

**African Organizations
and Ad Hoc Initiatives**

CHAPTER 3

ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

A LEGACY OF NON-INTERVENTION

When the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was created in 1963, its members¹ sought to protect their independence not only from the West, but from one another as well. The “Purposes,” and “Principles” enumerated in Articles II and III of the OAU Charter place a premium on sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference in member States’ internal affairs.² The Charter does not provide for collective security. The powers and resources of the Organization’s Administrative Secretary General were purposely limited.³

¹At the OAU’s inception, its Charter was signed by 30 out of the 32 independent African countries (with one country absent and one abstaining). Togo, which was not represented because of a recent coup, signed two months later in July 1963. Morocco, which originally abstained (because of the independence of Mauritania), subsequently signed in September 1963. (Written correspondence with Michael Wolfers, author, 30 June 1999.) It now has 53 member States. Among the internationally-recognized States of the continent, only Morocco is not presently a member of the Organization. Rabat formally withdrew in 1985, after the OAU bestowed membership on the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) of Western Sahara in 1984. SADR has not become a UN member, however, pending results of the long-awaited referendum to decide whether the people of Western Sahara choose independence or a federated union with Morocco.

²Articles II and III, *Charter of the Organization of African Unity*, 25 May 1963, reprinted in *International Legal Materials* Vol. 2, No. 4, July 1963, pp. 767-78.

³The designation “Administrative” was dropped in 1979. (Michael Wolfers, “The Institutional Evolution of the OAU,” in Yassin El-Ayouty and I. William Zartman (eds), *The OAU After Twenty Years*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984, p. 89.) The powers and resources of the Secretary-General have grown somewhat with the passage of time but are still limited, for primarily political reasons.

OAU member States' lack of enthusiasm for intervention in conflicts is clearly seen in the Organization's dispute resolution structures, which have been largely undeveloped and unused. The OAU Charter provides for a Commission of Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration.⁴ Under the terms of the protocol elaborating the Commission, it was to consist of 21 elected individuals.⁵ Even though the Commission was envisaged as one of the Organization's four principal organs,⁶ it never became operational. The places were filled at the 1968 OAU Summit in Algiers, but its permanent status was revoked two years later at the Summit in Addis Ababa, and it has since fallen into disuse.⁷ The 1977 Ad Hoc Committee on Inter-African Disputes, which despite its name was intended as a permanent body, shared a similar fate.⁸ Instead, the OAU has relied on ad hoc committees of member States and eminent personalities to mediate disputes.

The fact that member States have not embraced OAU initiatives to manage and resolve conflicts and have looked elsewhere for security assurances highlights the weaknesses of the OAU's ad hoc approach. The OAU decision in October 1963 to send military officers to supervise a cease-fire, the withdrawal of troops, and the creation of a demilitarized zone (DMZ) as a means to settle a disagreement between Algeria and Morocco was never acted upon; moreover, subsequent initiatives by the OAU to resolve the dispute over the next two years proved equally ineffective. In the end, the matter was settled bilaterally, without the OAU's active intervention. The OAU was similarly sidelined the following year in attempting to address the conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia as

⁴Article XIX, *Charter of the Organization of African Unity*, p. 771.

⁵Article II, *Protocol of the Commission of Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration*, 21 July 1964, reprinted in *International Legal Materials*, Vol. 3, No. 6, November 1964, p. 1116.

⁶The other three principal institutions are the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the Council of Ministers, and the General Secretariat.

⁷Michael Wolfers, "The Organization of African Unity as Mediator," in Saadia Touval and I. William Zartman (eds), *International Mediation in Theory and Practice* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), p. 176.

⁸Written correspondence with S. Bassey Ibok, Head, Conflict Management Division, OAU Secretariat, 3 May 1999.

well as the continuing civil unrest in the Congo.⁹ After the OAU failed to intervene meaningfully in the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970), African countries largely eschewed the Organization's involvement in attempting to resolve their differences and increasingly turned to countries outside the continent for their security needs.

NEUTRAL FORCE IN CHAD

The OAU Neutral Force in Chad of 1981-1982—the only instance when the OAU undertook a large-scale multinational operation—was an aberration. (See Annex A for a listing of all OAU peacekeeping operations.) Although the Chadian civil war had begun in the 1960s, the OAU's first diplomatic overture to help resolve the conflict did not occur until 1977 when the Assembly of Heads of State and Government created an ad hoc committee on Chad.¹⁰ The 1979 Nigerian peacekeeping operation in Chad received diplomatic support from the OAU retroactively, but was not an OAU force per se. The peacekeeping force from Congo (Brazzaville) that was deployed briefly in Chad in 1980 was essentially an OAU operation even though the OAU Secretariat does not claim "credit" for it. The OAU's largely laissez faire attitude towards the conflict only changed in the wake of the announced union of Chad and Libya in January 1981,¹¹ some two weeks after several thousand Libyan troops had entered the Chadian capital, Ndjamen. An inter-African force, which the OAU does consider its own, was deployed later that year. The OAU's lack of enthusiasm for the venture was matched by its difficulty in fielding an effective force. While the 1981-1982 OAU force did not achieve its stated aims and suffered from many operational shortcomings, its very feebleness ironically succeeded in hastening the end of the civil war.

⁹Nathan Pelcovits, "Peacekeeping: The African Experience," in Henry Wiseman (ed.), *Peacekeeping: Appraisals & Proposals*, New York: Pergamon Press, 1983, pp. 267-68.

¹⁰Colin Legum, "The Crisis Over Chad: Colonel Gaddafi's Sahelian Dream," in Colin Legum (ed.), *Africa Contemporary Record*, Vol. 13, 1980-81, p. A37.

¹¹Colin Legum (ed.), *Africa Contemporary Record*, Vol. 13, 1980-81, p. B21.

Background

The first peacekeeping force to deploy in Chad was Nigerian. The fall of the southern Sara-dominated Government of Félix Malloum in February 1979 provided a new impetus for a diplomatic solution to try to end the civil war. The coalition of northern groups that at one point had coalesced as the *Front de libération nationale du Tchad* (FROLINAT) had long since split into several acrimonious political and military factions.¹² Thus, despite the north's success in finally taking control of Ndjamena, there was no consensus among the "victors" on a clear successor to govern the country. Nigeria, a member of both the 1977-1978 and 1978-1979 OAU committees on Chad,¹³ hosted a conference in Kano in March 1979 that several of the Chadian warring parties attended. A peace accord was reached that called for Nigeria to send a peacekeeping force to Ndjamena to supervise a cease-fire. French troops stationed in the country as a result of a security pact with the previous Chadian Government were still present but remained on the sidelines.

In the wake of the failed bid by Nigeria to bring about a political settlement to the Chadian civil war, an agreement was reached whereby an inter-African force would undertake a similar mission. Lagos¹⁴ withdrew its troops but remained engaged diplomatically in attempting to resolve the conflict. Nigeria, which secured OAU support for its initiative retroactively at the July 1979 OAU Summit in Monrovia, convened a subsequent peace conference in August 1979 in Lagos (also known as "Lagos II"). All 11

¹²For a succinct review of FROLINAT's creation and disintegration, see Dean Pittman, "The OAU and Chad," in El-Ayouty and Zartman (eds), *The OAU After Twenty Years*, pp. 299-301.

