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Contents

Foreword

Jannie Malan

In the very human life that all of us are living, there are dynamic factors which tend to drive us apart and even incite separated groups to fight each other. Some of these factors, such as ethnicity or religion, may not appear to be divisive. Often, however, the same factors can also harbour tolerant and cooperative possibilities. Very much depends therefore on how we allow ourselves to be influenced by experiences and messages of discord or of concord. In most situations it is probably true that the public is oversupplied with the former by media that thrive on news about disputes and disunity. A fairly large proportion of such news is usually generated by politicians who are bent on strengthening their own constituencies and their own positions – to the detriment of opposition parties and leaders. Accordingly, there is an urgent need to counteract such sensationalism and divisiveness by focusing on viable options of living together and working together.

This is precisely the point that this issue of the African Journal on Conflict Resolution seeks to convey as far and wide as possible. Three of the articles in this issue address some of the dynamic factors referred to above: ethnicity and religious commitment.

In the first article, Jude Cocodia shows how conflicts 'revolving around ethnic or religious identities' do not only belong to the history of the past, but also to the reality of the present. Unless we as human beings undertake

a radical 'rethinking' of ethnicity and change our mindsets, attitudes and behaviours, violent ethnic conflicts will remain with us and mar our future. In light of examples from five African countries (Uganda, South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, Botswana and Tanzania), two kinds of trends are highlighted in this article: those that lead to conflict and those that lead to cooperation.

The second article, by Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, gives us a penetrating insight into a deep inter-ethnic divide in Zimbabwe. The beginnings and persistence of the particularism of the Ndebele are traced historically from pre-colonial times to the post-colonial present. It contributes to the complexities of the current situation – in which this particularism inhibits nation building and sends out signals of a craving for separate independence. The tenacity of this phenomenon is explained along two lines. The Ndebele experienced and reacted to events in history, and the Shona revealed an attitude of triumphalism. What this account of a specific example of particularism therefore clearly confirms, is that inter-ethnic tensions and hostilities usually emerge out of actions and reactions from both sides (or more sides if there are more). The particularism or the triumphalism (or even perceived versions of such isms) of one group tends to elicit reactions from another group or other groups. Such actions and reactions lead to tension, to conflict, and to the escalation of the conflict.

When a cycle of hostile violence has been established and entrenched, it needs a breakthrough to an orientation of understanding and cooperation. In the third article, by Ayo Whetho and Ufo Okeke Uzodike, the role of religious networks in the post-war Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is explored. The idea is not to propagate religion in general or any specific religion as a peacemaking institution. After all, the histories of religion and particular religions contain laudable examples of peacemaking and deplorable examples of religiously inspired conflicts and wars. The authors indeed refer to religious networks that use their powerful influence towards 'destructive ends'. What they do emphasise, however, is that in the DRC, during and after the conflicts, religious networks have stepped in to render crucial social services which the state failed to provide. In this way

the religious communities have earned well deserved gratitude and respect, plus reaping the benefits of phenomenal growth in their membership. What is also highlighted in the article, is the 'constructive engagement by faith-based groups in the public domain', and the way in which this rendering of service to fellow-human beings definitely facilitated and still facilitates the process of building peace in the war-ravaged country.

In the last article, Cedric de Coning takes the topic of cooperation a step further than the convergence of parties who had been in conflict. He argues convincingly for an integrated approach – as adopted by the United Nations (UN) – in all peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction programmes. Different kinds of work have to be done by different actors, but the various parts of the overall task of restoring and sustaining peace can be performed more effectively if the leaders, organisers and workers are aware of their interdependence. Even more importantly, the providers of the peacebuilding services should also be committed to an interdependence that includes the local actors. The people of the country or countries concerned should be involved in satisfying and encouraging ways, and share ownership of the peacebuilding and reconstruction process.

Taken one by one, each of these articles gives us a thorough description and discussion of the topic concerned. Jointly, however, they provide us with the added value of a strong thrust towards cooperation in cases where separatist and antagonistic tendencies are wielding their power. This constructive approach can be meaningful not only where the divisiveness is caused by ethnic or religious separateness, or by organisational non-relatedness (precisely in peacebuilding), but also in many other situations. After all, almost anything can be approached and performed with either a spirit of antagonism or one of affiliation.

Very fittingly, the book review in this issue, written by Theo Neethling, is on Stanley Meisler's biography of Kofi Annan. In the review, and in the book itself, we can read about the instructive and inspiring example of 'a man of peace in a world of war'. Many more such people are indeed needed in this war-prone world, in leadership positions and across the spectrum

of positions in socio-political life. The climate of realistic coexistence and cooperation has to be created where it is still non-existent, and promoted where it is already present.

