NEW ISSUES IN REFUGEE RESEARCH

The role of African regional and sub-regional organisations in conflict prevention and resolution

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Introduction: the "new" face of conflict in Africa

Security analysts now seem to have agreed that the nature of global conflicts has changed since the end of the Cold War.[1] One of the most frequently cited manifestations of this change is the increase in the number of intra-state conflicts. Grisly developments in Cambodia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Liberia, just to mention a few, left devastating consequences for a world that was expecting peace dividends after the end of the Cold War. Amongst others, this emergent pattern of conflict is rooted in:

(a)   tensions between sub-national groups stemming from the collapse of old patterns of relationships that provided the framework for collaboration among the many ethnic groups in most states;

(b)   disputes over resource sharing arising from gross disparities in wealth among different groups within the same countries and the consequent struggles for reform of economic systems to ensure an equitable distribution of economic power;

(c)   absence of democratic structures, culture and practice, and the consequent struggle for democratisation, good governance and reform of political systems;

(d)   systemic failures in the administration of justice and the inability of states to guarantee the security of the population;

(e)   issues relating to religious cleavages and religious fundamentalism.[2]

Paradoxically, however, just as the complexities of war have changed, so also has the wish for peace increased,[3] evidenced, among other things, by the increased efforts being made to prevent and resolve global conflicts. Africa has figured prominently in both tendencies. While the security problems in some of the countries resulted in the collapse of state structures, with many others, too, gasping for survival amidst formidable odds, international responses to the cataclysmic effects of war also increased. Regional organisations, NGOs and the United Nations came out forcefully to explore avenues for peace. The total paralysis of governance and breakdown in law and order that have accompanied most of these conflicts have, however, meant that international efforts to resolve them have had to go beyond military and humanitarian tasks to include the promotion of reconciliation and re-establishment of effective government.[4]

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[1] For more on this, see, among others, Elise Boulding (ed.) *New Agenda for Peace Research: Conflict and Security Re-examined*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992; Chester Crocker (ed.) *Managing Global Chaos,* Washington: USIP Press, 1996; John Baylis and Steve Smith, (eds.) *The Globalisation of World Peace,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, Adebayo Oyebade and Abiodun Alao (eds.) *Africa after the Cold War: The Changing Perspective on Security*, Trenton: Africa World Press, 1997. Sola Akinrinade and Amadu Sesay, *Africa in the Post-Cold War International System*, London: Cassell, 1997, Michael Hogan (ed.) *The End of the Cold War: Its Meaning and Implications*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; Hans-Henrik and George Sorensen, *Whose World Order? Uneven Globalisation and the End of the Cold War*, Boulder: Westview, 1995; Jason Ralph, "Security Dilemmas and the end of the Cold War", *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4, Oct. 1999.
[2] Quoted from Sola Akinrinade, "Proceeding from the ECOMOG Experiment", Unpublished mimeo.
[3] Ramesh Thakur has discussed this paradox at some length in his article "Peace Research", in *Work in Progress*, Tokyo: United Nations University Bulletin, Vol. 15, No. 3, Summer 1999.
[4] Boutros Boutros-Ghali "Supplement to Agenda for Peace: Position Paper of the UN Secretary-General on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations" A/50/60-S/1995/1, 3 January 1995, in *An*

One reason for the extensive interest in post-Cold War African conflicts has been their devastating consequences on the civilian population, especially women and children. In wars often prosecuted by armed groups that ignore international conventions governing the conduct of conflict, the suffering of the civilian population has evoked compassion from the international community. Also included in this sympathy are the refugees and internally displaced people. While Africa has historically produced the world's largest number of refugees, the post-Cold War increase in intra-state conflicts has further worsened the situation, thus putting more pressure on those involved in managing conflicts in the continent.[5]

Of all the actors that have intervened in post-Cold War African conflicts, perhaps the most important are the regional and sub-regional organisations. Indeed, the complexities of post-Cold War politics have resulted in innovative initiatives in conflict management at regional and sub-regional levels. However, while the intervention of these organisations in conflicts has been decisive and sometimes extensive, it has also often been controversial, with some people blaming the organisations for going too far, and others blaming them for not going far enough. Indeed, those who speculate on the "ifs" of history have sometimes wondered whether there would have been a quicker resolution of these conflicts if there had not been any such intervention.[6] This has thus made a detailed look at the activities of regional and sub-regional organisations necessary, especially with the view to suggesting ways through which their efforts in conflict prevention and resolution can be enhanced to meet future challenges. This, among others, is what this study intends to do.

The paper is divided into seven sections. The first identifies the main regional and sub-regional organisations involved in conflict management, highlighting the mechanisms they have in place for the prevention and resolution of conflicts, while the second section looks at how these organisations have responded to conflicts during the Cold War. In the third, there is a discussion of the activities of the organisations after the Cold War, especially the complexities associated with the despatch of regional and sub-regional peacekeeping missions. The linkage between regional organisations and the United Nations and its agencies in the management of African conflicts is the focus of attention of the fourth section, while the fifth part of the study provides a discussion on how regional and sub-regional organisations have worked with local and international NGOs in the prevention and resolution of disputes. The role of the African regional and sub-regional organisations in ameliorating the plights of the refugees and internally displaced population is the focus of attention in the sixth section, while the concluding section looks at how these organisations can be more effective in preventing and resolving conflicts in the new millennium.

Identifying Africa's regional and sub-regional actors and their mechanisms for handling conflict

It is, indeed, the case that the actual number of regional and sub-regional organisations involved in the management of African conflict may never be known, as there are several ad

Agenda for Peace, 1995, p. 9.
[5] Recent figures provided by the Representative of the UNHCR put Africa's refugee population at 8 million as of May 1999. See _Conflict Trends_, Issue 3, 1999, p. 3.
[6] This has been the case, for example, in Liberia, where the regional peacekeeping force, ECOMOG, has been accused of prolonging the conflict. This is discussed at some length in this study.

hoc coalitions making important, if often unrecognised involvement in preventing and resolving disputes on the continent. There are, however, five organisations whose activities are particularly important. These are the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the *Accord de Non Aggression et d' Assistance en Matière de Defence* (ANAD).[7] Of all these, only ANAD was specifically created for defence and security purposes. Others were forced by developments in their respective regions to incorporate defence and security calculations into their agenda. The objective of this section is to offer a capsule summary of the mechanisms these organisations employ in handling conflict. This has a two-fold intention: the first is to provide a background to appreciating the activities of these organisations in their conflict management styles; while the second is to investigate whether there are inter-connecting links in the conflict management objectives of these organisations, and how these manifest in operational terms.

Formed in 1963 and composed of all independent African States, the OAU sets as its overall goal the desire to protect the territorial integrity of African states. On conflict resolution, its charter specifically called for the amicable resolution of disputes, and as a preventive measure, a Commission on Mediation, Arbitration and Conciliation was established to mediate disputes between member states. Members were also exhorted not to interfere in the internal affairs of other states, and a decision was made to respect the inherited colonial boundaries. Looking critically at the structures the OAU put in place for conflict resolution, an obvious conclusion can be drawn: operating in a Cold War security mode, and against the background of its colonial experience, the organisation's charter was based on the two pillars of "sovereignty" and "pan-Africanism". While guarding its newly acquired sovereignty from Cold–War "hawks," it also wanted to free dependent countries from colonial yoke. Although this strategy is understandable and laudable, it also had attendant problems. For example, the attention of the organisation was more on the "state," without much interest in the "population". It was thus not surprising that despotic and autocratic rulers who confused regime survival with state security became entrenched in the continent. Also, the overemphasis on the "state" caused the organisation to show more interest in addressing conflicts between, rather than within states. This "state-centric" focus of the OAU is even obvious from the opening statement of its charter. While the UN charter opens with a people-focused declaration "we the peoples of the world", the OAU charter begins with "We the Heads of States of African countries…"

In the early 1990s, however, the OAU developed mechanisms to address specific post-Cold War security issues. In March 1992 the organisation established a Division of Conflict Management, with its own budget within the OAU Secretariat. During its July 1992 summit, its leaders agreed in principle to establish a mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution. This was formally adopted in June 1993. In it, they agreed that conflict prevention and peacemaking were the most important and most effective areas for OAU activity in the short term. Due to financial and organisational constraints, it was decided that peacekeeping should not be a priority for the OAU in the immediate future, although the organisation might deploy small-scale peacekeeping operations. Towards this end, the OAU leaders during the 1995 summit authorised a specially trained peacekeeping unit in African

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[7] Other organisations include, the Arab Margreb Union (AMU), comprising of countries in the Margreb Union and the Mano River Union (MRU) which comprise of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

armies. The idea was for African countries to create specialised units that could be called up for peacekeeping operations in the continent's hotspots.

For its part, the Economic Community of West African States, (ECOWAS) was formed in 1975 to integrate West Africa's economic potentials for sub-regional growth. Although the organisation did not contain defence clauses at the time of its formation, it soon appreciated the importance of security to the realisation of its identified economic objectives and, in April 1976, signed a *Protocol on Non-Aggression,* which commits numbers to "refrain from committing, encouraging or condoning the acts of subversion, hostility or aggression against ... other members". This was expanded in 1978, with the signing of the *Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defence,* which stipulates that an act of aggression against a member state constitutes an act of aggression against the entire community. In-built in these defence arrangements are some mechanisms to be activated in times of crisis, including the appointment of a Deputy Executive Secretary for Military Affairs, whose duty is to manage the operational aspects of the management. As Aning has noted, procedures were established to deal with how the affected state should contact the defence structure, and the types of conflicts that was considered worthy of the community's intervention.[8] In the end, three types of conflicts were identified: (i) aggression from non-member states; (ii) conflict between member states; and (iii) internal conflict in a member state.

