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Military intervention in Africa's conflicts as a route to peace: Strengths and pitfalls

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This study seeks to answer a basic question: what are the merits and flaws of military intervention as a tool of conflict management in Africa? It uses a qualitative research approach and draws on existing literature on conflicts and military intervention in Africa. The study argues that military intervention and peacekeeping operations (PKOs) have become the most common approaches to conflict management in Africa. While these approaches have been effective in mitigating, or at least managing, most of the continent's conflicts, they are not without lapses. In addition to human and financial costs, dubious intentions of interventions, and damning recent revelations of misdemeanour of peacekeepers, an additional troubling lapse of interventions and PKOs is their inability to address the fundamental causes of conflicts. Consequently, intervention-induced peace in most post-conflicts states remains tenuous, leaving them susceptible to relapse into conflict with the exit of peacekeepers. The article suggests that addressing the root causes is a better and a more sustainable way of mitigating conflicts and promoting peace in Africa.

Key words: Africa, conflict, peace, military intervention, PKOs.

INTRODUCTION

Africa holds an enviable, if not dubious, record of experiencing the highest number of conflicts in the world (SIPRI yearbook, 1999). While Africa accounted for 13 percent of all civil wars in the 1960s, it was host to 35 percent of the world's conflicts by the beginning of the 21st century (Walter, 2011).

Consequently, the continent is riddled with insecurity and danger, which together pose various threats to peace. A daunting challenge facing the continent, and in particular the African Union (AU) is promoting peace and, in most cases, accelerating post-conflict reconstruction and development. The negative impacts of conflicts are all too

familiar to be recounted. Suffice it to say that the World Bank (2011) notes that "the average cost of a civil war is equivalent to more than 30 years of GDP for a medium-sized developing country." The AU and Africa's sub-regional organisations, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), have historically shouldered the burden of conflict management in Africa.

However, the recent most common approach to peace

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has been the use of military intervention, which takes the forms of peace-making or peacebuilding. Military interventions have been conducted singularly by either the AU or sub-regional bodies, or have been undertaken jointly with extra-African actors. The widespread use of this approach has, in a large measure, been necessitated by the often protracted nature of Africa's conflicts, dramatized in the failure of warring parties, especially insurgents, to cease fire and the devastating impact of conflicts within and beyond a country's borders. The article focuses on military intervention and peace-keeping operations (PKOs), which have become popular approaches to conflicts management. The central question addressed is: what are the main strengths and pitfalls of military intervention in Africa's conflicts?

METHODOLOGY

In answering the question earlier stated, the study adopts a qualitative and a non-experimental methodological approach, synthesizing a large body of existing literature on African conflicts and military intervention. Qualitative research seeks to understand and interpret situations and occurrences from the perspective of researchers (Spratt et al., 2004). Babbie and Mouton (2001: 80) argue that qualitative research seeks to describe situations and events. As such it is inductive in approach.

However, as Roller and Lavrakas (2015) note, because it does not rely on numerical and statistical data, qualitative research does not seek to establish "truths"; rather it only seeks to establish the "plausibility" of interpretations.

Conclusions on the efficacy of military intervention in Africa should thus be seen as plausibilities rather than scientific truths that can be replicated or verified over time and space. Thus, using a qualitative approach, the article concludes that while they often help end conflicts, military interventions also have drawbacks. Among other things, interventions entail financial and human costs, and they further have a tendency of being used as a pretext to advance the strategic interest of intervening states. Even more worryingly, interventions bring only temporary reprieve as these do not typically resolve the underlying causes of conflicts.

In substantiating these central propositions, the article first grapples with the notion of peace. It thereafter briefly examines the causes of conflicts, which is followed by a prognosis on military interventions in Africa. The article ends with a summary of the main arguments raised in the article.

Is peace truly the absence of war in Africa?

Peace, one of the most cherished values of states, has a universal appeal. It has, however, remained elusive in a good number of countries in Africa, for various reasons. In some cases, peace has alternated with social and political

upheavals.

Generally, the international environment is deemed to lack peace if it is wrought with various threats. Yet, while the social and political values of peace are universally accepted, its definition has remained nebulous and contentious. For example, against a backdrop of the authoritarian governance and the culture of suppression of human rights by the military junta in Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi, the famous victim of Burma's oppressive military-dominated political system, argued that peace flowed inexorably from conditions of justice and democracy. For Kyi, peace was predicated on justice and democracy, and not necessarily the absence of war, which remains the conventional definition of peace (Goodhand and Hulme 1999).

