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EDITORIAL

Conflict prevention and the responsibility to protect in Africa

Kenneth Mpyisi and Tim Murithi*

This issue of African Security Review is dedicated to discussing the nexus between conflict prevention and the ‘responsibility to protect’ in Africa as a key contribution to the Direct Conflict Prevention (DCP) programme activities and is a collaborative effort between the DCP, based in Addis Ababa, and the Training for Peace (TfP) Programme, based in Pretoria. The objective of the Direct Conflict Prevention Programme of the Institute for Security Studies’ Addis Ababa Office is to improve the quality of direct conflict prevention strategies and approaches in Africa. The Training for Peace Programme promotes capacity building for personnel in peace operations.

The United Nations (UN) has a long-standing commitment to conflict prevention. Article 33 of the UN Charter (1945) encourages preventive action to offset disputes that are likely to endanger international peace and security. The UN’s An agenda for peace,

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published in 1992, argued for proactive peacemaking and humanitarian intervention. It highlighted four major areas of activity, namely preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peacebuilding. Preventive diplomacy, which is vital to implementing conflict prevention, comprises action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflict, and to limit the spread of conflict when it does occur. The notion of conflict prevention has gained greater currency in the discourse on peace and security since both the UN and the AU are attempting to mainstream this doctrine.

A key recommendation issued by the 2005 UN World Summit Outcome Document was a commitment to the ‘responsibility to protect’ people from threats to their livelihood. Article 4 of the AU Constitutive Act, 2000, endows the organisation with a right to intervene while simultaneously articulating a commitment to conflict prevention and the organisation’s responsibility to protect potential victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

This issue of African Security Review explores themes that highlight the nexus between conflict prevention and the responsibility to protect (R2P) by means of specific case studies. The aim is to enhance our understanding of the complexity of conflict prevention strategies and the responsibility to protect.

In broad terms, the contributions in this issue focus on contextualising conflict prevention and the responsibility to protect in Africa, as well as on issues related to sovereignty, non-interference and non-indifference, and challenges and prospects for intervention to prevent and manage conflict.

It must be noted that despite the numerous conflicts in Africa and the continued vulnerability of civilians in conflicts, it is widely recognised that some progress has been made through new legal instruments and mechanisms created to address the problem. The major obstacle in making substantial progress is the lack of implementation owing to a lack of resources and at times a lack of political will. Through analysing various conflicts and assessing past and current interventions, the contributions in this issue propose possible options for improved implementation.

Africa continues to witness a scourge of violent conflict leading to the death of countless civilians, not only as a direct result of conflict itself but also from the consequences of conflict. Understanding and tackling the root causes of conflict is a long-term process that requires the commitment of leadership at the national and the regional levels, together with support from the international community.

The features by Sadiki Koko and Tim Murithi engage directly with the notion of the responsibility to protect and assess to what extent international organisations like the
AU have implemented this norm. Based on an analysis of peacekeeping in Africa, Timothy Othieno and Nhamo Samasuwo question whether African institutions possess the ability to protect. The essay by Steven Gruzd examines whether the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) can contribute to peace and security. Joshua Marks’s essay explores the dilemmas faced in protecting civilians and contains an analysis of the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In his essay, which focuses on Sierra Leone, Theo Neethling assesses the prospects of sustaining peace through post-conflict reconstruction. Focusing on the West African region, Issaka Souaré discusses early warning mechanisms and explores the extent to which they prevent conflict. The commentary by Joseph Yav assess the prospects for reconciliation in the Great Lakes region, while Norbert Tóth surveys the relationship between the European Union (EU) and the AU with regard to issues of peace and security. Lauren Hutton reviews a book by scholar Greg Mills on his assessment of international assistance and intervention efforts.

It is our hope that this issue will provide a deeper insight and understanding into the challenges of addressing the root causes of conflict, existing mechanisms and new mechanisms for conflict prevention and the manner in which they relate to the responsibility to protect civilians.

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Whose responsibility to protect? Reflection on the dynamics of an ‘abandoned disorder’ in Somalia

Sadiki Koko*

Since 1991, Somalia has become the epitome par excellence of a collapsed state. In this situation, one is tempted to seek for the spheres or authorities entrusted with the responsibility to protect in that country. The quasi-abandonment of the ongoing ‘disorder’ in Somalia by major players in the international arena has simply meant the total inability of its Transitional Federal Government to survive a potential withdrawal by Ethiopia. This is compounded by the chronic deficiency of state structures in the country and the virtual Islamist connection to the conflict, which have made otherwise willing African countries hesitate to intervene. This paper uses the case of Somalia to demonstrate that there still is need for the United Nations, the world’s major players in the developed community as well as actors within Africa to define clear and equitable standards designed to operationalise this new paradigm.

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**Introduction**

Since the ousting of General Mohammed Siad Barre in 1991, Somalia has embarked on what Lemarchand (2000) would term the ‘road to hell’. Indeed, in Somalia driving away the dictator has not necessarily meant finding the way to a democratic dispensation or a semblance of it. Instead, in the current debate Somalia has become the epitome of a collapsed state.

Starting in 1991, state structures have been disintegrating in Somalia. This has been aggravated by the crystallisation of clans and warlords’ politics in Somalia, resulting in a *de facto* balkanisation of the country. Somaliland simply declared its independence, while Puntland pushed for more autonomy. But the Somali situation has left many perplexed. Somalia was known in independence years for its irredentism with regard to colonial boundaries. Concerned with the precedence of population identity over colonial ‘symbolic’ territorial demarcations, Somalia, as a unified republic, assumed the former British colony of Somaliland and the former Italian-controlled territory of Somalia. It also laid claim to Kenya’s Northern Frontier District, as well as Ethiopia’s Ogaden region.

Somalis appear homogenous as they belong to the same ethnic group, speak the same language and are predominantly Muslim. At Somalia’s collapse, though, neither the apparent homogenous nature of its population nor its leaders’ irredentist tendencies prevented the country from melt-down. In 1992, after internal forces had displayed their inability to prevent the escalation of the conflict and to safeguard state unity as well as protect civilians’ lives, the international community – through the UN – decided to step in. The rationale behind the intervention was purely humanitarian. Though some humanitarian assistance could be dispatched, the situation deteriorated, resulting in the withdrawal of UN peacekeepers, starting with their US component. This left the question of whose responsibility it was to protect in Somalia, even before this neologism was popularised among international law theorists and practitioners.

This article engages the debate on the essential significance of the concept of the responsibility to protect and its application in the ongoing Somali crisis. As a starting point, it analyses the concept of the responsibility to protect and some related issues. It then describes the dynamics of the Somali crisis, from its implosion to its current ‘abandonment’, before assessing the efforts of the Somali state, the African players and the international community to deliver on their responsibility to protect in Somalia. The article closes with recommendations on a way forward for Somalia.

‘Responsibility to protect’: Concept and issues

The ‘responsibility to protect’ is a recently developed concept in international relations. It aims to provide a legal and ethical basis for humanitarian intervention, in other words,
‘the intervention by external actors (preferably the international community through the UN) in a state that is unwilling or unable to fight genocide, massive killings and other massive human rights violations’ (Wikipedia). The concept has acquired prominence since the publication of a report relating thereto by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2001. It is believed that the post-Cold War context, which opened up space for the emergence of new forms of conflict, was at the origin of this new concept. However, more critical was the new dominant ideology of globalisation that viewed the world as a ‘global village’ which, in its emergence, compelled states to lessen the tightness of their national boundaries and temper their grip on national sovereignty. ‘Along with globalisation has come the moral pressure of states to protect the human rights of people in countries other than their own’ (Wikipedia).

As such, the responsibility to protect is seen as a significant breach of the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 which asserted the respect of state sovereignty and autonomy as an international norm. According to the treaty, interstate relations should be built on the principle of non-interference. However, the responsibility to protect assumes that state sovereignty will be respected only to the extent that that particular state demonstrates responsibility to protect its own citizens as well as all others living within its territory. In the African context, the debate on the responsibility to protect brings about a radical revolution, at least from a theoretical point of view. Indeed, in post-colonial Africa state sovereignty has long been regarded as a mere source of indisputable rights on the part of the ruling class, enabling it to exercise unchallenged power over society. In international affairs it has afforded African leaders the right to challenge any external interference in the sacred field of their internal affairs.

According to the ICISS Report the basic principles of the responsibility to protect are grounded in the assumption that ‘state sovereignty implies responsibility, and the primary responsibility for the protection of its people lies within the state itself’. Furthermore, ‘[w]here a population is suffering serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression or state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it, the principle of non-interference yields to the international responsibility to protect’ (ICISS 2001a:xi).

The responsibility to protect is well understood only if broken down into the three responsibilities it entails, namely the responsibility to prevent, the responsibility to react and the responsibility to rebuild. The main idea or approach behind the concept of the responsibility to protect is based on prevention. According to the ICISS Report (2001a: xi) ‘prevention options should always be exhausted before intervention is contemplated, and more commitment must be devoted to it’. More importantly, ‘[t]he exercise of the responsibility to both prevent and react should always involve less intrusive and coercive measures being considered before more coercive and intrusive ones are applied’. The military intervention is only deemed necessary when there is right intention (agreement
from international and regional players as well as the victims); it is used as the last resort (assuming that all peaceful means have been explored); and it is used proportionally and with reasonable prospects of success and less harm.

On the question of who is responsible to protect, the onus is primarily on national states. But because the idea behind the responsibility to protect arose from the inability – or rather the unwillingness – of national states to protect their citizens, it has almost become an illusion to expect them to act accordingly. In this case, the international community, through the UN, appears the most legitimate entity to operationalise the new concept. The UN may then, when and where it deems necessary, delegate such a power to regional or intergovernmental organisations, assuming that all procedures for international intervention are thoroughly observed.

**Somalia: From crisis to generalised disorder**

Any attempt to understand the current predicaments of Somalia and its conflict necessitates, as is the case with virtually all African countries, a rebound into its political past, especially the post-colonial era. In this regard, Bayne (2001:9) believes that:

> The dynamics underlying the collapse of the Somali state into conflict can be traced back to the process of independence, subsequent social, economic and political developments, and Somalia’s relationship with the two superpowers, the USSR and the USA, during the Cold War era … Prior to colonization, the Somali did not share a single political entity. Social organization was based on nomadic pastoralism with a decentralized democracy based on the complex relationships between clans, sub-clans and families. At the end of the nineteenth century the colonial powers divided the Somali people into five distinct units: Côte Française des Somalis (now the Republic of Djibouti) … ; the Ogaden district of Ethiopia … ; Somalia Italia; British Somaliland; and the Northern Frontier District of Kenya …

When Somalia gained independence in July 1960, it took the form of a merger of Italian Somaliland (Somalia Italiana) and British Somaliland. The Democratic Republic of Somalia was then a multi-party state leaving outside its borders more than two-thirds of the Somali population. Hence the dream of uniting the five units becoming a mobilising factor behind the subsequent nationalist movements (Bayne 2001:9).

**Post-colonial management and the descent into conflict**

‘Somalia’s descent into chaotic lawlessness did not occur overnight and could have long been predicted’ (Ayitteh 1994:2). At the accession of Somalia to independence, the concern
of the country – or rather of its leaders – was a potential irredentist expansion to include all Somali people left outside its borders. Therefore the country’s African foreign policy appeared more aggressive towards neighbouring Djibouti, but especially towards Kenya and Ethiopia. The military build-up that ensued and general mismanagement by the ruling class started sowing the seeds of instability that would slowly but surely consume the very pillars of the Somali state. The 1967 electoral defeat of the (first) president, Aden Abdullah Osman, by Abdirashid Ali Shermarke (his former prime minister) was thought to be the beginning of some kind of renaissance for Somalia. This dream was short-lived, however, because in October 1969 Mohamed Siad Barre seized power in a military coup.

Barre’s advent to power brought dramatic changes to Somalia, most of which accelerated that country’s slide toward failure, namely the decision to turn Somalia into a socialist state (1970), the integration of Somalia into the Arab League (1974) and the instauration of a single-party system (1976). Between 1970 and 1977 Somalia enjoyed economic and military support from Moscow. This led it to attempt annexation of Ethiopia’s Ogaden region in 1977. As Ethiopia was another Moscow ally, the latter disagreed with Somalia’s ambition and subsequently assisted Ethiopia in ousting Somali troops from its territory in 1978. This defeat on the military front coincided with the failure of Barre’s socialist policies ‘to engineer economic development’ (Ayitteh 1994:2).

While Barre managed to substitute the ‘departing’ Russians with the Americans as his strategic allies, internal discontent had grown substantially, in spite of the regime’s harsh repressive tactics. In 1978 a coup attempt against Barre failed. The dissidents then formed a guerrilla movement, the Somalia Salvation Front (SSF), which, in 1984, became the Somalia Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) operating from the northeast. In 1982 a second guerrilla movement, the Somali National Movement (SNM), was created in the northwest. Two years later, a third guerrilla movement, the Somali Patriotic Front (SPF), emerged in the south, one year before a fourth guerrilla movement, the United Somali Congress (USC), came into existence in the central southern region.

The common feature of these guerrilla movements was their reliance on clans. Each one had as its power base either one major clan or a coalition of several minor clans. Though these clan-based guerrillas were instrumental in the dismantlement of the Barre regime in early 1991, they subsequently became victims of their own factionalism, leaving the country to slide towards generalised disorder.

The Somali state and the national collapse

Seeking for evidence of the Somali state’s efforts to avert its collapse would be futile, since it is well documented that the state itself has been at the centre of its own collapse.
In some respects, a more appropriate subheading here would have been ‘The Somali people and the national collapse’. But we avoided this for two reasons: first, because it would imply that other Somalis, outside the national borders, collapsed the Somali state, and second, because it would place powerless and disempowered Somali citizens at the same level as their former rulers and would make them share responsibility for what they have suffered. So, what this section seeks to discuss is the commitment displayed by Somalia as a state and by the people who identify themselves with it to maintain the existence and unity of Somalia since its slide into disorder in 1991.

**Early threats of disintegration**

As the Somali state started collapsing in 1991, the unity of the country came into question. Somaliland declared independence in May of the same year. In the beginning, though, the whole issue centred on the resentment of members of the larger Myertyn and Isaaq clans *vis-à-vis* their exclusion from key government positions by Barre, who preferred his own Marehan clan (Othieno 2004:2). It is under these conditions that, in 1991, the Somali clans (under the leadership of the SSDF of the Darod clan, the USC of the Hawiye clan and the SDM of the Ogadenis) united to oust Barre and his Marehan clan from power (Othieno 2004:2). Though Barre was subsequently forced into exile, the political situation failed to normalise, with Somaliland opting to secede.1

Though not showing the same level of boldness as Somaliland with its claim for autonomy, Puntland remains a matter of concern with regard to unity in Somalia. This ‘pseudo-state’ was created in July 1998 as a number of clans in the northeast region of the country sought to put in place ‘measures to provide security, basic services and local governance … geared towards enhancing opportunities for commercial and trade activities, including livestock and fishing’ (Bayne 2001:10).

**Unity safeguarding strategies**

The general trend among Somalis – which could be extended to many other Africans – is to believe in the unity of their country despite its current collapse. In this regard, two trends need to be analysed as they have proved crucial in keeping national sentiment alive among these desperate people, namely clan politics and the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC).

*The dynamics of clan politics*

Clans had been central to the political and social lives of Somali long before they encountered European domination. By imposing a single-party kleptocratic dictatorship, Barre reinforced people’s reliance on their respective clans. This was ‘legitimised’ even further as Barre himself displayed overt favouritism toward his own clan while excluding
others from key positions in government. This has been well summarised by Visman (1998:3) who remarks that ‘[w]hile Siaad Barre’s repressive regime (1969–1991) incited widespread distrust of central government, his strategy of divide and rule left a legacy of deep inter-clan hostility and resulted in a number of clan-based insurgencies’. But Somali apparently understand the limitations of their respective clans to develop into viable political territorial entities. They also seem to be adamant as to how ephemeral potential agreements among clan leaders to coalesce into independent territories would be under the current circumstances. Though they organise through their clans, most Somalis remain convinced that the ultimate goal evolves around the restoration of a unified state of Somalia.

The Islamic Courts

Somalia’s Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) have come to be viewed as the embodiment of al-Qaeda in sub-Saharan Africa, especially after they had been targeted in US air strikes in January 2007. Notwithstanding their ‘Islamism’, ‘fundamentalism’ and possible connection to the international terrorism network, the UIC played a unifying role among Somali clans in the south of the country, containing the influence of warlords and other faction leaders, whose mere number can itself be a serious obstacle to any peace process in Somalia.

According to the International Crisis Group (ICG 2007:1), the emergence and expansion of the UIC was a consequence of clan alienation and the inadequacies of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). The ICG maintained that the UIC managed to bring about a degree of peace and security unknown to the south for more than fifteen years. Mogadishu was reunited, weapons removed from the streets and the port and airport reopened. Their defeat may lead to the revival of clan politics in the south since ‘[m]any Mogadishu residents resent the Courts’ defeat, feel threatened by the TFG and are dismayed by the presence of Ethiopian troops in the capital’ (ICG 2007:1). Despite the physical dismantlement of the UIC, elements of their leadership ‘remain largely intact and have dispersed throughout the country, threatening to wage a long war’ (ICG 2007:1).

Africa and the Somali crisis: The continent’s responsibility to protect

Ambassador Saïd Djinnit, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union (AU) (cited by Powell 2005:1), is believed to have said:

No more, never again. Africans cannot … watch the tragedies developing in the continent and say it is the United Nations’ responsibility or somebody else's responsibility. We have moved from the concept of non-interference to non-indifference. We cannot as Africans remain indifferent to the tragedy of our people.
When the Somali crisis erupted in 1991, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) itself as well as its mechanisms for peace and security on the African continent were undergoing profound reforms. As the region was virtually deserted by major players as a result of the end of the Cold War, the onus of bearing the weight of conflicts in Africa came to rest on the shoulders of regional actors. This was coupled with the ‘Somali syndrome’. This phrase was coined to mean the indifference displayed by major actors in the international community toward the intractability of the Somali conflict, which involved a large variety of local groups and leaders, most of whom developed a notorious level of aggressiveness towards external actors. A case in this regard was the sad fate incurred by American troops in the streets of Mogadishu in 1993 that became instrumental to the withdrawal of American troops from Somalia and furthermore the ‘abandonment’ of Somalia by the United Nations. As Africans rely mostly on the US and its Western allies for logistics and finance for intervention, this ‘indifference’ probably led to inaction on the part of African players themselves. It is this predicament that saw Nigeria and Ghana commit themselves to stabilising Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s, ‘undermining’ even the UN’s monopoly on deciding on peacekeeping operations and mission deployment.

However, since the inception of the AU in 2002 and the adoption of its Constitutive Act in 2000, African leaders, in their own words, have displayed commitment towards the responsibility to protect. Article 4 of the Constitutive Act entrusts the AU with ‘the right [not the responsibility] to intervene in a member state pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity’. In January 2005, the AU Assembly endorsed the request of member states of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to deploy an African mission in Somalia. The deployment has been delayed, partly because opponents to the TFG have displayed fierce opposition to the idea of a peacekeeping mission in the country. Approximately 1 500 Ugandan troops are already on the ground, while other countries are still to join them. However, the general delay should be understood as a signal of the lack of capacity on the part of many African players and an implicit request for meaningful back-up to the UN and other members of the international community.

Even before it could commit direct support to the Somali conflict, the AU/OAU stood by IGAD initiatives with regard to the resolution of the crisis in that country. Two such initiatives deserve attention, namely the Guelleh Initiative and the Nairobi Conference, since they led to the formation of a series of ‘national’ governments for Somalia.

**The Guelleh Initiative**

Between February and August 2000 a peace conference took place in Arte, Djibouti, to seek a solution to the Somali crisis. The conference was called by President Ismail Omar
Guelleh of Djibouti. Also known as the Djibouti peace process, the initiative followed on the failure of parallel, competing and ultimately unsuccessful attempts to forge national unity and reconciliation in Somalia held separately by Ethiopia (in Sodere, 1996) and Egypt (in Cairo, 1997) (Bayne 2001:11). Taking place within the IGAD framework, the Djibouti peace process resulted in the formation of a transitional assembly and a Transitional National Government (TNG) headed by Abdiqasim Salad Hassan. It was recognised by the OAU and the UN. ‘In contrast with previous attempts to forge national unity, the Djibouti peace process represented a real attempt to involve all sectors of Somali society, including traditional leaders, more modern elements of civil society and intellectuals from the Diaspora’ (Bayne 2001:12). But the refusal on the part of Somaliland and Puntland leaders, as well as the sidelining of a number of key faction leaders, weakened the peace process and eventually led to the collapse of the Guelleh Initiative.

The 2003–2004 Nairobi Peace Conference

After being established, the TNG experienced difficulties in operating as it had almost no territorial control beyond the reach of the capital, Mogadishu. The situation deteriorated further after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 on New York. The UN and the EU decided to evacuate their aid workers and the US froze the funds of the only remittance bank in Somalia (Al Barakat) because of its supposed links with al-Qaeda (Othieno 2004:3). By October 2002, though, 21 warring factions and the transitional government signed a ceasefire in Somalia to enable the cessation of hostilities for the duration of the peace initiative talks, and in January 2004, in Kenya, all the major Somali warlords and politicians agreed to sign a deal setting up a new parliament (Othieno 2004:3). Inaugurated in August 2004, the transitional parliament elected Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed as president of Somalia in October 2004. President Yusuf appointed Ali Mohammed Ghedi as prime minister, who then formed a 91-member government (the Transitional Federal Government, TFG) which included the different factions, warlords and clans. Though the Kenya conference was another initiative fully supported by IGAD, the ICG (2006:3) perceived it as an attempt by Ethiopia to do away with the TNG in favour of the Somali Restoration and Reconciliation Council (SRRC) from which President Yusuf hails.

The international community and the Somali crisis

The Somali crisis has defied not only Africa, but has also come to the fore as a serious challenge to the world community as a whole. It is therefore in our view as important to seek the international community’s efforts to avert the Somali crisis as it is informative to understand the impact of its actions on that country’s collapse. However, space constraints will prevent us from delving into the details of the collapse. Notwithstanding the role played by other international actors such as the EU in helping to mitigate the
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After the adoption of Resolution 733 (January 1992) on an arms embargo against Somalia, and of Resolution 746 (March 1992) by the Security Council, UNOSOM I was deployed in April 1992, apparently with the consent of major Somali actors. Because the force was made up of only 500 soldiers and there was no governing authority capable of maintaining law and order, the force was unable to implement its basic peacekeeping mandate (ICISS 2001b:94). Faced with this failure, Resolution 775 (August 1992) was adopted which made provision for the deployment of 3,500 UNOSOM security personnel to protect humanitarian relief efforts. However, the ensuing deployment was so slow that it resulted in a worsening of the situation. As the situation deteriorated and the UN appeared overwhelmed by the crisis, the US pledged to provide 20,000 troops as part of a multinational force authorised by the UN, ‘owing in some part to the unprecedented media exposure given to the humanitarian disaster’ (ICISS 2001b:96). This led to Operation Restore Hope (also known as United Nations Task Force, UNITAF), which deployed 28,000 US-led peacekeepers in the country. Apparently a lack of thorough preparation before deployment reduced the troops’ effectiveness on the ground and the US ended up rejecting categorically a host of activities the UN would expect them to conduct, including nation-building, disarming the factions and arresting warlords such as General Mohammad Farrah Aideed.

In March 1993 UNITAF was replaced by UNOSOM II, which was established under Resolution 814. UNOSOM II was meant to be a (Chapter VII) peace enforcement mission and its mandate included monitoring that all factions continued to respect the cessation of hostilities and other agreements to which they had consented; preventing any resumption of violence and, if necessary, taking appropriate action (Francis et al. 2005:91–92). This expansion of the mandate led troops on the ground to engage in battles against some reluctant militia groups, targeting especially General Aideed. The clashes resulted in the killing of 24 Pakistani soldiers in June 1993, the destruction of three US Black Hawk helicopters, and the killing of 18 Americans and one Malaysian in October of the same year. After images of the bodies of US pilots being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu appeared in the media, the US pulled out its troops and subsequently the entire UNOSOM withdrew by March 2005. Observers pointed out that UNOSOM II was more ambitious than the earlier US-led UNITAF effort, but that it had fewer war-fighting resources (ICISS 2001b:97). Commenting on the UN intervention in Somalia, Sahnoun (1994:xiii), a former special representative of the UN Secretary-General, admitted that Somalia proved ‘how the failure of the international community to intervene in different phases of a crisis can be detrimental and lead to further deterioration’. The European Parliament dismissed the UN strategy in Somalia for the lack of clear political objectives to be pursued and the lack of coherence of the means used (Visman 1998:8).
Conclusion: Whose responsibility to protect in Somalia? The way forward

Although the concept of the responsibility to protect is still new in the international political and legal discourse, the practice it refers to is not new. Unilateral interventions by countries or groups of countries in other countries without prior consent from the latter have been common throughout the world, in spite of UN opposition to the practice. The crisis in Iraq is the most recent example to date.

As far as the Somali crisis is concerned, the connection of most of its direct neighbours (Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti) to the conflict, the paralysis that characterised the OAU at its eruption, and the mistakes on the part of the US and UN with regard to policies and approaches between 1992 and 1995 have let the crisis in Somalia grow beyond the normal framework of intra-state conflict as a result of the disintegration of state structures.

However, despite the missed opportunities and the complexity of the challenges ahead, new developments in Somalia, in Africa and in the world represent valuable elements that are conducive to the normalisation of the Somali situation. The setting up of the TFG, the strengthening of the African peace and security architecture, and the limitations displayed by the US-led invasion in Iraq offer great possibilities for an enriching debate on a more effective and realistic approach of multilateral intervention in Somalia.

The contribution is concluded with the following recommendations:

- The TFG should be regarded as a stepping stone towards a more consensual government in Somalia. It should not be regarded as an end in itself, but its scope should be broadened to include other key actors, whether they hail from the UIC or the ‘Mogadishu Group’

- IGAD member states, especially Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti, should not be given key roles in the process as they are not generally regarded as impartial by the conflicting groups in Somalia

- The AU should take the lead in the process, whilst operating in close coordination with the UN, the EU and other international players

- The UN should deploy a right-sized peacekeeping mission whose composition and mandate avoid the stereotypes of the 1990s

- The AU, UN and other actors in the international community should be prepared to approach Somaliland and Puntland as parts of Greater Somalia while working out a fully fledged, decentralised political model for post-conflict Somalia
Notes

1. In December 2005, Somaliland submitted a direct application for admission to the AU. The AU is yet to react to the request, though it deployed a fact-finding mission in the area already in 2005.
2. The IGAD member states are Djibouti, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

References

The responsibility to protect, as enshrined in article 4 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union

Tim Murithi*

This paper assesses the emergence of the responsibility to protect (R2P) as an international relations norm. Following a brief discussion of the genesis of this norm, it assesses the key aspects of R2P. It then examines the Constitutive Act of the African Union (2000) to analyse the extent to which R2P is enshrined and implicated in this document. The paper also discusses the extent to which the AU has sought to implement R2P through its commitment to promote peace around the continent where there is a crisis. It concludes with a discussion of whether the AU is in fact committed to R2P.

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Genesis of the responsibility to protect

Contextualising humanitarian intervention

The 1992 *An agenda for peace*, published by the first African UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, argued for proactive peacemaking and humanitarian intervention (UN Secretary-General 1992). The report outlined suggestions for enabling intergovernmental organisations to respond quickly and effectively to threats to international peace and security in the post-Cold War era. In particular, four major areas of activity were identified: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peacebuilding.

