

**AFRICAN UNION MECHANISMS FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT:
A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT WITH REFERENCE TO DARFUR
CONFLICT IN SUDAN**

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ABSTRACT

The general objective of the study was to undertake critical assessment of the effectiveness of the African Union mechanisms for conflict management with particular reference to Darfur crisis. The specific objectives of the study focused on the Darfur region with respect to identifying the AU conflict management mechanisms; examining the factors constraining/promoting the effectiveness of AU in conflict management and establishing plausible strategies for conflict management in Africa.

The research design for this study was descriptive and solicited both primary and secondary data. Questionnaires and interviews were the major data collection tools. The sample size comprised 30 purposely selected respondents representing key participants expected to be either knowledgeable about the subject matter of AU mechanisms for conflict management and peace building initiatives or to have observed the said initiatives.

The study found that the effectiveness of AU mechanisms in managing the Darfur conflict was hampered by the vastness of the area compared to the limited troops available, rugged terrain, the Sudanese government's complacency and inability to stop the killings, as well as the rules of engagement that barred the AU troops from intervening militarily to shoot and kill the killers.

Regarding the AU conflict management mechanisms in the Darfur region, the study established that overall; all the four methods of mediation, conciliation, arbitration and ad hoc committees are used in varying degrees for solving conflicts in Darfur.

In terms of the plausible strategies for conflict management in Africa, the study has showed that the strategies that AU could employ for effective management of conflict on the African continent include the creation of an African Standby Force (ASF) together with the employment of Internal and International or external mediators; the seeking of military and advisory support; establishment of properly trained and equipped forces in the respective African countries ready to defend their nations; and the use of combined peacekeeping missions from the different African countries to the affected regions and in prompt manner.

In order for the AU to address the persistent conflicts on the African continent, the following recommendations are made. The African governments should exhibit out-right open political support, creation of an African Standby Force, mobilization of more funds and relief supplies to use in conflict situations before they get worse. Further still, the protection of civilians from the killing forces; the equipping and maintaining the AU peacekeeping force; deployment of cease-fire and monitoring force in the war zones; taking military action against perpetrators of human rights abuses were cited as critical interventions if the war in the region is to be addressed on a sustainable basis.