



**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
IN AFRICA**
A Permanent Challenge

EDITED BY
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AND
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DEVELOPMENT CENTRE SEMINARS

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DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
OF THE ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Un défi permanent



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Foreword

This book is the result of a joint undertaking by the OECD Development Centre and the Development Assistance Committee in the context of the Centre's research on Sustainable Growth in the Poorer Countries: Political Economy and Development in Africa. The research, this volume and the conference which led to it received the generous financial support of the Government of Switzerland, to which thanks is duly extended.

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Preface

Violent conflict has reversed or prevented economic and social development in many countries, particularly in Africa. Countries in conflict or emerging from conflict constitute a majority of those furthest from internationally-agreed goals for economic well-being, social development and environmental sustainability. In addition, socio-economic disparities and injustices are persistent features of most conflict-prone and war-torn societies. For these reasons, the OECD Development Centre and Development Assistance Committee (DAC) have placed a high priority on seeking a better understanding of the underlying causes and dynamics of conflict with the objective of providing guidance for more effective conflict resolution. This work has resulted in both meetings and publications, including Development Centre Studies and DAC reports and policy statements.

The present volume contains selected proceedings from our joint conference on the role of the international community in conflict prevention held at the OECD in Paris on 3-4 April 1997 and provides a wide range of analyses by academics and practitioners. The conference provided a valuable opportunity for a broadly-based dialogue on the subsequently adopted DAC Guidelines on “Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation”.

Social and political tensions are an inherent part of societal relations and the development process. These tensions need to be managed in a non-violent manner through the appropriate means of governance. A commitment to acknowledging various groups’ interests and concerns can be particularly important in situations of potential conflict in order to encourage groups and individuals to participate more widely in civil society and to prevent their marginalisation. A lesson drawn from the South African experience is that democracy can make an essential contribution to conflict prevention and resolution when its institutions acknowledge and accommodate diversity.

This volume demonstrates that a great deal of learning remains to be done if the international community is to play a more effective role in helping to prevent and resolve violent conflict. The international community should be modest, yet creative,

in its approach to conflict prevention. It should be aware that it can cause harm, and even “do the right thing in the wrong way”. It should, in particular, be flexible, seizing opportunities to support peacebuilding when they occur, and be guided by a longer-term perspective: consolidating peace and local capacities for conflict prevention and resolution. In doing so, special attention should be paid to the role of youth and women, who in different ways can be both victims of violent conflict and vectors of peace.

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President
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Development Assistance Committee

April 1998

PART ONE

INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW

Improving Analysis and Action

Hélène Grandvoininnet and Hartmut Schneider

Introduction

The main objective of the conference “Policies for Conflict Prevention: The Role of the International Community”, organised jointly by the Development Centre and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), was to serve as a forum for discussions between Africans from the political and academic spheres and members of the donor community. The principal bases for the discussions were the Development Centre’s case studies of 12 African countries — studies which focused on the social and economic determinants of political stability or instability — and the thinking and findings of the DAC Task Force on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation.

In these two series of studies, the conflicts analysed are principally those occurring within a state, and the geographical zone studied is sub-Saharan Africa.

Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution

As a preliminary, it was pointed out that the term “conflict prevention” calls for an explanation. Conflicts are inherent in human relations, for two essential reasons. First, individuals or groups have different values, needs and interests. Second, as most resources are available only in limited quantities, access to them must be organised. These two factors inherently generate conflicts. The latter are not necessarily destructive. Indeed, they can even lead to innovation and technical or social ingenuity. What must be avoided above all is the deterioration of a normal conflictual situation into crisis or violent conflict. It is not a matter of preventing conflicts, which are inherent in human relations, but of managing them so that they do not degenerate into political violence or major humanitarian disasters, with extremely high human and economic costs.

“Conflict prevention” thus corresponds in fact to conflict management and peace-building efforts. The term “conflict” will be used here in its common meaning of violent conflict or crisis, and the term “tension” for non-violent conflicts.

The international community has two roles to play in conflict prevention. It must endeavour to improve its analysis of tensions and conflicts: lack of analysis, or biased or incomplete analysis, is detrimental to both understanding and action. It must also evaluate the consequences of its activity and co-ordinate its policies so as to help build peace.

Improving Understanding and Analysis of Conflicts

Characteristics of Conflicts and the Complexity of Situations

Colletta and Nezam (in this volume) recall the main characteristics of recent conflicts in Africa. These conflicts occur within a state, although they often have consequences for some neighbouring countries or even the entire region, and they are often associated with ethnic cleavages. Their impact can be highly diverse within a single state, which can create major distortions between regions. These conflicts engender extreme violence which can lead to massive population movements (refugees and displaced persons). They are particularly harmful for women and children, an impact which is partly linked to the militarisation of societies in conflict as well as to the extensive use of anti-personnel mines. In many conflict-ridden societies, the state has lost all or part of its control over the country’s territory, and a loss of social capital is observed as the public authority collapses.

Improving our understanding of conflicts involves first of all an examination of conflict situations at all stages of their development. In the case of open conflict, the analysis should not be limited to immediate study of the various phases of the crisis. This type of analysis is necessarily retrospective. Moreover, societies which have experienced conflicts should not be the only ones studied, and the possibility of open conflict even in societies considered stable should always be taken into account. For all that, classification of conflict situations into three periods — pre-conflict, the conflict itself and post-conflict — although it may be convenient for purposes of analysis, cannot easily explain a complex reality. Different conflicts at different stages can co-exist within a single state, and the fragility of a society which has just undergone a major conflict can transform a post-conflict period into a new pre-conflict period. It is thus appropriate to avoid mechanical classification of these situations, which are characterised by their diversity.

Another fundamental aspect to be taken into account in analysing conflicts is the uniqueness of each situation. A corollary to this is the need for a close acquaintance with the area studied, which allows one to put into perspective the various factors which may have influenced the genesis of a crisis. Early warning systems based on observation of the tensions within a society should be established in order to allow

early intervention and to try to avoid the outbreak of crises, which can rapidly become uncontrollable. Here, local or international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) present in the field can be relevant sources of information on the situation which prevails at a given time. As Brodnig (in this volume) emphasises, non-violent events such as strikes, recurrent social unrest and boycotts are so many signs of discontent and tension within a society, which should be taken into consideration in order to prevent violent outbursts. Most violent conflicts have begun with these non-violent events.

Analysis of conflict requires a holistic approach. Conventional analyses recognise three categories of violent conflict: conflicts of identity, based on racial, religious or ethnic differences; conflicts connected with resources, including conflicts generated by competition for the control of natural resources or the distribution of wealth; and conflicts over the management of public affairs, linked to unequal distribution of power or of access to the decision-making process.

The conference discussions demonstrated that many factors come into play in the outbreak of a conflict. Although the impact of certain factors — be they geopolitical, historical or linked to the perception of history, cultural or even environmental — varies from one situation to another, two appear to have a major and systematic influence on conflicts: the state's politico-institutional structure and the social cohesiveness of its population. We will examine each of these two categories of explanatory factors in turn. Study of the fundamental determinants of conflicts should not, however, make us forget that in a crisis, proximity and contagion effects play a large role in the development and exacerbation of tensions.

The Various Factors of Conflict

Geopolitical explanations of conflicts were particularly relevant to certain conflicts of the cold war, such as that in Mozambique, where RENAMO was supported by South Rhodesia until that country became independent, and then by South Africa, as well as by interest groups hostile to the communist ideology of FRELIMO (see Goudie, in this volume). With the end of the Cold War and of the concomitant division of the world into two camps, however, geopolitical explanations have taken a back seat. For all that, the impact of external intervention and pressure in certain recent conflicts should not be neglected, whether these interventions were motivated by concern for security and regional stability, by rivalries between states or by states' determination to protect their geopolitical or economic interests. Nevertheless, the new configuration of international relations and the major social, political and economic changes experienced by African societies have shifted the focus of analysis to the explanatory factors observed *within* conflict-ridden states.

In analysing a conflict, an acquaintance with the history of the society concerned is essential. To understand a given situation, one must study it over a period of time in order to identify and understand the legacies of history which can throw light on the present. The historical factors which can explain certain characteristics of contemporary

African societies often date from the colonial period. In Uganda, for example, the colonial power favoured the Buganda people, granting them power and control over land at the expense of other ethnic groups, and this created inter-group rivalries (see Stewart *et al.*, 1998). They may also be intimately linked to differing perceptions of recent history: the memory of a conflict and the fears engendered by that memory have psychological consequences for individuals and groups which weaken societies, sometimes over the long term.

Another factor contributing to social fragility is environmental degradation, analysed by Brodnig (in this volume). The processes of environmental degradation confer increasing importance on access to certain natural resources (land, water, minerals). In general, access to resources is a fundamental dimension of conflicts. The desire for land redistribution was often a motivating force in the national liberation struggles in the period of African independence, and it remains a central factor of conflict situations in various countries. In Zimbabwe, the land issue is the potential source of two categories of conflict: conflict between the white minority, which was allocated the best lands in the colonial period, and the black majority; and conflict within the black community, since the Shona people are highly concentrated in the region of Mashonaland, which has a much higher potential for productive commercial agriculture than do the other regions, where the majority of the Ndebele live (see Goudie, in this volume).

In various African countries, tensions linked to natural resource management have been exacerbated in recent years by the disappearance of traditional mechanisms for handling disputes between nomads and sedentary peoples, by droughts, by demographic pressures and by inappropriate land development policies (see Touré, in this volume). To avoid these conflicts over access to scarce or dwindling resources, it is necessary to pay special attention to these problems, which by definition are not static. In a situation of shortage, conflicts of interest may be exacerbated — a process which favours violent conflicts. The link between these conflicts and the scarcity of resources can be direct and immediate, e.g. in conflicts over land ownership, or indirect, through the social upheavals which result from certain types of environmental degradation: for example, migratory phenomena, if not organised, are sometimes synonymous with deterioration of the urban environment.

Cultural differences within a society are often singled out as the main cause of conflicts. Brodnig (in this volume) considers the various aspects of culture and conflict, as well as the relations between them. In general, the participants agreed that a multi-cultural society is not necessarily unstable, just as the scarcity of a resource does not necessarily lead to crisis. Rivalries between groups are inherent in social relations. They create conflict only if certain groups consider that their identities are threatened, or if these differences are used for political ends.

In the first case, the perception of a threat is often linked to the lack of minority rights, which deprives many people of the possibility of living according to their culture and its outward expression. A major challenge for contemporary African societies is to include minority rights in their constitutions, laws and systems of justice and to

recognise these rights in their systems of government and their political cultures. In this respect, the case of South Africa is particularly interesting. The transition from the apartheid system to a fledgling democracy was based not on ignorance but on recognition of the country's cultural diversity and of the need to manage this diversity. The constitution of South Africa today recognises 11 official languages. More significantly, educational programmes for peace have been established at all levels, from the pre-school stage to secondary education. South African society has become aware of the need to take its diversity into account, to make it better known, to broaden it and finally to transcend it by promoting values and instruments common to all citizens. South African teams have even been asked to export this conception, and they are considered effective in this field (see Nathan, in this volume).

The second case, the use of ethnicity for political ends, illustrates the complexity of many conflicts which are described as ethnic in nature but in which analysis reveals multiple causes and subjacent factors. The Touareg rebellion in northern Mali (see Rospabe, 1997), often presented as an ethnic conflict, was essentially motivated by the inequitable distribution of public spending within the country and by internal tensions in Touareg society, resulting from President Traore's alliance with the Touareg aristocracy at a time when many young people out of school, hired as mercenaries in the Libyan army, returned to Mali armed but with no future prospects. This conflict is thus related to a social factor within Touareg society and to an economic dimension within Mali. Moreover, it cannot be analysed out of its wider context, namely the difficulty of establishing a democracy in a country where the army had held power for 30 years.

These factors may have an impact on the outbreak of conflict, but they are not necessarily present. Others, however, may be considered as systemic causes of the outbreak of a crisis: the mismanagement of public affairs and the resulting socio-economic distortions.

Systemic Causes

A society's politico-institutional configuration is of major importance to its structural stability (see Nsengiyaremye and Gakusi, in this volume). Observation shows that the risk of conflict is high in a society which lacks structures for popular participation in public decision making and which is characterised by the seizure of power for the personal enrichment of a small group. The intense frustration felt by excluded individuals and groups, and the lack of cohesiveness of the nation-state — or even the lack of any unifying national feeling — may be considered a systemic cause of open conflict. In the absence of mediating structures and in the context of a schism between the state and civil society, conflicts of interest can degenerate into violent conflicts. Violence is sometimes considered the only means of expressing disagreement with a non-democratic government and of calling it into question. In this respect, the lack of decentralisation is an aggravating factor, since decentralisation would allow citizens some influence over local political management. In this type of situation, culture can

be central to the conflict, either through a minority — or even majority — group's assertion of its claims against the group in power, or through the exploitation of cultural and especially ethnic factors by an authoritarian government, which by fanning the flames of hatred seeks to rally its supporters or to eliminate the opposition forces, as has been seen in Rwanda (see Gakunzi, in this volume).

Mismanagement of public affairs is also characterised by predatory management of resources. In authoritarian regimes, public spending is generally allocated so as to maintain the ruling class in power. For example, urban populations are generally favoured over rural ones, because the former's physical proximity to the decision-making centres places them in a better position to express their dissatisfaction. Similarly, priority is given to military spending, which serves more often to maintain order within a country's boundaries than to defend its territory. Thus, most expenditures are carried out to benefit the ruling elite, and this benefit can also be direct (corruption). This allocation of spending operates at the expense of investment in human capital (education, health), which is of overwhelming importance to the population. This analysis can be refined: while spending on primary education seems to favour stability and inhibit political violence, spending on secondary education — the benefits of which are felt first by urban elite groups — can favour political instability (see Azam, 1997). A budget is a political document which reflects the relative strengths of the various social groups. It must be rendered transparent as regards both public spending and public receipts, with the object of reducing the profits granted to elite groups and promoting economic growth through more equitable access to resources. Greater equity, as certain economies of Southeast Asia have demonstrated, has the two-fold advantage of allowing more balanced growth and simultaneously increasing political and social stability.

Inefficient or inequitable management of the mechanisms governing access to resources, whether these resources be economic or socio-cultural, is thus a major cause of conflict. Social and political stability requires social justice and an inclusive political system. Good governance — characterised by participation, the rule of law and access mechanisms which make social equity possible — constitutes the foundation of a society capable of managing its conflicts without resort to violence.

Economics and Conflict

The question of whether resource distribution is or is not a source of conflict within a society leads us to study the economic determinants of conflict. The goal is not to find a reductive, universal explanation of conflict, but to unearth any existing rational processes related to the economic choices of individuals, instead of observing irrational processes. Our investigation will address the impact of underdevelopment and of the development process on conflicts, and particularly the impact of market transition and poverty. This analysis will be illustrated with examples from the Development Centre case studies. These studies followed two principles: first, several countries in the same geographical area and having a certain number of common

characteristics were studied together, so as to concentrate the analysis on the socio-economic differences which determine political stability or instability; second, these countries were studied over the long term, so as to understand the situation better and to put it into perspective. These studies will allow us to make a better appraisal of the economic causes and costs of conflicts, without reducing these aspects to mere numerical data which cannot capture the complexity of conflicts. In any case, the scope of such quantitative analyses is limited by the lack of reliable or complete data, especially in periods of open conflict or during the period immediately following a conflict.

Underdevelopment, Development and Conflicts

Underdevelopment may be considered a source of tension. This tension may be managed by appropriate institutional structures which avert degeneration into open conflict, but without economic growth there can be no generalised access to health, education and other elements of social well-being. Moreover, the less the population benefits from a system, the less interest it has in the survival of that system. Profits derived from a functioning economy create an interest in avoiding conflict, which will prove more costly than management of tension even if the latter process requires some compromises.

The cases of Kenya and Uganda provide good illustrations of this point (see Stewart *et al.*, 1998). From the independence of these two countries in the 1960s until the recent past, Kenyan society had been politically far more stable than Ugandan society, despite the social and cultural similarities between the two. It seems that the principal reason for stability in Kenyan society was the creation of economic interests among the people, based on relative prosperity which was shared more equitably than in neighbouring Uganda. The Kenyan economy was thus much more integrated than that of Uganda. Each of the two countries has an ethnic group which is economically dominant and geographically localised — the Kikuyu in Kenya and the Buganda in Uganda — but in Kenya, owing to dynamic interregional trade, there was no incentive for any sort of regional autonomy, and the presence of a relatively large middle class (urban workers of the formal and informal sectors, farmers with medium-sized holdings) worked in favour of stability. The entire Kenyan middle class had a great deal to lose in a conflict, including the members of the Kikuyu ethnic group at a time when the state was dominated by non-Kikuyu. (Under the Moi government the Kikuyu, though excluded from politics, have retained their economic privileges.)

In Uganda, the cost of conflict was in fact lower. In view of the importance of the income generated by the agricultural sector, the weakness of infrastructure and industry, and the low level of social and economic spending, a large segment of the population did not perceive the possibility of the state's collapsing after a conflict as a potential disaster. This segment, moreover, did not feel itself truly to be part of a unified state, since there was no unifying national consciousness. Elite groups, in contrast, regarded control over the state as essential, in view of the slim possibilities for economic development. It cannot be concluded that a declining economy caused

the civil war in Uganda, since all of the major conflicts took place after a favourable economic period. Rather, the conflicts may be explained by the fact that groups excluded from power need to retake power in order to control the few resources which exist.

Economic development, particularly if it is equitable, gives a larger proportion of the population an interest in having a system that functions. Development is thus not only a goal in itself, but also a means of reducing the risk of conflict. The development process itself, however, may be defined as a process of tension management. The substantial changes which it brings to societies give rise to tension: they create winners and losers, and the latter tend to group together to hold back the development process or openly to oppose it in order to retain even small advantages or entitlements. For this reason, any development process should be accompanied by strategies for monitoring the risks of conflict and by the creation or strengthening of structures to devote media coverage to them.

The Role of the Market

Development requires market-oriented reforms. Bardhan (1997) analyses the ambiguous effect of the reforms and of market expansion on conflicts, highlighting both the factors which relieve tension and those which exacerbate it. Market reforms can help to reduce the risk of crisis by leaving more scope for individual initiative and bringing about a new distribution of wealth. Through the market, opportunities for profit exist at the level of the individual, and this — by reducing the effectiveness of social norms within groups, particularly ethnic groups — gives the individual a better chance of emerging from a group. Moreover, the market makes ethnic discrimination more costly, since market development works to the detriment of all controls and regulations. Finally, the reduction of rent due to the reduced role of the state can limit the tension stemming from various actors' attempts to appropriate this rent, while the growth of wealth facilitates compromise between groups.

Liberalisation can also be associated, however, with growing inequality, social dislocation and fragmentation, and the fears which these phenomena engender within groups. The danger is that the transition from a traditional clan system or a heavily regulated system to the market will favour the wealthiest people. A major risk is that those whom the reform process has placed in difficulties or left by the wayside will fall back on their primary allegiances, thus raising tension. Reallocation of resources, for example, is synonymous with the dismantling of declining activities, and certain groups do not have the human capital or the access to credit needed to adapt to new technologies and opportunities. At the same time, the diminished role of government reduces the possibilities for insuring these vulnerable groups. It is thus more difficult to prevent conflict through redistributive policies and transfers, while integration of the economy into international capital and goods markets limits the state's economic policy options, thus diminishing its ability to act as a mediator of the tension that may arise. Finally, the great changes which traditional societies undergo in adopting market mechanisms can overwhelm existing equilibria. For example, a frequent cause of tension or conflict following market reforms hinges on the value of land. Land

traditionally used according to informal rules by certain communities may increase in value, and the resulting pressure to privatise it can deprive the poorest strata of their traditional rights.

Market reforms are often the objective of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), the effects of which on conflict situations are much debated. SAPs are often connected with the outbreak or exacerbation of conflicts, and particularly of ethnic conflicts (which, as we have seen, often correspond to conflicts of interest between groups). It should be emphasised that the introduction of economic reforms often triggers conflicts for which the potential already existed, and that these reforms are generally introduced in critical situations which might have given rise to conflict even if no action had been taken. SAPs are important for long-term economic growth; it is their short-term consequences which need to be taken into consideration in order to avoid social effects often characterised by riots and shows of discontent by those who lose from the reforms.

A major criticism of SAPs bears on their technocratic aspect, their distance from the concerns of the people, since the process of their conception and implementation does not rely on local capacity. In this respect, SAPs have sometimes been considered as representing the convergence of the interests of local government and of external powers which desire the maintenance of economic stability. This feeling, added to the frustrations of the transition period, has given rise to tension and sometimes to violence. By contrast, the SAP implemented in Burkina Faso under the Compaoré government is a good example of economic reform carried out without violence, owing to a desire to develop a sense of national ownership of this reform: the government itself wrote the main lines of the SAP, after having consulted the people (see Azam, 1997). This democratic approach made it possible to attenuate the negative effects of the process, and would seem to be preferable in a context of high political risk.

In the short and medium term, the major problem which weakens and destabilises states under an adjustment programme is linked to the volume and allocation of public spending. First, the slightest suggestion of redistribution of rents may not alleviate but rather create tensions linked to the growing dissatisfaction of elite groups and their opposition to the SAP. Second, the goal of reducing fiscal deficits often results — apart from limiting the government's manoeuvring room for political choices — in a reduction of social spending, which is severe both in the short term and, if it lasts, in the medium and long term (the cuts in the education budget in particular make it impossible to develop the local capacities essential to economic development and to peace building). Finally, SAPs can affect different groups, ethnic groups or communities unequally. If they do not allow for the economic integration of the entire population, the marginalisation of a part of the population becomes a factor of political and social risk. Redistribution of wealth can be synonymous with serious tension: one consequence of the reforms in Tanzania, a country which has long been stable politically, was the genesis and development of a racist discourse directed against the Indian community, whose more developed economic base enabled it to buy most of the privatised enterprises (see Stewart *et al.*, 1998).

Poverty and Conflict

The implementation of SAPs (in particular because of devaluations and falling incomes) can also lead to deeper poverty or to the appearance of new groups of poor, particularly in urban areas, as a result of increasing inequality. These phenomena should be foreseen and alleviated, especially since urban populations are the most usual source of conflict.

The relationships between poverty and conflict are complex, whether one considers the poverty connected with underdevelopment or the poverty phenomena which accompany structural market reforms. Although poverty may be considered a cause of conflict, it cannot be assimilated to conflict. It is essential, however, to determine the role of poverty in triggering conflicts and the impact of poverty reduction on political stability, above all in a continent where half of the population survives on less than a dollar a day. Although statistical study of the links between poverty and conflict is not always conclusive, the conference participants seemed convinced that poverty, which is linked to inequality, injustice and violations of human rights, is frequently a determining factor in the outbreak of conflict.

Poverty is a cause of conflict when it gives rise to frustration and despair, which can lead to violence — all the more so since the lack of personal possessions and of economic interests which is inherent in indigence lowers the material risk involved in the outbreak of conflict. This does not mean that poverty in itself is a systemic cause of conflict, as witness the situations of very poor countries in which there are no open conflicts. Moreover, most of the poor live in the countryside, whereas almost all conflicts begin in urban areas, since the goal of conflict is often accession to political power and distribution of the spoils.

Irrespective of the stage of conflict, political decisions concerning action and intervention to manage conflict should be based on a thorough analysis of the situation.