However, during the 1990s and following the end of the Cold War it was difficult to operationalise humanitarian intervention. At that time the UN was generally reluctant to issue Security Council resolutions that were perceived as infringing on the sovereignty of member states. As a consequence, violent conflict that was perpetuated primarily within states was difficult to manage. Africa was particularly affected in this decade by the conflicts in Angola, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sierra Leone and South Sudan, and the genocide in Rwanda. With the onset of the new millennium, intra-state violent conflict continued unabated and tragedies like the situation in the Darfur region of Sudan raised new questions about the doctrine of humanitarian intervention.

The issue of humanitarian intervention became a key challenge in international relations. During the UN General Assembly in 1999, and again in 2000, the former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, ‘made compelling pleas to the international community to try and to find, once and for all, a new consensus on how to approach these issues, to “forge unity” around the basic questions of principle and process involved’ in humanitarian intervention (ICISS 2001:vii).

Through the leadership of the government of Canada an International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) was established to assess the issue of the right of humanitarian intervention.

Key aspects of the responsibility to protect

The responsibility to protect (R2P) comprises three specific responsibilities:

- The responsibility to prevent – addressing root causes and direct causes of internal conflict and other man-made crises that put populations at risk

- The responsibility to react – responding to situations using coercive measures like sanctions, international persecution and military intervention where necessary
The responsibility to rebuild – providing assistance with recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation, and addressing the causes of the harm the intervention was designed to halt or avert (ICISS 2001:xi)

The African Union’s accidental responsibility to protect: Article 4 of the Constitutive Act

The year 1999 marked three events: five years after the Rwandan genocide, five years after the liberation of South Africa from the yoke of apartheid, and the completion of the stated aim of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) to liberate the African continent from colonialism.

In this year, African leaders met in Sirte, Libya, inauspiciously to review the Charter of the OAU. The meeting emphasised the importance of strengthening solidarity among African countries and reviving the spirit of Pan-Africanism. The AU project was born in Sirte in 1999, with the decision to draft an act of constitution. The AU’s Constitutive Act was subsequently signed in Lomé, Togo, on 11 July 2000. The official inauguration of the AU took place in July 2002, in Durban, South Africa, and represented the next level in the evolution of the ideal of Pan-Africanism.

The chairperson of the African Union Commission, President Alpha Oumar Konaré, has been advocating the importance of moving away from a culture of non-intervention to a culture of non-indifference. The AU is learning from the lessons of the OAU and has adopted a much more interventionist stance through its legal frameworks and institutions. The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) was established in 2004 through the Protocol Relating to the Peace and Security Council of 2002 (AU 2002:1). The AU’s 15-member PSC is mandated to conduct peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The council has 15 member countries (ten elected for a term of two years and five for a term of three years). The chairperson of the AU is assisted by a commissioner in charge of peace and security who provides operational support to the PSC, deploys peace efforts and takes the necessary steps to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts.

The authors of the Constitutive Act of the African Union (2000) effectively enshrined a responsibility to protect in the document.

The PSC can assess a potential crisis situation, send fact-finding missions to trouble spots and authorise and legitimise AU intervention in internal crisis situations. Article 4(h) of the AU Constitutive Act affirms ‘the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity’ (AU 2000, article 4(h)). Furthermore, article 4(j) declares ‘the right of Member States to request intervention from the Union
in order to restore peace and security’ (AU 2000, article 4(j)). In particular, article 7(e), of the Protocol of the Peace and Security Council states that the Council can ‘recommend to the Assembly of Heads of State intervention, on behalf of the Union, in a Member State in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity, as defined in relevant international conventions and instruments’ (AU 2002:9). This is a major qualitative difference between the AU Protocol and the Charter of the OAU. With the adoption of these legal provisions, for the first time in the history of Africa, the continental organisation, working through an appointed group of states, has the authority to intervene in internal situations in any state that may lead to atrocities against minority groups or communities at risk. In other words, the AU has the right and the responsibility to protect.

To reinforce this provision the AU is working for the establishment of an African Standby Force by 2010 to cooperate, where appropriate, with the UN and subregional African organisations in conducting peace operations. In effect, the AU will continue to maintain a working relationship with the UN and other international organisations, namely the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECASS) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). An early warning system (CEWS) will be established on the African continent, as well as a Panel of the Wise to assist with preventing the outbreak or escalation of conflict.

An African Standby Force (ASF) is to be established and will comprise five brigades from each of Africa’s subregions: Southern, East, Central, West and North, which will effectively project the responsibility to react to atrocities as well as maintain peace. The AU’s responsibility to rebuild the continent is currently being pursued through its post-conflict and reconstruction framework.

The AU, in collaboration with the NGO SaferAfrica, convened a meeting from 4 to 5 September 2005 in Durban, South Africa, which brought together the AU’s PSC with the permanent representative of other AU member states (AU 2005:1). The objective of the meeting was to reflect on post-conflict reconstruction and development in Africa. The meeting discussed the experiences of and lessons learned by various organisations working in peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction and development. The meeting identified the key actors and the institutional set-up and coordination that will be required to generate broad agreement on operationalising the AU framework for post-conflict reconstruction and development. The meeting also proposed the establishment of an AU-managed African Development Fund whose functions would include securing the resources necessary for effective post-conflict recovery and development, and acting as a catalyst for accessing and targeting resources for the continent’s peacebuilding needs.
An effective AU post-conflict strategy must focus on the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants. This will ensure that demobilised fighters have access to rehabilitation programmes that will enable them to acquire new skills and facilitate their transition back into society. Security sector reform (SSR) is also vital to ensure that national defence and police forces re-orient their activities towards building sustainable peace in their respective countries. The meeting also noted that national institutions need to be rebuilt to consolidate democratic governance, rule of law, and the protection of the human rights in transitional societies. Education and training must be provided to guarantee the sustainability of these institutions, and to establish professionalism and integrity.

Having a principle enshrined in the Constitutive Act and making sure that countries live up to it are two entirely different things. The AU had effectively declared its adherence to R2P even before the term was popularised by the UN General Assembly. Although couched in different terms, the same outcome is sought, namely the ability to protect citizens in Africa from human rights atrocities.

To R2P or not to R2P? Questioning the prospects of transforming theory into practice

The question arises whether recent AU efforts in Burundi, Darfur and Somali represent an attempt by the AU to implement its R2P. R2P is not merely a recipe for military adventurism; it should be the blueprint for securing Africa’s future and the stability and prosperity of the continent’s citizens.

Operationalising R2P through the African Union: The case of Burundi

The AU intervened in Burundi to build peace and enable the establishment of a more robust UN peace operation. The AU’s 2003 peace operation in Burundi, also known as the African Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB), was the first AU operation wholly initiated, planned and executed by its members. In this regard, it represents a milestone for the AU in terms of self-reliance in operationalising and implementing peacebuilding. In Burundi, the AU was effectively mandated to build peace in a fluid and dynamic situation that could easily have led the country to relapse into violent conflict. In this regard, this AU mission had elements of R2P.

One of the tasks of the AU force was to protect returning politicians who would take part in the transitional government. Other peacebuilding tasks included opening secure demobilisation centres and improving AMIB’s ability to reintegrate former militia back into society. The demobilisation centres supervised the DDR process, which, as noted
earlier, is a fundamental pillar of peacebuilding. AMIB was also involved in creating conditions that would allow internally displaced persons and refugees, based in the eight Burundian provinces and three refugee camps in Tanzania, to return to their homes. This was very much in keeping with the AU and Nepad (New Partnership for Africa’s Development) policy frameworks that were subsequently developed.

AMIB also had to create the conditions that would allow a UN peace operation to enter into the country. The UN was reluctant to enter a situation where there was potential for a relapse into conflict. AMIB’s role in this case was a vital and crucial one in creating conditions through which peace, albeit a fragile one, could be built in Burundi. By the end of its mission AMIB had succeeded in establishing relative peace to most provinces in the country. Throughout its period of operation AMIB succeeded in de-escalating a potentially volatile situation and in February 2004 a UN evaluation team concluded that conditions were appropriate for establishing a UN peacekeeping operation in the country.

The limits of R2P in Darfur

The AU is also involved in promoting peace in the Darfur region of Sudan through its African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). In February 2003 the Darfur region (situated in western Sudan on the border with Chad) was afflicted by violent conflict between the Sudanese government and pro-government militia referred to as the Janjaweed and two rebel movements, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) (Mans 2005). The conflict resulted in widespread atrocities against civilians and displaced populations. Neighbouring Chad at one point hosted close to 110,000 refugees from Darfur. On 8 April 2004 a ceasefire, brokered with the assistance of the AU, came into effect for a period of 45 days in order to enable humanitarian aid to reach the affected populations (IRIN 2004). Throughout, the Chadian mediation team, which initiated talks on a political solution to the conflict in N’djamena, had been working closely with the AU. The AU was subsequently charged with establishing and financing a ceasefire verification commission. The ability of the AU to achieve its mission in Darfur will depend on its capacity to mobilise the political will of its member states.

The AU has a rather weak mandate in Darfur, namely to monitor the humanitarian crisis in the region effectively and to coordinate efforts to advance the cause of peace. However, this narrow mandate does not provide the AU with the leeway to implement peacebuilding initiatives, nor does the organisation have the wherewithal to finance comprehensive peacebuilding operations.

The regional or continental perspective under the leadership of the AU seeks to find a political solution while undertaking peace operations to alleviate the suffering of the
Darfurians. The AU’s monitoring mission leaves much to be desired; a more robust peacekeeping force is required to dissuade the silent genocide that is taking place in Darfur. However, the AU’s peacemaking initiative in Abuja, Nigeria, under the tutelage of a former Secretary-General of the OAU, Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, led to the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in May 2006. The fact that only the Minni Minnawi faction of the SLA signed the agreement means that the DPA was by no means a comprehensive peace agreement in the mould of the South Sudan agreement. The conflict is not over, nor is there a durable ceasefire. The armed resistance groups have even begun to fight each other, and the situation has deteriorated into a military, political and diplomatic conundrum.

In Darfur, the AU found itself with a test case that it was ill-equipped and under-resourced to resolve. The politicisation of the situation in Darfur means that there are now no easy answers. Certainly, it is right and proper for the AU to be in Darfur, or for some form of international peace operation to be staged there. Regrettably, while the AU’s peacemaking efforts are to be applauded, its monitoring peace operation is floundering and enabling government forces, the Janjaweed, and armed resistance groups to continue fighting amongst themselves and continue the carnage and destruction of the lives and property of Darfurians.

On 31 August 2006 the UN passed Security Council Resolution 1706, which called for the deployment of a UN peace operation in Sudan on 1 October 2006. It also stated that the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) would take over from AMIS the responsibility for implementing the Darfur Peace Agreement upon the expiry of AMIS’s mandate and at the very latest by 31 December 2006.

The Sudanese government is still cautious about the inclusion of non-African troops in a potential peacekeeping operation in Darfur. This is due to the fact that there are strong sentiments particularly with the political elite in Khartoum such an attempt to deploy non-African troops might represent an attempt to re-colonise Sudan.

A misconceived R2P in Somalia?

The AU has launched an operation in Somalia, ostensibly to stabilise the ongoing dispute between groups in the country. Following a report of the chairperson of the Commission on the Situation in Somalia (PSC/PR/2(LXIX)) and the evaluation and recommendations of the AU Military Staff Committee, the AU Peace and Security Council decided to authorise the deployment of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) ‘for a period of 6 months, starting from the date of this decision’, with the following mandate:

- To provide support for the TFIs (Transitional Federal Institutions) in their efforts towards stabilisation of the situation in the country and the furtherance of dialogue and reconciliationTo facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance
To create conditions conducive to long-term stabilisation, reconstruction and development in Somalia

On 20 February 2007 the UN Security Council adopted SC Resolution 1744, which authorised AMISOM’s deployment. The UN is supporting AMISOM through an assistance cell to the AU in Addis Ababa and providing military planners. The UN Security Council met with the AU Peace and Security Council on 16 June 2007 and discussed the modalities for deeper collaboration. In particular, both bodies discussed the importance of stabilising Somalia.

AMISOM was launched in March 2007 with 1 700 Ugandan troops. Nigeria, Ghana, Malawi and Burundi have also pledged to deploy troops. The PSC decision indicated that ‘the concept of logistic support for AMISOM shall be based on the model of the African Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB)’ (AU 2007, paragraph 9). This effectively means that ‘the AU Commission shall mobilize logistical support for the TCC’s, as well as, funding from AU member states and partners to ensure that TCC’s are reimbursed for the costs incurred in the course of their deployment, based on AU practice’ (AU 2007, paragraph 9).

AMISOM is trying to stabilise parts of Mogadishu and Baidoa in which it is operating. It has a role to play in creating the security conditions to enable the complete withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia. AMISOM is also supporting dialogue and reconciliation. The difficulty is that currently there is no peace to keep in Somalia and the AU may find itself drawn into a peace enforcement role. This may therefore turn into a case of a misconceived responsibility to protect in Somalia.

International collaboration on R2P

UN Security Council Resolution 1706 (UNSC 2006) requested ‘the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps to strengthen AMIS through the use of existing and additional United Nations resources with a view to transition to a United Nations operation in Darfur’. The focus is now on of the emergence of a ‘hybrid UN-AU force’ or a ‘hybrid partnership’ with the AU, particularly with reference to peacekeeping in Darfur. On 31 July 2007, the UN Security Council Resolution 1769 (UNSC 2007) established the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur, also referred to as UNAMID. There are efforts to reassure observers that this is not an effort to re-establish the asymmetrical relationship which prevailed in the early decades of the UN, but rather an effort to create something new – a hybrid partnership. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is supporting AMIS through its UN Assistance Cell in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where the AU headquarters are situated. More specifically, DPKO and the AU’s Peace Support Operations Division have signed an agreement to develop a joint action plan. In July
2006, the UN created a dedicated integrated capacity to oversee the implementation of this action plan. This integrated capacity will involve the ‘collocation’ of UN staff within the AU Commission in Addis Ababa.

Chapter VIII of the UN Charter is not explicit on the possibility of establishing such a hybrid partnership, therefore there is significant leeway to operationalise such a relationship provided that both the UN and the regional organisation are compliant. Article 52 in fact states that ‘the Security Council shall encourage the development of pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies either on the initiative of the states concerned or by reference from the Security Council’ (UN 1945, article 52). There is thus a legal basis for embedding UN staff within the AU.

In terms of the responsibility to rebuild, there is still no formal relationship between the UN Peacebuilding Commission and the AU framework for post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD). This is particularly pertinent because the UN Peacebuilding Commission is currently considering the cases of two African countries: Burundi and Sierra Leone. There needs to be greater collaboration between the UN Peacebuilding Commission and the AU PCRD framework. In particular, the Peacebuilding Commission and the AU need to develop a *symbiotic partnership* predicated on complementation. Such a relationship is necessary in order to avoid the duplication or replication of functions and, strategically, to target the disbursement of mobilised resources.

**Is the African Union committed to R2P?**

The chairperson of the AU, former president Alpha Oumar Konaré has questioned whether the AU mission in Darfur is adequate for policing a region covering the expanse of other medium-sized African countries. The AU force also did not have the mandate to prevent attacks but they could play a preventive role by their presence. Konaré has periodically requested the Sudanese government to make every effort to halt the bombing that was taking place and asked the militia to desist from military action. It was symbolic in terms of the AU’s initiating and implementing its commitment to promoting peace and protecting civilians across the continent. The AU is committed to responding to similar situations in the future, evident in the establishment of an AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in March 2007.

Of course much pain and suffering would be prevented if the AU enhanced and strengthened its mechanism for preventive diplomacy and early response to potential conflicts before they escalate. In this respect, the former chairman of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, President Olesegun Obasanjo, stated that this was an attempt to demonstrate the AU’s determination to be proactive and prevent violence and protect lives and property.
Financing R2P

The AU’s weak mandates may lead to its ultimately not succeeding in implementing R2P, but there is also the question of how to finance R2P. The AU remains spectacularly under-resourced, which is squarely the responsibility of African governments and not of donors. Tax revenue from African citizens is used to finance huge domestic defence budgets, but the commitment to Pan-African security does not approximate the commitment shown to national defence. This is a natural consequence of the overemphasis of state sovereignty and the illusion that one can secure one’s security without adequate concern for the security of others. The converse of course is true in Africa (as elsewhere): the security of a nation-state or a community is intricately bound to the security of its neighbours. Therefore, there has to be a greater commitment from African governments to finance R2P.

Abuse of R2P

Some countries have misappropriated the term R2P and used it to justify military confrontation with non-state actors. Some have gone so far as to use R2P to justify the invasion and occupation of other countries. UN member states signed the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document that effectively legitimised R2P as an international doctrine. However, because of the propensity towards military adventurism, regime change, and bringing or exporting freedom and democracy by force, vigilance is required when implementing R2P.

The importance of raising awareness of R2P

It is vital to raise the global awareness of R2P. Since citizens often feel disempowered or even powerless in the face of repression, an awareness of the existence of R2P as a doctrine that speaks direct to their plight is necessary. Awareness should be raised by means of training workshops, policy development seminars, and civic education programmes at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

Conclusion

Ultimately, it is possible to make the case that the AU is committed to R2P. The AU has taken an active, interventionist stance with regard to conflict situations in Burundi, Darfur and Somalia and is actively involved in supporting other peace operations on the continent. Given the youthfulness of its institutions, the AU, even though it has made a significant effort to conduct peace operations, it is far from being able to operationalise
an effective R2P regime. The limitations of its fledgling institutions have been exposed in for example the complex humanitarian situation in the Darfur region of Sudan. Ultimately, it is too early to pass a definitive judgement on the AU’s commitment to R2P, since the paradigm shift in attitude that the AU is attempting to bring about and the institutions that it has developed to do so have to be given an opportunity to work. The AU will need to reorient political leadership on the continent and take decisive and necessary action, without which the challenges surrounding the implementation of R2P will not be met.

References

In the last decade, the nature of peacekeeping in Africa has changed somewhat, especially the manner in which peacekeeping missions are comprised, funded and driven. What one can observe is that there has been new thinking in the field of peacekeeping where this initiative is driven by states with particular interest in a particular issue(s). This thinking has led, to a certain extent, to the United Nations (UN) de-monopolising peacekeeping and ceding its ‘responsibility to protect’ to either lead states or regional organisations to deal with crises in respective backyards. In the first instance, ‘lead states’ have been empowered (financially and militarily) by peacekeeping powers to attend to crises in their respective regions to drive peacekeeping efforts. In the second instance, while financial and military support is not paramount, regional powers have had the blessing of the UN to deal with regional issues and crises in various parts of their respective regions. This situation evidently signifies the shifting nature of peacekeeping on the African continent. On assessing this scenario, the question that emerges in one’s mind is where does this leave the UN? Does this mean that the UN and multilateralism is being sidelined in favour of unilateralism? Or does the UN still matter? What is the future of peacekeeping in Africa? These questions and the challenges posed by both the ‘old’ and ‘new’ approach to peacekeeping will be analysed in this article.

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**Introduction**

From whatever angle one chooses to look at Africa, there is no doubt that the continent faces a multiplicity of ‘old’ (perennial armed conflicts) and ‘new’ security challenges (health problems, massive migration, transnational organised crime and the impact of climate change). What is interesting is that the ‘new challenges are nourished by the same “old” security problems’ (Aning 2007). Both ‘old’ and ‘new’ security threats have been particularly prevalent in the regional ‘security complexes’ of the Great Lakes, West Africa and the Horn of Africa. The interconnected nature of these security challenges has made it particularly difficult for United Nations peacekeeping operations (UNPKOs) to be effective. Although it is debatable and not surprisingly, in the last decade, the nature of peacekeeping in Africa has changed from classical to complex to address emerging challenges, especially the manner in which new missions are composed, funded, driven or controlled and legitimised. What one can observe is the emergence of greater security cooperation and hybrid arrangements variously involving combinations of both regional and global powers, the United Nations (UN), continental bodies such as the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU), and regional economic communities (RECs) such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Since the 1990s, RECs and subsequently the AU have closely involved the UN, EU, US, etc in peace processes. For example the Algiers Proximity Talks; Liberia and Cote d’Ivoire in 2003 and Darfur in 2004 are cases in point. Such new approaches to peace creation reflect or signify the shifting and complex nature of responses to peacekeeping challenges on the continent. In situations where they make a difference, hybrid or cooperative arrangements should be welcome. However, they raise some very critical questions, with particular reference to their legitimacy and impact on the continental and global multilateral security architecture. Do such new approaches to PKOs mean that the UN has finally lost its traditional comparative advantage to new actors? Is multilateralism now being sidelined in favour of unilateral hybrid alternatives to global security? Are Africa’s new experiments in cooperative security the future of peacekeeping in light of the UN’s failure to act, say, in Rwanda and Sierra Leone in the 1990s? If not, what are the alternatives for the continent’s ‘old’ and ‘new’ security challenges? This article attempts to grapple with these questions.

**The end of ‘old’ peacekeeping?**

The prevalence of conflict systems or complexes explains why there is a preponderance of UN peacekeeping operations on the continent. The end of ‘old’ peacekeeping emerged with, among other things, the change in peacekeeping mandates, the numbers and size of forces, the use of force and the focus of PKOs being located on the African continent. In addition, the 1990s witnessed peacekeeping spending rising from US$266 million in
1988 to US$3.1 billion by 1993 (Myint-U & Scott 2007:89). Traditionally, peacekeeping has been used by the UN to assist countries ravaged by war and conflicts to create conditions for sustainable peace. In this regard, the UN monitors and observes peace processes in post-conflict areas and assists warring parties in implementing ceasefire and peace agreements. Such assistance comes in many forms, including confidence-building measures, power-sharing arrangements, electoral support, strengthening the rule of law, and economic and social development. Peacekeepers are often soldiers, though they do not necessarily have to be, and while they are sometimes armed, they do not have to engage in combat. Although in practice peacekeepers are not expected to get involved in conflict or war unless in enforcement action because that involves warlike operations, it is important to note that ‘Blue Helmets’ have in recent times been drawn into battle in self-defence – a principle that is sacrosanct in all peacekeeping. As a general rule, they are deployed when a ceasefire is in place and the parties to the conflict give their consent. Their functions are to observe and report impartially on adherence to a ceasefire, troop withdrawal or other elements of a peace agreement or mandate given to them.

The UN Charter empowers the Security Council (SC) with the authority and responsibility to take collective action to maintain international peace and security. By extension, the SC authorises all UNPKOs. Traditionally, all UNPKOs are placed under a UN operational command even though peacekeepers remain members of their respective armed forces. There have been some exceptions to this rule where UN involvement was not considered appropriate or feasible, thereby prompting the SC to authorise regional organisations or continental bodies, such as ECOWAS and the AU, respectively, or a combination of ‘coalitions of the willing’ to undertake peacekeeping or peace enforcement tasks. In all, Africa has had its fair share of difficult and relatively successful UNPKOs. Although MINURSO (Western Sahara) and UNMEE (Ethiopia and Eritrea) have proven to be difficult since the disputes have not been resolved though they have achieved establishing ceasefires, while UNAMSIL (Sierra Leone), MONUC (Democratic Republic of Congo), UNMIL (Liberia) and UNOCI (Ivory Coast) proved relatively successful in not only achieving ceasefires but establishing post-conflict processes that have seen these countries realise peace.

Despite some notable successes, UNPKOs in Africa have been faced with massive challenges. While some of the operations on the continent simply failed to protect civilians from genocide or sustain peace, others have tended to drag on for years seemingly with no end in sight. The problem of open-ended peacekeeping mandates have in recent years led to calls by major donor countries for the closure or scrapping of some of the older missions on financial grounds or as a way of reducing the peacekeeping budget. Some of the most vehement calls to scrap old mandates have come from the United States (US), which contributed 26 per cent of the UNPKO budget in 2006 compared to only about 372 of its citizens serving under the banner of the UN. In addition, the US is no longer willing to fund UNPKOs suggesting that there needs to be a cap on the UNPKO
budget, which stands at US$5.2 billion for the 2006/2007 financial year (UNPKO website, 2007). A presidential directive of May 1994 forbade US involvement in peace enforcement missions; as a result, the country has contributed fewer personnel for UNPKOs (US Policy 1994). This policy goes back to the early 1990s in Somalia where UN troops were sucked into a conflict with Mohamed Farah Aideed thereby forcing their mission to shift from its original humanitarian objectives to a broader strategy of peace enforcement and disarmament. In October 1993, this culminated in the deaths of 18 US Army Rangers who were not under UN control. Following this incident, the US seems to have grown contemptuous of UN-run peacekeeping operations and has swerved towards unilateral ‘shock and awe’ operations. For example, the former US National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, declared in 1999 that the American military was ‘not a civilian police force’ and that there was no need to see ‘the 82nd Airborne escorting kids to kindergarten’ (Rice 2000:53). Since the tragedy in Somalia in 1993, other entities and groupings such as the EU, G8, NATO and rich Western nations have also been reluctant to send troops, particularly to Africa’s hot spots.

Another good example of Western reluctance to contribute troops is Canada. The country was formerly a reliable troop contributor, a leader in peacekeeping up to 1994. In the early nineties, Canada contributed more than 10 per cent of all peacekeeping troops to the UN. Approximately 4500 Canadian troops were deployed at one time to more than 12 UN missions in 1994–1995. In 1994, the development of the Lester B Pearson Peacekeeping Training Centre signalled a commitment to assist other UN member states with diverse training courses, both on site and abroad. However, as of February 2007, Canada only had 14 troops and 41 military observers on UN peacekeeping duty. From being at the forefront of contributing states in the early 1990s, Canada now ranks 62nd in UN troop contributions. The reason for this is that Canada now views its ‘interests’ as best served through deep harmonisation and integration with American forces; further participation in the ‘war on terror’; and preparing to fight wars, not peacekeeping. This narrow, anti-internationalist agenda is strongly supported by Canada’s Conservative government, the Bush Administration, the Pentagon, NATO and an increasingly influential military-industrial (academic, media and corporate) complex (Langille 2007).

Thus, while Western countries now tend to provide money, poor developing countries have been left to contribute personnel for UNPKOs. This is especially true when one looks at the fact that the ten main troop-contributing countries to UNPKOs as of March 2007, for example, were Pakistan (10173), Bangladesh (9675), India (9471), Nepal (3626), Jordan (3564), Uruguay (2583), Italy (2539), Ghana, Nigeria and France. Interestingly, four of the top ten contributors of troops to UNPKOs over the last two years have been African countries the US considers strategic partners, namely Ethiopia, Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa (Gowan 2006). To some extent, troops from developing countries have been welcome because of the perception among some nervous UN member countries that they are more neutral and less threatening than those from, say, the US.
Also contributing to this skewed situation in troop contribution is the thinking in the West as well as in the African Union (AU) that Africa’s conflicts need to be solved by Africans themselves. This is despite the fact that peacekeeping has traditionally been the domain of the UN. By virtue of their membership to this supranational organ, all countries were supposed to be involved. Not surprisingly, some commentators accuse the West of promoting ‘apartheid’ in UN peacekeeping. According to one such commentator, under the current system of ‘peacekeeping apartheid’, ‘Africans are expected to spill blood while [rich states] pay some of the bills in a macabre aristocracy of death’ (Adebayo 2007).

The above situation has not been helped by the fact that some UNPKOs have left conflicts unresolved. Indeed, while some missions have tended to last forever, some have had the effect of sustaining unstable status quo situations that have tended to collapse over the long term, particularly following the departure of UN troops. It has been suggested that the only way to deal with the inherent failure of the UN to respond rapidly (as was the case in Rwanda) to dangerous situations is to create hybrid rapid reaction forces, possibly led by ‘coalitions of the willing’. The hypothetical argument is that rapid deployments could easily be facilitated outside the auspices of the UN in situations where powerful countries (such as the US) can take the lead in providing funding, equipment and training to ‘lead states’ or regional powers. Furthermore, it is argued that in the event that stakes are high enough, countries such as the US would not hesitate to send in their own troops for short periods and then pulling them out while phasing in a ‘lead state’, the UN or the AU to stay on for a longer period.

