Africa Crisis Response Initiative: Its Workability as a Framework for Conflict Prevention and Resolution

Nene Mburu

Historical Background

When Kwame Nkrumah proposed the formation of an African High Command in the early 1960s, he envisaged a pure homegrown force for policing and resolving conflicts occurring in the continent but not quite what the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) has emerged to be.[1] The founding father of Ghana was primarily concerned that, by slicing through ethnic communities arbitrarily, the inherited colonial boundaries could form a casus belli within the newly independent states as communities and regions jostled for the political space vacated by the colonizer.[2] Ironically, his abortive attempt to forge ethnic solidarity by incorporating within Ghana parts of Togo and Benin inhabited by the Ewe ethnic community received mixed reaction among African leaders with the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which he had helped found, regarding them as antitheses to unity.[3] In the Horn of Africa Somalia's attempts to crystallize the 'Greater Somalia' nation by merging Somali-inhabited enclaves of Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti were treated as irredentism and frustrated by the OAU, Britain, France, and a Kenya-Ethiopia mutual defense arrangement.[4]

To be fair to the first crop of pan-Africanists, the envisaged continental policing force was not only an expression of independence to resolve intra-African problems but also a means of initiating economic development and protecting the continent's natural wealth from foreigners particularly the former colonial masters. The insularity of the first generation of leaders defeated pan-Africanism as their colonial upbringing persuaded them to look for domestic political support from their primordial cleavages and externally strengthen links with former colonizers hoping such a relationship could deliver various pre-independence expectations to their people. Regional economic integration emerged, which created the illusion that unity with other newly independent states was achievable in the economic realm despite the prevalence of serious domestic and external security concerns and disconcerting ideological polarization of the early 1960s. Consequently, apart from the OAU, no other institution emerged to address the security needs of Africa collectively, which were erroneously viewed by the West, then as now, to be rooted in ethnoregionalism as in Sudan or tribalism as in Rwanda and

---

[1] Editorial "Nkrumah: Scrap the Colonial Frontiers," *Daily Nation*, (Nairobi) 17 May 1961, p.13.

[2] Sir E. Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty* Vol. II. London: His Majesty's Stationery; (1896); Sir E. Hertslet, *Map of Africa by Treaty*. 3rd Edition Vol. II Nos. 95-259, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1909. See also A.C. McEwen, *International Boundaries of East Africa*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

[3] D. Austin, Dennis, "The Uncertain Frontier: Ghana-Togo," *Journal of Moden African Studies*, 1 (2), 1963, pp.139-45. For a comparative account, see "Ghana," CD-ROM Microsoft ® Encarta ® 98 Encyclopedia.

[4] Popularly known as "The Defence Pact," the Agreement was signed by Oginga Odinga (Kenyan Minister of Interior) and Katema Yifrou (Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs). See, *Kenya Ethiopia Consultative Committee*, Kenya National Archives Nairobi (KNA) ABA/9/198. For the immediate reaction of Somalia see, "Dispute with Somalia," *Africa AFP* No. 1273 (Paris) May 24, 1966, pp. 14. Somali nationalism in Kenya is analyzed exhaustively in N. Mburu, "The Shifta Conflict in Kenya 1963-68," Ph.D. Dissertation in War Studies, University of London, 2000, Chap. 4.

Burundi.[5] So, what has changed almost four decades later to make Africa ready for a continental cop on the beat? This article begins with a retrospective examination of the limitations of traditional peacekeeping models in an attempt to understand the rationale behind the formation of ACRI and how it could be transformed into a suitable framework for conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance in post-Cold War Africa.

Traditional Peacekeeping: Paradigms and Options

For a clearer understanding of the problem under study there is need to clarify the principles and mechanics of outside intervention in support of distressed peoples.[6] Various perceptions and definitions exist for the terms peacekeeping, peacemaking, peace support, and peace enforcement. For the purpose of this study peacekeeping will refer to the collective deployment of a military force by the international community to keep or enforce peace.[7] This role, its military parameters, and obligations of the members are broadly outlined in articles 41 to 47 of the United Nations (UN) charter. It is important to examine the characteristics of the models used to promote or enforce peace during the Cold War period as a basis of understanding how policy shifts in the post-Cold War period have influenced the subject under study.

The first model is when regional organizations serve as institutional alternatives to the UN peacekeeping role. Regional alternatives create the impression of being committed to solve conflicts for fear of regional contagion in their backyard and they could win the political support of a third party whose interest and impact in a particular conflict may be crucial. After 1992 the Somalia experience promoted the feeling that regional organizations should take a prominent role for problems occurring in their neighborhoods and led to a change in the US policy for military deployments in Africa.[8] However, historical experience portrays some limitations of traditional regional arrangements. For example, prior to the invasion of Kuwait, members of the Arab League wanted to address the problem as an intra-Arab affair, but Kuwait sought the assistance of the UN thereby showing more confidence in the world body.[9] The annexation of a sovereign state by Iraq had triggered a crisis that was generally beyond the diplomatic and military capability of a regional organization. Hence, having failed to seriously exhaust diplomacy to avert war the American-led coalition was, at the time, the only plausible military option.

