THE CHALLENGES OF PEACEKEEPING IN AFRICA: A REVISIT

Oluwaseun Bamidele
Department of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
Faith Academy, Canaanland Ota
Ogun State, Nigeria

1. Introduction

The most visible international response to Africa's armed conflicts was the proliferation of peace operations, which between 1990 and 2012 numbered more than 60, far more than in any other region. This period was also the most tumultuous in the history of peacekeeping. The operations assumed various shapes and sizes. They were authorised and conducted by various actors and international institutions. As instruments of conflict management, they produced decidedly mixed results. This was in large part because the United Nations (UN) and other institutions had to learn, while on the job, how to keep the peace in messy armed conflicts. These institutions also had to develop the relevant tools and structures as they went along.

Peacekeeping in Africa after the Cold War was a way of trying to professionalise peace operations. Since peace operations are a reflection of international society's assumptions and priorities about conflict management and resolution, tracing their evolution provides an important barometer for the involvement of international engagement in Africa's violence. The results are instructive. The peace operations helped shepherd transitions from armed conflict to peace (among others in Liberia, Burundi, Sierra Leone, and Namibia). But peacekeepers failed to stop genocide in Rwanda and mass killings in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Angola and other African states. They also at times abused and exploited the local people they were supposed to protect. Perhaps the central explanations for

this mixed record were that some mission mandates were tougher than others and some operations were given more resources than others.

This article concludes that peacekeepers in Africa are often used as a substitute for an effective political plan and that peacekeeping missions are bound by the international legal requirement of seeking consent from the host governments, even when those governments constitute problems in several African armed conflicts.

2. Peacekeeping trends in post-Cold War Africa

At the end of 2012, Africa had military based peace operations, involving more than 242 000 peacekeepers. The complex and multi-dimensional efforts necessitate the analysis of two intertwined issues: The first is the conflict management and resolution efforts carried out by African states and international institutions, while the second is those of non-African initiatives, primarily by the UN and the European Union (EU), although African governments are clearly involved in the UN activities and external actors are usually involved in African initiatives. The peace-making, peacekeeping and peace-building operations conducted by the UN and other non-African actors were in most cases considerably larger than those carried out by their African counterparts.

Between 1990 and 2012 over 20 peace operations were conducted by African institutions. These involved the deployment of just over 74 000 uniformed personnel. Deployments by sub-regional institutions were mainly by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), amounting to over 56 000 personnel, while over 18 000 were deployed as African Union (AU) peacekeepers. During the same period non-African institutions and actors, primarily the UN, conducted 35 peace operations on the continent. These involved the deployment of approximately 200 000 uniformed personnel of whom approximately 157 500 were UN peacekeepers while some 41 200 were deployed by other actors. 32 000 of these came from the United States (US)-led Unified Task Force for Somalia, 1992 and 1993. In the 21st century, the UN peace operations in Africa have accounted for some 70 per cent of its peacekeeping forces globally and cost the institution over

US$300 billion.

Peacekeeping in Africa unfolded in two distinct phases: before and after the AU was established. Immediately after 2002, peacekeeping was coordinated by the AU with occasional sub-regional operations. In 1993, the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) established a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. It did not conduct any significant military peace operations beyond a variety of small-scale fact-finding missions, mainly in the Great Lakes Region and the Comoros (Berman and Sams 2001). Military peace operations were mainly conducted by ECOWAS and SADC (Boulden 2003; Coleman 2007), with the OAU deploying some small-scale observers.

Sub-regional institutions were attempting to fill the conflict resolution and management gap left during the 1990s when some of the UN's most powerful member states effectively turned their back on certain African armed conflicts, particularly those in Sudan, Liberia and Sierra Leone (Boulden 2003: 29). In others, such as Burundi, the UN explicitly ignored local calls for a peacekeeping operation and, instead, sent only a fact-finding mission (Khadiagala 2003: 218). It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that the UN's lack of engagement pushed Africa's regional institutions into operations which were not well designed and which they were not ready to execute.

