



An assessment of the African union conflict management mechanisms in Darfur region of Sudan

*Kim Luka Dung, Mohammed Nuru Umar, Abdulrasheed Adamu & Umar Farouk Musa

*Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Sa'adu Zungur University, Bauchi State – Nigeria.*

*Corresponding Author: kimlukadung@yahoo.com

Abstract

The conflict in Darfur region of Western Sudan began in February 2003 when the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rebel groups took up arms against the government of Sudan which they accused of oppressing Darfur's non-Arab black ethnic population. The armed conflict has resulted in over 300,000 deaths and exacerbated a humanitarian crisis resulting in the displacement of more than 2.7 million people from their homes. The conflict in Darfur region between the government and rebel groups is multi-dimensional in nature involving economic, political, social, cultural and environmental factors. However, this study intends to focus on the conflict management mechanisms employed by the African Union in resolving the conflict. Findings revealed that the conflict mechanisms adopted by the African Union were not effective and inadequate in managing the conflict in Darfur region. The study adopted descriptive and narrative qualitative research design. The research used purposive non probability sampling technique and the main research instruments adopted was semi structured in-depth interview used to generate data from 24 respondents. The researcher also explored various literature on the issue from scholars using journals, textbooks, official bulletins and internet sources. The paper recommend that the African Union need a robust conflict management tools and adequate funding to manage conflict in Darfur region of Western Sudan in particular and African continent in general.

Key Words: African Union, Conflict Management, Conflict Mechanism, Peacekeeping, Peace building

1. Introduction

Conflicts are part and parcel of the dynamics of human society. Man from the earliest times have always lived-in different societies each with its peculiarities. These peculiarities which could be in terms of social, economic, cultural and political conflict amongst others are part of human nature. Conflict arises as a result of clash of interest between individuals, groups and organizations. They could also occur between individuals, groups or within states as internal conflict. When such disagreements interfere with vital interest of such individuals, groups or states, they lead to clashes, contentions, struggle,

contestations, confrontation or ultimate battle (Sova, 2017; Best, 2006).

According to the realist theory, the international system is conflictual and characterized by anarchy. There is absence of central authority among states that regulate the behaviors of state actors. In order to survive the international system, nation states need to acquire power guided by their national interest to survive the international politics. So, conflict in international system is inevitable. Since the end of the Cold War in 1989, conflicts have emerged in the Balkans (the Croatian War of Independence, Bosnian and Kosovo war), South East Asia (a new escalation of armed conflict in Myanmar and the subnational armed conflict in Philippines,



Kashmir disputes between India and Pakistan), Middle East (Israel and Palestinians, internal uprising in Syria), Eastern Europe (Russia and Ukraine, Chechnya, Armenia, Kremlin's support of separatists in Georgia and Moldova), Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran (Ari, 2022; Minakov, 2015).

Africa is one of the leading continents of the world that have been affected by different conflicts. These conflicts have resulted in the loss of human lives, destruction of properties and untold suffering of innocent citizens. In fact, in 1992, the African continent recorded 46.7 percent of all conflicts in the world and fourteen of the sixteen wars fought in Africa from 1990 to 1997 were intrastate in nature. Hence, eight out of the fifteen complex emergencies declared by the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs in late 20th and 21st centuries were in Africa (Umozurike, 2005). These conflicts make it imperative for African Union to respond to potentially explosive situations at their earliest manifestations in order to prevent their escalation. Response to conflicts include both political and military intervention.

In African continent, conflict have occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Cameroun, Central African Republic (CAR), Lesotho, Chad, Zaire, Guinea Bisau, Angola as well as in Sudan. Peace building issues also remains incomplete in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Algeria, Ethiopia, Somalia, Angola, Eritrea and Burundi, while a self-determination referendum is yet to take place in Western Sahara, Morocco (Oguonu & Ezeibe, 2014). Indeed, the persistent border disputes arbitrary created by colonial masters have been a common event in the sub-region. Even when the defunct Organization of African Unity (OAU) pleaded various African leaders to respect these borders in order to avoid potentially protracted and widespread conflicts that such disputes may generate, yet border

disputes abound between Senegal and Mauritania, Ghana and Togo, Somalia and Ethiopia, Kenya and South Sudan, Tanzania and Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania amongst others (Akpuru-Aja, 2011).

The viciousness and the level of destruction that comes with these conflicts have raised concerns on the effectiveness or otherwise of conflict management by the United Nations (UN) at the global level, European Union (EU), Organization of American States (OAS), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Arab League and African Union (AU) at the regional level. While Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), East African Community (EAC), Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and Southern Africa Development Commission (SADC) at the sub-regional level respectively (Adar, 2007 & Imobighe, 2003).

The continent of Africa is marred with issues of conflict management that have become very topical in debates and discussions. Mwagiru (2001) underscored the importance of African Union in conflict management and peacebuilding when he pointed out that one distinguishing features of Africa's political landscape is its many protracted, social and political conflicts. This remains the problem of African Union to adequately and effectively cope and manage these conflicts through its mechanisms, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) which replaced the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (MCPMR) of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which was established following decision taken at the 29th session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Cairo, Egypt in June 1993. This instrument was



ineffective in managing conflicts in Africa. This have had negative consequences including the interruption of development and the diversion of scarce resources in the management of these conflicts (Albert, 2007).

In the Darfur region, relations between different ethnic groups have been tense since pre-colonial era. In the Nineteenth Century, Darfur was a centre of slave trade where both tribes competed in raiding towns to capture slaves for economic benefit. The sedentary farmers needed land to cultivate crops while nomads needed access to grazing land and water resources. Due to economic needs of the groups, they clashed violently and at times escalating larger tribal conflicts. As a result of government's neglect of Darfur, Alex de Waal observed that armed militia who had no respect for human rights and constituted authority increased in 1983. Likewise with the discovery of oil in commercial quantity, the inhabitants further asserted firmer control of their territories in Darfur (de Waal, 2006).