Action by the International Community

The Context

The international community's work in conflict management and peace building is an evolving process. By way of introduction, it must be recalled that the context of this action is not the same in the 1990s as in earlier periods. The economic and geopolitical upheavals we have witnessed have had an ambiguous impact on the position of both public opinion and governments concerning conflicts. The notion — fairly widespread in western civil societies hit by crisis — that developed countries should deal with their own problems explains the declining trend in the volume of aid, which necessitates a counterbalancing improvement in its efficiency. On the other hand, economic globalisation has contributed to donor countries' interest in the stability of

developing countries, which is now both a moral obligation and a political reality: the need to avoid cutting oneself off from trade opportunities and the determination to avoid the cross-border problems which may be connected with conflict (refugees, increased drug trafficking and so on). Another factor with ambiguous effects is the end of the Cold War, which has stripped conflicts of much of their ideological and geopolitical interest, but has also resulted in the refusal of public opinion to tolerate the risk to human life involved in sending troops as peace-keeping or intervention forces. Paradoxically, although public opinion reacts negatively to the prospect of intervention, it tends to support action in the most extreme and hence the most dangerous situations, for it is these which receive extensive media coverage. This leads governments to limit as much as possible the risks to their soldiers' lives, using sophisticated and costly means. This set of factors has led to ill-prepared actions or actions impaired by a lack of information about the context. The international community's intervention in Somalia may be considered as an archetype of such actions: its failure has marked the present attitude of the United Nations (UN) and of the international community concerning intervention during a crisis.

The intervention in Somalia (see Jan, in this volume) affords many lessons on the risks of an external intervention which has unforeseen side effects. Not only did the foreign interventions fail to end the conflicts among the various Somali factions, they also had negative economic and social consequences. The UN operation was unable to formulate a coherent strategy from its general mandate, and in fact was reduced to a series of *ad hoc* efforts with no linkages to the country's economy and institutions. The donors' financial contribution had a negative impact on exchange rates, while the physical presence and economic impact of the UN mission in the region of Mogadishu enriched the clan of General Aidid, who controlled that part of the country and who was considered one of the principal opponents of peace. In addition, the UN and the bilateral donors which succeeded it, through their intervention in regions which had not been in conflict, helped to extend the fighting into these regions, which their resources had made attractive. Attempts to rehabilitate governmental structures also failed. In particular, efforts to decentralise government, with a view to supporting local structures intended to weaken the faction leaders, were not conclusive. The district and regional councils were not generated by a local process but were imposed from outside. As a result, the composition of these councils took no account of the traditional distribution of authority among the various groups in Somali society, e.g. the status of the elders. Finally, the administrative borders of these local structures no longer corresponded to the real territorial divisions between the Somali clans. Consequently, the local structures suffered from a clear lack of legitimacy and could not discharge their functions. One of their tasks — the delivery of social services — continued to be carried out by international NGOs which, aware of the councils' lack of legitimacy, did not co-operate with them. The deep discredit into which the UN intervention fell had serious consequences for the future of development aid programmes in this country, whereas local peace initiatives picked up again after the departure of the external actors.

Faced with a changing context, analysts have begun to change their thinking about the impact of external interventions on conflicts and conflict management, and about the risk of intervention both in situations of open crisis and in less unstable contexts. Recognition of the links between development and conflict contributed to broadening this line of thought to include development aid mechanisms generally. External intervention can create distortions within a society, especially if its equilibrium is delicate, and can destabilise existing economic and social structures. Two essential principles should guide the international community's actions to aid beneficiary countries: the need to strengthen the capacities of these states in order to avoid the dependence often associated with development aid; and the need for popular involvement in the conception, implementation and follow-through of the actions carried out. It is imperative to allow beneficiaries to appropriate aid measures, for reasons of effectiveness — participatory methods and approaches have proved their long-term effectiveness — and of respect for local communities and capacities.

Finally, the way in which Africans perceive the intervention of Northern countries in Africa must not be neglected. The North, regarded as the principal beneficiary of the international trade system and the exploitation of natural resources, is sometimes considered to have imposed an economic model which is not always satisfying for the greatest number of people. Moreover, the North is criticised for its direct and indirect support to authoritarian regimes. In consequence, there is always a risk that an external intervention will be rejected, whatever its motivations.

In a long-term perspective, intervention strategies will certainly need to take into account the consequences of the emergence of new actors and phenomena on an international scale. The power of multinational firms, which have more economic clout than many states, should lead to their integration in the process of conflict prevention, in which they have a direct economic interest. Another recent phenomenon is organised crime, which is a direct supplier of conflicts. Its activity in the arms markets, as well as trafficking in drugs, diamonds and gold, contributes to governmental corruption and impairs democracy. Finally, technological change calls into question ideas such as national sovereignty, borders or the organisation of national defence, which have strong influence on the outbreak and the course of conflicts.

The discussions addressed three principal themes: the need for co-ordination of all the actors interested in conflict prevention and management, the need for consistency between so-called emergency actions and development actions, and the limits of this distinction, as well as questions related to the possibility of making aid conditional.

Co-ordination of Actors

The work of the international community will be effective only if co-ordination of all external actors (international organisations, national development agencies, foreign affairs ministries or co-operation ministries, international NGOs) is established, as well as systems for co-ordination with internal actors (government and civil society). The work of the DAC Task Force on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation

reflects this concern. Co-ordination can bring consistency among political, economic and possibly military measures, and it would prevent glaring inconsistencies such as a donor's promotion of local agriculture in a country when the trade policy of another state is unfavourable for the former's agricultural sector, or the promotion of human rights along with arms sales which imperil those rights.

In order to limit the risks of external intervention, the preparation and implementation of aid should be sensitive to the potential for conflict in each society. In this perspective, an analytical framework covering all available information on the local context and the first signs of tension, as well as the relevant political, social and economic factors, could be an important element of a conflict-prevention strategy. Systems for evaluating the impact of conflicts would also be useful.

In situations of open conflict, it is particularly important that all actors at all levels systematically exchange analyses and available data. This co-ordination of information management, like the co-ordination of action, cannot be implemented in the urgent atmosphere of a crisis; rather, both must be planned. The DAC Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation constitute an important tool in this respect.

Effective intervention in a conflict requires not only co-ordination but also leadership. This is often provided by an international organisation, considered more neutral than a government, which might seek to promote strictly national interests. During the discussions, one speaker emphasised the value of creating a panel of professional mediators, answerable to the UN Secretary General, completely independent and bound by a public code of conduct: this would render intervention by the international community more effective, because such intervention would be less likely to be viewed as interference (albeit by a group of states) in a country's internal affairs. It would also have the advantage of dissociating mediation from decision making and action; within the UN, the Security Council now is responsible for all of these functions.

Co-operation with NGOs makes it possible to benefit from their experience and their comparative advantage in the field of conflict prevention. Well-established NGOs, working in direct contact with the people, can play an essential role in early warning. They contribute to the creation of local capacity and peace building, particularly through their work with bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, which makes them important actors in the field of development aid. Their work can permit the mobilisation of civil society. NGOs can serve as intermediaries between international and local actors, and their decentralised mode of operation is essential, particularly when the state has abandoned its functions. Nevertheless, although it cannot be denied that NGO activity can be very positive, its risks in certain crisis situations must not be neglected. In Rwanda after the genocide of 1994, NGO activity was characterised by a lack of co-ordination not only with local authorities but also among the NGOs; each NGO had its own programmes and priorities, while some even encroached on areas which were normally the business of the state instead of working to re-establish the state (see Gakunzi, in this volume).

The importance of co-ordination between external and domestic actors must be emphasised. It is essential to establish a partnership with the government of the country concerned, because its agreement is needed for any action, which might otherwise be considered as interference, and because it can bring an action to a standstill. Establishment of a partnership is necessary because it is the government which should be in the best position to evaluate a given situation and to set priorities. One problem of crises is that the government in power may lose legitimacy or simply disappear, or that the state may disintegrate over all or part of the country's territory. In this context, actors should not take the government's place but should co-operate with civil society, which plays an essential role in conflict prevention and management and in development actions.

Civil society is being granted an increasingly important role as the subject of the development process. Owing to its mode of organisation, civil society is a structure for dialogue, which can allow the creation of a sense of nationhood and the promotion of a democratic culture. Although civil society, which is made up of associations, is often limited to an urban context, we are seeing a growing awareness of its role and its possibilities in Africa. Those in civil society who work for peace and mediation run risks which must not be neglected, however, especially when the international community grants them an important role and a degree of visibility which can be dangerous. They may be perceived by the state as a camouflaged opposition, their neutrality may be questioned, and their moderate position can make them the targets of extremists of all sorts. Finally, certain participants emphasised that civil society is still a recent phenomenon in Africa and is relatively undeveloped in many African countries, which should moderate current expectations concerning its effectiveness (see the discussion below concerning the development of civil society).

Short-term and Long-term Actions

Co-ordination of all the actors involved in peace building should make it possible to take effective action, oriented towards the priority areas for crisis prevention or, if prevention fails, for crisis resolution and restoration of the foundations of political and economic stability. Aid should be aimed not solely at re-establishing the economy but, in general, at building peace.

Emergency actions and development actions, long dissociated, should be considered in conjunction. The usual institutional separation between the two approaches within aid agencies should be superseded in order to allow for flexible procedures, especially with respect to the financial mechanisms for resource allocation and decisions to reallocate funds. Indeed, it seems more rational to distinguish short-term actions from the long-term actions which can be taken at the same time, than to distinguish between emergency assistance and development aid or to establish a chronology of relief operations, reconstruction and development. Experience shows that even in a crisis, opportunities exist to set up operations with long-term objectives. We may cite the examples of micro-credit programmes, or operations with several objectives, such

as the construction of a school through a “food for work” programme which supplies work and food in the short term and simultaneously prepares for the future by providing the possibility of schooling (see DAC, 1997).

Two errors should be avoided: limiting actions to the very short term and to purely humanitarian objectives, or, to the contrary, wishing to decide a country’s long-term future by imposing programmes with no input from local interlocutors. Reacting to a political and structural problem through humanitarian action, as a makeshift to fill a political vacuum, carries the risk that this action will be discredited. Moreover, in adopting *ad hoc* solutions it is not possible to envisage all the policies and linkages needed to avoid harmful social consequences, particularly those affecting the status of women: distribution of food to men, for example, deprives women of one of their traditional functions. If emergency aid continues to be delivered without the participation of the local population, even though this population might have the means to ensure self-sufficiency, there is a great risk of dependence and of socio-economic upheavals. In confused situations, moreover, humanitarian aid can be diverted from its objective. The NGOs working in Liberia realised that part of their aid was being diverted to arms purchases and in fact was feeding the conflict, which led them to change the form of their intervention.

The other extreme solution to be avoided, when a situation of conflict precludes any active contribution from a shattered society and destructured local institutions, is the organisation, without participation by the beneficiaries, of long-term actions which are binding for the future. It is thus necessary to limit the scope and the duration of dependence-creating emergency operations (i.e. they must be ended as soon as local governments can carry out their planning and management functions) and to plan for the transition towards other operations in liaison with local organisations and capacities. Generally speaking, granting aid creates a problem if the institutional capacity to manage it is lacking — whence the need to deliver technical assistance for the rebuilding of management and financial infrastructures (particularly the central bank, tax and customs systems, and statistical data bases).

Some conflict-induced problems must be addressed as a matter of urgency (the refugee problem, demobilisation) but often cannot be resolved quickly, whereas other issues which are essential to building a lasting peace (human capital formation, development of civil society) involve long-term actions which must be envisaged no matter what the situation is, and as soon as they can be organised.

One problem which requires immediate action during an open conflict is the situation of refugees and displaced persons. This issue is of great concern to donors, who play an active role in supporting these populations. Above all, the presence of numerous refugees in countries bordering the countries in crisis is a cause of regional instability. Since the refugee populations are taken in by countries which are themselves in difficulty, the fact that they receive outside aid can generate tension. Another problem is the environmental damage resulting from temporary overpopulation of entire regions. The many difficulties which afflict the host countries may gradually call the right to asylum into question. Consequently, the UN High Commission for Refugees

has developed “refugee assistance and development programmes”, which are concerned with the fate of refugees but also with the consequences of their presence in the host areas. Reintegration of these refugees and displaced persons in their regions of origin is still the goal, but it is always difficult to determine whether returning to the prewar context is desirable and, in particularly difficult situations, whether it is a viable option.

The problem of demobilisation should also be addressed in priority. Combatants should be disarmed and reintegrated so as to eliminate the risk of an autonomous armed population. Children who have served as soldiers should receive special follow-up attention which will let them resume a normal life.

Whatever the situation (a relatively stable country or one that has undergone crises in the recent past), assistance to the formation of human capital (health and education) and social capital (e.g. mediating structures and judicial institutions), in order to help create or reinforce local capacity, is essential to both conflict prevention and peace building. Education, whether formal or informal (e.g. organised by associations), is crucial to conflict prevention and should be addressed to both children and adults, in order to counter the stereotypes on which conflicts may be based. In addition to this general civic education, there should be special programmes for certain categories of the population, particularly programmes to instruct the military on its role in a democracy. The importance of judicial structures should also be emphasised, since the intrinsic function of the judicial system is to resolve tension. A weak system of justice holds back the processes of compromise and negotiation, which are essential to peace building. The impunity of the principal authors of past violence can disrupt a process of reconciliation. Moreover, the judicial system should, generally speaking, be a dispute-settlement mechanism; if it does not perform this function, some people may try to make their own justice. All citizens should have equal access to non-discriminatory and efficient justice.

Civil society in African countries is little developed, and its development will be a long-term process, highly important for conflict prevention and the consolidation of peace. Better management of tension and conflict might be possible if two major challenges are met: civil society’s assumption of responsibility and its emancipation (see Nathan, in this volume). African civil society should examine its values, recognising both its abilities and its limits. Individual communities must find compromises for themselves, as well as their own solutions to their problems. The international community’s aid to African civil society should be geared to the long term, and for this it is essential that associations be financially viable. In addition, assistance should focus on reinforcing the structures of civil society, in particular its systems of communication. To enable civil society to play its proper role, it is essential to provide assistance for capacity building, especially by facilitating learning processes.

Associations having a substantial component of, or composed exclusively of, young people or women have a special role to play in conflict prevention. The proportion of young people in African countries is very high, and they are often used

as common soldiers in conflicts. Many young urban dwellers are unemployed and out of school, sometimes marginalised from both family and society as a result of artificial urbanisation; and these people constitute a reservoir of destabilisation and violence which affects the political stability of African states (see Touré, in this volume). Integrating them into democratic structures which pursue objectives of general interest can allow them to participate in society, and even to be reintegrated in society after having taken part in a conflict. Women's associations can play a role in mediation and rebuilding, particularly in periods immediately after violence in which the associations have not participated (as in Rwanda).

An organised civil society can be an important instrument in creating a sense of nationhood, which is particularly important for the formation of a consensus within society. This approach is crucial in states where regional differences, notably linguistic differences, make national solidarity difficult to perceive or inexistent. Mozambique is a good illustration of this problem: 80 per cent of the population lives in rural areas and does not speak the official language; in certain cases, internal communications are more difficult than cross-border communications. The absence of national feeling in Mozambique is a major factor of political risk. One of the weaknesses of civil society in Africa today is the fact that it is often composed of groups from a single community, whereas one of its functions could be to establish exchanges between communities.

Aid and Good Governance

One objective of aid to conflict prevention and peace building is the establishment of good governance. In the context of conflict prevention, good governance is synonymous with democratic institutions capable of managing change without violence, and an active civil society is one of its essential elements.

The central issue is the way in which good governance, linked to the idea of democracy, should be introduced into African societies. Although certain common values such as individual freedoms and freedom of choice are internationally recognised, in particular by the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is the business of each government to promote these values by establishing its own institutions to put them into practice. Cultural and historical differences must be taken into account in introducing a democratic system.

In this respect, problems sometimes arise from external observers' emphasis on elections after a conflict. Elections are an element of democracy, not its essence (see Bakwesegha, in this volume). A good example is the elections in Burundi, which were supervised by the international community and judged satisfactory, but were nonetheless followed by substantial unrest three months later. The organisation of elections in a devastated country takes time, both to set up the structures needed and to allow the formation of viable political groupings. Moreover, it would be preferable to have trained national observers present alongside the international observers.

A concept imposed from outside has little chance of becoming genuinely viable and acquiring a solid base. Good governance and democracy imposed by donors can do a great deal of damage if local conditions are ignored. The democratic process in Burundi, which was imposed and hence gained little acceptance, moved at too rapid a pace and strengthened the existing cleavages. The question of the minimum conditions which could be applied as criteria for aid delivery remains open, however. In a context of reorientation from the security of the state to that of the people, respect for human rights takes on its full meaning, whereas choosing the form of democracy to be adopted is a matter for each society. Sanctioning a state for human rights violations, however, can amount to sanctioning its population. In any case, the question of whether aid is the proper means of favouring one form of government remains open, considering the internal political character of this issue.

It was asked whether arms expenditures should be taken into account in the decision whether or not to grant aid. In African states, the army's main function is often the maintenance of internal order. Donors are interested in the question of technical assistance for reform of the police and the army, so as to give the latter a role more appropriate to the changes occurring in African societies, but the sensitive nature of these areas requires a prudent approach. Furthermore, the problem of arms sales, and particularly the control of arms sales, is closely linked to that of conflict prevention and management. In view of the linkages between the arms trade and drug trafficking, the international community should be particularly sensitive to the issue of arms control. Encouraging progress has been made towards a ban on anti-personnel mines, but the diversity of arms producers and suppliers adds to the difficulty of establishing control over them. Priority should therefore be given to improving our understanding of how weapons are used and managed, and encouraging co-operative measures at the regional level with a view to creating an atmosphere of trust which could lead to voluntary limitations on arms imports. Consideration should be given to the pervasive use of light arms in African conflicts. Although these arms are called "light", they do enormous damage, their low cost makes them accessible to a great many people, and they are particularly difficult to control.

Conclusion

To manage conflicts and consolidate peace, it is necessary to move towards structural stability based on economic justice and an inclusive political system. Outside actors should co-ordinate their actions to this end, acting on the basis of thorough analysis of local conditions and in partnership with the governments and populations concerned.

To work for a "process of conflict dissolution", it is necessary to gear actions to the long term, which implies a system for foreseeing and anticipating conflicts. Initiatives should be based on the mobilisation of all actors, the pooling of information and the knowledge of those who have practical experience in the field.

This activity should make us better aware of the impact of the work of aid agencies and other external actors on the emergence of violence. This requires some methodological work, which the Development Centre has already begun in its series concerning the effects of adjustment policies on equity and the political feasibility of adjustment. To understand and cope with different situations in the context of adjustment, it is essential to identify winners and losers.

Conflict prevention should also concern itself with subjects related to conflict: the arms trade, a topic on which there is a critical lack of investigation and analysis; corruption, which is linked to the predatory management of resources by certain governments, as well as to crime; and economic integration within a country or a region, which can be a powerful disincentive for violent conflict.

Finally, a society's capacity for adaptation, accommodation and tolerance towards its various groups is essential to its stability. It is all the more crucial in the African context, as most African countries contain well-defined ethnic or religious minorities. Protection and promotion of the rights of minorities are essential to a conflict-free society. The development of civil society can play a role in this respect.

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PART TWO

ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVES

Cultural and Environmental Factors in Violent Conflict: A Framework for Conflict Prevention

Gernot Brodnig

Introduction

The proliferation of violent conflicts over the last several years has sparked spirited discussions about their causes, issues and parameters. The post-Cold War international order has not brought about the end of history but, instead, has shifted the focus of explanatory variables from ideology to factors such as environmental degradation and cultural clashes (Huntington, 1993 and 1996). Kaplan's work on conflict in Africa, dubbed "New Barbarism" by Richards, attributes violent clashes to such causes as widespread environmental degradation, overpopulation and cultural imperatives which lead to ethnic rivalry. These conflicts defy the logic of "rational" political and economic processes, he argues, and thereby, diminish the likelihood that conflicts can be managed and prevented.

By defining environmental and cultural conflicts and distinguishing them from resource and ethnic conflicts, we will show how changes in both ecological systems and in the value and belief system of a given society can translate into conflict. Based on this analysis, we will assess options for conflict prevention and intervention.

Environment

What is an Environmental Conflict?

Throughout history, wars have been fought for access to and control over natural resources. *Prima facie*, the term "environmental conflict" does not add to the analysis

of violent conflict, but rather restates “conventional wisdom” (Levy, 1995). Moreover, environmental issues are so closely intertwined with social, economic and political variables that it is difficult to discuss them in isolation. Some scholars (e.g. Homer-Dixon, 1991 and 1994), however, have tried to show that environmental and/or natural resource issues can be *primary* causes for the outbreak of violent conflict.

In order to define environmental conflict, the term “environment” must be clarified. Conflicts over territories and natural resources clearly belong to the category of environmental conflicts. They take place *in* the environment and have a significant impact *on* the environment. An analysis of the environment as a cause for conflict, however, needs to be restricted to characteristics specific to the ecosystem and environmental processes.

A definition of the environment must reflect the dynamic character of ecosystems, their resilience to external influences, and the phenomenon of threshold effects. The environment is constantly changing and reshaping itself by absorbing and integrating external influences such as human impact. However, this self-sustaining function is not limitless because resilience to disturbance has a threshold beyond which the system can no longer perform certain functions.

Once the threshold of a particular ecosystem is reached, environmental change turns into environmental degradation. The notion of environmental degradation is value-based because we engage our scientific understanding of ecological processes to determine how far we are willing to go to preserve the equilibrium of the ecosystem. For this reason, the notion of environmental degradation is implicitly linked to the human sphere.

The distinction between renewable and non-renewable resources underscores the specific nature of the environment’s life-supporting functions, and their impact on the social sphere. Since non-renewable resources such as oil, minerals, etc. — primary products of utmost economic significance — are outside the loop of ecological reproduction, we will focus on renewables such as water, air, living organisms, etc.

Like the distinction between renewable and non-renewable resources, the notion of resource scarcity links environmental variables to social phenomena. The underlying assumption is that many conflicts are over finite resources. Natural resource scarcity can have diverse causes: geopolitical, physical, socio-economic, demographic *and* environmental degradation. Scarcity in all its forms is ultimately linked to the perceptions of the “users”, and this subjective component is particularly helpful for understanding the causal relationship between the environment and conflict.

In sum, we can define environmental conflict as a conflict caused by a real or perceived resource scarcity, which in turn, stems from environmental degradation or negative environmental change.

A useful typology of environmentally induced conflicts has been suggested by the ENCOP Project. This typology distinguishes *i*) natural catastrophes such as drought and floods, *ii*) environmental degradation through a clearly identifiable planned

transformation of the environment such as big dam projects, logging, etc. and *iii*) what has been referred to as the tragedy of the commons — the cumulative effects of the use and abuse of environmental resources (Bächler, 1996).

Environmental degradation occurs at all levels, on a global scale (greenhouse effect and ozone depletion) at the regional level (acid rain, desertification) and at the local level (soil erosion, deforestation). The truism that environmental problems do not respect borders has serious consequences for conflict prevention. Given the conflict potential of environmental degradation, any preventative policies call for a multi-level approach which ascribes a large responsibility to international action.

Understanding the causes and scope of environmental degradation can help prevent conflict. Most large-scale environmental degradation is man-made. Population growth and the dramatic increase in our capacity to exploit the earth must be acknowledged, but misguided policies, inadequate institutional frameworks and cultural traditions also contribute to environmental degradation. Our increased understanding is informed by common sense and by the debate on sustainable development. Still, conflict prevention policies can play a role early on in the causal chain to be outlined below.

