

African Union promotion of human security in Africa

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This paper explores the contribution of the African Union (AU) to human security promotion in Africa. It contends that human security concerns informed the formation of the AU. Through the efforts of the AU Commission, the African ruling elite and policy-makers have become aware of human security doctrines. Human security ideas have been integrated into AU binding agreements, declarations, decisions and policies. The commission is now in the difficult, yet most important, phase of trying to persuade significant numbers of the African ruling elite and civil society to accept human security as a guiding principle and the desirable norm. Through the African Citizens' Directorate (CIDO), the commission is using indigenous African civil society groups to institutionalise human security doctrines in Africa. The commission faces serious challenges in its efforts to make human security the only security norm. While member states of the AU that have never been comfortable with the introduction of human security doctrines into the continental integration project are tacitly undermining the CIDO's ability to work with civil society groups to institutionalise the doctrines in Africa, the leaders who enthusiastically supported the integration of human security doctrines into the documents and work of the AU have seemed in recent times to be less resolute in their support of AU Commission's human security work.

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Introduction

Human security, defined as the protection of people and communities, rather than of states, from violence and imminent danger, has become a central feature of the contemporary international order. Human security doctrines inform the foreign policies of many states, particularly middle powers. They have strong support within research and academic institutions. Human security ideas occupy a privileged position in many institutions of higher learning in Europe, the Americas and Asia. In Canada alone 1 016 courses on human security were taught in institutions of higher learning in 2006 (Canadian Consortium on Human Security 2007). Human security is a priority area in the assistance programme of aid agencies. International organisations such as the United Nations have also assumed leadership roles in the promotion of human security. So what role, if any, is Africa's premier organisation, the African Union, playing in the promotion of human security?

The purpose of this paper is to show the contribution the AU is making in the promotion of human security doctrines in Africa. It contends that the African ruling elite and policy-makers have become aware of human security doctrines through the AU. Human security ideas have been integrated into AU documents and work. They inform many AU binding agreements, key policy documents, treaties, memoranda of understanding, plans of action, mission and vision statements, communiqués, conventions, declarations and decisions. Almost all decisions, declarations and protocols that African leaders have adopted since the formation of the AU have had strong human security undertones. The AU Commission is now in the difficult, yet most important, phase of trying to persuade significant numbers of the African ruling elite and civil society to accept human security as the 'only security game in town'. The commission is using indigenous civil society groups to institutionalise human security in Africa. The paper suggests that the jury is out, however, on whether the AU would be able to institutionalise human security in Africa effectively.

The argument of the paper is organised into four sections. The first sets the context for the analysis, noting that the establishment of the AU was informed, in part, by human security concerns. It is followed by an outline of ideas of human security as they may be said to exist in the AU, teasing out the human security elements in key AU documents. The third section examines AU institutions that promote human security. The fourth examines challenges that the AU faces in its efforts to convince the African elite that they should accept the human security doctrine as the desirable norm and guiding principle.

Pan-Africanism in practice: From the OAU to the AU

African leaders created the African Union on 26 May 2001 to reflect a shift in the focus of the Pan-African project.¹ Pan-Africanism as practised within the institutional framework

of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) focused primarily on legitimising and institutionalising statehood in Africa. Protection of states and governing regimes in Africa became the referent of Pan-Africanism. As part of the efforts to protect and consolidate the African state, the Charter of the OAU committed African governments to a treaty that contained some of the 'purest statements [that defend and hold together the rings] ... of elements of juridical sovereignty ever to be embodied in any international organization' (Clapham 1996:111). The Charter also put in place only institutions, rules and administrative mechanisms that strengthened sovereign prerogatives and the territorial integrity of African states. Many institutional restrictions were imposed on the OAU Secretariat to prevent it becoming a supranational entity.

The institutionalisation of the state across the African continent meant that Pan-Africanism needed a new focus and meaning. A new generation of Pan-Africanists led by South African president Nelson Mandela and Tanzanian diplomat Ahmed Salim Ahmed made conscious efforts in the 1990s to give a new meaning to Pan-Africanism. They felt that Pan-Africanism needed to deal with challenges facing ordinary Africans, rather than those encountered by broader entities such as states and regimes (Mandela 1994; Salim 1990). They identified three main challenges, namely security threats, underdevelopment and the impact of international political economic forces (Salim 1995). These three major issues informed the creation of the AU and the drafting of its legal text, called the Constitutive Act of the African Union (CA). To provide a framework for dealing with human insecurity, the CA empowers the AU to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts on the continent (Powell & Tieku 2005).² It is hoped that the AU will create conditions in which peace may prevail on the African continent; to make continental Africa a 'zone of peace'. African leaders also felt that regional economic integration could provide a basis for sustainable development; as a result, the CA provides the legal and institutional framework for African states to integrate their economies (African Union 2001). Last, the AU is designed to assist African governments in managing international issues effectively. As part of the move to enhance Africa's role in the international system, in July 2003 in Maputo in Mozambique, African leaders asked the AU Commission 'to set up a negotiating team ... headed by [an] experienced person to negotiate on behalf of all Member States the fundamental issues that are being negotiated in the World Trade Organization (WTO)' (African Union 2003).