¹³The OAU Libreville Summit of July 1977 appointed Algeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Senegal to comprise the ad hoc committee on Chad. A year later at the Khartoum Summit, the committee's membership was reconfigured and included Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan. Samuel G. Amoo and I. William Zartman, "Mediation by Regional Organizations: The Organization for African Unity (OAU) in Chad," in Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Z. Rubin (eds), *Mediation in International Relations: Multiple Approaches to Conflict Management*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992, pp. 139-40.

¹⁴Lagos was Nigeria's capital from independence until December 1991, when the seat of the Federal Government was officially transferred to Abuja.

Chadian factions were represented.¹⁵ Several important agreements were reached in Lagos, including the creation of a transitional Government of unity to be known as the *Gouvernement d'union nationale transitoire* (GUNT) as well as another peacekeeping operation. Whereas Nigeria alone had fielded the initial force, this second mission would be comprised of three States, none of which were to border Chad. It was agreed that the three countries would be Benin, Congo (Brazzaville), and Guinea.

For all intents and purposes, the second peacekeeping force was an OAU undertaking—even though the OAU does not claim ownership. Whereas the OAU Secretary General was kept informed of developments in negotiations leading up to the 1979 initiative headed by Nigeria, in the discussions for the 1980 force he had agreed to assume a much more active, if largely ceremonial, role. The Secretary General was to replace Nigeria as head of the monitoring commission to ensure that the various factions faithfully implemented the agreement. Thus, while the Heads of State and Government did not decide or resolve to officially sanction the inter-African force as an “OAU” operation, the actions of the Secretary General made it so. Moreover, as Roy May and Simon Massey point out, “Although deriving its mandate from Lagos II, rather than directly from the OAU, the troops that eventually arrived in January 1980 were recognized as the OAU Neutral Force.”¹⁶

From the difficulties encountered in deploying and in light of subsequent events, it is clear that this second peacekeeping force was not prepared for the challenge. OAU member States proved reluctant to fund the operation.¹⁷ Two of the three countries selected to send troops—Benin and Guinea—begged off, claiming that they did not possess the necessary

¹⁵Legum, “The Crisis Over Chad: Colonel Gaddafi’s Sahelian Dream,” p. A37.

¹⁶Roy May and Simon Massey, “The OAU Interventions in Chad: Mission Impossible or Mission Evaded?,” *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Spring 1998, p. 48.

¹⁷Pelcovits writes that only five countries—Cameroon, Liberia, Libya, Niger, and the Sudan—paid the US\$ 50,000 that the OAU requested each member State to contribute to a special fund to support the mission. (Pelcovits, “Peacekeeping: The African Experience,” p. 277.) Legum reports that the OAU managed to raise just 10 per cent of its promised contribution of US\$ 6 million. (Legum, “The Crisis Over Chad: Colonel Gaddafi’s Sahelian Dream,” pp. A37-38.) Whatever the amount provided, it was insufficient.

funds to undertake the operation.¹⁸ The third, Congo (Brazzaville), did contribute an infantry battalion¹⁹ with the aid of Algeria, which provided the necessary airlift,²⁰ but not until January 1980.²¹ The Congolese troops were led by Cmdr. Dawit Gebre Igzabhier²² of Ethiopia. Apart from Congolese officers residing in a Ndjamena hotel, the force was largely confined to the local police barracks.²³ The peacekeepers did not intervene when the Chadian war was reignited in March. Instead, they were promptly flown home by France,²⁴ which still had armed forces in the country.

While the peacekeeping operation did not accomplish its objectives, it is impossible to blame the failed mission solely on the force's own shortcomings. Even if all three countries had sent troops as proposed and the sought-after money had been raised, the success of the operation would have been questionable. Nathan Pelcovits stresses the numerous problems the peacekeeping force had faced in securing a mandate, which were never adequately resolved:

Because of factional division in the Chad Government, no consensus could be reached on the command structure or functions of the peacekeeping group, the status of the force, whether it could interpose to separate warring factions, where it could be deployed, how it might

¹⁸Pittman, "The OAU and Chad," p. 309. Pelcovits, however, reports that Guinea failed to deploy for logistical (and not financial) reasons. Nigeria, which was to ferry Guinean troops, refused to do so until France withdrew its military forces from Chad. Pelcovits, "Peacekeeping: The African Experience," p. 277.

¹⁹The size of the force is variously listed as between 500-600 men.

²⁰Pelcovits, "Peacekeeping: The African Experience," p. 277.

²¹According to the OAU, the Congolese contingent "... eventually turned up in Chad on January 8 1980." *Resolving Conflicts in Africa: Implementation Options*, OAU Information Services Publication - Series (II), 1993, p. 38, para. 113.

²²The Head of the OAU Conflict Management Division, S. Basse Ibok, points out that Igzabhier was a naval officer. Written correspondence with Ibok, 3 May 1999. Most commentators incorrectly list him as a "General."

²³Pelcovits, "Peacekeeping: The African Experience," p. 278.

²⁴Ibid.

supervise and police the cease-fire, or what law-and-order it would exercise.²⁵

Africa Contemporary Record highlights the chaotic political environment in Chad at the time of the proposed mission:

[The GUNT] reflected the remarkable unanimity attained at... Lagos... a unanimity that could not long endure, given the Chadians centrifugal regional and ethnic tendencies, intensified by their leaders' personal ambitions, the competitive foreign sponsorship, and their pervasive mistrust of any centralized authority. By the end of 1979, none of the key provisions of the Lagos agreements had been carried out...²⁶

The "OAU" Intervention (1981-1982)

The OAU Freetown Summit of July 1980 called for another peacekeeping operation in Chad. However, the OAU made little tangible progress towards this end for the remainder of the year. Togolese President Gnassingbé Eyadéma's mediation efforts produced a truce, which lasted for only two days.²⁷ At an OAU subcommittee meeting on Chad held in November, Goukouni Weddeye, the titular head of the GUNT, agreed to a cease-fire and a neutral peacekeeping force to be comprised of Benin, Congo (Brazzaville), Guinea, and Togo.²⁸ However, Hissène Habré, who had been dismissed from the GUNT in April 1980 and had gone on to challenge Weddeye for control of the country, did not attend the November meeting. He only signed the cease-fire on 16 December—the day after his *Forces armées du nord* (FAN) had been routed and forced to seek refuge in neighbouring Cameroon.²⁹

Western prodding and largesse along with Libya's actions ultimately provided the impetus for the OAU to establish what it viewed as its own

²⁵Ibid., pp. 277-78.

²⁶*Africa Contemporary Record*, Vol. 13, 1980-81, p. B19.

²⁷Amadu Sesay, Olusola Ojo, and Orobola Fasehun, *The OAU After Twenty Years*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1984, p. 42.

²⁸Legum, "The Crisis Over Chad: Colonel Gaddafi's Sahelian Dream," p. A38.