From Degradation to Conflict

Environmental degradation is a physical phenomenon that does not *per se* lead to conflict, but rather translates into a series of social, economic, and psychological effects. Homer-Dixon identifies four principal social effects that *can* induce conflict: *i*) decreased agricultural production, *ii*) economic decline, *iii*) population displacement, and *iv*) disruption of legitimised and authoritative institutions and social relations. The first two represent the direct effects, while the latter follow from the first two.

Some of these effects have been analysed in detail and are fairly well understood. The history of migrations in the Horn of Africa, for example, is partly a history of land degradation. Droughts, deforestation, overgrazing, etc. have led to widespread soil erosion and desertification, forcing farmers and pastoralists to leave their lands as “environmental refugees”. In cases such as these, the process of transmission is clear. The breakdown of the resource and livelihood base leads to the collapse of subsistence and market economies which, in turn, perpetuates poverty, insecurity, and stress. Given the limited technological and/or economic options, relocation is frequently the only alternative. Consequently, groups of different ethnic affiliations end up competing for scarce resources.

Other forms of environmental change such as global warming and ozone depletion, do not have such easily identifiable socio-economic effects and therefore, their conflict potential remains largely speculative and long-term.

The social impact of environmental change is not based on a simple mono-causal relationship. On the contrary, this relationship must be viewed in conjunction with socio-economic, political, and cultural factors which determine the capacity of

societies to adapt to change. In the Horn, the effects of droughts have often been exacerbated by political tensions. In particular, a lack of alternative grazing grounds in the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict caused famine among pastoralists. While desertification might lead to a decline in pastoralist economies in the short term, technological change and substitution effects combined with adaptation processes based on indigenous knowledge of the environment can help to manage environmental degradation in the long term. Ultimately these long term measures can lead to alternative modes of production and an improved general welfare.

But predominantly negative effects of environmental degradation do not automatically translate into conflict. Intervening variables will determine the causal link between the social impact of environmental degradation and conflict. This does not mean, however, that environmental factors and their consequences are entirely dependent on endogenous variables.

What is the empirical evidence for environmentally induced conflicts and what forms do they take? Major research projects on environmental security have produced typologies based on empirical evidence (Bächler, 1996). Homer-Dixon identifies a number of possible outcomes of simple-scarcity conflicts, notably: inter-state conflict, population movement, group-identity conflicts, economic deprivation, institutional disruption and civil strife.

Thus far inter-state violent conflict has rarely broken out over renewable resources although increasing demands on water regimes indicate that this resource has a high potential for conflict. In the Middle East negotiations, for instance, water resources are key to the region's stability and security. In the Horn of Africa, in contrast, population movements, refugee flows and other migrations have caused a number of conflicts: clashes in Darfur, violence between Turkana, Pokot and other pastoralist tribes on the Kenyan-Sudanese border (Lang, 1995). Empirical evidence is less concrete for the hypothesis that environmental degradation leads to economic deprivation, institutional disruption and civil strife, because of the large number of intervening variables.

The preceding analysis shows that there are no simple causal relationships between environmental degradation and violent conflict. Socio-economic variables, political institutions, psychological factors mediate the relationship.

Culture

If the concept of the environment is difficult to define, the notion of culture is even more elusive. Yet, cultural variables have typically been regarded as the impetus for much of the violence on the African continent. In this section, we will distinguish culture from related concepts such as ethnicity, which are often used interchangeably. This distinction is important for constructing more effective approaches to conflict prevention.

Culture and Ethnicity

Although there are many competing definitions of culture, each with a different slant (manifestations, transmissions, levels, etc.), there remains a core understanding, and as a working definition, the classic formula still stands: “Culture or civilisation... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”.

Current conceptions of culture focus on boundaries: Western culture is seen as distinct from Asian culture just as the Dinka and Nuer cultures are seen as distinct in many ways. How does the notion of culture as boundary relate to ethnicity? While ethnicity mainly revolves around cultural identities, they are not the same. Stavenhagen (1996) summarises the predominant views on “ethnicity” which are defined as “cultural groups based on social structures (institutions and social relations), whereby culture and social structure are interrelated in a complex web of reciprocal relations and influences”. A sense of identity and belonging thus plays a critical role in defining culture.

Culture and Conflict

There is a good deal of speculation as to how cultural and/or ethnic factors lead to violent conflict. Horowitz (1985) gives a thorough overview of the different schools of thought on this question which range from the cultural pluralists who argue that culturally plural societies have a greater propensity for clashes, to those that reduce ethnic conflicts to economic interests, i.e. a struggle for scarce resources.

Drawing from sociology and social psychology Horowitz reviews the fundamental principles of collective behaviour. His integrative approach presents two key concepts: group worth and group entitlement. Groups invariably compete for social worth and recognition. This struggle translates into a “politics of entitlement” because social recognition is typically viewed as a political issue. Horowitz depicts a tripartite structure of the sources of ethnic conflict. First, conflict occurs at the level of the group, particularly when shared beliefs and values provides a rallying point. Second, conflict arises from perceptions of stress such as the fear of inferiority or humiliation. Finally, socio-economic structures transform the psychological dimensions of the conflict to a political reality.

Where the environment is at issue, cultural factors are so intertwined with social structures that they cannot be dealt with in isolation (Salem, 1995) nor can they be dismissed as some commentators have suggested².

The question remains as to how cultural factors, as such, affect conflict. Are some societies more peace-loving than others? In a comparative study, Cross (1993) argues that a society’s psycho-cultural make-up determines its propensity for conflict

and violence. Culture dictates what people value, what people are willing to fight for, and sanctions moves to further individual or group interests. So we can see that conflict behaviour is, in fact, highly structured.

Cross' approach is useful for detecting conflict early on because it focuses on societies' underlying values. Cross shows how social structures and economic interests determine the likely opponents of a conflict. His findings are based on empirical evidence from a range of traditional societies. However, we must ask whether the more complex political structures in modern societies, including elites, are not bound to play a greater role in the genesis and/or prevention of conflicts.

Another perspective on the relationship between culture and conflict tags culture as a source of conflict. This angle is different both from Horowitz's notion of competition between culturally based ethnic groups and Cross' theories of cultures in conflict. A number of conflicts between ethnic groups are ultimately about economic and political resources, fuelled by the urge for collective survival and recognition. How these conflicts erupt into violence can partially be traced to the underlying value and belief systems of the participants.

Without exaggerating the parallels between ecosystems and the cultural sphere, "cultural attrition" can be viewed as an equivalent of environmental degradation. Like the environment, culture is a dynamic phenomenon, undergoing constant change. When this change reaches an unmanageable point or "carrying capacity", it becomes a degradation. Different societies show varying degrees of cultural resilience.

Cultural encroachment is linked to the human rights debate on the status of minorities. A poignant example of culture as a source of conflict can be seen in the struggle of indigenous peoples, not only for resources, but for cultural survival and the recognition of their otherness which is often regarded as backwardness by a dominant majority. "Real" cultural conflicts can also be seen in violence motivated by religious reasons. As the example of the Sudan suggests, however, religious struggles rarely occur in a pure form.

Conflict Prevention

We have tried to assess the relative importance of environmental and cultural factors for a theory of conflict. Environmental degradation and culture are independent variables in the genesis of conflicts that prevention policies and strategies have to account for in developing solutions.

The impact of environmental degradation on society can cause conflict. At the same time, certain cultural predispositions and/or cultural attrition are potential sources of conflict where social structures and processes serve as intervening variables.

A conflict prevention model can try to break these causal chains at three points: *i*) prevent/contain environmental degradation/cultural attrition *ii*) mitigate the negative

social consequences and *iii*) harness/control these consequences. For each of these primary, secondary and tertiary intervention points, different tools can be applied: first, a comprehensive and timely information system to assist with conflict management; second, socio-economic policies based on this information; and third, strategies and tools implementing or supplementing these policies. This model results in a matrix with nine combinations. Although none of these options should be considered in isolation, for the purposes of illustration, we have selected three types of intervention for further discussion.

Information about Environmental Degradation and Cultural Factors

Sound data are obviously crucial for all aspects of conflict prevention, and yet there remains a gap in information about certain ecological and cultural factors relevant to the prevention of conflict. Environmental monitoring systems which focus on physical and biological variables are already in place. As part of an early warning system, data covering the “human dimension” of environmental degradation can and should be used to prevent conflict. The famine warning system established by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) constitutes a case in point.

There is still a lack of baseline data on societies’ attitudes to conflict, management strategies, and mechanisms to settle disputes. Most early warning systems tend to focus on incidents of violent conflict as data material, and therefore do not really serve as conflict prevention instruments. Most armed conflicts, however, have their antecedents in other non-violent actions such as protests, boycotts, etc. which are, to a large degree, culturally determined and reflect the coping strategies of different societies. Consequently, there is a need for early warning systems such as PANDA, currently developed at Harvard University, which concentrate on the precursors of violence.

Policies to Prevent Adverse Social Effects

Better information about the relationship between environmental degradation and cultural tensions would enable us to develop policies more effectively to mitigate adverse social effects such as economic deprivation or political exclusion. This paper will not address the panoply of policies that could be employed. However, two issues relevant to international development assistance will be raised here.

The first issue concerns the adaptability of poor countries to resource scarcity. Homer-Dixon (1995) has stressed the importance of social and technical ingenuity in the prevention of environmental conflicts. According to Homer-Dixon, ingenuity, a derivative of human and technological capital, is in short supply in many developing countries. This “ingenuity gap” results from market failures, social friction, the lack of capital, and constraints on science. This issue clearly signals for the international community’s assistance in overcoming this gap.

The second issue concerns ethnic conflicts. Horowitz (1985) provides a survey of various ethnic policies, which he divides into structural and distributional. Structural policies aim to change the political framework in which the ethnic conflict occurs by encompassing federalism, regional autonomy³, and certain electoral systems. Distributional policies target the ethnic balance of economic opportunities and rewards, including preferential policies for minorities. Here again, the debate on governance and conditional aid⁴ places the international community in a strategic position to contribute to the prevention and reduction of conflict.

Tools for Conflict Prevention

An increased understanding about the relationships between the environment, culture and conflict on the one hand, and sound socio-economic policies and political measures on the other, will go far to prevent violent conflict. However, at the risk of sounding pessimistic, we must voice some reservations about the projected success of such interventions.

Even while environmentally induced conflicts can be predicted and avoided through intelligent policies, the geographic dimensions of degradation coupled with unpredictable socio-ecological factors call for flexible methods in establishing an effective regulatory framework.

A similar pragmatism is required for dealing with ethnic and cultural conflicts. Huntington (1996) notes that differences in secular ideology can be debated and resource conflicts negotiated while cultural questions are often zero-sum games. We disagree with this assessment because we believe inter-cultural dialogue and conflict management are possible. However, we do concede that the obstacles can appear insurmountable, particularly as many psycho-cultural sources of conflict do not lend themselves to modification by manipulation.

All this suggests that conflict prevention will be a “front-line” effort, trying to control the conflict potential of certain adverse social and political developments. At the prevention stage, a focus on environmental and cultural factors may be replaced by classic preventative diplomacy and confidence-building measures.

In our search for new ways to tackle a multiplicity of conflicts, we must develop tools to assess the impact of conflict (Mortimer, 1997) upon policies and actions that are likely to upset socio-economic and political balances. Such an assessment could rely on methodologies developed in analyses of the relation between the environment and social impact. For many conflicts in Africa, demilitarisation can make a difference, especially since the availability of weapons played a major role in the escalation of innumerable conflicts⁵.

Conclusions

In his conflict typology, Garcia (1993) defines categories of conflict over governance/authority, identity, environment/resources and ideology. We have tried to identify characteristics of environmental and cultural conflicts. While it is not likely that people will go to war over the loss of bio-diversity or the disappearance of traditional dances, environmental and cultural factors are increasingly important sources and parameters of violent conflict and call for a better understanding of their inherent mechanisms and adequate and adaptive policies (Rupesinghe, 1995).

Successful conflict prevention also requires a paradigmatic shift in our definition of security; the concept of human security⁶ with its emphasis on peoples' livelihoods including their natural environment and collective identities is more apt to capture the challenges of the post-Cold War order.

Notes and References

1. This section benefits largely from the research carried out in the frame of the Environment and Conflict Project (ENCOP) at the Center for Security Policy and Conflict Research, Zurich, Switzerland and the Project on Environmental Change and Acute Conflict of the University of Toronto.
2. See Stavenhagen (1996), "A widely held opinion is that if only people did not talk so much about it, ethnicity would go away".
3. Successfully implemented in Sudan in the 1970s.
4. See the idea of "conflict conditionality": different kinds of conditionality (economic, political, human rights) are treated flexibly in terms of their likely contribution to, or impact on, violent social conflict (Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, 1996).
5. For example, the civil war in Somalia or the tribal violence in Kenya.
6. As advocated, for example, in the UNDP Human Development Report 1994.

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Africa: Five Questions and Challenges

Laurie Nathan*

In these brief remarks, I wish to raise five questions and challenges regarding the prevention, management and resolution of inter- and intra-state conflict in Africa. *First*, how do we understand conflict as a social and political phenomenon? *Second*, do we make sufficient effort to analyse the specific causes and dynamics of conflict in Africa? *Third*, are we grappling in a meaningful way with the general, underlying causes of conflict in Africa? *Fourth*, what role is defined for civil society in conflict prevention and management? And *finally*, are we willing to accommodate groups who do not look, talk, or think like us, or do we seek to prevail over them?

Conflict as a Social and Political Phenomenon

Many people in Africa, indeed many peace activists, view conflict as inherently negative and destructive. This approach to conflict is implicit in much of the academic and policy literature on Africa, where the term “conflict” is associated with situations of actual or imminent violence. The assumption that conflict is necessarily negative is understandable given the destruction wrought by violent conflict on our continent, but it is extremely limited and misleading.

The reality is that social and political conflict is natural and inevitable in all societies. Social groups – whether they are defined by ethnicity, religion, class or political affiliation – have different interests, needs and values, and they have unequal access to power and resources. Differences among groups will generate competition and conflict. Yet, contrary to popular belief, competition and conflict are potentially productive because they stimulate creativity and change.

Our understanding of conflict conditions our response to it. If we view conflict as intrinsically negative, or as synonymous with violence, then we will work to eliminate or suppress conflict. This response is not only unrealistic, it often leads to authoritarianism and repression.

If, however, we accept conflict as inevitable, natural and potentially positive, then we can shift our focus to managing conflict in constructive ways. Stable societies are not those with an absence of conflict, but rather those which are able to manage political, social and economic conflict in stable ways.

Constructive conflict management is the essential, on-going business of governance and, in this respect, is distinct from crisis prevention and intervention. Managing conflict in its diverse forms is the responsibility of government, parliament, state institutions, the judiciary, local authorities and local communities.

Crises occur when these sectors lack the capacity to manage society, or when they are unwilling to accommodate diverse groups and interests.

The Importance of Analysis as a Tool for Conflict Prevention

The origins and contours of intra-state conflict differ substantially from country to country as a result of historical, cultural, political and regional factors.

Too many external actors intervene in African conflicts without taking these factors into account. While these actors may have good intentions, they fail to analyse the situation correctly, in part because they are preoccupied with responding to crises and, partly, because they lack respect for African communities. External actors typically focus on the symptoms of conflict. As a result, their interventions may be ineffectual, if not counterproductive, because they are perceived by local actors as an imposition.

The challenge, for both internal and external actors, is to engage in a thorough analysis of specific conflicts and their causes. The importance of analysis is sometimes dismissed as “academic”, or irrelevant, but action without analysis is arrogant and potentially dangerous.

General Underlying Causes of Conflict in Africa

Although the specific causes of conflict may differ from country to country, certain structural or systemic problems prevail throughout the continent.

These deep causes of conflict include the lack of accord between nation and state; the suppression of minorities (and in some instances, majorities); corrupt and authoritarian states; Northern support for these states through contributions of arms and aid; the general economic imbalance between North and South; and a net outflow of capital which inhibits development.

These problems are targeted for academic analysis but, for a variety of reasons, they are not on the agenda for action; perhaps because they seem too complex, too daunting, too politically sensitive. Most of the problems appear to lie beyond the scope of African civil society, and/or beyond the control of African governments. If

we fail to tackle these problems head-on, we will be locked forever in a fire-fighting mode, treating symptoms and responding to crises when total political and social breakdown is imminent.

The challenge for African leaders, academics and civil society is to advocate and lobby for the formulation of effective coherent policies which promote political, social and economic justice. Working towards these goals may paradoxically generate conflict in the process, and consequently raise complex questions for practitioners of conflict resolution on the relationship between advocacy and mediation.

The Role of Civil Society in Conflict Prevention and Management

People tend to be the objects rather than the subjects of these processes in Africa. Too often powerful external actors dash to the scene of crisis, competing with each other to offer food and bright ideas, knowing and learning nothing about those they hope to assist, only to vanish just as suddenly to the next crisis.

In academic circles, the concept of security has been transformed fundamentally over the past few years. Security is now viewed in a holistic way, no longer limited to the military sphere but broadened to include political, social, economic and environmental dimensions.

Nonetheless, people continue to be regarded as the objects of security; as the beneficiaries of democracy and development; as the recipients of aid; as victims of violence. In short, people are viewed as passive receptacles, not as actors. This crippling delusion has to be overcome through a process of empowerment where the end goal is the full political, social and economic emancipation of civil society.

The starting point, however, is psychological. Empowerment begins with the belief that we, civil society, can shape our destiny. We have to shrug off our sense of helplessness and despair. We have to look to ourselves and our own resources: our values, our wisdom, our labour and our strength in numbers.

At conferences like this on Africa, it is fashionable to say that “we have to rely as much as possible on our own resources and traditions in resolving conflicts on the continent”. But who is the “we”? If one listens carefully, the “we” is not civil society but rather the OAU, sub-regional organisations, governments and elder statespersons.

If the starting point of empowering civil society is psychological, and the end point is full emancipation, then the arduous road in between is the challenge of capacity-building. International actors can play a major role here in allocating resources and transferring skills to NGOs and community-based organisations. Some actors already play this role, but many are more concerned with dumping a product than with facilitating learning processes.

Capacity-building applies not only to civil society but also to political society. If constructive conflict management is the essential, permanent business of governance,

then government, parliament, state institutions and local authorities have to develop a greater capacity to manage society.

Accommodating Difference

If we accept that conflict is inevitable and natural because all societies comprise a multitude of religious, ethnic and political groups with competing interests, values and needs, then accommodation is arguably the central challenge of constructive conflict management.

Reconciliation seeks to overcome animosity between antagonists in the context of peacemaking. Compromise entails the softening of bargaining positions in the course of negotiating a settlement. Accommodation incorporates reconciliation and compromise, but it is a broader, deeper concept. Accommodation is concerned with the long-term, structural arrangements for ordering society.

Accommodation entails entrenching tolerance, respect and protection of individuals and groups, particularly minority groups, in the constitution, the law, the system of justice, the form of government, and the process and culture of politics.

Groups which are treated as outsiders in the political, cultural and economic life of a society invariably behave in ways which are regarded as anti-social. The outstanding lesson of the South African “miracle” may well lay, not in the details of the transition to democracy, but in the overarching commitment to accommodation.

The concepts of empowerment and accommodation affirm that conflict stems not only from competition over material resources, political power, and disputed borders, but also, on a more profound level, from the failure to meet basic human needs for identity, respect and recognition.

In summary, the challenges facing Africa include the following:

- analysing and addressing the specific and general causes of conflict;
- developing a programme of action around social, political and economic justice;
- empowering civil society through the transfer of skills, knowledge, and resources to NGOs and community-based organisations;
- building capacity for the conflict management function of governance; and finally,
- accommodating different groups and interests at all levels of society.

Note

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Conflict Prevention and Management in Africa

Amadou Toumani Touré¹

Introduction

In Africa today, above all other problems, ruinous wars and armed uprisings are exhausting the financial resources and human potential of the continent and hindering development, not to speak of the extreme suffering inflicted on the people. At the same time, the inability of African governments to ensure security and stability undermines citizens' trust in political institutions and leads to the militarisation of societies.

Although Somalia is an extreme case, many other countries of the continent have bankrupted themselves in endless conflicts and are now faced with immense problems of reconstruction: repatriation of refugees, resettlement of displaced populations, demobilisation and social reintegration of considerable numbers of former soldiers.

African conflicts and effective management of them are urgent problems for development today. These countries simply can no longer sustain these destructive confrontations which absorb their already scarce resources to the detriment of development, output and the provision of social services. Moreover, the funds provided by the international community for emergency relief and reconstruction reduce in equal measure the amount available for general development actions.

Under these conditions, and at a time when the political situation is changing in many African countries, more attention must be given to conflict management, viewed as a fundamental problem of development. In consequence, it is necessary to strengthen African institutional capacity, to prevent and manage conflicts by peaceful means, and to enhance the role of those of Africa's partners able to provide support.

The idea of conflict management analysed here encompasses the prevention and resolution of dissension as well as concrete measures in the case of actual conflict.

Conflict management must take three essential postulates into account:

- 1) Responsibility for preventing conflicts falls principally on the contending groups themselves, although third parties can play a large role in favouring the peaceful management of a conflict.
- 2) A conception of conflict management which is comprehensive, integrated and oriented towards problem solving is extremely useful, since emergency interventions — although they may sometimes make it possible to obtain a provisional peace or to delay the outbreak of fighting — do not create a propitious environment for conflict resolution.
- 3) To prevent or resolve antagonisms properly, it is necessary to address the fundamental causes of conflicts.

It should be recalled that there is no lasting guarantee that conflicts between states can be avoided in Africa. For the foreseeable future, however, internal conflicts will remain the most common, because of the struggles between rival groups over political power.

Recent events teach us that domestic conflicts can spill over into neighbouring countries, especially when the conflicts have an ethnic dimension. The most obvious danger here is the regionalisation of domestic or national conflicts, accompanied by famine, exiles and human suffering.

Most conflicts in Africa today are civil wars. In these cases, there are massive imbalances which affect the entire society and which are due to demographic growth, to economic backwardness, to poverty and, in this context of crisis, to ideological, religious, ethnic and, in particular, political demands. These conflicts are called “civil wars” not only because they affect the entire population — women, children and old people alike — but because they are largely “demilitarised”.

In some shattered societies, where the state is so weakened as to have lost legitimacy, each citizen, each gang, each political party grabs some of the power the state has lost. Spread out in this way, violence is “deregulated”, and force tends to be used irrationally.

Conflicts in Africa

Types of Conflicts

Analysis of the various types of conflicts in African countries reveals important similarities in many cases. The same fundamental causes are found everywhere: these societies are undergoing great social, cultural and political changes, marked by the coexistence of traditional and modern points of reference.

Conflicts Linked to Natural Resource Management (Land, Water, Pasturage)

In several African countries, conflicts connected with natural resource management have taken on increasingly ominous proportions in the last few years. To be sure, it has never been easy for farmers and pastoralists — or sedentary peoples and nomads generally — to live together; local brawls, limited uprisings and sporadic individual violence have long been part of the lives of these communities. Formerly, however, it was often possible to control and manage these crises through traditional mechanisms for negotiations between the different communities, based on common cultural values and the virtues of the “parley tree” or of the *Toguna*.

These types of conflicts have grown worse for several reasons:

- population pressure and migration have altered familial and clan equilibria and favoured the atomisation of land holdings;
- droughts have contributed to the scarcity of natural resources;
- inappropriate land development policies have failed to achieve harmonious integration of traditional activities (fishing, agriculture, animal husbandry).

