

PEACEKEEPING IN AFRICA: WHO ARE THE ROLE-PLAYERS AND WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

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1. INTRODUCTION

Clapham (1998:1) states that the African continent has had a critical impact on defining the limits and possibilities of the post-Cold War order and the place of the UN within that context. The problems and challenges that the UN has faced in Africa have also reflected the peculiar difficulties of peacekeeping endeavours in general, as well as the fact that conflict management in this part of the world has been among the UN's most important and challenging initiatives since the end of the Cold War. In view of these difficulties, the UN Security Council proved to be increasingly willing to allow regional, subregional and ad hoc initiatives in Africa as complementary ways and means of dealing with conflicts on the continent. This reality, as well as developments in Africa in the form of frequent conflicts - and the tendency of these conflicts to generate security problems and humanitarian disasters - compelled African role-players to consider and reconsider response capabilities or regional peacekeeping capabilities of some kind.

This does not mean that the UN has shrugged off its responsibilities towards the African continent onto African role-players. Rather, it indicates a trend of "burden-sharing". Accordingly, the concept of shared responsibility between the UN and African stakeholders for the effective management of conflicts in the region became one of the most important innovations in the management of international security. In this regard, Vogt (1998:1) points out that Africa is the first region where extensive efforts have been made between the UN and a continental organisation, namely the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) - specifically to enhance the management of conflicts in the region. However, on a practical level not much has been achieved. At the same time it is important to note that several political and economic alliances on the African continent have been expanded to include military dimensions and that these role-players have begun to exhibit a growing

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willingness to intervene in African conflicts. While it is important that subregional role-players have recognised the need to take primary responsibility in responding to crises and armed conflict, their political will far surpasses their peacekeeping capabilities (Berman and Sams 2000:41).

The following analysis gives an overview of the management and conducting of international peacekeeping endeavours. Special attention is paid to the international peacekeeping system as well as the general framework for security co-operation and related developments in Africa. An attempt is also made to reflect upon the role and capabilities of the UN and some of the more important role-players in Africa, and to discuss the constraints hampering the peacekeeping capabilities of these organisations. Finally, the study also attempts to comment briefly on the future of the African Union (AU) and the prospective role that this new organisation might play in the promotion of peace and security on the continent.

2. INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING SYSTEM

The UN was founded, in the words of its Charter, in order to "safeguard succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Meeting this challenge can be regarded as the most important function of the organisation and, to a significant degree, this is the yardstick by which the world body is judged and measured (Panel on UN Peace Operations 2000b).

Practically speaking, the 15 member states of the Security Council - and not the Secretary-General - create and define peacekeeping operations. The UN Charter specifies that the Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security (UN Department of Public Information 2002d). The first of the objectives of the UN listed in its Charter is "[t]o maintain international peace and security, and to this end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace" (UN 1945).

Concrete measures that are to be taken by the Security Council to achieve this objective are set out in Chapters VI and VII of the Charter. Chapter VI provides that international disputes "likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security" can be brought to the attention of the Security Council or the

General Assembly. If the Security Council determines that a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression exists, the Council may use the broad powers given to it in Chapter VII of the Charter. Should the Security Council regard it necessary, it may take, under Article 42, "action by air, sea and land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security" (UN 1945).

Peacekeeping initially developed as a means of dealing with interstate conflict and involved the deployment of military personnel from various contributing nations under UN command. Today, peacekeeping is increasingly applied to intrastate conflicts and civil wars (UN Department of Public Information 2002d). It is commonly known that the end of the Cold War has not reduced threats to peace and has in fact seen the transformation (or mutation) of classical peacekeeping operations into multidimensional conflict management activities. Accordingly, the UN requested Boutros Boutros-Ghali, then Secretary-General, to prepare a report containing "an analysis and recommendations on ways of strengthening and making more efficient within the framework and provisions of the Charter the capacity of the UN for preventive diplomacy, for peacemaking and for peacekeeping". As a result, his report, *An agenda for peace*, was submitted to and adopted by the Security Council in 1992 and has since then served as a broad framework for international peacekeeping operations (Boutros-Ghali 1992:1).