Exhuming Trends in Ethnic Conflict and Cooperation in Africa: Some selected states

Jude Cocodia *

Abstract

The world-wide surge in the number and violence of open conflicts revolving around ethnic or religious identities towards the end of the 20th century is a powerful reminder that communal identities are not a remnant of the past but a potent force in contemporary politics. After three decades of independence, ethnicity is more central than ever to the political process of many African countries. Africa has had more than its fair share of ethnic dissent which has sometimes plummeted states into civil war as was experienced in Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and reached frightening proportions in Rwanda and now Sudan. Political openings and multiparty elections have led to the formation of innumerable overtly or covertly ethnic political parties, which serve more often to increase civil strife of which the most recent addition to the long list in Africa is Kenya.

Africa's ethnic disturbances have occurred more within national borders, thus giving rise to unstable domestic systems. This paper attempts to address

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these ethnic issues by assessing certain conflict spots as opposed to areas of relative calm in Africa. The assessment of states on both sides of the divide (i.e. cooperation and conflict) is done in the hope that trends that lead to conflict as well as those that lead to cooperation can be identified. In order to establish these patterns of cooperation and conflict, it became pertinent to use a broad range of case studies, notably, Tanzania, Botswana, South Africa, Uganda and Côte d'Ivoire. The result of this study tells that the lack or presence of equity and justice (components of good governance), high literacy levels and an external threat, are factors which strengthen or diminish possibilities of ethnic conflict.

Introduction

From Thucydides to the Christian Fathers, David Hume and to the present day, man has tried to explain why men fight. In all these, there is no single unified theory capable of explaining why men fight. Thus the thrust of William James' argument – that men should be looking for causes of peace instead of causes of war, could not have been better imagined. This thrust serves as motivation for this study.

Scholars in the past two decades have occupied themselves with finding the causes of this drift with a bid to understand them and proffer solutions. Quaker-Dokubo (2001), for instance, attributes this trend in Africa to the gross neglect of her cultural basis. There is a negation of ethnic, regional and cultural diversities rather than their recognition as building blocks in the construction of a civil society. There is an arrogance of intellectual paradigms, such as Modernisation, Dependency and Neo-Marxist theories, that often relegates ethnicity to the realm of false consciousness or considers it the unfortunate remnants of a pre-modern Africa. So too, using Nigeria as case study, scholars like Nnoli (1978) contend that ethnicity in post-colonial Africa is largely due to the way and manner their politics evolved.

One thing remains certain, however, while positions and solutions vary, the problem of rising ethnic conflicts remains and worsens by the day, so that, as noted by Marshall (2008), 'there are currently about 15 million displaced,

mainly internally displaced' persons and 'about 3.5 million transnational refugees'. The relatively recent sharp increases in these numbers have increased the continent's humanitarian plight. The result, as noted by Ibaba (2006:2), has been a negative impact on the economy and society through undermining the development of local economies and thereby exacerbating poverty.

Understanding ethnic groupings and ethnic conflicts

Defining ethnic groups is quite a difficult task. To some, it refers to a subjective perception of common origins, historical memories, ties and aspirations. Quaker-Dokubo (2001:44) explains: 'Ethnic group pertains to organized activities by persons linked by a consciousness of a special identity, who jointly seek to maximize their corporate political, economic and social interest.' Heeger (in Willigenburg 1995:13) refers to ethnic groups as 'cultural nations which are bound together in the first place by a common culture and which lack the internationally recognized organization of a sovereign state.'

Gurr (1993:17) classifies ethnic affiliations into three, namely: 'Ethno-Nationals, Indigenous Peoples and Communal Contenders.'

Ethno-Nationals are historically autonomous, and often large and regionally concentrated groups that are committed to achieving or regaining independent statehood. Examples here include Eritreans and East Timorese formerly under Ethiopia and Indonesia respectively, the Kurds in Iraq and Western Saharans under Morocco.

Indigenous peoples are politically conquered, culturally isolated, ecologically endangered and economically vulnerable descendants of the original inhabitants of a region. The Khoi-San (bushmen) of South Africa, Botswana and Namibia are examples of indigenous peoples.

Communal Contenders are culturally distinct groups in heterogeneous societies in which no single group constitutes a demographic majority of the population. In societies dominated by communal contenders, there is a

general acceptance of the moral equivalence of all groups. Political power at the centre is based on fluid or unstable inter-ethnic coalitions. Most African countries including Nigeria are dominated by communal contenders.