In Kyi's widely quoted aphorism, "where there is no justice there can be no secure peace" (Abrams, 1999). Although the epigraph was originally attributed to Martin Luther King Jr, during his campaign for black civil rights in the 1960s, Aung San Suu Kyi has claimed strong association with the statement. In recent years, the Burmese human rights activist has become a global icon, a symbol of democracy, justice and peace in the world.

Historically, peace treaties, agreements and accords are signed either to end wars or after hostilities have ceased. Predating the modern state, peace agreements among warring protagonists have become an integral part of conflict management. The association of peace with the absence of war is informed by the truism that the latter is inherently incompatible not just with the progress of a nation, but also with the holistic development of people. The UN Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda (25 to 27 September 2015) noted that "there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development" (UN 2015 - Resolution A/RES/70/1). The Summit perceived peace and development to be mutually reinforcing.

However, in Africa, peace, the essential commodity for development and progress, is more than just the absence of war. A region devastated by various adversities – diseases, hunger, poverty, unemployment, diminishing livelihood resources, low incomes, and political oppression, among others – the absence of war is just one of the many preconditions for peace. There are impoverished countries in Africa, including Tanzania, Zambia, Ethiopia and Lesotho (Matsilele 2016), which are not witnessing conflicts, yet whose citizens could hardly be said to be at peace. Thus, under the exacting, if not traumatising socio-political, even decaying ecological conditions, it is no exaggeration to portend that peace is perpetually elusive in Africa. The depiction of peace as the absence of war, while logically sound, may be an inadequate definition in Africa.

Accordingly, the conceptualisation of peace by former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, is imperative in putting the concept in the peculiar context of Africa. In the forward to the 2000 edition of the celebrated series, *The State of the World's Children* 2000, former UN Secretary-general,

Kofi Annan, described peace as a holistic virtue, which accords opportunity to people, including children, a condition under which people lived free of fear and want. In his words, "...There is no duty more important than ensuring that [children's] rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they grow up in peace" (Annan 2000:4). Annan's comments were made in a decade where the protection of children and the security of the rights of people, especially the vulnerable, were top of the global agenda. In Annan's view, peace was linked to the security of people, summarised as "freedom from fear, and freedom from want" (UNDP, 1994).

Notwithstanding, the visible inadequacy of defining peace as the antithesis of war, this article combines the conventional view of peace as representing conditions devoid of war and the perspective offered by Kofi Annan. Thus, peace is conceived of as the absence of war and threats to human security. Home to the highest number conflicts and socio-economic adversities, most African countries are scarcely at peace.

Africa – the theatre of conflicts

A thorough appreciation of the rationale for military intervention as a peace process requires a deeper understanding of the complex causes of conflicts and rebellions in Africa. A wide range of factors are noted in the literature as causes of Africa's conflicts. For the present analysis, these are collapsed into political and governance; economic; environmental; and external factors. It is imperative to unpack, even if cursorily, the extent to which each of these either causes or exacerbates conflicts.

Political and governance causes

Intra-state conflicts have in some ways been the direct result of poor governance. Human rights abuses are rife and systematic and often target certain constituencies – political opponents of particular ethnic groups deemed unsympathetic to the government. In such cases, the state has been notorious in brutalising and repressing its own citizens.

In some cases, such as in Darfur, where a systematic campaign of terror was waged on the population, at the behest of the state and in Zimbabwe between 2008 and 2012, the state became a leading threat to human security (Akopari, 2007). This development has been exacerbated by the partisan nature of the African state, which for political expediency, privileges certain constituencies over others. Privileged constituencies have access to resources and are given major political appointments, often in strategic ministries and parastatals.

Members of privileged constituencies thus swim in opulence while the marginalised float in waters of poverty. With legitimate avenues for recourse closed, under-

privileged constituencies resort to violence in an attempt to reverse the situation.

Yet, within the broader context of the grotesque human rights abuses is the absence of genuine democracy despite the ubiquity of human rights-packed constitutions and the holding of periodic elections. Political life in a large number of African states hardly gives an indication of the prevalence of democratic precepts. Some governments and political elites remain practically unaccountable, in the face of corruption and disgusting scandals. Corruption and its inevitable offshoots – nepotism and neopatrimonialism – are rife. Allegations of corruption and nepotism are made in almost every rebellion against an African state. From the first Liberian conflict of 1990 to the recent military takeover in Mali in 2012, rebels complained of government ineptitude and corruption. Most African countries rank high on the corruption perception index compiled by the German-based non-governmental organisation (NGO), Transparency International. Even in relatively stable democracies such as South Africa and Ghana, leaders have either been perceived to be corrupt or accused of failing to deal decisively with it (Fihlani, 2016; Quansah, 2015). In retrospect, corruption is rampant because it is part of the strategy used by Africa's political elite to maintain the dense web of patronage networks that help keep them in office.