Because the UN is the source of authority for types of peacekeeping operations, its set of terms and definitions is of importance. *An agenda for peace* has sought to identify a new approach to UN peacekeeping. It suggested that it was no longer appropriate to consider peacekeeping in isolation, and presented the concepts of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding as a range of options to be considered in the context of peace support activities. None of these concepts was really new, but in this case they were presented together for the first time. In *An agenda for peace*, the terms "preventive diplomacy", "peacemaking", "peacekeeping" and "post conflict peacebuilding" were defined as follows:

- Preventive diplomacy is 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.
- Peacemaking is action to bring hostile parties to agreement, essentially through such peaceful means as those foreseen in Chapter VI of the Charter of the UN.

- Peacekeeping is the development of a UN presence in the field, hitherto with the consent of all parties concerned, normally involving UN military and/or police personnel and frequently civilians as well. It is a technique that expands the possibilities for both the prevention of conflict and the making of peace.
- Post-conflict peacebuilding is action to identify and support structures, which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict (Boutros-Ghali 1992:11).

Since 1948, there have been 54 UN peacekeeping operations. Forty-one of those operations were initiated by the Security Council in the last twelve years. There are currently 15 UN peacekeeping operations in the field, of which four are on African soil (UN Department of Public Information 2002d; UN Department of Public Information 2002a).

It has already been noted that the problems and dilemmas that faced the UN in the 1990s in Africa have been amongst the organisation's most important and challenging endeavours. At the same time, it is often argued that the Security Council is a cumbersome participant in the attempted settlements of Africa's fluid and complex conflicts (Clapham 1998:3). This view will be examined in greater detail.

3. UN RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS AFRICA

In the aftermath of the Cold War much was expected of the UN in the field of peacekeeping, but the world body proved unable to meet those expectations. Specifically, the UN has proved not to be in a position to deploy robust force postures that are able to conduct peace-enforcement operations in acute conflicts. Two factors in particular are hampering the UN's capabilities to conduct peacekeeping operations: the five permanent members of the Security Council have become increasingly reluctant since the early 1990s to commit firstly their troops and secondly their finances to UN peacekeeping efforts in Africa (Berman and Sams 2000:32).

In Africa, the UN's experience in Somalia between 1992 and 1995 and in Rwanda between 1993 and 1996 were glaring examples of the UN's limitations in terms of peacekeeping in complex emergencies. Also, in Angola the UN terminated its involvement in the peace process in February 1999 after years of futile peacekeeping efforts by no less than four peace missions. The termination of the UN's involvement in Angola marked the end of a decade of international military

presence in the Angolan civil war, with no end in sight of the tragic and devastating conflict that raged sporadically since the country had gained independence in 1975. The UN's involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) between 1998 and 2000¹ and in Sierra Leone in 2000 have been further proof that the UN is not in a position - actually quite unable - to respond meaningfully to complex emergencies in Africa. In both cases, the UN was practically impotent in averting conflict or to end the political turmoil. In this context, Berman and Sams (2000:379) state that "years after the failure to stop the genocide in Rwanda, insufficient progress has been made to respond appropriately, let alone to prevent, a similar catastrophe".

At this point a brief outline of developments in Sierra Leone since the beginning of 2000 calls for attention: Following on a number of incidents since January 2000, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) strongly rocked the shaky peace accord in May 2000 by launching attacks on towns and UN personnel. After killing Kenyan soldiers (four deaths were later confirmed) in an attack on a UN contingent, the RUF also wounded and captured several other UN soldiers (Anon 2000a:13). In the course of further events, the rebels eventually captured some 500 United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) personnel as hostages. Some of them were later released. After two months, in July 2000, all hostages were released, but only after a rare display of force by the UN. This happened after heavily armed UN soldiers had moved into the rebel's main headquarters, Kailahun, in the eastern part of the country to save 222 UN peacekeepers that were still being held (Roy-Macaulay 2000). Shortly before, the deteriorating situation in Sierra Leone sparked Britain to send paratroopers, marines, and a variety of warships, helicopters and transport planes to evacuate 500 British citizens, as well as to offer support to UNAMSIL (Anon 2000b) - an offer which certainly kept UNAMSIL from disintegration.

