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**Between Paternalism and Hybrid Partnership:
The Emerging UN and Africa Relationship
in Peace Operations**

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1 Introduction

Since its inception the United Nations (UN) has had a relationship with Africa which has vacillated between paternalism and partnership. In 1945 only four African countries were independent members of the UN and in these early decades African countries were effectively preached to rather than consulted as equals. Paternalism can best be characterized as a top-down unidirectional relationship where one party establishes the framework and issues strictures for the development of a second party. Partnership on the other hand involves a mutually enriching relationship based on respect and collaboration established through dialogue. Given the asymmetrical relationship that the UN had with Africa, particularly in the early years, a culture of paternalism developed between the organisation and the continent. Since then Africa has been trying to challenge and dispense with paternalistic attitudes from, and within, the UN system. Today, Africa is attempting to forge an identity as a collective entity capable of functioning as an equal partner in the international sphere. Five years after the launch of the African Union (AU) it is appropriate to interrogate the relationship between Africa and the UN. One view is that we are witnessing the emergence of a UN-AU partnership particularly in peace operations.¹ The AU's role in stabilising the situation in Burundi prior to the establishment of a UN peace operation remains a key model of collaboration. Efforts are currently underway to forge a "hybrid partnership" with Africa particularly on the Darfur issue. This involves the establishment of a hybrid UN-AU force to stabilize the situation in the region. This paper² analyses the extent to which such a hybrid partnership exists.

¹ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, New York: United Nations, 1992.

² The author is a Senior Researcher at the Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), in Cape Town. This paper was written during the author's Visiting Fellowship with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation's (FES) New York Office in October and November 2006. The author would like to thank FES for granting this Fellowship. The paper is the result of interviews and discussions held with UN officials and national delegates to the United Nations in New York, some of whom requested not to be publicly cited. The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect the views of the FES or CCR.

2 An Asymmetrical Partnership: The Legacy of Paternalism in UN-Africa Relations

At the inception of the UN, Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia and South Africa were the only four African countries present as fully sovereign entities. South Africa was operating under the system of apartheid, internal colonialism, and institutionalised racism in favour of descendants of European heritage. So its status as "independent" African country can be disputed. This lack of adequate African representation meant that African voices were not sufficiently heard in the formulation of peace, security and development of policies at the UN. African countries most of which were still under the yoke of colonialism were in fact still being treated in a paternalistic fashion by their former colonial powers who constitute, and continue to form, the axis-of-power within the UN system. It is therefore not surprising that the attitudes which permeate UN system are infused with this logic of paternalism towards Africa. These paternalistic attitudes did not change significantly in the 1950s and the 1960s. From the late 1950's the UN's Special Political Committee presided over the decolonisation of African countries. The newly independent African states had to effectively hit the ground running and catch up with the "diplomatic game" at the UN. The diplomatic "rules of engagement" had already been determined before the majority of African countries joined the organization. The effect of not having played a role in determining procedural issues means that the organization adopted a posture of pushing through agendas, dictating and pronouncing on issues that related to Africa, without adequate consultation or due diligence of the ramifications and consequences of such a top-down approach. This is especially true of the Security Council, where the Permanent Five (P5) can, and still do, prevent resolutions that are important to Africa from even being considered as was the case with the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. In effect the early decades of the UN were defined by an asymmetrical partnership between the body and Africa.

3 Pan-African Multilateralism: The Africa Group at the UN

Since the era of decolonisation and the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), African countries have organized themselves in the General Assembly through the Africa Group. The Group is composed of African countries. Morocco attends the meetings of the Africa Group even though it withdrew from the OAU, and is currently not a member of the AU,

due to its disapproval of the Union's recognition of Western Sahara as an independent African state. The Africa Group has a rotating monthly chairperson who is a Permanent Representative of one of the constituent African countries to the United Nations. The chairperson convenes meetings of the Group and establishes the negotiation agenda on key issues of vital Pan-African interest. In terms of the record of the Africa Group, on some issues African countries often find consensus for example on development, trade, debt cancellation, infectious diseases, small arms and light weapons, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, climate negotiations, trans-national crime prevention and on the election of Africans to various UN activities and bodies.³ For example, the official statement of the Africa Group on the draft 2005 Outcome Document was issued through the office of the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations.⁴ On some of these issues the Africa Group occasionally aligns itself with the Group of 77 (G-77) countries and China to increase its negotiation strength.