The struggle for the soul and control of the African state has been fierce since independence on account of perceived advantages. There is an erroneous perception among African politicians, and to some extent, the larger African population, that the state is everything; it is the epitome of resources, riches and affluence. Accordingly, access to the state is perceived as the ultimate prize in politics. Controlling the state means access to resources. In turn, this perception has raised the stakes in elections. Incumbent parties do everything possible, including rigging elections, to remain in power while opposition parties, desirous to win and control the state, dispute election results; even where neutral observers declare them as free, fair and credible. The dispute over elections has in some cases as, in Kenya in 2007, Zimbabwe 2008 and Ivory Coast 2010, led to violence. The Kenyan post-election conflict in particular claimed 1000 lives and displaced over 500,000 (Yamano et al., 2010). The conflict rekindled old inter-ethnic rivalries and spread fear and insecurity among Kenyans, threatening the very existence of the Kenyan state. Some observers have, in fact, argued that the desire to control the state or gain access to it has been central to most conflicts in Africa (Hyden and Bratton, 1992).

Economic causes

Compounding governance factors are the widespread economic adversities engulfing most African countries. Indeed, only few sub-Saharan African countries have been able to build on the fortunes of their post-

independence economies. Until the last decade, most African economies have seen consistent declines. The combined effects of conflict and uncertainty, have led to disinvestment and capital retreat from Africa. At the same time, the pursuit of inauspicious and self-destructive economic policies has vitiated the internal resilience of national economies. The state, which has traditionally been the leading employer, has failed to meet the employment expectations of Africans seeking jobs. For most employed Africans, salaries and wages are woefully inadequate to match the rising cost of living (Ezrow and Frantz, 2013).

The growing gap between cost of living and salaries has led to widespread frustration, economic despondency and poverty. The World Bank (2012) estimated that in 2011 nearly 43 percent of Sub-Saharan Africa's population lived below \$1.90 a day, the highest in the world. Only South Asia (18.8 percent) came close. Under taxing economic environment, destitute unemployed youth remain a volatile force needing only a spark from political adventurists to support rebellion. Most rebel leaders have pointed to the absence of economic opportunities and general adversities to justify insurgency.

The World Bank (2011) acknowledged the functional correlation between poverty and the propensity for conflicts within states. Although most African economies have been growing since the last decade (McKinsey Global Institute 2012, *Economist* 3 December 2011), how quickly the gains in growth translate into improved living conditions among the broad mass of Africans is an issue for posterity to tell. Indeed, In a seminal study, Collier and Hoeffler (2004) note that a variety of factors, including grievances, inequality poverty, economic growth among others impact on the prospects of civil wars and insurgency, although the degree of impact varies among the variables. However, while noting the factors contributing to insurgency and internal conflicts, Fearon and Laitin (2003) debunked the popular view that ethnicity was a major cause of conflict. They argue rather that there are certain structural conditions that predispose countries to civil wars. They note that poverty, political instability, weak institutions, among others, provide auspicious conditions for conflicts and insurgency.

Religious fundamentalism has in recent years become a cause of conflict in Africa. This has attracted young Africans who have waged campaigns of terror against the state and civilians in an unbridled attempt to purge society of western social practices. Thus, the seemingly intractable conflict in Somalia has been due to al-Shabbab's intransigence and mission to islamise Somalia. Al-Shaabbab use terror – bombings, kidnappings especially of women and rape – as part of its war campaign against the state (Zenn and Pearson, 2014).

In Nigeria, Boko Haram, another fundamentalist Islamic sect, has been terrorising the Nigeria state since the last 10 years in an attempt to purge the country of western practices. Both Al-Shaabbab and Boko Haram have links

with Al-Qaeda, which claimed responsibility for the dreadful 11 September 2001 attacks on the US (Wright, 2006). Sometimes, too, secular contestations mutate into religious conflicts. Following the coup led by Michel Djotodia and Seleka rebels in the Central Africa Republic (CAR) on 24 March 2013 the conflict between the rebels and the state quickly became one between Muslims and Christians. Predominantly Muslims, the *seleka* rebels visited terror on the population. Subsequently, a new militia group, the *anti-balaka*, composed mainly of Christians emerged to counter the seleeka intransigence (HRW 2013). The growing phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism has been attributed to the lack of adequate economic opportunities, the growing gap between the affluent few and the impoverished masses as well as widespread injustice in political systems. Thus, although intended to be a unifying factor, religion has provided a rallying point for opponents of the state.