Generally speaking, international reaction on the taking of UNAMSIL personnel as hostages was one of shock and outrage. Critics hammered the UN for its role and profile in Sierra Leone. The *New York Times*, for example, stated that Sierra Leone demonstrated the danger of sending a weak and inadequately trained peacekeeping force into a country where there was not a peace to keep. The paper called upon the UN to quickly reinforce the 8 700 peacekeepers already there and to regain control of an unravelling mission. For the *New York Times*, the situation

¹ This refers specifically to the period August 1998 to January 2001. During this time the DRC was ruled by Laurent Kabila - a period that was marked by war, insecurity and immense human suffering. In practical terms, the UN was unable and effectively impotent in averting conflict or ending the political turmoil in the DRC after the outbreak of serious conflict in 1998.

in Sierra Leone suggested a need to improve the planning and execution of UN peacekeeping operations to ensure that UN peacekeeping forces do not become casualties in the conflicts they are supposed to help end. "An international force must then be given the financial resources, manpower and disciplined command needed to protect itself and effectively carry out its mandate" (Anon 2000c).

In a similar vein, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) stated that the situation of the UN in Sierra Leone looked increasingly shaky: "As things stand there is no meaningful peace in Sierra Leone to keep. If the UN force was supposed to overawe the locals and effectively impose a settlement, then it simply wasn't equipped, configured or sufficiently well-trained to do so." The BBC also reflected upon the fact that in both Bosnia and Kosovo a well-trained, well-equipped force of Western troops was deployed rapidly with overwhelming force. "Local militias would have been crazy to resist." In these cases, major powers like the US, Britain and France were heavily involved. Their forces - being part of NATO - were also well used to working alongside each other. In Sierra Leone "[t]he UN force is drawn from sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. Its soldiers have little experience of operating together and in many cases have little experience of this type of operation." However, the BBC made it clear that "[i]t is not their fault: major western powers have refused to become involved" (BBC 2000).

The debacle surrounding UNAMSIL reopened the discourse on the possible role of private military companies in suppressing rebels in conflict-stricken African states. In fact, many observers and analysts strongly came out in favour of private military companies as part of the answer to crises such as that in Sierra Leone.

However, the inability of the UN to impact on Africa did not come as a surprise. In 1998, for instance, the Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, pointed out in a most significant document on Africa, *The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa*, that "United Nations peacekeeping will not always be the best answer to every problem, either in Africa or elsewhere". He also conceded that conflict in Africa posed a major challenge to UN efforts designed to ensure global peace, prosperity and human rights for all (UN 1998).

Early in 2000, Annan appointed a Panel on UN Peace Operations with a view to assessing and commenting on the UN's peacekeeping capabilities. In August 2000, the panel published a report on the reform of UN peacekeeping operations - com-

monly referred to as the Brahimi report.² The report explicitly stated that "[o]ver the last decade, the United Nations has repeatedly failed to meet the challenge (of peacekeeping), and it can do no better today" (Panel on UN Peace Operations 2000a). Ostensibly informed on and influenced by events in Sierra Leone, the basic and unambiguous message of the Brahimi report was that the UN could not perform the principal mission for which it was created - maintaining peace (Malan 2001:120-1).

Yet, members of the Security Council clearly indicated that they wanted to ensure an effective role for this institution in the maintenance of international peace and security, particularly in Africa. To this end, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1318(2000) on [e]nsuring an effective role for the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, particularly in Africa. By adopting this resolution, members of the Council reaffirmed their determination to give equal priority to the maintenance of international peace and security in every region of the world. In view of the particular needs of Africa, they also committed the UN to give special attention to the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, and to the specific characteristics of African conflicts (UN Security Council 2000). Since the taking of numerous hostages by the RUF in May 2000, the UN moved to increase the capacity of UNAMSIL to a strength of 17 000 (UN Department of Public Information 2002c). The troops now on duty in Sierra Leone constitute the largest peace force that the world body has currently assembled.

