



The US-made African army in the Horn of Africa: what result?

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le Chef d'escadron VATINEL

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Based on the American concept of "leadership from behind" or "leadership in retreat", the author takes stock of ten years of US military presence in the Horn of Africa. Recalling that the training activities of the American army are comparable to those carried out by the French army for a long time. This training raises the question of the nature of Western military support to African countries. What is the best compromise between direct engagement and efficient training?

The concept of "leadership from behind" is a fashionable concept at the strategic level and is frequently used when talking about the US military, particularly its Army. This notion refers to the American policy that has tended in recent years to leave its strategic partners and allies in the front line.

But what about the Horn of Africa? What role does the US military play in the training of AMISOM troops operating in Somalia?

What is the current "feedback" on such practices? What about the French army also acting in this part of the world?

The case of the Horn of Africa is, it seems, representative of the American strategy, since it is indeed a question of training African Union troops for their autonomous engagement in Somalia against the Shebbabs. France also plays a role in the training of these troops and its expertise is recognised by its Western partners.

Leadership versus "**leadership from behind**"

To understand how Americans operate in the Horn of Africa, we must first of all return to the concepts that define their foreign policy. The concept of "leadership from behind", first used during the intervention in Libya in 2011, has been used to clarify the Obama doctrine on foreign intervention. The American president wants to limit the intervention of his troops in theatres that are of little interest to the American citizen. When its interests are not directly threatened, Washington chooses to give priority to "light footprint operations" [1], particularly in Africa. This makes the presence of American troops in this region of the world less visible, preserves the lives of American soldiers and limits the financial costs of a massive commitment. The US Army is ready to provide logistical and intelligence support, but it does not wish to put soldiers on the ground in the front line. The most telling example is Libya. In 2011, the French and British armies will intervene in Libya. Officially, the Americans are not present alongside their Western partners. In practice, they provide intelligence, support and certainly special forces. But this case is not reserved for Western partners. We find the same approach in other parts of the world. Thus, in Somalia, the African Union troops, AMISOM [2] troops, intervene with American support against the Shebaabs.

The second concept, independent of the first, is that of "command, management" (leadership) in the sense of "learning the techniques of commanding a troop in combat". American army officers are working for the African Union troops before their engagement in Somalia. The objective is to give them the fundamentals that will enable them to fight against the Shebaabs. Inspired by U.S. Army doctrine for training African army cadres, the cadres engaged in this mission are trying to replicate what they have learned in "friendly" armies. In this context, it may be interesting to read the ADP 7-0 on "Training units and developing leaders" [3] which explains the concept of leader, including what is expected of a military leader, or how to be a charismatic leader in the neighbourhood as well as on operations. This is what the Americans want: to train competent African cadres who will be able to successfully conduct operations in Somalia while also being able to train their subordinates and their successors.

The two notions mentioned, "leadership from behind" and "leadership", are therefore complementary since the training of the cadres of allied African armies enables the United States to remain in the background in this region of the world. The current effort is focused on improving the overall quality of African cadres to enable them to take into account "their" regional problems.

The training of African cadres by the American army

The training mission for AMISOM troops operating in Somalia has been devolved to CJTF-HOA [4] (see annexed hereto). Located in Djibouti and placed directly under the orders of AFRICOM [5], this American headquarters intervenes in all the countries taking part in the AMISOM mission, and in particular in Burundi, Uganda, Djibouti and to a lesser extent Kenya, which is historically linked by its history to the United Kingdom. The long-term objective is to "leave it up to" local trainers so that the countries are self-sufficient in training the troops they send to Somalia.

The training being provided is extremely diverse. They range from section awareness of the threat of IEDs to civil-military action training and feedback. There are even more specific training courses, such as training for special forces and specialists in mine clearance or logistics. Training is dependent on agreements between member countries and the United States. In Burundi, for example, two to three times a year, the US military

provides training in explosives detection and civil-military actions. Radiating from Djibouti, the U.S. Army sends small teams to these various countries to train AMISOM army officers (equivalent to the French Army's operational training detachments or DIOs).

This training approach is not unique to the US Army alone. Given its history and its links with many African countries in this part of the world, France is also involved in the training of African AMISOM troops.

Although the number of troops is smaller, it is not negligible. The French forces in Gabon (FFG) or the French troops stationed in Djibouti (FFDj) participate in these training activities. In most cases, France provides initial training (Burundi and Djibouti) but also more specific training such as command post training. Because of its linguistic proximity, it gives priority to French-speaking countries such as Djibouti and Burundi, even if it sometimes commits itself to other contingents (e.g. Uganda).

The exchange of experience between Americans and French is frequent, both tactically (FFDj/CJTF-HOA) and strategically (AFRICOM/CPCO). These trainings are seen as complementary to the training outsourced to an American contractor (ACOTA training[6]).