Environmental factors

Attention has recently been focused on the role of the environment in both initiating and escalating conflicts in Africa. To be sure, the contribution of environmental factors to conflicts takes various forms, two of which are noted here. First, environmental degradation diminishes natural resources upon which a good number of Africans depend for livelihood. Global warming causes floods and droughts, which diminish available agricultural lands. Some of the violent conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa have been linked to diminishing environmental resources (Obi, 2000; Nordås and Gleditsch, 2007; Barnett and Adger, 2007).

Farming and pastoral communities have clashed in their search for fresh grazing and farming fields. One observer argued that the raging conflict in Darfur was nothing more than a clash between pastoral communities determined to secure their land and rivers from encroachers (Brown et al., 2007). The Darfur conflict, too, has been characterised by one observer as a "water war" (Tulloch, 2009). Similarly, in a study on the prolonged conflict in South Sudan, Suleiman and Omar (1994) concluded that it reflected a contestation between rival communities over fertile land in the region.

Second, conflicts have arisen as a result of struggles to control the sources of minerals in most cases, to finance war machines. The involvement of Charles Taylor, the Liberian rebel leader, in Sierra Leone was widely believed to have been motivated by his desire to control the sources of diamond in Sierra Leone. Taylor's support for the Sierra Leonean rebels prolonged the war (1991 to 2002), which left more than 70,000 dead and 2.6 million displaced (UNDP, 2006).

Other examples include Jonas Savimbi and the UNITA movement known to have fought and accounted for over 80 percent of Angola's diamonds output in 1996

(Laremont, 2002). The infamous intervention of Angola, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe in the DRC conflict in the early 2000s was believed to have been motivated by interests in the vast diamonds in the country (Nabudere, 2003). The centrality of natural resources in starting, escalating and prolonging conflicts has led to the characterisation of Africa's conflicts as "resource wars" (Hyden, 2000). The inescapable irony is that rather than catalysing growth, development and peace, Africa's vast natural resources have become a curse; a sources of conflicts, insecurity and stagnation.

External factors

External factors, too, have influenced Africa's conflicts, even if indirectly. Africa's debt crisis, for example, has been seen by some observers as a cause of conflicts, albeit indirectly. Studies have shown that heavily indebted countries, displaying the trappings of poverty and social inequalities, were highly susceptible to internal strife and conflicts.

The correlation between debt and economic crises, on the one hand, and conflicts on the other, established in the 1990s, has so far not been contradicted. It was noted that about half of the third world's most indebted countries experienced conflicts (Smith, 1992; Smith, 2004). It was also found that only four of Africa's most indebted countries, including Niger, Sao Tome, Senegal and Tanzania, have so far not witnessed any major intra-state conflicts (Brown, 1997). The negative impact of globalisation and the insistence on the implementation of neoliberal market policies such as liberalisation, desubsidisation, devaluation, decontrolling and privatisation, by external creditors, have exerted pressures on the fragile economies of sub-Saharan Africa. And, the uncertain global economic environment, frequently characterised by financial crisis and meltdowns, have not helped Africa's economies. Together, these factors have harmed Africa's economies, accentuated unemployment and general economic insecurity, and created auspicious conditions for conflicts.

The ending of the cold war left implications for conflicts in Africa. The cold war deepened and escalated Africa's conflicts as the leading protagonists – the US and Russia – supported opposing contestants either directly or indirectly through proxies, thus escalating or prolonging conflicts. The abatement of the cold war hardly improved prospects for peace; rather the new international environment provided fresh opportunities for conflicts. Constituencies which were brutalised by regimes that previously received support from Cold War protagonists rebelled against the weakened state. Rebellion spread and regimes fell as the latter lost external support – financial and military – to keep them on their feet.

The rebellion by Liberia's Samuel Doe succeeded largely because President William Tolbert lacked western support, following the country's loss of strategic

importance to the west. Similarly, Mobutu Sese Seko, the Zairean (now DRC) strongman, who enjoyed unflinching western support during the cold war despite his corruption and oppression, became defenceless in the face of rebel intransigence after the cold war.