Still, Malan (2001:120) contends that the Brahimi report did little to address the dilemmas of UN forces that are confronted with armed aggression. The report also did not venture beyond the improvement of consensual peacekeeping operations in fairly benign security situations - peacekeeping operations that are the least likely to occur in African environments. Furthermore, the report confirms the fact that where enforcement action is required, this continues to remain the exclusive preserve of "coalitions of willing states" (Panel on UN Peace Operations 2000b). In this regard, the role of the OAU and subregional organisations in Africa are of significance and are assessed below.

4. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OAU

Regional organisations, whether political or economic, are obliged to play an active role in regional security (Olinisakin 1998:2). In *An Agenda for Peace*, Boutros Boutros-Ghali noted that the Charter of the organisation devoted Chapter VIII to

² The 10-member panel was chaired by Algerian Foreign Minister, Lakhdar Brahimi.

regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action. The UN had encouraged a variety of complementary efforts in this regard and the OAU joined efforts with the UN regarding the situation in Somalia (Boutros-Ghali 1992:14). A number of years later, his successor, Kofi Annan, emphasised the need for co-operation between the UN and other role-players:

Within the context of the United Nations primary responsibility for matters of international peace and security, providing support for regional and sub-regional initiatives in Africa is both necessary and desirable. Such support is necessary because the United Nations lacks the capacity, resources and expertise to address all problems that may arise in Africa. It is desirable because wherever possible the international community should strive to complement rather than supplant African efforts to resolve Africa's problems (Annan 1998).

Referring specifically to enforcement action, the Brahimi report explicitly states that the UN "does not wage war" and, as already mentioned, where enforcement action is necessary, such action is consistently entrusted to other role-players, with the authorisation of the Security Council (Panel on UN Peace Operations 2000b). This implies that much is expected from role-players in Africa - especially regarding the more difficult peacekeeping tasks on the continent.

The question is: what role has the OAU since its inception in 1963 played in the field of peacekeeping in Africa in an effort to complement the efforts of the UN? Generally speaking, ad hoc arrangements were in common use in OAU dealings with interstate conflicts, while intrastate conflicts were largely left to each member state to take care of (Nhara 1995:103). Another relevant factor in this context relates to certain core principles of the OAU, which member states pledged to "observe scrupulously". These are:

- the sovereign equality of all states;
- non-interference in the internal affairs of states; and
- respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state and its inalienable right to independent existence.

These provisions mean that unless the government of the state in question decides to ask for international support for conciliation in interstate or intrastate conflicts, or the Security Council decides that intervention is required, there are no coercive

instruments to address any incipient crises. In addition to ad hoc arrangements, these provisions have constantly posed particular difficulties in conflict management and resolution in African states wrecked by civil war or other forms of violent dissent (Steyn 1997:9).

In 1991, the OAU committed itself to deploying greater efforts towards the creation of an enabling environment for conflict prevention, management and resolution (Organisation of African Unity undated). The **Kampala Document** of 23 May 1991 represented the first concerted call for an African peacekeeping body. Although not an official OAU document, it nevertheless carried considerable weight.

The **Kampala Document** it was suggested that Africa should institute a continental peacekeeping machinery as an important instrument for the preservation of peace in instances which potentially or actually threaten the security of African state(s) or the continent as a whole. In order to realise the establishment of a continental peacekeeping body, each participating member state was called upon to implement special training measures in peacekeeping operations for a contingent of its armed forces. In view of this, a continental peacekeeping operation was regarded as an ad hoc operation through rapid mobilisation of pre-agreed manpower and financial contributions from member states (Anon 1991:iv-v).