During the Cold War most regional organizations lacked provisions in their charter for the use of coercive force, lacked a standing force to pursue security objectives, and like the U.N they acted on ad hoc basis.[10] Due to geographical proximity to the area of conflict, regional organizations have been

---

[5] The political disintegration of Somalia in the 1990s is evidence that ethnic homogeneity is no guarantor of peace. Sudan's problem has particularly suffered this misrepresentation as detailed by J. Morton, "Ethnicity and Politics in Red Sea Province, Sudan," *African Affairs*, 88 (350) 1989 pp.63-76.

[6] J. Gow (ed.), *Iraq, The Gulf Conflict and The New World Community*, Macmillan Publishing Company: New York, 1992. See also, L. Freedman and E. Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91, Diplomacy and War in The New World Order*, Faber: London, 1993, pp. xxix.

[7] M. Rifkind, "Peacekeeping: Issues for the United Nations and the United States," *RUSI Journal*, 23 (2) London, 1994.

[8] See, United States Department of State, Project on Peacekeeping and the United Nations. "Africa Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI): A Peacekeeping Alliance in Africa" (Washington, DC, August 1997).

[9] S. Irfani, "The Persian Gulf Crisis, Regional Context and the UN Response," *Strategic Studies Journal*, Islamabad, Winter/Autumn, 1990, pp.22-23.

[10] P. Diehl, "Institutional Alternatives to Traditional UN Peacekeeping: An Assessment of Regional and Multinational Options Operations," *Armed Forces & Society*, 19, (2), London, 1993, pp.209-230.

accused of being partisan as witnessed in 1976 by the Arab League in Lebanon. More recently, the offensive role played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Liberia in 1990 reinforces the opinion that a regional organization cannot only overstep its mandate but also seriously compromise its neutrality.[11]

Another visible weakness of regional organizations, particularly in the Third World, is their lack of international support, which has been so acute that the OAU had to depend on the assistance of the UN when it deployed a pan-African peacekeeping force in 1981 to stop the civil war in Chad.[12] The OAU's weakness, however, cannot be the index for assessing the success of regional organizations considering a plethora of problems have reduced its capacity to resolve conflicts on the continent, the foremost being the lack of a mechanism for military intervention. Probably the most acute structural limitation has been being a consensual body; it needs to satisfy all members before agreeing on a course of action. Finance is a limiting factor but the amount of money required to mount a regional mission will equal the cost of a similar one undertaken by the UN. The UN itself has financial constraints but the main difference is that the members contributing to finance regional tasks, especially in Africa, have always been few and hardly self-supporting economically.[13]

The other major drawback hinges on overlapping memberships to several organizations, which impacts the loyalty and commitment of national contingents. For example, membership to west European security organizations is overlapping but there are contingency plans for crisis management with provisions for lateral liaison through institutions such as the Strategic Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and intermediate commands with reasonably secure mail services.[14] Nevertheless, overlapping membership could promote indecisiveness as seen when Britain was reluctant to commit troops for peacekeeping duties for the 1992-95 war in Bosnia when requested by the UN, but enthusiastically took a leading role when it became a task for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The second model is a multinational alternative where a national contingent is under the operational control, not necessarily administrative, of one dominant partner. One advantage of this arrangement is that being from outside the area of conflict the force may not appear partisan like regional organizations. The deployment is done with the mandate of the UN as was the case in Lebanon in 1982 where troops from the US, France, and Italy supervised the withdrawal of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) from Beirut. Each state in this case funded its own contingent thereby eliminating the problem of kit compatibility and logistics.

Several disadvantages exist to this alternative. First, contributing nations will be primarily pursuing their national interests and parties to the conflict do not always accept them, which is a UN prerequisite for the international use of force unless it is defined as peace enforcement or international sanctions. The debacle in Beirut where the peacekeeping force lost a large number of troops from suicide bombers indicates the problem of legitimacy associated with a multinational force. Secondly, dedicating and releasing troops for such commitment without a time limit is always a big sacrifice even

---

[11] There is a detailed study of the crisis facing ECOWAS by, Comfort Ero, "ECOWAS and Subregional Peacekeeping in Liberia," *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, http://www.jha.ac/articles/a005.htm
[12] B. Andemicael, *The O.A.U. and the UN*, Africana Publishing Company: New York and London, 1976.
[13] K. Annan, "UN Peacekeeping Operations and Cooperation with NATO," *NATO Review*, 5, pp.3-7, 1993. Also consult, E. Luard, *The United Nations, How it Works and What it Does*, St. Martin's Press: New York, 1994 pp.126-152.
[14] G. Jannuzi, "NATO's Outlook: A Perspective from Italy Peacekeeping," *NATO Review*, 6 (41) Brussels, December 1993, pp.14-15.

for the developed nations. Again, the experience of the US in Beirut in 1982 revealed how national commitments and changes in public opinion could pressurize a member state to withdraw national contingents at a critical stage of peacekeeping duties. The problem is particularly acute in internecine conflicts which have a tendency of being protracted. Additionally, if a coalition is under a developed nation, such as Britain or France, would it steer off the dominant partner's pursuit of national interests, such as cotton from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) or diamonds from Sierra Leone, in favour of an altruistic agenda for peace? Being torn between a universal goal under the aegis of the UN and pursuing national interests could delay decisions and damage institutional credibility. Invariably such contradictions give rise to an escalation of distrust among the belligerents and UN troops, which could turn peacekeepers into the enemy and subvert the quest for peace and humanitarian assistance.