With the militia in firm control of the impoverished region of Darfur, two local groups, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) accused the government of oppressing their communities. The JEM is associated with the Zaghawa of Northern Darfur while the SLM is generally associated with the Fur and Masalit. These groups attacked government forces and installations spontaneously in February 2003. The of Government of Sudan responded violently by aerial attack while the Janjaweed attacked the indigenous communities. Furthermore, the brutal action of Government of Sudan sent thousands of survivors to reinforce the ranks of the rebels in Darfur. While the conflict raged, series of ceasefires were negotiated by the African Union at various times in order to douse the tension (de Waal, 1993).

Theoretical Framework

This work adopts Functionalism as a theoretical framework. Functionalists believe that international organizations are formed for different reasons. This viewpoint is expressed by a scholar, David Mitrany in his work titled 'A Working Peace System'. Mitrany pointed out that the problem of our time is not how to keep the nation states peacefully apart but how to bring them actively together (Mitrany, 1946). Thus, he argued that different units bind together those interests which are common, where they are common, and the extent to which they are common. This implies that Mitrany advocated for the establishment of institutions for nation states with common interests to serve as the basis for them to work towards such interests (Agaba, 2022).

We can safely say that Mitrany's idea is the pioneering work that inspired functionalist's scholars like Gabriel Almond, Michael Hans and other scholars expand the school of thought. Generally, functionalists believe that nation states are not suitable unit to manage problems between or within them, this weakness according to the functionalists was what called for the formation of formal platforms which Gabriel Almond (1959) argued that functionalism promote building and expanding the frontiers of cooperation by groups of technical experts outside the official state channel. The habit of cooperation as advocated by Almond is the formation of international institution to perform certain functions. At this point, Almond made it clear that based on the recognition of the gaps that exist between nation states, it is therefore imperative that incremental strategy be adopted to bridge the gaps between states (Agaba, 2022).

According to Almond, the bridging of the gaps entails the establishment of functional international institutions which will perform the functions of input and output since the international system represent the social system (Almond, 1959). It is necessary to identify the structures and the



functions perform by the institutions. Therefore, a leading functionalist, Michael Hans modified Gabriel Almond's Structural Functionalism at the national level to suit global system. Michael Hans classified the functions to include articulation, interest aggregation, socialization, recruitment, transaction, rulemaking, rule application and rule supervision (Agaba, 2022).

2. Literature Review

Conceptual Clarifications

African Union

An appraisal of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) offers the researcher the knowledge to better understand how the African Union (AU) function and execute its responsibilities. The OAU preceded the AU as the Pan-African organization that was structured to address the African-specific issues related to peace, governance and stability of the continent (Makinda, Okumu & Mickler, 2015). The OAU provides the platform for understanding the current configuration of the African Union. The OAU was established on May 25, 1963 (Binns & Nel, 2012; Kieh, 2008). It existed as an African regional body from 1963 to 2001 when the OAU transmuted and replaced by the AU in 2002 (Fogwell, 2013). The OAU Charter was replaced by the Constitutive Act of the African Union (Odinkalu, 2013).

Fogwell (2013) argues that the main objective of the OAU was to promote unity, solidarity and cooperation between African States in relation to forming independent African states into a collaborative organization after they gained independence from the former colonial powers. The African Union served as a platform for cooperation among nascent African states that were not prepared to have a continental organization that would supplant state sovereignty (Yusuf & Ougueriuz, 2012). A unified Africa would allow for the union of independent states to pursue economic well-being as expressed through a Pan-African organization for

cooperation as pointed out by Mohammed Bedjaoui (Yusef, et al., 2012). The charter of the OAU did not allow for intervention into domestic affairs of the member states (Makinda et al., 2016). The intent of the OAU was to give Africa an independent voice in global affairs and to unite all of Africa together under one organizational umbrella (Reader, 1999; Martinelli, 2017). The African Union is a regional organization formally launched on 9th July, 2002 at the Durban Summit, South Africa. It was established to enable African countries meet the challenges of the new millennium and to address the new social, economic and political realities in the post-Cold War Africa. The regional body have 53 member nations, all from Africa except Morocco which withdrew its membership from the OAU in 1985 to protest against the admission of Western Sahara as a member. Therefore, the African Union member countries are expected to uphold the principles of the African Union and contribute to the promotion and maintenance of peace and security in the region (Nigerian Army Information Briefs, 2005; Uba, 2006; Martinelli, 2017).

The African Union has 14 directorates with the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments as its supreme organ (Microsoft Encarta Reference Library, 2005). The Union operates within the following broader organs: the Executive Council, the Permanent Representatives Committee, the Specialized Technical Committee and the Pan African Parliament constitute its political organs. Other organs are the Court of Justice, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, the Financial Institutions and the Peace and Security Council (PSC). With this structure and arrangement, member states are expected to demonstrate their readiness to contribute to the African Union funds, participate in conflict management, peacemaking and peacebuilding at regional and continental levels (Cilliers, 2006; Makinda et al., 2016).



Conflict

The concept of conflict has defied definitional consensus among scholars and international relations practitioners. Scholars and international relations practitioners have adduced different meaning to conflict as they have developed its several sources and causes. In other words, there is no universally or generally accepted meaning of conflict or agreement over what constitutes its sources and causes. There are multiple claims to the above than the reliance on a single factor (Kegley and Wittkopf, 1985; Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 1997; Mitchell, 1981; Martinelli, 2017; Keith, 2007; Karamalla-Gaiballa & El-Kafafi, 2021). Given the difficulty of definition of conflict, Akpan and Galadima (2003) inferred that the problem of definition is further compounded when it is realized that conflict is multi-dimensional. There are many types of conflicts. Some of these types include; inter or intra-national, personal conflict, community conflict, cultural conflict, religious conflict, racial conflict, organizational conflict, occupational conflict and international conflict. This is to say the term conflict, its sources and causes are also in academic conflict.