Even at the early stages of ECOWAS and in its incorporation of defence clauses into its agenda, a major problem that was to become complex in later years had been brewing. This was the antipathy, though subtle, between Nigeria, the key motivator of ECOWAS, and some Francophone countries, especially Côte d'Ivoire. The prospect of a sub-regional organisation dominated by Nigeria was viewed with apprehension in several Francophone circles, such that even after the ECOWAS defence pact was adopted, three Francophone countries, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Mali, refused to sign. Another important issue that was to have a lasting impact on the ECOWAS conflict management strategy was that the security threat facing the sub-region was perceived to be largely external. Little thought was given to the need to prevent internal security threats or the escalation of internal conflicts through a change in the system of governance and the use of accountability, rule of law and respect for citizens' human rights as conflict prevention strategies. It is not surprising that West African leaders did not (officially) give much thought to this, as more than two-thirds of the sixteen member states of ECOWAS were under dictatorial or authoritarian regimes. They therefore missed the opportunities for early warning, conflict prevention or avoidance, or indeed early mediation. This was to be revealed when the organisation had to respond to a post-Cold War conflict.

The third organisation, the Southern African Development Community, (SADC) was created in 1980 as a response to apartheid South Africa's economic domination of the sub-region. Against this background, it had, from the time of its origin, been conscious of the hostile environment under which it had to operate. But the struggle against apartheid and other minority regimes in southern Africa also gave birth to another grouping which shared SADC's ideals. This was the Front Line States (FLS). Comprised in this latter group at its formation were Tanzania, Angola, Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia,[9] and the primary

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[8] Emmanuel Aning, "The Dynamics of ECOWAS Security Regime: Constraints and Prospects", Paper Presented at the Conference on "The Future Face of Post Cold War Africa: Building Inter-African Solution to Urgent Needs", Leiden, Holland, November 1996.

[9] The membership of the FLS has changed over time. At the formation, it comprised only of Tanzania, Botswana and Zambia, the three countries at the forefront of the initial struggle to liberate Southern Africa.

objective was to assist in the military effort to liberate Southern Africa. However, the membership of the FLS was more exclusive than the SADC, as only those believed to have ideological commitment to the military liberation of Southern Africa,[10] or those with the military strength to contribute to the struggle,[11] were allowed into the FLS membership. Under the FLS arrangement, the oldest serving member acted as the chairperson.[12] The independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 and Namibia in 1990 further strengthened the membership of the two organisations, but when, in later years, apartheid collapsed and South Africa, against whom the structures had been targeted, became a respectable member of the international community, the future of the organisations came up for review.

A major decision about the future of the two organisations was reached in July 1994, when it was suggested that the FLS be dissolved to become the political and security wing of the SADC. After a number of meetings, it was recommended in March 1995 that the FLS should cease to exist, and that an Association of Southern African States (ASAS) be created under Chapter 7, Article 21-(3) (g) of the SADC treaty. ASAS was to function independently of the SADC Secretariat, and report directly to the SADC heads of states and governments. A number of technical considerations led to a delay in the ratification but, by January 1996, the SADC Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security recommended to their Heads of State the creation of a SADC Organ for Politics, Defence and Security, which "would allow more flexibility and timely response, at the highest level, to sensitive and potentially explosive situation".[13] The SADC Heads of State accepted this in June 1996, and the SADC's security wing, the "Organ on Politics, Defence and Security", was formed. The objectives of the body at its formation included:

(a)   to safeguard the people and development in the region against instability arising from civil disorder, interstate conflict and external aggression;

(b)   to undertake conflict prevention, management and resolution activities by mediating in inter state and intra state disputes and conflicts, pre-empting conflicts through an early warning system and using diplomacy and peacekeeping to achieve sustainable peace;

(c)   to promote the development of a common foreign policy in areas of mutual interest; to develop close co-operation between the police and security services of the region and to encourage the observance of human rights.

As will be shown later in this study, disagreement among members over different interpretations given to certain sections of the charter has resulted in the Organ being suspended.

The fourth organisation, the *Accord de Non Aggression et d'Assistance en Matière de Défense,* (ANAD), is one of the least known security co-operation arrangements in Africa. It

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Tanzania was providing military bases for the struggle against the Portuguese in Mozambique, while Zambia was at the front-line of the war against Rhodesia. After Angola and Mozambique gained independence, both states joined.

[10] Malawi, under late President Kamuzu Banda, was not accepted as a member because of its known preference of closer "dialogue" with the apartheid regime.

[11] States known to be extremely vulnerable, like Lesotho and Swaziland, were not expected to join the FLS.

[12] Mark Malan, *SADC and Sub-regional Security: Undes Venis et Quo Vadis?,* ISS Monograph series, No. 19, February 1998, p. 12.

[13] Ibid. pp. 13 – 14.

was established in 1977, with a membership from seven Francophone West African states.[14] ANAD's main objective at its creation was to promote security and stability in order to enhance economic development. It was not a supranational body, and neither did it develop any military policy. It stated quite clearly that it was a defensive alliance, and that any attack on any member would be interpreted as an attack on the entire alliance. As Mark Malan has noted, ANAD's concept of mutual assistance operates in two contexts.[15] First, conflicts between two member states would be addressed through dialogue and negotiation. Should this, however, fail, a peace intervention force would be considered. Second, an external attack against a member state from outside would require a course of action: first, a search for a diplomatic solution, to be followed by an imposition of sanctions short of the use of force, and finally, as a last resort, the use of armed force to counter and reverse the aggression. The supreme decision-making body in ANAD is the Conference of Heads of State and Government, which meets every two years. The organisation's Council of Ministers comprises the Defence Ministers and the Chiefs of Staff of member states, and they, too, meet every two years. Decisions in both bodies are unanimous, and the daily administration, budget management, and the implementation of the decisions taken by the Heads of Government are carried out by the General Secretariat, which is located in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Like the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), ANAD is not linked to any regional economic organisation.

The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, (IGAD), which is the last organisation considered in this study, was formed in 1986. It envelops six countries: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda, and its aim at its outset was to co-ordinate measures to combat the effect of drought and desertification in East Africa. Indeed, at its formation, it was known as Inter-Governmental Authority on Development and Disaster (IGADD). In March 1996, however, the Heads of IGAD amended the organisation's charter to cover political and economic issues, including conflict resolution. This change of focus was further necessitated by developments in many of the countries. Virtually all the countries in IGAD had significant internal security problems. Sudan, for example, had been in conflict for more than a decade, while Ethiopia and Eritrea were - as of 1996 when IGAD altered its focus - trying to consolidate their new-found peace. Under the new arrangement, decisions are to be taken by general consensus, but where this fails, a two-thirds-majority rule will prevail.

From the above, it can be seen that the mechanisms which most of these organisations put in place for conflict management have some characteristics relevant to the focus of this study. First, none of them has enshrined in them ways of addressing the consequences of war, especially the management of refugees and internally displaced. All their efforts are focused on ways to prevent wars, and to resolve them if prevention fails. Second, there are no major links between them. Although the OAU has tried, in recent years, to work with regional organisations, no similar links exist between the regional organisations in terms of exchanging notes and ideas about conflict management. Third, all of them have taken steps to re-direct their charter and focus to meet the post-Cold War security situation. All these will be better appreciated when the activities of these organisations are considered during and after the end of the Cold War.

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[14] These members were Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal Cote d'Ivoire and Togo. Benin and Guinea Conakry were granted observer status.

[15] Malan, op. cit., p. 20.

African regional and sub-regional organisations in Cold War conflicts: an overview

Any attempt to appreciate the post-Cold War activities of African regional and sub-regional organisations in conflict management must set them against the background of the Cold War antecedents. Although the full details of their involvement will not be discussed here, there is need to identify the themes that govern conflict management during this phase, especially aspects of it that interlocked with the post-Cold War phase. As might be expected, the approaches of Africa's regional and sub-regional organisations to conflict management during the Cold War were determined by the nature of the conflicts they faced and the mechanisms that were in place for tackling them. Generalising very broadly, African conflicts during the Cold War period can be categorised under three different headings: liberation wars targeted against illegal and minority regimes, especially in Southern Africa; inter-state conflicts, often caused by border disputes; and civil wars, often due to divergent positions over self-determination and resource allocation.

The OAU was the main organisation responding to conflict during the Cold War era. Although some of the sub-regional organisations that were later to become prominent in conflict management had been formed, they were at the early stages of their development, and they concentrated their attention more on the primary objective behind their formation, leaving the burden of conflict management to the OAU. Another reason why the OAU took a prominent position during this period was that its objectives made it particularly appropriate, at least in theory, to the most important security preoccupation of the time - the elimination of all forms of foreign rule in the continent.

The OAU adopted different approaches to the different types of conflict it faced. In the liberation wars against illegal and minority regimes, the organisation had a near-united position, with differences only on how best to achieve the desired result. The racial implications of the armed struggle ignited patriotic zeal in many of the countries, and the OAU was able to act decisively, with its liberation Committee co-ordinating financial assistance to the liberation fighters. Thus, working together with other organisations, especially the Commonwealth and the United Nations, the organisation was able to contribute to the armed struggles in Africa and achieve independence for Zimbabwe and the Lusophone countries of Angola, Mozambique and Cape Verde. During this period, too, a considerable assault was launched against apartheid South Africa, creating the political climate that ultimately led to the independence of Namibia in 1990.

