

‘Africa on its own’: The African Organisational Experiment in the Resolution of African Based Conflicts

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Abstract:-The African continent have been conflict prone since the 1960s when most of the countries in the continent attained independence. These conflicts necessitated the involvement of various international and sub-regional organisations. This paper evaluates the typology and causes of conflicts in Africa as well as the efforts of the proximate groupings towards their resolution. The paper is divided into three parts. Part one deals with the typology and causes of conflicts in Africa. Part two handles the efforts made by African based organisations in resolving the identified African based conflicts while the third part dwells on the problems encountered in such efforts. The paper argues that, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, African sub-regional organisations are in a better position to take the lead in the resolution of African based conflicts while the efforts extraneous to the continent only come in to complement such efforts indigenous to the continent in view of achieving the desired results. This was done through the use of primary and secondary sources that were carefully examined and analysed to arrive at the findings.

Keywords: Typology, Conflict, Spill over, Subsidiarity, Sub-regional Organisations, Extraneous

I. INTRODUCTION

The African continent has been conflicts prone since independence. An effective response to these conflicts requires agreement on and understanding of its typology and causes. These conflicts necessitated the involvement of sub-regional groupings and the African Union towards their resolution. Past responses to conflicts have often failed to understand the context within which the conflicts operated or to address its causes. Fragile and conflict affected states present unique and complex challenges to achieving effective development. While the range of issues can vary depending on the country or region of fragility, some key issues are common to all of them. These include chronic poverty; government and state structures lacking the capacity or will to provide public safety, security and basic services to the population; low levels of state accountability to citizens; challenges relating to natural resource management; a private sector which may be largely informal and opportunistic; low

levels of foreign direct investment; and a high risk of further state decline.¹

It is therefore germane to discuss the typology and the causes of conflicts in Africa. The study goes on to evaluate the efforts that are made by regional and sub-regional organizations in the continent towards the resolution of such conflicts. The role of African regional and sub-regional organizations in the resolution of African based conflicts is in consonance with the principle of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity is a principle of social organization which holds that social and political issues should be dealt with at the most immediate (or local) level that is consistent with their resolution. This principle is founded on the idea that sustainable peace is possible if conflict resolution mechanisms are led by actors who are culturally, geopolitically and/or strategically close to the crisis. A study like this one which seeks to examine the role and effectiveness of African organizations and groups in resolving African conflicts is thus consistent with this analytical theory of subsidiarity.

Typology and causes of conflicts in Africa

Africa has remained a violent –ridden continent in the psycho-political map of the world for a number of decades. Indeed, to the outside world, poverty, diseases, civil disturbance, revolts, insurgency, **guerrilla warfare**, domestic rebellion and in recent time terrorism are the core features of the continent. Disappointedly, the wave of the democracy which is expected to neutralize the storm of rebellion and conflict rather brought with it the rising tide of conflicts characterized by election instigated political violence in various forms and magnitude as witnessed in Congo in Congo 2006, Nigeria 2007, Kenya 2008 and Zimbabwe 2008 among others².

It is therefore observed that some of the biggest burdens to many African countries and their economies are civil strife, coup d'états and refugees. No

¹ Federico Fabbrini, *The principle of subsidiarity*” Copenhagen (The Danish National Research Foundation Centre of Excellence for International Courts: OUP, 2016), 5

² Ilufoye Sarafa Ogundiya, “Domestic rebellion in Africa: Between intelligence failures and the failure of governance” *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies*, Vol. 1(2), (2010): 25

single factor has contributed more to socio-economic decline on the African continent and the suffering of the civilian population than the scourge of conflicts within and between states³. Only a tiny number of these conflicts have been between countries; most have been internal battles for power and wealth within states. These conflicts in most cases are usually between different ethnic groups and **geopolitical** regions and between and among contending elites as was the case, in the CAR. This crisis of legitimacy confronting governments in Africa have debilitating consequences such as separatists' demands, wars, rebellion, and insurgence amongst others⁴.

In looking at the trend of conflicts in Africa, Ilufoye Sarafa Ogundiya provided seven broad typologies of and explanations as follows:

- Ethnic competitions for control of the state;
- Regional or secessionists rebellions;
- Continuation of liberation conflicts;
- Fundamentalist religious opposition to secular authority;
- Narrative arising from state degeneration or state collapse;
- Border dispute; and
- Protracted conflict within politicized militaries⁵

This classification of the conflict typologies in Africa was re-echoed by Rebeka Gluhbegovic who identified five types of conflicts in Africa. These include, political conflict which occurs where there are serious "positional differences" between two or more political actors; identity conflict which is the use of exclusionary identity as the basis for conflict, resource-based conflicts which arise from competition for the control of natural resources. Also identified is civil unrest which refers to riots, protests, revolts, demonstrations and uprising by a segment of the public in response to socio economic and political grievances and **terrorism** which is an act in violation of the criminal laws of the state party. These may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to persons and cause damage to public or private property⁶. It is within the context of these typologies that conflicts occur in Africa and have been widespread and rampant.

