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## The Struggle for Peace

**Rethinking Intervention and Conflict Management**  
**The Role of Regional Organizations**

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## 1 Introduction

The 1990s experienced the emergence of numerous new conflicts that tended to spread rapidly across an entire region. At the same time, the end of bloc confrontation led to a security vacuum, a new “global obscurity” that was missing established patterns of political action. Beginning in the mid-1990s, the multilateral world order was dealt several blows. Damaged by the renaissance of big-power politics and the use of war as a means to political ends such developments finally culminated in the UN Security Council crisis during the events leading up to the war in Iraq. Although this crisis damaged the UN as the stable and efficient backbone of a robust world peace order, unilateralism and “coalitions of the willing” have not made the world a safer place either. As the need for new structural elements for a world order that could contribute to resolving regional conflicts has become imminent, regional arrangements have moved to centre stage.

Regional security organizations have acquired a substantive role in peace and security affairs and over the course of the past decade a number of promising regional approaches to security policy have developed. Regional organizations have taken on a wide spectrum of tasks, ranging from confidence building measures and crisis mediation to sustained peace building operations. However, looking at the political practice, a number of serious problems cannot be overlooked. Notwithstanding the positive aspects, especially in the developing world regional organizations are still facing critical challenges: The lack of capacity and political will, scarcity of resources and the principle of non-interference are often roadblocks on the way for a more effective regional security governance. In view of the regionalization of security and security policy, the relationship between regional organizations and the UN will become more decisive in the future. Already in 1992, then-Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his “Agenda for peace” highlighted that better integration of regional organizations in strategies for conflict resolution could take pressure off the UN. To improve what has not always been a smooth relationship, questions of funding, practical aspects of coordination, and the legitimate authority remain crucial.

Against this backdrop, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung has looked into the perceptions of peacekeeping and crisis management in the regions

of the south and the role played by regional organizations and security arrangements. Within the framework of its working focus “Regional Renaissance – Security in a Globalized World” it has raised a number of questions: What experiences have regional actors made so far? Are some conflicts more appropriate for resolution or management by the global body, while others are more open to regional solution? Who should coordinate and lead interventions? Legitimacy, hegemony capacity and resources - what are the critical challenges confronting the regionalization of peace operations and conflict management? What is the role of civil society organizations in crisis prevention and peace building? This report sums up the results of an international conference “The struggle for peace: rethinking intervention and crisis management – the role of regional organizations”, which was organized by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and held in Berlin on November 7/8, 2005.

## 2 The comparative advantages of regional bodies – at least in theory

At least in theory several advantages can be attributed to regional organizations, such as physical proximity to the conflicts, greater motivation to resolve them, and sometimes more legitimacy. Yet these advantages may as well turn out to be contradictory and *Kennedy Graham* (United Nations University, CRIS, Bruges) referred to the “paradox of proximity.” On the one hand, regional transnational bodies are more sensitive to the circumstances in their vicinity, on the other hand, they are often tainted by this closeness and the historical baggage. The role of a regional hegemon may therefore be crucial: such a “benign hegemon” would be suited best to assume natural leadership. At the same time, a regional organization is the mechanism to hold the hegemon accountable to a legal framework.

It is worth remembering, however, that the historical evidence regarding regional bodies is relatively young. During the conference *Louise Fawcett* (St. Catherine’s College, Oxford University) pointed out that there had been a ‘fad’ of new regional organizations in the 1960s, however, in her view they were taken hostage during the entire Cold War period by the two superpowers. Only after the end of the bipolar world did these organizations have a chance to turn into viable instruments for peace and security. Moreover, as *Wolf Grabendorff* (Program for

Regional Security Cooperation, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Santiago de Chile) indicated, "security" has a different meaning in different regions. Also, since regionalism has often developed out of the need for economic development, it is not clear that regional organizations are by default prepared to deal with peace and security. Not all of them have the mechanisms and institutions for the varied challenges they face.