Another important milestone in the contemporary history of Africa was the establishment of the OAU's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management (hereafter mechanism) and Resolution in Cairo in 1993. During the Ordinary Session of the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in 1992 in Dakar, the Secretary-General submitted his proposals for the establishment, within the OAU General Secretariat, of such a mechanism. In 1993, a declaration leading to its establishment was adopted by the Heads of State and Government in Cairo. However, OAU discussions on the necessity of adopting the proposed mechanism led to a decision that peacekeeping should not constitute a priority activity of the OAU - at least not at that point. The rationale behind this decision was that "peacekeeping was not only an expensive undertaking but also a difficult and complex exercise" (OAU 1995:8-9). Thus it would seem that the leaders of Africa did not really envisage any serious role for the OAU in keeping the peace on the continent.

In 1995 a senior functionary of the OAU, William Nhara, admitted that the mechanism could not be put into operation "because of delays in the exchange of information on conflict trends and a shortage of resources". He also cited a problem on the part of the UN and especially the major powers to become directly involved

in peacekeeping operations (Nhara 1996:105-6). In view of the above, Landsberg (1999:48) summarised Africa's dilemma as follows:

The UN Security Council is today a deeply divided construct. It is both unwilling and reluctant to commit blue helmets to Africa's troubled spots. The UN Security Council has turned it into a new fashion to try and devolve power and responsibility away from itself to other regional and subregional actors such as the OAU... Failed missions then inevitably landed in the hands of the overstretched and struggling OAU. The much touted OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution has had a less than successful run in coming to terms with war and conflict in Africa since 1993.

In this context, Landsberg (1999:49) remarked that the OAU had far greater capacity to undertake observer, rather than peacekeeping missions. In a similar vein, Olinisakin (1998:2) argued that the OAU always had the capacity to resolve some types of conflict, particularly those that had not escalated to greater levels of violence. As such, the OAU was more gifted in the field of mediation, conciliation and arbitration as seen in the Cold War period. It also appeared to have the capacity to conduct limited military operations - akin to traditional peacekeeping ones - in support of diplomacy. Beyond this, the OAU did not seem to have the political will and financial means to conduct major peacekeeping operations, let alone peacekeeping operations required by the conflicts of the 1990s.

Thus it should be clear that the OAU was not in a position to field peacekeeping operations of even a modest size and complexity. A fundamental question is therefore whether the AU³ will be more able to make a significant impact on the continent. Although it is still too early to tell, it can be stated that the willingness to undertake peacekeeping operations will be fundamental to the question. In fact, "[i]t is the willingness to undertake peacekeeping operations that gives some of Africa's subregional organisations a decided advantage" (Berman and Sams 2000:74).

5. ROLES AND CAPABILITIES OF SUBREGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Traditionally, regionalism implies co-operation among states in geographically proximate and delimited areas for the pursuit of mutual gain in one or more areas. It is often argued that the great advantage of making subregional organisations

³ The AU replaced the OAU as continental organisation in July 2002.

responsible for peacekeeping is that neighbours are more familiar with each other's problems than outsiders. This implies that neighbours usually have a fairly common culture, a common social identity, a common history and similar experience (Nhara 1996:102).

In Africa, subregional organisations began featuring as important peacekeeping instruments in the 1990s as it is increasingly being accepted that there is a need for Africans to take care of their own security requirements. In this regard, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with its "military arm" the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), as well as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), are perhaps the best known subregional organisations as regards involvement in peacekeeping endeavours. In 1998, Annan formally acknowledged the importance of the co-deployment of UN forces with subregional or multinational forces in Africa. With reference to UN-ECOWAS co-deployment in Liberia,⁴ he stated that "the experience in Liberia shows clearly the contribution that can be made by a subregional organisation such as ECOWAS when dealing with so complex a situation, and the key role that the United Nations can play in support of such efforts" (Annan 1998).