4 The Challenges of Forging a Coherent Pan-African Identity to Influence Policy

On other issues, particularly where there is a strong national interest, such as security issues and conflict situations, African countries have not always maintained a united position or a common front for negotiations and voting.⁵ The problems and competing state interests within the Africa Group pose a fundamental challenge as far as efforts to forge a common identity are

concerned. For example, during the recent deliberations leading up to the creation of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, there was a certain degree of meandering and jostling for advantage among African countries. The PBC was established to fill a critical gap within the UN in providing a coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding and preventing war-affected countries from relapsing into conflicts. In December 2005, the United Nations General Assembly (GA)⁶ and Security Council⁷ passed corresponding resolutions to establish the new organ as an intergovernmental advisory body, as well as a Peacebuilding Support Office, which will be housed in the UN Secretariat and will serve as a focal point for UN peacebuilding efforts, and a multi-year standing Peacebuilding Fund. During the implementation of this resolution and the creation of the PBC, a senior African diplomat felt that African countries had "shot themselves in the foot".⁸ The majority of African countries recognised the importance of establishing a strong representation within the UN Secretariat for the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). A number of countries felt that it was important for the head of the PBSO to have a senior rank within the UN system. However, one or two African countries wanted to down-grade the rank of this office to enable their own citizens to have a chance of being appointed to the office. This was a clear case of self-sabotage. In addition, there was a substantial amount of in-fighting with regards to who would chair the Organisational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission, which was ultimately resolved with the selection of Ambassador Ismael Abraão Gaspar Martins of Angola. This in-fighting is not unique to Africa but symptomatic of the machiavellianism that permeates and corrupts the relationship between UN Member States in general. For example, there are concerns among many delegates to the UN about the way the Permanent-five (P5) members of the Security Council "insinuated" themselves into the Organisational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission. Some delegates believe that this has not set the right tone, as far as the objectives and operationalisation of this Commission are concerned, particularly given its focus on "soft" security issues rather than the

³ See, the Statement of the Africa Group at the 11th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, 18-25 April 2005; the Statement of the Coordinator of the Africa Group to the Chemical Weapons Convention, April 2003; and the Africa Group Position Statement to the UN Climate Negotiations, August 1997. Controversially, in May 2004, the Africa Group submitted and successfully saw through the election of Sudan to the UN Commission on Human Rights, see Economic and Social Council, Press release ECOSOC/6110.

⁴ Statement by Mohamed Mahmoud Ould El Ghaouth, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Mauritania, Chairperson of the Africa Group for the Month of June 2005, on the Draft Outcome of the High-Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly of September 2005, New York: African Union, 2005.

⁵ Currently there is no systematic analysis of the history of the voting record of the Africa Group, this would be a useful research project initiative to undertake in the future.

⁶ United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/180(2005).

⁷ United Nations Security Council Resolutions S/RES/1645(2005).

⁸ This interview was conducted with a senior African diplomat to the UN in New York on condition of anonymity.

“hard” security issues which are rightly the preserve of the UN Security Council.

