







Northern powers is problematic. This consequently plays out in the approaches both forge in intervening in the different stages of conflict management. Notable variances in the South-North policy debate include the tension over who should take the lead in peacemaking and post-conflict reconstruction (PCR) processes on the continent, and related sequencing of activities; and the lack of sufficient consensus on the structural conditions that lead to instability and thus necessitate concerted and long action. Secondly and also inevitably linked to the first point, there is a seeming disconnect between local and international approaches. Thirdly, the limited appreciation of new actors, newly emerging issue areas and novel approaches that challenge established paradigms make it all the more difficult to define the scope and parameters of intervention and collaboration.

The question we seek to interrogate is: what are the important areas of divergence and convergence in the approaches to African conflict resolution and peace-building between the North and Africa?

The paper is divided into four major parts. The first part deals with methodological issues in conflict resolution in Africa, highlighting the divergences in the Western and African perspectives. The second part critically analyzes the existing conflict prevention/management framework in Africa. While section three elaborates on the debate around humanitarian interventions in African conflicts, section four focuses on two recent experiences and lessons that could serve for future crisis response.

## II. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION: APPROACHES TO OWNERSHIP, DEFINING PEACE-BUILDING PRIORITIES AND SEQUENCING ACTIVITIES

In 2005, former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan promoted the idea of “an interlocking system of peacekeeping capacities...with relevant regional organizations” providing complementary capacities for an overburdened UN.<sup>249</sup>

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Having said this, African political will and leadership acumen should be understood as critical for the process of postconflict interventions as well. For this and other reasons, North-South PCR collaborations face many challenges, such as strong vested interests by both African and international players in not developing sufficient autonomy to exercise influence; the tendency by African and international actors to bypass the AU and RECs in PCR political activities; the reluctance of African governments to cede their sovereign privileges to allow for AU and REC diplomacy; and the incessant imbalance between AU policy and practice, and matching continental resolutions and mandates to capabilities and collectively implementable commitments. As we investigate divergences between North – South approaches to PCR, one should also interrogate where enforcement capacities lie, especially in implementing peace agreements. As aptly put, “Africa looks to Europe and the U.S.-sometimes bilaterally, sometimes under a UN umbrella.” To date, this has been done solely on an ad hoc basis, without a coordinated analysis of how the relations between African intergovernmental organisations and the UN are interfacing.

### Gaps in the northern approach

The selection of interventions by Northern actors have mostly been those that carry a wider political significance, for instance assisting to strengthen perceived helpful political forces, and those that seek to demonstrate a ‘peace dividend.’ For the most part, the Northern approach has demonstrated a bias toward rapid responses where delivering hurried visible results and capacity-building assistance is defined as most critical and useful in stabilizing fragile peace and preventing renewed conflict. This approach is also manifest in situations of deteriorating governance or rising conflict risk where concepts like Responsibility to Protect (R2P), state capacity building and democracy and governance promotion have been employed to justify external action. However, it is highly problematic that western countries and their donor agencies still continue to rely almost exclusively on their formal policy definitions, rather than African conflict contexts. This leads to a lack of appreciation of A.D

by promoting positive behavior change<sup>xii</sup>. This can prove ineffective, undermining the development of a more comprehensive process of reconstruction. Questions on Northern interventions additionally interr

domestic ones.

### The methodological approach by the African Union and its institutions

The AU's methodological approach to peace and security is guided foremost by the Constitutive Act, wherein the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), functioning as an interlocking system of RECs or RMs consisting of the PSC, a Panel of the Wise (POW), a CEWS, a Peace Fund and the African ASF, is operationalized. Most of these components require close coordination between the RECs/RMs and the AU, regional cooperation, and support from non-African international organizations such as the UN, EU and other individual state donors. In African post-conflict interventions, the application of the principle of subsidiarity reigns supreme. The 2007 MoU between the AU and RECs on institutional cooperation follows this functional logic based on political and institutional 'complementarity and comparative advantage' in fostering effective responses and also expanding the scope for more cooperation between RECs and the AU where required.