### 3 Practical experiences of regional actors

Whether the securitization of the development agenda after September 11, 2001 will turn out as a blessing or a bane for regional bodies posed theoretical and practical challenges that were addressed during the conference. *Chris Landsberg* (Center for Policy Studies, Johannesburg) presented an emerging African peace and security doctrine which, while formulated on the level of the entire continent, takes into consideration the relationship with subregional bodies as well as to other internal partnerships. In his view, the gist of every African problem is that there is no development without peace and security and vice versa. Taking peacekeeping into its own hands is only one aspect of the broader peace and security architecture, which is institutionalized with the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and the African Union (AU). Despite all its shortcomings, the AU at least demonstrates the political will of the member states to break with the non-interventionist past. At least in theory military intervention is justified in cases of genocide, gross human rights violations, or *coups d'état* that spread instability through the region. In practice, however, several speakers contended that the AU's neutrality was damaged in the peace process in Sudan. There, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement only came about because the EU and USA were involved. The question therefore may be whether Sudan may turn out as an example for a new strategic partnership between North and South. Without this, African participants feared that the efforts of African actors to tackle African problems would not lead to a "burden sharing" but to a "burden shedding". Several participants pointed to the political will of the AU, but asked whether its political agenda may be overly ambitious. If fully implemented, this would leave the AU with

capacities redundant to those already available at the UN (e.g. for mediation). Ironically, this may lead to a situation where Africa could indeed be left to its own. The current situation, however, is still quite different as the AU's financial capacities are constrained.

Scarcity of resources also turned out to be the greatest impediment on the subcontinental level, where the AU relies on subregional bodies such as the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as its building blocks. ECOWAS, which started as an economic entity, but had to acknowledge that there would be no development in the West African region without security. Therefore, ECOWAS took on security-related tasks, such as insuring electoral outcomes against *coups d'état*, small arms control, and conflict prevention. Also, ECOWAS developed institutional tools, such as crisis analysis center, mediation center, and with its Monitoring Observer Group (ECOMOG) a readily deployable armed force. According to *Mohammad Assani* (Ministry of Finance, Cotonou) despite these institutional arrangements, human resources and training are lacking.

For Southeast Asia, three important aspects were singled out regarding the efficiency of regional organizations.

First, the concept of sovereignty is something relatively new for states, who have interpreted nation-building and strong sovereign states as synonymous. For instance, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which was founded in 1967 does not allow for external intervention into domestic affairs of member states. Since ASEAN members have refused to transfer parts of their sovereignty to the regional body and its main purpose was to improve economic development, it could not really address security problems. In the view of *Makmur Keliat* (RIDEP Institute, Jakarta) ASEAN may still be considered a success, and although the peaceful resolution of conflicts was mostly reached through bilateral settlements, since 1994 ASEAN also has a region-wide mechanism to deal with disputes, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Yet this body still lacks legitimacy as long as member states refuse to transfer some of their sovereign prerogatives to ASEAN.

Second, unlike other regional organizations such as the AU or the European Union (EU), Asian regional bodies such as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) consist of both developing and industrialized nations. This has not only increased the economic diversity of the nations that participate in these arrangements, but according to *Hariyadi Wirawan* (University of Indonesia, Jawa Bada) a cultural difference in the perception of security. For instance with regards to the situation in Myanmar, it seems that Asian countries are more patient than Western states.

Third, there is the question of the regional hegemon and particularly the ascent of China in the Asian peace and security architecture. The country has taken on more responsibility and has become more engaged in regional bodies such as ASEAN. *Pang Zhongying* (Nankai University, Peking) explained China's own particular attempt towards regional politics, as it strives to establish a third way between the respect for national sovereignty and intervention. This approach is best reflected in the current Six Party Talks about North Korea. At the same time, due to its vast network of bilateral alliances, it is the United States that is still conceived of as a regional hegemon, and not China.

The question of hegemony also loomed large in the discussion of regional approaches in Latin America. For example, the Organization of American States (OAS) has always been tainted by the influence of the United States. Particularly after September 11, 2001, the country has been perceived as a threat not a guarantor for regional peace. Therefore, it was demanded that in Latin America those countries that have stable democracies should shoulder more of the peace and security tasks. Brazil is a case in point, but the country does not do this altruistically. Its regional and global ambitions have been accompanied by the country's bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. *Monica Hirst* (Universidad Torquato di Tella, Buenos Aires) concluded that for the time being the prospect of regional organizations on the Latin American continent has not been greeted with enthusiasm.

#### **4 Critical challenges for regionalization of peace operations and conflict management**

While the conference participants agreed on a general level about the nexus between security and development, the relationship between global and regional approaches to security remained contested. Challenging the contribution of regional bodies to global security solutions, it was debated whether the large-scale EU engagement in Kosovo prevents that body from contributing to other missions that may deserve stronger support. This debate took off with an overview of the European Security and Defence Policy, as it faced the different challenges that evolved after the Kosovo crisis in 1999. There, as *Friedrich Haas* (Senior Advisor, Federal Ministry of Defense, Berlin) conceded, efforts of the interveners had been discredited by ad-hocism and learning-by-doing. Haas warned that the lack of a clear exit strategy must not lead to an ad-hoc withdrawal of the international community, because it would turn Kosovo into a failed state. Since Kosovo the EU increasingly speaks with one voice, yet there are still obstacles to be overcome. For one, financing a joint defence policy poses to be one of the biggest challenges. For instance, 75 percent of the German population support a European Security and Defence Policy, as long as it does not provoke higher military expenditures.

