

PREPARE AND PARTICIPATE

Africa's contribution to peacekeeping

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Introduction

"Africa has an indispensable contribution to make in ensuring that 2005 becomes a turning point for the continent, the United Nations and the world." According to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's statement on January 30th, 2005 to the 4th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of African Union held in Abuja, Nigeria, this contribution includes continued involvement in peacekeeping "when prevention fails, UN peacekeepers, including men and women in uniform from this continent, have proven time and again their value in helping to end civil wars." Later in his presentation he called for closer peacekeeping ties between the UN and Africa and the African Union and acknowledged that "we must work hard to achieve" those ties. In his conclusion, he noted that "We are at a defining moment for the international community and its primary instrument of common progress, the United Nations."

This article will examine and comment on some recent writing and reports on African participation in peacekeeping and peacekeeping-related activities and submit some considerations for future research, exploration and action.

As of the end of December 2004, according to UN statistics, just over 30 % of the 102

countries supplying peacekeepers are from Africa. African countries have suffered 457 of the 1965 peacekeeping fatalities suffered by UN forces to date. It is thus clear that the majority of African countries are participating in peacekeeping activities. It is also clear that a large number of countries have yet to take part in a single mission. Of course, these figures also need to be understood within the context of the participation of African countries in non-UN peacekeeping missions in Africa and elsewhere.

Three articles on various aspects of African present and future contributions to peacekeeping writ large are featured in Volume 13, #2, 2004 of the *African Security Review*. The first is *African Standby Force: East Africa Moves On* by Nelson Alusala of the Institute for Security Studies.

Alusala comments on African endeavours to develop a common security policy and then to form an African Standby Force (ASF) within that policy. Dealing with the "early prevention of conflicts and maintenance of durable peace in Africa", he quotes other sources as believing that "the African challenge is a complex one...reflected in the continent's economic decline as well as its political and institutional failures." The author concludes his introductory material by asserting that "Africa therefore continues to demonstrate

eagerness in taking responsibility for its destiny” by putting African emphasis into its efforts.

Thirteen East African countries have banded together to raise an Eastern Africa Standby Brigade (EASBRIG). Representatives from most of the 13 countries, with observers from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Multinational Standby High Readiness Brigade for United Nations operations (SHIRBRIG) and Reinforcement of African Peacekeeping Capacity (RECOMP) met in early 2004 to discuss how to further the formation and operationalization of EASBRIG. They conducted their discussions within the range of missions and scenarios devised by the African Chiefs of Defence Staff (ACDS). The range covers activities from provision of military advice to a mission, through a co-deployed regional observer mission and a stand-alone mission of that type, to a UN Charter Chapter VI operation, a multi-dimensional peacekeeping mission (of the Chapter VI-and-a-half type) and finally, to a mission that would include intervention in situations when the international community is slow to act.

Following a description of the planning and implementation process with attendant timelines, the author notes that the setting-up of EASBRIG “underscores [the countries’] commitment towards the management of conflicts in the region.” On the subject of moving from EASBRIG to ASF, the conclusion of the article is that “the task is not massive – it simply requires commitment.”

Establishing and deploying a rapid reaction force is not an easy task; the author recognizes this through his endorsement of a detailed, methodical, phased plan. All too often, the necessity of preparation and training are overlooked. In addition, units designed for deployment as part of a rapid reaction formation must be available at short notice and should not be units that are double or even triple tasked.

Developmental Peacekeeping: What are the Advantages for Africa by Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge and Sybert Liebenberg. This article

defines developmental peacekeeping as a “post-conflict reconstruction intervention which aims to achieve sustainable levels of human security” The authors distinguish their approach from traditional peacekeeping in two ways: it focuses on human security and “it does not distinguish between peacekeeping and peacebuilding on a process level. Peacekeeping, peace-enforcement and peacebuilding are collapsed into one process.” They call for future African peacekeeping missions to be composed of “multi-disciplinary teams of development economists, civil engineers, public and development managers and policy developers which are deployed at the onset of an operation.”

This approach is one that must be recognized as essential by all who are involved in any aspect of planning and/or conducting peacekeeping operations, however they are defined. During my time at the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, we referred to this as “The New Peacekeeping Partnership” and suggested that the team include those elements mentioned above as well as good governance officials, civilian police and others essential to post-conflict restoration. Ensuring that developmental peacekeeping is adopted will take much effort and it will be necessary to win over those who still think that peacekeeping is a purely military activity.