There are a multitude of “low-intensity” conflicts — notably disputes between farmers as well as between farmers and pastoralists — which need to be watched, and for which the time and the appropriate framework for dialogue must be found.

Socio-political Conflicts

These are sporadic conflicts which can reach a high level of violence: riots, street demonstrations, looting, civil war. The rapid and artificial urbanisation of African societies is undoubtedly one of the structural factors underlying these conflicts.

Young people who are out of school, unemployed and sometimes living at the fringes of their families and of society, form a reserve force for destabilisation and violence. In all of the serious political and urban crises which African countries have experienced in recent years, young people have been in the front lines. For this reason, the education of these young people and their integration into the civic and familial framework constitute a crucial challenge for conflict prevention in the coming years.

Certain political actors use the ethnic issue as a cloak. This has in many cases led observers to describe conflicts as “ethnic” when their true underlying causes are political:

- the functioning of democracy and government: representativeness, the role and status of the opposition, freedom of speech, fundamental rights;
- the operation of the judicial system and, in particular, the impunity granted to some persons;
- economic problems, underdevelopment and poverty, which can lead to serious social unrest;

- the management of the armed forces, which in some countries has given rise to mutiny, often with serious consequences for the democratic process.

Socio-cultural Conflicts

The great transformations which are shaking African societies (the provision of schooling, migration, urbanisation and so on) bring changes in values, which take the form either of a loss of traditional points of reference and superficial adherence to imported values which cannot easily be adapted, or of great cultural ambiguity. The underlying search for identity is far from complete and often makes societies vulnerable to crises and conflicts.

Characteristics of Conflict

African conflicts are characterised by certain common aspects, notably with respect to the actors and the modes of conflict:

- those who engage in violence are primarily young people, for whom violence is a way of life and a means of asserting their social status;
- the criminalisation of armed groups and the disintegration of rebellious movements owing to internal crises;
- the connection between certain armed groups and international organised crime, through illicit trafficking in drugs, arms, counterfeit money and commodities;
- the political and military restructuring of social groups, made possible by the weakening of the state and the permeability of borders; and
- the steep rise of military spending.

Apart from their common characteristics, these conflicts are of an unprecedented intensity and scope.

- The principle of noninterference limits other countries' capacity for action, even though the problems are increasingly taking on a regional dimension.
- Dynamic and structured dialogue among researchers, political decision makers and leaders of civil society is often lacking, even though the establishment of such a dialogue sometimes makes it possible to anticipate events and effectively to prevent conflicts.
- The marginalisation or disappearance of traditional mechanisms for controlling and managing conflicts is a great disadvantage in crisis resolution.

The Consequences of Conflicts for African Development

Conflicts have inflicted, and are still inflicting, all kinds of suffering on the peoples of Africa. Wars and social uprisings lead to serious losses, both human and financial, and thus considerably hamper development in progress.

In addition to their direct consequences, these conflicts have indirect effects: disruption of social services, damage to the environment and alteration of the fabric of society.

In countries experiencing the horrors of war, health and education services are generally disorganised, either directly through the destruction of infrastructure, or indirectly through reduction of public expenditure. For example, vaccination campaigns or programmes to provide drinking water are often abandoned as soon as conflict breaks out.

According to a United Nations report, the victims of conflict include nearly 5 million children who are refugees, unaccompanied, orphaned and traumatised; nearly 500 000 children have died because of these conflicts².

In addition to these direct and indirect social effects, armed conflicts entail enormous economic costs. They lead to the paralysis or disruption of economic activity in many countries. Their effect is felt:

- in the agricultural sector (exodus of farmers, abandonment of fields and farms);
- in mining, oil production and basic infrastructure (destruction of bridges, roads, power stations, railroads and so on).

The costs of these disruptions are substantial. The World Bank estimates, for example, that the income lost due to war in Africa amounted to \$250 billion over the 1980-93 period, or the equivalent of the continent's total output for one year.

These conflicts also cause an escalation of military spending, which crowds out other public expenditures. Military spending in Africa has grown perceptibly since independence, and is estimated today at about \$11 billion annually. Military spending on this scale has seriously darkened the prospects for economic growth, since it has a negative effect on investment, the balance of payments and the development of human resources.

Confronted with this situation, the United Nations (UN), the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the European Union and humanitarian organisations are trying to help meet the growing needs of the people. In certain cases, thousands or even millions of lives are saved by relief operations and operations to protect victims. The meritorious efforts of Northern countries and some of their non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to act in support of sorely tried populations deserve every acknowledgement.

After the conflict, however, it is necessary to rebuild. The end goal is to consolidate peace once it has been obtained. This is a tricky phase: it includes disarmament, the demobilisation of combatants, the return of refugees and displaced persons, the organisation of free elections and protection of individual and collective freedoms. International support is needed to repair war damage, to rebuild, to re-establish necessary institutions and, above all, to keep the peace.

One cannot avoid raising the problem of refugees, forced to flee from and abandon their homes, as well as the most spectacular result of political violence: widespread violations of human rights. These refugees are surviving rather than living, and the path of their survival is strewn with tensions exacerbated by extreme poverty and blatant inequality. The host countries that grant them asylum take on an intolerable burden in terms of security and of social and economic infrastructure, as well as environmental degradation.

The disruption of family ties and above all the disappearance of community structures cause irresponsible conduct among men and erode the traditional rights of women.

What Is to Be Done?

Despite the difficulties, peace can be achieved, as shown by the cases of Mozambique, Mali and, to a certain extent, Angola.

How Can the Capacity for Conflict Management Be Increased?

- Strengthening regional co-operation, integration and interdependence in Africa would help in anticipating conflicts between states, while the establishment of participatory democratic political regimes, based on respect for human rights, the rule of law and the accountability of leaders, would reduce the risk of internal conflicts.
- Sales and transfers of arms and military spending are integral parts of the problem of African conflicts, since contemporary confrontations, whether internal or between states, have become characterised by the extreme facility with which people can procure arms and thus make disputes degenerate into violent confrontations.
- Demilitarisation of society and modification of the roles of the military with respect to civil authorities are major tasks for current and future governments. They require co-operation from the international community and from arms suppliers.
- Promotion of, and support for, more open, participatory political regimes may be the most effective means of preventing internal conflicts in the immediate future. If governments in power respond to demands for political change with

repression and oppression, the risks are considerable. In this case, it is essential to determine how to preserve the expression of rivalries and political disputes while avoiding devastating conflict.

Democratic political regimes can do a great deal to prevent the degeneration of disputes into conflicts, but only if effective participatory institutions and structures exist. Necessary though they may be, elections alone do not guarantee democracy. Actors must also attempt to promote genuine access to the decision-making process; to be responsive, when in power, to the claims of the opposition; to respect the state; and to develop civil society institutions which facilitate consensus and co-operation.

Without such measures, there is a great risk that armed insurrection and civil unrest will reappear, as the only available means of trying to redress the balance of power.

Initiatives concerning increased trade and transport links, or concerning infrastructure projects in the common interest of the participating countries, could promote trust and co-operation and thus contribute to regional stability. In addition, training soldiers for regional peace-keeping could help to promote regional co-operation and security.

How Can African Institutions Increase Their Participation in Conflict Management?

Measures

The following measures primarily concern the OAU, but individual countries, civil society and the international community are also involved:

- supporting the conflict-prevention activities of the OAU and sub-regional organisations, and analogous activities in Africa; and obtaining assistance, at the request of the parties involved, for developing Africa's capacity to participate in the observation and monitoring of elections;
- supporting a peaceful transition to the democratic exercise of power; promoting the ideas of power sharing, political tolerance and compromise; and refusing aid to those opposed to the settlement of disputes through political mechanisms;
- encouraging international collaboration, information sharing and co-operation on a generous scale, so as to provide technical and financial aid in order to develop the institutions and the civil and judicial structures conducive to peaceful dispute settlement;
- reducing and limiting arms transfers to Africa and informing the UN's armaments register about sales, transfers and stocks of weapons;
- obtaining specialised aid for African governments to restructure their armed forces, demobilise and reintegrate soldiers, and establish appropriate security structures and civil police forces;

- promoting and encouraging regional integration and co-operation, and assisting in the rationalisation and strengthening of regional African institutions;
- supporting the principles of OAU participation in re-establishing peace and of organising OAU-UN peace-keeping operations through UN voting mechanisms;
- making sufficient resources available for proper peace-keeping, by transferring special contributions to the conflict-management fund of the central body;
- encouraging and financing the participation of non-governmental bodies in training programmes, so as to create an African conflict-management capacity as great and as diverse as possible;
- increasing the involvement of civil society and reliance on traditional mechanisms (“parley tree”, *Toguna*) can always be useful;
- contributing to the prevention of humanitarian crises by establishing appropriate African structures for negotiation, training and education in peace (population, young people, women and so on);
- favouring a culture of peace (e.g. through school programmes); and
- contributing to the promotion of justice and to the struggle against impunity.

Conclusion

The appropriate response to post-conflict situations is to resume development activities without delay. What has been destroyed must be rebuilt, and a development plan must be launched to get the country or the zone concerned back to work.

One must not forget, however, that the basis for economic take-off is legislative and institutional adjustment. It thus becomes important to strengthen respect for fundamental human rights and good governance.

If today’s dismal trends are confirmed, development and aid in the coming years may sag under the weight of humanitarian action, the management of refugee camps and the politically costly reception of refugees.

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PART THREE

COUNTRY PERSPECTIVES

The Political Environment for Conflict Prevention and Resolution, with Reference to the Great Lakes Region

Dismas Nsengiyaremye and Albert-Enéas Gakusi¹

Introduction

This topic will be addressed according to its three dimensions: the domestic political dimension, the regional dimension and the international dimension. It should be emphasised, however, that this distinction is made principally for expository reasons, since the three dimensions are in fact linked. Most conflicts today reflect the new order resulting from global political and economic restructuring, which has repercussions at all these levels. We will illustrate our analyses with examples from the situation of the countries of the Great Lakes region, which are experiencing large-scale and extremely violent conflicts.

The Domestic Political Dimension of Conflicts

Formerly, conflicts usually took place between different states. In contrast, one characteristic of today's conflicts is that they take place *within* countries where various actors are struggling for power and hence have a domestic political dimension. It should be recalled that these conflicts stem in most cases from single-party political systems run by military officers who seized power by force of arms with the help of a foreign power.

The political foundations of the single-party system lead to institutional paralysis and to the political and economic exclusion of the greater part of the population. This system has turned the civil service into an instrument for propaganda and social control, and the army into an instrument for repressing the population, especially potential political opponents.

By definition, this single-party system has stifled all expression of fundamental freedoms and the exercise of civic and political rights. By blocking any possibility of electoral changeover and peaceful access to power, it fosters the emergence of politico-military organisations which in their turn seek to take power by force of arms — another extreme path. The conflicts we see today stem from this situation, in which politico-military organisations struggle to supplant the regime in power, not necessarily to change its nature.

Democratic organisations — those which respect and defend equality under the law, social justice, and the people's right to express themselves concerning the political leadership and economic management of the country — are opposed by both extreme forces and hence are excluded from political competition. Under these conditions, conflict prevention should be based on promoting democratic organisations and neutralising the partisans of extreme solutions, which is far from being the case today.

At the economic level, the single-party system has developed a predatory management of resources, enriching political leaders and multinational corporations to the detriment of the population. This state of affairs largely accounts for the deep poverty which characterises African countries, despite an abundance of natural resources and an industrious population which asks nothing better than medical care and education so as to be more productive. Under these conditions, the population — particularly unemployed young people — can readily be mobilised for conflicts without knowing their logic and scope. For better conflict prevention, it is thus important to promote sustained economic development and equitable distribution of the country's output.

The picture we have drawn corresponds in particular to the prevailing situation of the countries in the Great Lakes region. In Rwanda, the former regime had managed to build a political system organised to exercise a degree of social control which prevented any debate. From then on, it allowed itself no mechanism for adaptation and in the end took on an extremist character whose terrible consequences for Rwandan society are well known: genocide and massacres of civilians, including many members of the democratic opposition.

The new government has taken up the methods and practices of the regime it replaced, namely terror, oppression and exclusion. Massacres, assassinations and imprisonments account for several dozens of deaths each day. Moreover, the military are omnipresent in the hills, where they engage in pillaging and all sorts of excesses. In reality, we are witnessing not a change of regime, but the replacement of one violent regime by an equally violent one, with the same causes producing the same effects.

In Burundi, although the old regime had agreed to implement the democratic process, the former single party and the army subsequently rejected the results of the election. President Melchior Ndadaye, chosen to lead the country in the free democratic elections of 1 June 1993, was assassinated by the army on 21 October, just three months after taking office. Those who committed this infamous act then manoeuvred to paralyse the government and democratic institutions. This led to the *coup d'état* of 25 July 1996, which returned the former president to office even though the population had strongly repudiated him in the elections.

This situation resulted in the formation of an opposing politico-military group, and the country entered into a war logic, with the population caught between this group and the army. To ensure its control over the population, the current government is carrying out forced displacements and roundups of the population. As for the army, it has gone so far as to massacre civilians, including persons returning from the refugee camps of Zaire and Tanzania.

The situation in Zaire in March 1997 was, like those prevailing in Rwanda and Burundi, the result of the institutional paralysis inherent in the single party which has held power for 30-odd years. This system has paralysed the normal operation of institutions and of the economy by elevating corruption into a system of government. By hampering the application of the resolutions of the National Conference of 1991-92 and by refusing to share power with opposition parties, the regime has favoured the emergence of a politico-military group determined to take power by force. The ease with which this group was progressing can be explained by the army's lack of motivation to fight, as well as by the wish of Zaire's people to get rid of such a regime.

The Regional Dimension of Conflicts

The situation prevailing in any one of these three countries cannot be explained without reference to that which prevails in the others, for they have a certain number of common characteristics. The relationship between the national and regional dimensions of the conflicts must be understood in this light.

At the sociological level, we may emphasise the fact that the populations of Rwanda and Burundi are of the same ethnic composition. Moreover, part of the population of eastern Zaire, that of southern Uganda and that of western Tanzania share the cultural practices of these two countries, and speak languages related to those spoken in Rwanda and Burundi. These cultural and ethnic links constitute one of the factors which explain the intensity of social relationships and of community solidarity in the region, as well as the size of migratory movements. Owing to recurrent outbreaks of violence, this region has seen substantial refugee flows, the largest of which was that of Rwandan refugees in 1994.

Economically, the region is characterised by a population density and a rate of demographic growth among the highest in the world, while per capita income is among the world's lowest. The great majority of the population is rural and earns its livelihood principally by farming. The region is geographically enclosed.

The region has substantial formal and even more informal trade, which could be more profitable for the population if political and administrative constraints were lifted. It was for this reason that regional economic organisations — the Communauté Economique des Pays des Grands Lacs (CEPGL) and the Office pour le Développement du Bassin de la Kagera (OBK) — were established to foster regional integration.

Politically, Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire have a common colonial history. Rwanda and Burundi were German colonies until 1918, when they became Belgian possessions. The three countries became independent in the early 1960s (Zaire in 1960, Rwanda and Burundi in 1962). After several years of attempts to establish democratic regimes, these countries underwent military *coups d'état* which imposed single-party systems and led to political deadlock.

This blocked situation favoured the formation of politico-military groups which came into conflict with the government in power. For reasons of community solidarity and/or ideology, these groups received support from the countries of the region: Uganda supported the Rwandan Patriotic Front when it took power in Kigali; similarly, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi supported the rebellion in Zaire.

Several factors thus exist at the regional level which are favourable to conflict prevention and resolution: cultural and linguistic affinities, community solidarity, trade and migration. Owing to bad political regimes, however, these assets have been used as instruments in the struggle for power. To put them to better use, it will be necessary to introduce genuine regional integration with free circulation of goods and persons.

Regional integration should lead to greater economic efficiency, to improved living conditions for the people and to their participation in regional development. It may be hoped that these conditions would promote a culture of peace among the various segments of the population. If this integration is to bear fruit, however, there must be governments which care for the interests and well-being of the people, which is far from being the case today.

The International Dimension of Conflicts

The conflicts discussed here have a considerable international dimension, due to the involvement of foreign countries and of international organisations in their development, management and resolution.

It was noted above that these conflicts take place in the context of single-party political systems which usually stem from military *coups d'état*. These *coups d'état* were carried out at the instigation of, and with the help of, foreign powers. In fact, the conflicts are fought with modern weapons either supplied or financed by these countries, which may support either the regime in power or the politico-military organisations fighting for power.

Foreign powers and international organisations also intervene in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements, particularly as to the financing of peace-keeping operations. This shows that foreign powers and international organisations play a dominant role in the resolution or the worsening of conflicts, and it must be observed that the deterioration of the situation of the Great Lakes countries can be largely explained by this international dimension.

In Rwanda, the most flagrant case was the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission of Assistance to Rwanda. Although the obvious signs of genocide and massacres of civilians were known to the international community, the UN Security Council decided to withdraw the mission from Rwanda. This decision was immediately interpreted by the extremists as an authorisation to commit atrocities. Paradoxically, the mission's task was to "guarantee the general security of the country and to contribute to ensuring the safety of the population" (Arusha Peace Agreement, protocol on the integration of armed forces, article 54, B).

At a time when the new government in Kigali had already committed serious violations of human rights — notably in Kibeho on 22 April 1995, where thousands of people were massacred by the army — the Security Council decided, against all expectations, to lift the embargo on arms to Rwanda. It is these arms which were used in the 1997 war in eastern Zaire, in which the army of the Rwandan Patriotic Front was playing a major role.

In Burundi, the current conflict was exacerbated by the indifference of the international community to the assassination of the democratically elected president. This encouraged the adherents of the former single party to try to regain power through force of arms — whence the military *coup d'état* of 25 July 1996. Whereas the international community recommends the democratisation of institutions, it seems at the same time to accept the putschists' return to power.

Throughout the 1997 conflict in eastern Zaire (which led to the creation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo), the international community took no conclusive initiative to stop it or resolve it by peaceful means. By doing so, the international community has let the military solution prevail. The Security Council finally refused to intervene, even on humanitarian grounds, in favour of the Rwandan refugees and the people of eastern Zaire: the resolution of 16 November 1996, which authorised the deployment of an international security force, was invalidated on 23 December 1996, on the false pretext that there were no more Rwandan refugees in Zaire.

In short, by withdrawing from Rwanda in April 1994, by accepting the return of the putschists in Burundi, by refusing humanitarian assistance to Zaire, the United Nations has favoured the exacerbation and the extension of the conflicts in the region. These examples show how this organisation, owing to conflicts of interest and the struggle for influence among its members, became engaged in actions which were manifestly contrary to its *raison d'être*, namely the defence of fundamental rights: the right to life, to liberty, to justice and to peace.

Conclusion

In view of the way in which the three dimensions (national, regional, international) of current conflicts are interlinked, conflict prevention and resolution must also take place in these three dimensions. This is possible only if at each level there is a genuine political will which assumes its responsibilities, which is far from being the case at present.

We should like, finally, to emphasise two points: *i*) the position of the people in these conflicts, and *ii*) the issue of development. The fact is that defenceless civilian populations pay the heaviest toll in these conflicts: they live under a reign of terror, exposed to massacre or forced into exile.

We may recall that no development can be envisaged when the population faces an environment of great insecurity. In such a context, the population pulls back from all socio-political participation and develops mechanisms of passive resistance, taking refuge in an economy of survival and thus perpetuating its own poverty and that of the state.

As long as the people are forced to endure governments that take them hostage, as long as they are massacred with impunity or subjected to iniquitous laws, and as long as they are not provided with a context propitious for free enterprise, "development" will remain an empty word.

It is imperative that efforts to prevent or resolve conflicts be based on the aspirations and interests of the people. This condition leads to another one: the existence of responsible governments. This is far from being the case. This conclusion is disappointing, no doubt, but if one wishes to improve the world, one had best understand it first as it is. In view of the above, it is obvious that, for any development action, trying to understand the institutional conditions in which the action will take place should be a priority. The struggle against poverty should, without any doubt, adopt this perspective, and conflict prevention or resolution should also start from this basis.

It remains to be seen what could be the starting point for a return to normal living conditions for the populations of the Great Lakes region. Since 1994, the authors have made propositions in various publications, recommending in particular the organisation of an international conference on the Rwandan conflict in order to seek

solutions and to prevent the extension of the conflict to other countries in the region. Our proposition was followed by no concrete action, although the UN Security Council, in its resolution of 16 November 1996, recommended that such a conference be held.

This international conference should define a new institutional framework to guarantee peace and security for the people of the region, and a regional agreement for preventing and settling conflicts. In particular, this conference should take resolutions and make commitments on the following points:

- setting up temporary institutions which should lead to the introduction of a democratic regime;
- demobilisation and reintegration of combatants;
- the re-establishment of justice, and prosecution of those responsible for acts of genocide, war crimes and other crimes against humanity;
- the return and resettlement of refugees; and
- the creation of a framework for regional integration.

In addition, the international conference on the Great Lakes countries should decide on mechanisms for following up and monitoring the resolutions it takes.

Note

1. Dismas Nsengiyaremye was Prime Minister of Rwanda over the 1992-93 period. Albert-Enéas Gakusi was a professor at the National University of Rwanda from 1987 to 1989.

Sharing Roles in Conflict Prevention in the Great Lakes Region

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Stalemate in Rwanda and Burundi?

At the outbreak of the Rwandan conflict in 1990, international organisations and countries in the region pressured the warring parties to negotiate a settlement. After some months of negotiation, a power sharing agreement designed to eliminate the structural causes of the conflict was signed at Arusha.

The principal objective of the Arusha Agreement was to promote the rule of law as a platform for social regulation, and thereby to foster independent judicial institutions, an independent participatory economy, and the egalitarian management of state resources.

The agreement, however, failed to eliminate the causes of conflict because a multifaceted long-term approach was needed to safeguard human rights and to grant equal opportunities for personal fulfilment to all citizens. The Arusha Agreement did not address the risk factors which required immediate attention to prevent the conflict from escalating.

The work of conflict prevention cannot be confined to the high-level signing of peace agreements between two warring parties. It entails strengthening trust between communities and challenging the institutions responsible for excluding certain groups. Conflict prevention should introduce laws and procedures which guarantee equal opportunities in economic activities and participatory political structures.

What can we learn from the unsuccessful preventive efforts in Rwanda? And, how can we apply the lessons of Rwanda to contain and resolve the present Burundian conflict?

Three approaches have been used to deal with the Burundian conflict. First, preventive diplomacy was used to promote dialogue; second, economic sanctions were imposed; and third, the threat of force was made and then employed.

United Nations Special Envoy, Mr. Ould Abdallah, helped to avert the degeneration of the Burundian conflict into a Rwanda style genocide, although ultimately, he was unable to end the conflict. Throughout his assignment, he worked to advance the idea of power sharing in Burundi. Unfortunately, other parties in the region often took action without consulting him and this lack of co-ordination hindered his efforts.

Following the return to power in July 1996 of Pierre Buyoya, the neighbouring countries of the Great Lakes Region decided to take a stricter stance on the regime in Bujumbura. Previously they had been content to issue recommendations and ensure the implementation of the OAU resolutions on the Burundian crisis.

One of the new resolutions solicited the military forces of neighbouring countries to assist with the work of stabilising Burundi. The countries in the region also opted for using economic sanctions against the new government. When the take-over occurred, Burundi was indeed making progress.