In spite of the above, a general explanation of conflict will be given. There exists varying definition of conflict by scholars from the sociological, psychological, economical, biological, ethological, anthropological, political science among other perspectives (Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 1997). Deriving from the above, several supporting theories have been developed for the study of conflict which range from older theories of conflict and war, theories of identity, psychological, environmental, imperialism and economic causes of conflict to microcosmic and macrocosmic theories of violent conflicts with their attendant consequences. What is important here is to situate conflict at a level which will involve

parties with incompatible goals and objectives, and address their sources and causes from a multi-disciplinary perspective. This is because it has been generally argued that it is only from a multi-disciplinary approach that the essence of social conflict or international conflict can be truly captured (Mitchell, 1981; Lahdili, 2016).

The explanation of conflict entails the existence of two or more parties who perceive differences between or among them and who are committed to managing those differences to their own satisfaction. Conflict may be seen as an intrinsic product of communication and contact between peoples and or groups when they meet and interact with one another. As an essential part of all social interaction, therefore, conflict should not be seen as either infrequent or abnormal (Kegley & Wittkopf, 1985). In other words, conflict is a universally and permanently recurring phenomenon, it may be carried on by subtle, political, economic, psychological and social means. Also due to the anarchic nature of the international system, conflict becomes inevitable aspect of social life (McCormick, 2021).

Conflict is a concept with a varying and often discordant meaning. The concept is used to describe a phenomenon that is inherent in humanity and its society. As (Zartman 1991) observed that conflict is an inevitable aspect of human, international and unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions. From the views of this scholar, it is instructive that conflict is natural as human beings exist. Therefore, it cannot be avoided but managed. Conflict has also been described as a battle, contest of opposing forces, discord or antagonism existing between different people whose desires oppose one another. Arguing in the same perspective, Otite posited that conflict could result from the pursuit of divergent interests by individuals. These views expressed causes conflict which



again emanates from human interaction between one another (Kosciolek, 2019). Martinelli (2017) argued that conflicts manifest at the micro and macro levels of society. That is, at the level of individual, communities, races, nation states and between regions of the world respectively. And also, at other point in between these two levels. Similarly, as it is dynamic, conflict may produce positive or negative outcomes. Where it is not effectively managed, it degenerates to a level of adverse outcome such as violent conflict and war. According to (Salmon 1992) it is important to realize that the focus of any domestic or international affairs, lays conflict. Thus, some degree of conflict should be permitted as inevitable and desirable process in the social systems. In line with this view the problem is not to avoid conflict but to prevent it from turning into violence. John et al (1997) seem to agree with this position when they referred to conflict as a restless struggle for power, which ceases only in death (Mamdani, 2010; Mentan & Agbor, 2020).

Conflict Management

According to Isaac Olawale Albert (2007), conflicts are difficult to manage in the real sense of the word. They are thus, better managed or prevented altogether. Kenneth E. Boulding, who with Cooley Angell (1990) invented the concept of conflict resolution, shifted grounds some years later to become an advocate of another concept known as 'conflict management'. He thus, pointed out that conflict should not be resolved but should be managed, at least to maximize the total gain of both parties, no matter the distributional effect. Although, conflict scholars have distinguished

conflict management, settlement and resolution, this work uses the concepts interchangeably, so long as the objective is to end conflict. Conflict resolution here covers the whole gamut of positive conflict handling. Conflict management tends to focus more on mitigating or controlling the destructive consequences that emanates from a given conflict than on finding solution to the underlying factors causing the conflict. It typically involves the use of military force for deterrence or peacekeeping.

Miall (2005) argued that violent conflicts are eradicable, hence resolving such conflicts is unrealistic and the best that can be done is to manage or contain it, so that, violence may not erupt. Miall's concept seems to have narrowed the focus by assuming that conflicts could not be resolved and that handling conflict is limited to containing it and ending the violence. Imobighe (2003 & 1997) sees conflict management as a discipline with the ways and means of controlling and harmonizing conflictual relationships within an interaction process. He elaborated that conflict management is concerned with the way in which events and relationship between countries are controlled to ensure harmony and peace amongst different countries. He further argued that the management system is a process that embraces the three activities of conflict prevention, control and resolution (Albert, 2007). These processes constitute what is known and referred to as the integrated conflict management cycle which is presented in the diagram below.

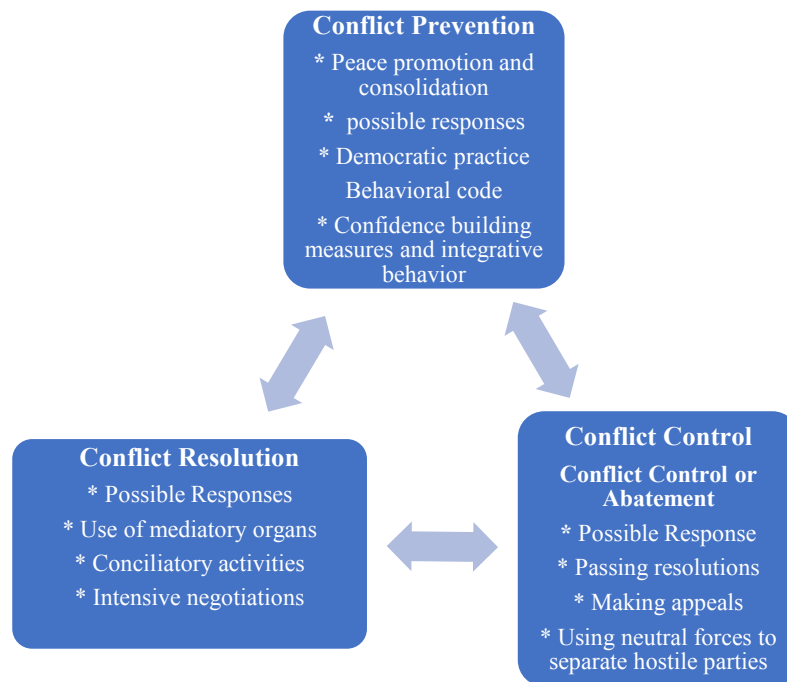


Figure 1: Integrated Conflict Management Cycle
Source: Imobighe 2003 & 1997

In the integrated conflict management cycle, the starting point is conflict prevention which is undertaken through the promotion of harmonious relationship. If conflict erupts, then conflict management moves to the second stage of conflict control. At this stage, the effort is to control or abate the conflict. The final phase is conflict resolution where all resolution mechanisms are employed to settle the conflict. Once that is done, conflict management can be said to have gone the full cycle. Hence, the concept of integrated conflict management cycle is relevant to this study (Imobighe, 2003; Oguonu & Ezeibe, 2014).