Some would question whether African countries have sufficiently coalesced as a group and developed a coherent identity to effectively influence policy development at the UN. As noted earlier the Africa Group expresses itself through the auspices of the African Union. In March 2005, the AU issued a declaration known as *The Common African Position on the Proposed Reform of the United Nations: The Ezulwini Consensus*⁹ which was a statement in response to the Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change which was issued in December 2004. In this Common African Position the AU highlighted issues pertaining to HIV/AIDS and security, poverty, debt, environmental degradation, trade negotiations, the responsibility to protect, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.¹⁰ In addition, the AU issued a position on UN reform and in particular on the reform of the Security Council by noting that “in 1945, when the UN was formed, most of Africa was not represented and that in 1963, when the first reform took place, Africa was represented but was not in a particularly strong position.”¹¹ The AU goes on to state that “Africa is now in a position to influence the proposed UN reforms by maintaining her unity of purpose”, furthermore it notes that “Africa’s goal is to be fully represented in all the decision-making organs of the UN, particularly in the Security Council.”¹² The Common Position enumerates what “full representation” of Africa in the Security Council means by demanding “not less than two permanent seats with all the prerogatives and privileges of permanent membership including the right to veto” and “five non-permanent seats”.¹³ This decision subsequently locked the AU into trying to maintain this position in the face of tremendous pressure from other members of the international community notably by the Group of four (G4) Brazil, Germany, Japan, and India, which were aspiring for a permanent seat at the Council and the Uniting for Consensus coalition, which opposed their ambitions. This was in effect a bold move for the AU to have taken which was informed more by principle than by *realpolitik*, as indi-

cated in the Ezulwini Consensus document which states that “even though Africa is opposed in principle to the veto, it is of the view that so long as it exists, and as a matter of common justice, it should be made available to all permanent members of the Security Council.”¹⁴ At least on paper the AU was endeavouring to establish and maintain a common position. However, due to internal dissension some African countries particularly Egypt and South Africa effectively broke rank with the Ezulwini Consensus and sought ways to individually ascend to become permanent members of the Security Council. This in effect undermined efforts to demonstrate African “unity of purpose”. This is further reinforced by the fact that time and again African countries have shown that they are unlikely to vote as a collective on matters before, or pertaining to, the Security Council. Governments generally tend to adopt positions that best serve their interests or positions that enable them to receive certain benefits from more powerful countries that pick and choose which African countries they want to work with. Therefore, the logic of “national self-interest” and political realism still prevails among African countries, and other member states, at the UN.

5 The Evolving Relationship Between the AU and the UN

The African Union has been operational for close to five years now and it is appropriate to reflect on whether the institutions it has developed, notably on peace and security issues, will achieve its intended objectives. On the one hand there is the AU-optimist position that views the AU as a recent creation which needs time to find its footing and become more effective. On the other hand there are the AU-skeptics who argue that the AU has not demonstrated an ability to deliver and so, as they argue, it is not necessary to pay too much attention to it or treat it seriously. The AU has become the *de facto* vehicle through which African countries articulate their interests at the UN. However, the lingering absence of the AU ambassador to the UN for a significant part of 2006, contributed to the lack of adequate strong activism and advocacy from the continental body in terms of providing leadership and direction for African countries at the UN. For example, the European Union (EU) and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) have both applied to be formally recognized as key actors in the affairs of the Peacebuilding

⁹ African Union, *The Common African Position on the Proposed Reform of the United Nations: The Ezulwini Consensus*, EXT/EX.CL/2 (VII), Addis Ababa, African Union, 7-8 March 2005.

¹⁰ AU, *Ezulwini Consensus*, pp.1-7.

¹¹ AU, *Ezulwini Consensus*, pp.9.

¹² AU, *Ezulwini Consensus*, pp.9.

¹³ AU, *Ezulwini Consensus*, pp.9.

¹⁴ AU, *Ezulwini Consensus*, pp.9-10.