The third option for peacekeeping/ peacemaking is using the UN, but in the past there has been an obstacle described by the Secretary General for peacekeeping operations as the lack of 'teeth' in terms of mandate and means. Drawing from the experience of the 1991 Gulf War, it may be claimed that big nations are reluctant contributors to the UN unless the world body's actions are serving their immediate or long-term geopolitical interests. For example, the US had failed to pay its contributions to the UN totaling US$146 million since 1977 until one day after the invasion of Kuwait in August 1991 when she paid US$50 million.[15] Considering the UN's dependence on the benevolence of the US and her allies, it is not surprising that most peace deployments during the Cold War could be described as an extension of the prevailing East-West ideological polarization. Further, it could be claimed that bipolarization facilitated a check and balance to the employment of UN forces, which is absent in the post-Cold War period. The rationale of establishing ACRI should be analyzed against the backdrop of these traditional peacekeeping/peacemaking models whose degree of success or failure is not generalizable to the current challenges of the post-Cold War period.

ACRI: Moral Contradictions and Unclear Mission Statement

The concept of an American-sponsored rapidly deployable military force operating in Africa was first proposed by then US Secretary of State Warren Christopher in 1994, but his thoughts did not bear fruit until 1997 during the second administration of President Bill Clinton.[16] During a visit to South Africa in October 1996, Christopher proposed the creation of a military force trained and equipped by the US but led by, and possibly located in, South Africa to resolve conflicts and render humanitarian assistance in Africa. Alongside this was to be a Conflict Management Center whose mission was to monitor and manage potential conflicts in Africa and preposition combat and logistical facilities for small, rapidly deployable military units.[17] His proposal ran into difficulties as Nelson Mandela was against any attempt by the UN to abrogate its responsibility by treating crises occurring in the continent as secondary to those occurring in other parts of the world. The US was not discouraged by Mandela's frankness and pragmatic approach to Africa's problems and went ahead to form the military program.

The US claims the initiative stems from American moral concern with the welfare of Africans who need enabling to prevent humanitarian disasters and catastrophes like the genocide in Rwanda.

---

[15] M. Heikal, *Illusions of Triumph, An Arab View of the Gulf War*, London, 1992, p.237-238.
[16] See a description in, Africa Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) http://www.eucom.mil/programs/acri
[17] US Department of State, *Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Fact sheet released by The Bureau of African Affairs, January 22, 1998.

However, American philanthropy is unconvincing considering that, during the period of forming ACRI, the US has scaled down its development aid to Africa from US$2 billion in 1985 to around US$1 billion in 1997. Furthermore, in the post-Cold War period development aid goes to African states that already have a story of economic success and dogged implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program prescribed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank while neglecting states whose infrastructure is too weak to attract foreign investment.[18] Apart from 'advisors' the superpower does not have significant military deployments on the African soil but it continues to provide military hardware and training particularly through the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET).[19] The confusing policy may be linked to the superpower's experience in Somalia in 1992 when she proved less dominant in asymmetrical conflicts where superior technology does not always guarantee favourable outcomes of firefights. The realization could have compelled decision makers in the White House to rethink less costly means of policing the African continent. Therefore it came as no surprise when the Clinton administration allocated a start-up budget of $35 million in 1997 and approved a recurrent annual budget for an Interagency Working Group, the organization's think tank, to operate under the behest of Ambassador Aubrey Hooks, the US State Department Coordinator for ACRI.

The formation of ACRI was debated by successive US administrations, but its launch without the consent or consultation of Africans created the impression it is primarily an instrument of American foreign policy.[20] In any event, Africa already has too many organizations that are as fragmented as the people they seek to support. Two deserve mention. One, the ECOWAS, is a regional group of 16 countries founded in 1975 and is currently involved in peacekeeping duties in West Africa under the banner of ECOMOG. The other credible institution is the Southern African Development Community (SADC) composed of 14 countries, which has a functioning organizational and an administrative framework for addressing trade, commerce, socio-economic development, and regional security. These two are fairly competent as demonstrated by ECOWAS in West Africa and SADC when it spearheaded humanitarian assistance to Mozambique during the floods of 2000. It is difficult to visualize what ACRI could possibly offer that is outside the capability of the two institutions whose only limitations are the financing and international publicity the American initiative enjoys.

Notwithstanding the above skepticism, the urgency of addressing Africa's security needs cannot be overstated given the profusion of instabilities that convulse the continent at any one time ranging from low-intensity interstate wars to politically motivated violence on certain ethnic groups to organized cross-border rustling and banditry.[21] Whereas African troops have respectable experience in peacekeeping at home and abroad alongside international troops including European armies, they have hitherto lacked an organizational framework, philosophy, or collective logistical structure that could be employed to keep peace on their continent. ACRI is meant to fill this void but its membership, at least in theory, is open to functioning democracies where the military is under civilian control, a criterion that disqualifies dismembered Somalia, strife-torn Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and the DRC (formerly

---

[18] D. Tilton, "US Africa Economic Initiative," *Africalink*, 3 (11), May 1998 at http://www.usaid.gov/regions/afr/alnk/

[19] The author has first hand experience of the programme having been trained in the US in 1989.

