

EDITORIAL

KEEPING THE PEACE IN AFRICA *Challenges and opportunities*

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Since 1990, two issues have almost become synonymous on the political and security landscape in Africa. As conflicts have broken out in various parts of the continent, so too has the debate about the forms and methods that should be used to keep the peace in these trouble spots. Thus, the conceptualisation of peacekeeping in Africa has shifted considerably since the newly independent states joined the United Nations (UN) to keep the peace in the newly independent Congo Republic (now Democratic Republic of Congo, or DRC) in the 1960s. Subsequent efforts at responding to crisis have not always been successful, with the Rwandan crisis epitomising the worst failure of international peacekeeping. Nevertheless, the changes that have ensued since the Congo and Rwandan crises in 1960 and 1994 respectively have contributed to a phenomenal paradigm shift in Africa's understanding and approach to peacekeeping, and the desirability of such efforts.

The first is the sheer scale and number of operations that are currently taking place in Africa (and elsewhere). The second is the complexity of these operations, as exemplified in the grave circumstances in Darfur. The third is the willingness of African states to actively contribute troops and civilian police to peacekeeping operations around the world (especially Nigeria, Senegal, Kenya, Ghana and South Africa). The fourth is that Africa's continental

organisation, the African Union (AU), is leading on institutional efforts to seek peace on the continent through the establishment of its continental security architecture, the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the African Standby Force (ASF) being one of the central pillars. The last is the emerging role of regional organisations in peacekeeping activities in Africa. Probably the best known of such efforts is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

While efforts at peacekeeping are commendable in spite of the problems that attend to them, it is logical to argue that the demand for peacekeepers will persist into the near future. From peacekeeping experiences within Africa, it has been established that the main problems and difficulties that confront African regional organisations and peacekeepers in various theatres of operations are lack of adequate logistics and materiel, insufficient numbers of trained personnel for peace operations, inadequacies of mandates, and a whole gamut of other problems, including strategic lift and funding.

Earlier, the point was made about the 'demand for peacekeepers'. The structural factors that led to the demand for peacekeepers, notably the manner in which some African states continue to be governed, have not changed. Bad economic policies, exploitation of ethnic identities, lack of transparent and inclusive governance

processes, and the general weakness of public institutions and their incapacity to play their regulatory functions are some of the structural weaknesses that may continue to engender conflicts in Africa. When crisis breaks out in such states, they pose particular challenges to peace-building because of the viciousness of the conflict, steeped, as it were, in the tensions, hatred and ethnic enmity that these states fail to ameliorate.

It is a welcome development therefore that the AU and African regional organisations have demonstrated the will, though against enormous challenges and difficulties, to create conditions for undertaking complex multidimensional peacekeeping, primarily by the UN. Whatever the weaknesses and the failures of current efforts at Africa-led peacekeeping, given the support that is needed, one can posit that these efforts will achieve commendable results. However, the continued eruption of conflicts around the continent strongly suggests that there is a compelling need to tackle the structural causes that led to these fratricidal conflicts in the first place.

This is an important period in which to take stock of what is happening on the peacekeeping front in Africa, by examining the collaborative efforts of the UN and continental and regional organisations such as the UN and ECOWAS in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, against the backdrop of the changing fortunes of the UN and other multinational forces in Somalia, and the AU's determined efforts at continental peacekeeping in Darfur – currently one of the world's most devastating humanitarian crises. The aim of this edition of *African Security Review* is to highlight the challenges of regional peace efforts and the synergies between continental, regional and UN efforts. The feature articles therefore focus primarily on peacekeeping efforts in West, Central and East Africa.

In this edition of *ASR* the four lead articles analyse some of the critical external dimensions, and operational and legal challenges presented by their case studies. Appiah-Mensah's article discusses the critical challenges to the AU Mission in Sudan, AMIS (I & II), and specifically Darfur. The paper discusses the processes leading to the decision to send African peacekeepers to Darfur, after the historic deployment

of the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) in 2003/04, and the challenging operational environment within which these troops operate. The paper does not simply present difficulties, it shows the way forward, and how the AU can take advantage of the favourable international environment to optimise its objectives and efforts.

The establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is perhaps one of the most significant developments in international efforts to protect civilians in conflict zones. Crimes committed in Darfur have been added to the list of cases that the court must consider. How the court works in Africa and the extent to which its decisions are complied with are critical not only for its credibility, but also for the validation of the discourse on the responsibility to protect civilians in violent armed conflicts. In this vein, Max du Plessis and Christopher Gevers investigate the complex dynamics of the referral of the Darfur crisis to the ICC by the Security Council – the first such referral since the signing of the Rome Statute in 1998.

That there is an emerging practice of 'division of labour' or collaborative peacekeeping is not in doubt. However, this phenomenon is dogged by serious and often crippling challenges. Using Liberia and Somalia as case studies, Kwesi Aning examines the complex web of challenges that have been brought to the fore by this emerging pattern in international peacekeeping. He argues that such interventions raise new challenges and questions about the growing perception that global (UN), continental (AU) and regional institutions (ECOWAS) should work together to promote international peace and security. He posits that such cooperation is not always smooth because the collaboration of different actors may reflect their competing agendas and interests.

In his feature article, Stephan Klingebiel examines the dynamics of African peace and security efforts, and of external support (largely military capabilities). Based on his assumption that past African and international community mechanisms have not been able to contribute to military intervention in extreme situations to protect civilian populations, his article determines the modalities and form of external actor support towards African peace efforts,

and the shape of future challenges. Stephan then concludes that while ongoing African efforts and measures aimed at implementing a new peace and security architecture may be positive, a number of structural deficits need to be overcome to achieve an effective peace and security architecture.

In conclusion, a striking feature of the post-Cold World era has been the unprecedented scale and scope of international interventions

to mitigate, contain and resolve violent conflicts within states, as well as increasing international consensus on intervention and state sovereignty. It is therefore underscored that effective burden-sharing between the UN, the AU and African regional organisations requires creative understanding of the possibilities and limitations of each organisation and the development of *principles*, *rules* and *procedures* that should govern and make such partnerships effective.