Highlight of Darfur Conflict

There are different explanations to the origins of the Darfur conflict. Factors underlying the conflict in Darfur region are inherently embedded in the history of the country. Notwithstanding, the current spate of violent conflict is traceable to April 2003, when government bases and facilities in El Fashir came under heavy attack from Darfur rebel movements, the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and

the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The attack culminated in the destruction of government air force planes (Darfur-UNAMID-Background, 2009). Government forces and the 'Janjaweed' (an Arab militia alleged to be supported by the Government of Sudan), subsequently launched a counter-insurgency against villages and ethnic groups perceived to be sympathetic to the rebels. This gave rise to the death of about 200,000 Darfurians and the displacement of over two million others (AMIS, Background & Chronology, 2009). The root of the conflict in Darfur is complex and intricate. The region is characterized by marginalization, ethnic animosities, environmental stress such as drought, famine and desertification. There are also issues of land ownership and access to land-based resources, porous border, availability of arms and ammunitions particularly from conflict emanating from Central African Republic (CAR), Ethiopia, Eritrea, Libya, Chad and other surrounding countries were some of the important issues that have shaped the dynamics of the conflict. These coupled



with Khartoum deliberate policy of arming and co-opting the Janjaweed in its war with the Darfur rebels. The conflict in Darfur also revolves around the crisis of identity and governance issues in which the history of political domination and exclusion, unfavorable policies and uneven development had come to worsen the conflict. These have made Sudan to emerge and remain as Africa's premier land of complex and intricate conflict (Kosciolek, 2019).

Due to the non-challant attitude and lack of interest of the international community in the conflict, the African Union (AU) hurriedly intervened to deescalate and manage the conflict. Despite the intervention of the African Union, killings, maiming of civilians and humanitarian crisis persisted in the region unabated. Some African Union member states contributed troops but the number required was inadequate. There were problems associated with logistical and operational matters that characterized the deployment of troops. Equipment deployed for the operation were either obsolete or insufficient and the mandate of the operation was not well articulated as there was no concrete agreement among the feuding parties in the conflict for the role of the African Union. The various ceasefire agreements signed were frequently violated by the contending parties and not all the rebel groups sign the agreements (Lacey, 2005).

Mediation efforts under the auspices of President Idriss Deby of Chad and the Chairperson of the

AU Commission resulted in the signing of a Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement (HCFA) and a Protocol on the Establishment of Humanitarian Assistance in Darfur in April 2004. Parties to the HCFA accepted an offer by the AU to lead the mobilization of international support and to monitor the ceasefire. The Ceasefire Commission (CFC) and the first deployment of military observers arrived in

El-Fasher on 9th June 2004. Known as AMIS I, the mission was mandated to monitor the HCFA and report violations to the CFC (Communiqué of the 91st Ordinary Session of the Central Organ of the MCPMR, 2009).

The mission was allowed to use force only for self defence and was not to intervene between factions on the ground. Notwithstanding regular patrols by military observers, the situation in Darfur continued to deteriorate, basically because the number of observers deployed was inadequate to implement the mandate effectively (Human Rights Watch, 2006; AMIS, 2009). In response to the worsening security situation, the AU Commission proposed an enhanced mission headed by a Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission (SRCC) with a force strength of 3,320 troops consisting of military, police and civilians (AU. Report of the chairperson, 2004).

Approval of the proposal transformed AMIS I into what became known as AMIS II which was deployed from October 2004 for a period of one year with an extension of the same mandate, but

more extensive reach in the field. As part of its mandate, AMIS II was to protect civilians encountered under imminent threat and in the immediate vicinity within resources and capability. However, the security situation in Darfur continued to deteriorate. The growing insecurity in Darfur despite the deployment of AMIS II led to international recognition of two important issues.

First, that AMIS was neither sufficiently mandated nor adequately resourced to control the violence on the ground and bring peace to Darfur. Secondly, that for a realistic restoration of peace and security in Darfur, progress would have to be made in the political process, the peacekeeping mission, and the process of grassroots social reconciliation since the three issues are intertwined and reinforce each other



(Jaye., de Calvalho., Kamsuba & de Coning, 2010).

To AMIS, a Joint AU/UN Technical Assessment process led by Ambassador Said Djinnit, former

AU Commissioner for Peace and Security and Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, former UN Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations recommended in June 2006 that the political process be re-energized and also that the ceasefire be strengthened under a joint AU and UN leadership. The proposal eventually led to the deployment of United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), an unprecedented joint AU/UN peacekeeping operation in Darfur. UNAMID was officially established by the UN Security Council in July 2007 through the adoption of resolution 1769 and formally took over from AMIS in December 2007 (Darfur-UNAMID Background, 2009).

Overview of the African Union

Mechanisms for Conflict Management

The Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU) which replaced the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 2002 did not initially provide for any mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution. The OAU's MCPMR and the Cairo Agenda for Action on the MCPMR were not factored into AU the document. This has been attributed to the haste with which the drafters of the AU Act had to meet the impatient deadlines set by Libya (Cilliers, 2002). To rectify this anomaly, the objectives and principles of the Cairo Declaration were made an integral part of the declared objectives and principles of the AU in accordance with Article 5(2) of the AU Act (Albert, 2007; McCormick, 2020).

