CONFLICT TRENDS

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REINTEGRATION AND RECONCILIATION

Creating African Solutions to African Challenges

ACCORD

Working across the continent, training current and future leaders in conflict management, researching and analysing conflict trends, developing policy options for the resolution of conflicts, and mediating between conflicting parties.

As in proportion as, in a manner depending on whether, he was praised or blamed.

Accountable 

Give a reckoning of (one's) deeds. Make accountable.

Accountant 

An expert in financial matters. A bookkeeper or accountant.

Accumulate 

Gather up, collect, store. Amass.}

Accommodate 

1. Provide lodging or room for. 2. Provide or supply. 3. Adapt, harmonize.

Accommodation 

1. Lodgings, living-rooms. 2. The process of accommodating or adapting.

Accomplice 

A partner in wrongdoing.

Accomplished 

Having accomplished many accomplishments.

Accrue 

Increase the amount of money or other valuable asset.

Accrue 

1. Increase the amount of money or other valuable asset. 2. Increase a debt or liability.

Accredited 

Recognized or approved as qualified.

Accreditation 

The process of recognizing or approving as qualified.
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Cover: Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) chief of staff, General Prince Siho (L) hands over his weapon to UNMIL force commander, General Daniel Opande.

PICTURE: GETTY IMAGES
On 18 February 2010, the military in Niger, led by Major Salou Djibo and Colonel Adamou Harouna, overthrew the government of President Mamadou Tandja. The coup followed a year-long political crisis in Niger that arose from President Tandja’s efforts to extend his mandate beyond December 2009, when his second term was originally scheduled to end. President Tandja dissolved the National Assembly in May 2009 and subsequently appointed a new Constitutional Court, enabling him to push forward with a constitutional referendum in August 2009 that extended his mandate for an additional three years. The new constitution also enhanced Tandja’s power by scrapping the semi-presidential system of government in favour of a presidential system. Mr Tandja, a former army officer, was first voted into office in 1999, and was returned to power in an election in 2004. Niger has experienced long periods of military rule since independence from France in 1960.

The coup in Niger follows a series of coups and unconstitutional changes in government in Africa. On 6 August 2009, senior military officers in Mauritania, led by General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, overthrew President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, who came to power in March 2007. General Aziz had led the August 2005 coup that ousted President Maaoiva Sid’Ahmed Ould Taya’s, who had been in power for 21 years. Mauritania has a long history of coups, with the military involved in nearly every government since its independence from France in 1960.

On 23 December 2008, junior military officers in Guinea, led by Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, overthrew President Lansana Conte, who had come to power in a military coup in April 1984, immediately after the death of the nation’s first president, Ahmed Sekou Toure, the leader of the ruling Democratic Party of Guinea (PGD).

On 10 March 2009, the mayor of Antananarivo, Andry Rajoelina, led the unconstitutional change of the government of President Marc Ravalomanana. Ravalomanana was first elected as the mayor of Madagascar’s capital, Antananarivo, and was then declared the winner of the first round of a 2001 presidential election. However, he only took up the presidency in 2002, after incumbent Didier Ratsiraka gave up a violent struggle to keep power and fled the country. President Ravalomanana was re-elected in 2006.

These coups and unconstitutional changes of government mark a disturbing trend in Africa. It takes Africa back to the post-independence days of the 1960s and 1970s when Africa, alongside Latin America, gained a reputation for coups and, consequently, the unwelcome and dangerous involvement of the military in politics.

The 1990s saw a decline in the number of coups in Africa, which also coincided with the dismantling of several one-party states and the resurgence of multiparty democracy. This positive trend in the 1990s culminated in the birth of the African Union in 2000, through the adoption of the Constitutive Act of the African Union. The African Union replaced the Organisation of Africa Unity, which was founded in 1963.

Given the history of coups and unconstitutional changes of governments in the 1960s and 1970s, the founding fathers of the African Union decided to address this issue by enshrining, as one of the principles of the African Union, the “condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of governments”. In addition, they set as one of the objectives of the African Union the need to “promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance”.

This principle and objective, among others set by the African Union, is commendable. However, as we have witnessed, after almost two decades of a decline in coups and almost eight years after the African Union made these declarations, we have not arrested this negative legacy. While we can and must condemn these unconstitutional changes of government, it is incumbent on us also to look at the causes of these unconstitutional changes.

Each of the four countries cited above are among the poorest countries in the world, yet all are endowed with sufficient beneficial natural resources. If these resources are managed properly through good governance, and their benefits accrue equitably to the nation as a whole, this will assist in addressing the underlying causes of these unconstitutional changes of government.