²⁹*Africa Contemporary Record*, Vol. 13, 1980-81, p. B20.

peacekeeping force. In December 1980, Libya sent thousands of troops to Ndjamea in support of Weddeye, which explains Habré's difficulties. Libyan President Muammar Qaddafi's explanation that his actions were based on a mutual defence treaty concluded in June 1980 was not universally accepted. Subsequently, in January 1981, Chad and Libya announced plans to unify their countries,³⁰ heightening concerns in many Western and African capitals. In response to these events, France, which had previously supported an African peacekeeping force in Chad politically, made it known that it would now support an OAU peacekeeping force in Chad financially.³¹ Qaddafi's decision to abruptly withdraw his troops from Ndjamea in October 1981 and the fear that this would lead to greater instability brought matters quickly to a head.

Western support for, and interest in, the OAU peacekeeping operation can be seen in the fact that the agreement to deploy the force was concluded in France. Weddeye and OAU Secretary General Edem Kodjo met in Paris on 14 November 1981 and agreed to terms for sending an OAU peacekeeping force to Chad. The subsequent meeting between Weddeye and Kodjo in Nairobi was convened for largely symbolic reasons at the behest of the OAU Chairman, Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi. According to Amadu Sesay, "many African States felt sufficiently concerned and embarrassed [about the lead role France had assumed] to convince the OAU Chairman ... to get Weddeye and the Organization to sign another agreement in Nairobi..."³²

The mission was fraught with problems from the outset. The planned force of 5,000 men,³³ although substantially smaller than the numbers that

³⁰According to Colin Legum, Weddeye let it be known to Nigeria and others that he acceded to Qaddafi's merger proposal under extreme duress. See Legum, "The Crisis Over Chad: Colonel Gaddafi's Sahelian Dream," pp. A40-41.

³¹Pittman, "The OAU and Chad," p. 315.

³²Amadu Sesay, "The OAU Peace-Keeping Force in Chad: Some Lessons for Future Operations," *Current Research on Peace and Violence*, Vol. XII, No. 4, 1989, p. 192.

³³Nigeria was to provide the bulk of the force, with the other five contributors supplying 600 troops each. Ibid.

had been discussed,³⁴ was far beyond what the OAU could manage. The initial estimated annual cost for the force, US\$ 163 million, was adjusted to US\$ 192 million³⁵—some 10 times the OAU's entire annual budget.³⁶ Of the six African countries to pledge formed units,³⁷ only three—Nigeria, Senegal, and Zaire—participated. In the end, roughly 3,500 troops were sent. Nigeria provided the bulk of the force³⁸ including its Commander, Maj-Gen. Geoffrey Ejiga. According to Sesay, "... once the troop contributing States were sure that the OAU was not in a position to fund the Force, their attitude and commitment to the peace-keeping exercise changed."³⁹ Indeed, according to the OAU, "it was only able to find US\$ 400,000"⁴⁰ for the operation—or less than three-tenths of one per cent of the original budget. Partly in an effort to compensate for the reduced presence, at least four other African countries—Algeria, Kenya, Guinea-Bissau, and Zambia—contributed military observers to the mission.⁴¹ Zaire's battalion, which was the first to arrive in November 1981,

³⁴According to an *Africa Research Bulletin* report, initially Nigeria was to provide 8,000 troops, Senegal 2,000 and Côte d'Ivoire 1,500. Ibid.

³⁵See *Resolving Conflicts in Africa: Implementation Options*, p. 39, para. 116.

³⁶The OAU's annual budget in 1980 was US\$ 17.6 million—of which the Organization, according to its Secretary General, had only received US\$ 9 million. Sesay, Ojo, and Fasehun, *The OAU After Twenty Years*, p. 39.

³⁷There is some confusion as to how many countries had pledged to provide troops. Most accounts mention Benin, Guinea, and Togo in addition to the three that eventually deployed. (See, for example, Alan James, *Peacekeeping in International Politics*, London: Macmillan, 1990, p. 101.) However, Gabon has been listed as a seventh country to have pledged troops. See Wiseman, "The OAU: Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution," p. 133.

³⁸According to the OAU, Nigeria provided 2,000 troops, Zaire, 700, and Senegal, 600. See *Resolving Conflicts in Africa: Implementation Options*, p. 39, para. 117.

³⁹Sesay, "The OAU Peace-Keeping Force in Chad," p. 194.

⁴⁰Mamadou Bah, Director, Political Department, OAU Secretariat, "Statement on the Maintenance of Regional Peace in Africa," in *Disarmament: United Nations Regional Disarmament Workshop for Africa, Lagos, Nigeria, 3-7 April 1989*, New York: UN Department for Disarmament Affairs, April 1980, p. 99.

⁴¹The commander of the Nigerian contingent in Chad during 1981-1982, Col. Rufus Kupolati, makes reference to the "excellent relationship" he had with observer groups from Algeria, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, and Zambia. Force Commander Ejiga mentions
(continued...)

remained hamstrung in part because the OAU did not know what to do with it, as the Organization's initial plan for the force to deploy in six sectors was clearly not going to materialize.⁴²

Besides financial difficulties that limited the size of the force, the operation suffered from logistical shortcomings and an unclear mandate. Logistical constraints delayed the force's deployment and undermined its ability to function smoothly once in the field. The OAU's material contribution to the mission was largely limited to supplying green berets and badges towards the end of the operation.⁴³ The inhospitable terrain and the inability to purchase spare parts and fuel on the local market further complicated matters.⁴⁴ The mission's mandate was muddled and its intentions were unclear.⁴⁵ According to May and Massey:

With a piece of characteristic circumlocution, the OAU appeared to both support the GUNT and maintain a neutral stance, while equivocating as to whether the [inter-African force] would act as a standard Chapter VI peacekeeping force or employ enforcement tactics to 'ensure the defence and security of the country.'⁴⁶

⁴¹(...continued)

that those four countries, as well as Congo (Brazzaville) and Gabon, were to provide observers to the mission. Written correspondence with Maj-Gen. (Rtd) Romeo Ola Ishola Williams, former Chief of Defence, Operations, Training and Plans, Nigerian Ministry of Defence, current Acting President, African Strategic and Peace Research Group (AFSTRAG), 6 August, and 7 October 1999.

⁴²Pittman, "The OAU and Chad," p. 315.

⁴³Funmi Olonisakin, "African 'Home-made' Peacekeeping Initiatives," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Spring 1997, p. 355.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵See May and Massey, "The OAU Interventions in Chad: Mission Impossible or Mission Evaded?," pp. 52-53.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 52.

Communication and command problems were never satisfactorily addressed. Force Commander Ejiga never exercised control. The fact that participants were beholden to their Western benefactors⁴⁷ rather than the OAU itself complicated his task. Inadequate communication with the OAU Secretary General and the Secretariat in Addis Ababa compounded his difficulties. The Secretary General's Special Representative, Gebre Igzabhier (the Force Commander of the 1980 mission), was unable to properly inform the Secretariat of developments or to receive instructions on how best to proceed. Secretary General Kodjo did not make himself accessible. He visited the mission only once, for a period of three days.⁴⁸ Instead of going through Addis Ababa, Ejiga communicated with OAU Chairman Moi in Nairobi, whose military observers on the ground served as the Chairman's "eyes and ears"⁴⁹ since he could not rely on the OAU Secretariat for information either.