Assessment after more than ten years of experience

What assessment can be made after a decade of training of African troops sent to Somalia by the American army? Despite resolutely optimistic official speeches, it appears that the results are far from satisfactory. Indeed, considering the volumes of trainers who have been employed for this mission and the money used over the same period to participate in the rise in power of these armies, it seems surprising not to have more convincing results. The U.S. Army is still stuck in the first stage of the process, namely the training of the first trainers, the local trainers who will in turn be able to train their troops. For the problem seems to be at this level. The troops trained and sent to Somalia are far from demerit and are doing a good job overall. But despite the accumulated experience, the new troops seem to be starting "from scratch", even though they include in their ranks cadres who have been to Somalia several times. Therefore, since 2014, an effort has been made on the Return of Experience Function (RETEX) to enable the troops involved to capitalize on the experiences of its cadres returning from combat.

The arrival of a new CJTF-HOA commander in the spring of 2014, Major General Wayne Grigsby [7], has made it possible to take this into account and to improve the training of AMISOM troops. Seeking to create a new dynamic, the General made an effort to develop quality cadres in the allied African armies ("It's all about developing leaders"). The general staff was therefore reorganized in the winter of 2014 to see the Hive concept emerge. Specialized by country, each cell is organized around an officer in charge of a country, who must become the "expert" of that country. Around him are the desk officers, non-commissioned officers or intelligence officers (J2) in charge of monitoring the country concerned and its area of action in Somalia. Whenever possible, the liaison officer of the country concerned is associated with this cell. At the same time, the cells work together to promote interaction and synergy between the contributing countries.

It is still too early to take stock of this new organisation. However, even if the formations

prove to be more relevant, they cannot replace the involvement and professionalism of the troops concerned.

A realistic solution: "the lesser evil"?

It is certain that the solution adopted, namely leadership from behind', or the commitment of African Union troops in Somalia, is not entirely satisfactory. From a display' point of view, it allows the Americans not to be on the front line, and therefore not to be an additional target in that part of the world. Moreover, it leads to a regional rather than a foreign response, which avoids criticism of outrageous American interventionism. But a final settlement of the conflict is still pending after more than ten years of American involvement in the region. For the Americans, this is therefore "the lesser evil" or an imperfect but generally satisfactory solution. It avoids the loss of American troops in a faraway country and fixes the enemy in this part of the world. This is indeed pragmatism. The Americans wish, without returning to a situation of total isolationism, to limit their external commitments to operations that involve their security. President Obama was partly elected on the idea that the "boys" had "died for nothing" in faraway countries such as Afghanistan or Iraq. It is therefore important not to engage in a new "quagmire" and to let Africans solve Africa's problems. Aware that this seems at present impracticable, the Americans are providing the necessary technical and logistical assistance; this is always less costly financially and humanly than going there oneself...

Is France, for its part, ready to invest more in this training programme, which seems to be very satisfactory? The reduction of troops overseas makes participation in this mission increasingly difficult. In a period of refocusing on the core business, the question is being asked.

Saint-cyrienne of the promotion "General Vanbremmersch" (2001-04), officer of the train weapon, Squadron Leader VATINEL was successively assigned to the 515th Train^{Regiment} and to the IHEDN before joining the Directorate of Higher Military Education (DEMS). She has been deployed on several occasions in operations or on foreign missions: Kosovo, Senegal, Afghanistan, Cape Verde, Lebanon and Djibouti. During this last mission, she was an officer in the American staff in charge of the training of AMISOM troops (CJTF-HOA).

1) Maya Kandel, International Issues, article "United States: New Modalities of Military Engagement - Light footprint and leading from behind".

2) AMISOM: African Union Mission In Somalia. Regional peacekeeping mission in Somalia led by the African Union with the endorsement of the United Nations.

3) ADP 7-0, Training units and developing leaders - a US Army manual updated in 2011 that addresses unit training and leadership training, particularly for units to be committed.

4) CJTF-HOA: Combined Joint Task Force, Horn of Africa. Created in 2002 in Djibouti. US headquarters under the command of AFRICOM. This body, whose mission is to create military and civilian capabilities for military operations for the benefit of African allies, was developed in response to the attacks of 11 September 2001.

5) AFRICOM: United States Africa Command. Established in 2007. United States Africa Command, located in Stuttgart, Germany.

6) ACOTA training: African Contingency operations training and assistance. Programme of the US Department of State (US Department of Foreign Affairs) since 2004 with the objective of training African military leaders and equipping African military forces to enable them to participate in peace support operations or operations with a humanitarian dimension.

7) Major General (two stars) Wayne W. Grigsby Jr., Commanding Officer CJTF-HOA from June 2014 to April 2015, Speech at a conference at the Africa Center for strategic studies in January 2015 (available on Youtube "Overcoming Leadership challenges").

Title : le Chef d'escadron VATINEL

Author (s) : le Chef d'escadron VATINEL

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