THE OAU AND AFRICAN SUBREGIONAL ORGANISATIONS –

A closer look at the 'peace pyramid'[1]
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INTRODUCTION

At the end of 1998, the International Peace Academy (IPA) joined the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in presenting a Seminar on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping in Africa. The seminar was more challenging than most conferences that have been held on *"peacekeeping in Africa."* It devoted significant attention to the interrelated and urgent themes of *"Relationships between the OAU and Sub-Regional Organisations on Peacaekeeping in Africa"* and the *"Development of Sub-Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Management."*

Future relationships between the OAU and subregional organisations in the realm of conflict management and peacekeeping will depend, in no small measure, upon the development of both entities. Most analysts understand the nature and limitations of the United Nations as a mechanism for conflict management. Most African analysts and a good number of international scholars are also coming to understand the merits and limits of the OAU as an intergovernmental conflict resolution body. However, such understanding dissipates rapidly as we move into the realm of subregional organisations in Africa — for these entities are extremely diverse in terms of structure, resources and orientation.

The aim of this paper is, firstly, to try and place African subregional organisations (and their member states) in a security context, and to identify their perceived place in conflict management endeavours. This is followed by the generation of a few general guidelines for action, and the suggestion of some structural issues that need to be addressed in an effort to enhance the role of subregional organisations and to better define reltionships between these and the OAU.

REGIONS, SUBREGIONS AND SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS

Traditionally, regionalism implies co-operation among states in geographically proximate and delimited areas for the pursuit of mutual gain in one or more issue areas. In most of the successful examples 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 organisations over time, regionalism and state strength do not stand in opposition to one another, and states remain the essential building blocks from which such arrangements are constructed.[2]

Article 52 of the UN Charter allows states to form regional organisations for dealing with such matters of peace and security *"as are appropriate for regional action."* Although not defined in the Charter, such regional organisations presumably involve co-operation treaties that are entered into by geographically proximate states. And, while nothing is mentioned of subregions, it is best to regard the two as synonymous beyond the context of relationships between the OAU and various African regional organisations.[3]

Although often misperceived as a regional organisation, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is a multinational alliance for collective self-defence, as was the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. This distinction is important, for it has fundamental implications for the legality of enforcement actions. A defensive alliance, according to Article 51 of the UN Charter, may use force in self-defence, without waiting for the Security Council to take action (only in response to an armed attack, of course). On the other hand, Article 53(1) allows a regional organisation to take enforcement action — even if there was no prior armed attack — but such action requires Security Council authorisation. Article 54 also requires that the Security Council *"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."*

While arrangements for collective defence and collective security are clearly related, there is also a significant distinction between the two. A collective defence agreement involves an alliance between two or more states whereby they undertake to come to the assistance of whichever party suffers an attack. Collective security, on the other hand, is an agreement among states to renounce the use of force in settling their disputes, while at the same time agreeing to use force against one of their number who breaks this rule. Under a collective security arrangement, such as the UN Charter, individual member states lose certain sovereign rights — the most important being the right to resort to force in self-defence. A member state that is subject to attack may use direct force in self-defence only as an interim measure. If and when the collectivity takes action, the state's right falls away.

It is also important to note that the UN, as an intergovernmental organisation dedicated primarily to the maintaining of collective security, is not a world government. Each member state is presumed to remain sovereign in all areas except that of security, where the Organisation has superior powers. Although the UN has no competence over matters falling within a state's domestic jurisdiction, the Security Council is the only international organ with the legal right to override state sovereignty. However, it can only do so if, in terms of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, it finds that there is a threat to the peace, a breach of the peace, or an act of aggression.[4]

African states all belong to the most ambitious (and arguably, most successful) collective security arrangement ever to be conceived — the United Nations Organisation. They also belong to the Organisation of African Unity, 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 African 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).[5]

ANAD has recently begun to investigate the modalities for a subregional peacekeeping force in West Africa, but its efforts may serve to complicate rather than complement other subregional peace-keeping developments in West Africa. On the opposite side of the continent, the Commission for East African Co-operation (EAC) is presently considering a draft treaty to re-establish the East African Community. Although this provides a possible basis for joint military operations, it is unclear how any peacekeeping role for the organisation would fit in with existing agreements and overlapping membership of other subregional organisations.[6]

Of course, this raises the issue of the proliferation of the number of subregional collective security or collective defence organisations with which the OAU must interact. It appears that the OAU has hitherto recognised five main subregions in Africa, and prioritised only one corresponding organisation 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 Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the South; and
- the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in the Central African subregion.

