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A NEW START FOR AFRICAN SECURITY

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The collapse of the cold war and Africa's increasing openness in the face of globalization and democratization have brought the dissolution of old patterns of political affiliation and radical shift in Africa's post-cold war security paradigm. The article explores regional and international dynamics of conflict in post-cold war Africa and analyzes the evolving regional arrangement, particularly, the Africa Union's attempts to resolve the current conflicts in Africa.

The Organization for African Unity (OAU) was not successful in its efforts to build a continental security arrangement. Among the outstanding reasons were enduring doctrine of non-interference and lack of formal organizational structures to manage and resolve turbulent internal conflicts which have ravaged the continent throughout its existence. Nonetheless, the OAU had taken undeniable efforts in conflict mediation and direct military intervention even though on an ad hoc basis. For example, in 1980, the OAU deployed a 3,500 peacekeeping force to Chad. The ad hoc nature of the operation was characterized with an apparent problem of formal mandate and structure within which to operate. The operation was also reported to have

suffered from lack of command and control where each national contingent was operating according to its own particular agenda, ignoring the orders of the Nigerian Commander when it didn't suite them.¹ The Nigerians were accused of operating in support of their own hegemonic ambitions under the cloak of the OAU force.² The US-backed contingent from the former Zaire was labelled as a surrogate force for the US policy in support of Hissene Habre against the pro-Libyan Goukouni Weddeye.³ Clearly, it was doubtful whether there was an OAU-led coordinated effort to bring national peace and reconciliation in Chad.

In spite of its failure in settling conflict in Chad, the OAU had continued to make positive efforts to resolve conflict-related problems in the continent. For example, the OAU department of Conflict Resolution Management

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and Prevention was set up in 1993 at the Cairo summit with the primary responsibility of reconciliation, mediation and arbitration of African conflicts. However, it has become evident that the complexity of conflicts in post-cold war Africa have required the OAU to undertake significant institutional shift and policy preparedness to effectively address the escalating conflicts.

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the idea of transforming the Organization of African Union to the African Union (AU). During the fifth summit of OAU in Libya, in March 2001, the OAU summit rectified the Constructive Act of the African Union to replace the 1963 OAU Charter. The new AU inherits some of its features from OAU such as the Assemblies of Heads of State, a secretariat, and a permanent committee of ambassadors. But it added new structures like Africa's Common Parliament, African Central Bank, Peace and Security Council, a court system, a Panel of the Wise, a Continental Early Warning System and African standby army (although not in effect as yet).

The OAU Lusaka summit of July 2001 officially announced the formation of the African Union (AU) and the new AU Constitutive Act made

effective in the year 2002. One of the main objectives of the AU (as stated under article three of the Constitutive Act) is to promote peace, security and stability on the continent. Article four of the Constitutive Act particularly makes provision for the right of the Union to intervene in a member state pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: crime, genocide and crimes against humanity.

Theoretically, African Union has undertaken some crucial doctrinal revisions and structural changes in its attempts to design a coherent African multilateral security system to replace the OAU's traditional concern for sovereignty and non-interference. But practically, it would be a mistake to assume that the AU's new doctrinal and structural frameworks alone make it ready to handle expanded regional crisis management mandates which involve complex multilateral tasks of rebuilding collapsed states, supporting weak states and addressing regional interventions in civil wars.

Equally importantly, the AU needs to gain high level political, operational and financial resources from member and non-member countries to construct such a comprehensive operational security capacity which would cover the continent. As it stands, contribution from African countries alone is too thin to help AU deliver its ambitions.

In addition to obvious economic and military incapacities, most African countries are facing some complex common security problems—having either national and/or cross-border origins—notably those derived in one way or another from the “failed state” syndrome. Among others, the following are crucial to mention. First, the “Great Lakes” crisis, which forms part of the so-called “arc of insecurity” through central Africa, highlights the spillover from domestic insurgency to regional insecurity, involving cross-border actions by exile groups, which may threaten insecurity to host as well as target states, as well as intervention by rival foreign armies.

Second, transnational alliances between warlords, foreign mercenaries and unscrupulous outside economic interests have been a feature of many recent African conflicts, including those involving Angola, Sierra Leone,

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Somalia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The plunder of natural resources, of which so-called "conflict diamonds" are the best example, help to give conflicts a self-sustaining economic dynamic, which has obvious regional implications. Third, refugee and food security issues are other examples of the multilateral dimensions to current African conflicts, which highlight the indivisibility of regional security concerns. These issues have been used on both sides of the argument for South Africa taking a less passive role in the diplomacy of Zimbabwe's internal crisis.