Principal issues surrounding the role of the AU in post-conflict situations include the substantive requirements for establishing reconstruction, regional peace and security; the institutional requirements for establishing such an order; and the development of a comprehensive and sustainable approach. Importantly, by the time a situation is defined as post-conflict by the AU and RECs, they would have determined whether the matter is regarded as solely a domestic issue or as a question of regional, continental or international concern and engagement. This also informs the logic of peacekeeping and the deployment of cooperative peacekeeping operations, determined by the demand and supply for such with reference to individual peacekeeping capabilities, as well as AU/REC capability and capacity gaps. Relevant to this is the 2005 African Conflict Reconstruction Policy Framework, and the African Development Bank as an illustration of a continental development institution supporting the AU's post-conflict reconstruction and development agenda. This is discussed in detail below.

The 2005 African Post-Conflict Reconstruction Policy Framework serves as a key blueprint that coordinates and guides the AU Commission, the NEPAD Secretariat, RECs, civil society, the private sector and external partners in the process of rebuilding affected communities.<sup>xii</sup> A proposed AU/NEPAD Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit is to serve as the implementing and coordinating institution of PCR. The framework is based on the premise that each country should adopt a PCR strategy that responds to its own particular context, however making a link between the peace, security, humanitarian and development dimensions of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. The framework identifies "the lack of sufficient local ownership and participation" in PCR; the unsustainability and ineffectiveness of externally driven post-conflict reconstruction processes; greater collaboration between the AU/NEPAD and RECS, as well as external actors in outlining entry and exit strategies and timetables for external actors interventions; focus on Disarmament-Demobilization-Rehabilitation (DDR) of combatants with a view to ensuring that demobilized fighters have access to rehabilitation programmes that facilitate their transition back into society; and Security Sector Reform (SSR).<sup>xiii</sup>

The five pillars of the framework focus on: security and political transition; governance and



participation; socioeconomic development; human rights, justice and reconciliation; and coordination, management and resource mobilization<sup>xiv</sup> But despite a shared commitment to a set of these overarching principles, challenges arise in PCR implementation, including insufficient domestic legitimization of the decisionmaking processes and priorities relating to the policy; incoherence and inconsistency in identifying priorities at the continental and AU levels; and the limited availability of and capacity to utilize policy instruments like diplomacy/negotiation, economic tools, and military means.

Shortfalls in the policy itself have to do with an undefined scope of interaction in PCR processes between international actors and target countries; ambiguous recognition of enabling economic conditions to foster regional and continental integration that promotes peace and equitable development; and the adverse impact of international trade rules and regulations on countries emerging from war, in particular, in Africa.



According to article 16 of the protocol establishing the PSC, regional mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution are considered to be an integral part of the peace and security architecture of the AU.<sup>xvii</sup> In fact, the preventive deployment system of the AU mentioned above is dependent on regionally based rapid response brigades, and as already indicated, the AU's early warning system is designed to draw extensively from regional observation and monitoring units. While recognizing that primary responsibility for conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa lies with the AU, a 2008 Memorandum of Understanding signed between the AU and RECs recommends "adherence to the principles of subsidiarity, complementarity and comparative advantage" in relations between them.<sup>xviii</sup>



create the space for a convergence of perspectives of Western and African leaders on the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa. However, although the resolution was unanimously adopted by all 15 members of the Council, the ~~high~~









Historically, Africa has defended its hard-won sovereignty and frequently resorted to this argument to resent any suggestion for foreign intervention understood as a foreign military presence. While this was premised on the political dynamics in the post-colonial setting and the disastrous experience of colonial and foreign occupations, the argument of non-interference served mostly as a cover for dictatorship and gross human rights abuses. Until 1980, South Africa's apartheid regime defended its racist policy as a matter of domestic jurisdiction while Zimbabwe recently brandished sovereignty to justify political repression unleashed on the citizens. But if democracy and respect for human rights were sensitive issues during the Cold War era, the reality of the 1990s conflicts and their consequences forced African leaders to reassess their normative position as far as humanitarian intervention is concerned. The civil war in Liberia in the early 1990s compelled the regional organization, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to send troops (Monitoring Group) in Monrovia to curb the onslaught that Charles Taylor and his rebel group, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), unleashed on the country.