Therefore, we have to strive to build a set of normative rules and values and generate the collective political will of the people of Africa to hold our public officials accountable for the negative consequences of these unconstitutional changes. We must address both the manifestation of the problem and the cause if we are to move Africa forward.●

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In the last few years, cooperation between the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) has developed into a meaningful, practical and pragmatic partnership. Many good intentions, especially ones about coordination and cooperation, fail to get off the ground because of bureaucratic wrangling, infighting and preoccupations with control. In this case, cooperation seems to work because it is motivated by necessity.

The UN and AU need each other. Eight of the UN’s 15 peacekeeping operations are in Africa. This includes six of the UN’s seven largest peace operations, and explains why 75% of the approximately 115 000 military, police

Above: Missions administered by the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations.
and civilian UN peacekeepers currently deployed are in Africa. The emphasis on Africa is also reflected in the UN peacekeeping budget. Of the approximate US$8 billion budgeted for 2009, 77% was for operations in Africa.1

Peacekeeping is also a dominant concern for the AU. In the first decade since its founding, the AU has undertaken three major peace operations of its own – in Burundi (AMIB), Sudan (AMIS) and Somalia (AMISOM) – involving approximately 14,000 peacekeepers at a total cost of approximately US$900 million.2 Africa is also a significant troop contributor to UN peace operations, with 34 African countries contributing approximately 28% of the UN’s uniformed peacekeepers.

Comparative Advantages

The AU has a proven capability to undertake high-risk stabilisation-type missions – operations aimed at saving lives and stabilising the security situation in a country before a lasting ceasefire or peace agreement has been reached. These are precisely the ‘no-peace-to-keep’ type missions at which the UN is particularly bad, and that the Brahimi Report warned the UN not to undertake.3 It is thus a huge relief to the UN that the AU is willing to step into this gap. However, the AU is unable to sustain these operations, because it does not yet have predictable funding mechanisms, and it has not yet developed the in-house mission-support capacity to backstop these missions with the logistics, personnel and financial systems needed to manage them.

The UN, on the other hand, has a proven capability to sustain peacekeeping missions, because it has access to a predictable funding arrangement, the assessed-contribution system to which every of the 192 member states of the UN contribute, in proportion to their gross domestic product (GDP). This financing system has proven to be the UN’s single largest comparative advantage. The UN has also developed a unique capacity to plan, sustain and drawdown large peacekeeping missions, often in some of the most remote parts of the world. In fact, this mission-support capacity is
now housed in its own dedicated department – the UN’s Department of Field Support – and, apart from peacekeeping missions, it is also responsible for a further 15 special political or peacebuilding offices in places like Palestine, Nepal, Burundi, Sierra Leone and Iraq.

It is thus not surprising that a trend has developed where AU peace operations first stabilise a conflict, whereafter the UN deploys a peacekeeping mission that takes on the longer-term responsibility for overseeing post-conflict peacebuilding. This pattern was established in Burundi, where the AU deployed AMIB in 2003, followed by a UN operation (ONUB) in 2004; and was repeated in Liberia, where the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) deployed ECOMIL in 2003, followed by a UN operation (UNMIL) later in the same year. This trend was again repeated in 2005 in Darfur, when the AU first deployed AMIS, which handed over to the UN/AU hybrid mission, UNAMID, on 1 January 2008.

What happens, however, when the situation remains too unstable for a UN operation to take over the AU operation? This was the predicament faced initially in Darfur, and it is a major challenge in Somalia. In Darfur, the UN stepped into the breach when it supported AMIS with first a light-support, and then later, a heavy-support package. In Somalia, the UN is supporting a dedicated trust fund and a specialised support mission, the UN Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA). Here we see the UN deploying a mission dedicated to supporting the AU, using its comparative advantages to fill the gaps in the AU’s own capacity – namely access to the UN’s peacekeeping budget, and specialised mission-support expertise, experience and systems. In both Darfur and Somalia, the UN has developed pragmatic and innovative ways with which to support the AU.

**An Innovative United Nations**

These innovations in the way that the UN supports AU peacekeeping reflect major shifts in global security partnerships, as well as significant developments in UN peacekeeping reform. UN peacekeeping has radically transformed itself since its dramatic failures in Somalia, Rwanda and Srebrenica. At the end of the 1990s, the UN had only 20,000 peacekeepers and a peacekeeping budget of US$1 billion per year. A decade later, the UN
deployed approximately 11 times more peacekeepers than the AU, including approximately 84 000 military, 13 000 police and 18 000 civilian peacekeepers. In contrast, in 2009 the AU had approximately 10 000 peacekeepers and a budget of approximately US$500 million.