The OAU's strategy for addressing intra and inter-state conflicts was more complex and, apparently, less successful. Its main instrument for handling these types of conflict was the Commission on Mediation, Arbitration and Conciliation. However, as Amadu Sesay has noted, most of the conflicts anticipated by this commission had no relation to the realities on the ground, and, as a result, it was never used.[16] Sesay further notes that the Commission's legalistic approach to handling conflict was a turn-off to many African leaders, especially because of its long and expensive judicial process.[17] Consequently, the Commission was dismantled in 1977 and, from that moment, the OAU shifted to "ad hoc" devices. These included the use of the "Good Offices Committee" and "Presidential Mediation". The former is usually made up of prominent leaders or statesmen, and they are often charged with investigating the issue in dispute and to use their standing to bring all the warring factions to

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[16] Amadu Sesay, "Regional and Sub-regional Conflict Management Efforts", in Sola Akinrinade and Amadu Sesay (eds.), *Africa in the Post Cold War International System,* London: Pinter, 1998, p. 48.
[17] Ibid.

the negotiating table with a view to finding a solution to the problem.[18] Presidential Mediation operated in a similar way, and its membership often comprised experienced heads of state. One factor that is common to the two systems is that it is predicated on the African traditional system of conflict management, which respects age and position. These two methods were employed with varying degrees of success in a number of conflicts during the Cold War. For example, it was used during the Algeria-Morocco border dispute of late 1963, when two "grand men" of Africa, the late Modibo Keita of Mali and Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia intervened to secure a cease-fire and, later, an agreement in 1971.

Perhaps the most controversial conflict management activity during the Cold War was the despatch of a peacekeeping force to Chad. Much has been written on this subject, such that it serves no useful purpose going into details here.[19] However, because of its importance to post-Cold War developments, especially in the area of peacekeeping, there is a need for a brief discussion. After Chad became engulfed in a complex, multi-sided civil conflict, the OAU decided to send a peacekeeping force to the country. This was the first of such mission carried out solely by the organisation. Ultimately, the mission failed completely; this was to haunt the organisation for many years to come and dictated caution in future post-Cold War peacekeeping activities.

Two principal factors weakened the OAU's ability to effectively manage African disputes during the Cold War. The first was the ambiguity of its charter over a number of issues, which left members to interpret it in the ways they found convenient. Indeed, controversy over the correct interpretation of certain clauses of the organisation's charter almost led to its collapse, after the former Secretary-General of the organisation, Edem Kodjo, admitted the Western Sahara, whose sovereignty was then being contested by Morocco. Morocco and some other countries sympathetic to its position threatened to leave the organisation if the admission was not rescinded. Although this was eventually resolved, it highlighted the dangers inherent in different interpretations of the charter. The second factor was the prevailing Cold War politics, which fuelled conflicts and encouraged intransigence on the part of belligerents. This, in turn, frustrated some of the peace moves organised by the OAU. Examples of the conflicts that fed on the Cold War include the Angolan and, to some extent, the Mozambican civil wars and the instability in the Horn of Africa.

A number of conclusions could be drawn from the OAU's management of conflicts during the Cold War era. The first is that, apart from efforts directed towards the elimination of apartheid and other minority regimes, the organisation was not particularly successful in its bid to prevent and resolve disputes in the continent. Second, the prevailing Cold War politics created problems for the OAU, as it frustrated some of its peace initiatives. Third, many observers believe that the charter of the organisation, while it may be applicable to the realities of 1963 when it was drafted, needs to be updated to suit changing realities. Those in this school of thought argue that once the wars against foreign rule were winding up, the inadequacies of the OAU charter to meet Africa's security challenges became obvious. The cold war era, however, ended with the armed forces of a number of African countries acquiring peacekeeping experiences from many UN peacekeeping operations. This was to be useful in subsequent years. With the end of the cold war and the changes in international security landscape, attention began to be switched to sub-regional organisations.

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[18] Ibid.

[19] For more on the Chadian civil war and OAU's involvement, see Amadu Sesay, "The Limit of Peacekeeping by a Regional Organisation: the OAU Peacekeeping Force in Chad, conflict Quarterly, Vol. XI, No. 1, Winter 1991.

African regional and sub-regional organisations in post-Cold War conflicts

Since the end of the Cold War, the role of African regional organisations in conflict management has increased considerably, with innovative, even if sometimes controversial, ideas, bringing Africa's conflict management strategies to global attention. Indeed, one of the major characteristics of post-Cold War conflict management strategies in Africa is the prominent position of that sub-regional organisations have come to assume. There are at least two reasons for this. First, the OAU and the UN - other organisations with responsibilities towards Africa - were in a serious financial situation, such that they were looking for ways of disengaging from aspects of sub-regional conflicts. For example, the OAU was, by the beginning of the 1990s, in parlous financial difficulties. Members had fallen behind in the payment of their annual dues, such that in October 1996 members were in arrears of US$ 64 million. The UN, too, was in dire financial crisis. Indeed, at the beginning of 1996, the organisation owed in excess of US$1 billion to more than 75 countries for their contribution to peacekeeping operations.[20] Second, the nature of post-Cold War conflicts affected sub-regional political and socio-economic situations in that the internal conflicts which were then proliferating caused problems between countries - refugee migration being an example. In this section, attention is focused on some of the major crises in which African regional and sub-regional organisations have been decisively involved. While not relating the entire story of each of these cases, the section investigates the complexities of these involvements and highlights the organisations' patterns of behaviour with a view to proffering suggestions that can assist in the future planning of conflict mediation.

The OAU and African conflicts

In the post-Cold War era, one of the earliest steps taken by the OAU in the prevention and resolution of conflict was the setting up of the Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution Mechanism during its 1993 Cairo summit. The resolution set out the following objectives:

(1)   The anticipation and prevention of conflicts, but in circumstances where conflicts have occurred, it will be the responsibility to undertake peace-making and peace-building functions in other to facilitate the resolution of those conflicts.

(2)   In the event that conflicts degenerate to the extent of requiring collective international intervention and policing, the assistance of the UN will be sought under the general terms of its charter.

(3)   The Mechanism shall be built around a Central Organ, with the Secretary-General and Secretariat as its operational arm.

(4)   The Central Organ of the Mechanism shall be composed of the states of members of the Bureau of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government elected annually; the

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[20] Mark Malan (ed.), *New partners in Peace: Towards a Southern African Peacekeeping Capacity*, IPD Monograph Series, No. 5, July 1996, p. 8.

states of the chairman and, where known, the in-coming chairman, shall also be members of the Central Organ.[21]

Although amendments have since been made to these since the Cairo summit, the document remains the clearest evidence of OAU's new thinking on conflict management.

There are also specific conflicts in which the OAU played important roles. In Rwanda, the organisation came in when an early stalemate was reached in the military conflict between the government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The OAU initiated a mediation process between the warring sides and the series of talks which took place between them during 1990 and 1992 led to an agreement to send a 55-man OAU Observer force (later expanded to 120) to Rwanda to oversee implementation of the cease-fire. The OAU also played an important role in the Arusha Peace process signed in August 1993. In neighbouring Burundi, the OAU deployed, in early 1994, a military Observer Mission, (OMIB), following the UN Security Council's unfavourable response to despatching a stronger peacekeeping force to the country. This mission was initially composed of 67 observers, charged with promoting confidence building among the parties. This was also complemented by the appointment of a Special Envoy to Burundi. When, however, the Buyoya coup occurred in July 1996, the OAU terminated the OMIB mission.[22]

A shift is also noticeable in the organisation's time-honoured policy on non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. Since most of the post-Cold War conflicts are internal, it was inevitable that the organisation had to take a more realistic and pragmatic look at its clause on non-interference. While the clause still remains enshrined in the OAU charter, it is now being ignored if exigencies so dictate. In fact, after a regional peacekeeping force intervened in the Liberian conflict, both the Chairman and the Secretary-General of the OAU gave implicit endorsement to interference in certain circumstances. The OAU Chairman at the time, Uganda's Yoweri Musoveni, noted:

> … when we talk of non-interference in the internal affairs of one another, we mean one state, which is functioning not interfering in another functioning state … we are not interfering in the internal affairs of Liberia because there was no longer any central authority in the country.[23]

The Secretary-General, Salim Ahmed Salim, also argued that the non-interference clause of the OAU should not be interpreted to mean indifference to massive human suffering of the kind witnessed in Liberia. He noted:

> Before ECOWAS undertook its initiative, many, including the African media, were condemning the indifference demonstrated by Africa. The most desirable thing would be to have an agreement of all parties to the conflict … but to argue that there was no legal basis is surprising. Should the countries in West Africa just leave Liberians to fight each other? Will that be more legitimate?[24]

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[21] *West Africa*, 12 – 18 July 1995, p. 1198.

[22] *Report of the Joint OAU/IPA Task Force on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping in Africa*, March, 1998, pp 6-7.

[23] Quoted from *ECOWAS Mediation in the Liberian Crisis,* Lagos: ECOWAS Publication, p. 8.

[24] Quoted from Abiodun Alao, *The Burden of Collective Goodwill: The International Involvement in the Liberian Civil War,* Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers, 1998, p. 61.

With this altered position on non-interference, it became easier to the OAU to work with other regional organisations in conflict management.