Fourth, the adoption by many African states of policies stressing openness to trade and investment has had the effect of stressing the vulnerability of even the most stable among them to perceptions of endemic African conflict. If future stability and security depends on sustainable economic growth, then all African states have an incentive to regard the peace of Africa as indivisible and to make the contributions and sacrifices that classically multilateral security policies require.

The western diminished interest to support Africa (militarily and financially) further complicated and obstructed the AU peacekeeping missions across the continent. Evidently, the western powers decided not to engage themselves in long-term multilateral peacekeeping obligation on African soil. They rather opted to deploy their unilateral peacekeeping forces on limited-purpose—with principal focus on protecting their national interests in conflict zones, initial provision of logistic support prior to the deployment of UN forces and limited involvement in post-conflict state building. In retrospect, Britain and France have conducted limited military intervention in Sierra Leone (2000) and Ivory Coast (2002) respectively.

Arguably, African resentment of western military peacekeepers in the continent has significantly contributed in raising western fears of vulnerability and unwillingness to intervene as part of a multinational peacekeeping force in the continent. In other words, the suspicion of western intentions and those of global institutions which are seen to be Western-dominated on the part of some African countries (for example Sudan's recent refusal to allow international peacekeepers from western countries) if not most African states, as well as fears of dependence and neo-colonialism has also played a significant role in hindering the rational use of western involvement in peacekeeping in Africa.

Under such circumstances, African states do not have many options but must assume primary responsibility for regional peace and security in their continent. But due to some of the reasons discussed above, attempts to cast the peacekeeping burden on Africa under the present circumstances is no less than condemning the continent to ongoing disorder.

As cases of ongoing AU peacekeeping interventions in the continent, African Union Mission in Darfur, Sudan (AUMIS) and African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) happen to show, the AU interventions are near a point of total collapse because of a serious shortage of combat forces. AU member countries have been reluctant to send their military towards the operations despite the African Union's repeated appeal for military contribution. In the case of AMISOM, for example, only Uganda and Burundi have contributed 2600 and 2550 troops respectively of 8000 African contingents needed to start the mission. Ethiopia's national interest-driven presence in Somalia has further complicated the AMISOM intervention in Somalia. Similarly, African Union Mission in Darfur, Sudan (AUMIS) has been underrepresented by one-third of troops needed. In light of this, African countries are not

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showing political willingness to stand up to the critical task of military peacekeeping in their continent. Logically speaking, if Africans can't afford to take up the rational load of military peacekeeping, they will remain dependent on foreign military assistance, regardless of outsiders diminished military appetite for intervention in the continent.

AUMIS also suffers from finance and logistics, including communication and transport, for forces to gain access to conflict zones. Poor road communications throughout Darfur, with an approximate size of France, make military transport heavily dependent on aircraft. But African countries do not have aircraft capable of moving the peacekeepers and their vehicles to a country in crisis.⁴ The western powers could easily alleviate these problems.

At it stands, the West's strong military presence is as important as their financial and logistic contributions towards a more effective peacekeeping

operation in support of Africa's own efforts in resolving security problems. They still have a critical role in supporting Africans in gathering intelligence and sharing information, experience, and technology.

Perhaps African leaders and their policy-making counterparts in the west should be able to recognize the need for close security cooperation in peacekeeping in the continent either as part of their obligation to the UN, or under the command of the African Union or within the UN-AU hybrid peacekeeping structure.

The UN-AU hybrid approach holds much greater chances for success if the mission is fully understood as a partnership strategy which makes both parties equally responsible for peacekeeping in the continent. It has been argued that the international organization should not use regionalized

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peacekeeping arrangements as a pretext to scale down the extent of its own involvement in peace and security on the continent.⁵ While the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security rests on the UN, the AU should not be forced to accept the sole responsibility for peacekeeping in Africa.⁶

Some have expressed fear that casting greater responsibility on Africans to handle their own regional peacekeeping missions will inevitably reflect national interests and the dominance of stronger states in the region.⁷ Building the capacity of weak African states through training and financial support is a very important step towards making them competent regional peacekeepers.

In terms of quality, African armies need to learn doctrines of peacekeeping (both civilian and military components of peacekeeping) and humanitarian services before involving themselves in peacekeeping missions. Most African armies tend to be an extension of a presidential bodyguard. At worst, they form the armed wing of the ruling party, trained to serve the president rather than the state and to control and suppress political dissent.⁸ Turning them into a restrained and impartial peacekeeping force would take more than a few training sessions.⁹ Part of overall efforts should be consolidating African national security structures through security sector

reform, which involves transforming and re-establishing African security agencies, including reforming national army and police services which have been actively engaged in protecting the political interest of the incumbent rather than promoting civility and order keeping.

