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Regional Integration and Conflict Management in Africa
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Abstract
This research is a critique of the regional integration attempts at conflict management in Africa. The drive towards the establishment of an African peace and security mechanism has become a common topic of discourse in political, security, and academic circles. If Europe needs integration for strength and prosperity, Africa needs it for survival. There is need for a rethink on the African regional integration. Commitments to African regional integration have been constrained by a highly ambivalent critique of the colonial heritage of sovereignty, and unwilling to transfer any of such freedom to supra-national bodies (Zartman, 1995). Yet this has the potentials of enhancing their ability to plan, coordinate and evaluate the implementation of collective projects and programs. This research opine that to be successful, African regional and sub regional integrations need to embrace the concepts of good governance, sound civil-military relations and commitment to democracy and human rights, rather than just on military components of security cooperation.

Introduction
The end of the cold war and the marginalization of Africa, coupled with the vicious cycle of poverty, underdevelopment, disease and internecine conflicts have generally been cited as the fundamental reasons for the

aggressive effort for such architects of regional integration and the establishment of an African peace and security mechanism (Aboagye, 2007). This concept emanated from regionalism which implies cooperation among states in geographically proximate and delimited areas for the pursuit of mutual gains in one or more issue areas. In most of the successful cases of regionalism, states that are already partners in solid political processes; based on shared and complementary values, devolve collective decisions, to structures that supplement, rather than supplant national institutions. While regionalism may lead to the creation of new political organizations over time, regionalism and state strength are not supposed to stand in opposition to one another, as states remain the essential building blocks from which such arrangement are constructed.

Regional integration is an association of countries occupying a particular geographical area for the safeguarding or promotion of members, and operate on terms that are fixed by treaties, or other rules and regulations.

Some scholars have viewed regional integration as a worldwide phenomenon of territorial systems that increase the interactions between their components and create new forms of organization, co-existing with traditional forms of state led organization at the national level. They argue that the initiatives should fulfill; the strengthening of trade integration in the region, the creation of an appropriate enabling environment for private sector development, the development of infrastructural programmes in support of economic growth, the development of strong public sector institutions and good governance, the reduction of social exclusion and the development of an inclusive civil society , contribution to peace and security in the region , the building of environment programmes at the regional level, and the strengthening of the region's interaction with other regions of the world (Philippe and Langenhove, 2007: 377-83).

Others have viewed regional integration as the process by which states within a particular region increase their level of interaction with regard to economic, security, political, social and cultural issues. They concluded that regional integration is the joining of individual states within a region into a larger whole. The degree of integration depends upon the willingness and commitment of independent sovereign states to share their sovereignty (Hans and Langenhove, 2003: 1-9).

Generally speaking, regional integration involve a process by which nations enter into a regional organization with a view to increasing regional cooperation and reduce regional tensions. Past attempts at this have focused on increasing the free movement of people, goods and services across national frontiers, removing barriers to free trade, and the possibility of regional armed conflict. Regional integration also implies the opening of discussion towards the enlargement of existing institutions, and the conclusion of inter-regional agreements. This kaleidoscopic interplay of institutions, identities and socio-political factors account for the polymorphous nature of the so called new regionalization process. Closely tied to the advancement of globalization, the regionalization process often endorsed previously existing international economic link between neighbouring states. Regionalization represented, as in Europe or North America, an opportunity to establish a more appropriate framework for absolving the pressures of multilateralism and globalization.

In Asia and Africa, regionalization is associated with the trade and investment strategies of private agents who operate in the absence of, or, as in Africa, in opposition to, institutionalized regional structures. The specific nature of the regionalization process in Africa results from this ambivalent relationship between regionalization, as impulses by private agents, and institutionalized patterns of regionalization - a distinction which recoups that between de jure and de facto regionalism (MacGaffey, 1991).

There have been many attempts at regional integration. The most, probably, known instance is the European Union (EU), which in some issues has grown beyond an intergovernmental approach to decision making at a supra-state level, and in the recent time New Partnership for African development (NEPAD) in the African context.

