

'Silencing the Guns' as Militarisation: A Feminist Perspective on African Security Practices.

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Introduction

Security governance is increasingly derived from the priorities of regional security institutions (RSIs). In Africa, this happens to be the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) the main funder of AU peace and security activities. While the AU sets the agenda of what security is, and what to prioritise in its attainment, the majority of the funding it gets from the EU goes towards militarised peace support operations as a response to violent conflict on the continent.

It is in this context that *Silencing the Guns* has emerged as a normative aspiration, and a strategic objective of the AU. Although formally articulated in 2014 as a Vision for 2020, the idea and the practice is not new for African security actors or the RSI itself. In this paper, I want to suggest that *Silencing the Guns* is an outcome of post cold war deliberations on what security means in the African context. Within the context of these understandings of security however, African security actors are undermining the concurrent commitments to gender inclusive security practices, and indeed their responses have hardly changed.

In this paper, I examine African security practices, by which I mean the discourse of security on the continent and the 'doing' of security as enacted by the AU. I then locate the ways in which feminist perspectives on gender perspectives are situated

within these militarised practices. I argue that due to the nature of security interventions that dominate the practices of the AU in a bid to *silence the guns*, the feminist aspirations of a new gender sensitive RSI is constrained from delivering a transformative security agenda.

The paper proceeds as follows: In the subsequent section, I examine the security context within which *Silencing the Guns* has emerged. Subsequently, I outline the utility of feminist institutionalism for understanding these practices as enacted by the AU supported by the EU. In the third section, I present the case of military intervention in Somalia and its gendered implications. Finally, I conclude by reflecting on feminist critiques of militarism drawing on reflections from the Somalia case example.

What does Security mean in Africa? Militarising Responses

Human Security has been embraced as the notion of security to which African security actors now aspire (Williams, 2007; Jeng, 2012; Haastrup, 2013a). This is an approach that has been adopted to respond to particular insecurities in the African context. These insecurities are dominated by violent conflicts, and in the past two decades Islamist terrorism.

It is these two main types of security challenges that have brought to the fore the *Silencing the Guns* agenda. This agenda was first outlined in 2014 in the context of the Fifth African Union High-Level Retreat on the promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa (emphasis added). It is broadly part of Agenda 2063. While the

commitment to *Silencing the Guns* has been reaffirmed in subsequent years, the entry point for this strategic objective (violent conflicts and terrorism) cannot be ignored.

From the onset, it was clear that African political elites understood insecurity as originating first from conflict and now terrorism - everything else follows. This is a narrow focus of what insecurity might mean. Yet, this is the understanding that is co-constituted by state officials, institutional officials within the regional security institutions and indeed the epistemic communities (see Khadiagala, 2015). This framing security that sets the tone for the strategic objective that is *Silencing the Guns* and it continues to have an impact on the scope of the responses to insecurity in Africa.

There is almost universal consensus that the way to deal with conflict related insecurity is to present conflict in the first instance. But this, it appears, has tended to be a lower priority relative to conflict management and resolutions historically and the AU presently. In the AU, this is being driven by how the complex emergencies on the continent, the manner in which the AU has set the priorities of the African Peace and Security Architecture (ASPA) but also the way external donors have committed to supporting the APSA.

For the most part then, the AU and those who support it have focused on delivering human security through military missions. While this is not the only means through which the AU engages peace and security on the continent as laid out by the Peace Fund and mechanisms like the Panel of the Wise and the Continental Early Warning

System, by far the most dominant mechanism are its peace support operations, or military missions.

As of 2017, the AU has deployed eight peace support operations, and has one joint operation with the United Nations (UN), the UN in Darfur (UNAMID). Additionally, the AU provides direct support to military missions like the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNTJF) constituted to fight against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin (see also de Coning, Gelot and Karlsrund, 2016, 8)

The majority of these AU missions are characterised by strong counter-terrorism and counter insurgency components (De Coning, 2017; Gelot 2017) that rely on military apparatuses. This constitutes a militarism of its peace and security architecture. Militarism is defined in different ways; however, in this context the *behavioural* definition is most appropriate in describing a tendency of African responses to insecurity. Eide and Thee (1980, 9) define militarism in this sense as 'the inclination to rely on military means of coercion for handling of conflicts' or as in Kinsella the 'disposition or proclivity to behave in a particular way, namely, to employ military over non-military means of conflict resolution' (Kinsella, 2013, 105). While the nature of insecurity, suggest the necessity of certain types of military engagements, the propensity to resort more to these have implications.