These military operations suffered numerous challenges. First of all, operations by SADC member states in particular were not examples of peacekeeping but were rather enforcement operations designed to help out friends in trouble, namely, President Laurent-Dèsirè Kabila of the DRC and Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili of Lesotho. These military operations were conducted without SADC endorsement. As collective defence operations, they were declared as peacekeeping operations under Article 51 of the UN Charter, which should not slide into enforcement activities without explicit authorisation from the UN Security Council (UNSC), as stipulated in Article 53 of the UN Charter.

Part of the uncertainty over this issue stemmed from the less than clear response of the UNSC. As Boulden (2003: 29) observed, in reaction to such operations, the Security Council "demonstrated relatively little concern for ensuring the primacy of the Charter" and was "remarkably unproductive of its own turf". Another issue was the lack of unity and consensus displayed within the regional institutions them-

selves. In the cases of the DRC, Liberia and Lesotho, for example, both ECOWAS and SADC broke their own internal rules for deploying military operations, with small factions within each institution conducting the missions (Coleman 2007).

Another set of issues revolved around practical matters, such as strategy, competence, deployment, management, logistics and the provision of suitable material (Howe 2001). In peacekeeping mission in Boleas, Lesotho, for example, the intervening peacekeepers were surprised by the level of resistance they encountered. The resulting battle left much of the capital city, Maseru, in ruins, displaced thousands of people, and left over 100 people dead. Similarly, ECOWAS Monitoring Group peacekeepers proved inept when, in September 1990, Liberia's President — Samuel Doe — was captured and subsequently killed while supposedly under the protection of ECOWAS peacekeepers. Although most peace operations suffered some degrees of misconduct by their personnel, ECOWAS Monitoring Group peacekeepers reached new heights with their frequent summary executions of prisoners, as well as looting and sexual violence carried out against the local populations. Indeed, Liberian civilians came up with an alternative name for the West African force: Every Car or Moving Object Gone (Adebayo 2002).

The most damning indictment of these operations was that they were not effective in managing the armed conflicts in question. Operation Sovereign Legitimacy in the DRC, for example, protected President Laurent Kabila from foreign invasion but could not save him in 2001 from one of his own bodyguards. Moreover, the presence of the peacekeepers from Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe fuelled rather than dampened the wider armed conflict. They also engaged in a wide variety of activities to exploit the DRC's natural resources (UNSC 2001). In Liberia, ECOWAS Monitoring Group only delayed Charles Taylor's bid to become president and arguably simply helped prolong the armed conflict (Malan 2008: 91). In Sierra Leone, ECOWAS was also internally divided and proved unable to defeat the Revolutionary United Front rebels. Instead, in July 1999, it facilitated the deeply flawed and misconceived Lomé peace agreement before Nigeria's new government withdrew many of its peacekeepers and passed the peacekeeping baton to the UN. In Guinea-Bissau, ECOWAS Monitoring Group failed to alter the country's kleptocratic style of politics, the huge rifts between the political elites tied to the presidency and the armed forces.

Changes began to take place with the establishment of the AU. Its Peace and Security Council became the hub of the peace and security architecture, carrying out several operations and a single hybrid mission with the UN.

The idea of non-African peacekeeping had a rather different trajectory for a comprehensive list of UN peacekeeping operations in Africa. The initial optimism that accompanied the end of the Cold War saw a raft of new operations between 1988 and 1992 in Namibia, Somalia, Angola and Mozambique. While the peacekeeping missions in Mozambique and Namibia went relatively well, those in Angola and especially Somalia went badly. After the so-called Black Hawk Down episode in Mogadishu in October 1993, the United States (US) led a general retreat from UN peacekeeping in Africa. The most immediate and direct casualty of this attitude was that the UN mission in Rwanda was left severely under-resourced, ultimately being unable to prevent the genocide of 1994 (Melvern 2009; Dallaire 2003). Surprisingly, Washington publicly released its new, more restrictive set of principles for engaging in multilateral peace missions in May 1994, one month into Rwanda's genocide.[1)]

As noted above, the UN's relative disengagement after the Black Hawk Down episode encouraged the notion that Africans should resolve the region's issues for themselves. This approach was commonly referred to as the 'African solutions to African issues' approach. As a specific variant of the regionalisation approach to peacekeeping, the basic idea was that "each region … should be responsible for its own peacemaking and peacebuilding, with some financial and technical supports from the West but few, if any, military or police contingents from outside the region" (Goulding 2002: 217). Hence, 'African solutions' rhetoric found support from African leaders and Western governments, especially the US, the United Kingdom (UK) and France. The general thrust of this rhetoric was captured by South African President Thabo Mbeki in his arguments about how outsiders should respond to the armed conflict in Darfur: "It's critically important that the African region should deal with these conflict situations … we have not asked for anybody outside the African region to deploy peacekeepers in Darfur. It is an African responsibility, and we can do it" (Quoted in Rice 2005).