Commission. The AU has not made a similar request even though the work of the Peacebuilding Commission is, and will be, vital to a significant number of African countries. It is self-evident that the AU needs to develop a more proactive stance on key matters at the UN that affect its constituent members. The net effect of this lack of activism is the continuing marginalization of Africa's interests at the UN. With the recent appointment of an AU ambassador there is now scope to remedy this lack of pro-African advocacy and activism. The inability of African countries to forge a much more coherent identity and consistently maintain a united stance on a wide range of issues means that African countries are at a disadvantage when it comes to promoting the continent's interests. This further contributes towards the perpetuation of a "paternal" attitude by the UN system towards Africa.

In 2002, the AU adopted the Protocol on the Peace and Security which launched the creation of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the African Standby Force (ASF), the Continental Early Warning Mechanism and the Panel of the Wise. This architecture is designed to oversee the successful implementation of the AU's peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives. There is no doubt that despite the relative youthfulness of its institutions the AU has made a significant effort to conduct peace operations in Africa. Burundi remains the most significant AU effort to date. More recently, a ten-year capacity building initiative to assist with the operationalisation of these institutions was launched by the Group of Eight (G8) countries and mandated to the UN. EU countries dominate this G8 grouping and have historically developed a different "donor" partnership with the UN, one based on the net flow of EU support to the UN. Given the recent unilateral initiatives by the United Kingdom (UK) in Sierra Leone and France in Côte d'Ivoire, both EU member countries, it is evident that the EU views the UN as an institution with operational limits.

6 The Forgotten Partnership: Joint UN-AU Efforts in Burundi

Following decades of political tension and sporadic civil war, in 2003, the African Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB) was the AU's first operation wholly initiated, planned and executed by its members. In this regard, it represents a milestone for the AU in terms of self-reliance in operationalising and implementing a peace operation. AMIB was mandated to stabilise a fluid and dynamic situation in which the country could re-

lapse back into violent conflict. In April 2003, the AU deployed AMIB with more than 3,000 troops from South Africa, Ethiopia, and Mozambique to monitor the peace process and provide security.¹⁵ The AU appointed Mamadou Bah as its Special Representative to Burundi to oversee this peace operation. One of the tasks of the AU force was to protect returning politicians who would take part in the transitional government. Other tasks included opening secure demobilisation centres and facilitating the reintegration of former militia back into society. These centres supervised the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) process. AMIB was also involved in creating conditions that would allow Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees, based in the eight Burundian provinces and three refugee camps in Tanzania, to return to their homes. Overall, AMIB had the task of establishing conditions which would allow for a UN peace operation to come into the country. The UN was reluctant to enter into a situation in which there was the potential for a relapse into conflict. AMIB's role in this case was a vital and crucial one in creating conditions through which peace, albeit a fragile one, could be built in the country. In the absence of the AU Mission, Burundi would have been left to its own devices which probably would have led to an escalation of violent conflict. AMIB was therefore engaging in peacebuilding through violent conflict prevention and trying to lay the foundations for reconciliation and reconstruction.

Throughout its period of operation AMIB succeeded in de-escalating a potentially volatile situation and in February 2004 a UN evaluation team concluded that the conditions were appropriate to establish a UN peacekeeping operation in the country. Following the UN Security Council Resolution 1545, of 21 May 2004, to deploy a peacekeeping mission in Burundi, Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General appointed a Special Representative, Ambassador Berhanu Dinka, to head the mission on 1 June 2004. The former AMIB troops belonging to the African Union were incorporated into the UN Peace Operation in Burundi (ONUB). As of November 2006 some 20,000 military personnel have been demobilised, but many still lack economic opportunities and could pose a potential security threat.¹⁶

¹⁵ Timothy Murithi, *The African Union: Pan-Africanism, Peacebuilding and Development*, (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2005), pp.91-95.