II. CAUSES OF CONFLICTS IN AFRICA

Most of the conflicts in the world have occurred in the developing countries and the continent of Africa has had

more than its fair share. These conflicts have come with enormous cost for the continent both in social and financial terms. These conflicts reflect a transnational value with great impact on neighbouring countries.⁷ In addition to undermining **democracy**, armed conflicts contribute to political decay, facilitate state collapse, cause widespread human rights violations and, generate refugees and internally displaced persons. Conflicts also divert scarce resources away from social services, disrupt trade and contribute to the breakdown of family structures. The **atrocities** and the persistence of the conflict also have serious psychological consequences as children are traumatized and in cases where they are used as soldiers, become accustomed to a culture of violence.⁸

While inter-state conflicts occur in some cases in Africa, the majority of African conflicts are internal and these internal conflicts are continuously on the increase. The causes of conflicts in Africa are many and they frequently recur. Some of these conflicts stem from ethnic diversity as was witnessed in the horrific ethnic violence between the Hutu's and the Tutsi's in Rwanda and Burundi. Most of the conflicts however are driven by poverty, underdevelopment, lack of economic diversification, and by political systems that marginalize large parts of the population.⁹ These are often the main causes of conflicts that lie behind social turbulence and allow the mobilization of political gain by political elites as is the case in the myriad conflicts in Africa.

A common trend in many of the conflicts in Africa is the unsatisfactory nature of inter-state borders inherited from the former colonial imperialists of the West. The Organisation of African Unity (**OAU**), now the African Union (AU), recognizing the fluidity of inherited African boundaries and its potential in fomenting discord and strife, maintained the permanence and sanctify of existing borders.¹⁰ These colonial boundaries were split up same ethnic groups into different borders as was the case of the Yoruba's between Nigeria and Benin Republic and the Ewe's between Ghana and Togo. The existence of such peoples have the effect of prolonging guerrilla conflicts as guerrillas can easily cross into "friendly" territory and hide among their people as is the case with cross border conflicts between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo and between Kenya and Somalia.¹¹

Another cause of conflicts in Africa has been the poor economic performance of many African countries. This situation is aggravated by poor flow of private capital, debt burden and insufficient foreign aid. In his *Agenda for Peace*,

⁷Jakkie Cilliers. "Regional Conflict and Poverty in Southern Africa", *Paper presented at Southern Africa Regional Poverty by Network Conference held at the Human Sciences Research Council*. (Pretoria, 26 April 2001).

⁸Ilufoye Sarafa Ogundiya, "Domestic rebellion in Africa, Vol. 1(2), (2010): 26

⁹Mthuli Ncube et al., "Drivers and dynamics of fragility" *Africa Economic Brief*, Vol. 4 Issue 5, (2013)

¹⁰Charter of the OAU Article II (c), Addis Ababa, 25th May 1963

¹¹Francis M. Deng et al, eds, *Conflict Resolution in Africa* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1991), 367-380

Boutrous – Boutrous Ghali stated *inter alia* that the deepest causes of conflicts are, economic despair, social injustice and political oppression.¹² Conflicts in Africa therefore emanates partly due to a fight for shares in a shrinking pie of economic resources and efforts to protect patterns of distribution.

Considering the causes of internal conflicts as witnessed in Africa today, scholarly literature on internal conflicts have identified four main clusters of factors: structural factors, political factors and economic/social factors.¹³ The cultural perceptual factors include weak state structures caused by lack of political legitimacy and ineffective political institutions capable of exercising effective control. When the state structures are weak, the logical outcome is often conflicts. Also, when state structures are weak, individual groups within these states feel compelled to provide their own security as they see other groups as security threats.¹⁴ Another structural factor that leads to conflicts is the ethnic geography of the states. States with ethnic minorities are more prone to conflict than others, especially when they are marginalized.

Political factors that contribute to conflicts in Africa include discriminatory political institutions. Closed authoritarian systems generate resentments especially if some groups are inadequately represented in the government. Also, the prospects of violence are great if groups have ambitious objectives, a strong sense of identity and confrontational strategies. These conflicts can also come as a result of elite politics and more specifically, the tactics employed by desperate and opportunistic politicians in times of political and economic turmoil.¹⁵

On the economic and social spheres two broad factors can be identified as potential sources of internal conflicts in Africa. Economic problems can contribute to intra-state tensions. Transitions from centrally planned to market-based economic system in Africa created several problems from high unemployment to rampant inflation.¹⁶ Also discriminatory economic systems, whether on the basis of class or ethnicity can generate feelings of resentment and levels of frustration that are a potential source of conflicts.

Cultural and perceptual factors have also been identified as sources of internal conflicts in Africa. This is seen in the cultural discrimination against minorities in forms of inequitable educational opportunities and constraints on religious freedoms and other aspects of social mobility. Also

group histories and group perceptions of themselves and others contribute to conflicts. Many groups have legitimate grievances against others for crimes of one kind or the other committed at some point in the past. These perceptions makes for growing resentment and prejudices that contribute to conflicts in Africa as the Rwandan and the Burundian examples in the 1990s indicated.¹⁷

According to Olusegun Obasanjo, African peoples and states are in conflict over three broad issues that include conflicts over resources, which may take two forms: internal struggle over the distribution of national resources and collective wealth or inter-state conflicts over territories that are believed to contain valuable physical or mineral resources.¹⁸ When the individuals and groups competing for power over the allocation of such resources or those seeking greater distributive justice within the state resort to violence, the security of the state is undermined. Secondly, he explained that there are other conflicts that emanates over the definition of “self” in the struggle for **self-determination**. This is the case in the conflict in Western Sahara in which the **POLISARIO** Front is fighting for self-determination from the Kingdom of Morocco. Another source of conflicts in Africa results from ideological concerns and competing socio-political systems. This was the case with the racist’s ideology in the Republic of South Africa that resulted in decades of conflicts between the black majorities that was segregated upon by the white minority.¹⁹ In Mozambique and Angola that operated socialists leaning regimes, conflicts also came up in these countries partly due to the ideological divide within the political class.

III. REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION IN AFRICA

The nature of global conflicts changed significantly after the Cold War from 1989. One of the manifestations of such a change was the increase in the number of intra-state conflicts as was the case in such African countries as Liberia, Sierra-Leone Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Côte d’Ivoire amongst others. The total paralysis of governance and breakdown of law and order that accompanied most of these conflicts, meant that concerted efforts had to be made at sub-regional, regional and international levels to resolve the conflicts, reconcile the warring parties and re-establish good governance.²⁰ These realities therefore availed the African sub-regional organisations that initially were formed to realize economic

¹²Boutrous – Boutrous Ghali – *An Agenda for peace*

¹³ Michael E. Brown, ed., *The International Dimensions of Internal conflict*. (London: MIT Press, 1996), 13

¹⁴Barry Posen “*The security Dilemma and Ethnic conflict*” Michael E. Brown, ed., *Ethnic Conflict and International security*, (London, MIT Press 1996), 123-124

¹⁵ Michael E. Brown, *The International Dimension of International Conflict*, 3

¹⁶E.V. Onumajuru, *United Nations Peacekeeping Operation and Conflict Resolution in Africa*, (New York, DPKO & UNITAR –POCI, 2005), 30

¹⁷Francis M. Deng et al., ed., *Conflict Resolution in Africa* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1991), 380

¹⁸ *Ibid*, XVII

¹⁹ This racist ideology of Apartheid dominated the Politics of the Republic of South Africa until it was abolished in the early 1990s when Nelson Mandela was released from prison and multi-racial elections organized that saw the election of the first ever black majority president in the country.

²⁰United Nations, *Year in Review 2012 United Nations Peace Operations* (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 2013), 1-5

ends to revise their structures and got involved in conflict prevention and resolution.

In line with this trend of African sub-regional and regional organisations increasingly getting involved in conflict prevention and resolution, this section examines the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) that transformed into the African Union (AU) in 2002. The examination of the involvement of these African organisations in the various conflicts in Africa serve as a torch light for future trends in conflict resolution in Africa and is in line with the principle of subsidiarity. This principle is founded on the idea that sustainable peace is possible if conflict resolution mechanisms are led by actors who are culturally, geopolitically and / or strategically close to the crisis in question.²¹

IV. THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)

This organisation was established in 1975 to integrate West Africa's economic potentials towards sub-regional growth. Although the organisation did not contain defence clauses at the time of its formation, it soon realized the importance of security towards the attainment of its economic objectives.²² As such, in April 1979, the member states signed a protocol on Non-Aggression, which committed member states to "refrain from committing, encouraging or condoning with acts of subversion, hostility, or aggression against members."²³ This was expanded in 1978, with the signing of the *Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defense*, which stipulated that an act of aggression against a member state constitutes an act of aggression against the entire community.²⁴

The ECOWAS protocol on mutual assistance and defense often has been invoked by the organisation as relates aggression from non-member states, conflicts between member states, and most especially conflicts in member States. In these dimensions of conflicts, the ECOWAS have always come in to make efforts towards resolving them. The organisation has however, imposed itself as a key player in the resolution of internal conflicts in member states as was the case in Liberia in the 1990s and 2000, Sierra-Leone in the 1990s and Cote d'Ivoire in 2002.

In the post-cold war era, the Liberian Crisis provided the first test of Africa's assumption of responsibility for

conflict resolution and ECOWAS took the initiative. The civil war in Liberia started in 1989 when a rebel movement, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor launched an attack on the government of the then President Samuel Doe. A few months into the onslaught, the structures of governance in Liberia became destroyed and the civilians became victims of the war. The appalling humanitarian situation caused by the conflict informed the intervention of ECOWAS in 1990 to seek ways of resolving the crisis.²⁵

The ECOWAS military intervention in the civil war from 1990 was through its ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) which was a Nigerian-led operation that remained in Liberia for nine years. It successfully set up a haven of relative peace around Monrovia and protected civilians within the perimeter of its control area. Though with some short comings in the way it executed its mandate, ECOWAS with the support of the UNO promoted a peace plan and oversaw elections in the country that brought Charles Taylor to power in 1997.²⁶ The ECOMOG eventually left Liberia in 1994. However its peace initiative in Liberia was not yet over as the security situation in the country further degenerated in 2000.²⁷

In 2000, Liberia again degenerated into a civil war when two rebel groups, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), launched attacks against government forces and called for the resignation of Charles Taylor.²⁸ In 2003, the situation had seriously degenerated and ECOWAS began holding peace talks with the belligerents. Charles Taylor was convinced to resign in August 2003 and took refuge in Nigeria. The efforts of ECOWAS on this second involvement in Liberia resulted in a peace agreement in August 2003. ECOWAS then redeployed a new force in Liberia in August 2003 known as ECOWAS Military Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL). This force brought calm to the capital and paved the way for the deployment of UN peacekeepers. Peace gradually returned to Liberia due to the efforts of ECOWAS as post conflict elections were held in the country under the auspices of ECOWAS with the support of other international organisations. These elections brought in Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to power as the first female elected president in Africa. Her government, with the help of ECOWAS, AU, UN and some individual countries was committed to the peace process in Liberia and began the process of post conflict reconstruction.²⁹