Feminist interventions especially critique militarism as having 'gendered' implications for society. For feminists, militarism is an ideology that supports military values that tend to reproduce problematic hegemonic masculinities. For feminists

then, while military values are seen as essential to security society, militarism creates the spaces of using military means to secure (Reardon, 1996; Horn, 2010; Enloe 1983). In the subsequent section, I consider the ways in which applying feminism to an institution like the AU can reveal the gendered implications of the increased militarism of the regional security institution.

Towards a Feminist Appraisal of a Security Institution

At the conceptual and practice levels, gender equality perspectives constitute an important concern for security actors. Following years of feminist activism, the accession of the global normative framework, Women, Peace and Security agenda in 2000 has especially engendered this. At an analytical level, feminist approaches to political science have always sought to bring gender to the forefront of scholarly analysis.

In the context of this paper, Feminist contributions to New Institutionalism and indeed Security Studies can help to unpick the dynamics of gender within the work that the AU does. Feminism has the added role of wanting to change the status quo, and thus has transformative potential on the institution as well as its policy outcomes and practices (see Ansorg and Haastруп, forthcoming). In recent work on feminist approaches to institutionalism, Mackay et al (2010) argue that feminist approaches to institutions wants to 'include women as actors in political processes, to "gender" the institution, and in terms of a research agenda to move the research agenda towards questions about the interplay between gender and the operation and effect

of political institutions' (p.524). Therefore, because Feminist approaches to new institutional theory accepts that institutions are gendered it is thus concerned with the '*gendered* character and *gendering* effects' of institutions (Mackay, 2011, p.181). In investigating the gendered character and gendering effects of institutions, I am able to decipher narratives of gender within the security policies and practices in Africa-EU relations.

What do the feminist claims of gendered institutions or gendering effects mean? According to Kantola (2010), an institution is gendered because it is underpinned by norms of femininity and masculinity in a hierarchical relationship whereby the masculine norms are valued over the feminine norms (p.3). Militarism especially allows for the institutionalisation of the sorts of gender differences that prioritise masculine norms (Khalid, 2014, 4).

It is unsurprising that the majority of the AU's military missions are dominated by men and efforts to include gender equality is not prioritised.

Feminism finds out the ways in which this hierarchical relationship is being produced and reproduced, and its broader implications on what institutions are able to do. Gendering then is the process of 'feminization and masculinization' that results in institutions constantly reproducing subjects that fit these characterisations (Kantola, 2010, p.3).

If one accepts this understanding, it is expected then that institutions that 'do security' are seen to embody hegemonic masculinity given their domination by men's

bodies and their governance often by masculinist logics of appropriateness (see for example Brock-Utne and Garbo, 2009; Cohn, 2000; Kronsell, 2012; Tickner, 1992; 2001). It is thus unsurprising that militarisation as a response to new security challenges in Africa only serves to maintain the status- quo of hegemonic masculinities.

With the advent of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, it might be expected that its internalisation within the AU might begin to break down those hegemonic masculinities. In the AU, the WPS agenda is being institutionalised through the office of the Special Envoy on WPS on behalf of the Commission Chairperson. This is considered to send a strong message on women's empowerment, leadership and visibility in Africa. The Special Envoy's mandate is very much focused on UN sanctioned agenda, however this is seen as additional to a broader commitment to amplifying the 'voices and concerns' to engender a role for women in being part of the peace and security processes on the continent (Diop, 2014). The commitment to WPS is focused on tackling sexual violence in conflict and post conflict situations, including a zero tolerance code of conduct against abuses by AU troops in conflict areas. However, an addendum to this is the existing African framework, Article 11 of the *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa* (Maputo Protocol), which obliges signing parties to protecting 'asylum seeking women, refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons' from sexual violence and exploitations (African Union Commission, 2003). There is thus a very specific focus on protection of women (and

girls) from sexualised violations in the AU's current interpretations of the intersection of gender and security.

Given the AU's militarism on the one hand, and its commitment to the WPS agenda, this paper now turns to see the outcome of these two combinations in practice by examining the case of Somalia.