Subsequently, both Liberia and the DRC fell into cycles of prolonged conflicts. Although Liberia and the DRC have since held elections after years of conflicts, the peace in these countries remains tenuous at best.¹ The debate about whether exogenous factors are more important than internal factors in explaining Africa's conflict is certain to continue. Irrespective of the outcome of the debate the fact is that Africa remains an undisputed theatre of conflicts. While some of the conflicts – Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Ivory Coast – have been resolved and peace, albeit fragile, installed, others, such as those in Somalia, Darfur and the CAR remain seemingly intractable. In nearly all these conflicts, some form of military intervention was either used or contemplated by the AU and sub-regional organisations.

Military intervention and PKOs as peace making instruments – the merits

Peace processes in Africa have frequently involved military interventions either for peace-making, peace-keeping or peacebuilding. Although these terms are often loosely used interchangeably in the security literature, they are technically speaking different. In peace-making the intervening force imposes peace by separating combatants and ensuring the cessation of conflict. Peacekeeping occurs after combatants have ceased fire, usually through signing an agreement, and an intervention force coming in to observe and maintain the truce (Feldman, 2008).

Peacebuilding is also different and may be undertaken in pre- and post-conflict situations. According to Coning (2013) peacebuilding is the process of creating conditions and structures that prevent the ignition, continuation or, in the cases of post-conflict situations, relapse into conflict. Peacebuilding may or may not involve military intervention, but typically requires the combine efforts of both local and external actors.

Since 2000, the justification for military intervention in conflicts was provided for by Article 4(h) of the Constitutive Act of the AU which 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" (Witt, 2013). The provision was in sharp contrast to the

¹ Liberia has since the ending of the war held two successful rounds of elections – in 2005 and 2011. The DRC also held two presidential elections in 2006 and 2011 whose outcome were riddled with controversy, but which both returned Joseph Kabila as president. The next presidential elections are scheduled for 27 November 2016. However, on 17 October 2016, the DRC Constitutional Court upheld the country's Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) plea to move the elections to 2018 because of inadequate resources.

non-interference posture of the defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU). In turn, the AU's new interventionist position was strengthened by the adoption of the Right to Protect (R2P) doctrine in 2005 by the UN General Assembly (World Summit). R2P was contained in the report of the 2001 International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) and was aimed at protecting people from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. R2P was adopted against the background of the horrific Rwandan genocide of 1990 and the Bosnian war five years later.

Thus, for the AU, the time had come for a paradigm shift from "non-interference to non-indifference" (Mwanasali 2008). Consistent with this new approach to peace building, the AU and its sub-regional bodies have made conscious efforts to militarily intervene in various conflicts since 2002. Notable examples included the AU Mission in Burundi – AMIB (2003), the AU Mission in Somalia-AMISOM (2007), the AU Mission in Darfur – UNAMID (2007) and recently, the AU's intervention in the Central African Republic (CAR). Interventions by sub-regional bodies included the ECOWAS interventions in Liberia (1990), Sierra Leone (1997), Guinea Bissau (1999) and Ivory Coast (2010). Military interventions in Southern Africa included SADC's intervention in Lesotho (1998), and its controversial and ill-fated intervention in the DRC conflict in 2005, in which only Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, of the 15-member SADC states, participated.

Typically, military intervention has been considered when non-military initiatives to prevent or end conflicts are deemed to have failed or are deemed to lack prospects of success. Over the years, military intervention has proved beneficial in cases where it remained the only way of ending conflict and mass killings. The 1994 Rwandan genocide would have been contained had there been an African or UN-led intervention force on the ground (Power 2001, Dorn and Matloff 2000). In a study of the NATO intervention on Kosovo in 1999, Morton (2014) notes that although military intervention has some disadvantages, including the possibility of causing civilian casualties, it helped protect Kosovar Albanians and other minorities from Serbian forces. Interventions thus help to end conflicts. The murder and mayhem that have characterised Somalia since the abdication of Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991, has not completely abated.

However, the scale of violence has reduced, even if marginally, since 2010 largely because of the combined presence of AMISOM and Kenyan troops. The latter entered Somalia in 2011 in response to Al-Shabaab terror acts in Kenya. In Sierra Leone, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) campaign of maiming unsympathetic civilians was only ended with the intervention of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Similarly, the presence of the UN-AU hybrid Force in Darfur has helped to scale down the atrocities of the Janjaweed against the black, and non-culturally Arabised population of Darfur. Long-lasting military interventions, which help in post-conflict

reconstruction, such as the re-building of infrastructure – roads, hospitals and schools – can improve the quality of civilian life and accelerate the return to post-conflict normalcy.

In turn, this can stimulate economic activities, which are often dormant or abandoned under conditions of conflict. In general, by virtue of ending conflicts, successful military interventions create conditions for peace and stability thereby giving hope of a return to normal life to civilian populations. In most cases, the military has assisted or at least laid the grounds for post-conflict reconstruction and development. Such measures have been evident in the processes of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants into civilian life in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast, among other post-conflict countries; security sector reforms (SSR) in Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast, leading to stability and the resumption of aid from the international community.