If, as Mthethwa-Sommers (in Nnoli 1998:417) observes, 'ethnic conflicts in Africa are an everyday occurrence', it becomes necessary to understand the term 'ethnic conflict'. Peterson and others (1982:1) posit that the word 'ethnic' is derived via Latin from the Greek *ethnos* which means nation or race. Leith and Solomon (2001:32) affirm further that 'various definitions of ethnicity build upon this by adding the idea of a common denominator, so to speak, that underlies this conception'.

Thomson (2000:58) defines an ethnic group as 'a community of people who have the conviction that they have a common identity and common fate based on issues of origin, kinship, ties, traditions, cultural uniqueness, a shared history and possibly a shared language …. Ethnicity becomes more pronounced when it is used to distinguish one social group from another within a specific territory'. He posits further, 'all individuals have ethnic allegiances irrespective of whether they are from the minority of a state's population or the majority, with the result that ethnicity as a sentiment is expressed by both majority and minority populations. Obviously, this social pluralism will lead to differences of interests, and this is where the possibility of ethnic conflict starts to emerge'.

Our analysis of trends in ethnic conflicts in Africa will thus revolve around the fact that most African states are largely heterogeneous states comprised of communal contenders, with each group seeking power, control and importance over the other.

Theories of ethnic conflict

In Africa we have witnessed naked ethnic wars and backsliding democracies in many places such as the Western Darfur Region, Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, just to name a few. Hence Smith (1992:436) submits that 'in most recent times Africa has become

the hot bed of ethnic conflicts and movements over the last three decades. Many states are wrecked by ethnic dissension' In the words of Nobert Gabiro (2006:1): 'Among the most significant and growing challenges to peace, freedom, democratic governance and the rule of law in Africa are ethnic, racial, communal and religious intolerance and conflicts'. These no doubt lead to flagrant abuses of fundamental human rights and freedoms, and to crime, violence, apathy and environmental irresponsibility. But when or how did ethnicity get to be an integral part of African politics?

Within the context of neo-colonial statehood, ethnicity is a colonial derivative based on matriarchal or patriarchal relations forged in the distant past and used by an ethnic group as a defensive or offensive weapon against other groups. The colonialists posit that they 'tried to make a nation-state out of a hotch-potch of antagonistic and uncivilized African peoples but failed in their pious mission. The various tribes had age-long hatred for one another and as soon as the colonial power went, the natives descended into barbarism, maiming and killing each other' (Avugma 2000:1).

The Nationalists, on the other hand, see things differently as they paint idyllic pictures of the African past and blame all tribal conflicts that have erupted after independence solely on the colonialists. This viewpoint is as historically incorrect as it is undialectical. A less extreme position is taken by Bailey (1994:4) when he posits that 'the political map of Africa is a western colonial creation, drawn by western powers with little regard to the boundaries of historic ethnic homelands or the ethnic compositions of the subject population, and today these artificial or multi-ethnic nations lack the internal political cohesion necessary for survival as nations'.

Facts abound on how the internal evolution of some African communities before colonialism had provided groups of people the opportunity to appropriate the labour of others and subjugate other communities. This scenario definitely generated ethnic animosity and discrimination. It was these differences that were carefully and deliberately nurtured by the colonialists and later exploited by the local political bourgeoisie. Supporting this claim, Nnoli (1998) points out that a contributory factor that has made

ethnic conflicts more severe in Africa than in other parts of the world is the incursion and exploitation by the colonialists which compounded already strained inter-ethnic relations. In countries like Nigeria, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya and Zimbabwe, colonial powers utilised the segmentation of ethnic groups to their advantage. There is no denying that since the colonial era, African states have frequently been hampered by instability, corruption and ethnic violence. Great instability has mainly been the result of marginalisation of other ethnic groups. Many politicians have used their positions of power to ignite negative sentiments arising from such marginalisation. While affirming the position of Nnoli above, Suberu (2003) also contends that ethnic conflict arises from the discontent of groups toward the perceived domination by other groups who are unduly favoured by the government.

The globalisation theory contends that the upsurge of ethnic conflicts in Africa in the 1980s and 1990s was a reaction to events in East Europe. The collapse of the old order in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s had a tremendous impact on the fragile nation states of Africa. Some of them have reacted, in the words of Bekker (1993:81), 'by increasingly articulating similar demands for human and cultural rights and for equity in access to resources'.