Well aware of the UN's limitations in impacting upon the continent, African states and specific role-players at subregional level have shown a clear willingness to prepare for and undertake combined diplomatic and military action. The "indigenous" intervention operations in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, the DRC and Lesotho are of particular interest, as these would seem to represent a new dimension in the management of peacekeeping in Africa.

Of all the subregional organisations, ECOWAS has made the most progress in fielding a credible peacekeeping force by creating ECOMOG, but each of the endeavours of this "military arm" had troubling aspects and implications. As far as the SADC is concerned, an Organ for Politics, Defence and Security was created in the mid-1990s to deal with conflict in Southern Africa at the highest political level. Yet, the SADC - which is potentially very significant in the domain of subregional peace and security - has effectively been paralysed in the field of conflict management due to the non-functioning of this Organ and broader tensions and divisions within the ranks of Southern African states (Berman and Sams 2000:382).

⁴ In the case of Liberia, the actual peacekeeping was done by ECOMOG, while the UN mission was deployed in 1993 to observe and monitor the process after ECOMOG had intervened militarily in the conflict in 1990.

On a more philosophical note it seems that while the devolution of responsibility for peacekeeping to subregional role-players offers the benefit of alleviating the burden for the overstretched UN, it could be contended that a number of problems and risks are associated with such action. The following is often argued (Cilliers and Malan 1996:339):

- A devolution of responsibility threatens to subvert firm UN guidance and control, and thus the impartiality and legitimacy of the UN in the process. Moreover, it could lead to the loss of control of an operation by the Security Council and the Secretary-General.
- Regional organisations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) have far greater operational force coherence than any multinational UN force - but this does not apply to subregional organisations in Africa where there is little prospect of doctrinal, command and equipment coherence. Furthermore, there are vast differences in the level of skills, training and education between the members of the armed forces of the majority of African states and those of the so-called developed world. Also, in contrast with some Scandinavian countries, for instance, peacekeepers from Africa are not volunteers who are carefully selected and psychologically tested - the cream of highly educated military forces.
- A subregional organisation will inevitably be viewed as less impartial than a multinational UN force drawn from further afield. In addition, there is always the risk of the perception of domination by a hegemon.

These arguments are certainly noteworthy and their validity is underscored by certain recent developments in Africa and further afield. Firstly, until a few years ago, intervention operations were conducted under the auspices of the UN and under the banner of peacekeeping and especially peace enforcement. The UN operations in Somalia were a typical example in this regard as it was basically an operation based on Chapter VII of the UN Charter. However, recent developments in Africa - specifically subregional intervention in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, the DRC and Lesotho - have all pointed towards intervention operations without UN endorsement.

With regard to the second point, the difference between peacekeeping in Africa and in the European situation was highlighted by developments in Kosovo. In the latter case, the peace process draws on the support of a number of wealthy nations that are members of the European Union and NATO (Panel on UN Peace Operations 2000b). Accordingly, the UN enjoys the security framework provided by well-

trained and properly equipped peacekeepers. Moreover, the peace process is facilitated by roughly tenfold more troops than the number of UN troops currently deployed in the DRC.⁵ This implies that where a peace can draw on the support of a number of wealthy or relatively wealthy (sub)regional actors, the UN could be successful in conflict resolution and management. It should furthermore be taken into account that NATO members learnt articulated serious lessons from their experience in the Balkans, and that they are at an advanced stage of doctrinal development for operations in the realm of peace and security. African states, on the other hand, suffer from a colonial heritage that brought a rough divide between especially militaries that espoused French doctrine and militaries that espoused British doctrine (Malan 2000:2). In view of this, Berman and Sams (2000:7;380) contend that even though subregional organisations have made noticeable strides over the past decade in assuming primary responsibility for promoting peace and security, "African peacekeeping capabilities, however, have lagged behind their willingness to intervene".