²⁵ Ibid, 81

²⁶ ECOWAS, *A stable and peaceful environment – prerequisite for accelerated ECOWAS development and integration, Interim report of the Executive secretary of ECOWAS* (Lagos: 1990, ECW/CM.XXVIII/2), 25

²⁷ Binaifer Nworojee, "Africa on its own: Regional Intervention and Human Rights", *Human Rights Watch*, (New York: Africa Division, 2003), 8

²⁸ Ibid., 9

²⁹ ECOWAS, *A stable and peaceful environment – prerequisite for accelerated ECOWAS development and integration*, 25

²¹ ECCAS, *The Principle of subsidiarity: The Example of ECCAS in the Central African Conflict* (ECCAS – CMI Publication, November 2016.), 4

²² Abiodun Aloa, "The Role of African Regional and Sub-regional Organisations in Conflict Prevention and Resolution" *African Security Unit Centre for Defence Studies*, (2000), 5

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ademola Abass, *The Implementation of ECOWAS' New Protocol and Security Council Resolution 1270 in Sierra Leone: New Developments in Regional Interventions* (Miami: Int'l & Comp. L. Rev. 177, 2015), 178

Based on its intervention in Liberia in 1990, ECOWAS began to strengthen its institutional conflict – response mechanisms. In 1993, it expanded its founding treaty to include peace and security in its mandate. ECOWAS subsequently created a Mediation and Security Council which authorized the dispatch of a peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone in 1997.³⁰ Following the 1997 insurgency by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Foday Sankoh, ECOWAS dispatched troops to Sierra Leone to quell the civil unrest. In 1998, ECOWAS troops helped to restore to power the deposed leader of the country Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. The ECOWAS Mandate in Sierra Leone ended in 1999 and its contingent was absorbed into the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone that continued in the peace process initiated by ECOWAS till rebels were eventually vanquished and peace restored.

The ECOWAS also got involved in efforts to resolve the internal conflict in Cote d'Ivoire. From September 2002, Côte d'Ivoire became gripped by an internal conflict that paralyzed the economy, split the political class and heightened the polarization of the Ivorian society along ethnic, political and religious lines. ECOWAS thus as a regional organisation recognized the gravity of the situation and its potential of bringing about an economic down turn in the region. As such, in October 2002, ECOWAS mediators brokered a ceasefire, and both the Ivorian government and the main rebel group Mouvement Patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI) authorized an ECOWAS monitoring mission.³¹ This early intervention of ECOWAS in the conflict helped in mitigating the crisis. The ECOWAS operation in the country, helped to monitor compliance with the various peace agreements between the Ivorian government and the rebel forces. The intervention of such countries as France later on and by the UN only came into complement the efforts of the sub-regional grouping- the ECOWAS.

From the above, it can thus be seen that ECOWAS distinguished itself as good example of an African sub-regional organisation that is committed in the intervention and resolution of conflicts in the West African Sub Region as it did in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. The experiences gained from these efforts were improved upon in future conflicts and served as an example to other sub-regional groupings. Its action with dispatch and its relative success in resolving the conflicts or in monitoring the peace process served as indications that with effective planning and a clear mandate, sub-regional organisations can effectively resolve conflicts in their various regions.

V. THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC)

The SADC was created in 1980 as a response to the domination of the sub-region by the apartheid South Africa. The struggle against apartheid and other minority regimes in southern Africa also gave birth to another grouping which shared SADC's ideals. This was known as the Front-Line States (FLS). This was later on subsumed into the SADC by January 1996 when the organ for politics, defence and security was formed within SADC to allow for more flexibility and timely response at the highest level to sensitive and potentially explosive situations.³² The objectives of this organ at formation included;

- a) to safeguard the people and development in the region against instability arising from civil disorder, interstate conflict and external aggression;
- b) to undertake conflict prevention, management and resolution activities by mediating in interstate and intra state disputes and conflicts through an early warning system and using **diplomacy** and peacekeeping to achieve sustainable peace;
- c) to promote the development of a common foreign policy in areas of mutual interests; to develop close co-operation between the police and security services of the region and to encourage the observance of human rights.³³

From August 1998, the DRC a member of SADC was enmeshed in a devastating and large scale war at one point pitting the armies of Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi together with Congolese rebel groups against the state supported by Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia. This prolonged conflict presented critical challenges to African leaders. For the SADC, the war created significant regional problems, as member States Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola joined, under the SADC umbrella and the former government of Kinshasa to fight the invasion from Uganda and Rwanda.³⁴

In the conflict, SADC's mandate was questioned at some quarters regarding the legality of its intervention and whether proper authorization procedures were followed by SADC's organ on Politics, Defence and Security led at the time by Robert Mugabe the then president of Zimbabwe. However, through the efforts of the SADC and the AU, a peace agreement was arrived at in what was known as the *Pretoria Peace Accord* of 2002. These efforts paved the way for an eventual government of national unity for the DRC.³⁵ The Republic of South Africa through its leader Thabo Mbeki