Economic sanctions in conflict situations express the international community's disapproval by identifying the guilty parties and providing them with an incentive to rectify errors. While sanctions leave open the possibility of taking more drastic measures such as force, they raise important questions: namely, who is the sanctioned party — a people, a government or a leader?

At present, sanctions have made it possible to reinstate the Burundian National Assembly and have forced the contenders to accept the principle of dialogue. One aim of sanctions is to encourage negotiation. However, it is not always clear how to go about bringing the factions to the negotiating table when they are not convinced that war is hopeless and that negotiations will improve their current position.

The first stage in a negotiation process is to persuade the parties to engage in dialogue, and to define the problem instead of denying it. Thanks to Julius Nyerere's mediation, dialogue between warring factions in Burundi now seems to be moving forward. Still, the nature, purpose and ground-rules of dialogue remain open for discussion.

The International Community

The international community has not been consistently effective in its prevention work in the Great Lakes Region. The Rwandan genocide in 1994 clearly disarmed the international community and yet numerous documents show that the information system was not responsible for the failure to respond to the Rwanda tragedy.

As early as 1993, the crisis in Rwanda was predicted by the United Nations Rapporteur whose report stated that the lessons of the past should be applied to the present in order to halt the violence which plunged Rwanda and Burundi into a bloodbath. The report proposed that the culprits of the massacres be held responsible for their behaviour, and that preventive measures be adopted to avert a recurrence of such tragedies. The report by the international commission of enquiry into the Rwandan massacres drew the same conclusions in September 1993.

Despite these cries of alarm, the international community was unable to react effectively to the emergency situation before it turned into a tragedy necessitating special operations. Why did the international community fail to prevent this conflict?

After the genocide ended, the UN renewed its mission to lay the foundation for lasting peace in Rwanda. The mission took a long-term, evolutive approach. Since the UN's presence was to be temporary, it focused on strengthening institutions to protect Rwandan national human rights and, in particular, on rebuilding the judicial system. Regrettably, the UN objectives did not include developing the capabilities of civil society.

The response of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to the Rwandan crisis was just as untimely as the UN's response. The OAU delayed its official and collective response until the Tunis summit of Heads of state in June 1994. The conflict prevention, management, and resolution mechanisms set up at the Cairo summit of Heads of state in 1993 were plainly not yet in working order.

Learning from the mismanagement of the Rwandan crisis, the all-African Organisation has been more active in handling the Burundian crisis. OAU observers have been on site for some months, and the Heads of state in the region have been mandated to find a solution to the crisis.

Under the auspices of Julius Nyerere, the Heads of state recently held at least three meetings to discuss the crises in Burundi and the Kivu area. They continue their work as mediators in these crises, even though their recommendations for an immediate cease-fire have yet to be enforced.

In order to be effective, the OAU preventive mechanism needs to set up an early warning system. Indeed, preventive action without an early warning system is much like groping in the dark. In an effort to increase preventive action, the OAU is in the process of compiling a database on the war-torn regions. If the database is not to remain strictly academic, the OAU and civil society need to envision forms of co-operation between nations in the region that would establish a network for gathering information on potential conflicts.

Starting with its active role in preventive diplomacy in Burundi and Zaire, the OAU has developed into an essential instrument of conflict prevention in the region. The success of prevention will depend on the extent to which the OAU's capacity for action and intervention can be developed.

Civil Society

The work of prevention rests above all with the populations concerned. It is their problem, and they hold the keys to solving it. Peace cannot be brought to the region without civil society, and still less in opposition to it. Civil society is the local resource for all prevention work and its capacities need to be strengthened. In the Great Lakes region, civil society consists chiefly of women's, youth, human rights, and development organisations, and is still fragile. Despite their good intentions, these groups have been unable, in Burundi, for instance, to constitute a force capable of preventing or stopping conflict.

The organisations of civil society are vital to the health of the various countries of the region. They must be consulted and supported in their efforts, for they alone can complete the work of promoting a culture of peace and reconstituting the social fabric. Civil society offers hope for socialisation, dialogue and the promotion of non-violence. Youth associations in the Great Lakes Region have worked to construct blueprints for supra-ethnic societies while a collective of 32 women's associations in Rwanda have been conducting a campaign for reconciliation and peace. These examples confirm our optimism about the positive impact that a strong civil society can have.

Civil society may also, as in the case of Burundi, reduce risk factors by supplying accurate information on parties, issues, and regional implications of conflict, and by helping to identify and support moderate leaders and groups. The groups that make up civil society are also in a better position to recommend methods to encourage and reward non-violence. Feeling the pulse of society as they do, the organisations of civil society are more suitable than any other to detect premonitory signs of conflict and give early warning for prevention purposes. Thus, conflict prevention depends on reinforcing local faculties to respond to crises.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have also become major forces of conflict prevention and management in the Great Lakes Region because of their local presence and access to decision makers. As service agencies, they have coped with enormous humanitarian disasters, such as the reception of the hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees fleeing to Zaire in 1994.

In 1994, certain NGOs maintained a strictly neutral stance while caring for the refugees, adhering to the principle that saving lives takes precedence over politics. Others began to ask questions as they perceived the diversion of their aid by paramilitary forces. In situations where aid is tapped by one of the parties to the conflict, outside organisations are faced with the difficult decision of weighing the ideological and practical implications of remaining, against those of withdrawing their aid.

In Rwanda, one can only deplore the local authorities' lack of co-ordination which characterised the NGOs' action with respect to emergency aid and post-genocide development. At one point, over 150 NGOs were recorded in this stricken country,

each with its own agenda, programme, and priorities. Some went so far as to interfere with the function of the state in opposition to the generally accepted principle that strengthening the weakened or bankrupt state should be made a priority.

NGOs are an ideal relay for international alert because their local presence gives them access to reliable information and because they have access to international policy makers. NGOs have acted as human rights lawyers and witnesses as well as unofficial mediators.

These organisations have, for the most part, not hesitated to warn the international community of the conflict's possible spread to Zairian territory. Their early warning, founded on reliable information from field sources, has unfortunately not been heeded by the international community.

The reasons are debatable; perhaps the imperatives identified or the actions suggested by them, their priorities and their vision, were not shared by the policy makers. There may have also been malfunction, discord, and disorganisation in the transmission of the information to the policy makers.

NGOs can also have an *economic role* in conflict prevention. Most of the present conflicts in the region are rooted in poverty or faulty development. The absence of social prospects left the youth in Rwanda susceptible to political opportunists. While the brains behind the genocide were adults, the executioners were mostly young people.

For the past thirty years, the Great Lakes Region has been a graveyard of economic development projects and various development theories. Rwanda, the country of the thousand hills and mass murder, was also the country of the thousand development projects. The projects failed because they were designed and executed without the participation of those most directly concerned. NGOs, as promoters of participatory development, can help restore economic prospects to the populations of the region.

The role of the media in conflict situations has been influential. They have the power to inflame and quench conflict, acting as fearful firebugs and effective firemen too. In the case of Burundi and Rwanda, rather than remaining neutral, the local media was responsible for inflaming public controversy and heightening feelings of despair and confusion. Factual errors and simplistic analyses have been common. Prompted by sensationalism, they reduced the region's conflicts to the ethnic factor. If Radio Mille Collines had not publicly urged hatred, the Rwandan genocide might not have reached such great proportions. In order to avoid unnecessary escalation of conflicts, the media should be urged to practice responsible journalism that promotes values of coexistence and tolerance.

On the whole, the media has not functioned to alert the public and decision makers to potential conflicts. A typical example is the Kivu crisis. In 1994, most of the Western media covered the exodus of the Rwandan refugees but then discontinued reporting until the Banyamulenge news and a further exodus of refugees took place. What can be done to encourage the media to act as an alarm rather than to report tragedies complacently when they are already taking place?

Conclusion

The crisis in the Great Lakes Region continues. While the worst is over in Rwanda, alarming situations still prevail in Burundi and Zaire and are directly affecting neighbouring countries. Prevention work in the region must move beyond simply negotiating cease-fires and signing peace agreements in order to become part of a regional process with a long-term dimension.

In many respects, the challenge of prevention in this region is synonymous with the struggle against poverty, and calls for an economic integration programme for young people, state reforms which foster a culture of good governance, and the strengthening of civil society.

Prevention begins with the first signs of the potential outbreak of a conflict when tensions and conflict are already present and continues after the conflict ends to lay structural foundations for stability by addressing the issue of resettling returned soldiers, refugees and displaced persons, by rebuilding political structures conducive to stability, by strengthening agriculture and the economy at large, by setting up independent judiciaries, by fighting against impunity, by the process of building a common memory, and by securing young people's economic and social integration.

Note

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Somalia: Failure in Peace Building

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International efforts to build a sustainable peace in Somalia have clearly failed. During the height of international involvement — from November 1992, when the US-led multinational force landed on the shores of Mogadishu to assist in the delivery of humanitarian relief, to March 1995, when the United Nations Operation in Somalia II (UNOSOM II) ended unceremoniously — Somalia witnessed no progress towards creating a durable peace. Many analysts argue that this failure was related to the inadequate resources and political will put at the disposal of the United Nations (UN) to implement its mandate, specifically with respect to military enforcement. Equally important, however, was the manner in which UNOSOM II conceptualised and implemented the civilian aspects of its mandate. This chapter will examine how UNOSOM II implemented these civilian aspects in attempting to build peace in Somalia.

UN Security Council Resolution 814, passed on 26 March 1993, established UNOSOM II and mandated it to undertake a broad range of activities, from relief and rehabilitation assistance to promoting political reconciliation and re-establishing institutions for effective governance in Somalia. This broad mandate for peace building was never translated into a strategic plan of action to ensure that political, economic and institution-building efforts would be embarked upon in a mutually supportive manner. Instead, efforts in each of these areas were undertaken on an *ad hoc* basis, and often in ways that undermined the broader peace-building agenda. In addition, peace-building efforts were “product-oriented” rather than “process-oriented”. Effective changes in the dynamics of the conflict and the creation of a lasting peace would necessarily take more time than the mandate of UNOSOM II allowed. UNOSOM II should, instead, have focused on supporting self-sustaining processes that could eventually lead to the end goals identified, namely the formation of a broad-based government and institutions of civil administration. Finally, and most important, all civilian international efforts in Somalia were subsumed by the military objectives of

the United States and the UN. The military mind-set that guided the initial humanitarian intervention in Somalia continued into UNOSOM II, which should have essentially been a civilian operation, with the military's role being limited to assisting in the implementation of the mission's overall peace-building mandate.

The international community's civilian efforts in Somalia during the UNOSOM II period fall into three broad categories: political efforts, institution building and economic rehabilitation. At the political level, the processes of factional reconciliation and of grass-roots political development were embarked upon simultaneously. UNOSOM II and various national governments, including that of the United States, were the principal international actors that supported the factional reconciliation process. This process, which sought to bring together the various faction leaders in order to create a power-sharing arrangement and put an end to the war, was a pragmatic response to the fighting in Somalia, but it had several fundamental flaws. Most significantly, the faction leaders had a vested interest in the conflict, since their power and prestige within their respective clans derived from its continuation. In peacetime, many of the faction leaders were likely to be replaced by other, civilian-oriented clan leaderships. Second, the method used to reconcile the factions was also flawed. UN-sponsored national reconciliation conferences were held outside Somalia and thus divorced faction leaders from their constituents, who would have imposed pressures on them to seek firm agreements. These conferences were instead used by the faction leaders to enhance their own prestige and image as statesmen. Third, a national reconciliation process would have been meaningful only after internal clan rivalries had been sorted out. Instead, the UN's efforts put the cart before the horse, by seeking a national agreement before sufficient local ground had been created to make such an agreement meaningful. Finally, the precipitate military reaction against one of the most important faction leaders, General Aidid, in response to the killing of Pakistani peacekeepers on 5 June 1993, effectively transformed UNOSOM II into the "sixteenth Somali faction". By the time the hunt for Aidid was terminated in October 1993, UNOSOM II was no longer a credible interlocutor among the Somali parties.

Parallel to the factional reconciliation process, UNOSOM II sought to develop political structures from the grass-roots level so as to build a system of political participation. This well-intentioned effort was also seriously flawed. First, the faction leaders clearly had no democratic intentions. Any effort by UNOSOM II to strengthen alternative centres of power was likely to result — and did result in a number of instances — in a clash with the faction leaders whose power would be adversely affected. Second, the manner in which local governments were formed was imposed from the outside by UNOSOM II, rather than being generated locally. As such, the district and regional councils had limited legitimacy and effectiveness among the communities they were supposed to represent. Instead of letting the local populations choose their own representatives and the method of functioning of local authorities through, for instance, the informal institution of the elders, UNOSOM II imposed its own rigid criteria of selection of councillors and became the certifier of the local councils' legitimacy. Third, the parallel focus on factional reconciliation undercut the

effectiveness of local authorities, because leaders with greater clout in their communities gravitated to the factional process, which they correctly perceived as the means of rapidly gaining power and influence. Finally, the councils were formed along the lines of antiquated district and regional boundaries which no longer corresponded to the real territorial divisions among the Somali clans.

In conjunction with grass-roots political development, UNOSOM II embarked on an institutional strengthening effort that was intended to provide the district and regional councils with some tools for effective governance. This support essentially took the form of training in basic administrative functions, such as budgeting, taxation and accounting, and provision of equipment and furniture. While important in its own right, this assistance could not overcome the basic problems connected with the authenticity of the local councils.

A better-financed effort was made by UNOSOM II to establish Somali judicial institutions and a police force. The rationale guiding this effort was the need to ensure local security, which would enable UNOSOM II to withdraw its peace-keeping forces from Somalia. To be sustainable, however, a local security force requires the existence of political authorities to which it can report and which can support it. UNOSOM II, in its rush to leave the country, sought to reconstruct the police force of the Barre era without effective local political authorities to which the police could report. In the event, the police force reported to UNOSOM II itself, which provided it with equipment and salaries. Salary levels for the police greatly exceeded what the local economy could sustain, which was another indication of its transient nature. As expected, when UNOSOM II was terminated the Somali police force crumbled, since its mentor and financial backer had disappeared.

The economic rehabilitation efforts of the international community in Somalia were undertaken principally by UN agencies, the United Nations Development Programme, various bilateral donors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). UNOSOM II, which included a humanitarian co-ordination division, had no operational role in humanitarian relief or rehabilitation. The World Bank, which in most countries is the lead international actor in economic development, did not engage in Somalia because of the absence of a national government, which it required as its interlocutor for undertaking development projects.

The major challenge for the international donor community in Somalia was how to shift its orientation from relief, which was the principal mode of operation in 1992 and early 1993, to economic rehabilitation. Before October 1993, little could be done systematically in this regard, since the entire machinery of international effort was geared towards the political agenda of forging an agreement among the principal Somali protagonists, first through negotiations and then through attempts to marginalise one faction which was seen as a “spoiler”. When 18 US servicemen died in an attack against Aidid on 3 October, however, the approach of the United States and UNOSOM II became essentially a holding pattern, with continuing, albeit half-hearted, efforts at factional reconciliation.

By the time the ill-conceived hunt for Aidid was over, the bilateral donors and a number of UN agencies had clearly lost confidence in UNOSOM II. A meeting of donors in November 1993 in Addis Ababa resulted in the creation of the Somalia Aid Co-ordination Body (SACB), which was intended to serve as a common donor platform for formulating a strategy and co-ordinating donors' rehabilitation assistance to Somalia. The SACB adopted a regional approach to development, establishing two cardinal conditions for providing rehabilitation assistance: security and the existence of local counterparts. The rationale behind this approach was that large parts of Somalia were in fact at relative peace, and hence that conditions existed for rehabilitation work to commence. It was also hoped that provision of donor assistance might provide an incentive for those parties that were still in conflict to settle their problems in order to take advantage of international financial support.

Like UNOSOM II, however, the SACB did not seek to develop an overall view of the prevailing situation in Somalia so as to design an economic assistance programme in support of a peace-building strategy. Although the donors emphasised that they did not wish their programmes to be associated with those of UNOSOM II, the regional approach that they adopted suffered from two of the same flaws as the UN operation. First, they continued to deal with administrative regions rather than with territories that were more coherent in organisation and controlled by a united clan or sub-clan. Second, the SACB asked the regional authorities to create new structures called regional development committees (RDCs), instead of working with the existing but discredited regional councils created by UNOSOM II. SACB did not engage in further dialogue with the local and regional leaderships on how these RDCs should be formed and who should compose them; as a result, the RDCs simply retained the composition of the regional councils but assumed a different name. A third problem, which was entirely of the donors' own making, was that as soon as money started to flow to more secure regions, resentment grew among other faction leaders who saw that their areas were not being favoured. Instead of serving as an incentive for the more troubled regions to resolve their problems so that they too could benefit from foreign largesse, the regional approach led certain factions to attempt to subvert the favoured regions. An example of this dynamic was Aidid's decision to invade the southern regions of Bay and Bakool in September 1995, which had recently received increased donor attention.

The key lesson from this experience is that economic support efforts cannot be divorced from political realities. In the Somali context at the time, rehabilitation assistance was a highly political tool. The donors recognised this to some degree, but were not sufficiently engaged at the political level to recognise fully the implications of their efforts. Had the donor community adopted an overtly political approach, with sufficient political sensitivity to the ground realities, donor funds for rehabilitation could have been applied to much greater effect. A common donor approach that was sensitive to such political realities would have been geared towards engaging with the factional leaderships, which exerted effective control over various areas of the country, in developing and supporting programmes for demobilisation. Effective demobilisation programmes, undertaken with the support of the actual authorities in the various

clan-controlled zones of the country, would have contributed far more effectively to peace building in Somalia than did the donors' piecemeal, regionally based efforts to rehabilitate the social sector.

The international presence also had important unintended economic impacts in Somalia, the most obvious manifestation of which was the appreciation of the Somali shilling by 100 per cent during the 1992-95 period. The massive presence of UNOSOM II led to serious distortions in the local economy: the growth of a service sector around the international presence, and the mushrooming of Somali "NGOs" which in fact were attempts by Somali entrepreneurs to take advantage of what they perceived as the international community's penchant to contract with local philanthropic entities rather than with the local business sector. UNOSOM II was the single largest employer of Somalis, engaging approximately 3 000 local staff, primarily in Mogadishu. This induced an artificial boom in the local economy during the period of UNOSOM II's presence. Aidid's faction controlled south Mogadishu, where UNOSOM II was headquartered, and this sub-clan therefore benefited disproportionately from UNOSOM II's presence, through both creation of employment and rental of houses and cars. Ironically, when the UN went to war against Aidid, its presence continued to enrich him at the same time. When UNOSOM II withdrew, the economy of Mogadishu suffered tremendously since many Somalis lost their jobs.

Finally, the social impact of the international presence in Somalia had important effects on its ability to build peace. Most striking was the transformation of UNOSOM II from an impartial interlocutor to an interested party in the Somali conflict, which limited its ability to play the role of an honest broker. A second repercussion was the result of the massive international presence, which was factored into every political decision the Somalis made. Indigenous political processes were effectively frozen in the areas of UNOSOM II presence, because Somalis wanted to see what benefits UNOSOM II would provide them — an expectation engendered by UNOSOM II's financial and material support to "friendly" faction leaders and to local authorities.

Since the end of UNOSOM II's mandate in March 1995, the uncertainty as to whether Somalia would revert to high levels of conflict has been put to rest. The end of the massive, intrusive international presence has had a salutary effect in allowing local political dynamics to resurface. These dynamics take two forms. One is the growing process of "civilianisation" of clan leaderships and of intra-clan reconciliation. Examples of this development are the emergence of a clan-based civilian government in the "Republic of Somaliland", the Digil and Mirifle reconciliation process within the Rahanweyn clan and the Darod reconciliation process in the northeast of Somalia. The second is the growth, at the local level across various clan-controlled areas, of Islamic authorities which are geared to providing basic internal security and policing. Both developments are indigenous and have little to do with the efforts of the international community. While no central government has been formed, and the situation remains unstable in a few areas, notably Mogadishu, the bulk of Somalia is at peace and locally generated processes of reconciliation and governance are under way. In time, these may lead to a sufficient measure of inter-clan reconciliation to

allow a meaningful discussion of the formation of a central government. This process must not be rushed, however, and the parameters of debate in the context of reconstituting a central government should revolve around how Somalia should be governed rather than who should govern it.

The role of the international community in Somalia today is necessarily circumscribed by the experience of the past several years. Instead of another massive political effort to reconcile the existing factions, international efforts should be limited to supporting home-grown political processes in discrete and non-intrusive ways. These may include provision of basic administrative support to authentic local and regional authorities to help them provide more effective governance, and support to emerging elements of civil society that are conducive to peace. At the economic level, international efforts should be geared towards preventing another humanitarian emergency, since this would once again strengthen the faction leaders who control the access routes for humanitarian supplies. Finally, demobilisation and reintegration programmes that have been initiated by local authorities should be supported.

Note

1. International Peace Academy.

A Southern African Perspective

Andrew Goudie

Recent decades have seen widespread tension and instability in southern Africa. Conflicts have often been protracted, spanning several decades; many have been characterised by extreme forms of violence and heavy loss of life. In most instances, the damage to the already weak economic and social infrastructure of the countries concerned has been devastating, representing a catastrophic reversal of the modest improvements in living standards that had been achieved earlier.

This chapter does not provide a detailed analysis of each of the primary conflicts in the region, which would be too ambitious an undertaking. Rather, it draws together some observations from the broad experience of the region and offers some thoughts that might have a wider validity in analysing problems of conflict and how to respond to such situations. The first section makes some general observations about the approach to conflict prevention advocated here; the second looks at some of the key determinants of conflict in southern Africa in recent times; the third reviews observed policy responses to conflict; and the last presents some concluding thoughts on the role of the international community in this context.

Approach to Conflict Prevention

Economic Perspective

One emphasis of this chapter is on the economic perspective: the role and significance of economic structure and economic policy in contributing adversely to situations of extreme instability and conflict; and the potential for economic policy to contribute positively to conflict prevention.

Long-term Horizon

In many analyses of conflict, it has proved instructive to distinguish between the chronological perspectives of pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict periods. Here, we start by explicitly blurring these distinctions in order to emphasise the long-term nature and fundamental structural focus of the economic perspective. In many post-conflict situations, the conflict *per se* and its conclusion — often with the signing of a peace settlement — have achieved little if anything towards resolving the fundamental causes of the conflict. In this sense, the fragile post-conflict period may, rather pessimistically, also be interpreted as potentially a pre-conflict period. With the longer-term horizon at the centre of our thinking, these chronological differences thus tend to disappear.

This perspective does not, of course, deny the importance of short-term pre-conflict interventions, often initiated in response to information from early warning systems and typically focusing on an imminent crisis and the humanitarian or military responses that might prevent immediate and heavy loss of life, or might at least postpone that catastrophe. Similarly, the critical short-term programmes of the transitional period from conflict to peace undoubtedly play a major role. Demilitarisation, demobilisation and disarmament programmes, the social reintegration of the armed forces and the rehabilitation of the most essential economic and social infrastructure — not to mention humanitarian interventions and, indeed, efforts to jump-start productive activities through such initiatives as seed distribution — are fundamental in seeking to achieve “normality” and rebuild the social capital of the country. To the extent that such measures aim to remove the means of pursuing violent conflict and to integrate the society, they are valuable.

Significant dangers lurk in the background, however. Do these programmes address the underlying causes rather than the symptoms of conflict? What do such programmes seek to achieve in the longer-term context of potential conflict? Do they seek to re-establish the *status quo ante*, or do they aim to engineer a new political balance within the country? It is naïve to believe that conflict prevention may be conducted in a political vacuum: from the local perspective, each action by the international community will have a political dimension. Furthermore, are interventions compatible with and supportive of the broader development strategy for the country — if one exists?