In terms of physical involvement in post Cold War conflicts, the OAU has employed two methods. The first is to despatch token forces as observers or election monitors to conflict areas. Thus, since the end of the Cold War, countries like Benin, Cape Verde, Comoro, Mali, Ethiopia, South Africa, Nigeria and Togo have had election monitors despatched to them to oversee crucial elections, while observer missions have been sent to Angola, Burundi, Liberia and Rwanda. But even in this, the financial predicament of the organisation also reflected. For example, it sent only 18 election monitors to cover the whole of Angola with a total of 6,000 polling stations. A second way has been through the organisation's close working relations with regional organisations and the United Nations. This is discussed later in the paper.

ECOWAS and security in West Africa

In the post-cold war era, the Liberian crisis provided the first test case of Africa's assumption of responsibility for conflict management and resolution, and the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS, was the first sub-regional organisation to manage the dispute. The story of the Liberian civil war is well documented, such that it serves no useful purpose recounting its details here.[25] All that is thus needed is a capsule summary that can illuminate the complexities of ECOWAS involvement. The war started in December 1989, when a rebel movement, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor, launched an attack on the government of the late President Samuel Doe. Within months, the structures of governance had been destroyed and civilians became victims in a war that was prosecuted without respect for convention. This was what launched the sub-regional organisation, ECOWAS, into intervening in the conflict.

ECOWAS' involvement in Liberia had an intricate politics, a summary of which is worth providing because of its relevance to the complexities inherent in sub-regional involvement in conflict management. Even before the despatch, the peacekeeping mission faced a string of controversies, including the political and legal ramifications of the action. The political problems were rooted on the division within the organisation as to the need to despatch the peacekeeping force and the possible hidden agenda behind Nigeria's agenda to spearhead the initiative. The latter problem was particularly profound because of the friendship between Nigeria's former leader, Ibrahim Babangida, and the late Liberian President Samuel Doe.[26] The legal problems centred on the justification under which ECOMOG was intervening in Nigeria. Article 18 of the Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defence, on which ECOWAS based its reasons for intervention, was considered as an inadequate justification. Others also claimed that the intervention was a violation of the internal affairs of Liberia, a clause held sacred by the OAU charter.

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[25] The list of published works on the Liberian civil war is enormous. See, amongst others, Kofi Oteng Kufour, "Development in the Resolution of the Liberian Civil Conflict", *American University Journal of International Law and Policy*, 10, (1), Fall, 1994; W. Ofuatey-Kodjoe, "Regional Organisations and the Resolution of Internal Conflict: The ECOWAS Intervention in Liberia", *International Peacekeeping*, 1, (3) 1994; Funmi Olonisakin, "UN Co-operation with Regional Peacekeeping: The ECOMOG and UNOMIL in Liberia, *International Peacekeeping,* 3, (3), Autumn, 1996; Abiodun Alao, "Thus Far, Still Far: the Prospect for Peace in Liberia", *International Security Digest*, 1, (9), August 1994.

[26] It was even rumoured that Nigeria had earlier sent arms to Doe. It is, however, fair to add that Nigeria denied this claim.

Second, the organisation had no practical experience in addressing a complex emergency of this magnitude. Although there had been conflicts between and within member states since its formation, they had not been on such a massive scale as to attract any major external intervention as was necessitated by the collapse of Liberia. The countries that contributed troops for the mission were also not known to have any link of military co-operation, either in a peacekeeping mission or joint military training. Thus, they had to solve the fundamental problem of harmonisation simultaneously with trying to bring the crisis in Liberia under control.

Third, ECOWAS intervention into the conflict was uncoordinated. The human suffering that had characterised the war had touched on the moral chord of some of the countries in the region, and they seemed to succumb to the spontaneous urge to intervene and stop what was seen as a needless loss of lives, without considering some practical implications. For example, not much thought was given to where the finances would come from. Although it was initially agreed that each of the countries sending in troops would be responsible for its contingent for the first three months before ECOWAS took over, it was not carefully considered whether ECOWAS really had the resources to carry this responsibility after this initial three months. In the end, each of the countries carried the responsibility of its troops, with Nigeria shouldering the bulk of the burden.

For convenience, ECOWAS' involvement in Liberia can be brought under two headings: diplomatic and military, with the former attracting so much more attention that few realised that the military operation itself was an offshoot of diplomatic attempts to end the war. ECOWAS' diplomatic efforts to end the Liberian conflict saw the organisation overseeing about 14 peace agreements on the Liberian conflict.[27] Indeed, contrary to what is often assumed, ECOWAS never saw the military operation as an end in itself, but a means of creating the necessary conditions for a diplomatic resolution of the conflict. The principal problem ECOWAS faced in arranging these agreements was the continued proliferation of factions. Although at the outset there was only one faction, the number had increased to seven by the time the final agreement was signed. Some of the key themes of these agreements were the issues of cease-fire, disarmament, demilitarisation and management of refugees and displaced people etc. Although most of the agreements were later broken, ECOWAS was still able to keep all the sides in the conflict talking throughout the war. This was a remarkable achievement that is not often acknowledged. It was also part of the diplomatic activities to end the war that led to ECOWAS working with foreign NGOs, like Jimmy Carter's International Negotiation Network (INN), and with the UN. In fact, the UN later despatched an Observer team to assist in the resolution of the war.

Without doubt, the most prominent aspect of ECOWAS' involvement in Liberia was the despatch of a regional peacekeeping force, ECOMOG. One of the reasons for this prominence is that it was the first regional peacekeeping initiative after the end of the Cold War. The mission was headed by Nigeria, and had contingents from Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Gambia.[28] The operation lasted seven years, during which ECOMOG fought mainly against the NPFL, with other factions fighting among each other, and sometimes against the NPFL.

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[27] The key among these were the four agreement signed in Yamoussoukro, the Cotonou accord, the Akosombo accord and the two agreements signed in Abuja

[28] Mali also contributed a token force.

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There were a number of complications with the exercise, some of which are germane to understanding the complexities of sub-regional conflict management strategies. First, the force became confused about its role in Liberia. It went in operating in the "traditional" peacekeeping mode, at a time when this was clearly inappropriate. It was some time before the force began to appreciate the complexities of the situation and realised the need to alternate between peace enforcement and peacekeeping. While the force was still confused about its role in Liberia, the country's warring factions hijacked its initiatives, and President Doe was arrested and later killed while visiting the ECOMOG Field Commander. Second, Nigeria, which contributed more than 80% of the troops, initially conceded leadership of the mission to Ghana in order to reduce the criticisms levelled against the country for wanting to dominate ECOMOG. When Nigeria eventually assumed the command position, further complications occurred as Nigerian domestic military politics became intertwined with the ECOMOG peacekeeping operation. Third, the military mission was sent in the name of a regional organisation that was not united on the need for a peacekeeping mission. Throughout the operation, some ECOWAS members opposed the military operation, and this was reflected in the subtle support given to the rebel force that pitched battle against the sub-regional peacekeeping force. Fourth, the military operation had limited fund to meet the peacekeeping challenge it had undertaken. Although some foreign donors made minimal contributions, the financial burden of ECOMOG Operation was carried by Nigeria, which recently confirmed that it spent $8 billion and lost about 500 soldiers. Fifth, the Liberian population, too, were divided as to the need for a peacekeeping mission, and some of the rebel factions, especially the NPFL, fought vehemently against the sub-regional force. However, by 1997, the war in Liberia was over and Charles Taylor, who led the rebellion about eight years earlier, had assumed leadership as an elected president.

The activities of the ECOMOG force have attracted a many criticisms, two of which are worthy of note. First, the force has been accused of being corrupt and of looting Liberian resources. So persistent was this allegation that the acronym "ECOMOG" was re-coined to mean "Every Car or Moveable Object Gone". Although the allegation was often directed at all ECOMOG soldiers, those making it actually had the Nigerian contingent in mind. It is indeed true that some ECOMOG soldiers used the opportunity of their Liberian assignment to loot resources from the country.[29] Although in principle the ECOMOG headquarters disapproved of such practices, there was nothing it could do to stop it, and there is, in fact, no evidence that it made any spirited efforts to do so. The poor wages being paid to the soldiers and the delay in their payment must have increased the propensity to be dishonest. The second allegation concerned the amorous affairs, which many ECOMOG soldiers developed with Liberian women. This was very visible during the operation, and the unbridled sexual escapades of the soldiers forced the ECOMOG Commander, General Victor Malu, to remind the soldiers that they were in Liberia to "make peace and not babies". Despite these rough edges, however, ECOMOG peacekeeping operation succeeded in ending the carnage that characterised Liberia before its entrance. The roots of some of its problems include the uncoordinated nature of its arrival; the political problems with ECOWAS; the ambiguity in the mandate given to the force; the recalcitrant and uncooperative attitude of the Liberian faction; and the political instability in Nigeria, the country that dominated ECOMOG.

Even before ECOWAS' involvement in Liberia came to an end, the organisation had become involved in another crisis in neighbouring Sierra Leone, where a rebel movement, the Revolutionary United Front, (RUF), under Foday Sankoh, took up arms against the central

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[29] I visited Liberia three times during the war and was able to observe this first-hand.

government. Again, going into the causes of the war here will serve no useful purpose, except to say that it was intertwined, in a number of ways with the civil war in neighbouring Liberia, as the main warring faction in Liberia, the NPFL, had links with the Sierra Leone rebel faction. ECOWAS' involvement in Sierra Leone was similar, in many aspects, to that in Liberia.