Many issues explain the resonance of the 'African solutions' idea. Firstly, it has deep historical roots in the anti-colonial struggle and re-

flected the powerful anti-imperial sentiment that Africans should be able to decide their own future without being dictated to by outsiders. It drew on earlier pan-African themes such as the 'African personality', negritude and the 'try Africa first' approach, which were important ideological rallying points in the late 19th and 20th century. In a positive sense, the 'African solution' approach represented a normative defence of the pluralist conception of international society and a rejection of neo-colonial enterprises (Jackson 2000).

Secondly, its supporters emphasised that Chapter VIII of the UN Charter encourages regional institutions to take the lead in the peaceful resolution of disputes in their own neighbourhood. While this is true, it also bans them from undertaking enforcement activities without prior authorisation from the UNSC. Another argument concluded that devising 'African solutions' was a necessary response to international disengagement from Africa after the Cold War. By the mid-1990s, the neglect of Africa had become so serious that the International Institute for Strategic Studies (1997: 223) concluded that, "if there is a common thread running throughout African region, it is fading international attention. The outstanding feature of Western policy in Africa is its absence". The obvious lesson from these submissions was that Africans could not afford to wait for the Western cavalry but would instead have to devise their own peacekeeping action plans.

It was against this background that UN peacekeeping resurged in 1999 with the authorisation of two missions in Sierra Leone and in the DRC (UNMDRC). While UNMDRC was unable to deploy significant numbers of peacekeepers until President Laurent-Dèsirè Kabila was assassinated in January 2001, the mission in Sierra Leone suffered humiliation from Revolutionary United Front rebels until an intervention by British forces in May 2000 started to turn the tide of the armed conflict in favour of the UN and the legitimate regime of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. By 2005 new UN operations in Africa had become many, with large expectations of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone and the DRC as well as sizeable new operations deployed to Ivory Coast, Liberia, Burundi, and Sudan.

By then operations in Africa were accounting for over two-thirds of the UN's worldwide peacekeeping commitments. Yet it was not long before analysts suggested that UN peacekeeping, especially in Africa, had run into another commotion. By the late 2000s, peacekeeping was said to have entered an era of strategic uncertainty because the

three crucial pillars on which it was based had begun to erode: a shared political vision of peacekeeping at the UNSCl, the willingness to pay the rising bill, and the deployment of peacekeepers, mainly from South Asia, to more complex multidimensional operations and hostile missions (Jones *et al* 2009: 2)

3. Major problems of peacekeeping in Africa

Examples from UNMDRC are used to illustrate significant implementation challenges, partly because the operation there dealt with the region's largest armed conflict and partly because for most of the 20th century operations, it has been the biggest, most costly and most complicated peace operation conducted in Africa. As such, it exemplifies many of the issues faced by peacekeepers.

3.1 Lack of coordination

Lack of coordination is an urgent problem in dealing with complex humanitarian emergencies. The issues involved are central to peacekeeping and peace-making; yet no single institution was equipped to deal adequately with all African conflict-related problems. Although the UN was the most significant peacekeeping organisation in post-Cold War Africa, it never had a monopoly on such activities. This proliferation of peacekeeping actors posed challenges at strategic and tactical levels. At the strategic level, it was often difficult to ensure coordination between these different actors over goals and methods (Jones 2002). While most actors agreed in the abstract sense that greater coordination was necessary, none of them liked to be 'coordinated' if this meant following another institution's agenda. Such strategic coordination was important during the planning stages for potential missions but complicated the relationship with the UN and other donor states and institutions. This generated a protracted debate over how to ensure African 'ownership' of operations that were paid for predominantly by Western states or the UN (as was the case with the AU missions in Sudan and Somalia).