Moreover, the repairs of broken infrastructure and the construction of new ones – schools, roads, hospitals, etc. – could begin. In some instances, peacekeepers have assisted in the conduct of post-conflict elections as AMIB did in Burundi in 2005. Civilian populations emerge from conflict traumatised and impoverished as economic activities and sources of livelihood are devastated. Yet, such populations are glad to have, at least in the short term, impoverished lives in tranquillity than wealth with trauma and danger.

The downsides of intervention and PKOs

The merits of military intervention do not suggest the absence of drawbacks. On the contrary, military interventions generally, and those in Africa in particular, have been wrought with lapses, challenges and negative outcomes. The first visible lapse of military intervention is its failure to address the root causes of conflicts. The leading motivations for intervention are usually moral – to end conflicts and stop the killing and suffering of civilian populations, especially women and children; and political – to prevent conflicts and associated trappings (refugees, proliferation of arms and crime) from spreading beyond the borders of the beleaguered country. As such, where regional organisations fail to put in place measures to stabilise the post-conflict country, a relapse into war after the exit of peacekeepers becomes almost inevitable.

In 1991, ECOWAS leaders argued, and quite compellingly, that the subregion could be destabilised by massive outpours of refugees and the proliferation of light weapons of war, if the Liberian conflict was not speedily ended. ECOWAS thus intervened with ECOMOG, ended the conflict and helped organise elections in 1997, which returned Charles Taylor, the main rebel leader, as president. However, since the underlying causes of the conflict – corruption and clientelism, ethnic privileging, unemployment, etc., – were left unaddressed, Liberia

relapsed into conflict in 1999, just two years after the elections.

In Mali, Ivory Coast, Burundi, the DRC and in nearly all countries that have once gone through conflicts in which some form of military intervention was used, there have either been post-conflict skirmishes between former protagonists or real threats of relapse into full scale conflict after the exit of peacekeepers largely because the original causes of the conflicts were never fully addressed. Evidence of this is seen in the continued presence of international peacekeepers and the frequent reluctance of refugees to accede to repatriation for fear of retribution and or insecurity. Studies have found that poor SSA countries, which have experienced civil wars, are most likely to suffer a relapse (Walter, 2011). This is particularly so if fundamental causes of the conflict are not resolved, even with peacebuilding measures in place.

Military interventions and peace operations in general come at huge human costs. UN PKOs keep accurate records of troop fatalities. This, however, cannot be said of AU peace operations. As such, numbers of casualties among AU peacekeepers remain shrouded in secrecy in turn generating controversy. While local press houses tend to inflate, governments, for political expediency, tend to underreport fatality numbers (Williams, 2015). This notwithstanding, Mills and Davis (2016) estimate that AMISOM, which as at January 2015 numbered 22,000 uniformed personnel, lost over 4,000 troops during the 8-year period between March 2007 and January 2015 largely through Al-Shabaab attacks and reprisals.

A former Nigerian ECOMOG commander revealed in 2002 that he supervised the burial of “hundreds of Nigerian casualties from Liberia” (May, 2004). Peace operations undertaken solely by Africans tend to suffer high fatalities largely because they are most often ill-equipped. As May (2004) notes over a decade ago: “..... there have been many cases of Third World contingents arriving [as peacekeepers] with nothing more than the clothes on their backs and asking the UN to provide everything, including weapons and underwear.” In fact, even UN-sponsored peace operations are not immune to casualties as Table 1 shows (UN Peacekeeping Factsheet, 2016). Critics of humanitarian intervention have argued that it is morally unjust for states to risk the lives of their peacekeeping soldiers in conflicts that have no bearing on their lives. They maintain further that states have social contracts with their citizens, which obligate them to protect the latter (Nicholas and Bellemy, 2001).

In addition to human costs, PKOs entail huge financial implications for the AU and regional organisations (Table 1). The high financial costs of PKOs often explain why some peace operations are speedily, sometime prematurely, ended. In turn this partly explains why often insufficient anti-relapse measures are put in place. The AU, which is expected to oversee and finance humanitarian interventions in Africa, is cash-strapped. Consequently, it has been relying of extra-African actors

and individual African states to finance PKOs. Humanitarian interventions in Africa thus frequently suffer intervention fatigue. In 2005, AMIB was financed almost entirely by South Africa, which also had the largest contingent of troops in the operation. The UN was reluctant to send peacekeepers until the situation showed evidence of stabilisation. However, desirous to make an early exit from Burundi, South Africa helped conduct election, which brought Pierre Nkurunziza, a former rebel leader, as president. Ten years on, Burundi almost went to war as president Nkurunziza sought and was controversially elected into a third term in contravention of the country's constitution.