The objective of this research therefore is to place African regional integration organizations in security context, and to critically identify their perceived place in conflict management endeavours.

Assessment of Regional Integration

> *There is no sub-regional integration process under way at this time Sub-regional groupings in Africa… have not been able to make their impact felt. Where they have had an impact, it has been on balance negative. As a result, member states are providing support to agencies that make no*

> *significant contribution in terms of improving Africa's situation (ECA, 1990:6).*

African states all belong to the most ambitious and successful collective security arrangement ever conceived- the UN. They also belong to the African Union (AU) formerly OAU which since the Cairo declaration of 1993 may be regarded as a regional collective security arrangement under chapter viii of the UN charter. A number of geographically proximate Africa states have also entered into collective defence agreements - such as the treaty of Non Aggression, Assistance and Mutual Defence; known by its French acronym – ANAD. In Europe, although often misperceived as a regional organization, NATO is a multinational alliance for collective self defence, as was the War-Saw Pact. A defensive alliance, according to art. 51 of the UN charter, may use force in self defence without waiting for the Security Council (SC) to take action, (only in response to an armed attack). Contrary, Art 53 (1) allows a regional organization to take enforcement action even if there was no prior armed attack, but with the SC authorization. Art 54 on the other hand requires that the SC "shall at all times be kept informed of activities undertaken or in contemplation under regional arrangements or by regional agencies for the maintenance of international peace and security".

At its 37th Ordinary Session in Lusaka, in July 2001, the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted the New African Initiative; later coined the New Partnership for Africa's Development, (NEPAD). This seeks to reconfigure the continent's political and economic institutions in order to manage the forces of globalization and stop the continent from sinking further into anarchy. The African Union seeks to promote democratic principles, peace, security and stability, greater unity and solidarity between African countries and African peoples, and the acceleration of political and socio-economic integration. NEPAD envisaged a new kind of partnership with the North and various multilateral and multinational institutions. It appears that the OAU has hitherto recognized five main sub-regions in Africa, and prioritized only one corresponding organization for each area; the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the east, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the West, the Arab Maghreb Union (known by its French acronym - UMA) in the North, the South Africa Development Community (SADC) in the South, and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in the

Central Africa sub-region. ECOWAS appears to be the best known of these organizations, having gained a good measure of international recognition through its massive peacekeeping efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone. SADC is also fast gaining a reputation for involvement in robust conflict management activities and IGAD has also begun to assert a role for itself in the resolution of sub-regional conflict. Indeed the OAU seems to have been relegated to a conflict management role as an intermediary between the U.N. with its higher moral authority for ensuring international peace and security on the one hand, and the sub-regional organizations with their perceived greater political will and power on the other hand.

However, without the courtesy and formality of a prior rigorous assessment of the progress already made, the African Heads of State in 1999, decided to establish the African Union. More specifically, Point 8 of the Sirte (Libya) Declaration called for the stepping up of the implementation process of the Abuja Treaty through the reduction of the original time frame of 34 years. It also called for the immediate establishment of all institutions provided for under the Treaty. The institutions in question are the African Central Bank, the African Monetary Fund, the Court of Justice, and the Pan-African Parliament.

If almost all the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are still standing on very shaky ground, it is difficult to see how the previous, already unrealistic, time frame could be shortened. The political exigencies of the Sirte Declaration reflect no lessons from history. What is even more troubling is the fact that the intractable political and economic problems that were encountered while establishing sub-regional cooperation and integration arrangements in Africa in the last four decades have been simply assumed away (Mulat 1998a: 119 and Aly 1994:94-95).

There are absolutely no shortcuts to an African Economic Community (AEC) or to African political union. In short, the move toward building and consolidating a continental community through sub-regional communities is neither as easy nor as straightforward as it may look.