At a more tactical level, the multiplicity of actors posed challenges related to interoperability, not least the fact that commanding multinational peacekeeping forces was made more difficult because personnel from different countries had been exposed to different doctrines

and trainings and used distinct equipment. The main attempt to overcome this problem was the establishment of various peacekeeping training centres and the creation of an African Standby Force (Malan 2008: 103-7).

3.2 Insufficient soldiers in the field

This issue dogged many peacekeeping operations. In the case of the UN Mission in the DRC this problem occurred repeatedly. Although a UN report of March 1999 estimated a need of more than 100 000 troops, fewer than 6 000 were granted (Roessler and Prendergast 2006: 259). Similarly, in October 2004, UNSC Resolution 1565 granted UNMDRC only 5 900 of the 13 100 additional troops requested and denied the mission a brigade planned for the south-eastern part of the country (Roessler and Prendergast 2006: 256). Again in 2006, the EU military operation in the DRC force was deployed temporarily to the region in support of UNMDRC because the UNSC declined the UN Secretary-General's request that UNMDRC be given an additional 2 590 troops to deal with security contingencies during the elections (Tull 2009: 218).

Another challenge was the duration of time it usually took peacekeepers to arrive in the field. UNMDRC was established in 1999 but the deployment was delayed till mid 2001 because of Kabila's intransigence and partly because the UN did not foresee the lack of progress on the ground. Other notable examples were the AU Mission in Somalia taking nearly two years to reach half its authorised troop's strength, the UN/AU Mission in Darfur operating with some 10 000 uniformed personnel below its authorised strength 18 months into its operations. The 3 000 reinforcements authorised for the UN Mission in the DRC in November 2008 took over a year to arrive.

3.3 Misconduct by the peacekeepers

Some peacekeepers abused their power. In extreme cases, this involved murdering locals — as in the case of Canadian military peacekeepers in Somalia in the early 1990s. The local perception was that peacekeepers were unaccountable, immune from the law, corrupt, and that they exploited and abused local civilians, also sexually. Such misconduct could "put an entire operation at risk, severely hampering its ability to effect positive change in the host countries" (Wiharta 2009:

115). Corruption, sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse usually made media headlines.

Corruption was evident when UN peacekeepers in the DRC were involved in illicit trading of gold and other goods, including arms. AU peacekeepers in Somalia engaged in arms trafficking (United Nations Security Council 2005). In the case of the DRC, the allegations against Indian peacekeepers apparently informed Kabila's government's decision in rejecting deployment to some parts of the country. This warning came in November 2008, immediately after the Indian government offered to provide half (1 500) of the temporary reinforcements authorised for the mission by the UNSC (Wiharta 2009: 113).

There were also numerous scandals involving peacekeepers raping and sexually abusing local women and children as well as engaging in human trafficking. Although such abuses occurred in peace operations all around the world, UNMDRC personnel was accused of more abuses than any other UN operation. In 2004 the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services conducted an investigation into the situation around Bunia in eastern DRC. It concluded that the sexual exploitation and abuse of locals was a regular occurrence and that UNMDRC had turned a blind eye to the problem (United Nations 2005). The only positive news was that these scandals prompted a major UN investigation, led by Jordan's Prince Zeid, and the subsequent setting out of the so-called zero tolerance approach (United Nations Secretary-General 2005).

3.4 Inadequate police force in the field

UN police officers were deployed for the first time in the 1960s. However, with the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG), operating in Namibia between April 1989 and March 1990, UN police contingents became an increasingly important element of UN peacekeeping. Greater demand for police was reflected in the UNSC's resolutions for its African operations; over 6 400 police were authorised for the UN/AU Mission in Darfur; over 1 400 for UNMDRC; over 1 200 for the UN Mission in Liberia; over 1 200 for the UN operation in Côte d'Ivoire and over 700 for the UN Mission in Sudan. By 2009, however, not all these targets had been met, with notable deficiencies in the missions in Darfur (about 3 000 police short) and in the DRC (about 600 short). The AU struggled even more to deploy police officers mainly

because good police officers were usually in greater demand by the world's states than good soldiers. Consequently, many countries lacked sufficient police capacity. Those that had it were often reluctant to send many of their police officers abroad, especially into dangerous environments where legal and justice systems had been destroyed.