Besides biting off more than it could chew operationally, the OAU clearly had little political appetite for the mission. Many countries—including several that pledged troops—were sympathetic to, if not outright supportive of, Habré.⁵⁰ The sudden withdrawal of Libyan soldiers created a vacuum that Habré correctly believed he could fill. The timely deployment of a peacekeeping force capable of interposing itself between the FAN and Weddeye's troops would have impeded Habré from seizing control of the country. The OAU's unrealistic timetable for elections (to be held in February 1982) and its firm deadline for the force to be withdrawn by the end of June underscored the Organization's lack of enthusiasm for the venture. Ejiga could not even count on the continuing support of his own country, which began to withdraw its contingent before the end of the mission was announced. When Habré's FAN wrested control of Ndjamená from Weddeye on 7 June, OAU Chairman Moi immediately called for the operation's termination and the return of all

⁴⁷Senegal and Zaire received substantial assistance from France. The US provided significant support to Nigeria. See Pittman, "The OAU and Chad," p. 316.

⁴⁸Written correspondence with Williams, 6 August 1999.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰According to Dean Pittman, Egypt, Guinea, Kenya, Morocco, Senegal, the Sudan, Togo, Zaire, and to a lesser extent Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire, were generally believed to support Habré. Pittman, "The OAU and Chad," p. 317.

troops by month's end. Habré's appeal that the peacekeeping force remain deployed was not seriously considered.⁵¹

END OF THE COLD WAR: A NEW BEGINNING ?

The end of the cold war provided the impetus for the OAU and many of its member States to attempt to redress the failings of the peacekeeping force in Chad and to develop the OAU's conflict resolution machinery. A growing awareness was already taking hold that Africa would become further marginalized once the victorious West no longer had to compete for friends and influence against the vanquished East. Weak regimes could no longer be assured of receiving the critical financial and military aid they once enjoyed from their foreign supporters. African leaders believed that this disengagement would have a negative impact on African security and result in several upheavals of various magnitudes.⁵² Many were also annoyed that the West, besides reducing its assistance, was increasingly adding political conditions upon which such aid would be disbursed.

African leaders recognized that a business-as-usual approach to governance and inter-State relations on the continent could not continue without exacerbating negative socio-economic trends. These concerns were expressed in a Declaration by the Heads of State and Government at the July 1990 OAU Summit in Addis Ababa, which stated in part:

We are fully aware that in order to facilitate this process of socio-economic transformation and integration, it is necessary to promote popular participation of our peoples in the processes of Government and development. A political environment which guarantees human rights and the observance of the rule of law, would assure high standards of probity and accountability particularly on the part of those who hold public office. ... We accordingly recommit ourselves to the further

⁵¹Given that Habré had paid the OAU peacekeeping force little heed during his advance on the capital, it is understandable that the OAU did not greet his proposal enthusiastically.

⁵²Interview with Chris J. Bakwesegha, former Head, Conflict Management Division, OAU Secretariat current Deputy Permanent Observer, OAU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN in New York, 13 March 1998, New York.

democratization of our societies and to the consolidation of democratic institutions in our countries.⁵³

They also took note—if only obliquely—of the rise of intra-State conflicts and their potential to destabilize and harm other States:

We realize at the same time that the possibilities of achieving the objectives we have set will be constrained as long as an atmosphere of lasting peace and stability does not prevail in Africa. We therefore renew our determination to work together towards the peaceful and speedy resolution of all the conflicts on our Continent.⁵⁴

While African leaders did not openly challenge the OAU's cherished principles of sovereignty and non-interference, they did indicate a willingness to become somewhat more transparent. The former Head of the OAU Conflict Management Division (CMD), Chris Bakwesegha, has written that, "It must be emphasized that prior to 1990, nobody ever imagined that any member State of the OAU would ever invite the OAU Secretary General to send a team of people to observe elections in a *sovereign State*."⁵⁵ The OAU has since been invited to monitor and supervise elections and referenda with increasing frequency among a growing number of OAU member States. According to Bakwesegha's successor, S. Bassey Ibok, the Declaration is tantamount to the Heads of State and Government saying that, "... non-interference should not mean indifference."⁵⁶

⁵³"Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World," *Organization of African Unity*, 11 July 1990, para. 10, courtesy of OAU Permanent Delegation to the UN in Geneva.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, para. 11.

⁵⁵Chris Bakwesegha, *Progress Report on the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution*, Paper presented at the "GCA Sub-Committee on Governance and Democracy," 7-9 June 1995, Accra.

⁵⁶S. Bassey Ibok, "The Dynamics of Conflicts in Africa: Evaluating OAU's Past and Present Approaches for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and Future Prospects," *African Journal on Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January-April 1997, p. 70.

Military Observer Team (1990-1991) and Neutral Military Observer Groups in Rwanda (1991-1993)

The OAU's decision in 1990 to send a peacekeeping mission to Rwanda illustrated this changing mind-set . The OAU Secretary General seized upon the rebellion by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) as an important test case by which to gauge the preparedness of the Organization to embark on a new, more interventionist, path. Within weeks of the RPF incursion, the Secretary General, in consultation with the OAU Chairman, had already met with regional leaders and representatives of the rebels and the Government of Rwanda to conclude an agreement whereby a group of military observers would help promote reconciliation and put an end to hostilities.⁵⁷ Burundi, Uganda, and Zaire agreed to take part in this undertaking, known as the Military Observer Team (MOT).⁵⁸

The OAU quickly realized that MOT would not be effective and sought another solution. It soon became clear that the selection of the three countries to participate in the force was problematic.⁵⁹ The countries either had vested interests that compromised their effectiveness or their troops were ill-disciplined and were a liability rather than an asset. Therefore, even before MOT first was deployed in April 1991 after months of delay, an agreement had been concluded in March 1991 in N'sele, Zaire, providing for the deployment of another team of military observers, to be known as the Neutral Military Observer Group (NMOG) to replace MOT.⁶⁰

Although NMOG's size and costs were modest, the OAU still had a difficult time fielding the force. The problems stemmed in part from the failure of the RPF and the Government of Rwanda to respect numerous cease-fires, as well as from the lack of clear demarcation lines . This

⁵⁷Interview with Bakwesegha, 18 June 1999, New York.

⁵⁸Written correspondence with Ibok, 26 January 1999.

⁵⁹Interview with Bakwesegha, 18 June 1999, New York.

⁶⁰Ibid. MOT withdrew from Rwanda in September 1991. Written correspondence with Ibok, 3 May 1999.

complicated the deployment, which should have been relatively easy.⁶¹ Force projection, logistics, and command and control should not have been obstacles. NMOG was to comprise a total of 50 military observers from Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal, and Zimbabwe.⁶² By September 1991, however, only 15 OAU military observers were in the country.⁶³ By the mission's end in July 1992 (when it was to be replaced by another OAU operation), 40 military observers from Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, and Zimbabwe had been deployed.⁶⁴

Despite the difficulties encountered in fielding and sustaining NMOG, the OAU Council of Ministers agreed in June 1992⁶⁵ to create an enlarged follow-on operation. OAU Secretary General Salim Ahmed Salim indicated that NMOG II was intended to total 240 all ranks. He acknowledged that the OAU could not support a larger force and would have to rely on outside assistance to deploy even one company.⁶⁶ According to Col. Gustave Zoula of the CMD, the OAU believed a force of at least 1,200 men would be required to effectively patrol the DMZ.⁶⁷ In the end, the OAU was able to field most of the observers it sought, but only two infantry platoons. NMOG II, which became operational in August 1992, comprised 70 military officers from Congo (Brazzaville), Nigeria, Senegal, and Tunisia,

⁶¹Rwanda is a small country with good roads. Travelling by car from the capital, Kigali, one can reach almost any area of the country within three hours.