Gendering the Practice of Militarism: Intervention in Somalia

Context

Somalia is an east African nation, which has been embroiled in conflict for over two decades. This conflict means that by whatever definition of security employed, Somalia is often considered a site of insecurity. In addition to the lack of physical safety following the overthrow of President Barre in 1991, one cannot ignore the war profiteering of diverse and clashing warlords. The everyday insecurity of internally displaced peoples and the 'spill-over' of refugees into neighbouring countries that cause tensions along its border is exacerbated by what is a low grading for human development (0.285) including inequality between men and women (UNDP, 2012; 2014). According to the Gender Inequality Index, Somalia currently ranks very highly at 0.776 out of 1 (total inequality) sitting in the fourth highest position (UNDP, 2012) in the areas of: maternal mortality, child marriages of young girls violence against women and a hostile atmosphere to equality through the persistence of discriminatory traditional jurisprudence. The UNDP (2012; 2014) further estimates that approximately 98% of Somali women have suffered from Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Additionally there are the profound effects of natural disasters including droughts on livelihoods and the strong hold of the Islamist extremists Al-

Shabab. More recently, Somalia is often associated with modern day piracy another source of perceived insecurity not just to Somalia but also to the regions, humanitarian and other external actors. Somalia thus epitomises a vast array of insecurities.

Somalia is a fascinating case because it is the poster 'child' for intervention with a diverse group of actors working in parallel and together to ostensibly bring about an environment that fosters peace and security. Importantly, the interventions to these insecurities must address not just violence or conflict related insecurities, but also impact on their knock-on effects. Nevertheless, the dominant narrative of insecurity in Somalia is the terrorist threat and the perpetuation of violent conflict.

For my analysis, I focus on the AU's interventions supported by the EU. Specifically, I examine AMISOM, and EUTM Somalia and their intended impact on proximate and remote insecurities. Both missions though distinct are intended to offer different measures towards insecurity are examined as a continuum of security intervention in Somalia. I examined and analysed AU and EU policy documents primarily¹. Additionally, UN programme reports, civil society reports and testimonies of personnel further helped to provide context for understanding the nature EU support to these missions and a broader part of support peace and security in Somalia. I also consider the third-party source report *Implementing UNSCR 1325 in Capacity Building Missions* (Lackenbauer and Jonsson, 2014).

¹ These include Programme Documents, Funding Documents, Press Releases and official Webpages.

To tease out the extent to which feminist considerations of gender work within the institutional contexts of the recent military interventions in Somalia, some key questions² guided the analysis:

1. Are there any references to gender?
2. In what context do these references appear?
3. Who features and who is excluded?
4. To what extent are perceived masculine norms being prioritised over feminine ones?
5. How is hierarchy retrenched or sustained?

The main and largest intervention to bring security to Somalia is AMISOM. AMISOM is an Africa-led multidimensional mission mandated by the UN since 2007. It includes military, civilian and maritime components. The military component is the largest of the three. It is the largest mission of its kind in the world with over 22,000 personnel (African Union, 2017). As of 2017, the EU remains its largest external contributor.

The military component of AMISOM is responsible for the first objective of mission mandates "Reduce the threat posed by Al Shabaab and other armed opposition groups" (African Union, 2017) through stabilization including offensive operations. In other words, the priorities are military in nature and a response to armed insurrection.

As an example, AMISOM does precisely what *Silencing the Gun* intends.

² These questions are adapted from those posed by Gill Allwood in 'Gender mainstreaming and EU Climate Change policy' EIoP, 18 (1) Article 6 pp. 1-26

AMISOM lends itself to the inclusion of the WPS agenda, of course. Yet, despite the advances made in trying to integrate the WPS agenda into African security interventions, the inclusion of gender perspectives within the military component of AMISOM is not evident.

Yet, gender perspectives feature as one of the six units of AMISOM's *civilian* component. The Gender Unit is considered an innovation of AMISOM and AU peace support missions more broadly. The Gender Unit is tasked with conducting training on gender sensitivity for the military, police and civilian dimension of AU engagement in Somalia and with implementing UNSCR 1325. The majority of the training on gender focuses on the prevention of sexual violence or exploitation, and public awareness raising about the criminality of sexual violence against women. Indeed one of the achievements of AMISOM in this regard is the *Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse* (2013). This was a direct response to the allegations and findings of the subsequent investigation that AU troops in Somalia had been complicit in the sexual exploitation of vulnerable women and girls.