The widespread failures of UN peacekeeping in the mid 1990s prompted Kofi Annan to commission a panel led by Lakhdar Brahimi in 2000 to assess all UNPKOs. The ‘Brahimi Report’ recommended sweeping changes in peacekeeping strategy, doctrine and operations (UN 2000).²

**Africa’s new experiments in cooperative security**

In light of the failure of the UN to deal with the continent’s massive security demands, the AU itself has tried to put in place its own security architecture to deal with the problems. For example, the AU has set up its own Peace and Security Council (PSC) as a collective mechanism to facilitate timely and quick response to conflicts as well as promote and implement peace building and post-conflict reconstruction (AU 2004). Likewise, the AU has also endeavoured to set up the African Standby Force (ASF) based on regional brigades in its goal to beef up its security apparatus. So far, the status of regional brigades as of 30 September 2005 was that ECOBRIG (established by ECOWAS) was the only brigade that had completed its planning and was fully functional. The least prepared was the NASBRIG, which is under the Arab Maghreb Union. The major
problem with other regional brigades is getting troop pledges from the various countries as well as getting together a regional military logistic depot. Despite this setback, there has been progress in all other regions on the continent such as setting up a headquarter, ensuring a continental planning element exits in each region, instituting a memorandum of understanding between member states, setting a policy framework, having host nation agreements and having a standby agreement between regional states.

As an organ, the AU has also undergone a normative shift towards preventive diplomacy by adopting a position that non-interference in the internal affairs of another state should not be equated with indifference. In this regard, article 4 of the Constitutive Act of the AU states although non-interference by any member state in the internal affairs of another should be upheld, the AU has the right to intervene in a member state pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity (AU Constitutive Act 2002). The AU is also in the process of strengthening the framework of a continental early warning system (CEWS) to facilitate the reception of accurate and timely data before conflicts break out. However, the problem is that the AU’s emerging security architecture still does not have supporting structures or sufficient resources to enable it to work effectively.

In order to compensate for these structural weaknesses, the AU has been forced to lean towards cooperative security arrangements with regional powers and RECs playing a far greater role in conflict prevention, peace enforcement and peacebuilding. Although traditionally the UN was the only organisation authorised to carry out peacekeeping missions on the continent, its failures in the mid-1990s spawned ‘new thinking’ on cooperative security. However, a special division of labour ensures that the UN continues to play a critical role by utilising its comparative advantage in setting standards, and providing technical support, logistics and equipment. More importantly, the various components of the UN, such as the DPKO and other humanitarian and development agencies, interface with the AU in peace support operations (PSOs) to prepare for ‘an eventual transition to a UN mission’. In this way, the role of the UN and its various arms not only serve to legitimise the emerging cooperative security arrangements but also provide ‘a possible exit strategy for AU peace-support operations’ in general (Guicherd 2007:15).

In several of Africa’s many interlinked conflict systems, it has also been demonstrated that ‘benevolent hegemonic leadership can under particular circumstances contribute to the resolution of some of these challenges, though with some structural and operational difficulties’ (Aning 2007:1). In recent times, both Nigeria and South Africa have played key roles in Liberia and Burundi. In particular, ‘Nigeria’s contribution in the form of fuel, finance, troops and logistical support for operations of the ECOWAS cease-fire monitoring Group (ECOMOG)’ is often cited as one example of how ‘hegemonic contributions can underpin [new] collective security responses’. However, observers such as Kwesi Aning are quick to point out that Nigeria’s hegemonic potential may be
seriously undermined by its own domestic political instability and ‘the feasibility of its own collapse if the present divisive politics are not resolved’ (Aning 2007). Also, South Africa has ‘been similarly influential in reflecting its political willingness, institutional strength and resource availability’ in places such as Côte d’Ivoire, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). However, the risk in relying on these two hegemonic states is that both countries are severely constrained by competing internal demands or ‘domestic democratic processes’, as well as inimical dynamics of regional conflicts. Indeed, for Nigeria and South Africa, a more fundamental factor is the democratic dispensation that limits the freedom of action that Abacha and other military dictators in West Africa enjoyed during the 1990s in the external deployment of their national forces. Thus, a disintegration of either one of them would have catastrophic consequences for the regional security architecture.

Apart from its reliance on these two ‘benevolent’ continental countries, the AU has, out of desperation more than anything else, been forced to lean on the support of so-called ‘lead states’ or regional military powers such as Ethiopia and Uganda in dealing with conflicts in the Horn of Africa. To a large extent, this situation has been borne out of by history when the OAU was so hamstrung by the Charter principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in the affairs of member states. This despite the fact that some of these states have no clean human rights record or democratic credentials. Still, with the support of the US, Ethiopia’s military machine helped the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Somalia expel the Union of Islamic Courts in December 2006. While a proposed AU force of 8 000 African troops has failed to materialise, Uganda has so far deployed 1 700 troops as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).³

Since the capacities of both Ethiopia and Uganda to sustain the effort are obviously limited, in the short to medium term, Somalia is likely to descend once again into instability similar to that witnessed in the last decade and a half. The situation in the Horn and further afield in West Africa and the Sahel therefore presents the AU with the ‘devil’s choice’ of riding the tiger by joining forces with US in its global war on terror. In the post-9/11 era, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Uganda have become the US’s main strategic partners on the continent. Ethiopia, for example, is increasingly being spoken of as being on the frontline in efforts to root out al-Qaeda infrastructure in Africa. The US funded, trained and equipped the Ethiopian ‘invasion’ of Somalia in 2007. In other words, the US effectively and indirectly funded Ethiopia’s unilateral intervention into Somalia. However, the AU mission to Somalia (AMISOM), which was created to try and resolve the crisis in Somalia, was a multilaterally sanctioned peacekeeping mission by Uganda and a few other African countries who had pledged troops to the mission.⁴

On the other hand, Nigeria’s oil wealth, coupled with its complex blend of communal tensions, political Islam and radical Islamism made the country the US’s ideal frontline
ally of choice in tackling militancy and terrorism in West Africa (Murunga 2005:137-162; Haynes 2005:1321-1339). Furthermore, existing conflict systems in West and Central Africa have created space for illicit diamond trade, transnational crime and an environment conducive to terror networks. In turn, the threat of terror networks embedding themselves in Africa's conflict systems has led the US to mount counter-terrorist initiatives, such as such as the Pan Sahelian Initiative (PSI) and Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorist Initiative (TSCTI). In all these situations, the US has shown greater willingness to fund, train and equip 'lead states' that align themselves with its anti-terror initiatives. For better or for worse, the AU and of course the UN have been left to cooperate and legitimise unilaterally initiated peace support operations in the interests of stability.

The problem is that lack of resources and capacity on the part of the UN and the AU has created space or opportunity for global powers, such as the US, to advance their own foreign policy interests in the name of Africa's peace enforcement and peacebuilding. A good example of this is the US government’s decision in 2007 to announce the creation of a new military and security command centre in Africa, AFRICOM, to strengthen US security cooperation with Africa and create new opportunities to bolster the capabilities of its African partners. Despite the fact that the project is purely a security command centre, the US claims that AFRICOM will work to promote democracy, health, education, economic growth and development. Local observers are, however, highly sceptical of the US's intentions, with some suggesting that the idea is to set up a command centre in the Horn of Africa – possibly in Ethiopia – to provide a base from which to launch attacks against terrorist groups in the area and the rest of the Middle East. In fact, one such observer argues that AFRICOM will not only act as a conduit for entrenching US interests on the continent, but also as both a source and a magnet for Africa's destabilisation (Ruiters 2007:4-5, 38). The fact of the matter is that the AFRICOM project will ensure that Africans unwittingly fight the US's unilateral 'war on terror'. As usual, the US will provide financing, equipment and intelligence, but not personnel. The personnel will come from selected AU member states or so-called 'anchor states' which the US regards as its strategic allies.

The sheer scale of PSOs needed to deal with Africa's existing security challenges has also forced the AU to rather reluctantly accept the supportive or cooperative role of other external Western partners. One good example is the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) which is to be transformed into a hybrid operation – the reality is that the transformation of AMIS into a hybrid operation will devolve on the backstopping capabilities provided by the UN. In fact, the situation in Sudan has generated so much Western interest that donors have been accused of being 'more anxious than African leaders to get into Darfur' (Guicherd 2007:13). According to new thinking on cooperative peacekeeping, a joint United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and AMIS operation demonstrates that the concept of a hybrid force has become a reality for the future. The
argument is that before the hybrid force eventually transitions into a full-blown UN multi-functional peacekeeping and peacebuilding mission it will, in the interim, enable the UN, the AU and the EU to complement each other with different sets of skills, expertise and experience. The other main challenge, however, is how the UN and AU will work together in view of the fact that on 7 June 2007, the UN and AU agreed on a command structure for a joint peacekeeping force to be deployed in Darfur. Under the plan, the AU will run the day-to-day operations while the UN will have overall control of the mission.

**A critique of hybrid peacekeeping**

The trend towards ‘new’ hybrid alternatives as one of the defining elements of modern peacekeeping raises more problems than previously thought. One of the main problems with hybrid force arrangements is the risk of sidelining the UN in favour of hegemonic unilateral initiatives. As the most representative supranational body in existence, the UN should not be unwittingly allowed to wither away or become obsolete in the global peacekeeping agenda. While the catastrophes of Somalia and Rwanda severely undercut the UN’s credibility in Africa in the early 1990s, there is growing international acceptance that UN operations are legitimate and therefore have a significant role to play in peacekeeping, peace enforcement and peacebuilding. The UN not only has the moral high ground or impartiality that other organisations may not necessarily have, but also has certain clear comparative advantages in setting global security standards, humanitarian assistance and development.

Besides, questions of legitimacy are bound to be raised, thereby challenging the authority or legality of future hybrid missions. Firstly, since issues of legitimacy and legality arise, certain peace missions, even if they enjoy the support of the AU or the UN, may be disputed. We may well see new disputes emerge between donors and regional organisations over who should play a bigger role in a particular region or peacekeeping or peace enforcement mission. By virtue of their financial muscle, donors may wish to smuggle in their own political agendas. Secondly, more questions arise from new missions where the UN plays second fiddle or is only brought in later to legitimise unilaterally initiated missions: who will have the authority to implement future peace agreements or ceasefires? What happens if belligerents or countries targeted refuse to agree to the deployment of hybrid forces on their soil (as happened – at least until recently – in Sudan), and how should countries or parties that refuse to cooperate be sanctioned? These are indeed complex issues that need to be clearly thought through before hybrid force mechanisms are adopted as a matter of best peacekeeping practice. What is needed on the continent is legitimate, accountable and creative methods of peacekeeping. This is not the same as adopting rapid and unilateral response mechanisms that undermine the UN but suit the whims of powerful countries.
Although, in recent decades, there has been clear evidence that rich countries have borne the burden of the UN’s overall budget, it is also true that some of them have tried to use the ‘power of the purse’ to control the way the UN operates in general. Another problem is the tendency for developed countries to prefer deploying their citizens in missions outside the African continent. In the meanwhile, African missions have had to rely on an increase in African and Asian personnel, while places such as the Balkans and the Middle East have relied almost purely on Western military personnel (Gowan & Johnstone 2007:2; Sidhu 2006:32–37). Such open ‘peacekeeping apartheid’ has strengthened the perception that powerful donor states prefer ‘big league, big budget, advanced technology, war fighting roles’, only to leave the UN and other continental bodies such as the AU to clean up the mess. The situations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia are cases in point. Also, some donor countries, such as the US, Sweden, Italy, Belgium, Britain and the Netherlands, have been criticised for supplying arms that fuel African conflicts while at the same time pursuing peacekeeping, often in the same conflict zones where they have dumped weapons.

Critics of peacekeeping operations have likened them to a new form of neo-colonialism. Adebajo argues that the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) have tended to maintain an ambiguous attitude towards regional organisations, that is, rejecting to fund them and then recognising them while attempting to maintain control over certain missions (Adebajo 2007). This point is supported by the fact that some of the UNSC veto-wielding members have shown greater willingness to sanction deployments of peace missions only in their former colonial or geo-strategic ‘spheres of influence’. The cases often cited are the British in Sierra Leone, the US in Liberia and Somalia, and France in Côte d’Ivoire (Adebajo 2007). Critics argue further that some peacekeeping missions have provided the opportunity for former colonial powers to interfere in the internal affairs of their former colonies, especially against unpopular governments, using newly adopted controversial norms of intervention in international affairs such as the concept: ‘responsibility to protect’.5 There is no doubt that such perceptions contributed to attacks on French peacekeepers in Côte d’Ivoire in November 2004. It is true that the application of such concepts as the responsibility to protect and human security have negatively coloured the way peace operations are carried out and the rationale used to justify them. In contrast to the non-threatening presence associated with traditional Chapter VI peacekeeping operations, the current trend towards issuing mandates under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, on the understanding that even the most benign environments can turn sour, has become a source of unease in international affairs (UN 2004:211–214; Langille 2007).

The focus on rights and human security has also increased pressure for robust and rapidly deployable military forces to deal with violent situations on the ground. However, such a trend is increasingly exposing troops to greater danger of attack by protagonists. Increasingly, both UN and non-UN peace operations have faced violent
opposition. For example, threats have been made by al-Qaeda to attack UN troops in Darfur when they are eventually deployed. Also, in Somalia, Islamist opposition has already started targeting AMISOM troops in that country. The overall effect of this is to dissuade peacekeeping contributors from sending their personnel under a Chapter VII mandate. What makes the situation worse is that in the post 9/11 strategic environment, peacekeeping has become an element of the ‘war on terror’. It is not uncommon to see operations spilling over into counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism. As the line between peace enforcement and war has become blurred, questions are being raised about whose agenda is being served by robust Chapter VII mandates and the adoption of hybrid cooperative arrangements that incorporate personnel and missions from a range of organisational, regional, continental and other ad hoc arrangements.

The increasing use of Chapter VII mandates are also feeding the perception that most peace operations may be influenced by US and British concerns with terror. ‘The significance of US choices to current peace operations cannot be doubted [since] Washington not only pays 26.7 percent of the UN peacekeeping budget but also provide training and funding for regional and sub-regional operations in Africa’ (Gowan & Johnstone 2007:10). In recent years, some ‘UN and non-UN missions have taken on operational aspects of counter insurgency’ with the risk of drawing the fire of attacks from radical terrorist groups (Gowan & Johnstone 2007:10). Examples are Sierra Leone, where UNAMSIL was mandated to ‘deter and where necessary, decisively counter the threat’ posed by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF); and the Democratic Republic of Congo, where MONUC is under instruction ‘to use all necessary means’ against militias in the East (Gowan & Johnstone 2007:10).

Another example of how US foreign policy is heavily influencing the adoption of hybrid operations is Sudan. In this case, the US and its ally, Britain, have attempted to rally a ‘coalition of the willing’ under a Chapter VII mandate in the Security Council Resolution 1706, allowing the use of military force, including the imposition of economic sanctions and a no-fly zone over Darfur – although this was later watered down tremendously to get Khartoum’s buy-in in the resolution. It was reported that imposing a no-fly zone (of the kind enforced in Iraq since the 1991 Gulf invasion), would cheaply enable the enforcement of UN resolutions by allowing the use of punitive air strikes against Sudanese air force bases in the event that Khartoum violated the no-fly zone (Mail & Guardian 2007). Instead of emphasising the impact of climate change (for which developed countries like the US would be culpable) as a factor helping to fuel the conflict in Darfur, Mahmood Mamdani argues, the US chose to adopt a ‘labelling strategy’ designed to trigger a foreign invasion in Sudan. According to him, labelling the fighting in Darfur as a government-sponsored ‘genocide’ was part of a strategy aimed at enabling the ‘international community [or] a coalition of the willing led by a single regional power – the US – to … intervene militarily for humanitarian reasons’ (Mail and Guardian 2007).
In contrast to its treatment of Sudan, the UNSC, led by the US, mildly condemned but accepted Eritrea’s decision to bar the UN from using helicopters and to carry out limited ground operations in the buffer zone created after its war with Ethiopia.

The unwillingness of the Sudanese government to accept even a UN-led ‘hybrid force’ in Darfur is largely informed by the fact that the US and some of its European allies have proved rather too keen on dealing with the situation in Darfur. Even Lakhdar Brahimi warned that ‘the UN’s global credibility is suffering because it is seen to be heavily influenced by Washington, and is almost always biased in favor of the interests of Western countries – to the detriment of the developing world’ (UN 2000). In this regard, it is not surprising that where significant national interests are not an issue, Western countries tend to be hesitant to commit troops, fund or equip peacekeeping missions. This is because, more often than not, Western countries are likely to join a mission or intervene when the issue at hand appears to be related to its political culture, which is shaped by history, public and elite views about their country’s place in the world (ICISS 2001:215-221). When these countries do intervene, it is due to negative public opinion in Europe, such as that which prompted NATO to train AMIS officers to deal with the genocide in Darfur. Another example is the case of the French government attempting to begin a parallel peace process for Darfur while the AU and UN processes are ongoing. France’s interest is in defending its former colonies, Chad and Central African Republic, with whom it has military pacts and who support and host Sudanese rebels (all three actors are Sudan’s foes). Moreover, France is highly motivated in resolving the crisis in Sudan because it feels that the Darfur crisis may spill into Southern Sudan, a territory in which the French conglomerate Total has huge oil concessions and drilling operations. Hence, if that link (to national interests, political culture, history, public and elite views as to whether or not to intervene) cannot be determined in any way, then public opinion and especially the decision-makers in Western countries tend to be reluctant to intervene despite international pressure and concerns to do so or not. Not surprisingly, the heavy footprint of the interests of Western countries in the UN SC’s decisions on PSOs is not only undercutting the UN’s credibility but also fuelling the perception that the world body is being used to perpetuate or legitimise neo-colonialism (Nayar 2006). Furthermore, there is also a deep-seated feeling that peacekeeping troops that come under missions readily sanctioned by the UN SC are in effect American stooges.

**Conclusion: reclaiming peacekeeping in Africa**

There is no doubt that the UN’s potential, as well as its traditional primacy in maintaining peace and security, is increasingly being challenged. However, the organisation is frequently being made the scapegoat and sometimes unfairly blamed for the failures of its member states. What is worrying is that the universal project of establishing appropriate, accountable and democratic multilateral tools to deal with global security
now seems to be at risk, at a critical period when effective and accountable global responses to global challenges are urgently needed. At the same time, conflicts in Africa are driving new experiments in hybrid security cooperation led by external partners. This is despite the fact that such hybrid operations are nothing more than a response to Africa’s political, financial and operational constraints. They should therefore not be regarded as alternative strategies for UN-led peacekeeping. ‘If capacity [has been the bane of old UN peace operations] and hybrid operations are the solution, the form these [new hybrid] operations take, who participates, who authorises them and to whom they are accountable all matter.’ While cooperative or hybrid security arrangements are welcome, they should not provide a ‘license for any state or organisation with the capacity to intervene to do so’ (Gowan & Johnstone 2007:11). There is therefore, a critical need to establish the ‘parameters of genuine continental and global partnership – including role clarification between sub-regional bodies, the AU, the European Union, United States of America and the UN’ (Aning 2007:1).

The problem now is that UN member states, especially those in the developed North, tend to wait, watch or even worse, defer action in times of crisis. To deal with the above scenarios, African states and their institutions need to move away from the rhetorical clichés and take genuine action to develop their own solutions for Africa’s security and development challenges. Relying heavily on the support of external partners and donors for PSOs only perpetuates dependency. It is important to remember that the donors themselves have their own political agendas. Thus, the solution to African security challenges lies in reducing both technical and financial dependence on external partners.

While better training and coordination will definitely help make regional African Union Standby Forces (ASF) arrangements more effective, it is important to note that subregional arrangements remain highly dependent on the political will of African leaders themselves. For example, the weaknesses in current ASF arrangements were demonstrated by the relatively unsuccessful efforts to mobilise a large enough force for deployment for AMISOM. Without new and locally funded innovative approaches, there is a risk that the continent will continue to limp from one crisis to another. Millions will continue to die and suffer. More importantly, hundreds of billions of dollars will be required for post-conflict reconstruction and recovery.

The adoption of local initiatives may mean that the UN will be sidelined. Besides its many comparative advantages in the areas of humanitarian and development assistance, a reformed UN remains the only legitimate global organ that can set the standards that are needed for peacekeeping operations in general. Perhaps the old idea of greater cooperation around a strategic reserve ‘UN Standing Army’, a ‘UN Legion’, a ‘UN Rapid Deployment Force’ or a ‘Permanent UN Brigade’ should be revisited. Such a UN emergency service or rapid reaction force would have broader appeal, especially in the ‘theatre’ of operations. It would also provide an array of useful emergency services
and may attract both deeper and wider support. Other advantages would include the fact that as a permanent UN formation, the service would be maintained at a high state of readiness with pretrained, well-equipped personnel and would be available for immediate deployment upon authorisation by the UN SC. The service would also be both multidimensional and multifunctional, composed of military, police and civilian elements, prepared for rapid deployment to diverse UN operations (Langille 2007).

Notes

1 Security cooperation implies a situation in which two or more entities and groupings come together and merge their resources, expertise and at the same time distribute and share the costs and tasks of implementing a particular security operation. For example, different states may come together and share intelligence in the war against terror. Hybridisation is one form of security cooperation takes security cooperation one step further in that these entities may come together under a single or joint command in addressing a common issue as is the case in Darfur where the UN/AU mission has been tasked with a particular role for the AU and UN.

2 The UN’s role in peacekeeping suffered further as allegations surfaced of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN staff and its agencies in the field. Subsequent measures to create DPKO conduct and discipline units at both headquarters and in the field to monitor and act on allegations of sexual abuse and corruption seem to have done little to restore lost confidence in the efficacy of ‘old’ peacekeeping in general.

3 The Somalia case study is an example of ‘other’ security cooperation mechanisms that employ two or more African states with the explicit backing of Western powers such as the US.


5 The concept was coined by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) and was later affirmed in the 2005 World Summit outcome document. For details on this point see, UN General Assembly, 2005 World Summit Outcome, GA Res 60/1, UN GA OR, 60th Session, UN Doc A/RES/60/1 (2005).

6 On April 23, Al-Jazeera Television broadcast a bin Laden audiotape in which he called for al-Qaeda fighters to begin travelling to Darfur to prepare for a ‘long-term war against the Crusaders’ – an apparent reference to the UN force (controlled by the United States in bin Laden’s mind) that could replace the ineffective African Union mission in the region. The commander of the United Nations Mission in Sudan has announced that the UN force is treating bin Laden’s threat with ‘whole seriousness’ (Al-Jazeera Television 23 April 2006; Sudan Tribune, 26 April 2006). In Somalia, six AMISOM troops have been killed by Islamist elements (Reuters, Rebel mortar attack in Somalia’s capital kills peacekeeper, The New York Times, 2 April 2007 [accessed 2 April 2007]; Ali Musa Abdi, Mogadishu blast kills four Ugandan peacekeepers, Agence France-Presse via the Middle East Times, 16 May 2007 [accessed 16 May 2007].

References


Security alerts and their impacts on Africa
Wafula Okumu

Trends and markers:
Global Peace Index
Security alerts and their impacts on Africa

Wafula Okumu*

Introduction

In the aftermath of the British security authorities’ discovery of two cars laden with gas canisters in central London on 29 June 2007 and the crashing of a car into Glasgow airport, British Security Minister Alan West revealed that the country faced a threat from more than 200 militant cells. Despite these terrorist incidences and the announcement of the Security Minister no country has issued a travel alert or ban to the UK. Similarly, when 52 people were killed by a series of terrorist bombs on 7 July 2005 in London, no travel alerts or bans were imposed on the UK. Notably, these bombings took place when the most powerful leaders of the world were meeting in Gleneagles, Scotland. In a show of solidarity with the British people, these leaders held a joint press conference and issued

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a stern warning to those planning similar acts. A similar posture was witnessed when terrorists bombed the World Trade Center and Pentagon on 9 September 2001. Instead of issuing travel warnings to the US, the world was encouraged to visit New York City to send a strong message to the terrorists that they cannot alter or interfere with the Western way of life and also to help the city recover the economic loss suffered in the aftermath of the attack. Tony Blair, then prime minister of Britain, even visited ‘Ground Zero’ to deliver British support in the declared ‘Global War on Terrorism’ (GWOT).

However, travel advisories or warnings by the US State Department, UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Canadian Department of Foreign and International Trade (DFAIT) and Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) are regularly issued to alert citizens from the respective countries to avoid certain countries for security reasons. Besides having devastating affects on many African economies they are imposed on, there are now serious concerns being raised as to whether these alerts serve the purpose of ensuring that citizens of the respective countries are safe when they travel to the countries deemed insecure. It can be argued that issuing travel alerts is in line with the responsibility of governments to protect their citizens. However, does this responsibility extend to threatening the livelihoods of citizens of other countries that rely on income generated from the tourism industry? Why is it that existing lists contains only poor, non-Western countries? How come travel bans are rarely imposed on Western countries, particularly those most threatened by both domestic and international terrorism? This article highlights the inconsistencies of these travel advisories and analyses their consequences on African economies before concluding with a set of recommendations.

Application of travel warnings and bans

Kenya, a regular target of international terrorism, has complained that it is being punished by Western countries (despite being an ally in the GWOT) whenever travel alerts and bans are issued in response to intelligence reports showing imminent terrorist attacks. In May 2003, the US and Britain placed a ‘non-essential travel ban’ on Kenya after intelligence sources had picked up information about an ‘imminent threat’ on a British-registered aircraft. British Airways promptly suspended its flights to Kenya for almost a month while Germany, France, Belgium, Hungary and Australia also imposed bans on Kenya. These bans had devastating impacts on the country, as we shall see later.

Thus, when the US issued a travel warning to Kenya on 6 February 2007, the Kibaki government cried foul and accused the US of sabotaging the World Cross-Country Championships that were to take place on 24 March in the port city of Mombasa. Kenya was the second African country to host this athletics event, rated as the third most important in world. Kenya had not only lobbied heavily to host the athletics event but
also pumped millions of dollars into organising it. Besides showcasing its world-class elite athletes, Kenya also hoped to reap enormous economic benefits and free public relations as an attractive tourist destination.

The US State Department’s travel warning simply reminded ‘American citizens to consider carefully the risks of travel to Kenya at the time due to ongoing safety and security concerns’. Among the safety concerns cited in the travel advisory were the ‘continuing terrorist threats’ and ‘terrorist acts’ near Mombasa and other Kenyan ports. American citizens were also warned to avoid Kenya due to ‘increasing incidents of violent crime’ such as ‘carjacking and home invasions/burglary’, which, according to the advisory, the ‘Kenyan authorities have limited capacity to deter and investigate’. American tourists were warned to stay away from tourist sites, locations, clubs, hotels, resorts, upmarket shopping centres, restaurants and recreational facilities. They were literally told to stay away from Kenya or, if they do go there, to lock themselves up in their hotel rooms and avoid mingling with Kenyans!

The American alert was issued in reaction to the February demonstration in Mombasa by the Muslim community to demand the immediate release of fellow Muslims who had been arrested after crossing into Kenya after the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia or to ‘paralyse the cross-country’ event. However, this threat by the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya to disrupt the World Cross-Country Championships was later condemned by the Interfaith Council of Clerics and Muslims in Mombasa.

Despite assurances from Muslim leaders that they would not allow the name of their community to be used to disrupt this important event, Kenyan security authorities did not take matters for granted. The government beefed up security by increasing police presence, patrolling the seaside, and deploying all members of the specially trained VIP Protection Squad, the anti-terrorism unit, and diplomatic and tourist police in Mombasa.