3.5 Complex multidimensional operation mandates

The central challenges revolved around four issues. First, peacekeepers were sometimes given contradictory instructions. For instance, UNMDRC was mandated to support President Joseph Kabila's government and protect the country's civilians, yet this government's soldiers were responsible for a significant proportion of the crimes committed against Congolese civilians. By 2009, the mission in the DRC was supposed to help the armed forces of the DRC to attack various rebel groups in the east of the country. But it had to withdraw its support from key elements of the Congolese army when it was proved they were responsible for a large number of atrocities committed against civilians (Human Rights Watch 2009).

On other occasions, governments withdrew their consent for operations. In early 2006, the new government in Burundi demanded the withdrawal of UN peacekeepers ahead of schedule. In 2008 Eritrea withdrew its consent from the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea because Asmara felt that the UN was not enforcing the ruling of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission. In 2009, the governments of Chad and the DRC both requested the withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping operations before they had completed their mandated tasks.

In other cases, host governments placed significant constraints on the activities of peacekeepers as a prerequisite for granting continued consent. This was a major challenge for the AU Mission in Sudan and the UN/AU Mission in Darfur. Indeed, one analysis concluded that peacekeepers should not cross 'the Darfur line' — that is, a peace operation should not be deployed where there is no real consent by the host country (Jones *et al* 2009: 12). This challenge reflects the fundamental constraint placed on peace operations by the rules of the international system; they can operate legally only with the consent of the host government.

The second issue was that ambiguity often pervaded the texts handed down by the UNSC and other mandating authorities. Not only

were mission mandates more complex than ever but there was a lack of consensus on how certain mandate tasks should be fulfilled. Peacekeepers were often told to assist authorities and support processes without being given further specific instructions or pre-deployment training on how to do this. A related problem stemmed from different national contingents within a peace operation interpreting these general instructions differently in operational terms or ignoring certain orders from their UN force commanders altogether.

An example of national contingents disobeying orders occurred within the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. The Canadian force commander, General Dallaire, had told the senior officer of the Bangladeshi contingent that the mission's mandate allowed it to try to protect civilians in danger of massacre. "Our orders from New York are quite explicit", Dallaire (2003: 1) wrote,

> we are to conduct the evacuation of the expatriate community and to offer protection when feasible of Rwandese citizens. Within our peacekeeping rules of engagement, we can use force to defend persons under United Nations protection and prevent crimes against humanity. We must, however, balance the use of force with the requirement to protect our men.

Nevertheless, members of the Bangladeshi contingent consistently ignored these orders, prompting Dallaire to complain to the UN headquarters in New York. He consistently stated that he was under national orders not to endanger his soldiers by evacuating Rwandese; they would evacuate expatriates but not local people. His junior officers clearly stated that if they were stopped at a roadblock with local people in the convoy, they would handover those local people for inevitable killing rather than use their weapons to save them. This reticence to engage in dangerous operations and the stated reluctance to use their weapons in self-defence or in defence during the occurrence of crimes against humanity led to widespread mistrust of this contingent among its peers in other units and amongst staff officers and UN military observers at the headquarters when they were tasked to go with these men on dangerous missions (Melvern 2009: 187). Members of the Bangladeshi contingent began to desert, taking UN vehicles with them, before UNSC Resolution 912 officially withdrew most of the mission, including their contingent (Melvern 2009: 194-195).

Problems also occurred when conflicting parties, usually rebel fac-

tions, viewed peacekeeping mandates as illegitimate. In the case of the EU Force Chad/Central African Republic, for instance, some rebel groups viewed the presence of an EU force as illegitimate because of its close association with France, which had a long history of providing military support for President Deby's corrupt and authoritarian regime in the name of maintaining stability. To make matters worse for the EU peacekeepers, Deby's government banned them from operating inside the country's refugee camps, even though the primary purpose of their mission was the protection of civilians and the creation of conditions which would allow the displaced from both Chad and Sudan to return to their homes (Wiharta 2009: 102-103).