These three core areas drive the work of the 17 institutions that make up the AU (Cilliers 2003) the key institutions being the African Heads of State and Government (Assembly), the Executive Council, the Permanent Representative Committee, the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), the AU Commission, the Peace and Security Council, the Pan-African Court of Justice, the Economic, Social and Cultural Councils (ECOSOC), the African Central Bank, the Investment Bank, and the Monetary Fund. In theory, the Assembly provides policy directions, including the human security agenda for the Union. In practice, though, the AU Commission and the Peace and Security Council have

taken centre-stage in shaping the AU human security agenda. These human security objectives entail creating conditions for individuals to satisfy their basic needs. These include working to provide the social, economic, political, environmental and cultural conditions necessary for the survival and dignity of the individual; striving to create conditions for the protection of and respect for human rights and good governance; and trying to guarantee for each individual the opportunity to fulfil his/her full development (African Union 2005). This understanding of human security informs the AU's work in the areas of peace, security, political governance and economic development.

AU human security agenda

The AU human security agenda in the areas of peace and security is clearly expressed in article 4(h) of the Constitutive Act (CA) of the African Union. Article 4(h), which empowers the Union to intervene in the affairs of a member state in order to 'prevent war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity', was inserted into the CA, as a number of informed writers on the CA have eloquently argued, with a view to protecting ordinary people in Africa from abusive governments (Malan 2002; Cilliers & Sturman 2002; Kioko 2003).³ To provide an operational arm to this specific human security element, the AU made room for the creation of an African Standby Force (ASF) charged with the task of intervening militarily in states for humanitarian purposes (African Union 2001). The condition laid down for human security intervention under the AU 'goes "beyond" the provision made for intervention in the internal affairs of a country in the UN Charter' (Schoeman 2003). The CA has actually set lower thresholds for intervention than those outlined in any international legal code (Weiss 2004). The specification of *war crimes*, *genocide*, and *crimes against humanity* by the drafters of the CA as grounds for intervention has provided a clearer set of criteria for the Union to intercede in a state to protect human security. The AU, unlike other international organisations, does not necessarily require the consent of a state to intervene in its internal affairs when populations are at risk. That is, the OAU's system of complete consensus has been abandoned. Under the AU, a decision on the part of a two-thirds majority of the Assembly is required for intervention (Powell & Tiekou 2005). The AU used this principle to arrive at the decision to deploy a peacekeeping force to monitor a ceasefire in Burundi in April 2003. The Assembly also used this principle to decide on the mission to the Darfur region of Sudan in the summer of 2004.

The AU also approaches economic development from a human security perspective. The development agenda in articles 3 and 4 of the CA is intended to create conditions necessary for sustainable development. As part of this agenda, the AU commits its member states to ensuring balanced economic development, to promoting gender equality and good health, and to working towards eradicating preventable diseases (articles 3(j) and (n); 4(l) and (n)).

The AU has adopted an approach to political governance in Africa that is human security-centred in as much as the CA commits member states to promoting ‘respect for the sanctity of human life’ (article 4(o)). Article 4(i), moreover, makes it clear that African people have a ‘right to live in peace’. Article 3(h) therefore commits member states to a path where they will ‘promote and protect human and peoples’ rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and other relevant human rights instruments’. It is significant that 3(g) enjoins member governments to promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance. This provision is important, because it is generally understood in the human security research community that democratic development is a critical aspect of human security (Hammerstad 2005). The decision to exclude from the AU states whose governments came to power through unconstitutional means therefore advances the human security agenda. The strength of the human security ideas embedded in the CA provokes questions on how and why these human security doctrines entered the discourse, agenda, documents and programmes of the AU.