ECOWAS is perhaps the best known of these organisations, having gained a good measure of international recognition through its massive peacekeeping efforts in Liberia and more recently in Sierra Leone. SADC is also fast gaining a reputation for involvement in robust conflict management endeavours, and IGAD has also begun to assert a role for itself in the resolution of subregional conflict.

On the other hand, much less is commonly known or understood about the roles of ECCAS and UMA. Indeed, UMA is just as well-known (or unknown) as the Ugandan Manufacturers Association (also known as UMA). The Arab Maghreb Union overlaps the little-known community of Sahelian-Saharan states, whose member countries include Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Mali, Niger and Sudan. It is unclear whether the latter is regarded as a bona fide subregional collective security organisation, but the present chairperson, Colonel Muammar el-Gadaffi of Libya, recently suggested the creation of an intervention force under this arrangement to help settle the border dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Despite their diversity, it is safe to say that all subregional organisations in Africa — even the larger ones such as ECOWAS and SADC — lack an institutionalised crisis prevention and management mechanism. As a result, regional military involvement in conflict resolution has been *ad hoc* and not in accordance with a specific operating procedure.

In the Liberian conflict, for example, the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government established a Community Standing Mediation Committee, which in turn created the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) at its inaugural session. In Sierra Leone, by contrast, the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government did not formally approve of the ECOMOG force until some three months after its intervention. Similarly, the ministerial-level ECOWAS Defence Council voted to extend ECOMOG's mandate to Guinea Bissau, at a time when the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government had not yet addressed the issue.[7] Moreover, the stated intention of ECOWAS to establish a permanent peacekeeping force does not address the critical issue of who will determine when and how it will be deployed.

Likewise, the great deficiency within SADC relates to the absence of conflict management structures — and of integrated systems, processes and methods to deal with issues such as human rights 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 countries are understandably sensitive.

Swaziland, for example, is perceived to be non-democratic, while Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo are still engaged in devastating civil wars over who should rule. Countries such as Zambia and Zimbabwe have been accused of being undemocratic in election-related practices, while some see South Africa drifting towards one-party dominance in the absence of an effective political opposition to the African National Congress. In other countries, such as Lesotho, military and para-military intervention in politics seems to remain a real threat.

Despite their obvious shortcomings, these diverse 'subregional organisations' are regarded by many as primary units of security and conflict management for the African continent. Indeed, the OAU seems to have been relegated to a conflict management role as an intermediary — between the UN with its higher moral authority for ensuring international peace and security on the one hand, and the subregional organisations with their perceived greater political will and executive power on the other hand. This notion has found various expressions — from talk of 'layered responses' to African conflicts, to ideas of pyramidal conflict management structures for the continent.

PYRAMIDS AND PEACEKEEPING
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 phased and prioritised facilitating processes is needed for their management. Boutros-Ghali's An Agenda for Peace proposed a broad spectrum of responses to conflict situations: from preventive diplomacy and preventive deployment through to peacekeeping, peace enforcement and post-conflict peacebuilding. However, these concepts were not integrated into a coherent hierarchy of responses that would work at specific points along the 'peace spectrum'. Nor has an

appropriate division of labour, based on relative advantage, been articulated for the various government and intergovernment actors who are willing and able to wield these conflict management tools.