Although the process of integration in Africa would appear complex and intractable, the difficulties involved are not insurmountable. Nor should they discourage ongoing reforms and progress toward cooperation and Integration. The existence of many integration organizations, in itself, be perceived as constituting an impossible impediment to reforms. They can all contribute

negatively, in various ways, to the implementation effort of the AEC Treaty, if carefully thought-out harmonization and coordination policies are not undertaken along the way.

To proponents of integration, essential prerequisite would be for states to surrender a certain degree of national sovereignty to elected supra-national bodies. Sovereignty is likely to be one of the persistent areas of discontent. As noted, African states have, hitherto retained total sovereign control of their territories and all aspects of decision-making, and have demonstrated a remarkable zeal not to cede any part of this authority for the common good of the continent. The Abuja Treaty calls on member-states to relinquish some of their powers to the Union. This implies a willingness to sacrifice some control over national economic policy management that directly affects the populations of member nations. Indeed, this is the basic litmus test for genuine political will and commitment to any regional integration effort. The Constitutive Act remains ambiguous on this very vital issue. On the one hand, it seeks to defend the national sovereignty of member-states, while on the other; it seeks to appropriate the right to intervene in the internal affairs of member-nations. This contradiction, if not properly handled, is likely to haunt future integration efforts in Africa.

In many integration attempts in Africa, political leaderships have jealously guarded their sovereignty and were not willing to surrender any of it to supra-national powers. As a result, national political agents tended to determine the nature of their participation in the integration project. The transfer of some powers will not only provide sub-regional secretariats with the necessary legitimacy but, most importantly, will vest in these institutions the necessary authority to make tough policy decisions and to enforce coordinated action in critical areas of national policy management. These shifts in decision-making do not necessarily imply erosion of existing state power and authority. Rather, what will have changed is the way in which states use their power and authority; decision-making will be made in coordination with other member- states. Moreover, the transfer of authority to elected supra-national bodies will enhance their ability to plan, coordinate, oversee and evaluate the implementation of collective projects and programs. Thus, sovereignty need no longer be thought of as a zero-sum game. Pooling it does not reduce sovereignty. Rather, the trade-offs of pooling sovereignty include security and stability, reduced anxiety and conflict, reduced military spending, and enhanced economic and technological cooperation (Rugumamu, 1999). In

short, the imperative of political will would constitute another important test of commitment to an integration project. This means that strong institutions at the national level would be indispensable for implementing this increasingly diverse policy and project initiatives for integration arrangements.

Theoretical Analysis

Most successful regional cooperation and collective security initiatives have thrived on the strong and willing leadership that Keohane (1980) and Kindleberger (1981) describe as 'the theory of hegemonic stability'. Hegemony is a condition of dominance without necessarily resorting to coercion, due to the dependence of the subordinate actors in the sub-system on the fortunes of the hegemon. A hegemon is functionally necessary to institute and provide 'international collective goods' that make the international system work better. The Dutch were hegemonic in the European world economy of the 17th century. The British rose to hegemony in the 19th century, and the United States and the former Soviet Union emerged as the economic and military powers of the 20th century in the Western and Eastern blocs.

In practical terms, equity among sovereign powers have always been a convenient international relations fiction. It has never been backed by reality because some powers have always been more dominant than others and, therefore, have been explicitly or implicitly charged with the responsibility of enforcing the agreed-upon norms of international behavior.

The theory posits that the hegemonic power facilitates international cooperation and prevents defection from the rules of the regime through the use of sanctions, but can seldom, if ever, coerce reluctant states to obey the rules, norms and regulations of the regime. The presence of a regional hegemon serves as a positive force for developing, nurturing, as well as for building a regional peace and security system. To lead, other member countries in the region would have to accept such a benign hegemony and put sufficient effort into regionalization activities to gradually increase their own power and influence. Also, benevolent leaders are expected to assume a disproportionate cost burden for the integration project as well as to serve as the paragons of compliance with the regime's rules, norms and procedures. It is not unusual in integration schemes to tax the wealthier member-states in order to aid the less developed. The hegemonic leader's economic strength and political stability, for example, would bolster the region's economic

vitality and political stability. It should also champion the cause of cooperation and integration by pulling the less willing and the less able countries along, as it may not be possible for all countries to move at the same time and pace (Keohane, 1980).