Thus, gender's link to security in this context is about sexual violence against women. In this particular narrative of gender, the possibility of vulnerable men is excluded from the narrative of those that need to be secured. The majority of the recipients of these training are men and thus men are situated as perpetrators vis-à-vis women as victims. This is despite the Special Envoy's promise to look 'beyond seeing women only as victims and men as only as [sic] victimizers' (Diop, 2014, p.4). At the same time, AU peacekeepers are positioned as protectors of women's virtue against Somali men as the new commitment of the AU and AMISOM does not address dismantling

systems that initially allowed their male Somali intermediaries to procure the women and girls for exploitation. The Policy in this regard is inward looking, calling into question the extent to which AMISOM can expect to impact shifts in societal discriminatory practices that are the sources of these gendered insecurities.

Despite the investment in 'gender' training on preventing and criminalising sexual violence the abuses still happened. Thus the extent to which the dominant framing of women as victims even works is called into question. Beyond this, while there have been some rhetorical moves towards recruiting more women into the ranks of AU peacekeepers as part of a broader gendering of peacekeeping this has not happened. The intersection of gender and security in this context narrates women as victims in relation to (Somali) men as perpetrators, (male) AU troops as perpetrators, then contrite protectors; meanwhile women's bodies are excluded from 'securing' and thus also excluded from specific forms of participation. This narrative also contradicts the idea that security intervention actually impacts positively on people (including women's) lives. Further, security is not transformed and indeed gender hierarchies are re-entrenched by the very practices intended to destabilise them. Importantly, in this particular narrative of security, the institution of the military and the ways in which it easily absorbs the gendered hierarchies of society is left unquestioned.

EUTM Somalia

Another intervention in Somalia, is the European Union Training Mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia) mandated under the EU's *Common Security and Defence Policy* and in response the UNSCR 1872 on the need to train and equip Somali security forces (Official Journal of the European Union, L44/16, 2010). This is a military mission

established in 2010. Its mandate seeks to support AMISOM by institutionalising the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) with the specific aims responding to the 'needs' of the *Somali people*. It is a training mission further guided by *EU Training Concept of the ESDP* (Council of the European Union, 2004). The key actors include representatives of the EU's Brussels institutions, member states' soldiers and other personnel, the Ugandan government and military elites, Somali Ministry of Defence, the Somali National Army General Staff, Somali soldier trainees and the AU (vis-à-vis AMISOM). An initial content analysis of the decision to contribute to the training of over 3,000 Somali soldiers shows that there is no mention of 'gender', 'women' or other keywords that would suggest an interlink between gender and security at all. A closer contextual reading reveals the same. At the planning phase of contributions however, the EU considers UNSCR 1325 as part of its mandate to uphold International Humanitarian Law (IHL) (Spiteri, 2013) and as is consistent with the 2006 *Council Conclusions*. This is in addition to the overall mandate of CSDP training missions.

As a member state participant, Finland contributed gender training in the context of the EUTM. On the first impressions of the Gender Advisor deployed for this purpose she notes,

At the outset, my greatest concern was that the Somali security trainees would somehow turn into human rights perpetrators themselves when they got back to Mogadishu, therefore I decided to use International Humanitarian Law, which includes international criminal liability as a gender tool (Grekula, 2011).

The same Advisor in another presentation noted that

Without first solving the security issues it will be impossible to guarantee the protection of human rights or women's rights in the country. Both men and women need security and more or less stable society in order to focus on reconstruction and development initiatives (Grenkula, n.d)

In this narrative of including gender in EUTM Somalia two things become apparent. First, Somali security trainees, all men, are perceived as a threat to Somali society. It is unclear why this is assumed from the onset. However, it serves the purpose of racialising Somali men in the quest to articulate gender concerns in this context. Second, that 'security' must come first before gender justice, which is seen as a process that occurs outside of the militarisation and rather is engaged post conflict. This however seems to contradict the need for a gender advisor during 'security' training.

However, in taking a broad IHL approach whose emphasis is on the respect for all humans in all situations, the gender advisor was able to link the usefulness of gender in military training to everyday life beyond the military. Furthermore, approach that focuses on sexual violence was able to engage in issues around controlling female sexuality and its link to sexually transmitted diseases, child marriage, domestic violence and gay rights (Grenkula, 2011).