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 organisations concentrated on preventive political and diplomatic measures. This changed in the 1990s. A proliferation of devastating internal conflicts saw several actors (governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental) becoming involved in attempts to resolve or ameliorate the same conflicts.[8] This soon led to the idea of layered responses to African crises, whereby the initial response would come from local and national organisations, followed by responses at the subregional and regional (OAU) levels, and finally by those of the UN and the broader international community. It was thought that this would overcome inertia at the level of the UN, and enable more rapid and appropriate responses at much lower levels of the international security framework.

Under the auspices of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, the OAU is indeed mandated to closely co-ordinate its activities with the UN and with African regional and subregional organisations, and to co-operate, where appropriate, with neighbouring countries. There is thus a strong perception among Africans that the future of conflict resolution and peacekeeping rests on a pyramidal security framework, which is aptly described by Nhara as follows:

"In graphic terms, and for the purposes of conflict management, the partnership between the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity, together with its corresponding sub-regional organisations, should be akin to a pyramid. At the top of that pyramid should be the United Nations 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 organisations. And, between the apex and the base, the OAU should provide the critical linkage."[9]

The great advantage of this type of approach to conflict management in Africa is that neighbours are more familiar with each other's problems than outsiders. Neighbours usually have a fairly common culture, a common social identity, a common history and similar experiences. The disadvantage, however, is that close proximity often generates tension and reduces the spirit of impartiality between neighbours — to the extent that they sometimes become part of the problem, rather than part of the solution.[10]

An overriding interest in their neighbourhood's stability, and their actual or potential leverage with disputants, means that subregional organisations such as ECOWAS, IGAD and SADC may be uniquely qualified to launch preventive diplomacy efforts — and to effect viable and sustainable negotiated settlements in cases of civil war. However, the role of regional organisations in conflict resolution has become extremely convoluted. 'Peacekeeping' has become more robust than ever before, and new operations are increasingly launched with a strong Chapter VII mandate. Drawing extensively on the ECOMOG experience, and perhaps confused by NATO's unique resources as a defensive alliance without peer, these peace missions have been delegated to regional organisations and arrangements because, as Kofi Annan has admitted:

"The United Nations 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 *Member States' coalitions of the willing offer the most effective deterrent to aggression or to the escalation or spread of an ongoing conflict ... "*[11]

This finding reinforces the type of thinking that will perpetuate the trend towards using (sub)regional organisations as peace enforcers. For example, Corum believes that:

"Regional organisations and coalitions, due to their greater familiarity with conflicts in their own area and their clear national interest in maintaining regional stability, are better motivated to employ force when necessary. The UN and United States ought to provide diplomatic support to such operations and, when necessary, aid and financial support. The UN can

contribute more effectively to peace by entering conflict as an observer or peace keeper after regional intervention has compelled stability."[12]

This has indeed seemed to hold true. Substantial and forceful missions have been conducted since 1990 by ECOWAS in West Africa, and since July 1992 by Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. While this robust 'peacekeeping' has been undertaken by regional organisations and alliances, much smaller UN missions have been deployed to observe the 'peacekeepers' as well as the belligerents (for example UNOMIL in Liberia, UNOMIG in Georgia, and UNMOT in Tajikistan).

This trend has been accepted rather uncritically by African analysts, 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 in the debate 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.

However, the notion of a pyramid implies a set of hierarchical bureaucratic relationships between the UN, the OAU and African subregional organisations. This is clearly extremely problematic, for all three levels of organisation are made up of nation states that belong simultaneously to these (and often many other) intergovernmental organisations. Moreover, while the UN, the OAU and some subregional organisations have permanent secretariats, the highest level of decision-making occurs through the votes of member states. It is thus state actors, rather than subregional organisations, that form the base, the body and the apex of the peace pyramid.