Yet the question whether the EU is prepared for its envisioned role as a global player in peace and security is not only a matter of economic constraints, but also of public perception. It was assumed that financial and ideological costs will put a strain on Europe's contribution to peace-keeping operations. Once the first body bags of soldiers killed in foreign territories are sent home, the public may demand that the EU limits itself to missions in close proximity. In this regard the increasing engagement in Kosovo was seen as an impediment for the EU to commit its resources to conflicts in other regions that are in dire straits, such as Haiti.

The example of Haiti is not only a problem of non-engagement of outside actors such as the EU, it also poses the question as to in how far is Haiti a regional security problem that has to be dealt with regionally. To begin with, the task in

crisis mediation is to define the appropriate level. In terms of geography, *Diego Cardona* (Secretaría General de la Comunidad Andina) argued that Port-Au-Prince and Buenos Aires are as distant from each other as New York and Berlin. Hence a regional solution to the crisis in Haiti may not be based so much on geography as on political feasibility. In terms of actors, it was pointed out that the peacekeeping operation in Haiti would profit from a stronger regional organization. In absence of such a body, *Wolfgang Celedón Mecketh* (National Defense, Santiago de Chile) explained the debate in Chile, where the government had decided to provide troops for the peacekeeping mission in Haiti. Congress and the public, however, complain about the high costs and want to revoke the engagement.

Alternatively, it was proposed that the costs for peacekeeping – both financially and in terms of casualties – could be shouldered best by a “benign regional hegemon”. It became apparent that this suggestion has its own potentials and limitations in every region. Whereas in the case of Haiti Brazil seems to be hesitant in taking up a hegemonic role, India was seen as an “imperfect hegemon” that does get engaged but whose involvement raises suspicion in the region. By contrast, Nigeria endured considerable casualties in peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone and Liberia without backing out. Ironically, the ongoing democratization in Nigeria makes such risk-taking behaviour more problematic for the current government than it was for the former military regime. The general lesson seems to be that where there is a public debate about submitting troops to peacekeeping operations, the consent of the emissary public cannot be taken for granted and may in fact even hold up troop deployment.

Another important debate revolved around relationships between different regional organizations. Some of them, such as the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), appear to be increasingly effective, yet they normally cannot take on the tasks alone. *Wolfram Vetter* (Policy Planning Unit, Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, Brussels) described the relationship between the AU and the EU as one in which the AU does no longer take directives from other bodies. However, as the EU contributes financially, it wants to have

some say in joint security initiatives without undermining African ownership. Acknowledging this is not an act of altruism, but of self-interest, since undermining African security would also backfire for Europe. The task ahead therefore is to find the right balance between “partnership” and “ownership”.

## **5 The role of civil society organizations in crisis prevention and peace building**

*Florence Mpaayei* (Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa/GPPAC, Nairobi) demanded a paradigm shift in the promotion of peace and security from intervention to prevention, whereas the international community still seems to lack the political will for this approach. *Leonard Kapungu* (Center for Peace Initiative, Harare) contended that it is less attractive for national governments to provide measures for conflict prevention than to send troops for peacekeeping operations. The aim, he insisted, should be to prevent conflicts and not the deployment of peacekeepers. What is missing is the political will to invest in economic development, democracy, and the rule of law.

Therefore, even if the primary responsibility for the safety of their populations remains with national governments, human security in a broader sense can only be achieved by an enlarged constituency. Despite criticism on the legitimacy, accountability and credibility of CSOs, their importance for conflict prevention was widely acknowledged, particularly in gathering and analyzing information for early warning purposes. This assessment dovetailed with the changing patterns of conflicts in Africa and the role of the UN on that continent. To date, 85 percent of the UN personnel are employed in Africa, yet the organization still has not set up an early-warning mechanism for the detection of conflicts. *Leonard Kapungu* asked whether such a mechanism could have helped preventing the conflicts of Rwanda and Darfur. It was contended that prevention and early-warning alone will not be sufficient: what is missing is early-acting.

In sum, it became clear that the often-times demanded engagement of civil society remains imminent. At the same time, the limitations of these actors, particularly regarding intervention,

were reiterated. Moreover, civil society does not necessarily profit from stronger regional organizations. There is no default mechanism that guarantees that they are more open to the impact of civil society than either nation-states or the UN.