The beneficiaries of this training are men. Among the 100 trainers sent by the EU there were only seven women. Similarly, there are only seven women receiving training from the Somali side. The EU contends that including women as part of the

contingent being trained is not part of EUTM mandate. Thus gender equality training itself re-entrenches gender hierarchies. In this context, gender's intersection with security is a feminisation of human rights to be preserved by soldiers. In certain areas, gender-sensitivity training is rejected as it is seen as unnecessary, which was the case in weapons training (see Lackenbauer and Jonsson, 2014). However, the exclusion is not surprising if one considers prevailing images of hyper-masculinity of 'boys and their toys' (Myrntinen, 2003), a domain that cannot be disturb; yet it is considered neutral. A feminist reading however epitomises the gendered nature of security practice that normalises certain hegemonic masculinities.

On the whole a consideration for the unequal hierarchies between masculinities and femininities - gender - is not seen as integral to the EUTM's core role of training beyond protecting women even when women are made invisible by the practices necessitated by militarism

Conclusion

The process of delivering human security on the African continent is manifested in the strategic objective that has been articulated by silencing the gun. This focuses on the elimination of violent conflicts and counter terrorism measure. However, this process is fraught with contestation, one of which is manifested by the feminist critique of militarism.

In applying feminist lenses, I suggest that the outcome of some of these tensions reveal multiple narratives of security and gender in the context of the AU's security practices. A dominant narrative is that security requires a measure of militarisation in

parallel or intersecting with other practices of intervention. Gender thus becomes only relevant for security when attended to by soldiers in the 'hard' security sphere. We further see that when gender is invoked the focus tends to be almost exclusively on what to do *to* women. This contradicts the commitment to examine the relationship between men and women, or gendered relations as a basis for insecurity itself. Further, while the Special Envoy for WPS in the AU is emphatic about not stereotyping women as victims and men as victimiser, this inevitably becomes the predominant focus of the current approach to gender in security within Africa-EU relations. We may further observe that even as soldiers who are overwhelming male are being trained to protect women, those women's perspectives and experiences are not included as legitimate parts of security training. Indeed their bodies are excluded from the sites of security.

A narrative, albeit latent, further suggests that to understand the gendered nature of security, there is an assumption that gender and security can often only intersect when other perceived power hierarchies have been broken down. It may even accept that the break down of those other hierarchies outweighs the imperative of gendering the security sphere. Specifically, there is a current imperative that privileges local ownership as a way to realise African agency, and begin to redress the historical power asymmetries between European and African actors.

Relatedly, this configuration also reveals the gendered relationship between the AU and its support, the EUTM. While the EU support to AMISOM is maintained and the

EUTM persists, the EU is able to absolve itself of responsibilities of promoting gender under the guise of prioritising African ownership.

Nevertheless, of course there is even more to the narrative of security in the African context. These narratives have significant implications. While African elites continue to prioritise militarised responses to conflict based insecurity, the EU uses this preference to bolster its own credentials as a security actor. A feminist reading further suggests that these militarised preferences are characterised by a hegemonic masculinity on the one hand that asserts a right to cull violence; and a logic of masculinist protection that positions the end result of these capability building programmes as self-sacrificing, to preserve the regional space in Africa, through shielding women from harm. In this understanding of how gender intersects security, security is 'courageous, responsible, and virtuous' as a man who protects (Young, 2003). Moreover, in highlighting the gendered dynamics of security, we see that it has remained more or less the same, human security or not. Gendered hierarchies are re-established where women, representing the feminised, play a subordinate role by being victims that justify the processes of security cooperation.

Intervention within this *meso* level institution observed through feminist lens reflects a troubling picture of institutional power increasingly consolidated in the hands of elites where women continue to be marginalised, and the intersectionality of oppressions ignored to formulate new gendered hierarchies. The obvious and complex narratives of gender and security have not given an opening especially for the feminised/devalorised positions of Somali women's voices even as male soldiers are able to proffer their preferences on the extent to which 'gender' can be located in

capacity building. Finally, the *meso* level of regions, though often absent from most analyses for International Relations does not mediate the problematic aspects of state interventions of a similar kind. Rather, I think to an extent, they mirror its broader gendered dynamics.

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