[20] R.I. Rotberg, "Looking for a Sound Peacekeeping Structure in Africa," *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 7, 1997 12:28 EDT http://www.nando.

[21] A detailed account of rustling in the context of eastern Africa and the Horn of Africa is by N. Mburu, "Contemporary Banditry in the Horn of Africa: Cause, History, and Political Implications," *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 8 (2), 1999, pp. 89-107.

known as Zaire).[22] Considering that societies under anarchy need security assistance more than orderly ones do, ACRI resembles a feast where invitation is only for those who are not hungry. Participant countries of ACRI include Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Benin, Malawi, Uganda, and Cote d'Ivoire. Kenya's application was initially rejected due to politically motivated ethnic violence and a clampdown on political dissent. Similarly, Ethiopia's application had at first been deferred due to irredentism to parts of eastern Eritrea and western Somalia whose root causes are traceable to post-Second World War settlement of former Italian colonial possessions.[23] The two countries were later accepted and Ethiopia's two battalions and a brigade headquarters form the largest contribution by any member country so far. But admitting countries with unacceptable policies reinforces the suspicion that the real criterion for membership is a country's geopolitical importance to the US and not good governance as officially posited. The representativeness of the African force is further dented by the abstention of most North Africans (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Sudan) who suspect America's insincerity in view of its mixed-signal policy in the Middle East, particularly over Palestinian statehood.

It is important to elucidate what the initiative is and is not to predicate its survivability in the post-Cold War world. ACRI is not a deployable standing army nor is it an early warning system for potential conflicts in the continent insofar as it lacks a structured risk assessment mechanism that can identify indicators of trouble such as the correlates for state collapse.[24] It cannot be defined as a peacekeeping/peace enforcement model considering soldiers who are trained by the US Special Forces revert to their normal military duties under national control. Their availability for future deployment cannot be guaranteed, as it will be dictated by national priorities, relationship with the US, and the prevailing political environment within the state and in the international society.

ACRI is described as a partnership between Africans and non-Africans with the aims of building long-term capacity enhancement by equipping and training troops for various peace roles they may be called upon to perform.[25] American forces visit each member state and embark on a 60-day training cycle with a 6-month follow-up to ensure inter-operability among future peacekeepers by standardizing communication equipment and conducting Field Training Exercises (FTX) based on a variety of scenarios of post-Cold War conflicts. The training programme covers skills that are neither strictly military nor strictly police but, rather, the combination America deems necessary for peacekeeping and peace enforcement in the modern world. Unlike traditional peacekeepers, they learn crowd control, identifying and neutralizing civilian agitators, psychological operations, observing human rights, and working with refugees, the press, and nongovernment organizations. Training also emphasizes the awareness of the law of armed conflict and how to win the hearts and minds of the communities in which they are deployed. It is notable that the US elicits the expertise of various international organizations, particularly the International Committee of the Red Cross whose

---

[22] Reference is to subjective and objective control of the military as persuasively argued by S.P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, Harvard University Press: Massachusetts, 1956.

[23] For further discussion of the genesis of this problem see, N. Mburu, "Patriots or Bandits? Britain's Strategy for Policing Eritrea 1941-1952," *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 9 (2), 2000, pp.85-104.

[24] J. Davies, and T.R. Gurr, (eds.), *Preventive Measures: Building Risk Assessment and Crisis Early Warning Systems*, Rowan & Littlefield Publishers: New York, 1999.

[25] C. Jones, "New International Strategy Sends SF Soldiers to Africa," *ARNEWS*, Fort Bragg, N.C. July 23 1997. Also, consult *Briefing on African Crisis Response Initiative*, United States Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, (Public Affairs), July 29, 1997.

programme for creating awareness of human rights issues in the armed forces of the continent has been on going for some years.[26]

Currently ACRI receives only US$20 million a year from the US, which is not enough. Furthermore, the soldiers to be trained are few and their equipment from the US is limited to small arms, communication radios, uniforms, water purification equipment, and simple mine detectors. Their likely enemy may have better equipment and firepower as seen by the ingenious improvising of 'technicals' by the Somali in 1992 or Sierra Leone in 2000 when the rebels captured 500 poorly armed peacekeepers.