Against the background of the threat posed to African development by small arms proliferation, the AU also adopted a Protocol for the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU to supersede all resolutions and decisions of the OAU on the MCPMR. The objectives

of the PSC as contained in Article 3 of the Protocol Establishing the PSC of the AU are:

- i. Promote peace, security and stability in Africa in order to guarantee the protection and preservation of life and property, the well-being of the African people and their environment, as well as the creation of conditions conducive to sustainable development;
- ii. Anticipate and prevent conflicts. In circumstances where conflicts have occurred, the Peace and Security Council shall have the responsibility to undertake peace making and peace building functions for the resolution of these conflicts;
- iii. Promote and implement peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction activities to consolidate peace and prevent the resurgence of violence;
- iv. Co-ordinate and harmonize continental efforts in the prevention and combating of international terrorism in all its aspects;
- v. Develop a common defense policy for the Union in accordance with article 4(d) of the Constitutive Act;
- vi. Promote and encourage democratic practice, good governance and the rule of law, protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for the sanctity of human life and international humanitarian law as part of efforts for preventing conflicts.

The PSC establishes an operational framework for the effective implementation of the decisions taken in the areas of conflict prevention, conflict management, conflict resolution, peace-making, peace support operations and intervention as well as peace building and post-conflict reconstruction (AU Protocol, 2004).

The reasons for establishing both the MCPMR and the PSC are a bit dramatically different from why the OAU had to become the AU. The main objective is to reposition Africa for more effective participation in global politics and economy in the post-Cold War era. During



the Cold War, African states were courted by both the East and West in their inordinate ambition to expand their spheres of influence. With the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, foreign investment and aid from the developed world to Africa declined sharply. The impact of the end of the Cold War affected Africa in another significant way. As the two former superpowers seized the opportunity of the end of the Cold War to manufacture new arms, the surplus armaments they stacked up during the Cold War were channeled to the developing world especially Africa, largely through black markets. The weapons fueled intra-state violence in different parts of Africa (Yifei, 2020).

Most of the post-Cold War conflicts in Africa are intrastate in nature. They took place within states rather than between them. The OAU which was formed to contend with the challenges of Cold War conflict dynamics, found it difficult to upgrade its systems to the standards required for dealing with intra-state conflicts of the post-Cold War era. This explains why most of the intra-state conflicts in Africa, except those that happened in the West African sub-region since the late 1980s were left to the UN to deal with it. When the UN failed to come in, the OAU literally folded its hands and at best blame the international community for not responding appropriately as the situation slid from bad to worse. The OAU transformed to AU as part of the larger attempt of African leaders to adjust to the reality of the post-Cold War world (McCormick, 2020).

The attention in the post-Cold War era is shifted to issues of conflict management by the AU which is derives from the realization that it is impossible for any society bedeviled by violent conflict to maximally benefit from political and economic globalization (Ibiek-Jonah, 2001). Violent conflicts rank among the leading factors responsible for Africa's underdevelopment. On February 7, 1993,

the New York Times Newspaper, published a list of 48 countries and potential violent conflicts all over the world. The African countries on the list were Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, Togo, Nigeria, Burundi, Kenya, Zaire, Algeria and Egypt. Things have worsened in Africa since then with Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan, Guinea Bissau, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Togo ravaged by different degrees of violent conflicts. These conflicts have resulted in destruction of lives and property. This kind of violent conflict and even the ones that have not escalated into full blown war unduly divert the attention of government from priority areas of development to the bloated task of internal maintenance of law and order. About \$300 billion is believed to be spent on the war industry annually throughout the world (Boulding, 1990). Africa gulped a sizeable percentage of such resources which would otherwise spend on development projects across the region (Albert, 2007).

As the number of conflicts in Africa increased exponentially, the continent became more marginalized in global politics, economics, science and technology. It was within this framework that Ali Mazrui (1995) observed in global terms, that the African continent has become increasingly marginalized and has been pushed into the ghetto of the world system since the end of the Cold War. Philip Ndegwa also warns not to see the revalorization and marginalization of African states in idle academic terms. It is not a kind of natural and harmless gradual reduction of contacts between African economies and the rest of the world. What the process actually involves is the deepening of the poverty of an already very poor and wretched people, widespread unemployment, hunger, political instability and other economic and social hardships (Ndegwa, 1993).

The western media, most especially the satellite televisions, beam to the rest of the



world pictures illustrating the unsavory consequences of contemporary African development where there is anarchy on the streets, unrepentant warlords boasting of their exploits and threatening to cause more troubles, child soldiers brandishing the latest automatic weapons, dead bodies in different stages of decomposition of city streets, displaced persons carrying what is left of their belongings on their heads and trekking to wherever, futureless orphans in pensive mood, tons of relief material being ferried to the refugees camps and such like happenings all over the place (Albert, 2007).

The western world has not withdrawn completely from African conflicts. They have merely adopted a new approach, which the AU has to learn from. Both the UN and the US now encourage the use of 'preventive diplomacy' for managing conflicts in Africa and elsewhere. The policy of preventive diplomacy was first given official push at the 1992 meeting of the Heads of State and Governments of the United Nations Security Council. Participants at the meeting were enjoined to give future attention to 'analysis and recommendations on ways of strengthening the capacity of the UN for preventive diplomacy, for peacemaking, for peacekeeping and peacebuilding' (cited in Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Boutros Ghali, the former UN General Secretary wrote a chapter in his book, titled "The Agenda for Peace" shortly after his response to this challenge on preventive diplomacy. The report was warmly received by the UN General Assembly in October 1992. Since then, different regional organizations and communities have been encouraged to practice preventive diplomacy as an alternative to engaging in expensive peacekeeping operations (Albert, 2007).

The attitude of the US to the practice of preventive diplomacy is a clear message to African leaders to find better way of dealing with their internal problems before they degenerate into conflict. America is

unwavering in its resolve not to send ground troops to Africa for any combat operations. The US National Security Director, Anthony Lake (1993), affirmed that 'in addition to helping solve disputes, we must also help prevent disputes and place greater emphasis on such tools as mediation and preventive diplomacy'. President Clinton too promised in his mid-1994 speech on Africa to 'help African countries identify and manage problems before they erupt'. He also noted at the Summit of the leaders of the member nation states of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in December 1994 that 'we must work to prevent future Bosnia' (Washington Post, 1994). It is within this framework that preventive diplomacy has become the main plank of the US policy towards Africa (Lund 1999). The MCPMR of the AU is a direct response to all these challenges.