Thus, the role of the United States in NAFTA, the emerging role of Germany in the European Union, the Nigerian strategic role in the activities of ECOMOG in West Africa, and that of the Republic of South Africa in the Southern African Customs Union are excellent contemporary examples of hegemonic stability. According to Olson "thus the world works better when there is a hegemonic power – one that finds it in its own interest to see that various international collective goods are provided" (1985: 122-127). Indeed, effective international regimes tend to rest on a political and economic base established through a strong and effective leadership that can persuade, induce or force other countries to cooperate.

While democratic and politically stable South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt and, possibly, Kenya have the capacity to play this strategic role in their respective sub-regions, the dominant position should be utilized in a constructive and benevolent way that is guided by a long-term perspective, rather than short-sighted national self-interests. By almost every measure, South Africa is the undisputable economic and military power in the Southern African sub-region; Zimbabwe comes in a distance second, and may remain so for the foreseeable future (Africa Confidential, 1995:7); as with the question of economic might, so with issues related to military superiority. The Republic of South Africa has no challenger in the region. It enjoys a marked supremacy on almost all counts.

At least at the level of rhetoric, the present African National Congress government of South Africa has committed itself to linking its country's future to the future of the region as a whole. Also the role of Nigeria cannot be underplayed or ignored if one is to understand regionalization processes in West Africa. The economic and resource dominance of Nigeria is important in understanding the political economy of West Africa. It is by far the most populous country in Africa. Its industrial and military sectors are by far the largest and the most diversified. In terms of regional security, Nigeria has played an unparalleled role in finding solutions to internal conflicts in countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone. Nigeria has frequently sought to shape the region in order to suit its interests, but France and its Francophone allies have often counteracted it indirectly. However, with the end of the

Cold War and a gradual withdrawal of France from Africa, Nigeria, is likely to play a more decisive hegemonic role in its region, just as South Africa is doing. Egypt and Kenya display similar superiority in their respective sub-regions.

The AU should consider aggressively promoting the role of the leaders in its sub-regions. However in the absence of substantive sub-regional hegemons or a strong collective leadership at the center, sub-regional organizations, and even individual African states, have not hesitated to by-pass the rigorous and often indecisive OAU (AU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in order to restore peace in neighboring countries. The 1990s witnessed several peace-enhancing initiatives, including uninvited interventions by some African states in neighboring countries in order to restore constitutional government, end threats to peace, or achieve peace enforcement. These are a clear testimony to the AU's institutional incapacity. Moreover, in the absence of a strong decision-making organ at the center, the OAU remained virtually powerless to intervene in relatively bigger countries, such as Angola, Sudan and the DRC.

In fact, for a long time, the former OAU failed to articulate credible plans for conflict management in these three conflict-ridden countries. The principal reasons for its incapacity to act were lack of resources, political will and resolute leadership. Other factors responsible for the failure of most previous integration schemes in Africa lie in both the scarcity of resources to finance projects and integration programs and over-dependence on financial support from the donor nation. At the same time, member-states were not always in a position to honor their obligations, given their fragile financial positions and to some extent, their political will.

However the proponent of regional integration holds that this would not only create economic benefits for member countries, but would also serve as a credible instrument for enhancing peace and security in the region by multiplying points of interaction among people and groups with similar interests (Rugumamu, 1997:283).