An examination of the workability of the military doctrine for ACRI reveals some contradictions. On the one hand, unpopular regimes could take advantage of their closeness to the only superpower, which is enhanced by belonging to the collaboration, and invest in coercive methods above pacific resolution for crises in Africa. In the immediate term such opportunism by specific leaderships could trigger an arms race and lead to the militarization of disputes thereby sowing the seeds of instability in the long term contrary to the aims of the founders of the initiative.[27] On the other hand, African military tradition, albeit a generalization, considers technology highly desirable but never as a substitute for the person in uniform. Conversely, as seen in Afghanistan in 2001-2002, the current US military strategy creates the impression wars are winnable by remote control using an extravagant air campaign in support of allies that should be prepared to take human casualties obscenely dubbed 'collateral damage.' Whereas it is undeniable that the US counter-insurgency experience in South America during the Cold War brings useful lessons particularly on the use of Special Forces to blend with and train local resistance, it should be remembered the enemy then, communism, had a definable doctrine.[28] The situation in Africa is different, as most contemporary conflicts have no ideological antecedent. Therefore, African countries will find American technology unaffordable and maneuver warfare inapplicable to asymmetrical conflicts such as inter-clan warfare in Somalia or genocide in Rwanda where the enemy is nondescript and without a definable front line, as he is the clansman, in-law, and previous neighbour next door. The US claims it will instill professionalism in the force, but Africa's military thought reflects Cold War legacies that will be difficult to supplant, particularly at the operational and tactical levels of war. Where the army has not taken political power, it enjoys unwritten and often extralegal reciprocity with the ruling elite where it trades loyalty for certain privileges and exercises so much influence on the body politic it cannot be described as apolitical. Insecure careers and uncertainty in a continent where employment opportunities are few and far between strengthen such symbiotic bonds. Elsewhere, especially during the Cold War, praetorians changed the government frequently through officers trained in the developed countries particularly West Point (US) and Sandhurst (UK). Albeit a generalization, civil-military relations in Africa are poorly defined because, having compromised its traditional role as protector, the military is alienated from the masses and its doctrine for war cannot be defined accurately. Troops in the ACRI programme return to their indigenous units and formations where they are subsumed by deeply entrenched attitudes and dogmas of soldiering, which modern equipment and training by American Special Forces cannot eradicate in the immediate term. Hence doubt is cast on the suitability of American military doctrine and experience

---

[26] The author draws on personal experience having attended the ICRC training workshops in Nairobi (Kenya) in 1992 and in Harare (Zimbabwe) in 1993, which were attended by many military personalities from Eastern Africa, Central Africa, and Southern Africa.

[27] P. Omach, "The African Crisis Response Initiative: Domestic Politics and Convergence of National Interests," *African Affairs* 99, (394) 2000, pp.73-95.

[28] D.M. Rempe, "Guerrillas, Bandits, and Independent Republics: US Counter-Insurgency Efforts in Colombia 1959-65," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 6 (3) 1995, pp.304-327.

as a vehicle for enforcing peace in Africa. Furthermore, hunger, disease, illiteracy, and poor governance, which are currently draining Africa's resources, are not a consequence of conflicts but the causes. Enabling Africa to tackle these problems will be the genuine investment in long-term peace.

Confusion reigns over the future of ACRI both in the US and in Africa, which cannot be isolated from America's policy shift following the Somalia experience of 1992 and, more recently, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Through the State Department Authorization bill FY '98, the US Senate endorsed a policy recommending the UN subcontract peacekeeping duties to regional organizations. By implication future peacekeeping missions may not count on military, financial, or political support from the US unless they were led by regional organizations. Hence, there is deep suspicion in Africa that ACRI could adopt a more aggressive posture and be used for surveillance or act as vanguard for future military operations on countries like Sudan, Somalia, or Libya defined by President George W. Bush in January 2002 as 'axis of evil.'[29] American policymakers send a confusing signal on the future of the programme. On the one hand, Secretary of State Colin Powell supports the initiative and continued American support for peacekeeping missions in Africa. On the other hand, the US Defense Secretary, Donald Rumfeld, is urging for ACRI to either be terminated or radically transformed to a more offensive and self-reliant force under American control. The latter's thoughts echo the position of President Bush, whose unequivocal message during his presidential campaign was for total military disengagement where American core interests were not at stake.[30] The uncertainty is compounded by the fact that members of ACRI also belong to other regional organizations including the American-sponsored Great Horn of Africa Initiative (GHAI) created in 1994 to resolve crises in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region.[31] It may be deduced that since membership is not binding, states could use American training and equipment and still shift allegiance according to their needs among various peacekeeping organizations to the detriment of ACRI.

While the US dithers over support for peace operations in future, Britain, currently the superpower's staunchest supporter, shares the policy of military disengagement where national interests are not at stake and goes further to suggest the privatization of peacekeeping in Africa.[32] It does not seem to matter that the use of mercenaries contravenes Protocol 1 Article 47 of the Geneva Convention (1949).[33] During the Cold War mercenaries were regarded as immoral renegades and never overtly invited to share in the management of violence, which was the pride of the regular armed forces of the state. Various factors feed the policy shift in favour of the privatization of security, among them the collapse of some developing states, the domino effect of regional insecurity across Africa's porous borders, unsustainability of ethno-military identities cultivated during colonialism, promotion of praetorian culture in African armies during the Cold War, unemployment and disaffection of former soldiers due to compulsory post-Cold War downsizing of the militaries, and a power vacuum following the withdrawal of the superpowers at the end of the Cold War.

---

[29] K.J. Kelley, "US to Give Kenya Forces More Muscle, *The East African*, January 7, 2002.

[30] M.E. O'Hanlon, "How to Keep Peace in Africa Without Sending Troops," *The New York Times*, (New York) January 8 2001, pp.17.

[31] For fuller information see, *The Great Horn of Africa Initiative (GHAI)*, http://www.usaid.gov/regions/afr/ghai/

[32] The post-Cold War logic fails to explain why Britain has deployed troops in Sierra Leone but uses diplomatic measures in Zimbabwe, yet, she claims national interests are at stake in each country.