African Union Mechanisms in Managing the Darfur Conflict

The African Union (AU) mechanisms in managing the Darfur conflict has been a subject of debate among scholars, policymakers and practitioners. Some argue that the African Union mechanisms including the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and the High-Level African Union Panel on Darfur (AUPD), made significant contributions in managing the conflict, while others contend that their efforts were limited and ultimately unsuccessful. On the one hand, it can be argued that the African Union mechanisms played an important role in managing the Darfur conflict. For example, apart from the mission facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need, the presence of AMIS troops helped to reduce violence and protect civilians in some areas of Darfur. Furthermore, the AU High-Level Panel on Darfur helped to facilitate peace negotiations between the Sudanese government and the rebel groups which led to a number of agreements aimed at resolving the conflict. In addition, the



African Union also provided a platform for international engagement with the conflict which helped to raise awareness about the situation in Darfur and mobilize support for efforts to address it.

On the other hand, there were criticisms of the AU mechanisms. For instance, AMIS was under-resourced and lacked operational capacity. The mission was criticized for being under-resourced and under-equipped which limited its effectiveness in protecting civilians and monitoring the ceasefire agreement. The AUPD equally faced challenges in implementing its recommendations. Recommendations by the AUPD were not always implemented by the Sudanese government and the rebel groups which limited the impact of the panel's work.

In order to manage the conflict, Chad brokered a humanitarian ceasefire agreement on behalf of African Union in 2004 at N'Djamena (Waal, 2006). Later, the African Union set up a Ceasefire Commission (CFC) and deployed military observers and peacekeepers (AMIS) to monitor the ceasefire in conformity with Article 4 of the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC) Protocol. Despite African Union's efforts, *Janjaweed* and rebel fight continued in Darfur region, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1556 urged the Government of Sudan to conclude a comprehensive peace accord with all the warring factions (UN, Security Council Resolution 1556, 2004). Furthermore, African Union peace talks resumed in August 2004 at Abuja leading to the signing of the protocol on the improvement of humanitarian and security issues in Darfur (AU Protocol, 2004).

Due to intermittent ceasefire violations and other human rights abuses, the UNSC passed another Resolution 1564 pressuring the Government of Sudan to urgently improve the security situation in Darfur, else, it will face the possibility of oil sanctions (AU Protocol, 2004). The security situation in Darfur was relatively

improved with the deployment of about 7,000 AMIS troops. To further bolster the security situation, Canada donated 105 Grizzly Armored Personnel Carriers (APC) to AMIS troops. The African Union adopted several hybrid conflict resolution measures sometimes in consultation with the United Nations and other international bodies to resolve the situation in Darfur. The major parties like the Government of Sudan and the SLM agreed to a permanent ceasefire. They endorsed the comprehensive Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) during the Seventh Round of Talks in Abuja. However, JEM and other splinter groups refused to endorse the DPA (Kosciolek, 2019).

According to Murithi (2012), the initial mandate of AMIS I was to assist the parties in conflict to reach a political settlement. It was also tasked to monitor and observe compliance with the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement; undertake confidence building; facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance; assist internally displaced persons (IDPs) in their camps and eventually facilitate their repatriation; and promote overall security in Darfur. After the initial deployment of the African Union Ceasefire Monitoring Team in Darfur, the AMIS which was deployed in July 2004 to monitor an African Union brokered N'djamena Ceasefire Agreement between the initial two rebel groups and the Government of Sudan and given the continued violence in Darfur, the mission was transformed into a peacekeeping mission. The mission according to its earlier mandate was to have the specific objectives of prioritizing civilian protection, facilitate the safe delivery of humanitarian aid and monitor the N'djamena ceasefire agreement (International Crisis Group, 2005a). The changes in the dynamics of the conflict have necessitated changes in the mandate of the mission to accommodate realities on ground in Darfur.



AMIS I started with 80 military observers in April 2004. It was coordinated by the Darfur Integrated Task Force based at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa and had an operational base in El Fasher, Darfur. AMIS I was deployed with the support of the UN, European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as well as on a bilateral level by the Government of Japan and South Korea. The initial Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) included Gambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Senegal. The Civilian Police Contributing Countries were Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Mauritania, Nigeria, South Africa and Zambia (Murithi, 2012).

While AMIS presence occasionally deterred violence against civilians it did not entirely eliminate its prevalence across the

Darfur region. Indeed, it was incapable of achieving such a feat largely due to its limited mandate and also due to its lack of capacity and adequate resources. Therefore, the African Union’s monitoring mission left much to be desired and a more robust peacekeeping force was required to effectively dissuade the silent genocide that was unfolding in Darfur As attacks on civilians continued unabated and an AMIS mandate changed to accommodate the changing realities, the strength of the force was increased. From a ceasefire monitoring mission with force strength of less than a thousand personnel, AMIS troop level increased to 3,320 for AMIS II and 7,731 for AMIS II-Enhanced as shown in below table (Prunier 2005; Jooma, 2006).

Table 7: Progressive Increase in Strength of AMIS Deployment in Darfur

S/No.	AMIS TYPE	YEAR	NUMBER TROOPS
1	AMIS I	2004	350
2	AMIS II	2005	3,320
3	AMIS II ENHANCED	2006	7,731

Sources: Jooma, 2006

The African Union had a rather weak mandate in Darfur to effectively monitor the humanitarian crisis in the region and coordinate efforts to advance the cause of peace. A Technical Assessment Mission was conducted from 10 to 22 March 2005 with the participation of the UN, EU and United States. The mission concluded that AMIS should be strengthened. Therefore, a more enhanced mandate was issued and an expanded African Union mission was deployed shown in the above table. The transformations were informed by reports of assessment missions conducted by the African Union regarding the mission capability to deliver on its aims and objectives (Murithi, 2012).

