations based on a regional understanding of the security problem.

Creative solutions exist however which could address the problem of transnational armed conflicts. Timid evolutions are already visible in this regard. The UN Secretary-General now publishes on a regular basis thematic reports addressing security issues at a regional scale such as the reports on LRA's activities³⁴ or the problem of child soldiers in Sudan.³⁵ In a context of scarce financial and human resources, the UN Security Council could favor task- rather than actor-oriented operations. This means refusing the deployment of operations even under harsh pressure from the public opinion if the conditions are not met in order to ensure the Blue Helmets will have a decisive impact on the ground. If they are launched, the missions should be more intimately coordinated on a regional basis. The French military operation Barkhane currently deployed in the Sahel and Sahara demonstrates that it is possible to go beyond a state-centric understanding of security and could be an inspiring case for UN peacekeeping. Given the complex and dynamic nature of cross-border threats in Africa, it may be time for the UN to address them both at the strategic and at the operational levels, thus paving the way towards a doctrine of regional peacekeeping.

Finally, PKOs cannot expect to solve a transnational conflict while ignoring the deleterious effect of porous borders. Border monitoring, which was the Blue Helmets' core business before the 1990s, should be restored as a key component for a successful peace operation. If the Blue Helmets want to bring security and peace inside a country, they should plug the leaks beforehand.

Appendix – Missions acronyms

MINURCAT	: UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad
MINUSMA	: UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MONUC	: UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MONUSCO	: UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
ONUB	: UN Operation in Burundi
UNAMID	: African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNAMIR	: UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNISFA	: UN Organization Interim Security Force for Abyei
UNMIS	: UN Mission in the Sudan
UNMISS	: UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan
UNOMUR	: UN Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda
UNOSOM	: UN Operation in Somalia
UNPROFOR	: UN Protection force

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