[33] "PROTOCOL ADDITIONAL TO THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS OF 12 AUGUST 1949, AND RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF VICTIMS OF INTERNATIONAL ARMED CONFLICTS," (PROTOCOL I U.N.T.S. No. 17512, vol. 1125, 3.)

It is important to briefly explore this shift in attitude and policy. During the Cold War period mercenaries like Bob Denard, Jacques Schramme, and Mike Hoare established a notoriety of deposing African regimes using small private armies. Although evidence exists that the secret services of many governments were aware of their activities, mercenaries were not officially substituting regular soldiers. In the post-Cold War period there has been a policy shift and many governments are overtly depending on hired guns for intervention for fear of losing public support if they suffer casualties in multilateral peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, due to the possession of superior military technology, mercenaries have become ruthlessly efficient and are cheaper to hire, quicker to respond, expendable, and not morally reprehensible as they are only accountable to their paymasters. For example, from 1995 to 1997 South African mercenaries known as Executive Outcomes (EO) were paid US$1.2 million a month for operations in Sierra Leone compared to US$47 million a month it would have cost a multinational UN peace force.[34] Before the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was deployed mercenaries had stabilized the situation and stopped the killing, raping, and cutting of limbs of civilians by the notorious Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led by Foday Sankoh a former army corporal.[35] Britain's deployment in Sierra Leone in 2000 was in consultation with British mercenaries known as Sandline, International which casts doubt on the country's claim to an ethical foreign policy.[36]

It is important to critically analyze some of the limitations of the UN framework for military deployments to enforce or maintain peace, as it is the frame of reference used by the African initiative. To start with ACRI intends to diffuse danger before it occurs, which conforms to the posture of the US following the catastrophe of September 11, 2001. However, its modus operandi is based on the UN Charter, which is reactive rather than pro-active to situations of chaos given that a peacekeeping force can legally be deployed only after parties to the conflict give their consent.[37] The precedent to this was the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF 1) whose deployment was authorized by a brave Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold in 1956 following the Suez crisis.[38] For it to succeed in diffusing tensions pro-actively, ACRI will need an unambiguous mission, appropriate force structure, posturing, timing, and ability to predict the duration of deployments. Internecine conflicts as seen in Somalia did not present identifiable leaderships, and genocide in Rwanda was not a conflict between opposing forces as envisaged in the UN Charter. Here, the response force will have to accept the UN Charter has not adjusted to the realities of modern conflicts as opposed to just mediating between nations, which was the rationale for its birth after the Second World War.[39] The experience of Major-General Lewis

---

[34] H. Howe, "Private Security Forces and African Stability: The Case of Executive Outcomes," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34(2) 1998. S. Mallaby, "New Role for Mercenaries," *Los Angeles Times*, (Los Angeles) August 3, 2001; S. Mallaby, "Paid to Make Peace Mercenaries Are No Altruists, but They Can Do Good," *The Washington Post*, (Washington D.C.) Monday June 4, 2001.

[35] The atrocities are well documented in a report by Amnesty International. Consult *Sierra Leone: Civilians Face Real and Immediate Threat to Their Fundamental Human* Rights, Report by Amnesty International, AFR 51/006/2000 dated 10/05/2000.

[36] "Send in the Mercenaries if Our Troops Won't Fight," *The Guardian*, (London) Wednesday May 10, 2000.

[37] R. B. Russell, Ruth B., *United Nations Experience with Military Forces: Political and Legal Aspects*, Brookings Institution: Washington, D.C. 1964; Also, R.B. Russell, *The United Nations: Patterns of Constitutional Development, Development of Peacekeeping Rules, Two Papers*. Brookings Institution: Washington, D.C.1965

[38] A. W. Cordier and W. Foote, (ed.) "United Nations General Assembly Resolution 997 (ES-1) of 2 November 1956," *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations: Volumes II-V: Dag Hammarskjold*, Columbia University Press, 1974-75.

[39] See a lucid discussion by King Hussein of Jordan, "Securing peace in the Middle East," *RUSI Journal*, London, October 1993, pp.1-3.

Mackenzie bears testimony to this complexity, first of dogmatically deploying peacekeepers in a situation where there was no peace to keep, secondly, deploying the wrong type of force, which turned the Bosnian Croatian population of Sarajevo against the peacekeepers.[40]

To avoid similar mistakes ACRI should continuously court trust among belligerents, maintain the universality of its mandate, and provide its peace enforcement or peacekeeping troops clear Rules of Engagement (ROE) in accordance with international humanitarian law of armed conflicts. The ROE should be structured to reflect the realities of Africa today where troops initially deployed for peacekeeping might be transformed rapidly into peace enforcers, election monitors, or be required to complete humanitarian tasks. The importance of a clear mandate and ROE is underpinned by many experiences of peacekeepers but two deserve mention as they should have led to a serious reassessment of the UN mechanism for deploying a military force. One is the experience of the UN troops in Bosnia whose inability to stop the genocide made the victims view them with the contempt reserved for the enemy.[41] A replica situation emerged during the UN deployment in Somalia (UNOSOM II) where the troops were initially greeted as angels of mercy coming to rescue civilians who had been dehumanized by Siad Barre's oligarchy and clan warlords. Later some Somali regarded them as the enemy and others saw them as powerless bystanders to the massacre of civilians caught up in crossfire between US troops and clan militia. For sure, troops of UNOSOM II had the mandate to use force under article 42 of the UN Charter, but no national contingent could stand in the way of American Rangers and Mohammed Farah Aideed, whose unprecedented confrontation was outside the framework of humanitarian assistance.