Besides deployment of the Recce and G companies that are trained to protect VIPs, as well as carry out rescue and evacuation operations and control crowds, 200 police dogs (including sniffer dogs), hundreds of police vehicles and 40 crowd-control horses were also ferried from Nairobi and the Anti-Stock Theft Unit. Four police helicopters patrolled the air while boats from the navy, police, the Kenya Ports Authority, the Kenya Wildlife Service and the Kenya Revenue Authority patrolled the sea. In case riots were to break out, the marine police was ready to contain them with high-tech anti-riot vehicles fitted with water cannons. With these elaborate security measures, Kenya went on to hold one of the most colourful and successful sporting events in Africa despite the American security alert imposed on the country.

It is notable that the US State Department’s current list of ‘travel warnings’ contains 26 countries, of which 12 are African countries engaged in one form of conflict or another.
Among these countries are the Central Africa Republic (CAR), Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea, Burundi, Nigeria, Algeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Chad, Sudan and Somalia.

When the American list is compared to the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) list, it is distinctly different as the later contains countries such as Russia, Israel, and India. Although some countries on the US list, such as CAR, Guinea, Côte d’Ivoire, Somalia, Burundi, the DRC, Chad, Nigeria, Sudan and Liberia, also appear on the British list, it is more extensive as it includes many more African countries, including Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia. The FCO list excludes Algeria and Kenya but includes, in a recent update, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Madagascar.

The FCO has four categories of countries under travel advisory: countries against all travel to; countries against all travel to parts of; countries against all but essential travel to parts of; and countries against all but essential travel to parts of. Somalia has the dubious distinction of being the only country in the first category. Among the African countries in the second category are Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, the DRC, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria, Sudan and Uganda. The CAR and Liberia are in the third category, while Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Chad, Congo, the DRC, Guinea, Libya, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda and Zambia are in the last category. Some countries, such as Burundi, the DRC, Nigeria and Uganda, appear in more than one category. The American list contains fewer African countries. However all the countries except Kenya also appear on the British list, namely Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Eritrea, Congo, the DRC, Algeria, the CAR, Burundi, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan. It is interesting to note that countries such as Zambia, Libya, Niger and Mauritania that are on the FCO list are not on the US list.

There are many questions on the criteria used to create these listings. One could argue that Zimbabwe is more violent than some of these countries and yet it is not on the US list. No explanation from the US government has been forthcoming, but various reasons are given for the alerts. For instance, the crash of a Kenya Airways plane on 5 May 2007 after take-off from Douala airport in which five Britons died is one of reasons cited for a travel warning to Cameroon. The reasons for the travel alert to Zambia include severe seasonal rains that caused major flooding and an outbreak of measles in some districts. British citizens are warned against travelling to Tanzania because of ‘a high threat from terrorism, armed robberies, proximity to Burundi and Rift Valley Fever’. Interestingly, Kenya has also experienced outbreaks of Rift Valley Fever but British citizens travelling to Kenya are not warned against it. In addition, while terrorism is cited as a reason for avoiding Tanzania, no such warning has been issued vis-à-vis Kenya. (The US, on the other hand, does consider it necessary to warn its citizens against the threat of terrorism in Kenya.) It gets more confusing when one refers to the reasons British citizens are
warned not to go to Uganda – it is a neighbour of Kenya that has been a target of terrorism! Thus, while British citizens are not warned about travelling to Kenya, the US government warns its citizens ‘to consider carefully the risks of travel to Kenya at this time due to ongoing safety and security concerns’.

While the British sees ‘risk of indiscriminate terrorist attacks’ in Mali, the Americans do not, although they have set up the Trans-Sahelian Counter-Terrorism Initiative. This programme includes Mali Niger, Chad and Mauritania – which the US military regards as ‘the new front in the war on terrorism’. The British recognises the Ethiopia-Eritrea border problem as a security risk but the US does not. The British also identifies a ‘high threat from terrorism in Ethiopia’ and the likelihood of attacks ‘against civilian targets including places frequented by foreigners’ but the Americans do not. The British warning could be due to the kidnapping of five Britons in the Afar region in early March and the 24 April killing of 74 people by Ethiopian rebel gunmen during an attack on an oil field in Ethiopia’s Somali region.

While the US does not give any warning against travel to Israel, the FCO regards the country as ‘trouble-free’ but warns that there ‘is a high threat of terrorism’, particularly from the Occupied Palestine Territories, West Bank and Gaza. It gets even more confusing when one considers the fact that the FCO points out the existence of ‘a high threat of terrorism throughout India’ but the US does not! The US thinks there is a ‘possibility of … terrorist activity directed against American citizens and interests’ in Saudi Arabia but the UK does not perceive such a threat against its citizens and interests in the country.

The impacts of warnings

Although no comprehensive analysis has been done of the impact of these ‘alerts’ on African economies, it is estimated that the impact can be devastating if it is borne in mind that income from tourism-related industries drops by at least 70 per cent whenever such alerts are issued against countries that are dependent on revenue from tourism. The impacts of travel warnings and bans on African countries can be seen in two ways. First, these warnings instil psychological fear of imminent attack on a defenceless and helpless population. As a result of this fear, people’s lives are disrupted when they stay away from workplaces and shopping centres. Second, these travel warnings disrupt the tourism industry and airline travel in the fragile African economies that are sensitive to terror scares. In particular, the tourism-related service sectors, including airlines, hotels, entertainment, retail and restaurants, are affected as travellers cancel trips. When a travel warning is issued against a country that relies heavily on tourism, hotel occupancy rates drop significantly due to cancellations. This in turn leads to layoffs, not just of hotel employees but also in other industries that rely on tourists, such as art and craft stalls,
tour operations and money changing. A study conducted by the Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2004 on the impact of travel bans on tourism in the country estimated that the direct impact of the travel ban imposed by the UK government alone amounted to UK£108 million – an amount equivalent to 1.6 per cent of the country’s national wealth. Besides the tourism industry that saw massive layoffs, the country’s horticultural industry also lost UK£3.5 million due to flight cancellations and the expense associated with premium freight costs. Another victim was the Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) that lost revenue estimated at UK£7 million, which impacted on the wildlife and ecology of the country (Wachira 2004).

**Beneficiaries of security alerts**

In view of the above, citizens of Western countries are definitely not the beneficiaries of travel alerts and bans issued or imposed by their governments. Unbeknown to the West, particularly the USA, travel warnings inflame anti-American sentiments locally and provide rallying reasons for the expression of these sentiments. For instance, travel alerts on Kenya usually hurt tourism, which is the mainstay of the coastal areas and home to a huge Muslim population. The rising unemployment that this region usually experiences after travel alerts and bans has at times been regarded as a form of economic sanctions.

Terrorists use scare tactics as a form of promoting their causes, whatever they may be. They could be seen to score whenever they succeed in causing cause massive disruptions in countless lives and instil fear in innocent populations on the grounds of intelligence reports of ‘imminent attacks’. By issuing travel alerts and banning travels to areas that are vulnerable to terrorism, the wrong signals could be sent, namely that the world is scared of terrorists.

However, the main beneficiaries of the travel alerts are not terrorists but security technology companies. When a terrorist plot aimed at transatlantic flights was discovered in August 2006, the value of the inspection-system manufacturer, American Science and Engineering Inc, rose by 26 per cent to US$45.64 on the Nasdaq stock market, while that of OSI Systems Inc rose by 9 per cent to US$19.11. Other security and surveillance companies that have increased in value during terrorist scares include L-3 Communications Holdings Inc, Isonics Corporation, Digital Recorders Inc, Global ePoint Inc and Israel’s Magal Security Systems Ltd.1

**Conclusion**

Travel alerts and bans can be very damaging to fragile economies when they are unfairly applied. Travel alerts on African countries usually exaggerate the security threat, are
inconsistent, unreasonable, and seem politically motivated. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has adopted the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, which states in article 6 that 'governments have the right – and the duty – especially in a crisis, to inform their nationals of the difficult circumstances, or even the dangers they may encounter during their travels abroad'. However, governments also have a 'responsibility … to issue such information without prejudicing in an unjustified or exaggerated manner the tourism industry of the host countries'. In addition, governments are called upon to discuss 'the contents of travel advisories … beforehand with the authorities of the host countries and the professionals concerned' and to formulate 'recommendations [that are] … strictly proportionate to the gravity of the situations encountered and confined to the geographical areas where the insecurity has arisen'. Finally, these advisories should 'be qualified or cancelled as soon as a return to normality permits'.

Note

1 See <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14286942/>.

Reference

Trends and markers: Global Peace Index

About the index

The Global Peace Index covers 121 countries and was compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). The EIU used all its country analysts to gather and score the data, in collaboration with a network of 650 contributors. The index comprises nearly 3,000 data points with another 4,000 relating to the drivers of peace (6,897 points in total). The index was peer reviewed by an international panel of the world’s leading experts on peace. African states are indicated by a darker shade.
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Peace, security and the African Peer Review Mechanism: Are the tools up to the task?
Steven Gruzd

The pitfalls of action and inaction: Civilian protection in MONUC’s peacekeeping operations
Joshua Marks

Pursuing sustainable peace through post-conflict peacebuilding: The case of Sierra Leone
Theo Neethling

Conflict prevention and early warning mechanisms in West Africa: A critical assessment of progress
Issaka K Souaré
Peace, security and the African Peer Review Mechanism: Are the tools up to the task?

Steven Gruzd*

The African Peer Review Mechanism is a novel system created by Africans to improve governance, promote compliance with global and continental standards and enhance development. Preventing and managing conflict is one of the many objectives of this process. The article examines the connections made between peace, governance and development, and how conflict-related concepts are described and interrogated in the mechanism’s self-assessment questionnaire. It analyses and contrasts how the country review reports from Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda have described and assessed conflict issues in practice. On this basis, it asks whether the APRM is incisive enough to promote peace and stability on the continent.

* Steven Gruzd is deputy manager of the APRM and Governance Programme at the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), based at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.
Governance, conflict and development

Sound governance is based upon accountability, transparency, institutional capacity, popular involvement, and adherence to rules. Governance within African countries has, however, frequently demonstrated the opposite: corruption, financial mismanagement, nepotism, ‘big man’ political dominance, patronage and arbitrariness. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is an ambitious, homegrown attempt to address bad governance, a fundamental cause of conflict. This article explores the nexus between peace, governance and development. It looks critically at how the APRM self-assessment questionnaire covers conflict detection and prevention, and contrasts how the country review reports from Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda have described and assessed conflict issues in practice. On this basis, it asks whether this instrument is incisive enough to make Africa’s people enjoy peace.

Perceived unfairness in allocating power and privilege underlies many African conflicts. Latent or violent armed conflicts – often within rather than between countries – have devastating humanitarian consequences and retard development. War destroys infrastructure, or diverts its use for military purposes. Education and health services suffer. Conflict disrupts normal economic activities and plunders natural resources. African leaders and citizens alike have long blamed their problems on external factors – slavery, colonialism and apartheid, the Cold War, and the unfair structure of international political and economic relations – not without merit. But there has been a growing recognition that how African countries are governed also matters, and that peace and security are critical components of governance that enhance socioeconomic development.

Many contemporary policy documents now acknowledge the link between governance, state security, human security and development – especially since intra-state conflicts have mushroomed. For instance, Africa’s economic development blueprint, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (Nepad 2001:16), states:

African leaders have learned from their own experiences that peace, security, democracy, good governance, human rights and sound economic management are conditions for sustainable development.

These ideas are developed in the Common African Defence and Security Policy (CADSP) (AU 2004:7), which emphasises ‘the fundamental link and symbiotic relationship … between security, stability, human security, development and cooperation’. The policy stresses ‘respect for democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law and good governance; [and] the promotion of social justice to ensure balanced economic development’. The CADSP lists common internal security threats confronting many African countries, all with a governance dimension, including lack of respect for human life; poor promotion and protection of human rights; assassinations, terrorism and
subversion; poorly managed elections; unequal opportunities that discriminate against women, children and ethnic minorities; poverty; inequitable resource distribution; corruption; political, religious and ethnic extremism; and racism.

The message is clear: peace promotes prosperity, while bad governance engenders conflict, which in turn seriously stifles development. So how does the APRM propose to boost governance and monitor and manage conflict?

The APRM’s conflict analysis framework: The questionnaire

An outgrowth of Nepad, the APRM is a voluntary African self-monitoring initiative aimed at improving governance and enhancing development. In acceding states, a National Governing Council that involves civil society, business and government, oversees an extensive research and consultation process to develop a self-assessment report evaluating the country’s governance strengths and weaknesses on a wide range of issues, including conflict prevention, election management and human rights. The country must design a programme of action to address all identified gaps in governance. Then an independent team of African experts visits the country to do its own assessment, and helps to write a country review report along with a Panel of Eminent Persons and the continental secretariat. This report is eventually debated by participating heads of state and then publicly released.

To assess how the APRM can contribute to conflict prevention and management, the starting point is the 88-page self-assessment questionnaire that guides the national process, and the relevance of questions asked.

The first of the questionnaire’s 25 objectives examines measures taken to prevent and manage internal and inter-state conflicts, reinforcing the view that peace underpins development. Under this broad objective, the questionnaire asks specific questions: (1) What are the recent or ongoing conflicts in a country and the sources of these conflicts? (2) What mechanisms exist for preventing, reducing, and managing conflicts in that country or region and how effective are they? (3) To what extent have regional and subregional organisations been involved in conflict resolution affecting that country? Detailed indicators are suggested for each question (APRM Secretariat 2004:18).

Several other APRM objectives relate to human and state security, such as constitutional democracy and the rule of law, women’s roles in preventing and resolving conflict, and children’s involvement in conflict. The questionnaire also seeks evidence that countries have signed, ratified, domesticated and implemented many global and African standards aimed at promoting peace.¹
However, a key weakness of the questionnaire is that it asks countries to describe laws, institutions or practices, without explicitly requiring them to evaluate or assess performance and delivery. Most countries possess good laws and policies on paper, and they can easily note these in responses, but rigorous assessment is necessary to evaluate whether they really work.

Ross Herbert and Terence Corrigan, researchers at the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), have thoroughly analysed the entire questionnaire, attempting to produce a more user-friendly version. They note that the word ‘conflict’ is often narrowly viewed as open violence, suggesting that the first question should guide countries to anticipate societal tensions, rather than just react once crises erupt. They recommend inserting a descriptive sentence explaining why each indicator explicitly mentioned can lead to conflict (drug trafficking; organised crime; economic inequality and wealth distribution; illicit arms trade; ethnic, religious and other diversities; and refugees and internally displaced persons). They highlight other key conflict-inducing factors: electoral disputes, unfair or repressive political systems, land and previous unresolved conflicts (Herbert & Corrigan 2006:2–3). The questionnaire’s wording suggests that specialised laws and bodies are needed to ‘manage diversities’, but this downplays the need for ordinary institutions of state, such as parliaments and courts, to function effectively. The questionnaire also makes it difficult to discuss issues comprehensively by the way it splits subjects. For instance, refugees are mentioned in the first indicator, but countries concentrate their analyses of the refugee situation under Objective 9 dealing with vulnerable groups.

Despite these limitations, the questionnaire still provides enough space for countries to reasonably assess themselves in terms of promoting peace within and across their borders. How then were conflict issues tackled in the first three APRM country review reports, from Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda?

From theory to practice: Conflict management in the APRM reports on Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda

Ghana

Ghana, the first country to undergo peer review, presented few challenges in terms of its conflict management and prevention policies and practices. Despite the turbulence of four coups d’état between 1957 and 1981, the country has experienced neither civil conflict nor interstate war. The country review report emphasises that Ghana is ‘seen as an oasis in an otherwise volatile sub-region’ and observes that regional tensions with Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo have largely dissipated under President John Kufuor’s ‘good neighbourliness’ policy (APR Panel 2005a:17). Ghana is commended for
contributing troops for peace missions, including to Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone recently, its active role in the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), and hosting regional peace summits (APR Panel 2005a). Nonetheless, the report highlights latent and manifest tensions, centring on land and chieftaincy, including issues of inheritance and succession, and election-related disputes.

The report tends to praise new and untested conflict prevention arrangements as ‘well-established’ and ‘well-defined’, and it names the State Security Services, the National Security Council and Regional and District Security Councils, without describing their functions, or evaluating their effectiveness. The report calls the recently introduced alternative dispute resolution system to complement the courts ‘innovative, appropriately structured and cost-effective’ (APR Panel 2005a:19).

The report acknowledges that despite the entrenched role of a variety of traditional chieftaincy institutions in conflict management, performance in practice has been weak, frequently fuelling conflict in northern Ghana. Chieftaincy issues are thorny, with the traditional legal, cultural and economic role of chiefs clashing with the requirements of a modern, democratic state. Regional Houses of Chiefs seem to lack sufficient legal resources, and hold meetings too infrequently. The report further notes divided opinions over whether chiefs should actively play a policy advice and consultation role at regional and district levels, or whether this would embroil them in ‘partisan politics and compromise their cultural position as “fathers” of their people’ (APR Panel 2005a:18–19).

Because the questionnaire fails to treat all conflict-related issues in one place, discussion of related issues appears in other sections. Deep socioeconomic tensions between the relatively prosperous south and less developed north of Ghana appear over 100 pages later:

From a perspective of socio-political stability … regional inequities appear to warrant the most immediate attention. Northerners with obvious influence and stature were very vocal about the fact that the three Northern regions have the highest percentage of persons below the poverty line and the highest unemployment, as well as the least access to electricity, water, educational, health and road facilities (APR Panel 2005a:128).

Similarly, discussion about refugees – a direct consequence of conflict – appears under ‘vulnerable groups’. While Ghana hosts thousands of refugees because of its relative stability, its 1992 constitution makes no explicit provision for refugee rights and does not grant them work permits or permanent residence, although the report claims that Ghana’s Refugee Act rests on global standards (APR Panel 2005a:43).
A scant section discusses the extent to which the security forces are subject to the rule of law. It cites no figures, and takes at face value claims by the police and army that they are already remedying human rights violations like detention without trial (APR Panel 2005a:43).

The APR Panel’s recommendations focus on chieftaincy and land issues. The panel recommends that Ghana should continue efforts to review and modernise the institution of chieftaincy to be more responsive to the population’s needs, including those of women, and enhance the capacities of the National, Regional and Traditional Houses of Chiefs to clear case backlogs within a set time-frame. It also recommends introducing a comprehensive land law and a firm plan to accede to and ratify several international protocols, especially those dealing with human rights (APR Panel 2005a:25).

Kenya

Like Ghana, Kenya has faced no civil war or external conflict since independence, and has also played a role as regional peacemaker. Land is a key source of conflict in Kenya, as are politically exploited ethnic gaps and economic disparities.

The country review report calls Kenya ‘an island of peace within a troubled region’ (APR Panel 2006:63), praising Nairobi’s critical peacemaking role in neighbouring Somalia (2004) and Sudan (2005) as ‘best practice’, and noting the thousands of refugees Kenya has accepted.3

The report notes that Kenya’s own self-assessment ‘acknowledges that internal conflict is rife in Kenya’. It frankly identifies interconnected causes:

> [P]olitically induced conflict, which is basically an outfall of competition and struggle for power often provides the basis for a politicisation of ethnic differences, abuse of political power and authority, existence of militias in political parties, and limited opportunities for effective political participation. According to the [country self-assessment report] CSAR, resource based conflicts occur in most cases over the politicisation of land ownership and land rights, arbitrary allocation of community land, scarcity of land for pasture and crop farming, struggle for access to and use of water resources, and depletion of limited water. The CSAR identified additional cases of conflict arising from land use for public purposes by government, and from forced removals from ‘environmentally protected areas’ by government (APR Panel 2006:62).

The self-assessment explores the economic inequalities that overlap with regional inequalities leading to conflicts, with weak state responses. It discusses a 'huge security
void’ in borderlands, where pastoral communities have amassed small arms, often from unstable neighbours like Somalia, and use them for banditry and cattle rustling, which also spill back over international boundaries. External support for insurgency, disagreements over shared resources and poor treatment of Kenyan migrant workers are also mentioned as sources of interstate tension.

The country review report confirms the seriousness of these cleavages. It states that regional inequalities stemming from the colonial era have been perpetuated by a succession of post-independence governments, and competition for resources and advancement has a strong ethnic overlay. The report notes strongly:

The politicisation of ethnicity is a tool that politicians have wielded to the detriment of unification, nation building and peace building in Kenya. There appears to be nothing preventing political leaders from exploiting existing opportunities in their jockeying for power … Stakeholders in Northern Kenya and other disadvantaged regions are aware of the culpability of the leaders from their region. Stakeholders expressed disappointment over the inability and/or unwillingness of the over forty parliamentarians representing them to secure additional resource allocation from the central government for the region (APR Panel 2006:63–64).

In Kenya’s Northern and North Eastern Provinces – borderlands awash with small arms – the lack of action by central government to end violent clashes has spawned lawlessness. The growing use of private militia and home guards is attributed to ‘state laxity, ineptitude or complicity’, which result in ‘impunity for the perpetrators, lawlessness in society and vulnerability and insecurity in the nation’ (APR Panel 2006:64).

Residents resent the deployment of soldiers and police to these areas. Poor roads hamper their effectiveness, while in other cases, communities complain that these forces breach rights and treat local residents inhumanely. Female and male detainees are not separated in police cells in some areas (APR Panel 2006:65).

Many alienated communities in these frontier regions remain unaware of government efforts to improve conditions, and there is a lack of information, engagement and participation. In interactions between ‘marginalised groups’ and the APRM review team, ‘there was a clearly discernible feeling of unjust treatment, lack of equity, and a palpable sense of neglect, bitterness, anger, apathy, and alienation’ (APR Panel 2006:65).

Consultations with stakeholders suggested that politics underlies much conflict in Kenya today, particularly following the failed referendum on a new constitution in 2005, and in-fighting between the ruling National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), and its erstwhile coalition partners (APR Panel 2006:65–66). The report notes increasingly personal and
pejorative exchanges that it claims are amplified by the mass media, ‘dedicated to rousing ethnic hostilities’ with impunity (APR Panel 2006:66).

The panel recommends that government and political parties design and use forums to defuse political and ethnic tensions, foster national consensus and promote tolerance. Government is urged to make laws and policies to revoke all discriminatory practices, proactively ‘managing diversity’. The panel stresses greater political will to create a coherent land redistribution and reallocation system. It calls for affirmative action to benefit marginalised communities, recommends human rights training programmes for law enforcement agencies, closer monitoring and investigation of alleged transgressions, and sensitising citizens about their rights to seek redress. Ominously for freedom of speech advocates, the panel recommends legally empowering media oversight bodies to sanction ‘irresponsible media organisations and professionals’ (APR Panel 2006:66–67).

In its response to the country review report, the Kenyan government generally acknowledged its shortcomings and pledged to resolve the major problems, although it often asserted it was already doing what had been recommended (APR Panel 2006:258).

Rwanda

If Ghana and Kenya are seen as havens of stability in troubled neighbourhoods, the same cannot be said of Rwanda. The tiny central African state has faced periodic and sustained civil and ethnic violence, culminating in the 1994 genocide. The Rwandan government has frequently been accused of fomenting regional instability, under the pretext of dealing with its security concerns in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Here, too, land is a key source of conflict.

The Rwanda country review report summarises how conflict is presented in Rwanda’s own self-assessment report. Among the intertwined factors identified as causing conflict are ‘ethnic, religious and other divisions in society, socio-economic inequality, poverty, land and illicit arms trade, drug trafficking and a high level of illiteracy’ but the principal cause was flagged as:

… [e]thnic discrimination and divisive politics promoted by some leaders, including colonial regimes (notably Belgium) and misdirected academics pursuing studies of physiological and racial factors in human intelligence. The impact of colonial policies and bad governance of post-colonial governments aggravate[s] the situation. Open ethnic rivalry began in 1959 (APR Panel 2005b:32–33).

The report briefly describes historical tensions and conflicts between Hutu-dominated governments and Tutsi opposition, both internal and in exile, including denial of
citizenship, and a cap of 15 per cent of government positions for Tutsis. It says the ‘tensions existing between the Government and the opposition in exile, notably the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), persisted and became an excuse for the Government of President Habyarimana in the 1990s to orchestrate one of the most heinous genocides in modern history’.

This is an extremely controversial statement – some contend that the president’s death sparked the genocide and implicate the RPF in his assassination. Having treated the genocide in just a few stark paragraphs, the report begins discussing land.

Conflicts over land make up 90 per cent of court cases in many Rwandan provinces, exacerbated by high population density and a poorly defined legal framework governing access to land and inheritance rights. Land is rated the biggest potential source of conflict, particularly given the country’s heavy dependence on agriculture for job creation. Highlighting the government’s twin strategies to solve land conflicts in the now defunct group settlement schemes and off-farm employment creation, the report recommends the need for clear and comprehensive land and family planning policies, given projections that Rwanda’s population will double to 16 million by 2020 (APR Panel 2005b:126).

The report notes that, despite peace efforts, including the 1993 Arusha Accord and the 1999 Lusaka Agreement, regional security problems persist, blaming armed ‘genocidal’ militias in the DRC. Justifying its self-help posture, the self-assessment says:

> Even though Rwanda has been criticised for ‘using’ security concerns to promote its own agenda, the fact remains that Rwanda’s security is intertwined with security and governance in neighbouring countries – as long as insurgents in the DRC, in particular, are not dealt with, it is difficult to see how Rwanda can be assured of its security (APR Panel 2005b:32–33).

University of Stellenbosch political scientist Dr Eduard Jordaan is highly critical of the way that conflict issues (and many others) are portrayed in Rwanda’s self-assessment report, and, indeed, in the final country review report. In an article in *African Affairs* in July 2006 he said that Rwanda’s draft self-assessment listed some vague sources of conflict, including imposed borders, ‘issues regarding nationality in some neighbouring countries, spill-over effects from power struggles within the area’, and, using politically loaded language, noted ‘the persistence of genocidal ideologies within the region’, coupled with the existence of ‘armed perpetrators of genocide in the DRC’ (Jordaan 2006:342). He noted that there was an ‘absence of any acknowledgement of blame on Rwanda’s part’. The report ignores Rwanda’s role in fuelling regional conflict (though often vehemently denied by government) in three well-documented dimensions in the
DRC: (1) Rwandan government soldiers and Rwandan-backed forces have repeatedly committed human rights violations; (2) Rwanda has exploited mineral wealth; and (3) Rwanda has armed various DRC groups, in violation of a UN arms embargo (Jordaan 2006:342–343).

The country review report commend Kigali for developing innovative conflict prevention laws and institutions, citing the law against sectarianism and discrimination, Article 9 of the 2003 Constitution, which advocates dialogue and consensus to find solutions and ‘power-sharing arrangements that prohibit a winner–takes-all approach’. It also lists a string of anti-conflict mechanisms – the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), the National Council of Dialogue, the National Commission for Human Rights, the Gacaca courts, and the National Commission for the Fight against Genocide – without questioning their effectiveness (APR Panel 2005b:36). In other sections, the report briefly mentions the plight of child soldiers and genocide orphans.

The report, however, remains largely silent on questions requiring information on social cohesion, and does not comment on ethnic relations in contemporary Rwanda. The report fails to broach the claim that the present regime has deliberately downplayed ethnic identities to mask Tutsi military and political dominance, and barely mentions the marginalisation of the Batwa minority in Rwanda. It also does not mention the International Criminal Tribunal in Rwanda – a serious omission.

The country review mission seems not to have engaged critically with any of these issues. Instead, in just three paragraphs, the panel’s report commends the government for establishing the NURC, and for the revival of traditional Gacaca courts to adjudicate on genocide crimes. The NURC attempts to instil a common Rwandan identity in all citizens and prevent the growth of divisive ideologies through civic education, conflict management and advocacy for policy reforms (APR Panel 2005b:36–37).