The management of the 1994 Rwandan conflict provides a striking example of the intractability of these fundamental questions and of the critical importance of addressing the underlying determinants of conflict rather than the superficial symptoms addressed by many of the world’s media and political thinkers. The relative absence of conflict today in no way implies that we have reached a solution to the Rwandan crisis. Most of the fundamental problems, which date from 1959 and before, remain unresolved: How are minority rights to be managed and respected? How are land

tenure and land distribution to be managed? How are conflicting claims to be resolved in the face of weak political governance and a weak judiciary? At the time of writing, none of these questions had been even remotely addressed in recent months.

Identification of the Determinants of Conflict

Our principal focus is on post-colonial conflict, since this is the primary concern today. Colonial history remains a powerful factor — as evidenced, for example, by the continuing implications of existing national boundaries, the colonial legacy of economic structures that favoured certain regions and groups, or political structures that favoured one or another social group — but even if many of the factors underlying the present disputes have their roots in the independence process, the nature of the basic dispute has significantly evolved.

It is important to recognise that economic determinants may be of only secondary importance in the evolution of conflict. Typically, the motivation of conflict is multi-faceted and complex; economic structure and economic policy may be only small components compared to other social and political elements. Five examples are considered here:

- external political determinants in Mozambique;
- internal economic interests: the mineral question in Angola;
- internal economic interests: the land question in Zimbabwe;
- poor economic growth in Zambia; and
- government distributional policies in Zimbabwe.

External Political Determinants: Mozambique

It can be argued that purely economic factors played a relatively minor role in the long-running conflict in Mozambique. To understand the determinants of instability in this case, it appears necessary to differentiate between the motivations of, on the one hand, those financing and providing active support for the conflict and, on the other, the leadership of the armed resistance to the government. Throughout the conflict, this issue was surrounded by considerable controversy. The motivation of the RENAMO leadership remained at best ambiguous and largely undefined for much of the period. Any political objectives were poorly articulated, and although at various times during the period large areas of land were at least temporarily subject to RENAMO control, no serious attempt was made to construct and consolidate a basis of political support amongst the rural population. On the contrary, the treatment of the civilian population is generally agreed to have been exceptionally aggressive and violent.

The underlying rationale of the primary sponsors of the war arose from the complex conjuncture of three political elements, all of which, arguably, were only loosely related to domestic interest groups: first, groups that had opposed the liberation war conducted by FRELIMO and continued to seek to overthrow the new government; second, groups that were ideologically opposed to the avowed Marxist-Leninist stance of the new government — that is, the familiar extension of the cold war to the southern African arena; and, third, the stance of the new FRELIMO government towards the white minority governments of Rhodesia and South Africa.

Various economic elements associated with this period of conflict can be identified, but it is doubtful that they played a dominant or primary role in initiating or perpetuating that conflict. Although there was serious economic mismanagement in the post-independence years, the evidence suggests that it was the socio-political instability created by the emergence of serious armed resistance that caused economic collapse, and that the pursuance of inappropriate economic policy only exacerbated this trend. There are a few indications of a significant degree of reverse causality. Economic collapse may have led to serious disenchantment with the new government in both rural and urban areas, but there is little evidence to suggest that it provided momentum for a substantive expansion of RENAMO's constituency amongst any specific social grouping. In the light of RENAMO's treatment of the local population in all economic matters, which apparently relied heavily on coercion and fear, it is perhaps not surprising that the failures of government policy had no significant impact on the conflict.

Internal Economic Interests: Mineral Resources in Angola

In one respect, the experience of Angola mirrors that of Mozambique, insofar as both in part reflected the broader cold war environment. What is striking about the Angolan experience, however, is the degree to which the underlying determinants of the conflict have changed during the course of the war. While the initial conflict may have had its origins in the cold war and in the post-colonial struggle for power, recent years have been marked by a struggle for economic power and by the desire to retain highly lucrative economic interests. To be sure, the failure of the initial peace accord in Angola in 1992 and the post-election collapse into renewed conflict may, at least in part, be attributed to the mismanagement of the transitional period. The failure to make sufficient progress in the transitional processes of demobilisation and reintegration *prior* to moving forward with political reform was arguably decisive in opening the way to further conflict.

In the most recent phase of conflict in Angola, however, economic interests and their interaction with the extremely poor governance of the country have been at the heart of the very slow progress towards a sustainable peace and the establishment of a government of unity and national reconciliation¹. The leaderships of the two protagonists have little incentive to bring the conflict rapidly to an end: as long as the conflict remains unresolved, the rich resource bases of oil and diamonds remain in the control

of the government and UNITA, respectively. References to the Angolan “war dividend” do, in fact, have a relatively sound basis. With structures of political governance on both sides that facilitate widespread corruption amongst the elite and, until today, with little prospect that appropriate political structures of accountability will be established, it is hardly surprising that the conflict has dragged on and that progress towards a unified post-conflict state with appropriate governance has been slow. Indeed, it can be argued that both the near collapse of the formal economy and the evolution of the conflict are closely related to problems of governance.

Internal Economic Interests: Land in Zimbabwe

The struggle to retain control over the valuable mineral resources of Angola is only one of many examples of the central importance of natural resources in many conflicts. Disputed claims upon land in a more general sense are commonly found amongst the factors contributing to conflict. Land distribution was clearly a motivating element of the liberation struggles, and it remains central in many countries today.

In Zimbabwe, there are two distinct dimensions to the land question, each of which underlies a different source of potential conflict: first, tension between the white and black communities, and second, tension within the black community itself. As a result of the 1930 Land Apportionment Act, the white community, which accounted for around 2 per cent of the population, was allocated 78 per cent of the highest-grade lands, while the majority of the land allocated to Africans for subsistence agriculture in communal farming areas was of the lowest grade. At independence, the agricultural sector was still characterised by extreme duality: there was sub-optimal production and overpopulation in the communal areas, while the commercial farming area was large and mostly under-utilised. Even in the early 1990s, the white community continued to hold 84 per cent of the total irrigated area and 59 per cent of the two most productive grades of land. Within the black community, similarly, the Ndebele and Shona peoples differ in their potential access to higher-grade land, with the Shona concentrated heavily in the high-potential and more commercialised land of Mashonaland. The land issue thus underpins the continuing tension both within the black community and between the black and white communities. We return to this important question below.

The Role of Poor Economic Growth: Zambia

Several countries in southern Africa have experienced very low rates of growth, but it would be difficult to attribute the more serious outbreaks of conflict to this factor. Generally, economic stagnation has not led to the more severe forms of conflict, but there are clear instances where economic decline — typically associated with efforts to implement economic reforms to reverse that decline — has provoked more minor forms of instability and conflict. This has been observed in Zambia periodically during

the 1980s. We might hypothesise that slow growth or economic decline exacerbates existing conflict, although it does not play a dominant role as a source of conflict, and that positive per capita growth has a role to play in prevention and resolution. We return to this point below, but it is worth noting here that, while economic reform programmes have been associated with instability in some countries, there is little evidence that they were the primary causal factor: in the absence of reform, economic conditions would probably have been worse in most cases and thus would likely to have provoked more intense instability. The lack of a clear counterfactual makes these forms of analysis problematic, but the tentative conclusions appear valid.

Government Distributional Policies: Zimbabwe

In post-independence Zimbabwe, the government initially managed the long-standing tension between the Ndebele and Shona peoples — a tension that certainly pre-dated independence in 1979 — by emphasising its social expenditure strategy: education, health and some physical infrastructure expenditure increased rapidly in the early years of independence. In 1982, however, with a growing perception of discrimination in the distribution of expenditure, coupled with rising concerns about the manner in which the government was handling political opposition, tension rose and fierce fighting broke out between the ZAPU and ZANU forces in Matabeleland. In response, the government moved sharply towards a more repressive line. While the government saw this step as necessary to counter destabilisation from South Africa, these policies served only to sharpen the regional and ethnic divisions and did little to constrain the conflict of the next five years. Thus, the land question and the perceived discrimination in government distributional policy both contributed to the potential for conflict.

The Determinants of Conflict: Summary

Within southern Africa, we may therefore draw a varied picture of the motives for conflict:

- i)* In Mozambique, conflict was driven to a considerable extent by exogenous events — largely of external and political origin — with their roots in the colonial struggle, the struggle against apartheid and the cold war; domestic economic and social conditions played a more subsidiary role.
- ii)* In Angola, a conflict that was initially rooted in a colonial struggle and in the cold war evolved into an economic struggle for the control of rich natural resources, fuelled by particularly weak governance.
- iii)* In Zimbabwe, the tension and conflict of the mid-1980s were in part attributable to the distributional concerns of some powerful armed groupings within the country, although political concerns undoubtedly played an equally crucial role.

- iv) In Zambia, arguably, weak economic policy and attempts at economic reform led not to serious systematic conflict, but to outbursts of lesser confrontation and unrest.

This review greatly simplifies each situation and the dynamic perspective that is relevant to each, but it does indicate the diversity of motivations from country to country even within a region — a factor that is fundamental in driving a country-specific approach to conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

The Policy Response

Repression or Accommodation?

Government responses to the perceived threat of conflict have varied considerably from one situation to another. Until recently, many African societies had little political accountability and few democratic institutions within which serious disputes might have been resolved. With the emergence of such mechanisms in several countries — although they remain very fragile in most cases and certainly not immune from the threat of reversal — the prospects for the internal resolution of fundamental disputes and the avoidance of violent conflict are enhanced, although largely untested as yet.

Irrespective of the form of government in power today, the policy choice it faces has changed little since earlier periods in which more autocratic forms of government prevailed: whether to respond to the threat of instability and conflict through a strategy of rejection and the adoption of repressive policies, or through a largely accommodating process of political and/or economic reform. This policy choice was clearly apparent in the case of Zimbabwe: when its distributional policies failed, the government reverted to repressive steps. However, neither the conflict nor the government's decision to pursue a more repressive strategy achieved anything of substance towards resolving the perceived distributional discrimination within the black community: the fundamental balance between the Shona and the Ndebele remained unchanged.

Distribution of Assets

When analysis of the underlying determinants of conflict in any country suggests that economic structures in general — and the distribution of economic assets in particular — contribute substantially to motivating instability and conflict, the distributional policy of an accommodating government will be seen as a key instrument of conflict prevention. In this context, what is important is the distribution of assets in their broadest sense, the assets over which individuals or groups have established rights of varying degrees of security. These must include strictly personal assets with clearly defined legal property rights attached to them: personal capital assets, such as

land, productive assets, natural resource assets; personal financial assets; and personal human capital assets derived from education and training. They should also include social assets, derived from state or communal assets in which the individual has no individual property rights but only rights founded on custom or use and established access. In this respect, it is important to consider the distribution of access to, and opportunities to benefit from, public services in the social and economic sphere. Access to employment-generating opportunities in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy should also be included.

If economic factors are deemed significant, distributional policy should be considered as a key instrument in resolving tension. The process by which such policy is formulated is necessarily highly political and sensitive, especially when the policy affects the distribution of the existing stocks of assets rather than seeking to achieve a marginal impact by addressing the future accumulation of assets. An emphasis on distributional policy should, of course, be seen as fundamentally accommodating in that the government responds, not by repressing conflict, but by moving the political balance in favour of the aggressor — assuming that the aggressor is contesting the existing distributional structure.

Constraints to Policy Formulation

The design of such redistributive policy faces important constraints, however, as is shown by the post-independence experience of Zimbabwe. As in many countries, the transition from the colonial era in Zimbabwe saw a major exodus of the white community. With approximately half of the white population departing — many from key positions in the economic and administrative structures — the government immediately moved to reassure the remaining white community with respect to their economic, political and security interests. Indeed, the Lancaster House Agreement had already gone a long way in providing constitutional safeguards for the socio-economic and political power of the white community, with the stated objective of maintaining high efficiency and standards. Notably, and by way of illustration from the economic point of view, protection from land appropriation was accorded for at least ten years unless acceptable compensation was provided; and in this case, the compensation could be remitted abroad. This provision was in direct conflict with a key objective of the liberation struggle — reform of the distributional structure — and removed a degree of freedom in what was arguably the most critical area of distributional policy.

In this instance, therefore, the implementation of policy to address an underlying cause of the nation's instability was subordinated to longer-term developmental objectives, the fulfilment of which was considered to depend heavily on the white community for the medium term. The potential for conflict between the black and white communities remains, taking on an added importance in view of the historical tensions within the black community.

Clearly, this analysis has an important parallel with the situation in South Africa today, where many of the post-apartheid concerns for the white community, coupled with the post-independence expectations of the black community, give rise to similar longer-term dilemmas and anxieties regarding future stability.

Zimbabwe also illustrates a second commonly observed constraint on government responses to conflict. This derives from the primacy that, it is argued, should be accorded to maintaining an appropriate framework that sets macroeconomic stability as a prerequisite for sustainable development in both the pre- and post-conflict periods. There may be reservations about the precise form that stabilisation and adjustment programmes have taken, but fiscal stabilisation has typically been at the top of the list in this context, with the implication that major expenditures on distributional policy — for example, in the enhancement of public services and, indeed, in facilitating land redistribution — have been severely constrained. Moreover, in countries which have increased defence and security spending in order to meet the challenges posed by conflict, the added pressure on fiscal expenditures has further tightened the constraint on government.

The Broader Equity Debate

Useful parallels may be drawn between the response to conflict and the responses that have been formulated to the problems of equity and poverty throughout the world. First, these parallels are instructive since, in the case of the equity debate, great emphasis has been placed on equity not just as an objective in its own right, but as a major factor in stimulating long-term growth². Whether the conclusions drawn in the east Asian context necessarily hold in the African situation can, of course, be debated, but this example does encourage us to focus on conflict prevention and greater socio-political stability both as objectives in their own right and as factors in the broader field of development thinking. Many observers have noted that “without peace, there is no development”.

Second, approaches to poverty reduction provide further insights into how distributional policies directed specifically at diffusing tensions in areas of potential conflict should be conceived. Here, the lessons of recent decades suggest that growth policy and poverty reduction policy need to be pursued through an integrated strategy: each policy is necessary for the success of the other, and neither alone is sufficient to achieve sustainable development. Policies to shape the patterns of growth and to facilitate the participation of the poorest social groups in economic activity, together with programmes to secure significant benefits for the poor from economic growth, have therefore taken on a far higher profile. Equally, improvements in the economic and social infrastructure, promoting the short-term integration of poorer people into the economic system and increasing their capacity to integrate over the longer term, are very much to the fore.

Similarly, distributional policies that address the fundamental determinants of instability should be seen within the overall context of the country's development strategy. The overriding objective should continue to be growth with equity, in which equity implies not only poverty reduction *per se*, but also addressing the inequalities between different social and political groupings, particularly where these are identified as threatening to the social structure.

To be sure, there are key differences between the conflict prevention debate and the poverty reduction debate. The poor in general may pose no significant threat of destabilisation or conflict, and they often are fragmented and politically weak. In contrast, social and political groupings that have pursued violent conflict, or have the potential to do so, constitute a more immediate and substantive threat. From this perspective, the establishment of greater peace and stability through distributional policies may be seen more appropriately as a prerequisite for addressing other developmental objectives. This suggests that distributional priorities — and in particular, consideration of measures to address the distribution of existing asset stocks, rather than only the future accumulations of assets — should receive much heavier emphasis within this development framework.

Growth as a Contributory Factor: Botswana

In principle, seemingly irreconcilable distributional problems should be more readily resolvable in an environment of significant, sustainable growth. Such growth might be anticipated to provide at least the possibility of a win-win solution, in contrast to the problem of intractable trade-offs in a stagnant or declining economy.

Botswana has been largely free of socio-political instability and has experienced extremely rapid growth, averaging 7 per cent per capita annually over the last 30 years. This picture contrasts so sharply with the experience of many other countries in the region that it naturally raises several questions: whether the country faced any potential for such instability; if it did, how the government managed these tensions to such impressive effect; and whether rapid growth played a key role.

In answer to the first question, it should be observed that, at independence, there had been no conflict such as most liberation struggles entailed. Moreover, there were few serious indications of ethnic tension or of significant duality in the country. Indeed, there were few interest groups of any significance. From this perspective, the basic socio-political environment at this time was favourable.

More interesting, however, is the manner in which the discovery of valuable diamond resources in the late 1960s was handled, in sharp contrast with the parallel situations of Angola and Nigeria. Two aspects are instructive here. First, the substantial flow of resources from diamonds allowed the government to pursue a development agenda focused on improving the basic social and physical infrastructure. This it did within an open economy and with a sound concern for long-term macroeconomic stability. Second, broadly speaking, the political governance of the country was good,

with a strong central state and a decentralised system of administration that ensured substantial political participation at the local level. Particularly important in view of the country's immensely valuable resources was the absence of the blatant corruption that has brought other economies to the brink of collapse and denied the benefits of natural resources to the population. Indeed, the government may be considered to have had an unusually long-term horizon, as is seen in its longer-term economic policy, in its promotion of investment and in the absence of widespread rent-seeking behaviour. This long-term perspective stemmed to a considerable degree from the government's well-founded expectation of re-election at the five-yearly elections — an expectation which was itself related to the availability of diamond resources to allocate on social spending and social safety nets.

Botswana's development path has not been uniformly exemplary, however. Botswana remains one of the most unequal societies in Africa: while it is classified as a middle-income country, the latest available data show that the poorest 20 per cent of the population accounts for only 3.6 per cent of income, and the poorest 40 per cent for only a little over 10 per cent of income³. With such inequality, and with the poor dispersed in rural areas so that any organised opposition to the government through interest group formation has been exceptionally weak, it is scarcely surprising that socio-political tensions have not been observed. Moreover, the government has not encouraged interest group formation and indeed has pursued mildly repressive policies, despite its broadly democratic and open stance. For instance, the Labour Relations Law of 1983 limited trade union freedoms, and the government has periodically interfered with the press. In general, the media have been a weak organ of civil society. Stronger interest groups have emerged recently, but the level of politicisation is still low and poses little threat to the government. In this sense, poverty and inequality appear to have no clear causal link with instability and conflict, although it has been argued that the maintenance of such inequality is itself a form of repression.

Although Botswana cannot be regarded as an unqualified success, it has succeeded in establishing a long history of avoiding conflict, of accountability and of democratic institutions. Strong growth driven by the discovery of a rich natural resource certainly played a part, but it provides only a partial explanation for the country's successes — and its failures.

The Role of the International Community

The conference which gave rise to this volume deliberately sought to highlight the manner in which the international community works with partner developing-country governments and the substance of that contribution. From the perspective of the southern African region, we may draw out several basic principles that appear fundamental to this role of contributing to conflict management:

- i) Prior to any attempt to contribute to this objective, the international community needs to develop a more detailed knowledge and understanding of the fundamental economic determinants of tension between communities, and an awareness of the complexity and sensitivity of those situations on a country-specific basis.

- ii) Notwithstanding the obvious value of short-term humanitarian interventions, we should focus on the longer-term perspective and on programmes which address the underlying causes rather than the symptoms of conflict.
- iii) The international community should seek to work as a coherent and co-ordinated community, recognising the inevitable political sensitivity of most activities related to conflict — be they short-term or longer-term in focus — and the importance of promoting objectivity rather than any specific national interests.
- iv) Economic approaches should be integrated within the broader developmental thinking of the domestic government, which itself needs to take full ownership of the process.
- v) The international community should be aware of the implications of its financial and intellectual support in the detailed context of the country's social and political structures.
- vi) Finally, it is urgent to address both the economic and non-economic aspects: the fundamental long-term perspective advocated here explicitly argues that the primary causes of conflict should be addressed — ideally, prior to the emergence of conflict itself.

Notes and References

1. The Government of National Unity was eventually established on 11 April 1997.
2. More specifically, analysis of the exceptional growth performance of the high-performing Asian economies has highlighted their unusual success in achieving shared growth: in terms of both growth rate and income distribution, the east Asian economies significantly out-perform the low- and middle-income economies.
3. World Bank (1994), *African Development Report*, Washington, D.C.

PART FOUR

FOCUS ON INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Towards a Policy for Conflict Prevention in Africa: The Role of the International Community

*Chris J. Bakwesegha*¹

Introduction

The world, as a community of nations, has come to recognise the burdens of war, conflict and domestic tension confronting the African continent today. It has also fully acknowledged the imperative need for the international community to rally behind those who are trying to prevent conflict by building coalitions of peace, security and stability in Africa.

Perhaps, however, the international community still needs to recognise:

- the degree to which Africa is committed to its own problems, especially that of peace building;
- Africa's priorities in the field of peace building, as determined by the Africans themselves;
- what Africa can do for itself within the scope of its limited resources; and
- what the African people cannot do by themselves in their enduring struggle to transform their societies, and how they intend to negotiate with their external partners in an effort to achieve that which they cannot achieve on their own.

These important issues need to be handled with a new dynamism and a sense of urgency. Peace is not only *indivisible* but also a *collective effort*, and the need for the countries of the world to develop sound and co-ordinated policies and strategies with which to foster conditions of peace, security, stability and development in Africa has never been more pressing.

Africa's Democratisation Process

Since the beginning of the 1990s, issues of democracy and good governance have become a major preoccupation for countries in Africa; the continent has been described as going through a "second liberation". The OAU itself has been able to observe, within the scope of its very limited resources, elections of one type or another in well over 45 of its 53 member states. Several of those 45 states have been able to hold their second round of general and presidential elections, while those which have not been able to hold elections have assiduously worked out programmes for transition to democracy through the ballot box.

The holding of periodic elections is one of the cornerstones of a democratic society. In principle, international observation of elections in a new democracy lends credence to those elections and helps to create confidence among the electorate; both of these effects help to enable the contending parties to stay in the political race.

Overall, Africa appears to have done fairly well in bowing to the winds of change that started in the late 1980s. As far as electoral processes are concerned, however, Africa's emerging democracy is still weak and remains at risk, for the following reasons.

First, many people in Africa tend to think that elections and democratisation are one and the same. In fact, while an election is an event which usually lasts a day or so, democratisation is a process which evolves over time. In the case of Africa, democratisation calls for the mobilisation of enormous resources worldwide with which to consolidate political stability as well as to address "bread and butter" issues. In the simplest terms, elections are the launching pad of a long-run, arduous and usually very expensive process of building institutions which are democratic, economically self-reinforcing and self-sustaining, and capable of absorbing instability. Unfortunately, certain donors seem to think that all they need do by way of assisting Africa to democratise society is merely to provide sufficient resources to enable countries to hold national elections. This assistance is not sufficient. Opportunities must be created at the same time for building and nurturing democratic institutions aimed at conflict containment.

Second, the way in which people participate in their electoral process certainly matters. To be able to declare elections "free and fair" or otherwise, international observers need to have observed the mood of the people concerned, not only on the election day, but also well before the elections, in order to identify forces that might bog down the electoral process. Observers should also be in a position to determine the extent of the local people's involvement in their elections.

Furthermore, since elections are the beginning of a more challenging and enduring struggle to build institutions to sustain that democracy, equally close monitoring is crucial in the period just after the elections, in order to discover obstacles to the

consolidation of the democratic transition just set in motion. Therefore, international donors which think that election monitoring is best accomplished merely through snapshot missions (if only to save resources) need to rethink their position.