As the AU shows an increasing incapacity to finance peace operations, Africa has come to rely heavily on external assistance. In 2011, for example, external actors, including the EU, China and the US accounted for 60 percent of the entire AU budget of \$260 million (*The Economist* 27 January 2011). The financial challenges of the AU are compounded by the failure of member states to timeously make their annual contributions. Five members – Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Nigeria and South Africa – make the largest financial contributions. In 2011, these countries each contributed \$15 million while the majority of member states contributed much lesser amounts ranging from \$160,000 to as little as \$20,000 by Malawi (ibid). The EU presently covers the full cost of AMISOM soldiers, which amounts to \$200 million annually (Kelley 2016). The AU standby force, which was originally scheduled to be ready for expeditious deployment to trouble spots by 2010, is still not fully in place. The AU therefore has relied on the contributions of troops from member countries, which has not proved to be a particularly reliable measure. Often, countries default in supplying troops although they make commitments.

In addition, the AU relies on external actors for logistics, which has tended to undermine the effectiveness of the continental body in resolving conflicts. Until the UN established a hybrid force in Darfur, the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) 7,000-personnel force was over-stretched, ill-equipped and poorly financed. The force was inadequate to effectively deal with a conflict in a region as large as France (Akokpari, 2011). The weakness of the AU and regional bodies to resolve conflicts was badly exposed in the Ivory Coast post-election conflict in 2010-2011. The refusal of defeated incumbent, Laurent Gbagbo, to cede power to his victorious rival, Alassane Ouattara, led to a violent two-year conflict between supporters of the rival candidates. ECOWAS's threats to use force to oust Gbagbo came to naught until the intervention of French troops that helped to forcibly dislodge Gbagbo from office (*Mail online* 12 April 2011). The conflicts in Eastern DRC, CAR and recently in Mali all vividly showed the weakness of the AU to single-handedly mitigate conflicts. The much trumpeted “African solutions to African problems” is increasingly becoming a mythical slogan as far as Africa's ability to solely undertake and finance PKOs is concerned.

Table 1. UN peacekeeping operations in Africa as at January 2016.

Country	Mission	Established	Troops	Total personnel*	Fatalities	UN Approved Budget (US\$) July 2015-June 2016
Western Sahara	UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)	April 1991	26	495	15	\$53,190,000
Liberia	UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)	Sept 2003	2,626	5,224	196	\$344,712,200
Cote d'Ivoire	UN Operations in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI)	April 2004	4,457	7,120	137	\$402,794,300
Darfur, Sudan	AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID)	July 2007	14,345	21,022	230	\$1,102,164,700
DRC	UN Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO)	July 2010	16,938	22,492	100	\$1,332,178,600
Abeyi-Sudan	United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA)	June 2011	4,410	4,795	20	\$268,256,700
South Sudan	UN Mission of South Sudan (UNMISS)	July 2011	11,782	15,509	42	\$1,085,769,200
Mali	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)	March 2013	10,645	13,170	81	\$923,305,800
CAR	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Central African Republic (MINUSCA)	April 2014	9,639	12,627	19	\$814,066,800
-	-	Totals	74,868	120,454	840	\$6,326,438,300

*Total personnel include troops, police, military observers, international and local civilians, and UN volunteers (Source: UN Peacekeeping Factsheet-2016. Online at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/bnote0216.pdf> (Accessed 2 June 2016)).

As well, the motives of some interventions have often come under question. It is often suspected that some PKOs are instigated as a pretext to serve the economic and strategic interests of leading or dominant countries.