The report notes that during the review mission in April 2005 several rural residents were fleeing in fear of being labelled genocidaires (perpetrators):

… [b]ased on allegations that the Gacaca courts are a camouflage for ‘victors’ justice’, since the crimes committed during the RPF’s incursion and takeover in Rwanda in the 1990s may go unpunished while the focus remains on the genocidaires. The Government has a singular challenge to assure all citizens that the Gacaca courts are not designed for retribution or witch hunting (APR Panel 2005b:35).

In its comments, the government of Rwanda responded sharply to even these muted criticisms, claiming that the review team was ill-informed and spent too little time in
the country. In particular, it felt that Gacaca had been misunderstood, explaining that Gacaca was only for genocide cases, not general court matters, and refuted that Gacaca could be construed as retributive ‘victor’s justice’ (APR Panel 2005b:132–133).

A few vague recommendations are made, urging the continuation of existing efforts. The APR Panel recommends that government should deepen its national reconciliation effort based on its policy of dialogue and consensus; strive to ensure that its policy of inclusiveness wins the trust of all citizens, both victims and perpetrators of genocide; and tighten regional security links, promote social relations between populations in border areas, and contribute towards finding subregional mechanisms to curtail small-arms trafficking (APR Panel 2005b:35–36).

**Conclusion and recommendations**

This article has sketched the rhetorical commitment of African leaders to peace, security and stability, and the explicit connections they have drawn between peace, governance and development. The APRM seeks, among its many other aims and purposes, to contribute to conflict prevention by examining a number of security-related issues, identifying problems and proposing solutions. It is therefore a useful diagnostic instrument in identifying potential fault lines.

But its practical utility as a conflict prevention tool is constrained by several weaknesses. These include a poorly structured questionnaire and loose framing of questions; the leeway afforded to countries in developing their responses; insufficient interrogation of issues excluded or downplayed in self-assessment reports by the panel and review teams; the non-confrontation ethos of the process; and the non-binding nature of the panel’s recommendations.

The questionnaire fails to ask some tough questions about electoral disputes, festering, partially resolved previous conflicts and unfair political systems. It assumes that states need special instruments and mechanisms to deal with conflict, rather than well-functioning regular arrangements to respect and uphold the rule of law. As a whole, the questionnaire tends to ask for too much description and too little dissection of problems. Conflict prevention only receives attention in a few pages in each report as APRM attempts to scrutinise the entire gamut of governance. The long, complex and poorly organised questionnaire splits subjects, making it hard to answer and analyse.

The three review reports discussed in this article yielded nothing not already widely known, and suggested remedies were generic and vague. They do, however, pick out important causes of conflict, such as land and managing diversity, both of which are underplayed in the questionnaire and should be revised accordingly.
In general, the reports of Ghana and Kenya are more frank about problems related to conflict than that of Rwanda, which glosses over or justifies its regional security decisions and interventions. The reports reflect the methodology used to compile the self-assessments – the first-mentioned two countries used independent and credible research institutions whereas Rwanda’s team consisted exclusively of government personnel.

Country review teams and the APR Panel are reactive. Their reports largely play off what countries submit in their self-assessment, without thorough interrogation, taking government assurances of reform at face value. In Rwanda’s case, the panel ignored serious allegations of military adventurism in the region, and failed to challenge the government on well-documented cases of aggression.

The APRM was never intended to be the major organ charged with resolving existing violent armed conflicts. That is the responsibility of the AU’s Peace and Security Council and African Standby Force. The APRM does have the potential to play a role in conflict prevention, but its usefulness is limited because it relies heavily on peer pressure that the participating leaders, so far, have not exerted meaningfully. The APRM lacks explicit sanctions for non-compliance, and heads of state will not adopt name-and-shame tactics. Given that the institution will struggle to review each of the 27 states every three to five years as planned – with just five reviews completed by July 2007 – it is extremely unlikely that the APRM will invoke ‘emergency’ reviews to deal with particular conflicts.

While the APRM may prove to be useful in describing sources of tension and conflict and ways that these have been mitigated, the first three reports suggest that Africa should not rely on APRM alone as an effective conflict prevention tool.

The following broad policy recommendations may improve the APRM’s effectiveness:

- A revised questionnaire that asks sharper questions, gives more guidance about conflict causes, consolidates discussion of both human and state security in one section and demands evaluation rather than mere description

- Country review missions that are better prepared well in advance of arrival in the country, with experts more informed about local circumstances and context

- More rigour by the Panel of Eminent Persons in interrogating self-assessment reports

- Countries using the opportunities that the APRM presents, through initiating inclusive national policy dialogue to delve more deeply into seemingly intractable national issues to work on innovative, sustainable solutions
Notes


2 Ghana’s APRM country self-assessment report was completed in early 2005, and the country review report – combining the self-assessment report and additional research by the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons and APRM Secretariat – was finalised in June 2005. The report was peer reviewed in January 2006 by the APR Forum of Participating Heads of State in Khartoum, Sudan.

3 It mentions, specifically, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

References

The pitfalls of action and inaction: Civilian protection in MONUC’s peacekeeping operations

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This article examines the efforts of the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) to protect civilians during two periods – its more passive phase from 2000 to 2004 and, since 2005, a more active phase, which included more forceful peace operations. Based on incidents spanning these two periods and an overview of the mission, it can be concluded that MONUC has incorporated civilian protection with great difficulty. Its more passive role failed to protect civilians and undermined the notion of civilian protection, yet its more aggressive operations occasionally led to greater civilian abuse. As civilian protection clauses become more common in UN mission mandates and as missions initiate more robust operations, MONUC’s experience offers important lessons for present and future missions.

Introduction

Since 2000, the operations of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) have illustrated the persistent problems encountered by the mission in protecting civilians in spite of the increasing use of force to keep them safe. A brutal relation against a mutiny in Kisangani in May 2002 and MONUC’s village alert system in rural Walungu, in eastern DRC, serves to underscore the dilemma. In Kisangani, Blue Helmets were aware of an unfolding civilian massacre after a failed mutiny yet proved unable to intervene in any meaningful way. In contrast, three years later, in Walungu, MONUC organised civilians to alert UN peacekeepers of any imminent attacks and deterred several civilian attacks, but with mixed results.

In both situations, essentially the same civilian protection clauses existed, yet their interpretation, execution and results varied widely. MONUC appeared to have had no initial plan to enforce the civilian protection clause. When events on the ground eventually prodded it to do so, its strategy occasionally backfired. An examination of incidents when civilians’ lives were at risk reveals the difficulties of implementing the increasingly accepted notion of civilian protection in UN mission mandates. More importantly, it exposes the persistent problems in UN peacekeeping missions against which reports from the 1990s warned. Then, as now, invoking civilian protection in mandates has complex implications and a responsibility that missions may not be able to meet immediately.

1999–2002: The mission’s first steps

By 1999, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) seemed to be the most challenging conflict and yet the one most in need of a UN operation. Considered one of the bloodiest conflicts in modern times, the Congo conflict dated back to 1996 when the Rwanda-backed rebel group *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la liberation du Congo-Zaïre* (AFDL) and its leader, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, swept through the country and deposed the dying dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko. The proximate cause of the war was the spill-over effects of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, which had led to the displacement of millions of refugees in Zaire’s eastern border region and the resurrection of the genocide perpetrators within those border areas.

An ultimate trigger of the conflict, however, was the total collapse of the Zairian state, which hung together by the tethered strings of a vast patronage system. From 1998 to 2002, the conflict sucked in eight other African countries, spawned several rebel groups, and resulted in the death of over three million people, mostly from disease and hunger. The gravity of the crisis, located at the crossroads of most regions of the continent, made it impossible to ignore, yet the complexity of the conflict dynamics and the failure of the state made it one of the most daunting cases for intervention.
Whereas the UN’s first entry into Congo in 1960 was quick and militarily aggressive, the new UN mission was initially slow and ineffective. MONUC would, in fact, require four years to scale up to a true Chapter VII mission and another year to be restructured to deal with the violence in the country’s restive east. In 1999, it began as an observer mission intended to ensure that the countries involved in the war complied with the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement signed that year. While the UN remained an observer mission, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and a joint military commission (JMC) assumed most peacekeeping duties. Composed of the signatories of the Lusaka Agreement and headed by a neutral OAU-selected chairman, the JMC was supposed to monitor party compliance to the ceasefire and help with the disengagement of armed forces, among other responsibilities. But lack of resources, poor coordination, and a structure that demanded trust and commitment from the previously warring parties hampered the initiative (Rogier 2003). Conscious of the complexity of the conflict in the Congo, African leaders called for a UN larger force of 15 000 to 20 000 peacekeepers and Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned that the mission would have to be a large and expensive deployment. The United States, on the other hand, was opposed to any new large missions, especially in an area where it saw little strategic interest.

To resolve the conflicting interests of key members of the Security Council, the council agreed to undertake a ‘phased-in’ approach, beginning with the deployment of 90 military liaison officers in August 1999, to engage warring parties in the peace process and pave the way for a larger, albeit modest, observer mission within a year’s time (UNSC 1999:2; Holt & Berkman 2006:159). Despite the gravity of the conflict in the Congo, the first phase of the mission was effectively a traditional peacekeeping operation reminiscent of the Cold War era when peacekeepers focused on monitoring ceasefire lines or supervising truces. But unlike many of those earlier missions, the intent was to gradually ramp up operations so long as resources and other peacekeeping operations around the world permitted.

That approach, however, worried sceptics of the mission, especially after the US introduced a resolution that called for a 5 500-person strong Chapter VII mission. With costly, complex missions already operating in Bosnia and Kosovo and the spectre of Somalia still looming over other African missions, US policy-makers questioned whether the capacity existed to create an effective large-scale operation. Richard Holbrooke, then US Ambassador to the UN, was well aware of these challenges and appeased American critics with anodyne promises: no US boots on the ground, no diversion of funds from Kosovo, and, significantly, no escalation to an enforcement mission, including forceful disarmament (HIRC 2000:74-76).

Under such conditions, the Security Council eventually adopted US-sponsored Resolution 1291 (2000), which contained the first explicit mention of civilian protection in MONUC’s mandates. Far from the measures Africans originally advocated, it
called for about 5,500 personnel to monitor the Lusaka Agreement and for a Chapter VII mandate. The second mission ever to invoke civilian protection in its mandate at the time, the Security Council called on the mission to protect UN personnel and civilians under imminent threat of physical violence ‘as it deems it within its capabilities’ (UNSC 2000:4). Interestingly, Holbrooke made no mention of civilian protection in his testimony to the US Congress. When Representative Gregory Meeks asked about a mandate to protect threatened civilians, Holbrooke deflected the question, responding instead with an appeal to focus more attention on internally displaced persons (HIRC 2000:24–25).

The lofty appeals to protect civilians and support the Lusaka Agreement, however, were not met with either a solid commitment or the capacity to enforce it. Indeed, the mandate appeared to have fallen into the same trap as that against which the reports on Rwanda and Srebrenica during the 1990s, as well as the Brahimi Report of 2000, warned. In a country over twenty times the size of Liberia yet with only a third the number of peacekeeping troops at one point, MONUC seemed disastrously underequipped. On paper, it had a Chapter VII mandate but, in reality, it continued to operate as a Chapter VI observer mission, hardly ever using force and avoiding forceful measures to protect civilians. The mission tried to implement an agreement that the warring parties showed little interest in respecting and its capacity fell far short of its mandate (Roessler & Prendergast 2006:305–306). Quoting a senior UN official, Refugees International reported: ‘The Congo file started in Africa, not in the United Nations. The Lusaka Agreement called for UN forces. They didn’t know what they were writing. The UN wasn’t there. The UN came in with a framework that wasn’t theirs’ (Bernath & Edgerton 2003:5).

These problems came to a head in 2002 when a localised mutiny in Kisangani mutated into a massacre of civilians. On the night of 13 to 14 May 2002, mid-level officers from the occupying force of eastern DRC, Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie – Goma (RCD-Goma), took over a local radio station and called on Congolese to revolt against the ‘Rwandans,’ meaning both Rwandans and Congolese of Rwandan origin (HRW 2002:2). The local population, urged now to kill any Rwandans, now to kill any enemies of the mutiny, ended up killing six civilians, including a four-year-old child (HRW 2002:9).

RCD-Goma forces quickly suppressed the revolt, however, and enacted harsh reprisals directed mostly against civilians. After RCD-Goma forces swiftly regained control of the radio station, they banned all civil society organisations and then let their soldiers loose on suspected hotbeds of anti-RCD-Goma sentiment. From 14 to 15 May, soldiers killed over 180 people, beat and raped others, and looted several homes. Suspected civilian sympathisers of the mutiny were shot on sight or were carried to a bridge on the outskirts of the city, where they were often bound, shot and dumped into the Tshopo River (IRIN 2002a; HRW 2002:11–17).
For its part, MONUC’s forces in Kisangani, numbering some 1 000 Blue Helmets and dozens of military observers, were well aware of the violence but did not react forcefully. They had witnessed two planeloads of RCD-Goma soldiers arrive at the airport; they observed gunfire during the rampage in the neighbourhoods on 14 May; and one international aid worker (as well as numerous Congolese) implored them to intervene in the situation (HRW 2002:23; UNSC 2002a:2). Apparently unwilling to risk UN lives to curb the violence, MONUC’s deputy force commander, who was present during the two days of attacks, requested meetings with RCD-Goma (UNSC 2002a:2). Only when most of the bloodshed had subsided, though, did the meeting take place, resulting in the protection of seven civilians and negotiations for the release of two missionaries. But these achievements paled in comparison to the loss of life and destruction the UN could have averted or at least mitigated.

In MONUC’s defence, the then Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Amos Ngongi, explained that ‘MONUC did what it could at the time … MONUC was not created to ensure the security of the population’ (IRIN 2002b). The statement revealed an apparent confusion over the interpretation of the ‘civilian protection’ clause, first inserted into the MONUC’s mandate two years earlier. Even as the subsequent MONUC mandate reaffirmed the mission’s mandate to protect civilians under imminent threat, ‘as [MONUC] deems within its capabilities’ (UNSC 2002b:2), it still claimed justifiably to be hamstrung by inadequate resources, training, and rules of engagement allowing for such protective action (UNSC 2002a:11).

By the time of the 2002 Kisangani massacre, UN headquarters personnel were aware of MONUC’s shortcomings in protecting civilians, even if they might not have envisioned the exact implications of an overambitious mandate and undermanned peace efforts. As early as 2001, when the UN had already explicitly stipulated civilian protection in its mandate for MONUC, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guéhenno (2002a:78), trenchantly wrote:

> The recommended force size of over 6,000 troops is far too small to present a credible military deterrent, if challenged, while it is perhaps too large to be perceived as a symbolic presence. The risks are tremendous. We are taking a gamble.

The reports of the events in Kisangani apparently led to the first discussions in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) on the meaning of civilian protection, the peacekeepers’ rules of engagement, and the ability for the peacekeepers to intervene in such conditions (Holt & Berkman 2006:160).

This inauspicious beginning contrasted sharply with the stern words of high-level reports and ‘lessons learned’ from the missions of the 1990s. As noted in the Brahimi
Report (UN 2000), one of the key areas that needed to improve in UN peacekeeping operations was that peacekeeping had to possess the capacity to carry out their mandate. Eight years earlier, in fact, Boutros Boutros-Ghali had highlighted the problematic gap between mission mandate and capacity to support it. In *An agenda for peace* (1992), he stated:

> A chasm has developed between the tasks entrusted to this Organisation and the financial means provided to it. The truth of the matter is that our vision cannot really extend to the prospect opening before us as long as our financing remains myopic.

### 2003: Ituri

Official rhetoric, however, did not translate into action and changes on the ground proved to be a stronger force for change. One signal event was the pull-out of several thousand Ugandan troops from Orientale Province, in the resource-rich northeast of the country. As Human Rights Watch reported at the time (HRW 2001), Uganda had been playing the role of both arsonist and fire-fighter in the province’s Ituri district, where conflicts involving ethnicity, property rights, and resources eventually left upwards of 60 000 people dead. After negotiations with the government of Uganda and the publication of several UN expert reports revealing Uganda’s role in exploiting the DRC’s natural resources, Uganda orchestrated a speedy withdrawal from the area by 2003.

The effect of Uganda’s withdrawal was disastrous for Ituri. The feuding between the Hema and Lendu ethnic groups grew worse as no credible third force remained to contain the violence that their respective politico-military organisations fuelled. The UN had only ten military observers in the region in 2002 and little solid intelligence even though it had known since 2001 that the situation was ‘highly explosive’ (Roessler & Prendergast 2006:279). By the time of Uganda’s exit, 712 Uruguayan peacekeepers trained for guard duty had arrived in Bunia, the district capital of Ituri and the focus of much fighting (Holt & Berkman 2006:160; Roessler & Prendergast 2006:281). The peacekeepers’ presence mattered little, for within a two-week period in May, the Hema-based *Union des patriotes congolais* (UPC) recaptured Bunia and over 400 people were killed in a spate of retaliatory killings.

The task of stabilising the area, however, went not to the UN but to the European Union (EU). In response to a request from the UN Secretary-General, the EU’s Interim Emergency Multinational Force (IEMF) arrived in Ituri in June 2003 with 1 400 troops and a Chapter VII mandate lasting through August to bring stability to Bunia. As Resolution 1484 (2003) stated, IEMF was to stabilise the city and ‘if the situation
requires it, to contribute to the safety of the civilian population’ (UNSC 2003a:2) The strategy was to help bring order to the area until MONUC troops were prepared to establish security there but, in reality, EU forces appeared to do more than that. Whereas MONUC lacked the capacity and the political will to address the conflicts in Kisangani and Ituri, the EU force appeared to have set the example for carrying out a true Chapter VII operation in the DRC. The EU forces comprised about 100 French and 70 to 80 Swedish Special Forces, helicopters, armoured vehicles, and the ability to call on French fighter aircraft in Uganda (Holt & Berkman 2006:170).

Benefiting from such equipment as well as the use of satellites for monitoring and cellular phone interception, Operation Artemis (as the IEMF mission was called) produced quick results. During the three-month mandate, it conducted cordon-and-search operations and vehicle patrols throughout the region, with robust rules of engagement to return fire. The troops also conducted several operations to stem the flow of small arms and light weapons that were fuelling the conflict. These included monitoring of airstrips, and a disarmament campaign that sought to collect weapons from all sectors of society in the district capital. Perhaps more importantly, it also had the political will to use force when needed, something for which MONUC’s troop-contributing countries were loath to provide. Operation Artemis, however, was much more limited in scope than was MONUC: its mandate was limited to the northwest area of Ituri District, it lasted for three months, and it benefited from the groundwork that MONUC had already laid.

Even subsequently, the mandate of MONUC did not, on face value, provide for a stronger mandate to protect civilians. Whereas Resolution 1291 (2000) called on MONUC to take ‘necessary action’ to protect civilians under threat of imminent violence in deployment areas of its ‘infantry battalions’ (UNSC 2000:4), Resolution 1493 (2003) authorised MONUC to ‘take the necessary measures’ to do the same thing but within the deployment areas of its ‘armed forces’ (UNSC 2003b:5). These were hardly profound changes.

The more significant development for civilian protection, however, was in increased troop and budget levels. The new mandate authorised the deployment of a brigade-size force (known as the Ituri Brigade) to replace the EU force by mid-August (UNSC 2003b:5). By the end of the year, MONUC’s troop ceiling reached 10 800, including a 4 800-strong replacement force in Ituri (Holt & Berkman 2006:162; UNSC 2004a:21). To meet the increased demand, MONUC’s 2003–2004 annual budget increased by 86 per cent to US$481.7 million. Peacekeeping troops alone increased nearly three and half times since 2001–2002 and now constituted nearly a quarter of all expenditures (Roessler & Prendergast 2006:258). In short, this meant that the chasm between mandate and capacity was narrowing, thereby bestowing on the mission the means to fulfil its civilian protection clause.
2004: Bukavu

It was ironic, then, that one of the most conspicuous failures to protect civilians occurred after these increases in force strength and budget in the provincial capital of Bukavu when a largely irregular group of between 1 000 and 1 500 soldiers entered the town without any effective opposition from the UN mission or the Congolese.

The occupation of Bukavu was the result of a festering dispute between the Congolese president, Joseph Kabila, and Azarias Ruberwa, the leader of a main opposition group, RCD-Goma, which had spread to their loyal troops in South Kivu. In February 2004, tensions between Congolese troops loyal to the president and supporters of RCD-Goma erupted into armed clashes, forcing the Congolese commander to flee and enabling the dissident RCD-Goma soldiers to consolidate a separate military cabal (ICG 2005:5–6). By late May, the renegade soldiers eventually returned to Bukavu under the pretence that their ethnic kin, the Banyamulenge, were facing genocide. Over the next week, the rebels laid siege to the town, burning the main market, raping and pillaging and causing more than 2 000 civilians to flee to the MONUC compound (ICG 2005:6).

The UN seemed to have missed the lesson that the failed responses in Kisangani in 2002 and Bunia in 2003 should have taught. Despite a maximum of 1 004 troops during the occupation and access to Mi-25 attack helicopters and heavy weaponry, the UN armed forces retreated in the face of rebel troops whose firepower was limited mainly to small arms and some heavy weaponry. The peacekeepers in Bukavu failed to intercept the rebel troops as they approached Bukavu. The UN force commander in charge of Bukavu ordered Uruguayan troops to defend the airport – with force, if necessary – but the Uruguayan commanders abandoned the post to the rebel troops without any resistance (Roessler & Prendergast 2006:289). Likewise, Uruguayan peacekeepers put up no resistance when rebel soldiers who were being guarded in a UN cantonment broke out fully armed. Instead, UN peacekeepers retreated to defend a small buffer zone that included MONUC’s Bukavu headquarters and some residential streets occupied mainly by expatriates.

The failure to protect the local population in Bukavu demonstrated that the mission fell far short of protecting civilians and still suffered from conflicting interpretations of its role. An assessment of the Bukavu crisis later revealed that UN leadership in Kinshasa and New York were caught unawares despite the arms build-up and violent clashes in the preceding months. A disconnect between the headquarters and the field created a confused response to the situation.

The fumbled response to the siege also reflected the confusion over the impartial-versus-neutral role peacekeepers play. Events of the 1990s made real the possibility that neutrality to all parties could lead to disastrous results, such as the 1995 Srebrenica
massacre of over 8 000 civilians which met with little UN resistance. In the wake of these crises, Secretary-General Annan began pushing for peacekeepers to favour impartiality. One of the first public statements suggesting this change came at the National Parliament in Kigali, Rwanda, where Secretary-General Annan declared: ‘In the face of genocide, there can be no standing aside, no looking away, no neutrality – there are perpetrators and there are victims; there is evil and there is evil’s harvest’ (UN 1998:1) The distinction between neutrality and impartiality seemed to have had little effect in decision-making during the Bukavu crisis, though. While some claimed that the UN desk officers, Secretary-General Annan and UN top leadership had begun to favour impartiality, MONUC’s leadership was fossilised in its response fearing to go against one of the rebel troops, whose allegiances were unclear during the invasion (Donald 2002:21, 23–25, 34; Roessler & Prendergast 2006:290–291). Indeed, UN statements immediately after the crisis were reminiscent of the UN attitude in the mid-1990s. Referring to the Bukavu crisis, UN spokesperson Fred Eckhard remarked: ‘Here, the peace agreement has been violently breached. It’s for the parties to sort out’ (Price 2004).


This exculpatory excuse notwithstanding, the Bukavu crisis accelerated the realignment of the mission initiated by the 2003 Ituri crisis and subsequent resolutions reflected this shift. Resolution 1565 (2004), passed in October 2004, requested MONUC to ‘use all necessary means, within its capacity and in the areas where its units are deployed’ to build confidence and ‘discourage violence’. Going even further, it called on the UN troops to help Congolese soldiers disarm foreign armed combatants (UNSC 2004b:2–3). Six months later, Resolution 1592 (2005) stated explicitly that ‘all necessary means’ meant that the mission ‘may use cordon and search tactics to prevent attacks on civilians and disrupt the military capability of illegal armed groups that continue to use violence in those areas’ (UNSC 2005:3). The Security Council also provided 5 900 additional troops (though far less than the number requested) and increased its budget to nearly US$1 billion (Roessler & Prendergast 2006:258, 294–295).

In the period after the Bukavu crisis, MONUC capacities and operations were transformed. The more combat-ready Pakistani and Indian peacekeepers replaced the Uruguayans in North and South Kivu and a major-general, Patrick Cammaert, was nominated to command the entire eastern division of peacekeepers. The new commander of the eastern division differed from past commanders in his willingness to use force, a disposition most certainly facilitated by the more expansive rules of engagement for the incoming troops. A major-general in the Dutch military, which had previously caught the world’s attention with its inaction at Srebrenica, Patrick Cammaert stressed that ‘We are not neutral but impartial. So, if you should react, you must do it. To keep the peace, you should sometimes impose it’ (Cammaert 2007).
Operations changed as early as November 2004, when MONUC increased its presence in South Kivu’s Walungu Territory, where an assortment of mostly Hutu bandits with roots in the Rwandan genocide had been terrorising the population since at least June 2004. These bandits regularly entered villages at night, usually hacking at civilian resisters and taking several hostages, whose release depended on the payment of exorbitant ransoms that crippled the poor village economies. From June 2004 through April 2005, MONUC’s human rights special investigations unit estimated that civilians suffered 1 700 human rights abuses, including 177 summary executions, and gathered over US$25 000 in ransom money (Radio Okapi 2005).

The rebels’ presence raised security concerns for the Rwandan government which had been claiming the right to invade DRC again in order to eliminate the 8 000–10 000 Hutu rebels, many of whom had participated in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Although many disputed the level of threat this group posed to Rwanda, especially since its last major offensive against Rwanda in 2001 was a clear defeat, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador William Swing (USA), deemed them and other foreign armed groups the largest threat to peace and stability in the DRC.6

In response to the rebels’ attacks on civilians, peacekeepers began conducting more night patrols and helping train Congolese troops in the territory. As the attacks against the population continued, however, operations increased. By March 2005, Pakistani troops organised a village alert system to warn peacekeepers of an imminent attack. When confrontations did occur, Pakistani troops quickly arrived at the scene to intercept the perpetrators and, on occasion, fired on them. By April and May, Blue Helmets expanded their civilian protection operation by undertaking cordon-and-search operations and expanding the perimeter of the safe area. During that period, MONUC troops managed to thwart six out of eight attacks against the civilian population (Burgard 2005), even though incidents started cropping up in other parts of the territory.7 Undeterred, the UN stepped up its initiatives by July with Operation Falcon Sweep, an aggressive campaign to persuade Hutu rebels in Walungu and surrounding territories to disarm and return to Rwanda. After the rebels refused to do so voluntarily, Congolese and UN troops, backed up by MONUC’s Guatemalan special forces, entered and burned six of their camps (Agence France-Presse 2005).

Farther north in Ituri, MONUC peacekeepers and Congolese military were conducting even more aggressive operations. In response to more numerous patrols and cordon-and-search operations, Ituri militants ambushed a Bangladeshi patrol and killed nine peacekeepers, the largest single-day casualty of MONUC personnel (Lambert 2006). A few days later, the Ituri Brigade stormed the stronghold of the militia group implicated in the ambush, killing over 50 of its men (IRIN 2005c). Swing shortly afterward issued a two-week ultimatum to all Ituri rebel groups to disarm by April or else be forcibly disarmed by the Congolese government forces with MONUC support (IRIN
2005b). Upon expiration of the ultimatum, UN forces arrested the leaders of the two most powerful rebel groups in the area and conducted forced disarmament initiatives throughout the year and into 2006.