Another issue stemmed from the sheer difficulty of the tasks peacekeepers were to undertake, especially with limited resources and according to externally driven and usually unrealistic timetables. Among them were mandates to 'strengthen the rule of law' and reform the 'security sector'. Demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration also posed huge problems to peacekeepers over the years. It was hard enough to disarm former combatants when they were willing participants in Chad and Sudan but attempting to do it by force, as occurred in Somalia, was a recipe for disaster. Demobilisation was also difficult to achieve, especially when there were few employment opportunities available to help 'reintegrate' these combatants into society. Sometimes the entire process was met with hostility by local civilians who did not want to 'reintegrate' war criminals but instead wanted them punished.

Another problem was the physical protection of civilians (Holt, Taylor and Kelly, 2009). Although many peace operations in Africa grappled with the problems of civilian protection throughout the 1990s, it was not until 1999 that all UN multidimensional peacekeeping operations in Africa included some explicit element of civilian protection in their mandates. Since 2003, the EU has been giving some of its operations civilian protection tasks. But it is important to recall that these mandates always came with various caveats, usually that peacekeepers should only protect civilians 'under imminent threat of violence' and within their 'areas of deployment'. In addition, it was quite rightly left to force commanders on the ground to decide whether they had sufficient capabilities to carry out specific protection tasks.

Throughout the two decades after the Cold War, most discussions and media attention centred on the many failures of peacekeeping

operations, especially in Rwanda, Angola, Sierra Leone, Sudan and the DRC. Yet news from Africa was not all bad. Even in truly dire circumstances the presence of peacekeepers usually made the overall situation better, not worse. Instances abound: in 2003, after Ugandan troops withdrew from Ituri in the DRC, some 700 Uruguayan peacekeepers managed to protect approximately 15 000 civilians in Bunia airport and UNMDRC's sector headquarters (Holt and Berkman 2006: 160-161). In 2005, the Pakistani brigade in South Kivu provided civilians with safe passage through the Kahuzi-Biegapark and organised village defence communities to alert peacekeepers of imminent attacks, by banging pots and blowing whistles (Holt and Berkman 2006: 166). Also, the beleaguered UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda peacekeepers were reported at one time to have protected approximately 30 000 people (Des Forges 1999: 689).[2)] The basic problem was that there was little even well-resourced peacekeepers could do more. As one analysis correctly observed, peacekeeping operations could not "protect everyone from everything", nor could they "operate without some semblance of a 'peace to keep' or halt determined belligerents wholly backed by a state" (Holt, Taylor and Kelly 2009: 12, 211).

3.6 Hostility and complex conflicts

As Downs and Stedman (2002) noted, peacekeeping is more difficult owing to the following factors: a high number of warring parties; the absence of a peace agreement signed with minimum of coercion by all major warring parties before intervention; relative easy access to disposable natural resources; the presence of hostile neighbouring states or networks; a high number of soldiers: cases with more than 50 000 soldiers are considered difficult; a high likelihood of 'spoilers'; the unwillingness of major or regional powers to engage in conflict management/peacekeeping; wars of secession; and collapsed functioning state institutions.

Operations deployed in remote areas with harsh physical terrain and a lack of access to infrastructure face huge logistical problems. Analysing over a dozen peace-building operations, Downs and Stedman (2002) concluded that the four most fundamental factors were the existence of spoilers, neighbouring states' hostility to the peace agreement concerned, the presence of disposable resources and major power interest. Many of the peace operations deployed in warring

African states had to contend with most of those factors.

Moreover, some features made African armed conflicts particularly challenging for peacekeeping, as they were not confined to state borders. While the sinews of conflict regularly stretched across political boundaries, peace operations were generally deployed to some countries. Peacekeepers were only able to deal with part of the issue confronting them. The UN's recognition of the cross-border nature of the wars across Sudan, Central African Republic and Chad and the deployment of related peace operations represented a welcome development.