The third article of interest is by Eric Berman and is entitled *Recent Developments in US Peacekeeping Policy and Assistance to Africa*. The author reviews US contributions channelled through the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), Operation Focus Relief (OFR), and the African Contingency Training and Assistance (ACOTA) effort. The United States has also provided financing and personnel expertise to assist in other areas. He concludes that US aid in many forms will continue but must be in accordance with African aims and needs and on a sound foundation of African ability to “prove they have sufficient capacity and structures in place to maintain and build upon what is provided”. In other words, the Americans want to ensure they receive the best value for their money.

These three substantial views each indicate

that Africans are capable of increasing contributions to regional and international peacekeeping. Although the continent's record of raising and deploying forces is impressive, the rest of the world looks for increased effort.

There are many aspects that need to be considered by the international community as it looks to Africa to build on its record of peacekeeping to date by expanding greatly its participation in international conflict prevention and resolution operations. Of course, they must also form part of the agenda whenever and wherever African countries, themselves discuss their past performance and look to the future. Some of these issues were raised at the recent meeting of the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. One of them concerned the fear that increased participation by African countries in African regional peacekeeping missions might reduce the participation of those countries in non-African operations. Another focused on the possibility that increased regional peacekeeping could diminish the important role the United Nations organization itself plays in peacekeeping. One country advocated increased "coordination with regional organizations in the field", while recognizing the responsibilities of the Security Council. An observer country mentioned that "the civilian component of peacekeeping operations had become equally, if not more, important than the military one."

There is no doubt that regional peacekeeping has taken great strides in the past decade or so. From calls for individual countries to participate in missions in their own region, through to regional countries taking responsibility for entire missions, it is now apparent that Africa has heeded those calls in an admirable fashion. In fact, as can be seen from a reading of the statements made by UN member states in the sessions of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, there is now concern that the UN's and the Security Council's special responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security could suffer because of the rapid advances in regional peacekeeping. There is little possibility of such fears becoming reality.

The UN member states would not permit it to happen. In addition regional countries recognize their continuing need for UN and individual country assistance with financing, education, training and other aspects of preparing for and conducting operations.

Instead of being apprehensive about Africa's regional peacekeeping record, the UN and the international community should applaud it and pledge to continue and enhance the assistance they provide.

African participation in peacekeeping has not been limited to troop deployments. The three articles referred to in this comment show evidence of great thought and wisdom in proposing new directions, such as that of developmental peacekeeping. The UN Secretary-General, in addition to the words quoted at the start of this comment, had previously indicated that he would "continue to highlight the urgent need for the international community to provide adequate support to strengthen African peacebuilding capacities." Further, he spoke strongly against any move to limit the participation of non-African countries in African peacekeeping missions. These statements clearly illustrate his resolute belief in regional peacekeeping and his belief that it need not be exclusionary.

In addition, the establishment and successful research and training programs of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), indicates that African countries wish to assume responsibility of training their own contingents before deployment. One indication of the degree of esteem in which the KAIPTC is held is that its Commandant is a member of the three-person Presidency of the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres. The recent launch of the web-based magazine, *Training for Peace*, is a clear indication of the willingness of the KAIPTC not to restrict its activities to Africa. This international outlook is welcome and will do much to extend its good reputation. Subjects that might attract the attention of peacekeeping thinkers and writers could include additional thoughts on developmental peacekeeping, the optimum balance of regional and non-regional coun-

tries in regional peacekeeping endeavours, innovative mission organizations tailored to the priority tasks that include imaginative uses of civilian segments, the perennial issues of financing and transportation, and how to ensure that lessons learned from previous missions are made readily available to future undertakings, amongst others. It might also be useful to explore in *Training for Peace* and elsewhere why countries such as Canada have drastically reduced their participation in UN

peacekeeping missions, whether this withdrawal is having negative effects, and, if so, how they might be overcome.

The current international situation presents a unique opportunity for African countries to expand and enhance their preparation for and participation in peacekeeping missions. For its part, the international community must welcome and assist (in all the ways it can) African efforts to assume a more significant role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.