³² Mark Malan, "SADC and sub-regional security; Undas Venis et Quo Vadis" *ISS Monograph series*, N° 19, (Pretoria: February 1998), 13 – 14

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Binaifer Nworejee, "Africa on its own Regional Intervention and Human Rights", 12

³⁵ Thabo Mbeki of South Africa who was the inaugural Chair of the AU that replaced the OAU, used his "good offices" to broke talks aimed at the peace agreement between the former government in Kinshasa and Rwanda

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 8

³¹ Jinmi Adisa *Nigeria ECOMOG: "Political Under-current and the Burden of Community Spirit"*, Jide Owoye, ed., *Nigeria in International Institutions* (Ife: College Press Limited, 1993), 10

was able to use its position as chair of the AU and member of SADC to facilitate the peace process in the **DRC**.

The efforts of SADC in this DRC conflict though flawed in some respects did not deter the sub-regional group from its continuous efforts to intervene and maintain peace and resolve conflicts in the sub-region. These efforts especially in the recent conflict in the DRC is an indication that African organisation are capable and have been resolving conflicts in various regions of the continent. The closeness of the SADC to the conflict in the DRC and to conflicts that affect other member states, as well as its promptness in making efforts to resolve the conflicts is an indication of the importance and utility of African regional and sub-regional organisations in conflict resolution in Africa.

VI. THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT (IGAD)

The IGAD was formed in 1986 bringing together six countries that include Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. Its aim on creation was to co-ordinate measures to combat the effects of drought and desertification in East Africa. Its Charter was however amended in 1996 to cover political and economic issues, including conflict resolution. This change was informed by the **internal** security problems in member states. Sudan had been in conflict for more than a decade then while Eritrea and Ethiopia were then trying to consolidate their new found peace.³⁶

Against the backdrop of its conviction that the crisis in Sudan was already taking a regional dimension, IGAD in September 1993 initiated a mediatory intervention into the crisis. In the effort to resolve the conflict, IGAD faced a major problem which stemmed from the divergent views of the warring factions on self-determination and the place of religion in state politics. While the central government insisted that Islam should remain the state religion, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) continued to favour secularism in the country.³⁷ By 1995 based on the difficulties that IGAD was facing to settle the Sudan crisis, it called on the OAU and the UN to assist.

IGAD's involvement took a new dimension in 1995, when a group of countries known as the friends of IGAD, mounted pressure on the organisation to reconsider its position and again got involved in the conflict.³⁸ Through IGAD, the Friends of IGAD advocated a longer ceasefire, introduced joint surveillance patrols assisted by international mediators, and a new round of IGAD – sponsored talks. This conflict in Sudan ended in 2011 when the SPLA succeeded in securing the independence of South Sudan from the Republic

of Sudan. This feat was achieved due to the mediation efforts of IGAD that was working in tandem with other international mediators that included the UNO, the African regional Organisation- the AU as well as the friends of IGAD.

VII. THE ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU) / THE AFRICAN UNION (AU)

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was established on 25 May 1963 in Addis Ababa with 32 signatory governments. It was disbanded on 9 July 2002 by its last chairperson Thabo Mbeki, and replaced with the African Union (AU). The OAU was composed of all independent African States and set as its overall goal, the desire to protect the territorial integrity of African States.³⁹ On conflict resolution, its charter called for the amicable resolution of disputes, and as a preventive measure, a commission on Mediation, Arbitration and Conciliation was established to mediate on disputes between member states. Its initial aim was to preserve the sovereignty of its members and on the principle of Pan-Africanism.⁴⁰

However in the post – cold war era, the OAU established a mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution which was adopted in the June 1993 session of its General Assembly.⁴¹ Due to financial constraints, it was decided that peacekeeping should not be a priority for the OAU in the immediate future, although the organisation might deploy small scale peacekeeping operations. As such, the OAU leaders in the 1995 summit of Head of States and governments authorized a specially trained peacekeeping unit within African armies. This idea was for African countries to create specialization units that could be called up for peacekeeping operations into areas of conflict in the continent at any time as circumstances demanded.⁴²

African leaders later on radically reformed the OAU and its associated bodies to suit the current challenges in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa. In July 2002, the OAU was dissolved and reconstituted as the African Union. In contrast to the OAU, the AU was provided with a Constitutive Act that envisaged a more integrated level of continental governance. Under the AU's Constitutive Act, there is a commitment to “promote and protect human and peoples' rights” and it specifies that “governments which shall come to power through unconstitutional means shall not be allowed to participate in the activities of the Union” In October 2003, the AU Protocol on Peace and security that later formed the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU was ratified. This Protocol authorizes the organisation to “intervene in a member state... in respect of grave

³⁶ Mark Malan, *SADC and sub-regional Security Undas Venis et Quo Vadis*, 20

³⁷ Abiodun Alao, “The role of African Regional Organisations in Conflict Prevention and Resolution” *New issues in Refugee Research Working paper No 23* (July 2000), 19

³⁸ Members included the Netherlands Canada, the United Kingdom, Italy, Norway and the United States.