Pan-Africanisation of human security

Human security entered the discourse of Pan-Africanism in the early 1990s. It was initiated by the Kampala Movement and Salim Ahmed Salim (Deng & Zartman 2002). The Kampala Movement was an initiative of civil society groups that met in Kampala in Uganda in the early 1990s to develop a regime of principles regarding security, stability, development and cooperation for Africa. At the heart of the principles, widely known as the CSSDCA, was a conscious effort to redefine security and sovereignty, and to demand certain ‘standards of behaviour ... from every government [in Africa] in the interest of common humanity’ (Obasanjo & Mosha 1992:260). The movement demanded that African leaders redefine their states’ security as a multidimensional phenomenon going beyond military considerations to include economic, political and social aspects of the individual, the family and the society. In the view of the movement, ‘[t]he concept of security must embrace all aspects of society ... [and the] security of a nation must be based on the security of the life of the individual citizens to live in peace and to satisfy basic needs’ (Obasanjo & Mosha 1992:265).

The document was submitted to African leaders for integration into the OAU framework in early 1991. The OAU convened a meeting of African governments to discuss it in May 1991 in Kampala. The leaders who attended agreed in principle in the Kampala Declaration to explore the possibility of integrating the ideas into the OAU in another meeting in June 1991 in Abuja in Nigeria. The CSSDCA was not adopted at the Abuja summit because of opposition by Libya’s Muammar Ghaddafi, Sudan’s Omar Hassan Ahmed el-Bashir and Kenya’s Daniel arap Moi (Deng & Zartman 2002). The leaders suspended discussions on the document and, indeed, on human security indefinitely.

Although the OAU leadership rejected the CSSDCA, the Kampala initiative provided the platform for Salim Ahmed Salim to place human protection on the OAU's agenda. The specific elements of the human protection agenda formed part of a broader policy initiative articulated in a document called *The political and socio-economic situation in Africa and the fundamental changes taking place in the world*, which the Assembly of the OAU adopted as a Declaration on 11 July 1990 (Salim 1990). This declaration recognised that the end of the Cold War had fundamentally changed the geopolitics of the world and that African governments needed to adopt specific measures to adapt to the new world order. It further argued that African states would henceforth have to do things on their own; there would be no geo-strategic basis for outside powers to protect Africans. It therefore called on the leaders to revive indigenous continental protection initiatives. More specifically, the declaration urged the OAU leadership to develop a framework for preventing, managing and resolving conflicts, since there would be no rationale for the international community to keep peace and promote human rights in Africa in the post-Cold War era.

The declaration opened the space for Salim, at the OAU summit in July 1991 in Abuja, to propose to the assembly a framework to create a mechanism for the OAU to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts in Africa. This mechanism was not just for maintaining order as many writers emphasise; it had the broader goal of protecting ordinary Africans from imminent danger. The assembly adopted the mechanism in principle and instructed the OAU secretariat to hold consultations with member states and to revise the proposal to reflect 'the views, comments and proposals of Member States' (AHG/Decl 1 XXVIII). A watered-down version of the mechanism was adopted by the assembly in Cairo, Egypt, in June 1993 (Ibok 1999). Certain governments in Africa – in particular those of Daniel arap Moi of Kenya and Lansana Conté of Guinea – ensured that certain provisions in the draft framework were removed. These emphasised human protection and proposed the delegation of powers to the OAU secretariat to protect ordinary Africans from state abuse. The extensive revisions of the draft framework by African governments largely explain why the mechanism that was approved at the OAU summit in Cairo in June 1993 adopted a traditional security approach. Nevertheless, Salim's initiative set in motion serious discussions within the OAU leadership on the need for it to play a central role in protecting ordinary Africans from imminent threats.

Former South African president Nelson Mandela pushed the human security discussions further on 13 June 1994 when he asked African leaders to empower the OAU to protect African people and to prevent African governments from abusing the sovereignty of states (Mandela 1994). The call emboldened the OAU secretariat to initiate a series of reform processes between 1995 and 1998 that were aimed at structuring the OAU in order to make it focus on human security concerns (Salim 1995, 1997). It also, in 1998, encouraged the secretariat to submit, and the assembly to adopt, two key human security issues. The first sought to make the promotion of 'strong and democratic

institutions' a key objective of the OAU (AHG/Decl XXXV). The second excluded from the OAU states 'whose Governments came to power through unconstitutional means', and the third gave the OAU the mandate to assist military regimes that may exist on the African continent in moving towards a democratic system of government. The election of Olusegun Obasanjo, who was a key figure in the Kampala Movement, as president of Nigeria encouraged the OAU secretariat to embellish OAU documents and policies with human security doctrines. Obasanjo himself made it a top priority to set in motion the process of integrating the CSSDCA into the OAU (Deng & Zartman 2002:xv).