While trying to use diplomatic means to resolve the crisis, ECOMOG also undertook a military operation in Sierra Leone. Although this military operation was less extensive, its complications, especially at the latter stages, were no less intense than Liberia's. The problem of Nigeria's domination, as well as the country's desire to protect an incumbent on the Sierra Leone throne, also arose, and ECOWAS was again split into two, with some of the countries, especially Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, believed to be supporting the rebel faction against the central government in Freetown. This issue reached its peak in January 1998, when the rebel force and the renegade members of the Sierra Leone armed forces, attacked a newly re-installed President Tejan Kabbah in Freetown. This development, which took ECOMOG by surprise and weakened the force's grip on Freetown, combined with changes in Nigeria, occasioned by the new democratic dawn in the country, forced a shift in ECOWAS' position in Sierra Leone. The organisation brokered a new peace deal which was signed in Lome, Togo, in July 1999, and the world now waits to see how effective this will be in ending what has since become one of Africa's most brutal civil conflicts, with more than 20,000 killed and up to a million people displaced. A third involvement by ECOWAS in a civil dispute is in Guinea, where the organisation is trying to end the country's civil war. It is still early to do a post-mortem examination of this, but its approach has remained largely the same as in Liberia and Sierra Leone, but now with greater emphasis on diplomatic activities.

On the whole, ECOWAS has led all African regional organisations in conflict management in the post-Cold War era. While some of its actions have been imperfect, they clearly show how effective regional organisations can be if they have a clear focus and the right leadership. Some of the problems the organisation faced include the divergence of opinion between its members as regards conflict management; the lack of financial resources to fund the complex roles it has to perform in conflict management; and the weakness of the structures of some of the states, both to address their respective security problems and to contribute meaningfully to conflict management in neighbouring countries.

As a result of ECOMOG experience, ECOWAS decided to institutionalise a peace mechanism to manage conflict in the region, and the Ministers of all the states were mandated by the Heads of State to create a conflict management strategy. The Ministers met and came up with an outline, which was later given to experts to deliberate upon. These people then composed a draft of conflict management mechanism, which they presented to the Council of Heads of State in October 1998. This was accepted in principle, and committees were set up to fine-tune the draft. This is now awaiting final ratification. The new protocol has the following institutions:

(a)   The Summit of Heads of State;
(b)   Mediation and Security Council, which will comprise Ministers of Defence of member states;
(c)   The Council of Elders, to be comprised of eminent personalities from member states; and
(d)   The Peacekeeping Intervention Force (ECOMOG).

Under the proposed structure, the peacekeeping force can intervene in conflicts under five different circumstances: external attack; internal crisis; in cases of humanitarian disaster or human-rights abuses; a coup against an elected government; and any other situation deemed fit by the Mediation and Security Committee. The mechanism also covers landmines, child-soldiers, and small arms and trans-border issues such as drug trafficking, extradition, corruption and money laundering. The source of funding will be through the organisation's annual budget and through a general community levy that will be imposed on all goods coming into member states. It remains to be seen how this new protocol, which is awaiting final ratification, will work.

The SADC in Central and Southern Africa

Like ECOWAS, rivalry and internal wrangling among members have coloured the SADC's conflict management strategy. To a large extent, the problem within the organisation is rooted in the personality clash between former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe, and also between the two countries themselves. Before discussing how this has permeated SADC politics, it is necessary to outline briefly the roots of this rivalry and tension. Although South Africa is considered the undisputed economic power in the region, Zimbabwe often lay claims to be a "senior" in the armed struggle, having won its armed war of independence more than a decade before South Africa. Second, many in Zimbabwe believe that their own war was more conclusive, and that their independence was won because of their efforts, and not through the kind of global security shift and the goodwill of de Klerk that determined South Africa's independence. Third, Zimbabwe and, to an extent Namibia, felt unhappy with the shift of global goodwill to South Africa: Namibia and Zimbabwe had previously enjoyed some form of global goodwill and sympathy as recently liberated countries and all this disappeared after South Africa became independent. Finally, many of the countries in southern Africa find it difficult to understand why South Africa could easily conclude trade agreements with the European Union, and not with its fellow southern African states.

Within the politics of the SADC, the South Africa/Zimbabwe rivalry centres on the position of the Organ on Security vis-à-vis the larger SADC. The institutional framework of the Organ is vague, and this created problems between South Africa and Zimbabwe. South Africa argues that the Organ on Security is under the SADC, and should behave as such. Pretoria argues that it was never the intention of the SADC to create a security wing that should be outside its control, and that under Article 10 (1), (2), and (6) of the SADC charter, the organisation is the "supreme policy making institution" and that its chairman is, *ipso facto*, the head of all the units attached to it. Zimbabwe, however, sees things differently. It argues that the Organ on Security is separate from the SADC, as it is based on the FLS principle, and that the "latter should not concern itself with political, diplomatic, defence and security issues".[30] This position is based, in part, on the understanding that the SADC proper is largely dependent on donor funding, and that political and security issues should not be dealt with by a donor-funded organisation.[31] Efforts to resolve this impasse continue. A lesser cause of controversy is South Africa's position that the SADC Organ, as set out by the Gaborone Summit, tends to focus more on the use of armed forces for conflict resolution at the expense

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[30] Cederic de Coning, "Why the SADC Intervened", *West Africa*, 19 October – 1 November, 1998, p. 766.
[31] Ibid.

of other more peaceful measures, especially early warning mechanisms and preventive diplomacy.[32]

A crisis which reflects the political infighting among the members of the SADC is the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Indeed, the present complexities of the war are as much due to the internal crisis within the DRC as it is to the external wrangling among different external actors. Indeed, the Congo crisis, which had initially begun as an attempt to overthrow the late dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko, had, by the middle of 1999, enveloped a catalogue of other sub-regional disputes. In a recent report, John Prendergast and David Smock highlighted a chain of other conflicts now inter-locked in the Congo dispute. These include:

◊   the Congolese government versus assorted rebel groups
◊   the Rwandan government versus the Congolese government
◊   the Rwandan government versus Rwandan insurgents
◊   the Ugandan government versus Sudan-supported rebels
◊   the Ugandan government versus the Congolese government
◊   the Ugandan and Rwandan government versus the Zimbabwean and Angolan governments
◊   Rwandan-backed Congolese rebels versus Ugandan-backed Congolese rebels
◊   the Ugandan government versus the Rwandan government
◊   the Burundian government versus the Burundian rebel factions
◊   the Angolan government versus UNITA and anyone who supports UNITA
◊   Mai Mai elements versus the Rwandan government and RCD (Rally for Congolese Democracy)
◊   the Sudanese government versus the Ugandan government

The DRC conflict highlighted the dangers and complications inherent in the in-fighting and the intricate political problems within the SADC. Although the organisation wanted to come up with a credible policy that could help resolve the crisis, the various countries perception of their national interest and prestige overrode sub-regional interest. Once the rebel force attacked the fledging government of Laurent Kabila and began to enjoy from Uganda and Rwanda, governments in countries like Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia viewed the developments as a case of foreign attack, and thus felt obliged to support the Kabila government. To give this action an image of SADC support, a controversial meeting of the Defence Ministers of the SADC was held in Harare, Zimbabwe, and approval was said to have been given for military support for Kabila. The action of the Ministers was neither unanimous nor clearly postulated and there were doubts as to the legality of Ministers despatching a military force to pacify a civil war. The Harare meeting was attended by the Defence Ministers of Angola, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, while five other countries were represented at junior levels, with South Africa sending only its Acting High Commissioner. To prevent further complications, President Mandela called an urgent meeting of the SADC, to which he invited the Rwandan and Ugandan Presidents. In the end, Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia sent in troops to assist Kabila.

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[32] Walter Tapfumantei, "Regional Security Co-operation in Southern Africa: A View from Zimbabwe", *Global Dialogue*, Vol. 4.2, August 1999, p. 23.

While it may be too early to write the final chapter of the SADC's involvement in the DRC, there are nevertheless certain conclusions that can be drawn. Perhaps the most important is that the SADC's military intervention in the country has far-reaching lessons and implications for the region. The first lesson is that the SADC was clearly not effectively prepared for the post-apartheid diplomatic realities of Southern Africa. Rather naively it would seem, the countries made no allowance for a new form of rivalry and division that could emerge between them post-apartheid. When this did emerge, they were confused as to how best to address it. Second, the intervention by some of the countries may have robbed the SADC of the opportunity to play any effective role in future diplomatic initiatives to end the impasse, as its neutrality could no longer be guaranteed. Third, a clear division has emerged within the SADC between those who favour diplomatic means to end disputes and those more inclined to resort to military means. Under this crude division, countries such as South Africa and Botswana seem to be in the former, while Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia are in the latter group. Finally, the handling of the DRC crisis could have serious domestic implications for some of the countries, which, in turn, may affect regional stability. For example, it is believed that Zimbabwe's regional adventurism could provoke a domestic backlash, especially as the economy is continuing to weaken and the leadership continues to lose touch with the socio-economic and military realities of the country. For example, when in August 1998 Mugabe decided to send troops to DRC, he did so without parliamentary approval. The country's economy has since gone worse, with the Zimbabwe dollar dropping from 18 to 35 against the US dollars. Again, while Zimbabwe is claiming that the involvement is causing the country just about 3 million US$ a month, the IMF claims that maintaining 11,000 men in DRC is not causing less than US$ 27 million.[33] This is an alarming figure for a country where inflation rate is nearing 70%. Indeed, many Zimbabweans believe that the primary motive for involvement in the DRC was for diamonds.