Thirdly, it could be pointed out that ECOMOG has since its inception been controlled largely by Nigeria. Critics of the organisation often complain that the organisation is a thin veil for Nigerian hegemonic ambitions. This generally accompanies accusations that Nigerians control all the key staff positions in ECOMOG and unfairly divert resources to their fellow countrymen. It also includes allegations that Nigeria lacks a profile of neutrality, which has led to a severe degradation of ECOMOG's credibility as a role-player in the Liberian conflict. Furthermore, in 1997, to mention a specific example, ECOMOG made international headlines when it intervened in Sierra Leone to reverse a military *coup* and restore power to elected President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. Nigerian domination was particularly prominent as hundreds of Nigerian troops were sent in with a view to driving out the military regime.

However, as with all things, a number of arguments may also be raised in favour of subregional peacekeeping action in Africa. In this regard, the following is often contended (Cilliers and Malan 1996:341):

- Subregional peacekeepers have a knowledge of the local environment and languages. This implies that African customs and traditions are often incomprehensible to European or Asian troops.

⁵ NATO has been able to deploy a force of almost 50 000 soldiers and support personnel in Kosovo, as opposed to less than 5 000 UN military personnel currently deployed in the DRC.

- A number of African countries have experience of UN peacekeeping operations. There is therefore a considerable pool of experience built up within African militaries.

Firstly, the point that African culture, customs and traditions are often incomprehensible to peacekeepers from other continents is certainly a valid argument. In short, the following statement of a former Australian peacekeeper bears testimony to this:

Another example (during the UN operation in Somalia) arose from the Somali custom of flashing car headlights up and down many times when approaching another car or pedestrian. It is very annoying to westerners but it is the local custom... On one occasion I was in a car when the driver was flashing an oncoming patrol. As we passed, one of the soldiers (from a western country) kicked the car and yelled "we see you, you dog". If the soldier had been aware of this custom and the reason behind it, he might have been more tolerant and not felt the need to insult (Kiesecker 1993:74).

With regard to the second point, it could be pointed out that Botswana, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Zimbabwe and others are all experienced in the field of UN peacekeeping. In addition, a number of African states have officially expressed their willingness to participate in the UN Standby Arrangements System: Benin, Chad, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zambia and Zimbabwe (UN Department of Public Information 2002b). Considering Africa's international position, the overwhelming majority of the top ten contributors of uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping operations worldwide are developing countries – three of them are African states, namely Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria (UN Department of Public Information 2002b).

6. ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSION

Over and above, it could be argued that the few advantages of subregional peacekeeping are somewhat negated by the complex nature of operations in the realm of peace and security - especially in the case of enforcement action (Cilliers and Malan 1996:341). Nonetheless, African role-players and states have to accept that they will have to share the burden for peacekeeping on the African continent. In the words of the Brahimi report: "[t]he likelihood of a KFOR⁶-type of operation being deployed in Africa in the near future seems remote given current trends". The

⁶ The international security presence in Kosovo is known as KFOR; derived from Kosovo Force.

report also pointed out that "no developed country currently contributes troops to the most difficult United Nations-led peacekeeping operations from a security perspective", namely the operations in Sierra Leone and the DRC (Panel on UN Peace Operations 2000b).

Moreover, security problems in Africa have already led to a situation where the UN is practically relying on partnerships with willing regional organisations and alliances in Africa as far as the maintenance of peace and security in Africa is concerned. This relates to the idea of shared responsibility between the UN and continental stakeholders for the effective management of conflicts in Africa. Even the fact that a number of African states are extremely poor and do not possess adequate military capacities to take part in multinational military action, is not likely to change the trend of greater reliance on (sub-) regional security arrangements or "coalitions of the willing".

To this end, the respective subregional role-players need to consider as a top priority the proper structuring, functioning and funding of their respective institutional arrangements in the domain of peace and security. Furthermore, there are a number of unresolved issues regarding the present and future conduct of operations in the realm of peace and security. Thus the development of an unambiguous policy on how to manage involvement in peacekeeping would seem to be imperative. For effective subregional deployment Williams (1999:171-2) argues that the challenge is to co-ordinate the different national interests and to synthesise them into a common and cohesive subregional strategy shared by all countries. Also, the legal and procedural mandates governing the participation of countries in peacekeeping need to be clearly determined.