⁶²See "Document 2: Letter dated 6 August 1992 from the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Salim Ahmed Salim, to the Secretary-General of the United Nations concerning implementation of the 14 July 1992 cease-fire agreement," in *The United Nations and Rwanda: 1993-1996*, New York: UN Department of Public Information, 1996, pp. 149-50.

⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 14, para. 34.

⁶⁴In addition to the 40 military observers—10 from each participating country—the force also included some five non-commissioned officers (NCOs) from Nigeria. Written correspondence with Ibok, 26 January 1999.

⁶⁵Written correspondence with Ibok, 3 May 1999.

⁶⁶UN Document S/26488, *Report of the Secretary-General on Rwanda*, 24 September 1993, para. 14.

⁶⁷See Gustave Zoula, *OAU Peacekeeping Operations: Past Experience and the Challenges of New Perspective*, Paper presented at the "UK/Zimbabwe Workshop on Peacekeeping," 23-27 January 1995, Harare.

as well as 62 non-commissioned officers (NCOs) from Tunisia. The Force Commander was Maj-Gen. Ekundayo Opaleye of Nigeria. The Government of Rwanda and the RPF each provided five liaison officers to the force as a confidence-building measure (CBM).⁶⁸

Notwithstanding the problems NMOG II encountered operationally in Rwanda, it achieved its political objectives in New York. From the time NMOG was created, the OAU had been trying to prod the Security Council into sending a United Nations peacekeeping force to Rwanda.⁶⁹ The Council dragged its feet. In March 1993, it passed a resolution inviting United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to consult the OAU on the ways in which the United Nations might contribute to the Rwandan peace process.⁷⁰ Three months later, the Council approved a small peacekeeping operation comprising 81 military observers to deploy *in Uganda* along the Rwandan border.⁷¹ Finally, on 5 October, the Council established the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR),⁷² a comparatively robust peacekeeping force of 2,217 troops and staff officers, 331 military observers, and 60 civilian police.⁷³ NMOG II was

⁶⁸Written correspondence with Ibok, 26 January 1999 and 3 May 1999.

⁶⁹See, for example, "Document 9: Letter dated 29 March 1993 from the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity to the Secretary-General of the United Nations concerning cooperation between the United Nations and the OAU pursuant to Security Council resolution 812 (1993)," and "Document 10: Letter dated 1 April 1993 from the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity concerning cooperation between the United Nations and the OAU pursuant to Security Council resolution 812 (1993)," *The United Nations and Rwanda: 1993-1996*, pp. 158-59.

⁷⁰UN Document S/RES/812 (1993), 12 March 1993.

⁷¹See UN Document S/RES/846 (1993), 22 June 1993; UN Document S/25810, *Interim Report of the Secretary-General on Rwanda*, 20 May 1993, para. 14.

⁷²UN Document S/RES/872 (1993), 5 October 1993.

⁷³See S/26488, paras. 31-38, 41, and 47.

integrated into UNAMIR on 1 November 1993,⁷⁴ the day after its mandate expired.⁷⁵

Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution

The creation of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution underscores that the OAU's new determination to take a more pro-active stance in both inter- and intra-State conflicts on the continent had not been universally embraced. According to Said Djinnit, OAU Secretary General Salim's Director of Cabinet, during negotiations at the Dakar Summit in July 1992, "... a clear consensus emerged against the involvement of the OAU in peacekeeping."⁷⁶ The Secretariat's proposal that the OAU Defence Commission⁷⁷ be tasked with performing an advisory function within the Mechanism to strengthen and harmonize member countries' peacekeeping policies received little support. According to the OAU, the proposal received "scant reference in both the debate and the written responses, and even in the consultations..."⁷⁸

When the Mechanism was formally adopted at the OAU Summit in Cairo in June 1993, the focus was firmly on conflict prevention rather than conflict management or resolution. This emphasis is clearly spelled out in the Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government establishing the Mechanism, which states:

⁷⁴UN Document S/26927, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda*, 30 December 1993, para. 11.

⁷⁵UN Document S/26488, para. 15.

⁷⁶Said Djinnit, Speech delivered at the "Meeting on Enhancing Africa's Peacekeeping Capacity," 5 December 1997, New York, courtesy of UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations.

⁷⁷The Defence Commission, one of five Specialized Commissions established in the OAU Charter, survived where others did not but fell largely into disuse. See Michael Wolfers, *Politics in the Organization of African Unity*, London: Methuen, 1976, pp. 91-97.

⁷⁸*Resolving Conflicts in Africa: Implementation Options*, p. 52, para. 161.

The Mechanism will have as a primary objective, the anticipation and prevention of conflicts. In circumstances where conflicts have occurred, it will be its responsibility to undertake peace-making and peace-building functions in order to facilitate the resolution of these conflicts. In this respect, civilian and military missions of observation and monitoring of limited scope and duration may be mounted and deployed. In setting these objectives, we are fully convinced that prompt and decisive action in these spheres will, in the first instance, prevent the emergence of conflicts, and where they do inevitably occur, stop them from degenerating into intense or generalized conflicts. Emphasis on anticipatory and preventive measures, and concerted action in peace-making and peace-building will obviate the need to resort to the complex and resource-demanding peace-keeping operations, which our countries will find difficult to finance.⁷⁹

Given many African rulers' tenuous grip on power, this outcome is not surprising. Governments rarely endorse policies or enact laws likely to result in their ouster. Makumi Mwagiru, questioning the effect the Mechanism would have on changing the conservative nature of the OAU and its resistance towards change, has written, "[a]fter all, the Mechanism was given the green light by the very Heads of State in whose countries internal conflicts abound."⁸⁰

Nevertheless, the Mechanism is a significant divergence from, and improvement on, previous practice and structures. It provides for a new decision-making body called the Central Organ. More importantly, the Mechanism creates a separate source of financing called the Peace Fund. The establishment of the Peace Fund has had a positive effect on developing the human and material assets of the Conflict Management Division, which should strengthen the position of the Secretary General. It has also provided a means for the West to influence the OAU's agenda and to support OAU peacekeeping initiatives.

⁷⁹See *ibid.*, Annex, "Declaration of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government on the Establishment, Within the OAU of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution," pp. 62-63, para. 15.

⁸⁰Makumi Mwagiru, "The Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Management of Internal Conflict in Africa," *International Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1, January-March 1996, p. 14.