After the peace agreement was signed with the Congolese rebels, Zimbabwe and Namibia decided that they would send their troops to help the Luandan authorities send out the UNITA rebels. However, at the August 1999 SADC meeting held in Maputo, Mozambique, the organisation again rejected the idea of SADC sending troops to Angola. Indeed, the ADC Secretary-General, Kaire Mbuende of Namibia, who pleaded that the organisation should send troops as demanded by Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia had to resign after heavy criticism. Despite all these disagreements and difficulties, the SADC is still engaged in capacity building for peace missions, and two military exercises – Blue Hungwe and Blue Crane – were conducted in 1997 and 1999 respectively.

IGAD's peace efforts in the Sudan

Against the background of its conviction that the crisis in the Sudan is a regional, rather than a national crisis, IGAD in September 1993 initiated a mediatory intervention into the crisis. The first meeting was in November 1993, and further meetings were held in January, March, May, July and September 1994 and in January and May 1995. The IGAD mediation committee comprised two sections: a committee of the Heads of State of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda; and a standing committee comprising their Ministers. In its effort to resolve the conflict, IGAD faced a major problem as a result of the warring factions divergent views on self-determination and the place of religion in state politics. While the central government insists that Islam should remain the state religion, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) continues to favour the secularism of the country. Again, while the government

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[33] *Tempo Magazine*, 18 November 1999, p. 22

vows that self-determination would never be an issue for discussion, the rebels see it as the only way forward. By the end of 1994, it was obvious that IGAD was facing serious difficulties in resolving the dispute, and the organisation, in January 1995, called on the OAU, the UN and the international community to co-operate with it (IGAD), in finding a suitable solution to the war in the Sudan. This, however, did nothing to break the deadlock and IGAD's interest in the conflict diminished.

IGAD's involvement took a new dimension in mid-1995, when a group of countries, known as the Friends of IGAD, put pressure on the organisation to re launch its interest in the conflict.[34] Through IGAD, the Friends of IGAD advocated a longer cease-fire, the introduction of a joint surveillance patrols assisted by international monitors, and a new round of IGAD-sponsored peace talks. To assist in these, the Friends of IGAD agreed to finance the surveillance patrol and assist in the establishment of an IGAD peace-talk secretariat in Nairobi. Although the Sudan had reservations about some members of this committee, especially the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom, it went along with the initiative. Subsequently, a number of peace talks were held under this initiative but the crucial deadlock has not yet been broken. Since IGAD's peace process has relied entirely on the personal involvement of the Foreign Ministers of member states, mediation efforts have been sporadic and difficult to organise. This difficulty has been further compounded by the fact that the members of IGAD have been divided on the Sudan crisis, with Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda supporting the rebels.

Problems encountered by regional and sub-regional organisations in conflict resolution

From the brief summary presented above, one can see a number of problems confronting regional and sub-regional organisations in conflict management. Some of these are discussed below.

Structural

It has to be noted that many of the regional and sub-regional organisations that took charge of conflict in the post-Cold War era were not specifically designed for the purpose. Most are, indeed, economic organisations, founded for economic purposes. Thus, they do not have in place some of the structural facilities needed for conflict management. ECOWAS was without a section akin to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and this inevitably affected its ability to co-ordinate the ECOMOG operations effectively. This problem has now been recognised by the organisation and, in its new treaty, such structural flaws have been given attention. The South African Development Community, too, is trying to clearly articulate its position, as it tries to strike a balance between the original economic objective and its security concerns.

Financial

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[34] Those in this group are the Netherlands, Canada, the United Kingdom, Italy, Norway and the United States.

This is a major problem, as none of these organisations has the resources to mount some of the operations needed in some of the countries to bring peace. Many regional organisations cannot mount a more straightforward and standard traditional peacekeeping operation, let alone the more complex peace support operations that are required for this new generation of conflicts. Thus, regional or sub-regional organisations are more likely to respond to conflicts when there is a leading nation - a country with the human and material resources to take the lead in the initiation of such operations. This could be seen in the case of Liberia, where Nigeria spent US$8 billion. Lack of financial resources has been known to affect many operations, and the inability of the organisations to obtain external financial assistance has adversely affected peace efforts. Although under the new mechanism ECOWAS has identified some sources of funding, these will still be inadequate to address complex peacekeeping operations.

Political divisions and "side-taking"

This has become a source of concern in recent years, especially as only countries within a region or sub-region are willing to resolve crisis in their own neighbourhoods. This problem was apparent in Liberia, where Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso were believed to have taken different sides in the conflict. This impacted on the ECOMOG operation, as the conflicting parties exploited the situation to further prolong the war. It also created political divisions within ECOWAS and served to emphasise old Anglophone and Francophone rivalries. In the SADC, it is an open secret that both South Africa and Zimbabwe are always at loggerheads, and this, as shown above, has impacted on the resolution of the crisis in the DRC.

Regional hegemons

This leads to the issue of regional hegemons, which have become "necessary evils" in many regions. On the one hand, the smaller nations resist the bigger and better-endowed ones for fear that they will always seek to dominate their region. Yet, on the other hand, these big countries are relied upon in times of conflict, to provide the resources to maintain the vital lifeline of peace operations. Thus, countries like the USA in the OAS (Organisation of American States), Nigeria in ECOWAS, South African in SADC may find themselves challenged to take a leading role in their regions in times of crisis. Where these hegemons have been willing and able to initiate and participate in regional conflict resolution efforts, they may make the difference between preventing collapse and complete destruction, human suffering and anarchy. Those sub-regions without such leading nations (particularly within Africa) are the ones likely to suffer more in times of crisis, especially where no external power outside is willing and able to intervene. One could only speculate what level of carnage might have been prevented in Rwanda, if there was a readily willing actor, available and able to act "quickly" to meet the situation with an effective response.

Despite their advantages, however, regional hegemons may themselves be stumbling blocks in a conflict resolution process if they are seen as too partial or having too much vested interest in the conflict or, indeed, if they are not inclusive in their approach. Nigeria faced deep suspicions from a combination of certain ECOWAS member states and one of the conflicting parties in Liberia, for various reasons - but mostly that of perceived partiality.

Legal relationship with the global organisation and legitimacy

Regional organisations face a problem of legitimacy if they are perceived to be acting without the authorisation of the global organisation - the United Nations - particularly where the action entails the use of force. The ECOMOG operation initially suffered this problem when its legitimacy was challenged on a number of levels. The operation only received the blessing of the UN retroactively. However, there has been a shift in thinking and approach in recent years. In difficult humanitarian emergencies, action has been taken unilaterally (e.g. by France in Rwanda) or collectively by a group of states, which receive retroactive authorisation from the UN.

Operational problems

Operations conducted in response to deadly conflict in recent years have encountered specific operational problems. The first arises from political control in the area of operation. Divisions in command, due to separate provision of logistic support by individual contributing states made control of the ECOMOG operation (for example) extremely difficult. Invariably there were two chains of command - operational and logistics. Had logistics been centralised, it might have been possible to achieve full central control of the entire operation. A second problem arises from orders coming from the home states - a problem not unique to regional operations. Governments of contributing states tend to give their contingents orders in the area of operation, which may contradict the operational order from the mission area. This was the case in the UN/US operation in Somalia and ECOMOG suffered several instances of this.

The above discussion has shown how fundamentally conflict management by regional and sub-regional organisations has changed in the post-Cold War era. However, in meeting the challenges posed by the new nature of conflict, the regional organisations have often had to work with the UN.

Allies or rivals: regional organisations and UN / UN agencies in conflict management

Before the increase in post Cold War conflicts necessitated a deeper involvement of the UN and its agencies in African conflicts, the organisation's involvement in African wars took the form of platitudinous calls for the amicable resolution of disputes and the involvement of some of the UN's humanitarian agencies in conflict zones. Although the UN-led a peacekeeping mission in the former Congo, this action was seen in several circles as more of a response to the Cold-War ramifications of the conflict than to the plight of the suffering Congolese. Since the end of the Cold War, however, a complex relationship has emerged between the UN and Africa's regional organisations in the management of conflicts, reaching its peak with the joint military peacekeeping co-operation between the UN and ECOWAS.

The relationship between the UN and Africa's organisations has been a complex one. While they are seen to be working together, at least in theory, a web of controversy and mutual distrust often underlies the relationship. Indeed, observers have sometimes wondered whether they are allies or rivals. The basic problem here is one of perception. African regional and sub-regional organisations believe that the UN and some of its agencies have not taken

African conflicts seriously. This, to a large extent, is a sentiment shared by most Africans, many of whom find ready evidence in the comparison of the UN response to a crisis in somewhere like Kosovo to that in Liberia or Sierra Leone. For its part, the UN believed, especially during the Cold War era, that the autocratic system of government in a number of African countries made the continent predisposed to conflict. Against this background, many officials in the UN believed that some of Africa's security problems were self-inflicted, and that little could be done to assist the continent until the structural problems were addressed by the states. UN humanitarian agencies also believed that their involvement in rendering assistance in times of conflict was often affected by the activities of some of the governments.

Africa's regional/sub-regional organisations have three main criticisms against the UN. First, it is often said that the UN's involvement in African conflict always comes late, and that Africa's regional organisations have often been forced to carry a burden for which they are not adequately equipped. An extension of this allegation is that the UN rarely accords African conflicts the necessary attention that it extends to other regions. Second, there are allegations that, in the course of their intervention in African conflicts, UN personnel often exhibit a flamboyant lifestyle that often doesn't reflect the prevailing socio-economic realities of the conflict in which they are intervening. Finally, the UN is often accused of not encouraging local initiatives, especially with regards to encouraging local activities geared towards conflict prevention and resolution. Indeed, in the Liberian conflict, the regional peacekeeping mission, ECOMOG, argued that it would have been much easier to resolve the conflict if the UN had been more supportive of the regional efforts aimed at resolving the conflict.