Third, however well-intentioned international observers may be, the best custodians of the democratic transition in any country are the nationals themselves and, other things being equal, the people within the region. It is these people who should be taught in the first place the rules for conducting democratic elections, how to nurture and defend their democratic institutions and how to use them as viable tools for absorbing conflicts. Outsiders can help, but the local people should remain at the forefront of their own electoral processes.

Fourth, in countries just emerging from wars between the government and opposition groups, the time frame prescribed by Africa's external friends for the holding of democratic elections is sometimes not realistic. Countries just emerging from the ravages of war often lack the necessary infrastructure and facilities to hold "free and fair" elections. Furthermore, the wounds within the hearts and souls of the people are usually so fresh and so deep that one should think in terms of reconciliation before holding elections. Rebel groups just emerging from the bush may not necessarily be known to the electorate left behind many years ago; and the rebels themselves, who have been operating underground for many years, may not be very conversant with the rules of democracy in the real world. They need time to turn themselves into viable political parties. Instead of rushing to hold elections within a one- or two-year period following the end of an armed struggle, donors might do better to provide resources for relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction, reconciliation and justice, as a prelude to the holding of elections.

In a declaration of July 1990, the African heads of state and government recommitted themselves to the further democratisation of their societies and to the consolidation of democratic institutions in their countries. They further reaffirmed the right of their countries to determine, in all sovereignty, their own system of democracy on the basis of their socio-cultural values, taking into account the realities of each country. Thus, while recognising the universal character of the principle of democracy, the heads of state and government also took note of the peculiarities of their countries in terms of history, culture, economy and polity — peculiarities which imply that the implementation of the principle of democracy must perforce vary from country to country. Clearly, these leaders were pleading for "home-grown democracy" which recognises the specific nature of each African country.

This approach to advancing and strengthening democracy in Africa has sometimes tempted certain segments of society to use the concept of "home-grown democracy" as a smoke screen to oppress other groups and to trample underfoot their human rights, while ignoring totally the historical and socio-cultural diversity of the people in the country. This has undermined the emerging entitlement of all African people to

democracy in its comprehensive sense, and in several instances has sown seeds of discord or domestic tension. Genuine democracy should be based on the consensus of the people concerned, and not merely on the whims of the government of the day.

In July 1990, the African heads of state and government recognised that democracy and development should go hand in hand and should be mutually reinforcing. In other words, in seeking to consolidate democracy, one cannot ignore basic issues. The socio-economic situation in most African countries is of concern to both Africans and to the continent's external friends. While it is true that some African countries have done relatively well in socio-economic terms since independence, the majority have not been so lucky.

In some African countries, people receive their salaries as infrequently as once or twice a year. There are also countries where roads and railways are extremely scarce and people are physically cut off; where people have to spend almost the entire day looking for water; where people have not seen their leaders for years but are obliged nevertheless to pay tax to the government; where the majority of the children of school age are out of school; and where gross violations of human rights are the order of the day. Such socio-economic difficulties have given rise to many cases of instability, insecurity and conflict, with their attendant problem of flows of refugees and internally displaced persons. Africans cannot be expected to democratise their political systems in the midst of such appalling socio-economic conditions, nor to go to the polling stations to choose leaders when the stomachs of the people are virtually empty.

Unless Africa's external partners become more responsive to socio-economic conditions and vigilantly assist Africans to address them, democracy in Africa will remain at risk for years to come. More fundamentally, the international community will continue to shoulder expensive humanitarian operations to help refugees and internally displaced persons. Indeed, just as economic development cannot take place in an ocean of wars, conflicts and domestic tension, so peace, security and stability cannot take root in situations of abject poverty and hopelessness. Conflict containment and economic development therefore go hand in hand, and to focus on one of these issues and ignore the other is to miss the point.

Africa is also a continent full of displaced human beings: former combatants, refugees returning from exile, internally displaced persons wishing to return to their areas of origin. All of these people, on their journey home, carry virtually nothing with them except perhaps the clothes on their backs, and they have been away for varying periods of time. The burden of facilitating their return, rehabilitation and reintegration in their local communities is certainly too heavy for the African countries concerned. Failure to facilitate these processes, however, especially in the case of former combatants, renders a country extremely vulnerable to instability and considerably delays our work in the field of conflict prevention, management and resolution. In order to avoid relapses into conflict, Africa's external friends may wish to provide resources to alleviate the burden of facilitating the return of the displaced, their rehabilitation and their reintegration in their local communities.

Another factor which has slowed the democratisation process in Africa is the fact that, on many occasions, people who deliberately committed crimes against humanity during a conflict have not been prosecuted for such acts of criminality in the post-conflict period. All efforts to build bridges of peace following violent conflicts in Africa have concentrated on the notion of reconciliation among people, even in situations where genocide has occurred. Reconciliation remains meaningless, however, if it is not matched with justice. If genuine reconciliation is to materialise, then impunity must not be encouraged. It is this viewpoint which led the OAU Council of Ministers in June 1996 to adopt a plan of action against impunity in Africa.

It will not be possible to try every single person who committed crimes against humanity, but the principal actors of the killings should appear for trial, if only to let the rest of the country's population and the world at large realise that crime must not go unpunished. As prosecuting people suspected of crimes against humanity calls for co-operation between various countries in and outside Africa, the international community should act in solidarity to make both reconciliation and justice a real possibility.

The last factor which has contributed to the fragility of democracy and therefore has slowed conflict prevention in Africa is the weakness of civil society. Apart from South Africa, it is rare to find civil society anywhere in Africa organising itself and mobilising resources with which meaningfully to challenge the government of the day, especially when that government is seen to abrogate the constitution of the country concerned. The weakness of civil society appears to be part of the legacy of the dictators who brutally ruled Africa throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Since then, the civil society in Africa has never recovered, and has remained meek.

Initiatives for Maintaining Peace in Africa

During the last several years, a number of initiatives have been proposed by Africa's external friends relating to stand-by forces for preventing crises in Africa from erupting into major wars. These include what have come to be known as the French initiative, the British initiative, the Dutch initiative and the Canadian initiative. Even more recently, the United States also came out with an initiative called the African Crisis Response Force, which is currently undergoing a thorough review by way of linking it with the earlier initiatives.

These initiatives may not be African, but since they are all concerned with Africa, the OAU certainly welcomes them. Whatever global initiative emerges from all these parallel initiatives, two fundamental issues should be recognised. First, such initiatives should enjoy the support of all the member states of the OAU, which operates on the cardinal principle of consensus. Second, it must be recalled that when the OAU Secretary-General first introduced the idea of establishing a mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution, member states exchanged views on the

possibility of each member state's earmarking a military contingent which, together with the contingents from other states, could be called upon by the OAU Secretary-General to handle any crisis that may emerge on the continent. Such military contingents were to remain part of the national armies of the contributing member states but were to be trained in common standards of maintaining peace in Africa.

This noble idea, conceived in Dakar in 1992, has been shelved ever since, principally because the resources required to implement it are lacking. Therefore, instead of coming out with a totally new arrangement for combating crises in Africa, OAU's external partners may wish to bring on board the OAU's own idea.

Conclusion

Although many African countries have opted for democratic transition, democracy in Africa generally is still fragile. If Africa's external friends are to assist, as indeed they should, in the process of democratising Africa, then they must understand African issues, especially those identified here as being responsible for slowing the pace of democratisation and conflict prevention. While any democratic transition must perforce embrace such issues as accountability, transparency, respect for human rights, the rule of law, popular participation and the holding of free and fair elections on a regular basis, it must also address the issue of socio-economic empowerment or socio-economic justice. Furthermore, although the recent initiatives for maintaining peace in Africa mean well for the people of Africa, they should not obscure the OAU's own initiatives in this respect. A way should be found to dovetail external initiatives into those of the OAU, if only to avoid political backlash.

Note

1. The author is Head of the Conflict Management Division of the Organisation of African Unity. This chapter expresses the personal views of the author, not necessarily those of the OAU.

The Role of Development Assistance in Conflict Prevention, Transition and Reconstruction

Nat Colletta and Taies Nezam¹

Introduction

Conflicts have impoverished countries in every major region, in many cases wiping out the achievements of decades of economic and social development. The destruction of physical assets, disruption of trade links and loss of human capital are devastating, but only part of the problem. Violent conflict also leaves a legacy of militarised, divided societies, widespread displacement and decimated institutional capacity.

Nowhere is this more evident than in sub-Saharan Africa: 14 of the 50 countries in this region hosted conflicts in 1996; Africa has about 5 million refugees, one-third of the world's total, and another 16 million displaced; and 20 million landmines hamper the movement of people, goods and services. Violent conflict is surely one reason why 250 million people in sub-Saharan Africa — half of the region's population — live below the poverty line in the mid-1990s.

Conflicts are also increasingly diverting international attention and resources from the global development mission. For example, the proportion of official development assistance devoted to relief has increased from 2 per cent in 1989 to approximately 10 per cent in 1994. Activities in conflict-ridden countries are also becoming a significant portion of development assistance. In 1994, excluding China and India, 24 per cent of the commitments of IDA (the World Bank's concessional lending arm, which lends to the poorest countries) went to post-conflict activities.

Modern conflicts are highly complex and demand an equally multifaceted response from the international community, incorporating a range of peace-making, peace-keeping and emergency initiatives, as well as reconstruction and development interventions. The response needs to be a well co-ordinated, timely mix of activities by a wide range of international and national actors.

There is no easily generalisable reason why conflicts occur, or why they occur at a particular point. It is clear, however, that conflicts are both a cause and an effect of inequality and impoverishment, and therefore a major concern to development institutions with a mandate for poverty alleviation. In addition, ethnicity seems to provide a fertile ground for exploitation by skilful political entrepreneurs. Institutions like the World Bank need to integrate these factors — and concern for conflict more generally — into development operations, not just as a reconstruction issue, but with a view to enhancing the preventive capacity of development assistance. The peace-promoting potential of the development process needs to be strengthened because peace and security are preconditions for development.

In many societies beset by conflict, the state either has lost control over a large portion of its territory or has completely collapsed (Liberia and Somalia). This situation raises special questions for development organisations like the World Bank, which depend on the state not only as implementing partner but also as a legal entity which takes formal responsibility for cost recovery of loans and credits.

Conflicts also involve the weakening of social capital — the patterns of social behaviour and social institutions which facilitate interaction and exchange, and the unity which holds a society together. Conflict breaks commercial links between farmers and markets, local forms of collective action and dispute resolution, and links between the state and society (revenue collection, health and education provision). Where the state apparatus still exists, the state may favour one group over another, deepening divisions and building resentments.

During many conflicts, the vacuum caused by a weak or nonexistent state is filled by the international community. Basic services in the country are delivered by local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), while refugees settled outside the country receive assistance through the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and other relief-oriented agencies. The institutional framework developed during this phase affects the reconstruction period, often creating dependency.

The Response of the International Community

In order to define the role of development assistance in conflict situations, we must understand the characteristics and origins of conflicts as well as the actors involved and their respective mandates. The international response to conflict includes the following four broad spheres of activity:

- *political and diplomatic*: Conflict prevention and conflict resolution (peace negotiations, disarmament, etc.). The major actors are key governments acting bilaterally or multilaterally, through influential alliances and multinational fora such as the United Nations (Department of Political Affairs).
- *security*: Peace operations, including peacekeeping to prevent violent confrontation and provide security for relief and rehabilitation. Peace-keeping forces are usually supplied by individual governments through the United Nations (Department of Peace-Keeping Operations), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or other bodies.
- *relief or emergency assistance*: The provision of basic necessities and, to the extent possible, the sustenance and development of human and social capital. Donor countries supply these mainly through agents, such as the UNHCR, the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund, ECHO, the WFP, etc., but also bilaterally; NGOs are also significant actors.
- *reconstruction and development assistance*: Rebuilding the economic and physical infrastructure, strengthening institutional capacity and providing a base for sustainable development. The main providers are the European Union, UN agencies (United Nations Development Programme, etc.), donor countries, NGOs and international financial institutions, including the regional development banks, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

International experience in these four areas is still evolving; the links between them are not well established. Although the areas are conceptually different, there is no clear-cut sequence for their occurrence, and several need to take place simultaneously. They are more “spheres of activity” than stages, and their implementation is interlinked. The international response is hampered by unclear and overlapping mandates — and often by bilateralism rather than common purpose. For example, some mandates do not cover all aspects of the necessary response: most agencies maintain a distinction between the relief and reconstruction activities, tending to leave a functional and budgetary gap which is not always closed by existing co-ordination mechanisms.

Development assistance activities have, of course, been connected with the reconstruction and development part of the international response. Owing to the increasingly complex problems of conflict-prone countries, however, the traditional response is undergoing change, and emphasis is being placed on the potential role of development assistance in addressing the seeds of conflict. Equally, the economic advisory role of the Bretton Woods institutions is being tailored to post-conflict situations. Here its paramount purpose is to create a stable foundation for supporting conflict-affected countries through the transition period to a stage where they can normalise domestic and international financial and economic relations, and where private actors can resume their activities. In this manner, development assistance can begin to fill the gap between relief and development and to build a sound foundation for sustainable development.

The Development Response

This section outlines the challenges encountered by development institutions in the areas of conflict prevention, transition and reconstruction.

Prevention

Although the activities of development assistance institutions have been mainly confined to post-conflict reconstruction, it is critical that these institutions also adopt a strategy to prevent conflict, for two reasons. First, conflicts are cyclical, and many countries return to conflict when reconstruction is unsuccessful. Reconstruction itself must take into account the dynamics of conflict, and interventions must be designed to address explicitly the inequities and schisms which led to breakdown in the first place and to facilitate the creation of conditions which either resolve points of contention or manage conflict. In addition to a focus on the original roots of conflict, development institutions must recognise that conflicts have created dynamics of their own (militarisation, displacement, fragmentation of the state) which provide fuel for additional conflict. Second, prevention is a less costly alternative. Reconstruction is a very expensive process and can never hope to rebuild all that is lost during the conflict. The process of transition is long and the residues of conflict take generations to repair.

At the same time, there are no easy answers, since the dynamics are ill-understood and outside actors have limited ability to influence events. Concerted efforts must be made to improve our understanding of, and to prepare for, potential opportunities to support societies in their efforts to avoid conflict. In any given situation, external actors may have opportunities to influence substantially the course of events, but these opportunities are difficult to predict and must necessarily be dealt with case by case. Some donors have developed lists of countries at risk, and there is much talk of “early warning systems”. In many cases, foreknowledge of tensions does not guarantee a successful strategy to halt the conflict. Nonetheless, early recognition can in some cases provide windows for investments which could prove pivotal.

The true challenge is to integrate a sensitivity to conflict into our vision of development. The following list suggests some elements of development policies which support such a sensitivity, not just for a few countries designated as already in conflict, but for all countries in which the development community provides assistance:

- *social assessment* which includes explicit recognition of conflict and fault lines of social tension as a core aspect of development planning. Particular analysis should focus on patterns of resource distribution within a society, emphasising inclusiveness of opportunities including attention to disparities between geographic regions or readily identifiable social groups;
- engagement with *civil society*, incorporating participatory approaches and the concept of social capital, that is, the vision that social organisations matter, that individuals make decisions which reflect their membership not only in households

but also in larger social entities. The intermediary role of social organisations can support a stable environment for development or can prove to be the channel for organised violence which disrupts societies. Social capital, like any other form of capital, can be wisely or foolishly invested, used to many different ends, or squandered and wasted. In other words, evaluations of development investments must take full account of the fact that institutions and social organisations matter for both good and bad, and provide the filters through which investments are distributed;

- increased focus on *governance*, incorporating elements of accountability and transparency, and including an expanded sensitivity to the role of government institutions in selectively allocating and extracting resources and in providing the predominant legal framework for dispute resolution and conflict management within the territorial bounds of a given state; and
- a frank exploration of the *cost of random and organised violence* in undermining the routine functions of socio-economic activity. The impact of violence and the dissolution of bonds of trust and confidence in a conflict-ridden society alter strategies of household accumulation and investment, yet these phenomena are little understood.

By working on social assessment and governance issues, by engaging civil society more in development operations and by undertaking more explicit exploration of violence and its costs, development institutions will become better equipped to understand the social underpinnings of the communities and cultures within which they operate. None of these areas of analysis replaces a focus on economic growth; rather, better understanding of the social paradigm complements and informs economic analysis. One would also expect social analysis to help in avoiding development interventions which would inadvertently fuel existing conflict. Thus, expanded work in the whole area of social analysis and civil society is becoming a priority for the development community.

Transition and Reconstruction

Investments undertaken during the transition from conflict to a post-conflict phase have two primary aims: to facilitate the transition from war to sustainable peace (a preventive function), and to lay the groundwork for economic and social development (a developmental function). This requires a reknitting of society and a rebuilding of the confidence and trust which underpin social and economic relations.

Reconstruction takes place within a limited window of opportunity. Unsuccessful or delayed reconstruction risks a breakdown of peace and a return to open conflict. The most important elements of successful reconstruction include:

- iterative and flexible implementation, taking account of changing circumstances;
- careful sequencing of programmes;

- NGO participation in implementation to help compensate for weak state capacity;
- co-ordination of activities and standardisation of strategies among NGOs, donors and government to make efficient use of limited human and capital resources;
- participatory methods and capacity building which engender community mobilisation, institution building and sustainability.

Investment Priorities

A comprehensive and interrelated package of interventions designed to facilitate the transition from conflict to peace should include:

- jump-starting the *economy* through investment in key productive sectors, and supporting the conditions for resumption of trade, savings, and domestic and foreign investment; these conditions include macroeconomic stabilisation, rehabilitation of financial institutions and restoration of appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks;
- reconstructing the framework of *governance*: strengthening government institutions, including the capacity for resource mobilisation and fiscal management; the restoration of law and order, and of the organisations of civil society;
- repairing important *physical infrastructure*, including key transport, communications and utility networks;
- rebuilding and maintaining key *social infrastructure*, i.e. education and health, including the financing of recurrent costs;
- *targeted assistance to those affected by war*: reintegration of displaced populations; demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants; revitalisation of the local communities most disrupted by conflict through support (credit lines, etc.) to subsistence agriculture, micro-enterprises, etc.; and support to vulnerable groups (e.g. households headed by women);
- *landmine action programmes*, where relevant, including mine surveys and demining of key infrastructure as part of a comprehensive development strategy for supporting a return to normal life for populations living in mine-polluted areas; and
- *financial normalisation*: planning a workout of arrears, rescheduling of debt and the longer-term path to financial normalisation.

The World Bank's Experience with Conflict

Much of the Bank's earlier post-conflict reconstruction work has been in rebuilding infrastructure — a traditional area of strength — but recent responses have also included operations to promote economic adjustment and recovery (Northern Reconstruction Project for Uganda), to address social-sector needs (Emergency Social Recovery Project for Angola) and to build institutional capacity (Emergency Recovery Credit for Sierra Leone). New lending operations have also been developed specifically for post-conflict situations, including demining (Emergency Landmine Clearance Project for Bosnia; such a project is under consideration for Angola), demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants (Uganda, Namibia and Ethiopia) and reintegration of displaced populations (a project was under consideration for Eritrea). It is also increasingly being realised that the activities supported by the Bank during this period must be part of a comprehensive and interrelated package of interventions designed to facilitate the transition from conflict to peace (Energy Recovery Credit for Sierra Leone, and the Emergency Reintegration and Reconstruction Program for Rwanda).

On the whole, given the absence of clearly defined procedures in this area, the Bank has responded flexibly. Up-front costs have been high, however, both in staff time and in the senior management attention necessary to remove constraints and enable operations to proceed in a timely fashion. The scope and urgency of the reconstruction task clearly require greater certainty about what is permissible under Bank policy and guidelines. Lessons are still being assimilated, but experience to date suggests that the recommendations outlined below provide a conceptual framework for an enhanced Bank response in a fast-changing environment. These recommendations largely consolidate Bank practice rather than lead the Bank into new territory:

- *Prevention in "at risk" countries.* Although there can be no certainty about causes of conflict or effectiveness of prevention, the Bank needs to integrate concern for conflict into development operations. It must ensure that its interventions do not aggravate existing inequalities, for example, and that they ameliorate situations of potential conflict, through judicious social, political and economic analysis and adequate attention to distributive policies, participation of excluded groups, etc.
- In conflict-ridden countries, a *watching brief* is needed during the conflict, to develop an understanding of the context, dynamics and assistance needs, in order to design appropriate interventions when conditions permit, and to identify potential implementing partners in reconstruction. The Bank should also work with humanitarian agencies on the long-term implications of short-term relief strategies. During this period, judgements about the opportunities and risks associated with a higher level of activity would be made and updated continuously.

- *Assessment and planning* would involve a key role for the Bank, together with other major donors, in putting together a strategic framework — the overall reconstruction and recovery programme. The direction of the programme, the extent of the Bank’s involvement and risk-management strategies would be worked out.
- *Early reconstruction* would depend on three basic conditions: sufficient indication of a sustainable cease-fire, an effective counterpart (which may be something less than a fully functioning government) and strong international co-operation with a well-defined role for the Bank. The small-scale, early reconstruction activities would be part of the rapid response that is critical to reinforce incipient peace processes, deter a resurgence of violence and build a foundation for longer-term reconstruction. Examples would include urgent repair of vital facilities (e.g. schools, health centres, sanitation and shelter) to benefit returning refugees, displaced people and communities heavily affected by the conflict; repair of rudimentary communications and transport installations; detailed project planning and preparation; pilot reconstruction projects; limited but urgent demining; and initial demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants.
- *Emergency lending phase*. When security and government commitment allow, support will be given for a “full reconstruction” approach which would include physical reconstruction, economic recovery, institution building and social reintegration. This approach would be incremental and flexible, moving ahead as and when possible.
- *Return to normal lending*. Throughout this process — but particularly when the emergency phase is over, operations are once more carried out under normal lending procedures and the consciousness of conflict begins to wane — country assistance strategies and economic and sector work should explicitly recognise the conflict and its effects. They should indicate what information is required in order to ensure that future operations not only do not exacerbate existing tensions, but also contribute to supporting a sustainable period of peace, without which development is unattainable. They should also include social assessments which can address some of the fundamental issues related to the aftermath of conflict.

Conclusion

The nature, scale and proliferation of conflict at the close of this century demand a flexible, speedy and well-integrated response from the development community. In designing their projects and programmes, institutions like the World Bank need to concentrate on the following:

- A sensitivity to conflict needs to be integrated into the larger development paradigm with an emphasis on the preventive capacity of interventions. Development assistance should not aggravate existing tensions and should, where

possible, ameliorate situations of potential conflict by expanding activities in the areas of social assessment (focusing on equity and resource distribution), civil society and governance.

- During the conflict phase, development institutions need to maintain a presence in the country to develop an understanding of the context, dynamics, assistance needs and major players. It is also important for institutions like the World Bank to work with relief agencies on the long-term implications of short-term interventions.
- During the resolution phase (peace negotiations) when the overall reconstruction and recovery plan is being drafted, the World Bank can provide the economic and financial framework.
- The transition and reconstruction phase should facilitate the transition from war to sustainable peace and lay the groundwork for economic and social development by adopting a comprehensive, well-sequenced and flexible package which includes the following key activities: jump-starting the economy, reconstructing the framework of governance, repairing important physical infrastructure, rebuilding and maintaining social infrastructure, targeting assistance to those affected by the war, demining programmes and financial normalisation.

Much remains to be learned about sources of conflict, resolution mechanisms, damage assessment and successful interventions. The international community must continue to explore issues connected with conflict and to inform its interventions accordingly.