³⁹ OAU Charter Article II(c), 5

⁴⁰ OAU Charter, Article II (1(C))

⁴¹ OAU, *Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government on the establishment within the OAU of a mechanism for conflict prevention*, (Cairo: OAU, June 1993), 28-30

⁴² Organization of African Unity(OAU), *Declaration and Resolutions Adopted by the thirty first Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government*, (Addis Ababa: OAU, 1995), 26-28

circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity”.⁴³

In line with the AU's efforts to resolve conflicts in the continent, the organisation, in its special session on Consideration and Resolution of Conflicts in Africa, held in Tripoli, Libya, on 31 August 2009 and adopted two key documents namely the Tripoli Declaration and Plan of Action.⁴⁴ In the Tripoli Declaration, the Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their commitment to redouble efforts towards promoting sustainable peace, security and stability in the continent. In the Declaration, the leaders stated their “determination to deal once and for all with the scourge of conflicts and violence on our continent, acknowledging our shortcomings ...and missing no opportunity to push forward the agenda of conflict prevention, peace-making, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction”.⁴⁵ This was an indication that the AU was committed in decisively taking action towards the resolution of conflicts in Africa on its own while remaining open to international efforts but not relying solely on such international efforts.⁴⁶

In the application of the Tripoli Plan of Action, the organisation intervened in the Comoros Island to settle the dispute over its Island of Mayotte. In handling the volatile and dangerous security situation in Somalia, the AU deployed a peacekeeping force in the country known as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), whose force was enlarged in 2010.⁴⁷ This force worked hand in hand with other international actors to ensure relative peace in Somalia, combated piracy and armed robbery at sea off the Coast of Somalia. The AU also got involved in the conflicts in Sudan, Chad, The Central African Republic, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the fight against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and its menace on Uganda as well as neighbouring countries to Uganda, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Guinea Bissau, and Western Sahara. The organisation was also firm in its condemnation of unconstitutional governments till democratic rule was restored in Guinea, Niger, and Madagascar.⁴⁸ The peacekeeping efforts of the AU in these countries are discussed in the next section of this work.

⁴³ African Union, *Communique of the Ninety-Sixth Ordinary Session at Ambassadorial level of the Central Organ of the Mechanism for conflict prevention, Management and resolution* (Addis Ababa: African Union, 21 October 2003)

⁴⁴ African Union, Peace and Security Council, *Progress report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the implementation of the Tripoli Declaration on the elimination of Conflicts in Africa and the promotion of sustainable peace and on the Tripoli plan of Action*, (Tripoli: African Union, 2010),30

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ African Union Peace and Security Council, *Progress Report on the Tripoli Plan of Action* (Tripoli: African Union, 2010)

⁴⁷ African Union: *General Assembly Decision on Somalia*, (AU/142(VIII), Addis Ababa 29-30 January 2007 and United Nations: Security Council Resolution 1772 (2007), S/RES/1772, 2007)

⁴⁸Ibid

VIII. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY SUB-REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In the examination of the efforts of African regional and sub-regional organizations in conflict resolution and management, it was realized that these organizations encountered a number of problems.

One of such problems is structural. It is realized that many of the regional and sub-regional organizations that took charge of conflicts in Africa such as ECCAS, ECOWAS, ICGLR, and IGAD were not specifically designed for the purpose. Most of them were formed as economic organizations and founded for economic ends. Thus, they did not have in place some of the structural facilities needed for conflict resolution and management. The ECOWAS for example, did not have a department of peacekeeping operations and this inevitably affected its ability to co-ordinate its peacekeeping operation effectively. This problem was recognized by the organization and in its new treaty, such structural flaws were given the required attention. The SADC, ECCAS, IGAD and other regional organizations in Africa also are trying to clearly articulate their position amidst difficulties as they try to strike a balance between their original economic objectives and emerging security concerns.

One of the problems that these bodies encountered was finance. The place a nation or a group of nations hold in international affairs is determined by its relative power defined in economic and in some cases military terms. The position and actions of member states within their regional and sub-regional organizations is determined by the power of those countries to articulate and define their interests in the context of the programmes and activities to be undertaken by the organization and this depends on the economic strength of the countries that constitute such an organization. In the case of Africa, her economy is in state of perennial crisis as two third of the world's poorest countries are found in Africa. The record for the highest death rates and lowest life expectancy in world is held by Africa. These dismal socio economic conditions which held sway during the 1960s and 1970s when moderate growth was widespread in the African economies became worse in the 1980s and 1990s.⁴⁹

This problem made it difficult for the African regional and sub-regional organizations to generate resources to mount some of the operations needed in some countries to bring peace. Many regional organizations therefore, faced difficulties in mounting more straightforward and standard traditional peacekeeping operations let alone the more complex peace support operations that were required for the new generation conflicts that started emerging after the cold war era. As such regional or sub-regional organizations were more likely to respond to conflicts when there existed a

⁴⁹ K. Menngisbeab et al., ed., *Beyond Economic Liberalization in Africa: Structural Adjustment and the Alternative* (London: Zed Books, 1995), 259.

leading nation with the human and material resources to take the lead in the initiation of such operations. Lack of financial resources therefore affected many operations, and the inability of the organizations to obtain external financial assistance adversely affected its peace efforts.