These new operations occasionally succeeded in providing greater protection for civilians, yet they also put civilians at greater risk in two respects. First, by pressuring armed groups living within or near civilian communities, there was a constant threat that the enemy would retaliate against civilians. In response to the increased operations in Walungu, for example, Hutu rebels hacked 18 villagers to death, mutilating 11 others and taking about 50 as hostages in May 2005 (IRIN 2005a). The message was clear: if you attack us, it will be the civilians who pay. One month later, civilians took to the streets in Bukavu to protest against operations of MONUC and the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) in the area (MISNA 2005). In an eerily similar attack almost exactly two years later, bandits from the same suspected group hacked to death 18 villagers (12 of whom were children) and took another 50 hostages in the Kaniola area, which had been a focal point for MONUC civilian protection just two years earlier (Isango 2007). Although notes left at the scene justified portrayed the massacre as retribution for recent Congolese army operations against the bandit group, the local villagers focused their anger on MONUC, which had recently scaled down its civilian protection measures in the area (Bavier 2007).

Second, MONUC’s partner in many of its operations, the Congolese national army, was sometimes a greater perpetrator of civilian abuses than the armed groups. As various human rights reports noted, Congolese soldiers working jointly with UN Blue Helmets were often inflicting more damage on the local population than did the rebels. These same civilians who had managed to coexist with Hutu rebels for years now feared their putative saviours more than their supposed enemies. During joint MONUC-FARDC operations in July and August 2005, villagers began taking refuge in the forest in reaction to FARDC’s predatory presence. According to witnesses, FARDC systematically pillaged homes and abused citizens under the pretext of hunting for rebels. In Luhwinja, south of Walungu, 20 400 civilians fled their homes out of fear of the newly arrived Congolese troops in July 2005. During anti-militia operations in Ituri in 2005-2006, FARDC abuses were especially corrosive to MONUC’s image and local support. In March 2006, MONUC’s human rights division stated that Congolese soldiers committed most reported abuses, including a significant number in Ituri during anti-militia operations (MONUC 2006) and MONUC officials privately admitted that the militias in Ituri were gaining strength because of FARDC’s bungling of joint operations.

**Conclusion**

MONUC’s approach to civilian protection exposes both the problems of inaction and the pitfalls of action in carrying out a mandate to protect civilians. In its more passive
phase – from 2000 to 2004\(^{10}\) – the mission’s inability to take forceful measures to protect civilians facing assault undermined the very notion of civilian protection. In Kisangani, MONUC stayed put as soldiers rampaged through the streets of civilian neighbourhoods and in Bukavu, MONUC troops retreated to a small perimeter around their headquarters while renegade soldiers looted homes and abused the local population. UN officials claimed with some justification that the mission lacked the resources to undertake even minimal measures to protect civilians, but that cannot explain the hasty retreat in Bukavu, where Blue Helmets outnumbered renegade troops and the deputy commander was prepared to use force.

From 2005 to the present, MONUC’s mandate to protect civilians remained essentially the same, even though its operations changed considerably. Pakistani and Indian peacekeepers in North and South Kivu executed more ingenious, aggressive operations against armed groups and occasionally devised alert systems to warn civilians of imminent attacks. In Ituri, peacekeepers operating jointly with the Congolese army rooted out rebels embedded in the villages. In some places, more robust operations did bring security to the civilian population but they also exposed villagers to retaliatory attacks, and to predatory actions by the underpaid Congolese army.

These two different periods in MONUC’s history reveal that the civilian protection will have to be approached more prudently than originally envisioned in the responsibility to protect (ICISS 2001). While many UN missions today have eschewed the more passive approach that characterised MONUC’s first years, more robust operations also have unintended consequences and, in fact, can put civilians in greater danger than before. With civilian protection clauses inserted in UN mandates for missions in Liberia, Haiti, Côte d’Ivoire and South Sudan, among others, the importance of civilian protection will not diminish in future missions. On the contrary, if recent operations in DRC and Haiti are any indication, more muscular operations will continue. But as MONUC operations since 2005 and the first UN mission operations in Congo in the 1960s demonstrate, a reliance on force will not meet the challenge to protect civilians. Incorporating the lessons learned from its recent peace operations, UN missions should pursue a more deliberate and coordinated combination of political overtures with forceful operations. In such complex environments, neither the carrot nor the stick can function alone.

Notes

1 From 1971 to 1997, the territory of the DRC was called Zaire. From independence in 1960 to 1971, it was called Congo (Leopoldville).
2 The UN first entered Congo in 1960 to 1964 in the United Nations Organisation Mission in the Congo (ONUC), which was essentially an enforcement mission.
3 Holbrooke also stated that the ‘Phase II’ deployment would only occur in a more stable environment and that an escalation to a ‘Phase III’ mission, which would entail demobilisation and disarmament, would first receive congressional notification (HIRC 2000:73–74).

4 Resolution 1270 (1999) of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) called for civilian protection under imminent threat of physical violence ‘within its capabilities and areas of deployment’ (UNSC 1999:3).

5 Neutrality means behaviour that does not provide a political or military advantage to any side in a conflict, whereas impartiality can mean the provision of help to those in need, regardless of whether it favours one side or the other.

6 It can be argued that it was the presence of similar Hutu rebel groups that served as the justification for the start of the 1998 Congolese civil war.

7 Interview with civilian population in Walungu Territory, DRC, on 10–13 May 2005.

8 Interview with humanitarian worker at Bukavu, DRC, on 8 August 2005.

9 Interview with UN official at Bunia, DRC, on 18 March 2006.

10 This excludes 1999, the first year of the mission, since Resolutions 1234, 1258, 1273, and 1279 dating from that period made no mention of civilian protection.

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Pursuing sustainable peace through post-conflict peacebuilding: The case of Sierra Leone

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Many of the world’s poorest states have experienced violent conflict in the past decades and it is today widely accepted that armed conflicts require sustained efforts that address not only the military, but also the political, humanitarian, economic and social dimensions of conflicts. For some years there has been a growing international concern with and emphasis on peacebuilding programming in the area of conflict resolution and peacekeeping. In Sierra Leone, a country that was engulfed in a brutal civil war for more than ten years, peace was hard won – a peace that would not have been possible without the presence and active post-conflict assistance of the United Nations (UN). However, Sierra Leone remains in a precarious state, being one of the poorest countries in the world, and needs the commitment of the international community in ongoing post-conflict peacebuilding to sustain its delicate peace. This article examines the challenges, extent and achievements of peacebuilding programming in Sierra Leone, and assesses the prospects for sustainable peace in this once war-torn West African state.

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Introduction

Following the deployment of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in 1997 and the United Nations Observer Mission to Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) in 1998, the United Nations (UN) deployed the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 1999 in the wake of the devastating civil war in that country, which left 75,000 people dead and many more maimed. The conflict in Sierra Leone shocked the international community with its images of drugged-up youngsters severing the arms, legs and body parts of civilians. Television journalists capturing the presence of vultures in the capital Freetown, ready to scavenge on dead human flesh, further imposed the brutality of the war on international observers and outsiders. Some six years later, in November 2005, UNAMSIL hosted an International Music Festival to mark what has been described as ‘the end of the successful UN mission in West Africa’, which brought peace and stability to a country that had been engulfed in one of the most brutal wars in the international community in the past decade (Bell 2005:1). Indeed, peace in Sierra Leone was hard won and is perceived by some as a success story for the UN peacekeeping system.

The importance of Sierra Leone to the UN is evident from the fact that in 2004 some 13,000 UN peacekeepers were deployed in Sierra Leone, which has a population of 5.7 million, while only about 10,000 peacekeepers were deployed in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), with a population ten times as large (Ottoway et al 2004:1) and several times larger in territorial expanse. For some observers UNAMSIL signalled the ‘UN’s return to Africa’ after the major (Western) powers ‘retreated’ from African peacekeeping after the twin failures of Somalia and Rwanda in the early 1990s. The mission’s achievements have been numerous and it shepherded the peace process to regularise much of the once war-ravaged country’s diamond mining industry which had fuelled the conflict (Bell 2005:1–2).

On 12 October 2006, Solomon Berewa, Vice-President of Sierra Leone, stated in an address to the UN Peacebuilding Commission in New York that ‘there is now peace in the country, democratic elections have already been held with success, and all that the country should now do is to get on with the normal business of development’ (Berewa 2006). However, he also cautioned that ‘our success as a viable state, pursuing development that is sustainable, is in jeopardy unless we can tackle immediately, certain obstacles in our path which, if not removed, may hinder our progress towards long term peace and stability’ (Berewa 2006). In fact, he alluded to certain areas that are often ignored, areas that constitute impediments to Sierra Leone’s development agenda and that may threaten peace and stability in the country. It is alarming that Sierra Leone remains one of the world’s poorest countries with about 70 per cent of its population still subsisting on less than a dollar a day, whilst 70 per cent remain illiterate (Bell 2005:2).
Of further relevance is that extensive research undertaken over a considerable period suggests that about half of all peace agreements fail in the first five years of their conclusion. This can often be blamed on the protagonists in conflicts, because they frequently agree to peace agreements for tactical reasons without being firmly committed to a long-term peace process (De Coning 2004:42). Therefore, for some years there have been a growing concern with and emphasis on the necessity of linking security and development to achieve meaningful and sustainable peace, and pursuing this by means of special peacebuilding measures.

In view of the above, this article examines the challenges, extent and achievements of post-conflict peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, and assesses the prospects for sustainable peace in this once war-torn West African state.

**Conceptualising peacebuilding**

Through *An agenda for peace*, introduced in 1992 by the then UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the concept of peacebuilding gained widespread acceptance in academic and political circles. According to the Secretary-General, peacebuilding consisted of ‘sustained, co-operative work to deal with underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems’ (UN Secretary-General 1992). However, Haugerudbraaten (1998:1) argues that the measures listed in *An agenda for peace*, namely disarming, restoring order, destroying weapons, repatriating refugees, training security forces, monitoring elections, advancing the protection of human rights, reforming institutions and promoting political participation, do not carry the notion of being sustained efforts that address the underlying or root causes of conflicts. A host of other questions and issues were also raised as a matter of discourse and ongoing discussion on peacebuilding as a notion.

After considerable debate and disagreement on the exact meaning of peacebuilding, the Secretary-General modified his position in the 1995 *Supplement to an agenda for peace* and suggested that peacebuilding could also be preventive (UN Secretary-General 1995). This coincides with a somewhat broader view that peacebuilding is essentially about removing or weakening factors that breed or sustain conflict, and reinforcing factors that build positive relations and sustain peace (Hitchcock 2004:38). Hence it could be stated that peacebuilding has evolved from a strictly post-conflict undertaking to a concept with a broader meaning, and the general consensus would seem that peacebuilding efforts should (ideally speaking) already be attempted during the earliest indication of tension in a situation of potential conflict. Against this background, Tschirgi (2003:1) points out that the term ‘peacebuilding’ was gradually expanded to refer to integrated approaches to address violent conflict at different phases of the conflict cycle. As far as this article is concerned, the view is taken that the purpose of peacebuilding is to avoid a return to conflict and that in some cases it may require ambitious long-term nation-building efforts by international actors.
The challenge for the UN – as the pre-eminent organisation responsible for international peace and security – was how to transform the short-term presence of peacekeepers into efforts aimed at societal transformation. Efforts aimed at building peace, as opposed to providing security, brought security thinking and practice into closer alignment with development policy (Sending 2004:5). From an international or macro perspective, the elaborate doctrines, strategies and institutions developed during the Cold War to deal with issues of international peace and security were inadequate for dealing with conflicts in the ‘new’ era (Tschirgi 2003:1).

Against this background, a range of international reforms throughout the international system have taken place to facilitate peacebuilding endeavours. There were numerous proposals for a fundamental overhaul of the UN system, inter alia by the 2000 Report of the Panel of UN Peacekeeping Operations (otherwise known as the Brahimi Report). Furthermore, major aid agencies established conflict prevention and peacebuilding units (Tschirgi 2003:4–5). Today, a great deal of attention is focused on the need for more and better coordination among existing bureaucratic organisations, such as the UN’s Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), or between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nation’s Children’s Fund (UNICEF), on the one hand, and the DPA and DPKO, on the other. By its own account, the UNDP’s work is now central to post-conflict peacebuilding. Areas in the nexus of peace and security where, for instance, the UNDP is most active are the demobilisation of former combatants, comprehensive mine action, sustainable return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the restoration of governance institutions to support the rule of law and bringing about just and democratic societies (UNDP 2004:12). This implies that the UNDP, as the UN’s global development network that is facilitating and advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life and eradicate poverty (UNDP 2007a:1), realised the importance of addressing the proximate and root causes of contemporary conflicts. In a post-conflict context, this means the consolidation and promotion of peace and the building of trust in the aftermath of a conflict to prevent a relapse into conflict or war.

In sum, lying at the nexus of development and security, peacebuilding requires a readiness to make a difference on the ground in preventing conflicts or establishing the conditions for a return to sustainable peace. It also relates to integrated approaches to address violent conflict at different phases of the conflict cycle.

The question arises as to what confronts the peacebuilding agenda on the African continent. Furthermore, to what extent have peacebuilding endeavours been undertaken in conflict-ridden African states? These questions will be explored in the section below with specific reference to post-conflict peacebuilding in Sierra Leone.
The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) undertook various initiatives aimed at a peaceful settlement in Sierra Leone – including the deployment of peacekeepers in 1997. Initially, this was done with a view to reinstating a democratically elected government in Freetown, which had been toppled in May 1997. In June 1998, the UN Security Council decided to establish the United Nations Observer Mission to Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) for an initial period of six months. The mission had the task of monitoring and facilitating efforts to disarm the combatants and restructure Sierra Leone’s security forces. Unarmed UN teams under the protection of ECOMOG documented reports of ongoing atrocities and human rights abuses (UNDPKO 2001a:1). But UNOMSIL was never more than a ‘lame duck’ UN presence alongside ECOMOG and no meaningful progress could be made towards the UNOMSIL mandate in a highly unstable security environment. In these circumstances, the rebels began a second offensive to retake Freetown and managed to overrun most of the city towards the end of 1998. Once more this resulted in a toppling of a civilian government in Freetown. ECOMOG struck back and again installed a civilian government, although thousands of rebels were reportedly still hiding out in the countryside. The UN Security Council commended ECOMOG on its role in supporting the restoration of peace and security in Sierra Leone. However, ECOMOG was unable to stamp its authority on the hinterland beyond Freetown and rebels continued to terrorise and brutalise the population (Malan 2000:5–6).

On 22 October 1999, the Security Council decided to terminate UNOMSIL and to establish UNAMSIL, a much larger mission with a maximum strength of 6 000 military personnel, including 260 military observers. UNAMSIL was given the task of assisting the government and rebels in carrying out the provisions of the Lomé agreement (UNDPKO 2001a:2). According to a UN Security Council Resolution of February 2000 (a revised version of Resolution 1270 of 22 October 1999) UNAMSIL was given the following mandate (UNDPKO 2001b:1):

- To provide security at key locations and government buildings, particularly in Freetown, important intersections and major airports
- To facilitate the free flow of people, goods and humanitarian assistance along specified thoroughfares
- To provide security in and at all sites of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes
- To co-ordinate with and assist the Sierra Leone law enforcement authorities in the discharge of their responsibilities
To safeguard weapons, ammunition and other military equipment collected from ex-combatants and to assist in their subsequent disposal or destruction.

In accordance with its mandate, UNAMSIL was given the task of helping to disarm an estimated 45,000 former combatants. This was a mammoth task since only 6,000 troops were deployed into the theatre, although 11,000 troops were mandated by the Security Council on 7 February 2000. By May 2000 it was reported that 16,000 former combatants had been disarmed, but an estimated 28,000 continued to roam the countryside (Adeyemi 2000:2).

In a letter to the Security Council dated 7 March 2000 UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated that progress in the peace process had been slow. He made specific mention of little progress in disarmament in the northern and eastern parts of the country and reported that the security situation generally ‘remained tense and volatile’. He also referred to several incidents involving UNAMSIL and combatants, and elements from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) having seized a large number of weapons, ammunition and vehicles from a UNAMSIL contingent (UN Secretary-General 2000:5). As the UN deployed further to reinforce peace in Sierra Leone, RUF rebels and renegade government troops continued to disrupt the peace process, carrying out a number of attacks on UN personnel (Adeyemi 2000:2).

After a disastrous encounter with the RUF in May 2000, when the UN suffered one of its worst setbacks in the history of UN peacekeeping, the UN made significant strides towards achieving its goals in Sierra Leone. Having moved speedily to increase the capacity of its mission after observers and critics hammered UNAMSIL severely for its role and profile, the UN forces in Sierra Leone appeared to be better organised and equipped. To this end, UNAMSIL was able to play a meaningful role in helping Sierra Leone’s war-ravaged population move towards an election process. In his report of 14 March 2002, the Secretary-General reported the following with regard to the peace process (UN Secretary-General 2002:2–5):

- The overall security situation in Sierra Leone was generally stable
- The disarmament process had progressed well with a total of 47,076 combatants disarmed between 18 May 2001 and 17 January 2002
- Some 1,723 ex-combatants had been selected for reintegration into the Sierra Leonean army
- Substantial progress had been made in preparing for presidential and parliamentary elections
- Political parties could continue to prepare for the scheduled elections
The Secretary-General furthermore reported that the disarmament process and the deployment of UNAMSIL throughout the country had created a relatively more secure environment, which provided the opportunity for Sierra Leone to hold free, fair and credible elections, and to concentrate on national reconciliation and recovery, as well as building sustainable institutions. He also mentioned that the international community invested heavily in Sierra Leone, both politically and financially (UN Secretary-General 2002:11–12).

Against this background, the general elections of 14 May 2002 represented a significant step forward in Sierra Leone’s elusive search for peace and democracy. Though the elections did not result in a change of government, the participation of the RUF signalled a commitment to both peace and the democratisation process. One of the remarkable features of the 2002 elections was the level of public engagement and the peaceful nature of the campaign process (Jalloh 2002:59, 61).

Another remarkable or most outstanding feature – especially significant from a peacebuilding perspective – was the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) under the Lomé Peace Agreement of 1999 between Sierra Leone’s government and the RUF. The TRC, clearly meant to be a nation-building project, was intended to address impunity, to break the cycle of violence, to provide a forum for both victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to tell their story, and to obtain a clear picture of the past in order to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation. Modelled on similar past commissions in Chile, Guatemala and South Africa, the TRC intended to investigate the causes, nature and extent of human rights violations that occurred in the country, help restore the human dignity of victims, and promote national reconciliation. Apart from fostering national reconciliation through the TRC, it was also decided to establish a Special UN Court to prosecute persons who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law in Sierra Leone since 30 November 1996. This means that the tribunal have power to prosecute those who committed crimes against civilians, including murder, torture and rape, as well as those who committed or ordered the commission of serious violations against the Geneva Convention (IRIN 2002:2–3). In what has been described as ‘welcoming news’ and ‘momentous events in Africa’ (Aboagye 2006:1), Charles Taylor, the former president of neighbouring Liberia who backed the RUF insurgency by providing arms and training to the RUF in exchange for diamonds, was arrested and on 3 March 2007 charged by the UN’s Special Court for Sierra Leone with crimes against humanity, violations of the Geneva Convention and other serious violations of international humanitarian law (Special Court for Sierra Leone 2007:1).

Other issues that received attention in the peacebuilding process relate to programmes in the fields of humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons, the consolidation of civil authority, the promotion of human rights and good governance, and also the restoration of the legal system. Without going into much detail, it should be noted that considerable amounts were invested and practical aid provided by the
European Union, and the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States. For instance, US total humanitarian and emergency contribution in the fiscal year 2002, including grants to the World Food Programme and other aid agencies, assistance to refugees, programmes to combat HIV/Aids, reintegration of combatants and development programmes, amounted to US$56 million (HRW 2003:7–9).

Approximately five years after its creation, UNAMSIL approached the end of its mandate in December 2004. Amongst other successes, UNAMSIL managed to disarm some 75 000 former combatants, facilitated significant improvement to infrastructure, expanded state authority, and almost rebuilt the national police to the target of 9 500 officials. Although UNAMSIL enjoyed considerable success, certain challenges remained. Low levels of public confidence in the capabilities of the police and armed forces, especially, posed serious security challenges. However, it was generally felt that should the peace process – and post-conflict peacebuilding – prove to be successful, it would represent a major success in international peacekeeping in one of Africa’s most conflict-ridden states (Molukanele et al 2004:42–43).

All in all, it could be said that the post-conflict peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone clearly involved a human security approach, specifically based on a liberty/rights and rule of law dimension; a freedom from fear/safety of people’s dimension; and a freedom from want/equity and social justice dimension. Moreover, it involved a willingness to make a difference on the ground in preventing conflicts or establishing the basic conditions for making sustainable security and development possible. The following section expands on this in more detail.

Sierra Leone in a contemporary context

It has already been said that Sierra Leone remains one of the world’s poorest countries. An estimated 26 per cent of the population live in extreme poverty, while 70 per cent live on less that US$1 per day. Today, most households live in substandard shelters and only 59 per cent of the population have access to safe drinking water. This is exacerbated by high unemployment and deteriorating health conditions with a growing incidence in HIV/Aids, typhoid, malaria and tuberculosis. These figures are indeed reason for serious concern as the relation between economics and violent armed conflict is clear from the following (Solomon 2006:221):

- Since the mid-1980s, 15 of the world’s 20 poorest countries have experienced violent conflict
- Half of the world’s low-income countries are either engaged in conflict or are in the process of transition to conflict
Almost every low-income country at least shares a border with a country in conflict, if not embroiled in its own conflict.

In the 1990s, 70 million of the world’s poor were displaced from their homes as a result of conflict. In Africa alone, one third of its countries have produced refugees.

Although much remains to be done to further the peace process in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL’s achievements in the field of post-conflict peacebuilding have certainly been numerous and noteworthy, ranging from disarming and demobilising over 75,000 combatants, including some 6,000 child soldiers, who were reintegrated back into society (UNAMSIL DDR Coordination Section 2003:5), to overseeing the May 2002 democratic election process. It also facilitated the regulation of much of the diamond mining industry in a relatively short time. Hence official diamond trade grew from US$10 million in 2000 to about US$130 million in 2004 (Bell 2005:2).

Having said this, much of any post-conflict peace building depends on a successful process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR). In the case of Sierra Leone the DDR process was to be implemented by the UN and various other role-players, including the government of Sierra Leone with the support of ECOWAS and the UNDP. The National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR) was established to act on behalf of the government, while the World Bank was tasked with marshalling resources to fund the process. DDR was carried out in three phases as a comprehensive and progressive operation to remove arms from communities and integrating ex-combatants into their communities (UNAMSIL DDR Coordination Section 2003:5).

Yet, Sierra Leone remains in a precarious state and it needs the international community to overcome further challenges in dealing with its delicate peace. In the words of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone (cited in Bell 2005): ‘The country is fragile. We can’t continue with the peacekeeping. We need peacebuilding. My appeal is that the country is ready for the next phase of development.’ This said, the possibility that the two million unemployed youth in Sierra Leone, many of whom are former combatants, may take up arms again to fight, is a real one. In the early days of the conflict the youth were unemployed or living in precarious economic circumstances. They were motivated by the promise of both financial compensation and the opportunity to loot. Mismanagement of natural resources is another potential source of conflict. According to estimates, more than 50 per cent of the lucrative diamond mining industry remains unlicensed and considerable illegal smuggling is still the order of the day (Bell 2005:2).

In late August 2005, the Security Council approved the establishment of the UN Integrated Office for Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL). UNIOSIL is mandated to help the
government reinforce human rights by strongly supporting the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals and to conduct free and fair elections in 2007. Furthermore, the mission attempts to sustain the progress achieved as it undertakes the co-ordination of UN efforts to deal with arms and human trafficking, as well as illegal trade in the region. It also provides security for the Special Court of Sierra Leone (Bell 2005:5).

It should also be noted that the generous contributions made by the European Community, Denmark, Ireland, Japan, the UK and the US were key to the peacebuilding process (UN Secretary-General 2007:12). Also, since the end of 2002, the UNDP, like many other role players, focused much of its advocacy and resources on assisting the people of Sierra Leone in addressing the fundamental causes of the conflict. Based on the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Sierra Leone, the UNDP concentrated on three focus areas: democracy, poverty reduction, and peace and development. Within these areas, a mix of interventions are under way that balance immediate needs for development and reconstruction with the longer-term objectives of reform and capacity building to assist the country on its much needed path of sustainable development (UNDP 2007e:1–2). Firstly, democracy as a focus area involves the following (UNDP 2007b:1–2):

- **Democratic governance:** The UNDP provides support to the electoral systems as a contribution to the consolidation to democracy in the country. In practice this means developing the capacity of the National Electoral Commission and the Political Party Registration Commission, among others.

- **Decentralisation and local governance:** UNDP renders support to the decentralisation process following the local elections and reestablishment of local government in 2004. In practice this boils down to the implementation of the Local Government Act of 2004.

- **Public administration reform:** UNDP’s support in this area focuses on supporting efficient, responsive, transparent administration in the public sector.

- **Justice, human rights and security:** This focuses on the security sector and transitional justice reform in a holistic manner to ensure equity, due process, maintenance of public order, enforcement of the rule of law and human rights application.

Secondly, poverty reduction and human development are aimed at assisting the government in fighting chronic and pervasive poverty in the country, as well as at efforts to support an environment conducive to attracting the kind of investment necessary to address poverty and meet specific development goals. Key programmes are aimed at, for instance, ensuring effective aid co-ordination for poverty reduction,
microfinance and micro-enterprise development, and private sector development (UNDP 2007d:1–2).

Thirdly, the focus area of peace and development is meant to give meaning to the need to move from ‘recovery’ to ‘development’. Specific programmes are running in the fields of youth and job creation, community empowerment, community security, and disaster risk management, among others (UNDP 2007c:1–2).

On 12 October 2006, Solomon Berewa, Vice-President of Sierra Leone, reflected on some of the achievements in post-conflict Sierra Leone. It was pointed out that the authority of the state had been restored throughout the country, combatants had been disarmed, one million displaced persons had been resettled, public and social institutions had been re-established, government infrastructure had been rehabilitated and rebuilt, basic services had been provided and businesses had been encouraged to return. Also, the economy had been opened and enjoyed macro-economic stability, and impressive programmes with the Bretton Woods Institutions had boosted the economy to a growth rate of over 7 per cent. At the same time, Berewa outlined two difficult tasks to be addressed in Sierra Leone, namely that of youth development and capacity limitations.

As far as youth development is concerned: Sierra Leone has a young population with over 60 per cent below the age of 35, and almost two million between the ages of 15 and 35 – the majority of whom are unemployed. Obviously, without jobs they are disenchanted, volatile and ready to erupt into violence. In Berewa’s words (2006): ‘[U]nless we can provide hope now, to the growing numbers of young people, they will either become fodder for ruthless and unsuccessful politicians, or resort to crime and other anti-social activities.’ As far as capacity limitations are concerned, he alluded to the point that capacity weaknesses pervade all areas of the economy, and the effects are evident at all levels, especially in the public service. This has a negative effect on sustained levels of economic growth and the delivery of basic services, as well as on the fight against corruption (Berewa 2006).

With regard to the UN Peacebuilding Commission, it was reported on 6 February 2007 to the General Assembly that ‘important achievements have been made to date in restoring peace and stability and promoting post-conflict recovery in Sierra Leone’. In the words of the chairperson of the Country Specific Meetings on Sierra Leone of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (2007):

There can be no denial of the actual and potential contribution that the Peacebuilding Commission can make to the promotion of peace and stability in Sierra Leone. With the continued involvement of all stakeholders – the government of Sierra Leone, the PBC’s [Peacebuilding Commission’s] full membership, the various UN bodies on the ground, NGOs, civil society
and the private sector – and with the continued engagement by the General Assembly and other UN bodies, we will be able to make a difference.