Building the capacity of African countries security structures may be addressed in two ways. First is by transforming the existing security sector to a viable peacekeeping force. For example, South Africa has successfully transformed its repressive apartheid national defence force to well-trained regional peacekeepers through a series of national and regional level peace-keeping trainings. Second is by helping to establish these security sectors from the beginning. The second approach is appropriate in cases of collapsed states like Somalia and weak states like the DRC, where security sectors like the police, justice system, and military need to be reformed or even re-established. In cases like these, where there are no viable security sector organizations to transform, what needs to be done is to focus on re-constructing them from the ashes.

Part of developing a new national security sector system should also involve establishing civil society groups and academic programs in studying national and African regional security issues to encourage alternative national and regional security policies. Under current circumstances, however, only a few Africans study, teach, analyze, and write on the various aspects of conflict management, reduction, resolution and prevention.¹⁰ Only in South Africa is this strongly developed.

African higher academic institutions are only weakly developed in fields of conflict management and resolution. In many parts of Africa, universities are state-controlled and are centers for activism of ruling political parties.¹¹ Academics and scholars are frequently under the suspicion of their governments. This problem can only be alleviated if African leaders are willing to encourage African universities to take part in seeking alternative national security policy. Also important is the availability of external resources to

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build African universities capacity to analyze issues related to origins of conflict, prevention, management, mediation, resolution and promoting peace education across the continent.

One such attempt has come from the United Nations-mandated University for Peace (UPEACE) which opened its African regional office in 2002 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The primary focus of the UPEACE Africa program is to build the capacity of African regional and academic institutions to effectively address peace, conflict, and security issues in their respective geographical areas. To fulfil this aspiration, the UPEACE Africa program actively engaged in initiation and/or strengthening the capacity of post-graduate level peace and security studies at selected African universities.

The UPEACE Africa programme has also entered partnership agreements with various African peace and security inspired institutions in

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order to pool their resources towards the achievement of their common goal of promoting peace, security and prosperity in the continent. The recently signed memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the UPEACE Africa program, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) of Addis Ababa University is a clear indication of that inspiration.¹²

The MoU explains all parties have signed the agreement to enhance regional capacity building for peace, conflict and sustainable development in the IGAD region. Under the agreement, the UPEACE has particularly entered a task of contributing to building of IGAD's regional peace and security capacity through conducting regional-focused research and trainings.¹³

Needless to say, such an endeavor would substantially improve the availability of expertise in peace making in the region and reduce regional dependency on expertise from outside the region which is more expensive and less familiar with the situation of peace making in the region, including but not limited to language and cultural barriers for such an intervention.

In conclusion, if the AU expects to be more successful than the OAU, several things will be required. Among them are more political willingness of members to contribute to Africa's standby army and financial commitment to AU to perform the responsibilities assigned to it. Other sources of financial support should come from non-state actors within the continent and external sources towards the AU Peace Fund. As it is, the AU's annual budget is \$140,037,880¹⁴ with a total amount of US\$ 106,554,635 assessed to member states.¹⁵ However, many of the member states have not been dutiful in paying their annual contributions to the AU. According to an AU report, "by the year 2008, only 29 of 53 member states of AU were up to date in settling their financial obligation to the regular budget of the organization."¹⁶ Member countries are expected to show their financial commitment in addition to relying on outsiders for financial support. Libya has donated \$1million towards AU activities¹⁷ and international partners have been donating towards the AU Peace Fund. This will have to be followed by other African states and international partners. If not, the AU will be too handicapped to be effective in dealing with peacekeeping and other development responsibilities in Africa.

Therefore, the new conceptions of African multilateral security strategies must be sustained on grounds of high level national political solidarity and resource commitment of African national governments and international partners.

It is worth noting that despite a growing feeling among many Africans that continental security cooperation under the AU may bring more effectiveness in resolving security problems, it would be a mistake to assume that the new regional security initiative would have uniform coverage, either in depth of acceptance, or in geographical breadth among Africans themselves.

The AU's Africa-wide efforts in resolving security problems assume a sub-regional paradigm of African security—stressing sub-regional nationalist solidarity in conflict resolution. This might be considered by others

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whenever close working relationships with the African Union are being considered. Article 16 of the protocol relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union establishes the procedures and principles regional mechanisms should follow to stage any intervention in their respective sub-regions. Therefore, it is against such a background that any urgent reappraisal of African security problems should be seen.

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