Nevertheless, the United Nations also has its own criticisms against regional and sub-regional initiatives for conflict management. First, the UN believes that most of the conflicts in which it has been invited to participate reached the crisis stage because regional organisations had been ineffective in managing them. UN officials believe that there are inherent problems in the organisations' conflict management strategies. It is also their belief that regional and sub-regional organisations are corrupt and sometimes aggravate crises in order to maximise material gains from the crisis. Against the background of the mutual suspicion between the two, relations have often been difficult and both have ended up more as rivals than allies in efforts aimed at managing conflicts.

Since the end of the Cold War, the UN has signalled interest in working closely with regional organisations in the handling of conflicts. This change in policy was well captured by the former UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his *Agenda for Peace* initiative, when he noted:

> Regional organizations ... possess a potential that should be utilized in serving the function (of) preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, peacemaking and post conflict peace loading... under the chatter, the security council has and will continue to have primary responsibility for international peace and security but regional actions as a matter of decentralization, delegation and co-operation, with UN efforts could not only lighten the burden of border of the council, but also contribute to a deeper sense of participation, consensus and democratization of internal affairs.

For convenience, the post-Cold War relationship between the UN and African regional organisations in conflict management can be brought under three different headings: the first is where neither side makes any physical intervention, limiting involvement only to

diplomatic attempts by all the organisations; the second is where one side makes a physical involvement, with the other complementing with diplomatic activities; while the third is where both sides are physically involved. Of all these, the most complex has been the third.

In conflicts where the involvement of both sides is limited to diplomatic activities, there seem to be few problems, as both sides provide the necessary diplomatic initiative to keep the conflict from escalating. In the second category – those in which one side has intervened – the situation is slightly different. In this case, it is often the regional/sub-regional organisation that intervenes. What often complicates the relationship here is the disagreement over the extent of assistance coming from the UN. Regional organisations often accuse the UN of not providing enough financial and logistical support for the regional effort. This was the situation before the UN became physically involved in the Liberian war.

The final category – where both sides became physically involved – creates a far more complex situation. In the post-Cold War era, the ECOWAS/UN management of the Liberian civil war presents the best example of UN/regional organisation's joint management of civil dispute. Indeed, it was the first instance where the UN worked with a regional organisation in the pacification of civil dispute in this period. Against this background, a brief discussion of how this relationship worked, and the problems it faced, are important to the understanding of UN/regional organisation's relationship under the new global disposition.

Although ECOWAS had persistently called on the United Nations to assist it in the handling of the Liberian conflict, concerted UN involvement did not materialise until 1993, when, under the Cotonou Accord, the United Nations was invited to come and assist in the implementation of the disarmament and demobilisation clauses of the agreement. In response, the global body despatched a UN Secretary-General's Special Representative (UNSGSR) to oversee the activities of the UN in the country, and a United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) was also despatched under a Chief Military Officer. This was a token force which, at any of stage of the conflict, never reached a hundred troops.

Although, in the end, both UNOMIL and ECOMOG worked together to steer Liberia to a fairly successful disarmament and demobilisation, the relationship had many difficulties that, if analysed and addressed, could help in handling future relationship between the UN and regional organisations. First, the Cotonou agreement that brought in UNOMIL was ambiguous about the division of responsibilities between UNOMIL and ECOMOG, especially as to who was to hold the final authority between the two over the issues of disarmament and demobilisation. Second, both UNOMIL and ECOMOG had different structure and reporting arrangements. While the ECOMOG Commander was the final authority in the ECOMOG structure and was only responsible to the ECOWAS Heads of States at the organisation's secretariat, the UNOMIL Chief Military Officer had a political superior on the ground – the UNSGSR. In many ways, this created problems in both the decision making and implementation processes. Third, ECOMOG was not adequately briefed about the *modus operandi* of the UNOMIL operation. Although it was informed fully about UN's arrival, it knew little about the nature of its mission, and how it was to be carried out. Indeed, many ECOMOG soldiers expected UNOMIL troops to take an active part in combat, and also expected them to carry guns. When it later became clear that the UN team was operating under a different mandate, ECOMOG began to deride them as "office soldiers" who came into Liberia after they (ECOMOG) had completed the difficult aspects of the assignment. This was also not helped by the UNOMIL soldier's flamboyant lifestyle.

Apart from these fairly obvious sources of problems, there was a "hidden hand of tension", which affected the relationship between ECOMOG and UNOMIL and frustrated the peace process. This was the issue of pay; while ECOMOG soldiers were on about $150 a month, UNOMIL soldiers were being paid about $100 per day. ECOMOG soldiers saw this huge disparity as being unfair, and incomprehensible. Although they realised that UNOMIL officers were being paid by the UN, while their respective home states were responsible for their own allowances, they saw no reason why the UN could not assist in increasing their salaries by giving money to their respective governments. Once they realised that no assistance was coming from the UN, many ECOMOG soldiers diverted their anger towards UNOMIL officers. This unstable relationship between ECOMOG and UNOMIL affected their joint operation in Liberia, as it was exploited by the warring factions who were all too aware of the differences between the two. Different warring factions sought informal alliance with either of the peacekeeping teams and played the two sides off against each other.

The UN and ECOWAS are also currently operating together in Sierra Leone, and it is hoped that a more cordial arrangement would be worked out. Under UN Security Council Resolution 1270, the UN is to take charge of peacekeeping, ECOMOG will continue to maintain not more than 1,200 soldiers in the country, while Nigeria is to act as the chairman of the peace committee for Sierra Leone. The majority of these soldiers will still be supplied by Nigeria which will provide three battalions out of the four ECOMOG is to provide under the new arrangement. The UN will supply 6,000 troops, with India and Kenya providing two battalions and Guinea a company of 123 men. The resolution is based on the Lome Peace agreement that ECOMOG will continue to help maintain peace. The UN troops have three main responsibilities: demobilisation, disarmament and rehabilitation.

This new UN/ECOMOG arrangement differs from the Liberian experiment in a number of ways. First, in the Sierra Leonean case, the United Nations is taking the lead position, with ECOMOG just supplying a fraction of the force that would implement a UN Security Council resolution. Second, the mission is going in at a time when a crude semblance of order had been established in the country. This thus gives the mission a "take-off" advantage from which to begin implementing a mandate - an advantage not enjoyed by the peacekeeping mission in Liberia. Third, the two sides in the conflict accept the involvement of both ECOMOG and UNOSIL in the conflict. The UN is also collaborating with the OAU in the DRC conflict. The two organisations are to collect weapons from civilians, schedule and supervise the withdrawal of all foreign forces and provide humanitarian assistance for displaced persons and refugees. This UN peacekeeping force is also mandated to "seek-out and disarm the various militias and armed groups in the country".

The relationship between African organisations and the UN agencies has been somewhat different. Because most of their activities of these agencies are target-specific, relations have not been as complicated as that between the UN and the regional/sub-regional organisations. Regional organisations naturally expect UN agencies, especially those directly involved in conflict handling, to make their presence felt as soon as possible in conflict situations and, more often than not, these agencies have been relatively quick to respond to these calls. However, there are still a number of allegations levelled by regional/sub-regional organisations against UN agencies concerning their conflict management style. First, the organisations believe that the UN agencies are sometimes bedevilled by the same bureaucratic encumbrances that often delay decision making within the UN offices in Geneva and New York. It is not unusual for the UN agencies to delay actions considered as urgent by regional organisations because official clearances are slow in coming from the appropriate head

offices. Second, the organisations are often frustrated by the infighting that often characterises the relationships among UN agencies operating in conflict regions. Such infighting, which often centres on co-ordination problems and disagreements on who should have the final say on specific issues, has, on several occasions, frustrated regional and sub-regional organisations who argue that lives should not be put at risk because of bickering among UN bureaucrats. Third, African organisations are sometimes unhappy with the UN agencies' occasional refusal to respect instruction given to them by the organisations. They argue that, because of their local knowledge, UN agencies should concede some positions of authority to them and carry out instructions passed by them. The agencies, however, maintain that, while they might be willing to respect the local knowledge of the regional organisations, they are not obliged to carry out instructions given by them, especially in cases where the instructions run contrary to the directions given from their head office. For their part, the UN agencies share some of the sentiments of the UN about African regional organisations. Many of them believe that the crises in the continent are caused by the governments represented in these organisations. Thus, depending on any of the organisations for effective solutions to the conflict may not be helpful. To a large extent, some of these complications also exist in the relationship between African regional and sub-regional organisations and local and international NGOs.

Regional / sub-regional organisations and NGOs in conflict resolution

Non-governmental organisations, both local and international, have come out forcefully to assist regional and sub-regional organisations in managing conflicts. The impacts most of the post-Cold War conflicts have had on non-combatant sections of the population have further increased the involvement of these NGOs in African conflicts, as many of them have come on to the scene to help the innocent victims of war.