Central Organ

OAU member States chose to model the Central Organ on the Bureau of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government (the Bureau).⁸¹ The Bureau comprises 15 countries elected annually on the basis of geographical representation⁸² to consider issues before the OAU and to assist the Chairman. It is not a formally-constituted body and does not appear in the OAU Charter, but rather an ad hoc arrangement that over time has assumed some degree of permanence. This option won out over another recommendation to establish a new special committee whose members would be elected solely for the purpose of trying to resolve conflicts. Advocates for the special committee argued that many States that otherwise might be actively engaged in the decision-making process cannot participate because of geographical restrictions. The proposals by the OAU Secretary General to create an African Security Council based on the United Nations model, or to revive and revise the Commission on Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration, were not seriously considered.⁸³

⁸¹For a discussion of the various proposals put forth and the reasons behind the eventual consensual decision to opt for a Central Organ based on the Bureau, see *Resolving Conflicts in Africa: Implementation Options*, pp. 44-48, paras. 135-149.

⁸²OAU member States have devised five African subregions: Central (with 11 countries), Eastern (12), Northern (5), Southern (9), and Western (16). Membership of each region is as follows: Central (11) - Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, and Sao Tome and Principe; Eastern (12) - the Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, the Seychelles, Somalia, the Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda; Northern (5) - Algeria, Egypt, Libya, SADR, and Tunisia; Southern (9) - Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe; and Western (16) - Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. ("Africa's Five Regions," *Organization of African Unity*, courtesy of OAU Permanent Delegation to the UN in Geneva.) The Bureau is comprised of three States each from the Central, Eastern, and Southern groups, two from the Northern, and four from the Western. Written correspondence with Ibok, 15 June 1999.

⁸³*Resolving Conflicts in Africa: Implementation Options*, pp. 45-46, paras. 139-40.

Although the decision to create the Central Organ based on the Bureau indicates some member States' lack of enthusiasm for the Mechanism, it is not necessarily troublesome. There is no reason to believe that if a separate committee had been established, it would have been any more effective than the current structure. OAU member States that do not support an interventionist agenda would likely have placed like-minded countries on the committee. Assuming the committee worked by consensus—the guiding principle of OAU and African diplomacy—the concerns of these committee members still would have had to be taken into account. The agreement to model the Central Organ on the Bureau helps ensure that the decisions the Central Organ makes will enjoy the full support of the Organization's members. It may also be seen as an intelligent cost-saving measure, and was argued as such by some of those who favoured it, as it only required "institutionalizing" a pre-existing structure.⁸⁴

The Central Organ differs from the Bureau in significant ways. Unlike the Bureau, the Organ meets regularly on three levels: annually, at the Heads of State and Government level; bi-annually, at the Ministers of Foreign Affairs level; and monthly, at the level of Ambassadors accredited to the OAU. It can, and has, met extraordinarily as the need arises. More importantly, the Organ can make binding decisions—even at the Ambassadorial level. The Central Organ also differs from the Bureau in its composition. In the interest of continuity it was decided that the country chairing the previous Summit would retain its membership on the Central Organ even if that country would no longer be a member of the Bureau. Similarly, the Organ will include the country designated to be the incoming Chair, if known beforehand. Thus, the Central Organ's size will vary from 15 to 17 members, with 15 mirroring those serving on the Bureau.⁸⁵

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 45, para. 138.

⁸⁵The Central Organ's membership for 1998-1999 was 16: Algeria (Incoming Chair), Burkina Faso (Chair), Burundi, Chad, Egypt, Ghana, Madagascar, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, the Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (Outgoing Chair). Written correspondence with Ibok, 26 January 1999.

Peace Fund

The Peace Fund provides an important source of financing for a cash-strapped Organization. According to an OAU report issued prior to the June 1998 Summit in Ouagadougou, the Organization was owed more than US\$ 48 million in arrears, with only 20 of the 53 members paid in full.⁸⁶ Given the financial difficulties the OAU encountered in fielding the observer force in Rwanda, a source of independent funding for OAU peace and security initiatives was regarded as important. According to the OAU, the cost of that small mission “proved staggering.”⁸⁷ The Fund is designed specifically to support initiatives of the Central Organ, and more generally, to develop the Conflict Management Division. It is divided into two parts: a General Peace Fund and Special Contributions. The fund is not used for salaries and allowances of OAU staff members (although it can be, and has been, used to pay for consultants) or to cover normal operational costs of the Political Department.⁸⁸

The Fund has significantly augmented the OAU’s coffers. As of 31 December 1998, the Peace Fund had received almost US\$ 28 million since its creation on 1 June 1993.⁸⁹ The percentage of the OAU regular budget earmarked for the Peace Fund was raised from five to six per cent beginning in the 1998-1999 fiscal year. Yet the failure of OAU member States to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time means that considerably less than the expected contribution of some US\$ 2 million per year is actually received.⁹⁰ African countries’ voluntary contributions to the Peace Fund have “been rather modest,” in the words of Secretary General

⁸⁶See Sidy Gaye, “OAU Owed 48 Million By Member States,” *Panafrican News Agency*, 2 June 1998. The 20 were: Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Côte d’Ivoire, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.

⁸⁷*Resolving Conflicts in Africa: Implementation Options*, p. 56, para. 175.

⁸⁸Written correspondence with Ibok, 26 January 1999.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰The 1997-1998 annual budget of the OAU was US\$ 31,199,000. Gaye, “OAU Owed 48 Million By Member States.” Six per cent of US\$ 32 million is US\$ 1.92 million.

Salim.⁹¹ In the first five years, only nine African countries had made voluntary contributions to the Peace Fund, for a total of US\$ 1.4 million.⁹²

Most of the money has come from Western countries and has been earmarked for special projects. Non-African countries have provided more than US\$ 18.2 million—roughly two out of every three dollars that the Fund has received. All but two of these contributions have come from Western Governments.⁹³ More than 90 per cent of the money has been deposited into the Special Contributions section of the Peace Fund. The OAU does not have the power to dispense these funds as it pleases, unlike its discretionary use of the General Peace Fund. (The Central Organ can, of course, always choose to decline an offer, but never has.⁹⁴)

Most of the money spent has gone to support OAU peacekeeping operations. Of the US\$ 19.9 million disbursed as of March 1998, US\$ 10.1 million went to the mission in Burundi (discussed below). An additional US\$ 2.9 million was used to procure logistical support for a projected 100-strong OAU observer force.⁹⁵ The OAU mission in the Comoros (also discussed below) received US\$ 1.1 million.⁹⁶

⁹¹"Statement of Salim Ahmed Salim", *68th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers*, Ouagadougou, June 1998, available on the Internet at <<http://www.oau.oua.org/oau_info/burkdoc/council_of_ministers.htm>>.

⁹²The nine countries were: Algeria (US\$ 210,000), Burkina Faso (US\$ 14,572), Egypt (US\$ 100,000), Ethiopia (US\$ 10,000), Lesotho (US\$ 15,000), Mauritius (US\$ 52,000), Namibia (US\$ 250,000), South Africa (US\$ 715,680), and Tunisia (US\$ 5,136). All of these contributions were made to the General Fund. Written correspondence with Ibok, 26 January 1999.

⁹³Korea and Indonesia provided US\$ 50,000 and US\$ 15,000, respectively, to the General Peace Fund. Ibid.

⁹⁴Written correspondence with Ibok, 3 May 1999.