The decision to create the AU in September 1999 provided a good opportunity for the Nigerian and the South African governments to support the OAU secretariat in merging human security doctrines with Pan-African ideas. The strategy adopted by the secretariat aimed at encouraging the delegations that negotiated the legal treaty of the AU to codify as principles some of the ideas in the CSSDCA, while simultaneously working with African leaders to ensure the adoption of the CSSDCA as a working document of the AU. The then assistant secretary-general in charge of political affairs, Said Djinnit, and the acting legal counsellor of the OAU, Ben Kioko, were instrumental in making the delegations adopt the concepts in articles 3 and 4 of the CA (discussed above). As a step towards making African leaders adopt the CSSDCA, the secretariat, with the strong backing of the Nigerian government, convened a ministerial meeting in May 2000 to discuss ways of integrating the CSSDCA into the AU/OAU. The report of the ministerial meeting was approved by the OAU summit in Lomé in July 2000. African leaders agreed to use the CSSDCA as norms and guiding principles of security, stability, development and cooperation in a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in July 2002 in Pretoria, South Africa. Though MoU added many traditional security concerns to the CSSDCA, it retained most of the human security principles.

Institutional mechanisms for promoting human security

The MoU paved the way for the secretariat to create a unit within the OAU to coordinate CSSDCA activities. The CSSDCA unit is now called the African Citizens' Directorate (CIDO). More crucially, it opened the space for the AU Commission to try to institutionalise human security ideas in Africa, which it does through civil society channels. The CIDO is building coalitions around, and engineering consensus on, human security within civil society groups. The office of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, the Political Department, the Peace and Security Department and the Legal Affairs Department also use state channels, such as the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the Council of Ministers and the Permanent Representative Committee, to convince the African ruling elite to accept human security doctrines.

The African Citizens' Directorate (CIDO)

The CIDO was originally established in 2001 as the implementation directorate of the CSSDCA. The Nigerian government, which provided the resources for the creation of the directorate, wanted the unit to focus on integrating CSSDCA ideas into all documents of the AU. The AU Commission gave the CIDO the additional responsibility of facilitating civil society engagement with the AU. As part of its efforts to engage civil society with the AU organs and process, in 2001 the CIDO developed an annual conference of indigenous African civil society and the AU. The CIDO usually invites over 50 civil society groups in Africa to attend these conferences, which are normally held before AU summits. About five conferences have been held since the first AU-civil society meeting in June 2001. The conferences have turned out to be a good place for the AU Commission to sell AU programmes, projects and agendas to civil society groups. The CIDO is using the conferences to create awareness about the AU's work and persuade the civil society groups to integrate the AU's policies, including the human security agenda, into their advocacy activities and promote them in their states. Because the CIDO was established to promote CSSDCA and the AU human security agenda, the discussions of all past AU-civil society conferences have been dominated by human security issues. The head of the CIDO, Jimmi Adisa, has taken full advantage of these conferences to create awareness and update civil society groups about the CSSDCA and AU human security activities.

The CIDO also promotes the human security agenda in the intellectual and diaspora communities and its head therefore took advantage of the CIDO civil society mandate to sell the human security agenda at two major conferences – the first in October 2004 in Senegal and the second in July 2006 in Brazil.

Challenges to AU human security promotion

The AU Commission faces serious challenges in its efforts to promote human security. A number of AU member states oppose the human security agenda and the space the CIDO has opened for civil society to participate in AU activities. The states that opposed the integration of the CSSDCA into the OAU in the early 1990s remain uncomfortable with the human security agenda. Perhaps these leaders are opposed to the AU's promotion of human security doctrines because it renders their regimes vulnerable. They have, however, succeeded in creating the impression in AU leadership circles that the human security and the CSSDCA process are nothing but vehicles for promoting Western values in Africa. A number of African leaders, including Libya's Muammar Ghaddafi, seem to think that the introduction of human security language and doctrines into the work and documents of the AU is a conscious effort by Western governments and institutions to use the AU as an instrument to pursue their cultural colonialism project.

The anti-human security leaders in the assembly have made conscious efforts in recent times to reduce the influence of human security ideas in AU policy documents. They have been able to assert their influence primarily because the unwavering support human security enjoyed in the Assembly of the AU in the early days has waned considerably. Strong supporters of the CSSDCA, such as Obasanjo and Thabo Mbeki, have seemed in recent times to be less keen to talk about the issue. The ambivalent attitude of the supporters of human security has allowed anti-human security leaders in the assembly to move to curb its influence in recent AU documents. For instance, the African Union Non-Aggression and Defence Pact that was recently developed took a minimalist human security approach. Compared with the original draft of the Common African Defence and Security Policy (developed in the early days of the AU), this follow-up document has paid human security scant heed. The minimalist human security orientations of recent policy documents attest to the increasing influence of the anti-human security elements in the AU leadership. The increasing visibility of the anti-CSSDCA elements raises the question: does human security have a future within the AU when Obasanjo and Mbeki leave office?