A Critque

> *At the same time, especially on a regional level, we must beware of statism. Many regional organizations, especially those involve in security, have contributed more to regime security than to the security of the people of the region. The*

> *multiplier effect that one is looking for regional integration,*
> *can serve to entrench unpopular and undemocratic regimes*
> *who can rely on each other, and each other's militaries for*
> *support (Ayoob, 1996: 61-65).*

Despite the prophets of globalization, states have remained the principle actors in the international arena, especially when it comes to the raising and employment of military forces. Where individual national armies have had the capacity and will to intervene in African crises, it has been in pursuit of the real or perceived narrow national interests of the intervening country. Intervening in contemporary African conflicts is a risky enterprise, in which states are unlikely to take part unless they have strong interests of their own to secure (Corum, 1995:141). In many of this crisis, however, it is the very nature of the state that is often at the centre of violent internecine conflicts.

The crucial condition for state viability lies in the ability of the state to provide security to all its citizens on an equitable basis. In functional political systems, the coercive monopoly of the state is used to provide protection to all citizens as a basic right. Security, inform of physical protection is provided for each citizen against every other, against the arbitrary actions of the state, and against threats from beyond state borders. The failure of the state to provide such protection gives rise to a security dilemma. This condition becomes apparent when intermingled or adjacent groups of people start to sense that they have to take care of their own security. The dilemma emerges, when what one does to enhance ones security causes reactions that, in the end, can make one less secured when groups perceive the state to be incapable or willing to provide security, they will take their own measure for protection. In the process, security becomes privatized or communalized (Posen, 1993:28 and Toit, 1998).

Such security, however, further undermines the viability of the state by causing a spiral of destabling counter measures. This creates the incentive to seek security through pre-emptive actions, and can lead to state collapse or disintegration once a crucial threshold of escalation has been breached.

The crises of the post-war order led to the emergence of a new global political structure. This new global political structure made obsolete the classical Westphalia concept of a system of sovereign states to conceptualize

world politics. The concept of sovereignty becomes weaken and the old legal definitions of an ultimate and fully autonomous power of a nation-state are no longer meaningful. Sovereignty, which gain meaning as an affirmation of cultural identity, has lost meaning just as power over the economy. All regional integration projects during the cold war period were built on the Westphalia state system and were to serve economic growth as well as security motives in their assistance to state building goals.

Regional integration and globalization are the two phenomena challenging the existing global order based upon sovereign states at the beginning of the 21st century. The two processes deeply affect the stability of the Westphalia state system, thus contributing to both disorder and a new global order. Since the demise of the cold war, African states have become evermore vulnerable to armed insurgencies, and the success of such movements indicates the decline of these states as units of security. This clearly indicates that we are busy trying to build hollow structures for conflict resolution in Africa- both at the A.U and at the sub-regional organizations. Our attempts to define the relations between the two are thus also bound to be fruitless, unless we accept the need to place state building and good governance at the centre of such efforts, and strip the debate on the way forward of its customary politeness and hypocrisy.

> *The OAU and the African sub-regional organizations need to be clearer on the moral and political principles which should inform the relationship between an within states in the region. These organizations should uphold minimum standards, the violation of which should be sanctioned equally across the board, and not only when the culprit is a relatively less powerful member of the organization (Vogt, 1998).*

The prospects for sub-regional collective security or even defence regimes developing successfully in Africa is not considered to be good, because states remain the basic building blocks and decisional loci of multi national security regimes. The process of state formation and state building in Africa, on the whole, has not produced very strong base for larger security constructs.

Many African states attain independence through low intensity conflict waged by liberation movements against colonial powers. Having achieved

freedom in this manner, the new states were left highly exposed and vulnerable to challenges from within, bent on using these very same methods against them (Toit, 1998). However, African states that have scarcely emerged from devastating civil wars are also now being expected to play an active role in conflict management through regional integration. Most African sub-regional organizations have been born of a need for economic cooperation, and have only recently been expected to play a role in security cooperation and conflict management. This has resulted in a poor fit between roles and structures, as could be seen from the SADC inability to operationalise its organs for politics, defence and security. While this example may indicate that there is some sense in separating economic issues from security concerns, the case of ANAD warns against too narrow a conceptualization of security, and of focusing almost exclusively on defence, rather than on several security issues.