For convenience, NGOs' relationships with regional/sub-regional organisations in conflict management can be divided into two: those who work on conflict resolution, and those who concentrate attention on prevention. In both cases, attention is focused on the complexities that have underlined the relationship and how these have assisted or impeded the search for peace in Africa. NGOs that have worked alongside regional organisations in conflict resolution are mainly international organisations, most of which have come to help address human catastrophes resulting from the conflicts. Prominent among these are the ICRC, Action Aid, AICF, MSF, Save the Children and a number of others. In the history of some of these organisations, African conflicts have been particularly significant. Indeed, the *Médicins Sans Frontières* (MSF) came into existence in response to the human catastrophe of the Nigerian civil war, while the same war had the unpleasant distinction of being the worst civil war the ICRC had addressed in the then century of its existence. [35]

In the post-Cold War era, the activities of NGOs in Africa have been controversial. Some have accused some of these organisations of working in active collaboration with "other agents of imperialism" in perpetrating the dependence of recipient states on foreign aid and in undermining the national sovereignty of the affected states.[36] Other criticisms include

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[35] By June 1969, its monthly budget for the war was $500,000. See John de St Joros, *The Nigerian Civil War,* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971, p. 249.

[36] This was the case in Rwanda, where the RPF government expelled 39 foreign NGOs for engaging in

allegations of lack of accountability, destruction of local capacity to undertake development, long-term destruction of the natural economy because of their massive and uncoordinated injection of foreign currency into the local economy, etc. A second school of thought, however, argues that the above allegations are unjustified, and that international NGOs' contribution to the reconstruction of collapsed states has been helpful.

NGOs working on conflict resolution have often had difficulties with regional and sub-regional organisations. This has centred on the perception of these NGOs that the governments of countries in these regional organisations have not shown sufficient interest in the plight of the suffering population. Indeed, more often than not, these NGOs believe that the wars are often for selfish motives, completely unconnected with how best to make life easier for the population they are meant to protect. The relationship between the two, however, becomes more difficult to manage if both of them are involved in a peacekeeping operation. Again, Liberia presents the best example in this respect; here, several hundreds of local and international NGOs had to work together in the sub-regional peacekeeping mission, ECOMOG.

While, on the surface, the NGOs and ECOMOG were united in their mutual desire to bring peace to Liberia, complex and intricate politics underlay their relationship. The NGOs needed ECOMOG to provide security for its convoys and to open up places where the warring factions had prevented the distribution of relief supplies. ECOMOG, on its part, needed the NGOs to provide relief materials to the starving population and thus assist in the quicker resolution of the conflict. At the beginning, this mutual need for one another made for a cordial and co-operative relationship: as soon as ECOMOG opened up a place, the NGOs moved in to assist the needy. This arrangement continued until about 1991, when the political nature of the conflict changed and ECOMOG had to employ considerable force to repel the infamous Operation Octopus.

Immediately after Operation Octopus, the NGOs' perception of ECOMOG changed. Many of them considered ECOMOG as being unnecessarily harsh, and that its method of clamping down on the NPFL was making the distribution of relief supplies difficult. Many of the NGOs also believed that ECOMOG was partial and corrupt, and that its activities had become impediments to the relief distribution operation. ECOMOG also had similar ill feelings towards the NGOs. The peacekeeping force believed that some of the warring factions, especially the NPFL, were using the NGOs for propaganda purposes, and that some of the allegations levelled by the NGOs against ECOMOG were not true.[37] Second, ECOMOG argued that some of the NGOs were serving as conduits to get arms into the country for the warring factions. This, in fact, resulted in ECOMOG's attack on the *Médicins Sans Frontières* (MSF) convoys in April 1993. However, the relationship between the NGOs and ECOMOG improved considerably from 1995, and they were able to work together to implement the final peace agreements in the country.

The NGOs working on conflict prevention have been active in the post-Cold War period. Most have come to assist in building sub-regional capacity for conflict management. In most of these cases, attention has been focused on consolidating peacekeeping mechanisms of the

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activities that contravened the reason for their presence in the country.
[37] For example, ECOMOG claimed that, after its raid on Gbanga in February 1993, many NGOs claimed that the soldiers had destroyed the Phebe Hospital, which was running as a charitable organisation. This, ECOMOG argued, was false, and the NGOs were later forced to withdraw the allegation. There were other examples cited by ECOMOG.

sub-regional organisations, and two of the organisations - SADC and ECOWAS - are the main beneficiaries of these. For the SADC, the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI) has worked closely with the South African-based African Centre for Constructive Resolution of Dispute (ACCORD) and the Institute for Defence Policy (IDO) to organise a programme of sub-regional peacekeeping training seminars for SADC countries.[38] The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) and the Graduate School of Public and Development Management of the University of Witwaterstrand have also launched a similar programme. According to Monnakgtla, "the aim of these projects is to enhance peacekeeping capacity for a more secure and stable southern Africa".[39] In West Africa, the Lagos-based African Strategic Studies Group (AFSTRAG) has been working with ECOWAS to strengthen the organisation's peacekeeping capacity. The NGO is also assisting in harmonising the structures of ANAD with those of ECOWAS to build a united security mechanism in the sub-region.

Regional and sub-regional organisations and the management of refugees

Refugees and internally displaced people have never been of any direct interest to African regional and sub-regional organisations, especially during the Cold War era. There are at least four reasons for this. First, in most conflicts during the period, refugees were often considered peripheral to conflicts. As they were not considered as tilting the balance of war in any serious way, regional or sub-regional organisations did not factor them into conflict resolution calculations. Second, most organisations considered them as a problem that should be handled by the countries harbouring the victims, and hence did not consider it necessary to spend time and resources addressing their interests. Third, African regional and sub-regional organisations believed that the UN had a body designed to address the problem and, on the assumption that the UN had more resources to invest, regional organisations left the management of the problem to the United Nations, merely supplementing it with occasional resolutions. Finally, African organisations appeared to believe that there was no special need to consider the refugees, as Africa's traditional hospitality, which gives succour to the needy without questioning their origins, can be relied to deal with refugee problems. It was believed that there were in-built structures that could address the problem without the organisations taking specific interest.

All this changed with the end of the Cold War. Again, there are a number of reasons for the change. First, the cold war has changed the nature of conflict and the collapse of state structures means that refugees now have more devastating impacts on neighbouring countries than before. Second, refugees are now major actors in conflicts, as they can significantly tilt the balance of war. From being considered only as creating social problems, they had, by the end of the Cold War, become important actors in the arena of security that could not be ignored. Third, the calibre of refugees has changed. While, historically, refugees have often been poor people, the collapse of government structures meant that senior politicians, including ministers, presidents and other major actors in the management of state affairs became refugees in post-Cold War conflicts. Indeed, at one stage in the Sierra Leone conflict, the President and all his Ministers were refugees in Guinea and other neighbouring countries. With people such as these now becoming refugees, interest in their affairs began to grow.

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[38] Kgomotso Monnakgotta, "From Ambivalence and Adversity to Stability in Southern Africa", in Mark Malan (ed.), *New Partners in Peace: Towards a Southern African Peacekeeping Capacity*, IDP Monograph Series, No. 5, July 1996, p. 18.
[39] Ibid.

Finally, many NGOs have emerged to assist in the handling of refugee problems. This gave regional and sub-regional organisations the courage to confront the problem, especially as it is believed that NGO involvement has been significantly lightened the burden.

Regional and sub-regional organisations have now adopted a two-pronged approach to handling refugee problems in the post-Cold War period. These are: first, trying to address the root causes of the conflicts that could give rise to refugee problems; and, second, assisting in the provision of amenities and infrastructures that could lighten the burden of the victims. Tackling the root causes of the war seems to be the area in which African regional and sub-regional organisations have been most active. As shown in the preceding pages, these organisations have now emerged as a major actor in the handling of conflict in the post-Cold War period. However, their involvement in the provision of infrastructures has been less significant, and the little the organisations have done in this regard has been in conjunction with local and international NGOs.

Conclusion: whereto for Africa? Regional/sub-regional organisations and conflict management in the new millennium

Although the 20th century ended with an acknowledgement of the importance of regional and sub-regional organisations in conflict management, the coming decades are likely to further reinforce the importance of these organisations. This will inevitably put more responsibilities on them. What is thus required is some strategy to enhance the capacity of these organisations to meet these impending challenges. First, the organisations will need to further equip their structures. It is clear that the existing structures in some of the organisations are weak. This is due partly to the fact that some of them were originally economic organisations, and only incorporated security mechanisms into their structures, and due partly to the failure of the African countries to support the organisations in conflict management. Second, regional and sub-regional organisations in Africa have to work out ways of harmonising their activities and, at the same time, avoid multiple initiatives. There are, at present, several initiatives within and outside the continent. While some of these are credible and should be considered, others are clearly antithetical to an effective conflict management strategy. In the decades ahead, regional and sub-regional organisations are likely to be saddled with excessive goodwill. It will remain their duty to distinguish between the credible and the incredible. Third, the regional and sub-regional organisations will need to work closely with the civil society in their efforts to manage conflict. The experience 1990s has shown that one of the weaknesses of previous conflict management strategies was the neglect of the civil societies. Over the last few years, the civil society organisations in many African countries have become strong and effective. Thus, there is a need for all those interested in preventing conflicts in the continent to work in close conjunction with the civil society. Finally, a major refocusing is necessary. More than ever before, African organisations must appreciate the need for good governance and economic rejuvenation, which is, after all, the best guarantor of harmonious inter-group relations.

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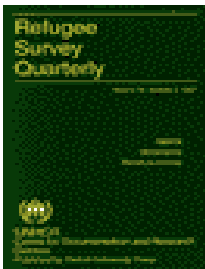**CDR Publications**

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