AFRICAN STATES AND THE SECURITY DILEMMA

Despite the prophets of 'globalisation', states have remained the principal 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.[13]

In many of these crises, 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, in the form of physical protection, is provided for each citizen against every other, against the arbitrary actions of the state, and against threatening actions from beyond the borders of the state.[14]

The failure of a 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 one's own security causes reactions that, in the end, can make one less secure."*[15] When groups perceive the state not to be capable, or willing, to provide security they will take their own measures for protection. In the process, security becomes privatised, or communalised.[16]

Such security, however, further undermines the viability of the state by causing a spiral of destabilising countermeasures. These reactions are likely to emerge when the offensive and defensive capabilities of groups, responding to their own insecurity, cannot be distinguished by other groups, and when offensive countermeasures appear to be more effective. This creates the incentive to seek security through pre-emptive actions.[17] The destabilising spiral of violence triggered by the security dilemma can lead to state collapse or disintegration once a crucial threshold of escalation has been breached.

It is thought that the security dilemma of marginal states can be addressed by constructing larger units of security. Where security dilemmas emerge that involve sovereign states in the international arena, larger institutional configurations or security regimes have been constructed.[18] The North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) is obviously the most prominent and successful modern example of such a configuration. However, African states that have scarcely emerged from devastating civil wars are also now being expected to play an active role in conflict resolution under the auspices of subregional organisations.

The prospects for subregional collective security or even defence regimes developing successfully in Africa is not considered to be good, exactly because states remain the basic building blocks and decisional *loci* of multinational security regimes. The process of state-formation and state-building in Africa, on the whole, has not produced very strong foundation stones for larger security constructs. Many African states came to independence through low intensity conflicts waged by liberation movements against colonial powers. Having taken power in this way, the new state incumbents were left highly exposed and vulnerable to challengers from within bent on using these very same methods against them.[19]

Since the demise of the Cold War, African states have become ever more vulnerable to armed insurgencies, and the success of such movements indicates the decline of these states as units of security. Insurgent movements have not only rivalled juridical states as units of coercion, but have also emerged as competing centres of security. This vulnerability has been exacerbated by creditor demands and conditionality requirements for smaller, more efficient bureaucracies. In some cases, downsizing and privatisation have lead to the demise of the territorial bureaucratic state, where the public domain cannot be defined, and security is privatised and redefined as a zero-sum good to be gained at the cost of society.[20]

This clearly indicates that we are busy trying to build hollow structures for conflict resolution in Africa — both at the level of the OAU and at that of subregional organisations. Our attempts to refine the relations between the two are thus also bound to be fruitless. Unless, of course, 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. As Vogt so candidly puts it:

"The OAU and the African sub-regional organisations need to be clearer on the moral and political principles which should inform the relationships between and within states in the region. These organisations 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 organisation."[21]

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

With a number of African states still trying to deal with the outcome of failed nationhood, 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 ideals and complex institutional mechanisms. The emphasis should be on simple but reliable structures for security co-operation, ones that can stabilise relations, prevent the spill-over of conflicts, secure emerging common values and, perhaps, lay the foundation for nascent security regimes.[22] Moreover, if this co-operation is to include joint military enforcement operations in support of peace processes, then this should be determined upfront, and the necessary legitimacy for such a course sought through the UN system.

As a principle, it has already been recommended by African military chiefs that the OAU approaches the UN to endorse and authorise a peace operation where this is a necessary response to an emergency on the continent. Only if the UN is unresponsive, was it felt that the OAU should be prepared to take preliminary action while continuing its efforts to elicit a positive response from the world body.[23] There is also agreement on the need for African efforts to strengthen UN capacity for peace operations by providing the bulk of a ready force package for utilisation by the UN, and for the OAU to be more assertive in placing African crises on the UN agenda.

The UN Secretary-General is already highly sensitive to African needs in the realm of conflict

management, as evidenced by his recent Report on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa. However, a constant theme of this report is the need for increased co-ordination among the principal intergovernmental bodies. For example, Annan states that:

"Peacemaking efforts need to be well co-ordinated and well prepared ... the newly established United Nations liaison office at OAU headquarters in Addis Ababa will consolidate co-operation between the two organisations and facilitate the co-ordinated deployment of political efforts to prevent, contain and resolve conflicts in Africa. ... Co-operation between the United Nations and sub-regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which are working actively to address issues of peace and security in their sub-regions, is also being strengthened."[24]