The type of conflicts caused by the political breakdown in African countries can rarely be remedied by short term military interventions. Rather, a system of phase and prioritized facilitating processes is needed for their management. During the cold war, there was a fair understanding of a simple division of labour whereby the UN mounted military peace operations and observer missions while regional organizations concentrated on preventive political and diplomatic measures. This changed in the 1990s as a proliferation of devastating internal conflicts saw several actors becoming involved in attempts to resolve the same conflicts. Under the auspices of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, the OAU is indeed authorized to work closely with the UN and with African regional and sub-regional organizations, and to co-operate where appropriate with neighbouring states.

Thus, there is a perception that the future of conflict management rests on a pyramidal security framework, which scholars have described as

> *In graphic terms, and for the purpose of conflict management, the partnership between the UN and the AU, together with its corresponding sub-regional organizations, should be a kin to a pyramid. At the top of that pyramid should be the UN as a world body, and as the supreme organ for ensuring peace and security world wide. At the bottom of that pyramid should be the sub-regional organizations. And, between the apex and the*

> *base, the AU should provide the critical linkage (Nhara, 1998).*

While this approach to conflict management in Africa may appear logical as neighbours are more familiar with each other's problems than outsiders, considering that neighbours usually share a fairly common culture, social identity, history, and experience. The major problem here is that close proximity often generates tension and reduces the spirit of impartiality to the extent that they sometimes become part of the problem, rather than part of the solution. However, the role of regional organizations in conflict management has become extremely convoluted. Conflict management has become more robust than ever before and new operations are increasingly launched. Drawing from the ECOMOG experience and perhaps, confused by NATOs unique resources as a defensive alliance without peer, these peace missions have been delegated to regional organizations and arrangements because-

> *The UN does not have, at this point in its history, the institutional capacity to conduct military enforcement measures under chapter vii (of the UN charter). Under present conditions, ad hoc members state coalitions of the willing, offer the most effective deterrent to aggression or to the escalation or spread of an on going conflict... (Annan, 1997).*

This assertion reinforces the type of thinking that will perpetuate the trend towards using (sub) regional organizations as peace enforcers.

One of the most vexing aspects of the regional security integration is the issue of states enjoying or being burdened by over lapping membership of a member of intergovernmental bodies that aspire to a role in conflict management. For instance should the AU/UN not also recognize the EAC and ANAD as legitimate sub regional organizations for the management of conflict? This problem is not limited to Africa alone. Europe also has a highly complex regional security architecture that include the UN, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NATO, Partnership for Peace (PfP), the West European Union (WEU), and the European Union (EU) and its various institutions (Malan, 1998). The difference of course, is that the smallest and poorest of these groups (PfP) can draw on the support of the industrialized states that are members of NATO and the EU. This adds to the viability of such arrangements. If all

regional organizations in Africa are comparatively poor, they are still political aspect of membership to be considered. The West African instance, where ECOWAS and ANAD overlap, suggests that membership of any regional security organization should err on the side of inclusiveness, rather than exclusivity, and that the membership should be wider than that of any over lapping regional economic grouping, otherwise the economic grouping will tend to take the lead in conflict management initiatives.

Despite their diversity, it is safe to say that the sub regional organizations in Africa including the big ones ECOWAS and SADC lack institutionalized crisis prevention and management mechanisms. Consequently, regional military involvement in conflict management has been ad hoc and not in accordance with a specific operating procedure. A case study of the Liberian conflict reveals that the ECOWAS heads of state and government created a community standing mediation committee, which in turn established the ECOMOG. Contrary, in the Sierra Leone conflict, the committee of Heads of state and government did not formally approve of the ECOMOG force until about three months after its intervention. In a similar situation, the ministerial committee approved ECOMOG mandate in Guinea Bissau, at a time when the Heads of state and government committee had not yet address the problem. To crown it all, the stated objective of ECOWAS to crate a permanent peacekeeping force did not address the critical problem of who will determine when and how it will be deployed (http://www.iss.co.za/index.php?link).

