

Dealing with Conflict in Africa: The United Nations and Regional Organizations.
Edited by Jane Boulden. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 356pp.
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More than 15 years since the end of the Cold War, a wide range of political and humanitarian actors are still assessing the implications of the change in the international system for Africa. Some believe that the end of superpower rivalry heralded a new era of turmoil and neglect. Others point to the increased focus of the UN Security Council (UNSC) on conflict in Africa as an indication of a new international commitment to address the challenges faced by the continent.

Dealing with Conflict in Africa: The United Nations and Regional Organizations makes an important contribution to this debate. The book examines the increasingly important role that regional organizations such as the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have come to play in addressing conflict in Africa and the nature of cooperation between these organizations and the UN.

The end of the Cold War resulted in a ten-fold increase in the number of UN peacekeeping operations, primarily in Africa. In response to this increase, one of the central recommendations of the UN Secretary-General's 1992 report *An Agenda for Peace* was that regional organizations should play a greater role in peacekeeping activities. It was believed that increased regional peacekeeping would ease the financial burden placed on the UN, provide more intimate knowledge of regional conflicts and result in more rapid deployment. Regional organizations would help share the UN's peacekeeping burden, while providing better, more responsive peacekeeping.

In a series of rich and insightful chapters, the contributors to the volume question these assumptions with the benefit of a decade of hindsight, and examine the gap between rhetoric and practice, both in UN Headquarters

in New York and through the deployment of missions to Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Sudan, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The resulting argument is convincing, original, and highly relevant.

The first section of the volume reviews key issues and themes. Boulden's chapter on debate within the UN Security Council illustrates how the interest in a greater role for African regional organizations coincided with the desire of Western powers to distance themselves from African conflicts in the aftermath of the failed intervention in Somalia. Boulden then highlights the gap between the interests and priorities of African states and other members of the UN Security Council, emphasizing the concern that an increased role for regional organizations may be simply a euphemism for shifting the peacekeeping burden from Western states onto under-resourced African states.

These concerns are developed in the chapter by Berman and Sams, which reviews peacekeeping operations undertaken primarily by the Organization for African Unity (OAU), ECOWAS, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), in addition to efforts on the part of these organizations to enhance their peacekeeping capacity. While the review may paint a bleak picture, the authors caution against being 'dismissive or overly negative about what African regional organizations have achieved' (p. 65). They conclude, however, that 'the willingness of African countries to undertake peacekeeping through regional organizations will continue to far surpass their capacities' for the foreseeable future (p. 67).

Adibe's chapter on conflict management in West Africa and the Great Lakes region of Central Africa provides a useful bridge between the issues introduced in the preceding chapters and the subsequent case studies. By placing the causes and management of conflicts within the context of post-colonial diplomacy, Adibe highlights the intricate web of actors and interests that are at play in sub-regional conflict, a point which is especially well illustrated in the subsequent chapter on the DRC by Carayannis and Weiss. Given the propensity of intra-state conflicts in Africa to spill over national borders, Adibe argues for a multilateral approach as the most effective source of conflict resolution.

The six case studies take refreshingly novel looks at a number of frequently studied conflicts. The characterization of the relationship between the UN and the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Olonisakin's chapter on Liberia is intimate in its detail. Lata's chapter on the Ethiopia-Eritrea War and Khadiagala's chapter on Burundi both shed new light on the need for a combined UN-OAU approach to managing these conflicts, given their entrenched history and the perceived partiality of the various actors. Juma's chapter on Sudan traces the involvement of regional actors through a protracted negotiation and conflict management process.

While a comparison between these case studies and the experience of the UN in Somalia and Rwanda, where the UN did not cooperate with regional organizations, would have been a welcome addition to the work, *Dealing with Conflict in Africa* makes an important contribution to our understanding of recent efforts to respond to Africa's conflicts in innovative and effective ways.

The work also serves as a useful introduction to regional organizations, who are fast becoming familiar actors in the field of refugee and returnee protection and security. In this way, *Dealing with Conflict in Africa* makes a useful contribution to our understanding of an important dimension of the question of solutions to the plight of refugees in post-Cold War Africa.

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