Also the organizations were often confronted with the problem of political divisions and “side-taking”. This became a problem as it was noticed that only countries within region or sub-region became willing in resolving the conflict in their neighbourhoods. The geographical location of the conflict therefore in most cases determines the efforts made by the regional organizations towards its resolution. It is seen therefore that African states participate massively only in peacekeeping operations that were located within their sub-regions. If the conflict is in West Africa as was the case in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d’Ivoire, it was realized that mainly countries within the ECOWAS sub-regional grouping were involved in efforts towards its resolution, while countries of other sub-regions acted only minimally under the banner of the regional organization the OAU/AU.⁵⁰

Also the issue of side taking in conflicts delays or complicates efforts towards its resolution. This problem was apparent in Liberia, where Nigeria, Cote d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso were believed to have taken different sides in the conflict.⁵¹ This impacted on the ECOMOG operation, as the conflicting parties exploited the situation to further prolong the war. It created political divisions within ECOWAS and served to emphasize old Anglophone and Francophone rivalries within the grouping. In the SADC, it was an open secret then that both South Africa and Zimbabwe were always at loggerheads and this impacted negatively on its efforts to resolve the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The issue of regional hegemony has also become an “evil” in many regional and sub-regional groupings and affected their conflict resolution mechanisms and efficiency. On the one hand, the smaller nations resist the bigger and better endowed ones for fear of their tendency to seek to dominate their regions.⁵² However, on the other hand, these big countries are relied upon in times of conflict to provide the resources to maintain the vital lifeline of peace operations. Thus countries like Nigeria in ECOWAS, Cameroon in ECCAS, South Africa in SADC, amongst others may find themselves challenged to take leading roles in their regions.⁵³ In times of crisis, where these regional hegemony have been willing and able to initiate and participate in

regional conflict resolution efforts, they often make the differences between preventing collapse and complete destruction, human suffering and anarchy. The sub-regions within Africa that do not have such leading nations are the ones likely to suffer more in times of crisis especially where no external power is willing and able to intervene. One could only speculate what level of carnage might have been prevented in Rwanda, if there was a readily willing actor, available to act quickly to meet the situation with an effective response.

Though these regional hegemony are an advantage to the regions that have them in times of conflict, they may themselves pose as stumbling blocks in a conflict resolution process if they are seen to be partial or having too much vested interest in the conflict or, indeed, if they are not inclusive in their approach. The Republic of Congo faced deep suspicion in its efforts towards the resolution of the crisis in the CAR as the role of its president Denis Sassou N’Guesso was often challenged as he was seen to pursuing personal interest alongside the regional interest.

In addition to these, regional organizations often face a problem of legitimacy if they are perceived to be acting without the authorization of the global organization (the UNO), particularly where the action entails the use of force. The ECOMOG operation initially suffered this problem when its legitimacy was challenged at various levels over its intervention in Liberia.⁵⁴ The operation went on for sometimes and only obtained a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution authorizing it retroactively. The delay at times in securing the approval of the UNSC for regional enforcement constituted a problem in efforts towards conflict resolution in Africa. This stemmed from the fact that unauthorized involvements could attract criticisms for such a regional grouping for taking laws into its hands. This is especially because the UNO frowns against unilateral enforcements of peace. Regional efforts often are confronted with operational problems. Operations conducted in response to deadly conflict in recent years have encountered specific operational problems. The first arises from the political control in the area of operation. Division in command, due to separate provision of logistic support by individual contributing states made coordination of operations extremely difficult. If the logistics are centralized, it is possible to achieve full control of the entire operation but this is not always the case.⁵⁵ This inability limits seriously the effectiveness of regional and sub-regional African organizations in conflict resolution efforts. A second problem arises from orders coming from home, state governments of contributing states often tend to give their contingents orders

⁵⁰Emmanuel Hensen, ed., *Africa: Perspectives on peace and Development* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd 1987)

⁵¹Abiodun Alao “The role of African Regional and sub-regional organizations in conflict prevention and resolution”, 20.

⁵²Lindsay Barrett “Nigeria’s Pivotal Role” in *West Africa* (London, March 1997), 469

⁵³ Daniel Warner, ed., *New Dimensions of Peacekeeping* (Dordrecht, Boston and London: Martinus Nijhoff, 1995), 60

⁵⁴Jinmi Adisa, “Nigeria ECOMOG: Political Under-current and the Burden of Community Spirit”, Jide Owoye, ed., *Nigeria in International Institutions*, (Ife: College Press Limited, 1993), 143.

⁵⁵ Jean – Marie Guehenno, *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines* (New York: DPKO, 2010), 18-29

in the area of operation, which may contradict the operational order from the commander in the conflict area. These instructions and counter instructions that sometimes are contradictory, reduces the effectiveness of the organizations in resolving the conflicts that they are engaged in.

There is also the problem of ideology and general willingness of states to contribute towards efforts aimed at realizing peace and stability. It is a truism that during the era of the **Cold war**, part of the considerations as to whether to participate in a conflict-regional or international was influenced by the ideological orientations of the states in question. An ideology is a comprehensive system of political beliefs about the nature of people and society it is an organized collection of ideas about the best way to live and about the most appropriate institutional arrangement for society. This is the philosophical bent of true believers of whatever belief. It also refers to interrelated ideas or a world view that explains complex social phenomena.⁵⁶ These orientations during the cold war era determined the desire to participate in conflicts by the various African states. Though the cold war is over, remnants of these ideological divisions still surface at times and adversely affect African regional and sub-regional bodies in their efforts to resolve conflicts as some countries still do not participate effectively in particular conflicts based on old divisions and **rivalry**.