The Nigeria-led ECOWAS intervention in Liberia in 1999 was perceived to have been motivated by the strategic ambitions of General Ibrahim Babangida who sought to stop Charles Taylor from instigating similar rebellions and

demise of military leaders in the West Africa.²

Similarly, Zimbabwe, then chair of SADC, led a regional intervention force composed of troops from Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia, into DRC in 1998. The intervention was believed to have been motivated by Harare's economic interests in the DRC. *The Zimbabwean*, a local newspaper, reported in 2008 that "Kabila and Mugabe had signed a US\$200 million contract involving corporations owned by Mugabe and his family, and there were several reports in 1998 of numerous mining contracts being negotiated with companies under the control of the Mugabe family" (*The Zimbabwean*, 10 November 2008). As well, the 2008 South Africa-led SADC intervention in Lesotho was believed to have been induced by Pretoria's quest to protect its economic interests, especially the Lesotho Highlands Water project, which is the main source of water to the country's industrial province of Gauteng. Also, South Africa pushed for the deployment of an AU force in the CAR in 2014 after 13 members of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) helping to train the CAR military were ambushed and killed by CAR rebels in March 2013. The entry into DRC by Rwanda and Ugandan forces between 1998 and 2004 was aimed at securing their common borders and aiding Tutsi rebels. Ulterior motives, often the desire for interest protection, almost always seem to underlie military interventions led by African states.

While motives of interventions are increasingly becoming a source of concern, cases of alleged misdemeanour of peacekeepers is further discrediting PKOs. Peacekeepers have in recent years come under scrutiny as allegations of rape, looting and becoming a new source of atrocities to civilians, have surfaced. Peacekeepers in the CAR have been reported to have raped, engaged in transactional sex with local women and leading to the production of what is now called "peacekeeper babies." Sadly only one of the 42 cases of the sexual exploitation cases registered was criminally filed (Sief, 2016). In the DRC, too, more than 150 allegations of rape, soliciting of sex, abuse and transactional sex involving peacekeepers were reported in the early 2000s (ibid). Some of the troops committing such sexual crimes were originally AU operation troops who were later grafted into the UN mission. In Sierra Leone, HRW reported "several cases of sexual violence by UNAMSIL peacekeepers, including the rape of a twelve-year old girl in Bo by a soldier of the Guinean peacekeeping contingent in March 2001 and a gang rape of a woman by two Ukrainian peacekeepers in April 2002 near Kanema" (HRW 2003: 28). Disconcertingly, there is often reluctance on the part of PKO commanders to investigate and punish perpetrators of such sexual violence (ibid). Other forms of misconduct by peace-

keepers have also surfaced. Five AMISOM troops from Uganda were arrested in June 2016, after being caught "red handed" for selling military supplies to civilians in Mogadishu (*The Guardian* 7 June 2016). These incidences are increasingly compounding the litany of lapses and challenges surrounding PKOs in Africa.

Conclusion

Africa remains a notorious theatre of conflicts. While negotiations and dialogue have been used to resolve them, these have yielded little peace dividends. Consequently, humanitarian interventions have been used by the AU and sub-regional bodies to end conflicts and to promote peace. Although peace has been assumed to prevail in a conflict-free environment, this is hardly true for Africa. A mix of economic adversities, poverty, diseases, crime, and unemployment has left the majority of Africa's population destitute, exasperated and hardly at peace.

While the AU has not been able to craft a continental response to the non-conflict threats facing Africa, it has found a response to conflicts in military interventions. The Constitutive Act of the AU legitimised interventions in conflicts in cases where grotesque human right violations are being committed and where the state appears incapable of terminating and promoting peace. Today, the AU's most popular response to conflicts is the use of interventions and PKOs as witnessed in the management of conflicts across the continent. The frequency and intensity of conflicts means the interventions and PKOs will remain key features of the AU's conflict management strategies. Moreover, most of the fundamental causes of conflicts – political, economic, religious, environmental and external factors – appear, for the moment insurmountable given the very nature of Africa's political economy.

There is hardly any doubt that Africa's PKOs have helped terminate or at least managed most of the continent's conflicts and restored peace, albeit often tenuous. Yet, there are a number of lapses that characterise intervention and general PKOs. The fact that these fail to address the structural causes of conflicts, leaving post-conflict states susceptible to relapse is a leading concern. This is coupled with the financial and human costs that attend interventions and PKOs. This said, however, military interventions and PKOs are worth pursuing. In a region of incessant conflicts, intervention with lapses may be preferable to indifference with grave consequences. Interventions deal mostly with the eruption of conflicts. It is expedient for vulnerable and conflict-prone African states to be assisted to build or and strengthen conflict-prevention institutions, including stable democracies, stronger democratic institutions and building stronger economies that help reduce the tendency towards intra-state conflicts. Herein lies the need for the wider international community to be part of Africa's conflict management efforts.

² By 1990 when Charles Taylor's rebellion broke out only two countries – Senegal and Gambia – among the 16 states in West Africa had democratically elected governments. All other countries were under military generals. Fears of the spread of rebellion were heightened among West Africa's military rulers, moreover, because that was also a period when the wind of democracy was blowing across the third world and sweeping dictators aside.

Conflicts of interest

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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