⁹⁵Written correspondence with Ibok, 26 January 1999.

⁹⁶Written correspondence with Ibok, 3 May 1999.

Conflict Management Division

The Peace Fund also supports the work of the OAU Conflict Management Division. Created in March 1992,⁹⁷ the CMD has four units: Preventive Diplomacy, Conflict Resolution, Field Operations, and Project Formulation. More than US\$ 1 million has gone to constructing and equipping the Conflict Management Centre (CMC) and training its staff. The CMC includes the Situation Room, Peace Library and Documentation Center. The Situation Room⁹⁸ has been outfitted with computers, maps and communication equipment, and is intended to serve as the basis for an Early Warning System (EWS).⁹⁹ It is envisaged that the EWS will benefit from inputs supplied by OAU member States, African subregional organizations, the United Nations System and civil society, including academia, research institutes, the media, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).¹⁰⁰

The Conflict Management Division has made important strides since it was created, but is still far from meeting the weighty demands that have been thrust upon it. The completion of the Situation Room represents an important development. An exercise undertaken in March 1998 showed its potential. The basis now exists for CMD's staff to provide useful analysis to support OAU decision-making. Yet while the collection of data is crucial, making sense of that data is extremely time-consuming. At present, the CMD simply does not possess the personnel to take full advantage of its new capabilities. The entire Division consists of 15 full-time OAU staff members—including the secretaries, a receptionist, and a messenger.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷*Resolving Conflicts in Africa: Implementation Options*, p. 49, para. 153.

⁹⁸The Situation Room is also known as the Crisis Management Room.

⁹⁹The EWS is also referred to as the Early Warning Network. The OAU itself uses the two terms interchangeably.

¹⁰⁰Ibok, "The Dynamics of Conflicts in Africa: Evaluating OAU's Past and Present approaches for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and Future Prospects," p. 73.

¹⁰¹Written correspondence with Ibok, 26 January 1999. At the time, there were also three consultants on short-term contracts. *Ibid.*

MECHANISM'S EFFECT ON OAU PEACEKEEPING POLICY AND CAPACITY

Although the focus of the Mechanism is on conflict prevention, the Central Organ has approved two small peacekeeping operations. While both initiatives have encountered operational shortcomings, they may have served useful political functions. Less controversial accomplishment are the growing administrative know-how, standard operating procedures (SOPs) and rules of engagement (ROEs) that have resulted from these missions, which ought to facilitate future OAU peacekeeping operations.

Observer Mission in Burundi (1993-1996)

Once NMOG II was subsumed into UNAMIR, the OAU believed a useful precedent had been established and sought to replicate it elsewhere. Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), and Zaire, to differing degrees, were all seen as potential candidates. The murder of Burundi's President, Melchoir Ndadaye, on 21 October 1993 in a military coup, brought a sense of urgency to the decision-making process. The OAU henceforth focused its energies on Burundi. Bakwesegha described the OAU as being "flush with success" from its initiative in Rwanda and noted that it saw Burundi as an opportunity to strengthen the peace process and improve on its performance in Rwanda.¹⁰²

Financial and operational considerations did not weigh heavily in the OAU's decision to send a peacekeeping mission to Burundi. According to Bakwesegha, there was a general expectation within the OAU that if an agreement was reached with Bujumbura, financing would not be a factor. The OAU strongly believed that certain foreign countries would likely contribute to an OAU peacekeeping initiative. The issue of finding a sufficient number of qualified African military observers was never seriously debated.¹⁰³

¹⁰²Interview with Bakwesegha, 30 November 1998, New York.

¹⁰³Ibid.

Rather, the problem lay in convincing the Government of Burundi to accept an OAU mission. Initially, discussions between the OAU and Bujumbura centred around a proposal to send 180 observers as part of an "International Mission of Observation and Protection for the Restoration of Confidence."¹⁰⁴ This number was eventually reduced to 47 because of the Burundian military's strong opposition to the intervention. During negotiations, the possible OAU mission was spoken of as a "preventive diplomacy" force and not as a "peacekeeping" force, to further assuage certain Burundian sensitivities.¹⁰⁵ Importantly, several of the military observers were also medical doctors who assisted civilians to the extent possible.

Deployment of even this smaller force was significantly delayed. The mission's civilian component was deployed by mid-December 1993,¹⁰⁶ a month after the Central Organ had established the OAU Observer Mission in Burundi (OMIB). The first military observers did not arrive in Bujumbura until February 1994.¹⁰⁷ As of September 1994, 33 of the 47 observers had been dispatched to Burundi.¹⁰⁸ Thirteen more deployed the following month.¹⁰⁹ The six-nation OAU force (comprised of observers from Burkina

¹⁰⁴The peacekeeping operation was to also include 20 civilians. See Chris J. Bakwesegha, "The Role of the Organization of African Unity in Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution," *International Journal of Refugee Law*, Special Issue, July 1995, p. 213.

¹⁰⁵Interview with Bakwesegha, 30 November 1998, New York.

¹⁰⁶Written correspondence with Ibok, 3 May 1999.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Bakwesegha, "The Role of the Organization of African Unity in Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution," p. 214.

¹⁰⁹The initial 47-strong OMIB force never reached full strength. An observer from Niger, killed during the mission, was not replaced. Written correspondence with Ibok, 3 May 1999.

Faso, Cameroon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Tunisia)¹¹⁰ was under Tunisian command.¹¹¹

Although OMIB did not serve as a catalyst to Security Council action, the force cannot be judged a complete failure. Tensions were extremely high between the minority Tutsi-led Government and Hutu civilians (who make up the vast majority of the population), and military action by both the Government and rebels was commonplace. According to Col. Djibril Sangaré, a military observer serving in OMIB who headed the team of medical officers, the OAU observers, although few in number, served as useful intermediaries between the military authorities and civilian leaders and managed to defuse numerous explosive situations.¹¹² Furthermore, the provision of medical care was not seen as a threat by the Burundian army, and it helped reassure a wary populace. The decision to augment OMIB by an additional 20 military observers in March 1995 suggests that Bujumbura, the OAU, and foreign donors viewed the mission as a valuable undertaking. The military component was withdrawn shortly after the coup of 25 July 1996. The civilian component continues with a small number of political officers.

Observer Mission in the Comoros (1997-1999)

Following the withdrawal of the OAU military observers in Burundi, a full year passed before the Central Organ agreed to deploy another peacekeeping mission, this time in the Comoros. The decision to authorize the OAU Observer Mission in the Comoros (OMIC) was taken by the

¹¹⁰Cameroon had initially committed 10 observers. In the end, however, only one deployed—briefly. He fell ill shortly after arriving, and returned home. *Ibid.*

¹¹¹The first Commander, Lt-Col. Ben Younes Abdeljilil was replaced by his compatriot, Lt-Col. Mabrouk Boujemma. Written correspondence with Ibok, 3 May 1999.

¹¹²Interview with Col. Djibril Sangaré, former Head, Medical Officers, OMIB, current Security Officer, OMIB, 17 September 1998, Bujumbura.