ACRI could learn from the mistakes of the UN by proactively monitoring situations of conflict as a friend of all parties and respecting the culture of belligerents in the tradition of African conflict resolution. This could retain the sympathy of active or potential adversaries and maintain rapport with influential people at the grassroots level. The role of elders and informal opinion leaders may prove crucial in intercommunity disputes, which are usually localized, small, and stoppable in the early stages before they snowball into uncontrollable conflicts. A few success stories support this view. Pastoral elders from southern Sudan have been mediating and resolving problems ranging from predatory expansion to organized rustling through their informal deliberations where 'burying the spear' signifies a brokerage on a key issue. The Boran (Galla) and Somali people of the Horn of Africa have traditionally used blood bonds and partnerships and other systems of social reciprocity to resolve community disputes.[42] In Mali, the 'Palaver tree' system, where all parties to a conflict freely participate in deliberation until a consensus is reached, has been employed in recent times with resounding success after coercion and Eurocentric democratic channels failed to promote peace.[43] Rather than depend on technology-based foreign solutions, ACRI could research and apply such traditional mechanisms where appropriate considering they give the belligerents ownership of conflict resolution because they are holistic and people-focused.

---

[40] Major-General L Mackenzie, "Military Realities of UN Peacekeeping Operations," *RUSI Journal*, London Vol. 138, London, February, 1993, pp.21-34.
[41] C. Beal, "Peacekeepers in Distress," *International Defence Review*, Vol.26, Surrey, 1993, pp.927.
[42] I.M. Lewis, *A Modern History of Somalia, Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*, Westview Press: London 1988. I.M. Lewis, *Understanding Somalia: Guide to Culture, History and Social Institutions*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson: London, 1993.
[43] R.E. Poulton, "To Make Peace, Support Civil Society and Keep Out of Sight: Technical Cooperation and Peacemaking in Mali', *United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research*, Geneva, http://Capacity.undp.org/cases/insights/mali.htm

ACRI: A Draft Framework for Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement

Article 43 (1) of the UN Charter obligates member states "to make available to the Security Council on its call and in accordance with a special agreement…armed forces, assistance and facilities necessary for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security." To ensure timely availability for peace missions, ACRI could be transformed into a permanent civil-military force under the direct control of the UN Security Council for deployment anywhere in the world.[44] This proposal could save decision-making and response time, which was traditionally lost due to habitual delays within the Security Council, and enable poor states to contribute toward peace on the continent. It would cost up to US$500 million annually to train, equip, and deploy 10,000 to 50,000 African troops, the force adequate to contain most intrastate conflicts. This may sound a lot but it is much less than the US alone would spend on a similar operation using American troops.[45] Presently, ACRI is incapable of monitoring or rendering humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disasters like the volcanic eruption along the Rwanda and DRC border in 2002. Whereas a coalition may appear more practical, nations with large armies such as South Africa and Nigeria may dedicate some troops for peace duties or humanitarian missions but not for indefinite periods. In any event the primary loyalty for South Africa and Nigeria is in the SADC and the ECOWAS, respectively, where their military superiority over other partners gives them leverage in the pursuit of peace in their political backyard. Under ACRI the situation would be different as recruitment could be transparent and on nationality basis that combines civilian professionals, and active and retired security forces personnel assigned to the UN.

The above arrangement could also solve the current limitation with ACRI of deciding who pulls the trigger for its deployment. The UN Secretary General could assume the direct control of operations in Africa through a well-tested command and control headquarters (e.g. NATO or SADC), which could be contracted for limited periods or conflicts. Such arrangements could be composed of senior advisors on political, military, and humanitarian issues. Decision-making at the Security Council could be hastened by having a situations update room within the same building as the Secretary General of the UN. The aim is for the Force and Sector commanders to get decisions from New York without delay particularly in life threatening fluid situations like Somalia in 1991-2, Rwanda in 1994, and currently the DRC.

Under the control of the UN the African force could respond to the recommendations highlighted in the report entitled "An agenda for peace" in 1992 by the UN Secretary General Boutros-Boutros Ghali.[46] The document is a redefinition of the UN's role in the post-Cold War era, particularly its capacity to maintain peace and justice in the emerging situations of chaos. It suggests means of expanding and improving the role of the UN in preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, peacemaking, and cooperation within the organization and with regional organizations. The Secretary General also advocates for trust, patience, and impartiality while discouraging opportunism.[47] Under the umbrella of

---

[44] See the views of, A. Parsons, "World Peace Bites Back," *Times*, (London), February 1991, p.13.

[45] M. E. O'Hanlon, "How to Keep Peace in Africa without Sending Troops," *The New York Times*, (New York) January 8, 2001, pp.17.