One of the most significant, but often overlooked, developments in UN peacekeeping is the transformation from military- to civilian-led multidimensional missions. The UN integrates the political, security, development, rule of law and governance dimensions under one overarching peace consolidation framework. In contrast, AU, European Union (EU) and NATO peace efforts are still primarily military operations, which also explains why they are focused on stability operations. Twenty percent of UN peacekeepers are now civilian, compared to approximately one percent in the AU operations in Darfur and Somalia. However, the AU now has a dedicated effort supported by ACCORD’s Training for Peace programme, to develop the civilian dimension of AU peace operations further, especially through the African Standby Force.

As the scope of UN peacekeeping has expanded, so has its challenges. Some UN missions, like that in Kashmir, have been operational for some 60 years, and are small and relatively stable. Others, like the AU/UN hybrid mission in Darfur (UNAMID), southern Sudan (UNMIS) and the Congo (MONUC), are large and dangerous. In 2008, 136 UN peacekeepers died. As the UN noted in a recent assessment, UN peacekeeping is stretched like never before and is increasingly called upon to deploy to remote, uncertain operating environments and into volatile political contexts. There has been criticism that the Security Council has been too quick to launch new missions, without adequately assessing the consequences. The scale of the current and newly-emerging conflicts are such that the need for peacekeeping is unlikely to decrease. The UN, AU, EU and NATO will be under increasing pressure to further expand their peacekeeping capacities and deployments. All this comes at an increase in costs.

The Financing of Peace Operations

The single most important factor when considering the future of peace operations in Africa is cost, and how they are to be financed. If we consider the demand for
more and larger peace operations against the global financial crises, the obvious conclusion is that the UN and AU will be under increasing pressure to do more with less.

A positive development in this regard is that United States (US) President Barack Obama has pledged to transform the Bush administration’s poor relationship with the UN, and to increase his administration’s support for UN peacekeeping. The US, Europe and Japan together are responsible for approximately 88% of the UN’s annual peacekeeping budget. In August 2009, Susan Rice, Washington’s ambassador to the UN, announced that, despite the global financial crisis, the US is now in a position to clear all its peacekeeping arrears, and hand over US$2.2 billion in new and old contributions to the UN.

In an assessment system based on GDP, the US is responsible for 26% of the UN’s peacekeeping budget, which implies an annual contribution under current commitments of approximately US$2 billion. Although that is a significant amount, it pales in comparison next to the cost of the US’s own operations. In 2008, Iraq cost US tax payers US$12.5 billion a month and Afghanistan US$3.5 billion a month. Ambassador Rice pointed out that, for every dollar it costs the US to carry out a peacekeeping activity independently, it costs just 12 cents to carry out the same task as part of a UN mission. Another estimate indicates that the per capita cost of a NATO mission is five times that of a UN mission. Whilst the cost of UN and AU peace operations is thus not insignificant, they are efficient and convenient investments for the major powers – and considerably

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cheaper than if they were drawn into these conflict-management tasks themselves. This also explains, in part, why China is now the largest contributor of peacekeepers among the permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The US and Europe are also major financial contributors to AU peace operations. The AU’s first such operation, AMIB in Burundi, had an approved strength of just over 3,000 troops and an operational budget of approximately US$130 million per year. In comparison, the annual budget of the AU Commission for 2003 was approximately US$32 million. South Africa was the lead nation in this mission and it covered its own costs, while also contributing moderately to the cost of the other two participant states, Ethiopia and Mozambique. The total cost to the South African tax payer was approximately US$110 million. The EU contributed approximately €45 million to the AU, whilst the United Kingdom and the US contributed another approximately US$20 million directly to Ethiopia and Mozambique, to enable them to participate in AMIB. South Africa was willing to take on the lead-nation role – including its financial cost – in Burundi because it led the mediation effort that resulted in the peace process, and it was thus a matter of national interest to ensure that the peace process was supported with an African peace operation. However, it is unlikely that this will often be the case.

The AU’s second peace operation, AMIS in Darfur, was even larger, with approximately 6,500 military, police and civilian personnel and an annual budget of approximately US$500 million. AMIS was almost entirely funded from

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voluntary contributions, mostly from the EU and the US. The EU contributed approximately €435 million to AMISOM, and bilateral contributions by individual EU member states amounted to an additional approximately €115 million. The US contributed approximately US$450 million towards the operation. Because of the size of the funding required and the AU’s lack of capacity to manage its own mission support, financial contributors like the US had to enter into direct arrangements with private contractors to provide AMISOM with mission enablers like vehicles, camps, fuel and water. Each contribution had to be individually negotiated, and the funding was thus unpredictable and came in dribs and drabs. This made it extremely difficult to plan properly and sustain the mission. The UN’s support packages, mentioned earlier, were thus a welcome relief and a highly meaningful contribution.