¹⁶ Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR)/ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) seminar report on African Per-

Therefore, it is too early to conclude whether the foundations for peacebuilding that were laid by both AMIB and ONUB will be sustained. It is therefore appropriate that Burundi is one of the first countries, together with Sierra Leone, to fall under the purview of the UN Peacebuilding Commission. ONUB is terminating its operations, after which the envisaged United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) will coordinate international assistance. BINUB will provide technical assistance for the development of a comprehensive Security Sector Reform Plan which includes the training of the Burundi National Police and army. The mission will also be tasked with completing the national programme for the demobilisation and integration of former combatants, as well as providing training for employment and access to micro-credit schemes.¹⁷ Even though the UN took over from the AU, the case of Burundi demonstrates that the continental body can in fact make useful peacebuilding interventions around the continent and does deserve to be treated with a modicum of respect. The AU's contribution to these developments is often forgotten and needs to be highlighted. This UN-AU collaboration suggests that such a model might provide insights as to how both organizations might build upon their relationship in the future.

7 The Still-Born Partnership: Prospects for UN-AU Peace Operations in Darfur

One cannot deny the fact that the AU's fledgling institutions lack adequately trained personnel and the financial wherewithal to underwrite all the initiatives that it adopts. This has been exposed in the complex humanitarian situation in the Darfur region of Sudan, where the AU has faltered in delivering security to Darfurians. Ironically, as the tension and violence in Darfur unfolded in 2003, a lot of pressure was placed on the AU to do something to address and resolve the dispute, with the proviso that the international community would follow-up with the political, diplomatic and financial support to enable it to successfully undertake the mission. Whether rightly or wrongly, the AU took the initiative and initially brokered the Humanitarian

Ceasefire Agreement in N'djamena, Chad, on 8 April 2004. The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) deployed troops to oversee this ceasefire. Three years later it is clear that the AU force on the ground, of about 7,000 troops, has a rather weak mandate to effectively monitor the humanitarian crisis in the region and coordinate efforts to advance the cause of peace, which remains elusive. This issue raises the question as to whether African leaders are genuinely serious about living up to the principles which they signed in the Constitutive Act of the AU. The Sudanese government, which is a co-signatory to the Act, could halt the atrocities being committed in Darfur if it genuinely wanted to do so, and alleviate the pressure placed on the AU to resolve this issue. A more fruitful avenue for addressing the Darfur issue, should be through diplomatic pressure placed on the Khartoum regime, rather than the "endless" expenditure of resources on peacekeeping in a place where there is no peace to keep. The international support for the Khartoum government, notably from China, has complicated efforts to resolve this issue and perpetuated a situation that Gerald Prunier has described as the "ambiguous genocide".¹⁸ The main difference between the relatively successful AMIB and the failing AMIS was partly due to the fact that in Burundi the P5 did not have any vested geo-strategic or resource-driven interests, which made it easier for the Security Council to agree on resolutions and implement them. This illustrates that in the context of a dominant and domineering P5, a UN-AU partnership is bound to be constrained, corrupted and exploited by the demands of the powerful members of this club, particularly with regards to security issues.

8 A Hybrid Partnership? The Emerging UN-AU Relationship

UN Security Council Resolution 1706 requested "the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps to strengthen AMIS through the use of existing and additional United Nations resources with a view to transition to a United Nations operation in Darfur."¹⁹ Some delegates to the UN are now speaking of the emergence of a "hybrid UN-AU force" or a "hybrid partnership" with the AU particularly on peacekeeping, and with reference to Sudan in particular. There are ef-

spectives on the UN Peacebuilding Commission, Maputo, Mozambique, 3-4 August 2006, available at: <http://ccrweb.uct.ac.za>

¹⁷ CCR/FES seminar report on African Perspectives on the UN Peacebuilding Commission, Maputo, Mozambique, 3-4 August 2006, available at: <http://ccrweb.uct.ac.za>

¹⁸ Gerald Prunier, *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

¹⁹ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1706 (2006), S/RES/1706(2006), 31 August 2006, paragraph 11.