The type of co-operation envisaged is therefore not as hierarchical as 'peace pyramid theory' suggests, as it provides for direct linkages and lines of communication between the UN and subregional organisations. While emphasising the importance of the subregions, the Secretary-General also acknowledges the potential moral strength of the OAU in galvanising action by these organisations. Although he maintains that *"... broader international efforts ... [at conflict resolution] can succeed only if there is genuine co-operation and support of such measures by the sub-region"*, Annan goes on to emphasise that *"[t]he Organisation of African Unity has a leading role to play in ensuring such co-operation and support, in conjunction with the relevant sub-regional organisations."*[25]

Indeed, the emerging concept for the conduct of OAU peace operations envisages the use of subregional organisations, as a possible first line of reaction where the OAU is unable to act. African Chiefs of Defence Staff have recommended a brigade-sized contribution from each of the five African subregions, as a starting point for this type of capacity.[26] However, there has been no analysis of the type of organisational structure that would be needed for the legitimate and effective deployment of such military forces at the subregional level, nor of the possible linkages between such structures and the OAU and the UN. There has also been a dearth of progress on developing the non-military side of subregional security arrangements.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION
While the above guidelines may roughly indicate what is expected of subregional organisations, it is clear that the political frameworks for conflict management in the various African subregions are still in the elementary stages of development. If subregional organisations are to become an integral part of the partnership between the UN and the OAU in the fostering of peace and security on the African continent, then it is surely time for some serious deliberation on the type of structures needed for a conflict management mechanism. Pertinent points to ponder include membership, organisational focus, and organisational structure.

Membership
One of the most vexing aspects of the regional security architecture is the issue of states enjoying (or being burdened by) overlapping membership of a number of intergovernmental bodies that aspire to a role in security maintenance and conflict management. For example, should Tanzania lend priority to its contribution to conflict management under the auspices of the UN, the OAU, SADC or the EAC? And should the OAU/UN not also recognise the EAC and ANAD as legitimate subregional organisations for the management of conflict?

This problem is not unique in Africa. Europe, for example, has a highly complex regional security architecture that includes: the United Nations; the 55-member Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); the sixteen-member North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) plus fifteen NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) nations; and the 28-member West European Union (WEU). And, of course, this cannot be seen in isolation from the dynamics of economic integration under the European Union (EU) and its various institutions.[27] The difference, of course is that the smallest and poorest of these arrangements (PfP) can and does draw on the support of a number of wealthy industrialised states that are members of NATO and the EU. This adds to the viability of such arrangements, even though it may not relieve the confusion.

If we accept that all regional organisations in Africa will be comparatively poor, there are still 'political' aspects of membership to be considered. The West African example, where ECOWAS and ANAD overlap, suggests that membership of any regional security organisation should err on the side of inclusiveness, rather than exclusivity, and that this membership should be wider than that of any overlapping regional economic grouping — otherwise the economic grouping will tend to take the lead in conflict management initiatives.

European experiences also suggest that it is easier to allow for the expansion of a regional security arrangement than it is to expand an economic community of member states. While a longer-standing economic grouping (where mutual trust has historically been built) may form the core of membership, a system of differentiated membership (including full members, associate members, observers, dialogue partners, etc.) would seem to facilitate expansion in the security domain.

In this way, certain conflict-generating aspects of economic integration (and hence vacillation in decision-making) can be avoided, while benefiting from confidence-building among a wider range of countries. This is particularly relevant in Africa, where both border configuration and regional demarcation are largely artificial constructs, and where security concerns do not match arrangements for economic co-operation.

Organisational Focus

Most African subregional organisations have been born of a need for economic co-operation, and have only recently been expected to play a role in security co-operation and conflict management. This has resulted in a poor fit between roles and structures, as evidenced in SADC's inability to operationalise its Organ for Politics, Defence and Security. While this example may indicate that there is some merit in divorcing economic issues from security concerns, the example of ANAD warns against too narrow a conceptualisation of security, and of focusing almost exclusively on defence, rather than on several security 'baskets'.