The decision was derived from the fact that Western powers appeared no longer willing to take casualties and who were reluctant to respond to African people's plight. The setbacks in Somalia were contributing factors to a situation where influential United Nations Security Council members grew wary of contributing to missions headed for Africa's civil war scenarios in the early 1990s.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Therefore, as controversial as it was, ECOMOG intervention contributed to the stabilization of the country and provided the UN force with some peace to keep.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Two major consequences emerged from this intervention.

Firstly, there was a realization that Africa and its leaders could no longer remain 'indifferent' in the face of humanitarian tragedies brought about by internal armed conflicts as some of them could have international or cross-border impacts detrimental to regional peace and stability.<sup>xxxix</sup> Secondly, with this experience, African regional and continental organisations (AU and ECOWAS) made significant normative and constitutional strides towards a more robust conflict management capability, which may, in some circumstances and on a case-by-case basis, be employed to prevent or stop ongoing human rights abuses and atrocities. Indeed, inspired by the search for 'African solutions to African problems,' the AU has become the primary formal actor in the area of civilian protection and peace operations on African soil.<sup>l</sup>

In 2002, following the transformation of the OAU into the AU, the first Chairperson of the African Union Commission, President Alpha Oumar Konare, called for the need to shift from a culture of non-intervention to a culture of non-indifference.<sup>xli</sup> The codification of that norm came through the adoption of the AU Constitutive Act. In essence, its article 4(h) affirms 'the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.' In the same vein, article 4(j) declares 'the right of Member States to

request intervention from the Union in order to restore peace and security.' Finally, article 7(e), of the Protocol on the Peace and Security Council, states that the Council can 'recommend to the Assembly (of Heads of State), intervention, on behalf of the Union a







- It is necessary to support continental mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. Special purpose facilities are often customized to the unique conditions of countries affected by conflicts.
- Attention to sequencing of interventions at all levels and across sectors (political-administrative, security, and socio-economic) to ensure long-term sustainability of investments. The partnership approach also assist in synergize accountability and regulatory requirements to avoid a conflict relapse.
- Support should be given to the promotion of genuine, open and sustained dialogue involving Western policymakers, practitioners and scholars and their African counterparts to facilitate a shared understanding of the varying concerns and interests that bedevil mutually



researchers and project administrators. This is complemented by a network of fellows and associates that work part-time for IGD as and when there are funded projects. IGD's research staff teaches at universities and training colleges, and also frequently participates in media commentary on international developments and foreign policy. Besides the proceeds from the investment account built over many years of scrupulous financial management, the bulk of the IGD's revenue is from major consultancy work for the South African government and international organizations, as well as project funding from foundations and trusts. Recently, the IGD's political research, especially the analysis of actor dynamics in countries within Africa has attracted funding from some of the major SA corporations investing in emerging markets.







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thus paving the way for the descent of Cote d'Ivoire into a civil war that left the country virtually divided. Coulibaly then retreated northwards from Abidjan and helped establish the Forces Nouvelles, which soon gained control over the Northern half of the country until his relationship with Guillaume Soro, who was then Forces Nouvelles Secretary General, soured owing to a fierce power struggle within the ranks of Forces Nouvelles. With the post 2010 electoral conflict, he sought to reestablish himself as a powerful actor in the country on his own right. Coulibaly was the key initiator of the 'Invisible Commandos', a rebel grouping which assisted in undercutting Gbagbo's security forces at the heart of Abidjan. This group was put in place by Coulibaly and recruited from both national security Forces and rebels.

<sup>liv</sup> Ramesh Thakur, Libya and the Responsibility to Protect: Between Opportunistic Humanitarianism and Value free Pragmatism, ISS Situation Report, March 2012.

<sup>lv</sup> Ibid, p.3

<sup>lvi</sup> Ibid.