Notwithstanding the transformation that AMIS undergone, the security situation in Darfur continue to deteriorate as parties to the conflict did not cease violating the provisions of numerous agreements, they

have entered into. Worst still AMIS lacks the capability to enforce those agreements (Saka, 2006). Additionally, AMIS played a key role in supporting the peace process and promoting dialogue between and amongst the parties to the conflict. Despite the altruistic efforts of the mission, the conflict in Darfur persisted and continued to escalate, with both the government and rebel groups committing widespread atrocities against civilians. In light of the continued challenges and limitations, AMIS was eventually replaced by the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur known as (UNAMID) in December 2007.

Agaba (2022) posits that apart from the military approach to the Darfur conflict, the AU equally adopted other peaceful mechanisms for conflict management. Specifically, on September 15, 2005 a number of African leaders mediated



between the representatives of the Sudanese government and the two major rebel groups, that is the SLM and the JEM. Also, notable African leaders at different times have had talks with the leading forces with the view to stopping the violent conflict. Despite the kinetic and non-kinetic approaches applied by AU, the conflict took a pragmatic destructive dimension as the use of arms by the conflicting parties intensified. The speed and scale of its occurrence and unprecedented dimensions are what in most cases attracted the interest of the international community. The constant confrontations by the disputants pose a threat to civilians and their properties as the conflict endangers the peace and stability of Darfur region of Sudan (Agaba, 2022). In an apparent effort to manage the Darfur conflict, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operation, Alain Le Roy expressed his deep frustration that everyone including the government, the rebel movements and the international community had failed to muster the political will to address the lingering conflict in Darfur. He observed that the lack of forward movement in Darfur was deeply distressing because of the human suffering that had occurred in the intervening years. He added that it was deeply frustrating because elements for a solution to the conflict had in many ways not held accountable. He urged the government to take serious concessions and illustrate its commitment to Darfur peace agreement through active investment in its people and infrastructure. On the other hand, he appealed to rebel groups to take the interests of their people the sole priority, make compromise among themselves and agree on a veritable platform for discussions (Martinelli, 2017). Above all, Alain Le Roy stated that the channel to peace and the sacrifices required to achieve it would come from the Sudanese people themselves, who bore the ultimate responsibility for bringing

stability to Darfur. At the same time, the international community, particularly countries in the region should play central role in creating the conditions that would help the Darfurians address those challenges by providing concrete incentives to reach agreement and guarantees that new agreements would be implemented (UN Security Council 6170th Meeting, 2009). The Under-Secretary-General pointed out that the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council must call upon the various warring parties to the conflict to mobilize the will and capacity to reach a negotiated political agreement which would effectively end the marginalization of Darfur (McCormick, 2020).

While the DPA offered a step towards ending the carnage, the AU was unable to restore peace in Darfur. The AMIS troops lacked the robust mandate and capacity to enforce AU decisions. Politically, the AU and her mediators were unable to accommodate other factional rebels into the DPA. With the UN taken over the Darfur mission from AMIS in December 2007, it was a clear indication that the AU's capacity was inadequate. Hence, the AU need to develop capacity for peace support operations in Africa if it is to mediate in subsequent conflict in the continent. Given the fragility of the DPA, the UN provided a robust mission under Chapter VII of the UN Charter (2007 (Darfur-UNAMID-Background, 2009).

Challenges of African Union Mechanisms in Managing the Darfur Conflict

The conflict in Darfur region of Western Sudan has been one of the most significant challenges faced by the African Union (AU) in recent years. The African Union's efforts to manage the conflict was hampered by limited financial and logistical resources to address the conflict in Darfur. This has made it difficult for the African Union to deploy and sustain large peacekeeping forces in the region. The



African Union member states have different political interests and priorities which have made it difficult for the organization to speak with a unified voice on the conflict in Darfur. Some member states have supported the Sudanese government, while others have supported the rebels (Agaba, 2022).

The African Union struggled to reach a consensus on the best approach to addressing the conflict in Darfur region. Some member states have favored a more aggressive approach, while others have favored a more diplomatic approach. The African Union peacekeeping forces deployed in Darfur have been targeted by various armed groups operating in the region. This has made it difficult for the African Union to protect civilians and stabilize the situation on the ground. The Sudanese government has been reluctant to cooperate with the African Union in addressing the conflict in Darfur. This has made it difficult for the African Union to implement its peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts effectively (Agaba, 2022).

Saka and Omede (2014) pointed out that the apparent failure of AMIS to carry out its mission mandate stems from the many problems confronting the AU and its peacekeeping operation in Darfur. Prominent among such problems according to Saka and Omede (2014) is the issue of inadequate funds available to the AU and its mission in Darfur. They argued that it is an open secret that the greater portion of the funds for running of the AMIS came from foreign donors, important of which are the United States, the European Union, the Nordic Countries, Canada and host of other bilateral donors. Although, AU received bulk of the funding from Canada, the European Union, Germany, United Kingdom and the United States of America (USA), the mission was still underfunded. AU Peace and Security Directorate (2008) pointed out that of the US\$570 million proposed for its 2005

budget, AU member states only approved US\$158.4 million, a little more than a quarter of what was requested. Of this amount, US\$63 million came from member states contributions which support the AU's operational and running costs. For the remaining nearly US\$100 million, the AU Commission relied on voluntary contributions from member states, that is, the key donors being Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Nigeria and South Africa. Each of whom contributed 15 percent of the budget and also grants received from external donors. International Colloquium report (2012) posits that, over 90% of the AU's peace and security efforts are funded by external actors. However, the AU's lack of influence over external interventions led by the UN Security Council and its five permanent members, that is, the United States (US), China, Russia, France, and United Kingdom, who often have their own parochial interests, has sometimes resulted in undesirable outcomes (Nikitin, 2010).

An evaluation of the AU mechanisms reveals that the establishment of the Conflict Management Centre (CMC) and AMIS was timely done in the right circumstances and with the right intentions. The CMC and AMIS helped to reduce the conflagration in Darfur. However, the DPA relies too much on the Government of Sudan to implement many of the agreement's provisions. For example, the Government of Sudan was solely responsible for disarming the Janjaweed despite its failure to comply with earlier commitments. An additional constraint is in the weakness of the AU's mechanisms to undertake the implementation of the DPA. For instance, the verification of the disarmament of the Janjaweed and the rebel militia was a herculean task to the mechanisms. Furthermore, the enforcement of buffer zones, the maintenance of humanitarian corridors and the separation of the warring parties overwhelmed AMIS because its capacity and capability were limited due to lack of



funds, equipment and political will among others (Human Rights Watch, 2006).