Finally, as much as peacebuilding in Sierra Leone has thus far been commendable, Vice President Berewa’s reminder, issued in New York in October 2006, that failures in development policy and practice were at the root of past conflict, should be taken seriously. Likewise, notice should be taken of his reference to major constraints in consolidating peace and guaranteeing sustainable development with regard to youth development, weak capacity for service delivery, weak government structures and poor physical infrastructure. He also rightly argued that the building of institutions and mechanisms to provide the social, political and economic environment that will facilitate growth should be pursued vigorously (Berewa 2006):

Indeed our success as a viable state, pursuing development that is sustainable, is in jeopardy unless we tackle immediately, certain obstacles in our path which, if not removed, may hinder our progress towards long term peace and stability.

It should also be noted that Sierra Leone’s armed forces continue to suffer from a serious lack of logistical support, equipment and accommodation. Some 55 per cent of military personnel and their families are living in substandard conditions. This obviously has a negative impact on the state and morale of the armed forces (UN Secretary-General 2007:4), which are supposed to be the custodians of the peace process in the country. Having said this, lasting peace cannot be realised without addressing the political, economic, social and security spheres and their marked interconnectedness (Bell 2005:5).

## Conclusion

A more holistic, current-day understanding of peace distinguishes between two notions of peace. On the one hand negative peace exists when there is a mere absence of war. On the other hand, positive peace is more embracing and holistic and includes issues such as prospects for social development. Working towards positive peace implies that peacemakers have to play roles beyond the mere signing of a ceasefire or peace agreement. Both state and civil society need to be involved in arriving at sustainable (positive) peace through structural and non-structural measures. Structural measures include political democratisation, economic reconstruction of the judicial system, education and training, health and housing, and arms control. Non-structural measures related to reconciliation include issues such as healing the past, commitment to the future, reconciling values, and developing a belief in ‘us’ plural loyalties (Solomon 2006:222). The notion of positive peace coincides with the contention of De Coning (2006:4) that contemporary UN
peace operations are in effect peacebuilding operations, in that they have mandates that combine political, security, humanitarian, development and human rights dimensions in the post-conflict phase – all aimed at addressing both the immediate consequences and root causes of a conflict.

It is evident from the case of Sierra Leone that there has been growing international awareness that peacebuilding should be an essential part of any multinational peacekeeping undertaking in Africa. The citizens of this West African state went to the polls on 26 and 27 February 1996 before there was any sign of a ceasefire or peace agreement. Instead of the usual ‘UN prescribed pattern’ of ceasefire, peace agreement, demobilisation and then elections, the ‘peace process’ of 1996 began with the staging of elections. Not surprisingly, Sierra Leone’s had a short-lived experiment with democracy. In 2002, there was clearly a different methodology as peacebuilding measures, instruments and programmes were put in place. Policy instruments outside the toolbox of traditional security policy were mobilised and development-related interventions were made in the search for democracy and durable peace.

In his report to the Security Council of 7 May 2007, the Secretary-General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, stated that Sierra Leone continued to make progress in the peace consolidation process. The registration of voters for the July 2007 general elections commenced on 26 February and was completed on 18 March 2007. Some 91 per cent of eligible voters were registered. Meanwhile, the political parties have stepped up their electoral campaigning activities in democratic fashion. At the time of writing, Sierra Leone has gone through the scheduled round of presidential and legislative elections that were hailed as free and fair by international observers. Thus general positive developments have strengthened the prospects for long-term peace. Yet the security situation in Sierra Leone remains fragile, although stable. The high rates of youth unemployment and negative public perceptions about the lack of improvement in the living conditions of the overwhelming majority of the population remain the key threats to the country’s fragile stability (UN Secretary-General 2007:1–3).

Finally, it could be stated that notwithstanding many commendable positive developments and undertakings, several problems still need to be urgently addressed. Progress in the justice sector remains slow. The devolution of authority to district/town level remains a serious challenge. This devolution is necessary to reconnect the centre with rural communities and to promote socio-economic development and broader community participation (UN Secretary-General 2007:7, 9). In order to further advance peace consolidation, it is also imperative that the security sector be strengthened so that the armed forces can execute their tasks effectively. Furthermore, the fostering of a vibrant private sector is needed to transform the economy and create employment opportunities. Also, efforts to step up the judiciary and increased attention to the promotion of human rights is of great importance to support social and economic transformation.
(UN Secretary-General 2007:9, 13) – all with a view to moving to lasting peace and sustainable development in a country that has only fairly recently emerged from a brutal conflict and a devastated socio-political structure.

Notes

1 UNAMSIL replaced UNOMSIL after the UN decided on a much larger mission to be deployed to Sierra Leone.
2 The crisis in Sierra Leone since the early 1990s is well documented and will not be discussed here in much detail.
3 Following a number of incidents since January 2000, the RUF strongly rocked the shaky peace accord in May 2000 by launching attacks on towns and UN personnel. After killing four Kenyan soldiers (three others were wounded) in an attack on a UN contingent, the RUF also captured some 500 UNAMSIL peacekeepers as hostages.

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Conflict prevention and early warning mechanisms in West Africa: A critical assessment of progress

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The popular adage has it that ‘prevention is better than cure’. Given the heavy and enduring costs of armed conflicts, there is no disputing the fact that making efforts to prevent them from breaking out in the first place is better than waiting until it is too late. This entails two things: conflict prevention measures and early warning systems. Anything that could be done to effectively address the root causes of a conflict before it turns violent may fit into the former, while the latter aims to identify threats to these elements so that effective conflict prevention measures can be taken. In other words, ensuring ‘human security’ is the thrust of the former, while the latter serves as a surveillance camera for any deficit in providing the different components of this ‘human security’. It is with these two important issues that this essay deals, with particular reference to West Africa.

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Introduction

In its 1997 Final Report, the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict estimated that the international community spent about US$200 billion on the seven major peacekeeping and peace settlement operations in the 1990s alone. These were in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, the Persian Gulf, Cambodia and El Salvador, and excluded Kosovo and East Timor and virtually all African conflicts in such countries as Liberia and Sierra Leone (Carnegie Commission 1997). Many other studies have highlighted the cost of armed conflicts, showing that many of the consequences of war last long after the fighting has stopped and that the direct and immediate cost is only the tip of the iceberg compared to their long-term consequences for human security (see for example Ghobarah et al 2003.)

In regard to West Africa, this author found, after an extensive empirical study, that the civil wars and military coup d’états that have taken place in the region since the 1960s have had profound human, political, economic, psychological, social, cultural and environmental effects on the peoples and the states of the region and that most of these effects are interconnected. He concluded that even if no one is killed or no property is destroyed in an armed conflict (which is rare anyway), the simple fact that there has been a war or a military coup d’état in a country is in itself damaging (Souaré 2006:127–191). This makes preventing the outbreak of armed conflict one of the most difficult challenges in the 21st century (Ackermann 2003).

It is not therefore surprising that, in recent years, increasing efforts are being made in the field of conflict prevention and management. Almost all international and regional organisations concerned with conflict management, such as the UN, the AU (building on the work of its predecessor, the OAU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the EU, have designed policies in this regard. As Kofi Annan (2001) rightly said, ‘effective conflict prevention is a prerequisite for achieving and maintaining sustainable peace, which in turn is a prerequisite for sustainable development’.

Conflict prevention consists of a number of issues. Anything that could be done to effectively address the root causes of a conflict before it turns violent and the factors that gave rise to it in the first place can fall under the term of conflict prevention. And this is the important subject with which this essay deals.

The essay is divided into two principal sections: the first section deals with measures to be undertaken to prevent armed conflicts, and the other concerns ways in which policy makers can observe conflict trends and know that one or more of the issues identified in the first section are threatened, so that timely and effective measures can be taken. The first section therefore concerns what one may generally term ‘measures of conflict prevention’, while the subject of the other section is understood as ‘early warning’ systems or mechanisms. Region-wise, West Africa will be the focus in both sections, especially in the context of relevant ECOWAS efforts and policies.
Conflict prevention

In his now famous policy document entitled *An agenda for peace* (1992), the former UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, defined conflict prevention as the ‘action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur’.

This makes the main aims of conflict prevention as being ‘to seek to identify at the earliest possible stage situations that could produce conflict, and to try through diplomacy to remove the sources of danger before violence results’ (Boutros-Ghali 1992). His successor, Kofi Annan, confirmed this in a similar report that dealt specifically with ‘the prevention of armed conflict in Africa’ (Annan 2001). This is also the general thrust of the ECOWAS’ Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security adopted in 1999, as we will see later.

From this, it is clear that in order to prevent conflicts, one must identify which factors cause them in the first place. This is a daunting task, for conflict situations differ, even within the same country, and most armed conflicts are so complex that any serious research to establish their causes needs to approach this on a case-by-case basis and avoid generalisations.

This said, a cautious generalisation is possible with regard to the root causes of armed conflicts in West Africa: bad governance and the ills that emanate from it, such as relative poverty and illiteracy. By implication, the way to prevent armed conflicts should primarily be the reverse of this trend – that is, good governance, sustainable economic development and genuine efforts to reverse the trend of mass illiteracy (Souaré 2006:41–52; Annan 2001). These are therefore the three issues on which this section will focus as essential elements of conflict prevention.

Good governance

Amongst the key issues that could be used as indicators of the presence of good governance in a country are genuine democratic rule; respect for human rights; and the creation or consolidation of independent and credible mass media.

Genuine democratic rule

Almost all theorists of democracy agree that it is a form of government that is based on the empowerment of ordinary citizens so that they have more say in the day-to-day running of the affairs of their state. It also means a clear separation between the three branches of government (executive, legislative and judicial), political pluralism, accountability of
the rulers to the citizenry, and equality before the law. It is now generally accepted that the holding of periodic free, fair and transparent elections in which citizens are called upon to elect their leaders and representatives constitute an essential part of democracy and democratic culture.

A popular proverbial definition of democracy often associated with the American president Abraham Lincoln is that democracy ‘is the rule of the people by the people for the people’. This presupposes that ordinary people not only participate in the election of their leaders and representatives, but also play an active role in the decision-making process of these leaders and representatives. The people should be consulted and listened to through appropriate institutions and mechanisms for effective regular communication between the electorate and their representatives; this should form a fundamental part of democracy. To test the extent of the involvement of the populace in decision-making, a useful question may be: do the majority of ordinary people in the country identify themselves with the actions of their government? Do they often use the term ‘our government did this’, or even ‘we did this’ instead of ‘the government did this’?

These characteristics of democracy are found in the constitutions of almost all West African states. The problem is how to translate this fine logic and its virtues from political rhetoric into practice. The various West African states should make sure that this is achieved. A genuine democratic system will foster a culture of accountability in the mindset of office holders, starting with the head of state himself. With this in mind, they will be unlikely to commit abuses of power, which cause a great deal of harm to the ordinary population and often lead them to nurture deep sentiments of frustration vis-à-vis the government. For example, one of the immediate benefits that a credible and independent judiciary holds for conflict prevention is that people will have almost no reason for recourse to violence in order to satisfy their needs for justice. Instead, they will seek justice, if they need to, in appropriate places, provided for that purpose and protected from any manipulation by the state. In addition, the notion of accountability should prevent mismanagement and help eradicate the miasma of corruption that is so widespread in public office in the region, which is the main factor behind the abject poverty in which many West Africans live. This is one of the factors that drive many people, especially unemployed youths, to join rebel movements opposed to the government.

Another aspect of democratic rule that needs to be consolidated across the region is a culture of tolerance towards political pluralism. This requires the existence of credible and constructive opposition parties with the political space to serve as a check on government actions, with the real possibility of replacing the government if it fails to live up to its responsibilities and if the people so wish through democratic elections. Real political pluralism, based on periodic elections in a country, will generate a ‘shadow of the future’ (Reynolds & Sisk 1998:11–36). That is to say that instead of people resorting
to violence in order to get representation, with this policy in place, they are very likely to be patient and wait for the next elections to get a peaceful and legitimate regime change.

Yet, some West African leaders seem to have the erroneous perception of democracy as being something alien and their practice of its principles as a mere strategy to satisfy what they think is a condition put forth by donors. At least two observations can be made here. First, those leaders should remember that the notion of democracy is not foreign to the region. Empires and kingdoms that existed in pre-colonial West Africa did have forms of modern democracy, based on accountability and consultation. Therefore, the notion that democracy is foreign to Africa is at least an obvious indication of ignorance of pre-colonial African history. The second point is that even if we admit that democracy is a Western product being marketed in Africa, one cannot pretend that it is a foreign conspiracy to control Africans. Democracy is a universal language on its own in the collective struggle for justice in some areas of people’s lives (Kukah 1998:108; Darah 1998:91).

Nonetheless, a few words must be said about opposition political parties in the region. First, some opposition political leaders tend to contribute to the obduracy of already reluctant incumbents against playing by democratic rules. This is clear from the aggressive tone some of them adopt in their speeches, statements and interviews where they attack the very personality of the incumbent leader. To make things worse, most of these virulent criticisms are made through foreign media. This clearly makes the incumbent leader more adamant in opposing any compromise. The use of foreign media to voice criticism may be at times necessary, as there may not be credible and independent local media in the country or at their disposal. However, the menacing words some use with regard to the regime in place, no matter how bad it may be, does not augur well for the spirit of tolerance and does not help the culture of compromise. These are essential ingredients of a healthy democratic process.

**Respect for human rights**

As with the issue of democracy, some African leaders tend to view human rights as a Western-inspired notion to pressurise them. True, the West seems to use the human rights discourse selectively and only when and where it deems convenient. True again that when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted in December 1948, almost all African countries were still under European colonialism. This was by nature a flagrant violation of the spirit of that declaration. It is also true that when the UN in 1975 adopted the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR), which gave these rights the same prominence as civil and political rights, most Western countries that had been championing the latter component of the human rights discourse, were not enthusiastic about the covenant and this is still true today (Forsythe 2000:57). But all this does not justify the blatant denial of the ordinary African basic human rights.
Fortunately, the 1981 African Charter of Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR), the Declaration of Political Principles (DPP) approved by ECOWAS Heads of State in 1991, and the ECOWAS Revised Treaty (RT) of 1993 were all laid down by Africans taking into consideration African traditions and cultures. Thus, no one can justifiably argue that they are imposed on Africans. Yet, as the international treaties mentioned above, all these ‘African’ treaties emphasise the need for equality of everyone before, and equal protection by, the law; inviolability of the human being; and freedom from all exploitation and degradation, particularly torture and inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment. In addition, and most importantly, they all stress the right to freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention, and the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty by a competent and independent court of justice (Quashigah 1997:259–264). As Cambell (1997:199) argues, when people are being exploited and oppressed by a leader or an elite group in a country, this is bound to generate wars of resistance against whoever oppresses them.

Therefore, for lasting political stability in the region, measures are needed to strengthen the protection of individual rights. National human rights commissions as well as national judiciaries should be empowered to carry out their duties without undue interference from the state. Giving them this independence in terms of authority and the necessary resources should be viewed by governments as an indispensable investment in conflict prevention and thus in the very survival of the territorial integrity of the nation concerned. To ensure this, the West African Community Court of Justice should be empowered to serve as a higher court of appeal where any subregional citizen not satisfied with a particular ruling in his country can take his case and hope for justice (Sawyer 2004:100–101). Its rulings should be supreme and binding.

Independent and credible mass media

Without doubt, banning the expression of legitimate views about issues that affect the lives and destiny of the citizenry is a troubling situation. Yet, this is what prevails in most West African countries. Surely, as Sawyer (2004:108) says, there is nothing wrong with the availability of government-controlled media. However, it is wrong for the government to insist that its controlled media are the only media available. This is a recipe for dictatorship.

Such a situation harms the nation in at least two ways: it adds to the sense of frustration of the population by denying them the right to express their legitimate views and concerns; and it forces people to rely on foreign media for information even on their own country, as is the unfortunate case today in several African countries. This latter point has its own negative impact on countries, especially in conflict situations. This is because some foreign media tend to profile some African rebel leaders in a way that can be construed as glorifying them and somehow justifying their cause if not promoting it.
Such actions will have an immeasurable impact on the psyche of the population if there are no credible local sources of information.

Thus, as an effective conflict prevention measure, West African states should ensure that all barriers to freedom of expression are removed. In fact, the presence of independent and credible mass media in a country constitutes a valuable source for conflict early warning systems. This is because people will express their private thoughts and ideas and whatever frustration they may have through the columns of these papers or on the airwaves and screens of independent radio and television channels. It may be impossible to get them to do so in any other way. Moreover, independent, trusted and vibrant local media can constitute a valuable analytical and advisory source for a government, especially with regard to assessing public opinion on its various projects and activities.

**Economic development**

Poverty is both a cause and a consequence of armed conflict. Manifestly, development and prosperity are impossible without stability and, at the same time, durable security and stability are not sustainable without development (Duffield 2001:16). Economic development is both a conflict prevention measure and an essential tool for effective conflict transformation and post-conflict peacebuilding. That it is an essential condition for post-conflict peacebuilding seems obvious. With regard to its preventive role, it is argued that when people are poor and/or unemployed and thus have little or nothing to lose in case of war, they are easily manipulated by warlords. This therefore makes it imperative for any comprehensive peace study to focus on the economic aspects of the issue.

Since the era of African political independence during the 1960s, many development theories have been espoused by scholars and policy-makers. Many theorists agree that the major obstacles to economic advancement in the region lay in poor infrastructure – left behind by colonial powers and not until now reversed by successive indigenous governments – corruption, political instability, and now also the debt burden and the unfair international economic order. However, in order to reverse this trend, the emphasis of most of these studies has been on reliance on foreign resources and assistance. Africa’s debt burden today is estimated at more than US$300 billion. It is recognised that the cost of servicing these debts is exacerbating underdevelopment in the region. Perhaps this is what has led some people to call for their outright cancellation in a Marshall Plan-like initiative. For the Bretton Woods institutions – the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – and their apologists, the cure for all these problems is simple. It lies in certain macroeconomic adjustments, which they have formalised in their so-called Structural Adjustment Programme. But within the constraints of space of this article, I contend that only self-help can assist Africans in overcoming their
economic and development problems, as did all developed nations in various ways. (See also Souaré 2004.)

It is argued that it is unrealistic for Africans to rely on outsiders for their economic recovery. To be specific, rich Western countries cannot and will not provide the answer to the economic problems of developing countries, including those in Africa. But is it their responsibility anyway? True, besides the obvious negative impact of European colonialism that lasted for over seven decades, the neo-colonial policies that have been in place over the last half a century are having very unpalatable effects on the continent. But does this justify the West being held solely responsible for all the current woes of Africa? For example, the billions of dollars pillaged from Africa and deposited in Western banks may have been facilitated by the complicity of some Western actors. But who were their accomplices? In fact, it was the corrupt African associates who stole these funds and stashed them in these foreign accounts. Africans should take their part of the blame and face their responsibilities, especially when we consider the fact that neo-colonialism always relies on local partners in any region.

This does not mean that foreign ‘assistance’ should not be welcome if and when it comes. However, given its unreliable nature, and because the ‘donors’ have their own problems and priorities, the solution should be sought from within the region. To do this in the context of West Africa, in addition to political good governance mentioned above, there must be a rigorous fight against the miasma of corruption, development of local economic production capacities especially the agricultural sector, and more regional economic integration in the framework of ECOWAS.

With regard to developed countries’ subsidising of their agriculture and their blackmailing of African countries not to do likewise, one should look at the long-term benefits of defying them and the short-term consequences of this defiance. Undoubtedly, the former greatly outweigh the latter. Thus, the different governments in the region should accept their responsibilities and guarantee food security for their citizens and implement sound economic policies to reverse the current miserable economic trends in the region. By doing this, they will have put into place an effective conflict prevention measure in the country as well as in the subregion.

**Improvement of educational systems and standards**

For both democracy and economic development, the need for an enlightened and qualified citizenry cannot be overstated. With regard to our conflict prevention purposes, it is a fact that an illiterate population is more easily prone to manipulation by warlords and unscrupulous politicians for their unholy causes. When people have little knowledge
of the realities of their own communities and the world around them, and if the youth especially have not developed a sense of critical analysis, which in most cases can only be acquired through education, they will easily commit to groups and causes without sufficient thought about the justifications of such a movement, and still less about the long-term consequences of its actions.

Yet according to the different surveys of the state of education across the world, West Africa is amongst the most illiterate regions on the planet. In order to reverse this trend or at least minimise its effects, national authorities in the region must strive to provide better educational systems and standards for their populations. To do this, there are certain structural and financial impediments that need to be overcome before any meaningful progress can be registered in this regard.

In view of the vital importance of education in the achievement of all the measures of conflict prevention, it can be suggested that the percentage of GNP spent on education should be significantly increased in all the countries of the region. In addition, the number of vocational and professional training schools and colleges should also grow.

Some governments appear to have a deliberate policy of restricting access to higher education, justifying it by the high unemployment rates in the country. In other words, these governments fear that flocks of unemployed educated youths might turn against them. This may be true to an extent. However, if there are good employment policies in place and sound economic policies, governments should not worry much about this. This is because an educated population is more likely to understand the government’s positions and claims if there is no relative deprivation. In fact, with their qualifications and skills, they may be able to find other ways of helping themselves if governments live up to their part of responsibility. Moreover, and most importantly here, they are unlikely to follow rebel groups, as they know the long-term dreadful effects of armed conflict. After all, education is one of their basic human rights that need to be respected.

One strategy of mitigating the aforementioned concern of the authorities vis-à-vis the threats posed by unemployed educated citizens may be the facilitation of job-creating infrastructure. Governments should mainly be interested in job creation rather than the revenue that the state derives from commercial and industrial companies. With a good number of citizens employed and paying income tax to the state (which does not exist in most countries of the region), the governments would have killed two birds with one stone: gained revenue from these taxes, and most important, created wealth in the country and thus contributed to conflict prevention. Therefore, a policy that exempts new companies from paying taxes to the government or significantly reduces the amount of these taxes for a given period may be advisable here. Again, campaigns to attract investors must not be limited to foreign investors. More emphasis must be put on local investments, both by local businessmen and nationals of the different countries in the
Diaspora. Particularly for the latter, most of them want to settle at home, but they need incentives by their governments, which these governments must seriously consider.

**Conflict early warning systems**

The earlier a dispute or a conflict can be identified, diagnosed and its causes properly addressed, the less likely it is that the situation will deteriorate into violence. Normally, armed conflict does not occur suddenly without warning indicators. Thus, in order to guarantee the sustainability of the conflict prevention measures identified above, governments and regional, as well as international organisations must ensure that there are proper mechanisms for conflict early warning in place, based on information gathering and informal and formal fact-finding.

Fortunately, with a view to ensure this, ECOWAS leaders adopted the 1999 Mechanism. Another ‘Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance’ was adopted in 2001 as a supplement to this protocol.

Chapter IV of this Protocol is devoted to ‘sub-regional peace and security observation systems’ or ‘early warning systems’ for the purpose of conflict prevention. The Mechanism provides for an Observation and Monitoring Centre (OMC) located at the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja.¹ There is also provision for the establishment of four observation and monitoring zones within the sub-region.² The Observation Centre is to be responsible for data collection and analysis and preparation of periodic reports for the attention of the commission. The protocol envisages that these zonal bureaux should report to the OMC in Abuja. These provisions are being implemented, although there are some funding issues that need to be overcome.

These are commendable policies in the right direction, especially since civil society actors were involved in the establishment of the Mechanism and there are indications that they will continue to be so even more actively involved in the foreseeable future. A true indication of this is the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between ECOWAS and the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), which is a pan-regional civil society organisation based in Ghana, to assist in data collection for this purpose.

According to the Protocol, the zonal bureaux will be responsible for data collection on human security issues. These are the political (human rights and democracy), economic (food shortages), social (unemployment), security (arms flows and civil-military relations), and environmental (droughts and flooding) indicators that impact on the peace and security of the particular zone and the subregion at large. The zonal headquarters will then process the data and prepare a report for the attention of the OMC in Abuja.
This clearly indicates acknowledgement by the drafters of the Protocol of the importance of coordinating subregional efforts for conflict prevention and conflict management as a whole, which is a good development.

It is feared, however, that these OMCs, whether zonal or based at headquarters in Abuja, will reflect the wishes of the different governments in the region, since they will be staffed by these governments. Yet factors that ‘impact on peace and security’ are considered to include such issues as democratic deficit, human rights abuses and economic inequalities. Thus, with nearly half of the ECOWAS member states having huge governance deficits it is not clear whether these zonal bureaux will be able to achieve their intended goals under the current regime of observation and monitoring systems. It is unlikely that civil servants loyal to an undemocratic regime will be able to effectively monitor and report human rights situations, press freedom and civil–military relations in their country or its allies. Yet these are issues that should necessarily be monitored and reported as part of an effective early warning system if genuine and adequate conflict prevention measures are to be taken.

Hence some have rightly argued that it would be more sensible for the observation mechanisms to focus on less politically sensitive issues, including economic, social and environmental indicators, and leave the most delicate political matters to civil society groups (CSGs), such as WANEP. The latter can do this independently and report direct to the ECOWAS Commission (Adebajo 2002:151; 2004:291–318). It must be added that CSGs should be very careful in the way they collect their data and present their reports. A publicity-seeking report will not be helpful. The ideal working strategy for CSGs may be that of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC): to collect data and pass it on to the ECOWAS Commission as confidentially as possible. This will enable the appropriate authorities at the Commission to critically analyse the reports and, if necessary, discuss their findings with the concerned authorities – again confidentially but with the required seriousness.

In this way, the authorities in question will know that they are being monitored. Since they will also know that everything it is done in good faith, they will more likely be willing to acknowledge the issues at hand and, if necessary, seek ECOWAS’ recommendations and expertise in order to prevent the impending issue(s) from deteriorating and escalating into violence. The relevant authorities at the Commission should not stop at notification and consultation. They should follow up and request civil society group(s) to continue monitoring the situation and to report any further developments. The main observation centre at the Commission may have something like a checklist, which should be fully satisfied before the authorities being monitored are discharged, with possibly an acknowledgement and a certificate of appreciation or a letter by the president of the ECOWAS Commission. (For more details on these suggestions, see Souaré 2006:154–159.)
The big question is how to fund the CSGs so that it does not affect their independence and impartiality and yet enables them to render quality service. West African countries being very poor, funding is one of the most likely hindrances such civil society groups may face. The issue of funding has made many such groups and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in West Africa vulnerable to manipulation by unscrupulous governments and political parties and heavily dependent on less genuine external donors who, in most cases, are motivated by their own agendas.

In her outstanding analysis of West African CSGs, Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff (2004) suggests ways in which West African civil society groups can and should generate adequate resources in order to continue their much-needed activism while retaining their independence. She rightly emphasises the need for these resources to be generated from within the subregion. The local funding sources she identifies include membership fees, voluntary contributions and fundraising events, which could help pay for basic administration and organisation expenses. She also recommends taking into consideration the untapped resources of the West African business community. Perhaps one of the most original recommendations Jusu-Sheriff makes is the suggestion that the hundreds of thousands of West Africans in the Diaspora (especially those in Europe and North America) should constitute a useful funding source for these civil society groups. (On the latter suggestion, also see Mohan & Zack-Williams 2002:211–236.)

Finally, what is needed is improved coordination among CSGs within each country as well as improved networking and linking with like-minded groups across the region. Such networks and linkages will enhance the national, regional and international profile of CSGs and considerably help consolidate their legitimacy and authority. Hopefully, with good coordination among CSGs in the region and (at least moral) assistance from governments, but also with credible and accountable leadership within CSGs, the thorny issue of funding may with time be overcome.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, one may argue that the most effective conflict prevention measures are good governance, an improved standard of living, an improved standard of education, and systems to achieve popular education. These are the measures that should serve as the checklist for conflict early warning systems, which provide another measure of conflict prevention. These measures should serve as an immunising vaccine for those countries in the region that are at peace. They should use the measures to consolidate this peace and prevent a descent into armed conflict of any nature.