The subregions should also be wary of 'jumping the gun' through the premature creation of a mutual defence pact. While a non-aggression pact is a good starting point for regional security co-operation, the inclusion of a mutual defence pact in the initial agenda endorsed by the SADC Summit for the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security was patently over-ambitious. Overly ambitious agendas tend to create doubt and suspicion, and eventually undermine the credibility of an institution when their terms simply cannot be met.

To borrow again from 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 the 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 subregional organisations may do well to take their lead from the OSCE and indeed the OAU — to accept the need to focus on the non-military components of security co-operation, and to reflect their importance in their organisational structures.

Organisational Structure

Credibility demands an organisation that is:
- realistic in terms of its aims and objectives;
- impartial in its dealings with members and non-members;
- reliable in terms of being consequent with decisions and actions; and
- legitimate in terms of its mandate and actions under international law.

The structure of any regional security organisation should therefore follow its focus and purpose.

Once again, the OSCE clearly reflects this principle. The creation of an Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which plays an active role in election monitoring and provides assistance with constitutional engineering, is an essential ingredient of an organisation which encompasses a number of formerly hegemonic regimes. Likewise, the High Commissioner for National Minorities lends credence to the notion of conflict prevention through early involvement in potential ethnic conflicts. The relevance of such structures should be obvious

to the African subregions, many of which have experienced a post-colonial history of ethnically-based single party governance.

Impartiality and reliability can only really be achieved with some type of permanent bureaucracy or secretariat. Given the negative impact of personality-based leadership at the presidential level, it would be advisable to create secretariats and to formalise bureaucratic arrangements for conflict management in subregional organisations, with clear channels of authority from summit level down to the level of officials. This would be essential for communicating with similar organisational levels within the UN and OAU secretariats. It is not necessary to recreate a UN Department of Peace-Keeping Operations or an OAU Conflict Management Division in the subregions, but organisations dealing with the life or death business of conflict resolution should at least have sufficient structural compatibility to allow for clear and regular communication.

For effective communication within subregional organisations, it is obviously important that a rational and regular system of interaction among members is created. The way the OAU operates has demonstrated the utility of conducting meetings, with declining frequency, from heads of state and government downwards, according to the levels of seniority of the attendant officials. This would allow for continuity, for delegation, and, most important, for the implementation of decisions taken at each level. The bottom line is that we need a number of levels of meaningful interaction below the presidents with all their political power, and above the colonels with too much fire-power.

CONCLUSION

The traumatic and violent political power-struggles that continue to rack the continent prove that there is a clear need to institutionalise African mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. While it is, no doubt, up to the subregions themselves to reach consensus on 'political' principles and standards, the organisational characteristics that would typify a functional and effective subregional mechanism for conflict management are pretty obvious. In addition to the well-emphasised need for co-ordination, these may be summed up as communication, compatibility, competence, and credibility.

In terms of process, there may be much wisdom in adopting a phased approach to regional security co-operation, beginning simply with confidence-building measures. However, the urgency of African security challenges precludes the luxury of a drawn out process of establishing workable conflict management mechanisms. The subregions should pick up on OAU initiatives and urgently begin with processes that lead to the adoption or confirmation of modest but meaningful security agendas that can be systematically expanded once member countries have exhibited a proven commitment to co-operation in these areas. By consulting with the UN and the OAU throughout, this will also lay the foundation for enhanced interaction between the various intergovernmental bodies.

The views of the UN Secretary-General are quite clear:

"With political will, rhetoric can truly be transformed into reality. Without it, not even the noblest sentiments will have a chance of success ... Africa must demonstrate the will to rely upon political rather than military responses to problems. Democratic channels for pursuing legitimate interests and expressing dissent must be protected, and political opposition respected and accommodated in constitutional forms ... Africa must summon the will to take good governance seriously, ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law, strengthening democratisation, and promoting transparency and capability in public administration."[28]

ENDNOTES

1. This is an edited version of a paper read at the IPA/OAU Seminar on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping in Africa, Addis Ababa, 29 November — 3 December 1998. It is published in support of Training for Peace, a project sponsored by Norway and executed by the ISS in partnership with the Norwegian Institute for International

Affairs (NUPI) and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD).