African regional and sub-regional organizations are also slowed down in their efforts by the lack of the required personnel and equipment. Three main categories of personnel are utilized in peacekeeping operations. These include military, police and civilian personnel. In this respect, African states have lots of men and women in arms. According to figures published by the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACADA), in 1977, about 1.7 million people were in the service of African armed forces.⁵⁷ However, this sheer number does not translate into effectiveness and in the political will to participate in a conflict. As such many contingents from contributing countries in conflicts are often ill equipped and at times with low morale due to low salaries as was the case with the Sierra Leonean contingent in ECOMOG during the Liberian crisis that in anger due to low wages, informed the decision of its commander Captain Valentine Strasser to stage a coup against the government of Joseph Momoh.⁵⁸ The low pay that some of these regional peacekeepers receive push them into such undesirable activities as looting and rape that go a long way to tarnish the reputation of regional and sub-regional conflict resolution efforts. All these problems account for why most of these regional and sub-regional efforts are always with time subsumed into international efforts coordinated by the UNO.

It is therefore realized that there is an acknowledgement of the importance of regional and sub-regional organisations in conflict management and prevention in Africa and the trend indicates that these organisations are to continue taking more and more responsibilities in this direction. It is seen that when these regional and sub-regional bodies take the initiative in seeking solutions to the conflicts around them, they help in preparing the grounds for the entry of the International body and other external actors.⁵⁹ These early involvements in conflicts help in ameliorating the sufferings of the populations caught in the conflict.

The trend thus indicates that more responsibility should be put on these organisations in future. What is required therefore is a strategy to enhance the capacities of these organisations to meet the impending challenges. The organisations need to further equip their structures as existing ones in some of the organisations are weak since most of them were originally economic organisations and only incorporated security mechanisms into their structures due to changing realities. Also, the regional and sub-regional organisations in Africa must work out ways of harmonizing their activities, and at the same time, avoid multiple initiatives. These regional and sub-regional organisations also in other to realize their objectives and intervene effectively in conflicts in Africa need to work closely with the civil society and must of necessity, appreciate the need for good governance and economic development which are an essential *sine-qua-non* for harmonious inter-group relations.

IX. CONCLUSION

From the above therefore, it can be seen that many peacekeeping operation have been set up in Africa by African groupings to resolve African based conflicts. These sub-regional organisations in Africa have been taking the lead in some peacekeeping operations as the ECOMOG interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone indicate. The peacekeeping operations in Africa today, rely on many troops, military observers, police and civilians from around the world. The mandate of these missions have steadily expanded over the years. In addition to protecting civilians, peacekeepers now regularly face irregular forces like *Al-Shabaab*, *Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb*, *Boko Haram*, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), as well as the now-defunct *M23 militia* in the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁶⁰ Contributions and active involvement from Africans themselves in these African-based operations was impressive and indispensable. These impressive contributions serve as a commitment to regional peace and security for mutual interest. They also reflect the sustained efforts of African states and their multilateral bodies to overcome the challenge of collective action in the face of war, natural disaster, or genocide. These sustained efforts are

⁵⁶ Vernon Bogdanored., *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political science*, (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1991), 260

⁵⁷ Frank Barnaby, "Africa at war: The militarization of the world's poorest continent" *Africa Guide* (1981), 28.

⁵⁸ Emeka Nwokedi, "Regional Integration and Regional Security. ECOMOG, Nigeria and the Liberian Civil War" *Travaux – Et Document*, N° 35 (1992),7

⁵⁹ Ademola Adeleke, "The Politics and Diplomacy of Peacekeeping in West Africa: The ECOWAS Operation in Liberia" *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol 33, N° 4, (1995): 579

⁶⁰ Michael D. Rettig, *The Evolution of African Peacekeeping*, (Washington: Africa Center for strategic studies, 2006), 2.

a reflection of the mantra -“African solutions for African problems”. These African countries in addition to contributing through their sub- regional organizations towards conflict resolution in Africa also participate actively in UN led efforts.⁶¹Based on the United Nations report as of 31 August 2017, in the list of the top fifty contributors of troops towards UN peacekeeping assignments, twenty three of them were African states that include Cameroon. It can thus be argued that the expansion of African peacekeeping capabilities is a victory for multilateralism and African efforts to overcome its collective security challenges which amongst others is the core business of the AU. African states therefore have had experiences in peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts led by sub-regional organisations, the African Union and the United Nations. The study of the peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia amongst others indicates that African states through its regional organisations are becoming more committed and proactive in taking the lead in resolving African based conflicts. This is seen in the amendment of the charters of the various sub-regional groupings to include conflict resolution and peacekeeping roles as well as the impressive troop and others contributions towards conflict resolution efforts in Africa. All these go a long way to exemplify the usefulness of the principle of subsidiarity as a potent of analysing the role of African states in resolving African based conflicts. This timely and active involvement of African groupings potentially enable the conflicts to be resolved with despatch because Africans are more likely to understand the polemics involved the African conflicts better than all extraneous actors.

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⁶¹United Nations, *Report on the Committee on contributions* (New York: United Nations, 2016).