In the SADC case, the great deficiency relates to the absence of conflict management structures, and of integrated systems, processes and methods with issues of human right and the advancement of democracy and good governance. The latter is clearly a contentious issue, and one about which many of the fourteen SADC member nations are understandably very sensitive. While Swaziland is perceived to be undemocratic, Angola and the DRC are still engage in a war over who should rule. Zambia and Zimbabwe have been accused of being undemocratic in election related practices, South Africa is seem to be drifting towards a one -party state and in Lesotho, military intervention in politics remain a real threat. The overall trend towards a transformation of the ambitious regional integration schemes into more modest functional cooperation programmes is a direct consequence of the member states reluctance to undertake transfers of sovereignty. The countries' lack of political and financial internationalization of regional

integration commitments has been often denounced but should not be considered really surprising in a context where a good number of sates are confronted domestically with severe national integration problems. In broad terms, the desire for closer integration is usually related to a larger desire for opening to the outside world.

Regional integration arrangements are mainly the outcome of necessity felt by nation-states to integrate their economies in order to achieve rapid economic development, decrease conflict, and build mutual trusts among members. But the nation-state system which has been the predominant pattern of international relations since the peace of Westphalia in 1648 is evolving towards a system in which regional groupings of states are becoming more vital than the sovereignty of state. There is a perception that state and its sovereignty has become irrelevant by both local and global processes. The concept of sovereignty may likely become more blurred if the issue of regional integration is not properly addressed.

Global peace and security is not divisible into geo-political regions, neither are the tools for ensuring and maintaining global peace and security. The international community needs to rethink its post cold war policies regarding the U.N policies that have given rise to an African peacekeeping architecture that is for all intends and purposes unsustainable. It should be noted that the African Standby Force Missions are at best stop gap measures and not inter-locking alternatives to intervention by the UN. Therefore, we should seek to restrict, and not to enhance the roles of such security forces and agencies.

Conclusion
With a number of Africa states still trying to deal with the outcome of failed nation hood, and others consumed by civil and secessionist wars, regional security arrangements need to focus on modest measures for the prevention and containment of conflicts, rather than utopian ideas and complex institutional mechanisms.

The emphasis should be on simple but reliable structures for security cooperation. Ones that can stabilize relations, prevent the spill-over of conflicts, secure emerging common values and perhaps, lay the foundation for nascent security regimes (Nhara, 1998: 38). Moreover, if this cooperation is to include joint military enforcement operations in support of peace processes, then this should be determined up front, and the necessary legitimacy for such a course sought through the UN system. Regional

security integration should rest on concepts of good governance, sound civil-military relations and commitments to democracy and human rights.

As far as possible, potential security issues should be dealt with through political and social processes and institutions. They should be elevated to the security agenda only when real threats become visible and special measures are required. At this point the possible role of defence institutions in dealing with such threats should be considered, but the implications of such employment need to be cautiously examined. Though proponents of intense regional integration have advocated for substantial and forceful missions by Africans, this trend has been accepted rather uncritically by African analyst, while those from the North have not had the courage to openly challenge African visions in the realm of improved conflict management capabilities as long as such visions do not demand sacrifices of them. Thus we have reached a stage where Africans are playing into the hands of those who would undermine the legitimacy and efficacy of the UN in the field of peace operations.

This is obviously unintentional, for placing the UN at the apex of the pyramid reflects the respect that Africans have for the world body. Looking at the European experience, the OSCE has taken a comprehensive but realistic view of security, to include issues of arms control, preventive diplomacy, confidence building, human rights, and election monitoring. While WEU has the responsibility for European defence and security policy formulation, its priorities also lie in the area of conflict management and peacekeeping, rather than mutual defence. African sub-regional organizations may do well to take their lead from the OSCE and indeed the AU to accept the need to focus on the non-military components of security cooperation, and to reflect their importance in their organizational structures.

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