In addition, the CIDO human security promotion through civil society groups is facing serious problems. Anti-human security governments in Africa are undermining the CIDO's ability to meet civil society groups. These governments usually do not cooperate with the CIDO to convene the AU-civil society conferences when they host the AU summits. The Libyan and the Sudanese governments failed to give the CIDO the necessary logistical and political support to convene AU-civil society conference before the summits in Sirte in June 2005 and in Khartoum in January 2006.

AU-civil society conferences have also come under attack. Some of the big NGOs operating in Africa have started to question their relevance. They are unhappy with the CIDO's engagements with African civil society, and claim that the civil society groups invited to these conferences are neither representative of civil society organisations in Africa nor given the opportunity to contribute to the work of the AU. A recent report by some of the NGOs sums up their concerns:

[T]he quality of the debate [during AU-civil society conferences] is often poor, with a lack of substance, and there are some concerns that the forums are rather used to endorse decisions that have already been taken than to provide a real opportunity for civil society organisations to influence decision-making at the summit ... In addition, the criteria applied by CIDO in selecting participants to attend forums are not clear; many of those who are invited are quite closely connected to governments, and there have been cases where self-funded participants have been excluded from the meetings, even though they would appear to fulfill the qualifications to attend (Afrimap, AFRODAD, Oxfam 2007:31).

The paucity of opportunities for civil society to shape the AU agenda may discourage civil society groups from adding AU human security initiative to their work.

The CIDO unit itself is seriously understaffed. Besides Jimmi Adisa, the head, only one person works full-time. It is also poorly equipped. The AU Commission intends to add four more permanent staff members but this is still inadequate. The unit needs at least a dozen well-equipped staff members in the short to medium term. In the long term, the unit must be better resourced even than the Peace and Security Department, which is considered one of the better resourced branches of the commission.

Conclusion

This paper sought to show that the AU has taken a centre stage in the promotion of human security in Africa. The organisation drew on the work of the civil society movement in the early 1990s to develop a Pan-African version of human security that contains the principles of security, stability, development, and cooperation in Africa. This conceptualisation of human security is meant not only to give a new perspective on the doctrines, but also provides creative ways of making the concept acceptable.

Member states of the AU approved the principles in 2000 in Lomé, Togo, and the AU Commission has made serious efforts to integrate it into the work of the AU. The integration of human security doctrines into AU binding agreements and other documents is significant. It is significant in part because legalisation is one of the most important aspects of institutionalisation of ideas and in part because it provides a basis for the incorporation of human security doctrines into national laws and policies. Legalisation of human security doctrines has also strengthened the hands and the work of human rights advocates operating in the Africa region. It has given the human rights advocates and their organisations region-wide legal instruments and resources they could use to influence African governments to pursue human security-oriented policies.

The commission has taken the leadership role in persuading and socialising African elites to adopt the principles to guide actions and inform policies of their states. The AU is pursuing the institutionalisation processes through the CIDO and indigenous African civil society groups. The commission, however, has encountered serious challenges in its efforts to institutionalise human security. A number of African governments are undermining the CIDO's work, tacitly undercutting its ability to meet with civil society groups. The CIDO also faces serious institutional and human resource challenges. It is understaffed and under-resourced. Also, there is a real danger that the entire human security agenda may go off the radar screen of the AU when Obasanjo and Mbeki, key supporters of human security in the AU leadership, step down as presidents of their countries.

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Notes

- 1 26 May 2001 is recognised as the official date that the AU came into existence because it was the date that the Constitutive Act of the African Union entered into force. It was exactly thirty days after the deposit of the instrument of ratification by two-thirds of the member states of the OAU, as provided for in article 28 of the CA.
- 2 The new security architecture, which is managed by a newly created fifteen-member Peace and Security Council (herein referred to as PSC), calls for the development of a rapid reaction force, an African Standby Force (ASF), to be fully developed by the year 2010. The ASF will build on the military capabilities of the regional economic communities in Africa to develop the ASF. Note that the new security regime had already undertaken its first peacemaking operations called the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB). AMIB was an integrated mission made up of 3 500 contingents drawn mainly from South Africa, Mozambique and Ethiopia deployed by the AU in April 2003 to monitor a ceasefire in Burundi. On 21 May 2004 the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution to take over the mission after AMIB had stabilised and created conditions conducive for peacekeeping operations. It has also deployed another mission to the Darfur region of Sudan.
- 3 The article has been amended to include intervention to 'restore peace and stability' and in response to 'a serious threat to legitimate order'.

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