Another factor was the nature of most of the peace agreements that peacekeepers were to support. These were often problematic in at least two senses: they did not address the complete range of incompatibilities driving the conflict and were not fully comprehensive, inasmuch as they were signed by a limited number of the conflicting parties, with unarmed groups altogether ignored. This left peacekeepers operating in zones where the re-occurrence of armed conflict was a constant threat. In some cases peacekeepers would be viewed by some parties as hostile elements, attempting to impose an unjust peace. Examples are the AU mission in Sudan after the Darfur Peace Agreement in May 2006, and the AU mission in Somalia after the Djibouti Agreement in August 2008.

A large number of conflict groups or parties constitute a problem. At various levels, peacekeepers in the DRC and Darfur were faced with approximately 20 armed rebel factions. Many of these had unprofessional armed forces, comprised of little more than militias and criminals who rarely respected the laws of war or did not consistently followed chains of command. This raised the probability that armed groups would deliberately target civilians, perhaps because they possessed resources useful to the belligerents. A related problem was that the conflicting parties often formed bewildering and shifting alliances, which made it difficult for peacekeepers to know who to support. The splintering of rebel factions in both the DRC and Darfur were cases in point. Moreover, armed groups whose members relied on warfare to generate their livelihoods had a vested interest in maintaining conflict and, hence, often resented the presence of peacekeepers.

4. Conclusion

Peacekeepers neither changed the nature of African armed conflicts nor fundamentally altered the political dynamics. Being given unrealistic deadlines and starved of adequate resources and personnel, some of the worst symptoms were not alleviated. Africa received more peacekeepers than any other region during the 1990s and 2000s but there were far too few of them relative to the complexity and magnitude of the tasks at hand.

Peacekeepers also suffered from the fact that their missions were not always tied to a viable conflict resolution strategy. Two particular weaknesses were reliance on elections for stability and the inability of most peacekeeping operations to tackle local dynamics, which lay at the heart of many armed conflicts. In one of the thoughtful critiques of the UNOMDRC's operation, Severine Autesserre (2009: 272, 276) observed how the mission's leaders relied heavily on elections, which were "a poor peacebuilding mechanism" and ended up framing "local conflict resolution as an irrelevant, inappropriate and illegitimate task for international actors", when it was crucial to implementing peace agreements. This conclusion could reasonably be levelled at many other operations as well.

It was also apparent that no single institution could handle the full spectrum of conflict management issues facing the region. The issue of logistic and strategic coordination cast a persistent shadow over the international landscape. During the 1990s, the key relationships were between Africa's regional institutions and the UN. In the 21st century, however, the locus shifted to a UN, AU and EU nexus, as the latter two institutions began to play larger roles. Throughout international institutions' debates on peacekeeping the notion of 'African solutions to African problems' was a prominent but not always helpful fixture in regional and international debates.

In more positive terms, the two decades after the Cold War witnessed an unprecedented improvement in the professionalisation of the world's peacekeepers and the institutionalisation of African conflict resolution structures. Some big issues remained, amongst others that of professionalism. In response, the UN missions established in the early 21st century reflected a qualitatively different order than those of the early 1990s. In addition, although the AU tried to run before

it could walk in the field of peacekeeping, it made considerable progress, especially when considering the low baseline and the lack of interest displayed in peacekeeping by many of its members.

It is important to remember that even 'robust' peace operations with mandates to use force were not designed for armed fighting. Their purpose was not to achieve victory over enemies but to uphold impartially the principles and rules written into their mandate and the peace agreement concerned. When belligerents were genuinely committed to a peace process, peacekeepers helped make it stick (Fortna 2008). When belligerents remained belligerent, peacekeepers could do little but help alleviate some of the symptoms of armed conflicts. When forced into such situations, peacekeepers predictably drew hostility from all sides: governments complained that rebels were not disarmed, rebels complained that government abuses were ignored and civilians complained that they were not protected.

Endnotes

1. *United States of America Presidential Decision Directive 25* determined that peacekeeping operations should be authorised only when there was a genuine threat to peace and security; regional or sub-regional organisations could assist in resolving the situation; a ceasefire existed and the parties had committed themselves to a peace process; a clear political goal existed and was present in the mandate; and a precise mandate had been formulated and the safety of United Nations personnel could be reasonably assured.
2. The difficulty with this figure is that many of these people were located within the RPF zone. Consequently, the extent to which UNAMIR was responsible for saving them is not entirely clear.

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