AMISOM in Somalia, the AU’s third large-scale peace operation, with approximately 8,000 military, police and civilian peacekeepers, was first deployed in 2007. AMISOM’s cost has increased proportionally with the number of soldiers, from an initial approximately US$250 million per year to now close to US$500 million. The US and Europe have again contributed the bulk of the costs for AMISOM and, as mentioned earlier, the UN has now deployed a dedicated support mission to AMISOM – UNSOA – which provides it with the same kind of mission-support skill set that a similar-sized UN mission would need to sustain itself.

As can be seen from these three mission experiences, AU peace operations are resourced from a combination of African military and police contributions, AU and voluntary contributions to the AU Peace Fund and support from the UN. This is problematic, but unavoidable, because the AU’s dependency on external resources denies it the independent freedom to make decisions on some of the strategic, operational and even tactical aspects of the peace operations it may wish to undertake. The availability of funding determines the number of peacekeepers, the nature of their equipment and support, the duration of the mission and the level and intensity of their operations.

A joint UN and AU panel was established to consider the modalities for supporting and financing AU peacekeeping operations. The panel was chaired by the former Italian prime minister, Romano Prodi, and it submitted its report to the AU and UN on 31 December 2008. The panel recommended a number of concrete steps that could be taken to strengthen the relationship between the UN and the AU, but the central recommendation of the panel was the use of UN assessed-contribution funding for AU-led and UN-authorised peacekeeping operations on a case-by-case basis for up to six months, to be provided mainly in kind, and only when there is an intention to transition the mission to a UN peacekeeping operation.

The report of the panel is a positive development in that the question of using the UN’s assessed-contribution system to support UN-authorised AU peacekeeping missions is now openly discussed as one option on the table. However, in reality, the panel’s suggestion goes no further than what the UN has already done in Darfur and Somalia with the support packages and the support office. In fact, the UN has already gone further in practise, because the panel refers to support for six months only, and then only if it is sure that the UN will take over the mission, whilst the support in Darfur and Somalia has lasted longer than six months and the UN is unlikely to take over the AU mission in Somalia as long as the fighting there continues. In that sense, the report’s recommendations were disappointingly conservative.

Political, Planning and Other Forms of Cooperation

However, financial considerations are not the only aspects of AU/UN cooperation. There is room for enhanced cooperation on the political front between the AU’s Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council, and scope for further cooperation between the UN Secretariat and the AU Commission – not just on mission support, but also on integrated planning, mission management, leadership, training and the monitoring and evaluation of peacekeeping operations.

Insights from the AU and UN experiences in Darfur and Somalia, and the experiences of the United States and NATO in Iraq and Afghanistan, have resulted in the widely recognised understanding that the UN failures in the 1990s were not because the UN system was inherently flawed. They failed because they were faced with impossibly complex odds. To succeed, they would have needed a much more multidimensional and comprehensive approach than was available at the time. However, the popular notion was that the UN was weak and that the world needed more robust peacekeeping. Ten years later, the US and NATO, and the world with
them, have rediscovered in Iraq and Afghanistan that complex conflicts are not resolved by force alone, no matter how technically superior and advanced, but primarily through politically-driven peace processes. As the figures cited earlier have demonstrated, the latter can often be achieved at a fraction of the cost of the former.

The most important prerequisites for peace brokers are credibility and legitimacy. This is the critical ingredient that the US and NATO lack in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the reason why the UN has proved indispensable in Kosovo, Lebanon and Darfur. The enduring lesson is that, in peacemaking, credibility trumps overwhelming force. In this sphere, the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council have much to gain from closer cooperation, and much to lose from lack of coherence between the two bodies, in those many cases where there are joint or coordinated mediation and peacekeeping efforts underway.

A 2008 study by the Human Security Report Project at Canada’s Simon Fraser University found that there has been a decline in every form of violence, except terrorism, since 1992. Armed conflicts fell by more than 40% in the past 13 years, and the number of “very deadly wars” had fallen by 80%. Although large-scale conflicts and deaths have declined, the scale, frequency and nature of today’s conflicts – now more often directed at civilians, especially women and children – are still alarming. However, the study credits “interventions by the United Nations, plus the end of colonialism and the Cold War, as the main reasons for the decline in conflict”.13 The UN and AU have thus already had a significant impact on international peace and security, and an even closer and more professional partnership between the AU and the UN has the potential of further enhancing coherence among these organisations, with the potential benefit of more efficient and effective peacekeeping operations, and eventually more sustainable peace processes. △

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Endnotes
1 All the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations statistics in this article are based on the DPKO Background Note of 31 August 2009, Available at: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/bnote.htm> Accessed on: 10 October 2009.
2 All AU statistics, unless otherwise referenced, are based on information on the AU website, Available at: <http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AUC/Departments/PSC/PSC.htm> Accessed on: 10 October 2009.
4 UNSOA and the trust fund are authorised under UN Security Council Resolution 1863 of 2009.