This situation was further compounded by the fact that the continental body clearly lack oversight over most of the member states when it comes to governance issues, meaning that it is unable to determine which governance factors should be considered when taking decision to intervene in a conflict situation (Mentan & Agbor, 2013). Because of this factor, AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) was unclear due to the different views of the members of the AU about the mission's purpose. Hence, AU admitted its limitation and joined with the UN in a UN-AU Hybrid Mission in Darfur (Nikitin, 2010).

Jooma (2006) stated that from the political legitimacy angle, there was also the suspicion among warring parties to the conflict and civilians alike that AMIS was bias towards the Government of Sudan and SLM/Minnawi faction. Whether perceived or real, the sense of partiality eroded every sense of neutrality and transparency that AMIS has among the groups that were not signatory to the Abuja agreement (Informant 24 & 25). As AMIS troops became demoralized and fearful, they attempted less civilian and humanitarian delivery protection. The tactful commendations of AU efforts that came from various quarters in the beginning of the mission were replaced by cynicism and increasing awareness that the AMIS was under-funded, under-manned, ill equipped and is failing more than ever before. The conclusion was that the AU mission has virtually collapsed as a force to reckon with in Darfur (Jooma, 2006).

A peaceful settlement in Darfur was not helped by the issuance of arrest warrant for President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir. The AU was in favor of security guarantees for him and felt that progress in negotiations should take precedence over judicial procedures. The regional body believed that the International Criminal Court (ICC) ignored Arab and African efforts to manage the

conflict. Basically, the AU encountered challenges of shortage of resources, poor planning, management capacity, inadequate personnel, funds, organic logistical base, equipment, training, expertise, experience, lack of good modern communication tools and organizational structure. This soiled the credibility, transparency, authority and reliability of the AU. The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) was also hampered by impediments of the host country which was not supportive (Saka & Omede, 2014). Another problem is that African leaders are suspicious of one another. The AU's mission in Darfur was unclear due to the different views of the members of the AU about the mission's purpose (Nikitin, 2010). The internal divisions between member states undermined the credibility and transparency of the AU as the main political mediator. These divisions were reflected within the AU mediation team (Africa Briefing Report, 2011).

The worsening security situation in Darfur resulted in the renewed call on the UN to intervene directly in Darfur through the deployment of a more robust peacekeeping mission. Even though, the Government of Sudan tenuously resisted UN intervention but with strong international pressure, Khartoum resistance was subdued and the joint United Nations-African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) was deployed (Saka & Omede, 2014). With the UN takeover of the Darfur mission, the UNSC called for up to 20,000 UN peacekeepers. Nevertheless, the Government of Sudan consistently opposed to UN troops in Sudan (Kosciolek, 2019). Overall, these challenges made it difficult for the AU to manage the conflict in Darfur region effectively (Saka & Omede, 2014).

Notwithstanding the shortcomings of AMIS during the period it was deployed and the failure of the DPA to serve as the foundation for sustainable peace, the AU rose up to the challenges of the conflict in



Darfur and demonstrated a strong political will to provide leadership in its efforts at promoting peace and stability in Darfur region (Nikitin, 2010).

3. Recommendations on ways to Improve African Union Conflict Management Mechanisms for Future Challenges

The study recommends the following:

- i. African Union should devise ways of raising funds for the smooth operation of the organization. This research has shown that without funds, the organization can do little or nothing to achieve its objectives.
- ii. African Union leaders should be encouraged to speak with one voice. Divergent views will render the conflict management mechanisms ineffective. There should be cooperation, unity and collaboration among member states.
- iii. Effort should be made by the AU to bring all parties to the conflict on board. Dialogue should be encouraged at different levels among the feuding parties. All ceasefire agreements signed and endorsed by the various parties must be respected. There should be an enforcing mechanism by the AU to ensure that all agreements freely and voluntarily entered by parties to the conflict are fully implemented.
- iv. African Union should scrutinize any donation or foreign aid to the organization to avoid being manipulated and influenced by foreign powers based on their parochial interest. The AU should explore more partnership with the UN to achieve peace in Africa.
- v. African Union should always ensure that there is always a robust mandate before troops are deployed to conflict zones. Without a comprehensive mandate, it will be difficult for the mission to succeed.
- vi. African Union should promote good governance among African Heads of State and Government as this will bring development in the region. The

continental body should not hesitate to sanction bad governance particularly member countries with human right abuse and crime against humanity as enshrine in the Constitutive Act. When there is good governance in African countries, there will be peace and development.

4. Conclusion

There is a lot of lessons to be learnt from the Darfur conflict and the effort made by the AU to restore peace in the war-torn region. The effectiveness of the AU mechanisms in managing the Darfur conflict has been a subject of debate among scholars, policymakers and practitioners. The AU mechanisms including the AMIS and the AU High-Level Panel on Darfur made significant contributions in managing the conflict. Apart from the mission facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need, the presence of AMIS troops helped to reduce violence and protect civilians in some areas of Darfur. The AU High-Level Panel on Darfur helped to facilitate peace negotiations between the Sudanese government and the rebel groups which led to a number of agreements aimed at managing the conflict. In addition, the AU also provided a platform for international engagement with the conflict, which helped to raise awareness about the actual situation in Darfur and mobilized international support for efforts to address it.

It is worthy of note, however, that AMIS was faced with incredible and daunting challenges resulting in its inability to halt the violence in Darfur. These were attributed to the growing cost of maintaining the mission, inadequate troops strength and material inadequacies which hampered the Darfur peace support operation. These among others brought up the need for the transition of AMIS, an AU initiative to a UN operation in 2007. The study concluded that despite the weaknesses and challenges of the AU in



managing the conflict, the success story of the UN in Darfur region cannot be analysed without taking cognizance into the amount of effort invested by AU in the conflict.

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