## 6 Towards “global security governance”?

Despite recent success stories of UN peacekeeping, such as in the case of East Timor, there continues to be a general desire for improvements. It was felt that while the UN has gathered valuable expertise in peacekeeping, it is overstretching itself by applying a one-size-fit all approach to conflicts in different regions. Admittedly, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) may indeed exceed its limits while aiming to fulfil the various missions. Yet as was pointed out by *Catherine Guicherd* (International Peace Academy, New York), already the Brahimi Report urged the Security Council not to issue resolutions without funding the missions to implement them afterwards.

Could this mismatch be rectified by a division of labor between the UN and regional organizations? The UN Charter clearly suggests so, and its Chapter VIII expresses the idea to settle local conflicts regionally before referring to the Security Council, which would only step in if regional efforts failed. During the Cold War, however, this provision was also used by the United States and the Soviet Union, who denied the UN to deal with crises such as in Panama or Hungary. Instead, the superpowers argued that the regional organizations over which they had control, respectively the OAS and the Warsaw Pact, were the proper body to deal with these crises.

After the end of the Cold War, the unspecific provisions of Chapter VIII contributed to ambiguous circumstances. For example, problems arose in the case of the military intervention in Sierra Leone: To maintain international peace and security, ECOWAS under the leadership of Nigeria intervened as a regional organization and asked for approval from the Security Council only retroactively. The relationship between ECOWAS and the SC turned out to be complicated, because on the one hand, the UN body has been used to giving orders, whereas on the

other hand, its resolutions were not followed up by giving ECOWAS the necessary funding.

While there was a general agreement about the usefulness of not replicating tasks and means, a division of labor raised different questions. For example, to what extent does this division solve the problem of resources? There is no doubt that the United States and Europe would be in the position to contribute most. Some participants therefore argued that NATO's better-endowed missions are more sustainable than those of the UN. Conversely, while UN missions often face a shortage of resources they enjoy the highest level of legitimacy. This viewpoint was strengthened by *Kennedy Graham*, who argued that legitimacy is still achieved best on the global level and that the UN Charter as a legal framework must not be dismissed. He referred to the division of labor as laid out in the Charter and to flesh out the role of regional organizations under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. The UN should lead and coordinate interventions, but regional entities are better suited to exercise prevention. By contrast, *James Jonah* (University of New York) suggested that regional organizations should be in charge of Peacekeeping Operations under a UN Security Council mandate. For the future, he advocates for African and Asian bodies with well-endowed peacekeeping capacities that carry out interventions approved by the Security Council.

Scepticism regarding regional organizations is not a privilege of the Security Council, however. *Renata Dwan* from the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, alluded to the rift that goes right through the UN: There is an “old school” thinking of those who do not want to share any responsibility with the regional bodies, whereas others are very much in favor of a division of tasks. In her view, however, “competitive advantage” as the distinguishing parameter between regional entities and the global UN is too static a concept, and should be substituted by “interlocking partnerships.” Such partnerships, which bring together – state and non-state - actors, are better-suited to tackle the various different threats to peace and security collectively. Interlocking partnerships mean to identify shared interests and views. For instance, environmental risks and AIDS threats are different in different regions, but they require a collective

response. "Interlocking" also means to transfer resources from the UN to the region (which already happens in the case of the AU), but also from one regional organization to another (as in the case of Darfur, where the UN, EU, and the AU are all engaged). Also the UN Peacebuilding Commission, which is currently being established, could become such an interlocking tool for global security governance. To live up to such expectations, the Commission would have to reach strategic agreement on post-conflict scenarios, and coordinate the input of regional bodies, the UN, member states, the International Financial Institutions, and Civil Society.

In conclusion, despite their potential for enhancing peace and security both on the regional and global level, there remains to be a big variety among regional organizations: Some, as in Latin America, are historically mistrusted, because of the US hegemony. Others, such as the AU in Africa, clearly seem to be on the upswing yet lack the necessary resources to credibly take on the necessary tasks. And whereas the ASEAN only makes small steps, the EU's much bolder aspirations are still marred by contradictions. At

the same time, there seems to be a kind of normalization process: Membership to regional organizations has become part of the identity of a sovereign state, and regionalism is not in contradiction to multilateralism, but a reflection of it. The tension between sovereignty and multilateral arrangements affects regional bodies as much as the UN. Consequently, regional organizations are as much a platform for national interests as is the UN. Different actors at different times therefore have chosen the one over the other, depending on what suited their needs better. And although regional organizations are not the magic bullet, they are the building blocks that make the UN and the global security governance structure more viable.

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