Organ at Ambassadorial level in August 1997,¹¹³ after the island of Anjouan (one of three islands that comprise the country) unilaterally declared itself independent from the Comoros that July. The Central Organ authorized OMIC's strength at 27 military observers, which were provided by Egypt, Niger, Senegal, and Tunisia.¹¹⁴

If ever there were an instance when the OAU could agree to act with unanimity and alacrity, one would be hard-pressed to find a better example. Anjouan's decision to break from the islands of Grande Comoros and Mohéli to join the archipelago's fourth island, Mayotte, as a French territory¹¹⁵ could simply not be countenanced by any of the 53 OAU members.¹¹⁶

OMIC had mixed success. Only 20 observers deployed, as it proved impossible to reach agreement with Anjouan concerning the intended seven-member observer team to be stationed there.¹¹⁷ Despite the OAU's presence and repeated stern warnings to reunite, Anjouan is instead preparing to celebrate its second year of independence. On the other hand, as the OAU has stressed, the observers fulfilled on occasion a useful mediation role among the factions and provided humanitarian assistance when violent clashes broke out.¹¹⁸ Moreover, Ibok suggested there were signs that the hardline taken by the Anjouanese was softening—although he was uncertain what effect the 30 April 1999 coup would have on the

¹¹³Richard Cornwell, "Africa Watch, Anjouan: A Spat in the Indian Ocean," *African Security Review*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1998, pp. 57-58.

¹¹⁴Written correspondence with Ibok, 26 January 1999.

¹¹⁵Mayotte was alone among the four islands to forego independence in favor of departmental status within France in a December 1974 referendum. In a 1996 vote, more than 99 per cent of Mayotte's residents casting ballots voted to continue its status. See Cornwell, "Africa Watch, Anjouan: A Spat in the Indian Ocean," pp. 51-54.

¹¹⁶France too responded unenthusiastically to Anjouan's declaration.

¹¹⁷Written correspondence with Ibok, 3 May 1999.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

peace process.¹¹⁹ He also emphasized the differences between a large peacekeeping operation and a small observer mission, such as OMIC. The fact that the peace process has been lengthy with few noticeable achievements, together with the coup and its uncertain aftermath, does not mean that OMIC was a failure.¹²⁰ The OAU announced the withdrawal of its observers from the Comoros on 10 May 1999.¹²¹

Achievements

Although the Central Organ has approved only two peacekeeping operations, an important base exists upon which to build. Administrative, financial, institutional, and operational structures have been established to serve as benchmarks and guidelines for future missions. For example, ROEs now exist for OAU military observers. They may use deadly force in self-defence when an OAU military observer's life is in imminent danger. (Unlike their United Nations counterparts, OAU military observers carry side arms.) They are also authorized to search, detain, and disarm paramilitary personnel when acting in self-defence. The OAU has also devised a standard life insurance for mission participants.¹²²

The OAU is now better able to provide basic tools of the trade. During NMOG, the OAU was forced to seek from donors such items as flashlights, boots, and canteens.¹²³ It is now able to routinely provide flak jackets, helmets, raincoats, "OAU" arm bands and berets, binoculars, compasses, and somewhat rudimentary communication equipment.¹²⁴ The provision of weapons and uniforms remains the responsibility of the country contributing military personnel.

¹¹⁹Ibid. Acting on behalf of the army, Col. Azali Assoumani seized power in a bloodless coup from President Tadjidine Ben Said Massonde.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹"OAU Withdraws Military Observers from Comoros," *Panafrican News Agency*, 10 May 1999, available on the Internet at <<<http://www.africanews.org>>>.

¹²²Written correspondence with Ibok, 26 January 1999.

¹²³Zoula, "OAU Peacekeeping Operations: Past Experience and the Challenges of New Perspective."

¹²⁴Written correspondence with Ibok, 26 January 1999.

Precedents have now been set for the relative reimbursement levels for the commanding officer, contingent commanders, military observers, and NCOs. While the OAU has paid different allowances for lodging, food, and incidentals for those serving in NMOG, OMIB, and OMIC, this is not surprising and is the same for United Nations operations.

Limitations

At the same time, a sense of realism is needed with regard to what the OAU can and cannot accomplish. Bakwesegha has admitted that the Mechanism has its flaws. In 1997 he wrote, "The Organization cannot assume that it has achieved much in its efforts to operationalize the Mechanism since its adoption [in 1993], nor can one assume that the Mechanism as it is today is without its shortcomings."¹²⁵ Bakwesegha, however, highlighted election monitoring as an area where the Mechanism had scored highly. Two years later, while some progress towards managing and resolving conflicts has been made, preventive diplomacy continues to be, and will remain, the chief preoccupation of the Mechanism.

OAU plans to field large and multifaceted peacekeeping operations and to establish a standby African peacekeeping force are simply out of the question for the foreseeable future. Ibok believes a standby force is still three to five years away from becoming operational.¹²⁶ Even this seems to be an overly optimistic assessment, given the lukewarm response of OAU member States. The aspirations of senior African military and diplomatic officials to a continent-wide African standby peacekeeping force are likely to remain just that. In October 1997, the OAU Chiefs of Defence Staff recommended that the OAU earmark a brigade-sized contribution to standby arrangements from each of the five African subregions. They also suggested that each subregion identify 100 military and civilian observers

¹²⁵Chris Bakwesegha, "The Role of the Organization of African Unity in Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in the Context of the Political Evolution of Africa," *African Journal on Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January-April 1997, p. 14.

¹²⁶Written correspondence with Ibok, 26 January 1999.

as a starting point.¹²⁷ In March 1998, the OAU Council of Ministers agreed that an eventual African peacekeeping force should be made up of subregional brigades under the OAU's command and control, within the framework of the OAU Central Organ.¹²⁸ Yet no further action was taken at the 1998 Summit in Ouagadougou. The Council of Ministers simply requested the OAU Secretariat to look into the possibility of adopting the United Nations Training Doctrine. As of early 1999, no member State had begun to identify military or civilian observers in a coordinated manner to comply with the OAU's previous decisions.¹²⁹

Even if the various OAU standby initiatives should eventually become operational, their impact is likely to be quite limited. The Central Organ's decisions to create only two observer missions (of 67 and 27 personnel) reflect deeply-entrenched conservative political sensibilities, rather than an appreciation of the OAU's limited resources. The OAU is quick to distinguish between "peacekeeping operations" and "observer missions" and claims that it has been successful in undertaking the latter. The Organization's evident failure to predict—let alone prevent—the recent coup in the Comoros calls into question the achievements of its observer missions. A more fundamental issue, however, is the OAU's reluctance to field peacekeeping missions of even a modest size and complexity. As for more robust undertakings, the OAU is still years away from possessing even the capability, much less the inclination. It is the willingness to undertake peacekeeping operations that gives some of Africa's subregional organizations a decided advantage.

¹²⁷See *Draft Report of the Second Meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the Central Organ of the OAU*, 24-25 October 1997, OAU/CHST/Co/Draft/Rpt (II).

¹²⁸See "OAU Wants Sub-regional Brigades for African Force," *Panafrican News Agency*, 9 March 1998, available on the internet at <<<http://www.africanews.org/pana/search.html>>>.

¹²⁹Written correspondence with Ibok, 26 January 1999.