In addition to the work of civil society groups in undertaking an active role in data collection for conflict early warning purposes, or perhaps more important than that, is the
work of individual national governments. As Kofi Annan (2001) rightly said, ‘the primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with national Governments and other local actors’. This is so because without a sense of national ownership of conflict prevention measures, the prevention itself is unlikely to succeed. The measures to be taken by national governments include good governance (with all that it entails) and improvement of social, security and other important indicators in their respective countries.

Notes

1 When the Protocol and its supplement were adopted respectively in 1999 and 2001, the headquarters of ECOWAS was known as the Executive Secretariat and the organisation’s chief administrator as the Executive Secretary. However, since January 2007, the Executive Secretariat has been transformed into a Commission and the chief administrator has taken the title of President of the Commission.

2 The four zonal bureaux are to be located in Banjul (the Gambia – to cover the host country, plus Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal), Ouagadougou (to cover Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali and Niger), Monrovia (to cover Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Ghana), and Cotonou (Benin – to cover Benin itself, Nigeria and Togo).

References


Historical duty or pragmatic interest?
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Historical duty or pragmatic interest? Notes on EU and AU security issues

Norbert Tóth*

After the decolonisation process had been started, and the Organisation of African Unity was established, some African and European states were searching for the possibility of cooperation. In 1963 the member states of the European Economic Community (including the European Coal and Steel Community), and some African states signed the so-called Convention of Association in Yaoundé. The Yaoundé system was replaced by the Lomé Convention in 1975, because of British accession to the EEC. The Lomé process brought some new elements relating to Euro-African cooperation, for instance the two export-stabilising systems called Stabex and Sysmin, or the question of food security. The Lomé Conventions were in force until 2000, but because of pressure of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (and the USA), the Lomé system was substituted by the Cotonou Agreement in the same year. The foundation of the African Union in 2000–2001 enabled the European Union to treat its southern neighbour as an equal

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partner. After 2000, African security issues popped up frequently on the European agenda, because of several reasons. One of them was the terrorist attack on New York City in 2001; another was the creation of the AU’s own security and peace architecture which changed official European public opinion of the matter. In addition, leaders of the EU and AU launched a process of African-European summits, and this will result in an African-European pact by the end of the year.

The official European Africa policy is nowadays based on three main pillars: the European Union’s relations with the Sub-Saharan states, the EU-Mediterranean dialogue, and the EU’s special relationship with the Republic of South Africa.

On the one hand the European Community (EC) – the predecessor of the European Union – entered into relations with some African states (mainly from the Sub-Saharan region) by signing the Yaoundé Convention in 1963. This initiative was well prepared, because the constitutive document of the European Economic Community (EEC), the Treaty of Rome (1957), regulates the possibility of cooperation between the continents in question under the title called ‘Association of the Overseas Countries and Territories’. The reason the founders of the EEC had adopted such rules was to maintain the relationship between certain European states (especially France and Belgium) and their former African colonies.

In the beginning, the African countries felt repugnance towards their former colonisers, because ‘they had a hangover of colonialism’ (McCleland 1975:112–117). According to Robert Schuman (1991:119), ‘the Rome Treaty was also calculating on the establishment of a EuroAfrica’. The system of Yaoundé was dominated primarily by French interests, and the accession of Great Britain to the EEC in 1973 necessitated the reform of the European-African overture. Accordingly, a new document, the Lomé Treaty, was signed by the parties concerned in 1975. In addition, some other new states – mainly from the Caribbean and Pacific region – had joined this system and these newcomers, together with the African states, founded the group of African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) states in the same year.

The Lomé conventions reflected on some security questions, including the problem of food security, and the issue of Système de Stabilisation des Recettes d’Exportation (Stabex) and Système de Stabilisation de Recettes d’Exportation de Produits Miniers (Sysmin). Actually, the questions mentioned above represented the interests of European states, while the main goal of the latter measures was to guarantee the tranquillity of bilateral commerce, without any moral underpinnings.

The Lomé conventions were in force until 2000, but because of the pressure of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (Faber 1999), and also that of the USA, the Lomé system was replaced by the Cotonou Agreement in the same year. The signatory parties
decided to discontinue the system of Stabex and Sysmin but to extend their cooperation to political issues.

Long after the Yaoundé-Lomé-Cotonou process had been started, the EU sought the opportunity of cooperation with North African states (except Libya). Accordingly, they launched the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (nowadays known as the European Neighbourhood Policy) by the Barcelona Declaration in 1995. The Barcelona Process – as it was known unofficially – planned cooperation in three fields, but the first chapter of the declaration, entitled Political and Security Partnership, spoke only in general terms.

The third pillar of the European-African relationship, between the EU and South Africa, was established immediately after the downfall of the apartheid regime in South Africa. One of the most important elements of this cooperation is the joint fight against transnational crime, organised crime and drug trafficking.

However, the relationship described above was inadequate in terms of the challenges of the 21st century. Leaders in both Africa and Europe knew that a paradigm shift was necessary. On the one hand Africa’s value has been growing significantly since the 1990s, and on the other, the great powers such as the USA, China and Russia are keen to develop the African continent. Although the EU can hardly be compared with the great powers mentioned above, the leaders of Europe do not want to be left out of the game.

The European states are not complete strangers to the African continent. In addition, the African integration process has been speeding up (notably around the turn of the millennium) as a result of the establishment of the African Union (AU). The EU became able to treat its southern counterpart as a more or less unified, legal entity. Finally, the AU’s own security architecture is seen to be appropriate to address the problems of Africa from the viewpoint of Brussels.

At a summit in Cairo in 2000, the leaders of the EU and the African states agreed to launch a Euro-African dialogue in order to establish a new basis for cooperation. In a joint statement they announced that they would hold an African-Europe summit each year to harmonise their policies, including their security policies. The European and African leaders devoted an entire chapter of the Cairo Declaration 2000 to the issue of security. The aims of the parties concerned can be summarised in terms of an old cliché, namely that ‘peace and security are the first essential prerequisites for sustainable development’.

Thus the questions of security and development are strongly linked in terms of European-African cooperation. EU support for the AU’s efforts is primarily financial, since the EU’s own security architecture is less developed than the other global players’ security framework. The greater part of this financial support is administered through
the European Development Fund (EDF) and in terms of a decision of the Council of Ministers of the EU and ACP states an African Peace Facility (APF) was established in 2003. The APF initially allocated €250 million for three years and supports only African-owned projects. Within the scope of this system, the AU has a primary role to distribute the resources and plan the measures of the APF. The only question is whether or not €200 million for peacekeeping operations, €35 million for capacity building, €12 million for contingencies, €2 million for evaluations and €1 million for audits (European Union Database 2004) is sufficient. However, the EU has confidence in the current security architecture of the AU, as proved by the findings of the 2003 European Security Strategy and the 2005 European Strategy for Africa.

The brand-new European Africa strategy is three-pronged and its most important pillar is the promotion of peace and security in Africa. Accordingly, the EU would support Africa in all aspects of conflict, namely conflict prevention, management and resolution, as well as post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building (European Union Database 2005). Virtually the only aim of the African strategy is to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), since the UN is one of the most prominent players in the European-African relationship. Both an African and a European interest is to underline and strengthen the role of the UN in the contemporary world order, to counterweight the influence of the great powers on African and European issues.

In addition to above, the terrorist attack on New York in 2001 helped foster cooperation on security between Africa and Europe. The EU adopted the theories primarily worked out by American scientists on weak states and failed states. After the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London, peace and security in Africa became even more important in European public opinion. According to the European Africa strategy:

Security has become a top priority worldwide since 11 September 2001. Both the EU member states and North African partner countries (Mediterranean Dialogue 1994) have suffered major terrorist attacks. The security of citizens is now a major priority for both Africa and Europe. Ensuring security and the rule of law, with equity, justice and full respect for human rights are now fully recognised as fundamental, shared priorities (European Union Database 2005:4).

In line with the above, the EU would like to take part in so-called state-building and would do so by means of the EDF structure.

In summary, the EU believes that peace and security in Africa basically depends on the AU. The EU treats the AU as a completely equal partner and ally, which differs from its treatment of the now defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The AU presents an historical opportunity to its 53 member states, because the only way towards permanent
peace is to foster the integration process in Africa. However, African integration is set back by several facts. On the one hand, African borders of state, as well as tribal/ethnic/cultural borders, are inadequate, and because of the international legal principle of *uti possidetis iuris*, the situation can hardly be changed without bloody conflict. In addition, one of the missing conditions of the (European-styled) integration is the evolution of nations, and the formation of nation states, which was launched by the French Revolution in the 18th century. And, while the AU was founded on the principles of democracy, good governance, human rights and rule of law, most of its member states currently do not meet these requirements. Finally, African integration seems to be expensive from an economical aspect – perhaps the states concerned undertook too much.

In spite of the above, the EU is optimistic about the current African integration process. On the one hand, African states unequivocally declared their commitment to break with the policy of dead end by establishing the AU and its security architecture. And on the other, the legal and political documents of the AU are proving their intention. Last but not least, the most important question for the near future is whether the African-European Dialogue, launched in 2000, and the planned joint African-European Strategy would yield appropriate answers to present-day challenges. There can be only one appropriate answer, namely the alliance and harmonisation of interests of the two unions within the framework of democratic principles.

**Notes**

1. See the Fourth Part of the 1957 Rome Treaty on the establishment of the European Economic Community.
2. See the 2000 Cairo Declaration section 41.

**References**


Greasing the wheels of reconciliation in the Great Lakes region

Joseph Yav Katshung*

Introduction

Several interconnected elements have shaped the conflict in the Great Lakes region, including the interests of neighbouring countries, competition over natural and economic resources concerns over instability and lack of security, and ethnic chauvinism, to name but a few. This generally applies to all countries in the region, namely Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Uganda. In addition, these countries are afflicted by poor governance and political opportunism, which leads to military action being used to resolve essentially social, political and economic problems (Cartier-Bresson 2003).

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If realistic possibilities for conflict resolution and transformation are to be developed, concerns about resources and security will have to be addressed. This article will focus only on the issues of resources and security, and will offer a perspective on how to transform conflicts by using resources and security as tools of reconciliation and reconstruction in the Great Lakes region.

**Security and resources as sources of conflict in the Great Lakes region**

**Security concerns**

Security remains a major issue throughout the region. There is a long history to the sources of conflict in the region. However, the recent cycle of violence in the region began with the 1993 civil war in Burundi, which was followed by the 1994 Rwandan genocide that targeted ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Both conflicts resulted in large numbers of refugees fleeing to neighbouring Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). Before the Rwandan conflict spread to Zaire, both Tutsis and Hutus had been residing there in significant numbers. Rwanda, citing the need not only to protect its own citizens from attacks by Hutus, but also to protect Tutsi Congolese, launched incursions into the eastern DRC in 1996.

At the beginning of the war in the DRC (1996), Rwanda and Uganda formed an alliance with the Congolese armed resistance movement led by Laurent Kabila. However, this ‘triple K’ (Kampala-Kinshasa-Kigali) alliance fell apart in 1998 because of security concerns cited by Uganda and Rwanda. Uganda maintained that it needed to stop insurgents, particularly the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and the Allied Democratic Forces, from attacking Uganda through southern Sudan and eastern DRC. The Rwandan government invoked the right to ‘self-defence’ against cross-border incursions into its territory by DRC-based Hutu militias. In reaction to the growing hostilities, Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe justified their military intervention in the DRC stating that they were seeking to preserve the unity of a Southern African Development Community (SADC) member state. Chad also provided a small number of troops at the request of the DRC government.

Political and security justifications for Rwandan and Ugandan intervention notwithstanding, the opportunity to exploit the DRC’s lucrative natural resources also provided several states in the region – Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe – with an incentive for military intervention. However, while the clamour for economic resources may well have proved to be an obstacle to peace in the DRC, the conflict was triggered by the security concerns of neighbouring states, particularly Rwanda and Uganda, who
argued that it was essential to stop the incursions by various armed groups based in Congo.

**Concerns about resources**

One of the most perplexing issues in the DRC conflict has been, and still is, that of the exploitation of the DRC’s natural resources. Illegal exploitation of the DRC’s mineral resources has been a constant feature in discussions about the war in general and especially in the eastern part of the country. There is a debate about whether the exploitation of mineral resources is a main aim for foreign intervention or whether mining initiatives is a way of financing the war effort. It has long been established that the exploitation of these resources, including ‘coltan’ (columbite-tantalite), gold, and diamonds in the eastern Congo, and diamonds, copper, cobalt, and timber in central DRC, contributed to and exacerbated the conflict in the country. Concerned with reports of pillaging of resources by the foreign forces, the UN Security Council mandated an independent panel to investigate these allegations. In fact, in its presidential statement dated 2 June 2000 (S/PRST/2000/20), the Security Council requested that the Secretary-General establish a Panel of Experts on the illegal exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth of the DRC. The objective was to research and analyse the links between the exploitation of the natural resources and other forms of wealth in the DRC and the continuation of the conflict. In its four reports, the UN Panel of Experts has named senior Ugandan and Rwandese armed forces officers and senior government officials and their families who are allegedly responsible for illegal exploitation of the DRC’s natural resources and other abuses. It has also proposed that measures be taken against the states, individuals and companies most implicated in the exploitation, including travel bans, financial penalties and reductions in aid disbursements. In January 2003, in response to complaints raised by companies and some governments, the panel’s mandate was extended to 31 October 2003. In its final report from October 2003 the panel largely documented the nexus of economic exploitation, arms trafficking, and armed conflict, stating that illegal exploitation remains one of the main sources of funding groups involved in perpetuating conflict. The Panel of Experts also listed companies based in Belgium, China, France, Germany, Israel, Spain, the UK and the United States that were allegedly involved in the illegal arms trade in the DRC. (See UN Security Council 2001a, 2001b and 2002b.)

Regional actors have been accused of aggression and ‘foreign adventurism’ with regard to Congolese territory and natural resources. In other words, while parties to the conflict in the DRC may have been motivated originally by security concerns, their continued presence in the DRC can be attributed to economic gains derived from the DRC. The report further stated that criminal groups linked to the armies of Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe and the government of the DRC have benefited from such conflicts. This is critical to the peace process, because according to reports, these ‘groups will not disband
voluntarily … they have built up a self-financing war economy centred on mineral exploitation’ (UN Security Council 2002b).

The rationale for intervention by neighbouring states became self-enforcing and the localised conflicts became regional. As such, the conflicts within and among the countries of the Great Lakes region require regionally based and targeted solutions, along with the cooperation of other, relevant neighbouring states.

Transforming security and resources from sources of conflict to options for reconciliation and reconstruction in the Great Lakes region

Reconciliation and reconstruction are essential elements of peacebuilding. The key to transforming conflicts is to build strong, equitable relations where distrust and fear were once the norm (Kriesberg 1998:322–335).

In the Great Lakes region, as in many other African countries, violent conflict has become the ‘normal’ state of affairs. Control of economic resources has become an important factor in motivating and sustaining armed conflicts. Complex political economies, which often hide behind the outward symbols of statehood and national sovereignty, have been rooted in the pursuance of conflict. The challenge therefore is to transform regional and national political ‘parasite’ economies that rely on violent conflict into healthy systems based on political participation, social and economic inclusion, and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Accordingly, any attempt at transforming conflicts to ensure reconciliation and reconstruction in the region requires stimulating positive developments in the region. Such developments will reassure the affected countries that their security and economic interests are better served through fostering stability and improving relations with their neighbours than through allowing their neighbours’ turmoil to deflect them from their objective of peace, reconciliation, democracy, and economic development.

Moreover, in terms of ensuring security, ignoring the tensions and misunderstanding among Burundi, DRC, Rwanda and Uganda will have far-reaching implications for the stability and socioeconomic development of the region because resources will be diverted from human and economic development to warfare. For this reason it is important for these countries to cooperate towards the restoration of peaceful dialogue and cordial interstate relations. In this regard, allegations of support to belligerent proxy armed movements by the neighbouring states must be investigated and stopped. Armed incursions by rebel groups of one state into another can lead to rising tensions and full-blown interstate armed conflict which, if not promptly addressed, will affect the long-
term well-being and socioeconomic development of both populations. If rebel groups in Burundi, the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda are not disarmed and rebel incursions prevented, and interstate aggression is not arrested and territorial integrity secured, the result may be a renewal of interstate conflicts and destabilisation or even disintegration of the countries concerned.

The Great Lakes region is rich in the natural resources that are at stake for many actors in the conflict. However, natural resources also harbour potential for post-conflict rehabilitation and development. Countries should therefore examine ways of limiting the exploitation of such resources for the purpose of funding conflict. They should furthermore seek to identify and promote the means by which such resources can be safeguarded and managed in a way that will reduce conflict and ensure benefit to the population. Equally, there is a need to develop institutions and frameworks for the integration and transformation of the informal economy to a formal economy, governed by a reasonable rule of law, transparency and efficiency, without marginalising local and regional actors.

**Concluding remarks**

While the conflict dynamics in the Great Lakes region are complex and involve a multiplicity of interlocking regional and international actors, we should recognise that the region has made some progress in overcoming instability, even though several threats remain.

Each country in the region has pursued its own process of internal normalisation. Nevertheless, it is clear that the reconciliation process in one country is strongly linked to that in the others. Any durable solution to the issue of insecurity in the region must have a regional character. It is therefore important that the region’s constituent states understand that their security and economic interests are better served by fostering stability and improving relations with their neighbours than by allowing turmoil to prevail.

At the level of regional integration it is important to use a forum, such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes, to speed up the normalisation process among all these states and to define strategies for political and economic integration in the region. Reviving the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries would also be a vital step towards ensuring stability. Other social, cultural and scientific institutions can also contribute to deepening the progress.

Moreover, countries in the Great Lakes region should work towards establishing rule of law. This implies promoting democratic governance and respect for human rights, and
terminating impunity at every level through the creation of effective and independent courts and tribunals. Efforts can be made to set up functional Truth and Reconciliation Commissions. There should be support for indigenous institutions for resolving disputes, for example the Gacaca courts in Rwanda set up to address accountability for atrocities and reconciliation even if the system has recently come under criticism.

Furthermore, in order to build sustainable peace, countries in the region should work on political cohabitation and border security. The security of borders must be guaranteed and the efficacy of checkpoints ensured. To reach these objectives, it is necessary to strengthen the human resource capacity of the security sector in every country in the region, as well as the regime to monitor and prevent illicit small arms trafficking, particularly in the border areas. Ultimately, it is also important for these countries to promote peaceful coexistence among themselves by respecting the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of their neighbours.

In summary, close to one-third of all civil wars that have ended in Africa have re-ignited. Therefore postconflict reconstruction and reconciliation efforts in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC need to be consolidated. Ultimately, peace and stability have to become a reality for the millions of citizens in this region to ensure that we effectively move from crises and conflicts to security and stability.

References


From Africa to Afghanistan: With Richards and NATO to Kabul
Greg Mills
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Greg Mills

This book documents renowned South African international relations academic Greg Mills’s journey from South Africa to Afghanistan, where, by invitation of the commander of the ninth International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), he was asked to help establish a civilian think-tank within the ISAF headquarters in Kabul. This challenging task forced Mills to ask himself how to put into effect the theory of 20 years of academic study and policy advice and actually be able to make a difference on the ground.

This is not another book about the war in Afghanistan. It is a challenge to political scientists and academics the world over to be the change you wish to see in the world (to paraphrase Mahatma Gandhi). Aside from the personal impact such reading can have on ever-idealistic peacebuilders, the academic value of the book lies in Mills’s analysis of the challenges of trying to simultaneously stabilise and build a state with massive external

involvement while also countering a violent insurgency. He tries to answer a question, which resonates from Afghanistan to Iraq to Somali, the DRC and Sierra Leone: how can states build peace and development while trying to coordinate multinational efforts, build governance structures and provide security while not exercising a monopoly on the use of force?

This is a part adventure-war story, part hands-on field research. It is difficult to ascertain the chronology of events and it seems that the author has collected various snapshots of events during his stay in Afghanistan and pieced them together to highlight certain aspects and important elements. The overriding logic of the organisation of the book is into three distinct sections, namely the place, the people and the process.

The place

The first section of the book provides an in-depth analysis of the socio-economic and security environment in Afghanistan. This is obviously an important point of departure for understanding the nature of the reforms that are being undertaken and are still needed. A striking element is the chaotic nature of multinational operations, which require a high level of coordination. The description of life at the ISAF headquarters is seasoned with amusing annotations about the military obsession with acronyms and an unrequited love for PowerPoint. The informal and personal writing style of the author is complemented by a clear analysis of the war economy of Afghanistan, which still exists and remains largely based on the opium trade. In many respects Afghanistan is an archetypal failed state with rampant poverty, an economy largely dependent on war and a highly unstable security environment with little semblance of legitimate organised governance.

Mills points out that the democratic Afghan government has made slow progress: elections were held, the return of millions of refugees has been facilitated, more than 60 000 militia have been demobilised and a viable police force has been created. But this is just a flash in the pan when considering the legacy of bad governance, corruption and socio-economic development inherited by the democratic state. This is not dissimilar to the states inherited by Kabila and others in Africa. Furthermore, the ability, or inability, to address land issues lies at the heart of the possibility of improving socio-economic conditions and overcoming the potential for civil strife.

Mills makes a sound argument for the increased involvement of African peacekeepers in Afghanistan, firstly to establish the principle and practice of reciprocity in peacekeeping, secondly to raise the standards of African peacekeeping, especially given the technology on show in the Western forces, and thirdly to make the Afghan effort a global force in order to reduce the ‘them and us’ perceptions of the West versus Islam debate. The practicality
of this sound rhetoric can be questioned in terms of the affordability of African states such as Ghana and South Africa to commit more troops to peacekeeping efforts, the albeit initially detrimental effects of committing troops off the continent and not being able to fulfil peacekeeping efforts at home, and the hope of international reciprocation when all current indications seem to be for Africa to solve its own security needs.

The opening discourse on Afghanistan also outlines the organisation of the multinational efforts to provide security and development across widely dispersed areas, primarily through provincial reconstruction teams (PRT). Ideally the PRTs provide stability through the force presence and act as a conduit for development. This approach is based on recognition of the security-development nexus and is in many ways a modern-day version of the Marshall Plan.

What is interesting about the unpacking of the security-development processes under way in Afghanistan is that there seems to be firm commitment from the international community to the ideals of peace-building as espoused by academia and the lessons learnt in Afghanistan can to a large degree provide a road map for post-conflict state-building in circumstances not too different from the African context. The main difference between peace-building in Afghanistan and in Africa, however, would be the level of international support, political will and commitment to achieving success. As Mills suggests, the primary challenges to successful peace-building are the tension between setting priorities and the limited time and resources available and the challenge of nation building in post-colonial states with controversial and fictional borders.

**The people**

From the diplomatic commander of the NATO forces, General David Richards, to Mohammed Atta, a ‘muj’ turned politician, to the quintessential USAID representative espousing US ownership of Afghan development, to journalists, diplomats, Special Forces operatives and others, Mills provides a fascinating narrative of the variety of actors and perspectives littering the Afghan security-development environment. Of the most striking aspects is the military acknowledgement of the need to fulfil an unorthodox developmental role sensitive to local ownership while the traditional development aid workers oppose the ‘militarisation of development’ and appear like new imperialists from a competitive and proprietary world. This is an interesting point to take forward when considering the coordination of multinational peace building efforts, as the military does have the potential of being a focal point as a centre of excellence in terms of organisation, logistical arrangement and the key point in the creation of the stability needed in order to foster development. Development aid organisations, on the other hand, also have to embrace the human security rhetoric to the same extent that the military has had to and to avoid demonising all things military.
The process

Countering insurgency is not a new security problem, neither is it unique to Afghanistan. Mills’s approach to the problem offers a historical perspective of lessons from Malaya in the 1950s, which echoed through Vietnam, Algeria and Northern Ireland. According to Mills, modern insurgencies, however, differ in that they are more complex and dispersed across national boundaries. Moreover, technology has and is shaping the modern battlefield. Mills also explains that the lack of an overarching strategic imperative has enforced an emphasis on media operations (which can be interpreted as a more politically correct way of legitimising propaganda campaigns). The logic follows that the nature of modern insurgency should determine the response. Therefore, multinational efforts at all levels and across military, political, diplomatic, private and humanitarian sectors are required. This needs to be complemented by media operations to create an alternative national vision while also providing for economic revitalisation and physical security. Furthermore, this will only be possible through coordinating the planning and operations of the various actors involved.

This said, Mills then recognises that for Africa, the myriad difficulties in countering insurgency underline the critical importance of prevention. This line of thinking re-emphasises the centrality of the state and stable, predictable systems and institutions of governance. There are some who would contest such a state-centric approach to conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction, but it is difficult to argue against Mills’s logic of the necessity of political solutions as opposed to the ability to contain insurrections through military force.

One of the most valuable contributions that this book makes is in highlighting the changing operational military doctrine, a new paradigm of war, in which military forces and their civilian counterparts acknowledge, accept and plan for ‘running the peace' cognisant of the need for international legitimacy, cooperation and partnership. Mills then uses case studies from Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo, Colombia and Liberia to point out further lessons in international engagement in conflict management and in post-conflict reconstruction. The author points out several interesting lessons learnt from US/UN interventions in Somalia drawing attention to the need to have an understanding of the political and cultural composition of the local society as a foundation for understanding the reasons behind the conflict, the extent of the conflict and the requirements to remedy it. A further important point highlighted by the author, which resonates in Sudan, is the need to match the mandate of the mission with the means to be able to exact a measure of success, which includes issues of command and control.

The Colombian case study provides an analysis of possibilities for breaking out of the war economy trap, diversifying the economy, and improving socio-economic conditions while increasing physical security. Post-Escobar Colombia is in many aspects a post-
conflict state and the author uses this example to illustrate the importance of strong, decisive leadership and good policies. This is an interesting case study that is relevant to many students of African politics who focus on war economy and post-conflict reconstruction in countries such as Sierra Leone.

Of further interest to scholars of the security-development nexus is the section in which Mills provides a succinct and insightful analysis of the economic success of Israel in the midst of overwhelming security risks. The author concludes with some credibility that the success of the Jewish state is not based on cultural or religious homogeneity or on its flourishing democracy but rather came about through an existential crisis where performance is driven by fear. Whether or not this is a lesson that is suitable to others is difficult to ascertain as the conditions in the Middle East are unique and the divide between Jew and Muslim literally carved in religious stone.

Mills identifies the media as a key component of the asymmetrical war being waged between the West and elements of radical Islam. For the militarily weaker opponent, propaganda is an essential tool but for those fighting insurgency, the balance of success could lie in winning hearts and minds. According to the author, the Afghan insurgency cannot be beaten by military means alone and requires a mix of military pressure, institution building, reconstruction and development, and international aid. He concludes, however, that the ultimate key is political accommodation.

Mills concludes the book with practical lessons, which he distils down to ten counter-insurgency commandments. These lessons reinforce the ‘best practice’ guidelines and principles that academics the world over espouse, such as accepting the way local systems operate and focusing on constraints to economic growth and not just on security or development aid. Mills questions the power of his contribution to Afghan reconstruction, security and development. It is the quintessential uncertainty of the political scientist: does what we do actually make a difference? Most of what we do cannot be measured, the impact of the production of knowledge and the dissemination of information may not even be felt within this century, all we can do is hold onto the idealism that drives the search for peace and stability. The only thing left is to end this piece with the words of Robert Kennedy, as does Mills:

Each time a person stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, these ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

*Lauren Hutton*