forts to re-assure observers that this is not an effort to re-establish the asymmetrical relationship which prevailed in the early decades of the UN, but rather an effort to create something new – a hybrid partnership. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is supporting AMIS through its UN Assistance Cell in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the AU headquarters. More specifically, DPKO and the AU's Peace Support Operations Division have signed an agreement to develop a joint action plan. In July 2006, the UN created a dedicated integrated capacity to oversee the implementation of this action plan. This integrated capacity will involve the "collocation" of UN staff within the AU Commission in Addis Ababa. This innovative approach of embedding UN staff within the operational structures of a regional organization represents a completely new form of partnership or a hybrid partnership. There is an emphasis on the fact that this is not an asymmetrical partnership, but an entirely new arrangement established through the mutual consent of both parties. Chapter VIII of the UN Charter is not explicit on the possibility of establishing such a hybrid partnership, therefore there is significant leeway to operationalise such a relationship if both the UN and the regional organization are compliant. Article 52 in fact states that "the Security Council shall encourage the development of pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies either on the initiative of the states concerned or by reference from the Security Council". Therefore the legal basis for embedding UN staff within the AU, can be made.

9 Hybrid Partnership or Hybrid Paternalism?

Even though the nature of the UN-AU partnership is evolving in a new direction, it is important to interrogate what this new relationship represents. Is the hybrid partnership in effect a hybrid form of paternalism - where AU troops and personnel do the basic and dangerous work on the ground guided by the all-wise and "fatherly" coterie of UN advisors? Does this evolution in the UN-AU partnership represent a paradigm shift in relations between both organisations, or is it a case of old wine in new bottles? Certainly, it still remains an asymmetric relationship due to the fact that the UN is a much older institution, with more resources and experience compared to the AU. Therefore, in this relationship the advice and resources are more likely to be unidirectional – flowing from the UN to the AU. Naturally, as the regional organisation the AU has an important

role to play in orienting efforts in a way that respects local sensibilities. However, it is not clear to which extent it can declare total ownership of the conceptualisation, design, planning and implementation of its peace operations, when "collocated" UN personnel maintain a dominant presence in its affairs. It is too early to pass definitive judgement on this emerging hybrid partnership. The AU has to remain vigilant to ensure that it does not descend into a form of hybrid paternalism. In particular, the AU should guard against allowing the UN's historical paternalism to re-manifest under a new guise, with UN brawn being used to direct African bodies on the ground.

10 Policy Recommendations

The Africa Group has to remain vigilant to ensure that the proposed so-called "hybrid partnership" is not used by the UN system as a means to perpetuate paternalism towards Africa, particularly with respect to peacekeeping.

The AU Commission in Addis Ababa should ensure its Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations is adequately and professionally staffed, so that it can provide leadership and adopt a more activist stance with regards to advocating for issues that concern Africa. This should include influencing events and drafting resolutions in the Security Council through its African membership.

The AU and Africa Group needs to develop a coherent strategy to influence, support and ensure the effective functioning and orientation of the Peacebuilding Commission, through African countries represented on this body.

11 Conclusion – The Prospects for the AU at the UN

Ultimately, African countries constitute a significant subset of the UN membership and the relationship should be based on a reciprocal respect, if the body is to succeed in achieving the noble objectives which it set for itself at its inception. Given the confluence of mandates that the UN and the AU share there is no question that there needs to be greater policy coherence and partnership between the two bodies. The bulk, more than 60 percent of the UN's peace and security issues are focused on Africa, which suggests that it is vital to establish a genuine partnership based on equal respect, reciprocity and dialogue. African countries have an important role to play in the UN. Other countries and regional groupings recognize that they need to coordinate with

the Africa Group and the AU to get support on substantive issues because of the number of votes that Africa can deliver, when it acts in unison. However, African countries have demonstrated that they can be divided by their own parochial interests as well as by coercion or co-optation by other more powerful actors. In the interests of achieving peace, security and development it is important for African countries to maintain sufficient discipline so that they can act as a unified block at the UN. It is the only way

that the AU can dispense with any paternalism towards Africa, which still lingers in the UN system.

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