Furthermore, many issues still remain to be thrashed out as regards an ideal arrangement between the UN, the continental level and role-players at subregional level. Vogt (1998:12) argued some time ago that the ideal arrangement would be one in which the OAU is fully involved in all aspects of the preparation of African forces for UN peacekeeping operations. The OAU should be in a position to deploy peacekeeping forces into African conflicts, based on a mandate from the Security Council and with active financial support from the UN. This should be done with due consideration of the fact that some of the subregional organisations have become the cutting edge of conflict management.

These comments were of course made before the historic Extraordinary Summit of the OAU in March 2001 in Sirte, Libya, where the Assembly of Heads of State and Government committed African states to the establishment of the AU by unanimous decision. In this context, it needs to be noted that the relevance of the OAU came under scrutiny in Sirte, especially given the fact that its founding principles were defined in terms of the struggle against colonialism and narrow concerns with national sovereignty. Accordingly, the immediate focus in the post-Sirte phase became the replacement of the OAU by the AU with a Pan-African Parliament, Court of Justice and Economic and Social Commission as its main instruments (Maloka 2001:3).

The question is: what can be expected from the AU? Firstly, while the AU will (also) be battling with limited resources, it appears that this institution is structurally better organised than the OAU to deal with conflict management and to co-ordinate efforts in the field of peace and security on the African continent. Also, there seems to be more political will amongst African leaders to deal with the problems on the continent from a continental platform. Thirdly, there seems to be a realisation on the part of leading figures that the survival of the AU will depend on the extent to which it will be able to mobilise resources for its sustenance. What is of special interest, is that article 3(f) of the Constitutive Act of the AU commits this organisation to promote peace, security, and stability on the continent. Especially significant - and a clear deviation from the OAU Charter - is article 4(h) that provides 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: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity" (OAU 2001:4;8).

Given this somewhat optimistic perspective, it appears that the AU could play a more constructive role (than the OAU) in ensuring that the idea of shared responsibility between the UN and African role-players is attended to and clarified. Also, the suggestion by Vogt (1998:12) that Africa needs a continental institution that should be involved in all aspects of the preparation and deployment of peacekeepers on the continent may well be realised in the medium term.

Nhara (1996:102) commented earlier that "[i]n graphic terms, the partnership between the UN and the OAU, must be viewed together with its subregional organisations, as pyramid-shaped" and that "[t]he biggest advantage of having the OAU midway down the pyramid is that the organisation is neither too far from, not too near the theatres of conflict. It is, therefore, in a position to co-ordinate all activities relating to conflict management". This type of model will probably also

apply to the AU as an organisation between the apex (the UN) and the base (subregional organisations). Therefore, it is trusted that this new continental organisation will pick up on some of the outstanding and unresolved issues with a view to ensuring that less of an "ad hococracy" is the order of the day in Africa concerning intervention action and conflict management.

In view of the above, it seems that the modalities, legal framework and practical basis for delegating or for sharing the responsibility for peace and security in Africa need to be clarified. The challenge remains to establish a legitimate and acceptable basis for UN-African involvement in joint ventures so as to ensure appropriate response to situations where the security of people is imperilled.

Practically speaking and put simply, it could be argued that the following unresolved issues need to be addressed (Malan 2000:166-74):

- When and where to intervene.
- Who should intervene.
- How to intervene.

Against this background the need is to achieve more legitimacy and greater consistency with regard to intervention action, conflict management and resolution. This is not only required in terms of the principles and doctrine that guide operations, but also as regards the way in which to approach conflicts and apply appropriate action with the required resources. What is therefore necessary, is to establish a firm and broad coalition that can respond positively and constructively to security challenges in Africa at a time when the continent stands at a critical juncture in its history. In this regard, it is trusted that the AU may bring some new movement and direction in an area that has for too long been an outstanding and unresolved issue in the maintenance of peace and security on the African continent.

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