[46] Consult An *Agenda for Peace, Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping, Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to the Statement Adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992*, A/47/277-S/24111, 17 June 1992. See also, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations*, A/50/60-S/19995/1, 3 January 1995.

[47] J. Mackinlay, and J. Chopra, Jarat, *A Draft Concept of Second-Generation Multi-National Operations*, Unwin Hyman: London 1989.

the UN, ACRI could be tailored for low-intensity conflicts especially after the Security Council is enlarged to include new members, which could curtail the realpolitik witnessed during the Cold War era. Such improvements could reduce a repeat of the situation at the UN before the 1991 Gulf War, when the US took advantage of a sketchy chapter VII of the UN Charter to pursue what was primarily American policy in the Gulf region.[48] The Military Staff Committee (MSC) should have handled the military aspect of the Gulf War to generate confidence from all members since they belong to the world body as equal partners. That the MSC could play a greater role is justified by articles 43 to 47 of the UN Charter, which advocate for the creation of a UN permanent force. The importance of close liaison with the Secretariat cannot be overstated bearing in mind that, at the commencement of the 1991 Gulf War, the Secretary General admitted, somewhat in embarrassment, he had "learned the outbreak of the war with 'deep sorrow' and was not well informed on the course of events."[49] Such a statement issued on the first morning of the air offensive on Iraq indicated the Secretariat not only lacked authority over UN deployments but also did not have a complete picture of the situation.

While operating under the UN system, ACRI could become a credible organ for the employment of diplomatic forces, but the more challenging coercive/military role will require streamlining of certain aspects. An area of concern is how to lay down standard guidelines for problem definition and solution for military commanders of a peace enforcement operation. The current African initiative lacks the means for long-term planning and defining objectives at the strategic level. Operational tasks could be the responsibility of the military professional on the ground in reasonable proximity to the area of conflict. At the UN, strategic levels of the plans should be under the auspices of the MSC including the appointment of an ACRI force commander and the establishment of a Headquarters. In the region of conflict it will be important to standardize the ROE to ensure smooth hand-over/ take-over of the responsibilities of the initiative from one contracted HQ to another. Ideally the ROE should reflect professionalism and aim to protect the intervention force, the belligerents, and the innocent people in the host country.[50]

Bosnia highlighted the problem of communication within the force in a hostile environment after Lieutenant-General Phillipe Marillon lost his command and was literally taken hostage.[51] Experienced peacekeepers of the post-Cold War period have observed that the current UN arrangement of command is unsuitable for complicated peace missions.[52] ACRI could be structured to have 50% African troops and 50% multinational force on an ad hoc basis such as NATO or the European Union with the UN in control at the political/grand-strategy level. The ad hoc arrangement should curtail the pursuit of national policy by the developed nations at the expense of international peace. Such an arrangement should also ensure security is given equal weighting in all regions of the world and nations with political military deterrence pursue the quest for international peace in Africa alongside the small nations.

---

[48] P. Taylor, and ASR Groom, "The UN and the Gulf War, 1990-91, Back to the Future?," *RIIA Discussion Paper* No. 38, London 1992.

[49] *Financial Times*, (London), 17 January 1991, p.1.

[50] R. Connaughton, *Military Intervention in the 1990s: A New Logic of War*, Routledge: London & New York, 1992, pp.70-80.

[51] Lt-General P. Morillon, "UN Operations in Bosnia: Lessons and Realities," *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 138, December 1993, pp.31-35.

[52] General Sir D. Ramsbotham, "UN Operations: The Art of the Possible," *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 26. London, 1993, pp.25-30. See Fig. 1.

Concluding Reflections

The concept Kwame Nkrumah proposed in the 1960s took form almost four decades later as an ad hoc programme for training and equipping African militaries for various peace and humanitarian missions. Although the initiative is a welcome step in addressing conflicts, it is based on the ill-informed premise that the root causes of the continent's problems are intrastate and interstate violence whose solution is having better-trained and equipped soldiers. By failing to address economic development, hunger, disease, literacy, and good governance ACRI reduces its ability to seriously impact on what Africa needs. The study has observed the force is an arrangement by America to substitute its military deployments in the continent in the post-Cold War period, but the lack of a definable structure limits its capability or survivability. To ensure the programme is sustainable and gets international legitimacy, it should have a structure with an identifiable hierarchy ideally under the UN Department of Peace Keeping Operations. Deployment on the continent should be international where Africans participate alongside other international troops as they have previously done in various parts of the world. With the recommended structural improvement and cooperation among the member states, ACRI will still not be the panacea to Africa's security needs but bearing in mind it is currently only a training programme without any describable command or logistical framework for conflict resolution it is struggling to prove it is not a placebo.

Nene Mburu holds a PhD in War Studies from Kings College University of London. A retired soldier, he has published several refereed articles on conflicts in Africa and is the author of a book of short stories in Swahili language titled 'Aliyevunja Mwiko' *(Hakuna Matata Press, London 1999). The author is currently a lecturer at Amersham & Wycombe College (United Kingdom) and is a member of Amnesty International and The Royal African Society. His revised PhD dissertation on the Shifta Conflict in Kenya and asymmetrical warfare in the Horn of Africa is under review for publication in book form.*