Note

1. Nat Colletta is Head of the War to Peace Transition Team for the Africa Region, World Bank, and Taies Nezam is Research Associate of the War to Peace Transition Team. This chapter is a shortened version of a paper prepared for the OECD Conference on “Policies for the Prevention of Conflict”. The authors would like to thank Rogier van den Brink, Steven Holtzman, Colin Scott and Roger Sullivan of the World Bank for their comments. The chapter is largely based on two papers (“Post-conflict Reconstruction” and “A Framework for World Bank Involvement in Situations of Conflict”) produced by the Social Policy and Resettlement Division and defining World Bank policy in the area of conflict, and on the operational experience of the War to Peace Transition Team for the Africa Region.

Key Findings of the OECD-DAC Task Force on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation: The Imperative of Conflict Prevention

Robert Scharf

Background and Introduction

At the High Level Meeting of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) on 3-4 May 1995, development co-operation ministers and heads of aid agencies focused on the growing demands and opportunities for development co-operation to contribute more pro-actively to conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction. The DAC decided to launch a programme of work with three aims:

- to draw out lessons from experience on the linkages between conflict, peace and development co-operation;
- to seek ways to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and coherence of Members' efforts in these areas; and
- to provide practical policy guidance to those called upon to design and implement programmes in these complex and often ground-breaking areas.

In late 1995, the DAC established a special task force for this purpose². One of the principal tasks of this group was to develop guidelines in the areas of conflict, peace and development co-operation. The work of the task force has drawn primarily on the operational experience of development co-operation agencies and the knowledge and expertise of outside experts and practitioners, as well as the growing body of academic research in these fields. The topic areas covered were selected as issues of

particular concern in the design and implementation of development co-operation for conflict prevention and post-conflict recovery. They ranged from broad policy questions to more technical and operational aspects of assistance. The Task Force on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation examined these issues and recommended several new approaches for development co-operation agencies.

The task force found that development assistance will have the greatest impact in conflict prevention when it is designed and timed to address the root causes of violent conflicts, as well as the precipitating factors, in ways that are relevant to local circumstances. These may include the imbalance of opportunities within societies, the lack of effective and legitimate government, or the absence of mechanisms for the peaceful conciliation of differing interests within society at the local, national and regional levels. The shift towards conflict prevention requires that external partners deepen their understanding of conflict, develop greater early warning capacity and build up the political will needed to carry out coherent initiatives over the long term. The possibilities for regional or sub-regional approaches to conflict prevention and peace building, as well as collaborative security measures, need to be explored further.

The guidelines are primarily concerned with the role of development co-operation, but some activities and approaches described in this summary of key findings involve broader areas of international assistance and co-operation. Although the rules and procedures governing the use of development assistance funds will limit the extent to which development agencies can be used to fulfil these guidelines, examining the issues from a more integrated perspective should help to promote greater coherence and co-ordination amongst all the actors involved.

Principles for Preventive Action through Development Co-operation

Development co-operation can play an important role in conflict prevention and peace building. Donors' work in war-torn or conflict-prone countries must therefore be seen as an integral part of the co-operation challenge. Wars have severely set back development in many countries, including some of the poorest, and responses to complex emergencies have become a major claim on development co-operation budgets. More fundamentally, helping to strengthen a society's capacity to manage conflict without violence must be seen as a foundation for sustainable development.

Humanitarian assistance cannot substitute for sustained political commitment and action to avert crisis and support peace. Increasingly, humanitarian agencies have encountered moral dilemmas as they have attempted to respond to the needs of vulnerable populations in conflict situations. The humanitarian community cannot be the sole vehicle for response to complex crises. Development co-operation must also play its role, alongside all the other instruments — economic, social, legal, environmental and military — which the international community can bring to bear

on the root causes of these crises. There is a clear need for international responses that are more co-ordinated, coherent and integrated — both between governments and between intergovernmental organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Developing countries are ultimately responsible for their own development. This cardinal principle of development co-operation must be respected, even in countries in crisis and even when division is rife and local capacities are severely weakened. The task of international assistance is to help strengthen a country's indigenous capacities, in ways that are even-handed and that encourage broad participation throughout society. This also means ensuring that programmes address the special needs of women and children, who often bear the brunt of the consequences of conflict.

Although prolonged economic decline can itself be a source of conflict, economic growth alone does not prevent or resolve violent conflict, and can sometimes even intensify tensions in society. Development co-operation efforts should strive for an environment of “structural stability” as a basis for sustainable development. This concept embraces the mutually reinforcing objectives of social peace, respect for human rights, accountable military forces and broadly shared social and economic development, supported by dynamic and representative political structures capable of managing change and resolving disputes through peaceful means.

Conflict Prevention — a Central Development Objective

Understanding Violent Conflict and its Causes

Although it is theoretically possible to define a conflict cycle in terms of peace, conflict and reconciliation phases, the actual situation is far more complex. It is often difficult to define the moment at which peace or normality has been transformed into conflict, or vice versa. A clear progression from conditions of peace to heightened socio-political tensions which culminate in violent conflict before receding back to peace is the exception rather than the norm. Similarly, at a given time, certain parts of a country may be at peace while conflict lingers in others, flaring up periodically. Many countries are characterised by both peace and conflict simultaneously, and this situation may span years or even decades.

As the causes of conflict are frequently varied and intertwined, it is often difficult to delineate them clearly or to weigh the influence of different elements. These range from destabilising social conditions, such as extreme social disparities and exclusion, to government which lacks the appropriate mechanisms for the peaceful conciliation of differing interests within society. A comprehensive and integrated knowledge of the need for state and civil society to work properly together is key to understanding the origins and dynamics of violent conflict. Indigenous capacities may already exist. Supporting them to the extent possible — and ensuring that they are not displaced —

can strengthen possibilities for peace and development. Analysis of how and why violent conflicts occur should distinguish between structural factors on the one hand, and accelerating or triggering factors on the other.

As a general rule, a society endowed with a good balance and distribution of solid social and economic resources, as evidenced by high human development indicators, is able to manage tensions with less risk of institutional and social breakdown than a society marked by destabilising conditions such as pervasive poverty, extreme socio-economic disparities, systematic lack of opportunity and a lack of credible institutions for resolving grievances. Where capacities are weak, the following pressures, among others, can contribute to violent conflict: transition processes and rapid change, widening socio-economic disparities, exploitation of ethnic and other differences, and resource-based disputes.

Violence and the damage it inflicts can also intensify insecurity and hatred within society, deepening the “conflict history” of intergroup relations. In addition to hindering economic progress, it can aggravate the vulnerability of certain groups to adverse conditions, resulting, in extreme cases, in large-scale humanitarian crises. The exploitation of ethnic, religious and cultural factors can often regenerate conflict even when general economic conditions improve. Another frequent legacy of prolonged conflict — the ready availability of arms (especially small arms) — can make it easier to resort to violence.

A Coherent Approach to Conflict Prevention and Peace Building

Although conflict is a powerful dynamic process, it can be influenced by international action. Approaches to conflict prevention and peace building must be coherent, comprehensive, integrated and aimed at addressing the root causes of conflicts. The close co-operation of all policy instruments (diplomacy, military means, trade and development co-operation), based on their respective comparative advantages, is required to ensure coherence and co-ordination. Approaches to conflict prevention must take account of potential international dimensions. Neighbouring countries, regional bodies, the United Nations system, regional organisations and other states may all have essential roles to play, it being understood that any such actors will need to inspire the requisite levels of trust in the countries concerned.

Coherence of policies and instruments is an important goal for both national governments and the international or multilateral system. While coherence among political, economic, diplomatic, military, humanitarian and development co-operation policies is difficult to achieve at the national level — where arms sales, for example, may undermine regional security or human rights policies — it is even more difficult at the international level. A lack of policy coherence among states on questions of conflict and development policies can be the result of real differences in national priorities, approaches to conflict resolution or ideas about the root causes of conflict, but it can also result from a lack of co-ordination among the actors.

The long-term role of development co-operation in helping to create appropriate institutions for conflict prevention and resolution is only one of the factors at work. In most cases, the long-term perspective of development co-operation limits its use as a short-term instrument. Nor can development programmes proceed in ignorance of the factors of conflict. Given their own potentially destabilising impacts, development programmes must be carefully screened to avoid exacerbating tensions in conflict-prone countries or regions. In all cases, assistance on the part of outside agencies needs to be guided by informed political judgement.

The processes of peace building and conflict prevention must be self-sustaining once external donor support has ended or has reverted to regular development programming. This underlines the importance of local “ownership” of peace programmes, built upon local and regional approaches to conflict prevention and management, with the continuing involvement of local and regional organisations in programme creation and delivery.

Early Warning of Potential Conflict

Central to an effective capability to prevent conflict is the capacity to identify, monitor and analyse its long-term underlying causes. Early warning can be concerned with the monitoring and analysis of early signals of potential conflict, the escalation of violence and impending humanitarian disasters. Different kinds of early warning have different time frames.

The systematic monitoring of early signals of potential conflict can help in anticipating trouble spots in time to respond effectively. This requires selecting, monitoring and analysing key political, social and economic indicators. Field workers and partners familiar with local conditions should be relied on to collect and monitor information on conflict potential. A co-ordinated approach and the pooling of information within the donor community (particularly information on long-term solutions to specific problems) and between governments, international organisations and NGOs will allow refined quantitative data to be complemented by the analysis and judgement of “qualitative” warnings.

Effective early warning mechanisms must be able to provide interdisciplinary, integrated analyses that anticipate the questions and needs of policy makers. They must address what might happen if the situation continues to deteriorate, and how various causal factors are linked. Recognition of the complexity of conflicts is essential to prevent misguided responses — for example, treating a single factor as the exclusive cause of the conflict — which disregard the complex interrelationships from which conflict arises. The tools available to help prevent violent conflict and the appropriate time frames for action must be kept in mind. It may also be useful to present policy options or at least point to a set of possible actions, linked to the analysis presented. Alternatively, the formulation of scenarios may make the mass of information more readily usable while enhancing policy makers’ ability to react swiftly to signs of escalation in violence-prone areas.

Moving from Early Warning to Preventive Action

Although it can be difficult to secure attention for warnings very far in advance of a potential conflict, it is often even more difficult to agree on needed actions when conflict is imminent. Thus far, international efforts to create and use early warning (especially on long-range issues) have had limited effectiveness. In part, this is a consequence of the inadequate quality, accessibility and timeliness of the information provided by forecasting and analysis. Clearly, the lack of analytical capacity — and of an integrated analytic framework through which political, social and economic information can be weighed — creates critical bottlenecks in this regard. There is also a tendency to monitor the situation as it evolves instead of the long-term structural factors, which are more difficult to analyse. An excessive focus on the factors which precipitate an escalation towards violence may detract attention from a more effective long-term focus on prevention.

Political will is a vital connection between information and action. If an early warning mechanism is to be useful, it must contribute to creating the political will and capacity to act at the national and international levels, including the donor community. This may also help to mobilise the resources needed for a timely response. Possible instruments for multilateral and bilateral preventive assistance can include the following: policy dialogue (including dialogue in the context of consultative groups), sanctions, steps to support peace processes and actions to deal with impending conflict. Areas that enhance the capacity and effectiveness of timely political action include the strengthening of co-ordination and co-operation, the elaboration of “emergency procedures” (including guidelines for co-ordination) and the streamlining of budgetary procedures for funding preventive activities.

The media and public opinion can be instrumental in fostering support for humanitarian action at the political level; the former can also inform the public of the underlying causes of violent conflict and consequent humanitarian emergencies. It is necessary to stimulate international awareness of the potential importance of the long-term problems which create conditions ripe for conflict. Otherwise, the sometimes inconstant and inconsistent interests and influence of the media and public opinion may contribute to an *ad hoc* approach to conflict prevention, thereby undermining more coherent and sustained efforts and initiatives.

Building Blocks for Peace Building and Reconciliation

Supporting Strong Institutions of Governance

Peace building involves both long-term preventive measures and more immediate responses before, during and after conflict. It both depends upon and seeks to foster a spirit of tolerance and reconciliation. When the human rights of all are respected, when society is governed by the rule of law, and when ordinary men and women are

involved in the political process, people are obviously less likely to resort to violence in their efforts to effect political change. Broad acceptance throughout society of the legitimacy of the state and the credibility of the institutions of governance is key to forging such a civic spirit.

Given their sensitive and complex nature, governance-oriented assistance programmes need a strong base of political commitment in both donor and recipient countries over the long term. Assistance efforts should consistently emphasise the strengthening of partner countries' capacities for good governance. Mechanisms to help strengthen the political will for reform in partner countries often involve elements of policy dialogue and incentives. In discussing the design of development co-operation programmes with partner countries, donors can, without proselytising or understating the complexities, consistently emphasise the need for good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights, and the development of a strong civil society, as a basis for long-term stability.

The most basic tenets of democratic practice require broad acceptance by the state and civil society. Democratisation is thus a complex, gradual and participatory process whereby citizens, civil society and the state create a set of norms, values and institutions to mediate their relationships in a predictable, representative and fair manner. Development co-operation efforts in support of improved governance and participation must be framed over a long time horizon, based on coherent strategies consistently applied by different donors and multilateral agencies. This requires:

- effective co-ordination among all actors involved in the design and implementation of programmes;
- donors' calling upon persuasion and dialogue when working with partner governments to promote constructive steps towards improved governance;
- that policy focused on promoting democracy, the rule of law, human rights and good governance be integrated in a wider range of development assistance programmes.

Approaches to governance must also be adapted to national circumstances. For example, when dealing with authoritarian and semi-authoritarian states, the scope for constructive dialogue may be severely limited, and donors may have to restrict their assistance to non-governmental sectors which are committed to reform. In the case of countries in transition to democratic systems, support may concentrate on strengthening civil society actors and democratic political processes.

Donors must be careful to avoid precipitating political and economic instability by pressing for the introduction of democratic institutions. They need to contribute to the development of those institutions and processes within the state and civil society which will stimulate and sustain democratisation. Specifically:

- Support for governance involves, *inter alia*, increasing a state's capacity to develop and maintain representative, responsive and fair political institutions;

- Facilitating the transition to more democratic systems of government may require donors to assist in planning, conducting and monitoring elections;
- Developing the capacities of civil society will allow better articulation of interests through non-violent channels, and the use or development of the mechanisms necessary to pursue those interests in the public arena.

Reinforcing Civil Society

The institutions of civil society play a vital function in representing different groups. Where groups perceive that accommodation processes are inadequate or institutions are biased, heightened tensions, oppression and even increased levels of violence may result. Support to civil society should therefore maintain the objective of helping to reconcile group interests over the long term.

In regions of latent or manifest violence, actors within civil society may be inhibited by intimidation and attack from playing a peace-building role. Information and communication networks may be especially vulnerable. Group divisions may also be exacerbated, and special efforts may be required to help protect the human rights of minorities. The same conditions, however, may also generate the impetus for the emergence of new actors and institutions, such as human rights networks and peace activist groups. In certain circumstances, they may promote the re-emergence of traditional forms of authority and techniques of conflict management and resolution.

While seeking to identify sources of peace-building strength in society, development agencies should be alert to the risk that their support for particular social institutions and authorities can be misrepresented and misunderstood. Some traditional groups may be elitist and oppressive; some NGOs or other local groups may be instruments of contending factions. These alternative or supplementary peace-building agents should be subjected to the same scrutiny as other “partner” institutions, and their most positive aspects built upon.

The various elements in a vigorous civil society do not necessarily set out to achieve a broad consensus; yet opportunities for a society to develop and strengthen common values and goals, and the ability and willingness of the individual to participate in mainstream society, are vital components of peace building and sustainable development. Over the long term, donors can contribute to this through, *inter alia*:

- support for government institutions and other organisations, including the business community, which are able to establish or maintain social networks and associations enhancing participation in mainstream society, or which promote common values, such as cultural and athletic programmes;
- support for access to information through education, and for institutions such as citizens’ advice bureaux and local media; and

- support for local NGOs and community-based organisations to help them become more capable and more responsive to their constituencies.

In extreme cases — where governments, or elements within them, are particularly resistant to supporting these key elements of conflict prevention and peace building — donors may have to consider the judicious use of direct incentives and/or disincentives in their funding allocations. Such approaches, despite their limitations, may in some cases stimulate recipients to strengthen the elements which underpin peace building and conflict prevention in their national development programmes.

Support for dispute resolution must focus primarily on helping to build up sustainable local capacities. Donors can play a nurturing or facilitating role, and in the interest of durable solutions, they must be as open as possible to the needs and priorities expressed from within the society itself. In pursuing efforts in these areas, the following points must be kept in mind:

- Development interventions in support of dialogue and negotiation must avoid seeking to impose externally generated solutions. They must constantly discipline themselves to help create the space within which the parties to a conflict may themselves explore solutions and work together to build peace and good governance.
- Assistance must be sustained over the medium to long term. Otherwise, individuals and groups brought together to deal with an immediate crisis may return to “business as usual” before the underlying problems have been fully addressed.
- All assistance aimed at supporting indigenous mechanisms of dispute resolution — e.g. traditional authorities or moderate groups — needs to be developed in the light of the best possible understanding of the political, social and economic dynamics that underlie the conflict.
- Donors should recognise that assistance which seeks to strengthen or support the institutions of civil society may not in itself prevent or reduce conflict in the short term. Rather, donors should support peace building and reconciliation at the community level over the long term, parallel to their efforts to strengthen the peace-building elements of good governance.

Working towards Peace in Crisis Conditions

With the outbreak of violent conflict, peace-building activities should normally be intensified to reinforce other efforts. When a country is in crisis, external efforts to contribute to conflict prevention and peace building may meet considerable opposition from domestic actors in the name of national sovereignty. Parties to the conflict may view outside interventions as partial to one side. In such politically volatile situations, or when a situation is on the verge of erupting into violence, the role and potential impact of development co-operation initiatives carried out through established

authorities must be carefully examined. The continuation of development programmes designed in the pre-conflict phase can be very problematic during civil war. The protection of civilians and aid workers is of paramount importance if aid is to be used constructively in conflict conditions.

As conflict involves the control of resources, the injection of resources into these situations inevitably means involvement in the conflict. This factor is important not only for humanitarian assistance but also for development co-operation. The risk is not just that outside parties may be perceived as partial, but that their resources may be diverted and used by warring factions. In short, relief assistance and longer-term development assistance have an undeniable political impact in conflict situations. Specifically, the following guidelines need to be taken into consideration:

- The political impact of relief must be recognised explicitly. Development and relief assistance can confer power on local organisations involved in its distribution and challenge other economic and social structures. Aid agencies may thus find themselves accused of taking sides (feeding the enemy), and indirectly contribute to prolonging the crisis.
- A careful analysis of the social context, including gender dimensions, is critical where relief goods are channelled through local community organisations. This can help minimise the risk of inequitable distribution and avoid reinforcing any existing patterns of exploitation.
- The role of development assistance in preventing violent conflict, or mitigating its effect, should be examined systematically. In this context, the concept of vulnerability is important in identifying the groups most at risk.
- If local government is non-existent, other local structures or NGOs can be engaged. If they lack capacity, they can be trained by counterpart international NGOs. Care must be taken that salaries offered by aid agencies do not rob the local administration of qualified staff.

Development co-operation agencies must adjust to operating in unstable conditions and must consider the scope for supporting development processes even amid crisis conditions. They also need to be prepared to seize opportunities for conflict resolution and to plan for post-conflict reconstruction. In such volatile circumstances, however, the risks of failure must be recognised.

The post-conflict consolidation phase can be particularly fragile and unstable. To address the potential for renewed conflict, an in-depth, comprehensive understanding of the background and root causes of the conflict is required. Measures formulated to deal with the consequences of war, such as reconstruction programmes, should simultaneously focus on preventing the relapse into violent confrontation.

Regional Approaches to Conflict Prevention and Peace Building

Arguments for a Regional Approach

The international community has learned from experience that multilateral preventive engagement in an internal conflict is often best mediated through the relevant regional organisation or group. A government that is a member of a regional organisation may well find a regional process of engagement co-ordinated by that organisation less threatening than intervention by non-regional actors. It must also be recognised, however, that the impartiality of regional organisations and neighbouring countries is sometimes open to question. In the cases of regional power struggles or hegemonic fears, wider international institutions may be more appropriate channels for international response and support.

Many serious intergroup tensions and structural inequalities — which, combined with the lack of effective political mechanisms, can generate violent internal strife — can be effectively addressed by initiatives at the regional level. Political participation, decentralisation and power-sharing arrangements, constitutional and legal guarantees, and reform of the military are all crucial issues which have a regional dimension. The issues at stake in a protracted internal conflict will often be of greater salience and significance to a country's immediate neighbours than to the broader international community. Neighbouring countries will often have both an immediate interest and a more nuanced appreciation of the options available for effective external contributions.

By rooting conflict prevention and peace-building programmes in regional approaches, donors are more likely to ensure their long-term viability and compatibility with regional norms. Protagonists would be more inclined to continue participation in a process which is the product of their own interests and concerns.

Fostering Regional Mechanisms

Donors should encourage regional organisations to develop comprehensive frameworks for conflict prevention and peace building, and should orient their support for capacity building to help regional organisations act as a bridge between the international community and the states of the region. The availability of financial and technical means often determines which activities a regional organisation can undertake. Specific areas of donor support should include providing technical expertise to strengthen communications and logistical capacities.

The absence of an effective mechanism for dialogue between state and sub-state actors is a difficult issue for states and donor agencies to address, yet it is essential to effective preventive engagement. An integrated regional approach to conflict could

thus be two-pronged: working with regional organisations and groups at the supra-state level, and working through regional and local NGOs at the sub-state level. Some specific areas of assistance may include the following:

- Regional and local non-governmental and community-based organisations, including women’s peace groups, can offer promising opportunities in this regard. Donor agencies and regional organisations should identify key regional NGOs which can act as co-ordinating contact points for the delivery of peace-building assistance by local NGOs in the field.
- Owing to their familiarity with regional issues and communities, neighbouring countries may often have both strong motivation and special capability to provide technical assistance and training, to share experience with transitions and reform. This argues for greater involvement of countries from the region wherever they are able to act even-handedly.
- Donors should encourage initiatives aimed at fostering regional economic co-operation and integration, which would not only help to expand local economic gains but also foster mutual trust and co-operation. Encouraging “South-South” co-operation on functional issues could be pursued as a means of building regional dialogue and a perception of shared interests.
- Sub-regional bodies designed to address functional issues such as trade or resource management can sometimes provide a basis for addressing issues of regional insecurity. They can offer promising avenues, especially where efforts are sustained over the long term.

Although regional organisations have considerable potential in this area, it is necessary to recognise the limits of many such organisations in the developing world. Many are financially constrained and underresourced, with little institutional or administrative capacity to deliver comprehensive and integrated mechanisms for conflict prevention and peace building. *Ad hoc* regional arrangements can also be effective, assuming that the ultimate goal in advocating regional approaches is the prevention of conflict, not institution building *per se*. Support should be given to the most effective instrument for addressing the conflict, whether it be a formal intergovernmental organisation, NGO, *ad hoc* grouping or some other alternative arrangement.

Notes

1. This chapter, prepared by Robert Scharf of the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate, summarises some of the key findings of the DAC Task Force on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation in the broader areas of conflict prevention and peace building in conflict-prone and crisis situations. These critical areas of assistance are outlined in greater detail in the 1997 DAC Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation. The full text of these guidelines, which will continue to be refined, is available via Internet at <http://www.oecd.org/dac>, or directly from the Secretariat.
2. Participating were: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the International Monetary Fund, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. Invited organisations included the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

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