2. W Nhara, *Conflict Management and Peace Operations: The Role of the Organisation of African Unity and Subregional Organisations*, in M Malan (ed.), Resolute Partners: Building Peacekeeping Capacity in Southern Africa, ISS Monograph Series, 21, Institute for Security Studies, Halfway House, February 1998, p. 38.

3. The notion of subregions and subregional organisations seems fairly unique to the African security debate. For example, both the large Organisation for Security Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the smaller Western European Union (WEU) are regarded as 'regional organisations'. And, while the Organisation of American States (OAS) is a 'hemispheric organisation' that serves the interests of many smaller (Latin) American intergovernmental organisations, the latter are commonly referred to as regional organisations. The notion of subregions therefore reinforces the theme of a hierarchical security architecture in Africa, with the OAU presiding over a number of intergovernmental organisations on the continent.

4. Article 2(7) states that: *"Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorise the UN to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII."*

5. The *Accord de Non-Aggression et d'Assistance en Matière de Défense* was signed in June 1977 by Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo. Benin and Guinea Conakry were granted observer status at the meetings of ANAD. While originally conceived narrowly — as a non-aggression and mutual defence pact — ANAD is now moving beyond narrower conceptions of subregional security to include areas such as common policy formulation and co-operation on broader issues of human security, such as economic development, population migration, banditry, pollution, etc. It has a large permanent secretariat in Abidjan, and functions at the levels of a Conference of Heads of State and Government; a Council of Ministers; and a General Secretariat.

6. In June 1998, the three EAC member states — Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda — together with the US undertook their first joint peacekeeping exercise, Natural Fire, in Kenya.

7. See *ECOWAS Puts Out Plan to End Bissau Mutiny*, Panafrican News Agency, 5 July 1998, <www.africanews.org/pana/search.html>

8. See M A Vogt, *Cooperation between the United Nations and the OAU in the Management of African Conflicts,* paper presented at the Symposium on International Peace and Security: The African Experience, jointly sponsored by the South African Military Academy and the Institute for Security Studies, Saldanha, South Africa, 21-23 September 1998.

9. Nhara, op. cit., p. 39.

10. Witness, for example, the involvement of DRC neighbours Angola and Rwanda on opposite sides of the conflict in Congo — and differing opinions among key SADC member states, South Africa and Zimbabwe, on military support to President Kabila.

11. UN Report on Reform, released 16 July 1997, <www.un.org/reform/track2/part2.htm>

12. J S Corum, *Operational Problems in Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Operations,* in J Cilliers & G Mills (eds.), Peacekeeping in Africa, Volume 2, IDP and SAIIA, Halfway House, 1995, p. 132.

13. Ibid, p. 141.

14. P du Toit, *African Prospects for Security and Democracy Beyond the State*, paper presented at a symposium on International Peace and Security: The African Experience, jointly sponsored by the South African Military Academy and the Institute for Security Studies, Saldanha, 21-23 September, 1998.

15. B R Posen, *The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict*, Survival, 35(1), Spring 1993, p. 28.

16. Du Toit, op. cit.

17. Posen, op. cit.

18. R Jervis, *Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,* World Politics, 30(2), January 1978, pp. 167- 214.

19. Du Toit, op. cit.

20. Ibid.
21. Vogt, op. cit.
22. Nhara, op. cit., p. 38.
23. Second Meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Harare, Zimbabwe 24-25 October 1997.
24. United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa, A/52/871-S/1998/318, par. 20.
25. Ibid., par. 21.
26. Meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff, op. cit.
27. For a more detailed overview of the European security architecture in relation to African organisations, see M Malan, SADC and Sub-Regional Security: *Unde Venis et Quo Vadis?*, ISS Monograph Series, 19, Institute for Security Studies, Halfway House, February 1998.
28. United Nations, op. cit., par. 105.