The hegemony theory of conflict argues that ethnic conflicts have been on the increase with the era of rapid democratisation of African status. This position holds that one-party (hegemonic) states have better control of ethnic conflict. As Rothchild (in Nkwi 2001:5) points out: 'In such hegemonic situations, the state uses its coercive power to freeze inter-ethnic conflicts…. Hegemonic strategies of conflict management include subjugation, avoidance, isolation, assimilation and displacement, all of which tend to display relatively low levels of political interaction and reciprocity'.

I actually started this study with a bias for this theory as the most effective means for the control of ethnic conflicts. But a close study of politics in Côte d'Ivoire, the former Soviet Union, the DRC and a host of others, as well as reports from the Chinese Academy of Sciences (1993) that China had disintegrated along regional lines after Mao's death, certainly gave cause

for a rethink. In my study, it became apparent that the flaw of this theory is that every hegemony ends. The end of every hegemony often brings chaos as different persons or groups try to fill the vacuum created or acquire the authority once possessed by the hegemony. A picture of Côte d'Ivoire after Boigny's hegemony makes one uncomfortable about the prospects of relatively prosperous one-party states such as Libya and Egypt with dominant dictators in Muammar al-Gaddafi and Hosni Mubarak respectively.

Ethnic conflict in Africa: Selected cases

Uganda

Independence in 1962 ended a period of colonisation that began in 1885. Through the period of colonisation and at independence, there was little indication that the country was headed for social and political upheaval. Uganda appeared to be a model of stability and progress. During colonisation, the British established their authority in Uganda and kept the peace among the Nilotic and Bantu groups by negotiations and the application of force where necessary. The British had even devised a timetable for withdrawal before local groups organised nationalist movements, which were unfortunately separated by ethnic and religious lines as well as historical enmities and rivalries (Buganda, Banyoro and Acholi peoples). This state of affairs was further worsened by the struggle between Milton Obote, a Lango leader elected prime minister in 1962 and Mutesa, the Buganda King (Kabaka) elected president in 1963 who sought autonomy for his people. In 1966, Obote sacked the Kabaka, thereby ending Buganda's autonomy, and forced the Kabaka to flee the country. In 1971, Obote was overthrown by Idi Amin who had good relations with the Buganda and thus pursued retribution against the Lango and Acholi groups. From 1963 to 1981, Ugandan politics was plagued by ethnicity and thus progress made under colonial rule was stunted or lost entirely.

Several African states, such as Nigeria, possess a similar history of elites fostering ethnic reprisals and plunging the country into ethnic chaos. This scenario of elite competition causing ethnic conflict is aptly expressed by

Kruger (1993:11) when he states: 'ethnicity and nationalism … are the creations of elites who draw upon, distort and sometimes fabricate materials from the cultures of the groups they wish to represent in order to protect their well-being or existence or to gain political and economic advantage for their groups as well as for themselves'. Today, though still noticeable, ethnicity is not central to Ugandan politics as the country has had to cope with conflicts with its neighbours Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC on a regular basis. One of such conflicts, as noted by Kristine Drake (2006), is the Ituri conflict in the northeastern corner of the DRC which involves the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda.

It should be noted that ethnic loyalty in politics as well as the existence of a political divide, set the stage for an unstable Uganda. Unity across ethnic divisions has only been temporarily achieved due to the external threat or problems (coping with refugees) presented by her unstable neighbours.

South Africa

South Africa has a multiracial and multiethnic population. Blacks constitute 77% of which the Zulu make up 22.4% of the overall population. Whites account for 11%, Coloured people for 9% and Asians (mainly Indians) 2%. The largest concentration of Asians and Coloured people is found in KwaZulu-Natal and the three Cape provinces.

The liberation struggle during the years of white minority rule cemented the Blacks, Asians and Coloured people together. With the end of apartheid, however, most Asians and Coloured people, conscious of their minority position turned to vote for the ruling National Party along with most whites. Blacks gave overwhelming support to the African National Congress (ANC) except in KwaZulu-Natal, where the ethnically based Inkatha Freedom Party won more than half the Zulu votes. The violent incidents following immediately (1994) were not between blacks and whites, but between the Zulu who supported the ANC and those who supported Inkatha led by Buthelezi. This becomes a classic case of intra-communal conflict spurred by elite competition (cf Kruger 1993).

It should be noticed here that as in Uganda where ethnic dissent was kept at bay in the pre-independence era due to the presence of the white colonial masters, South Africa tells the same story. The unity forged by the Blacks, Asians and Coloured people under white oppression collapsed when state power was to be competed for by all groups. The Asians and Coloured people inadvertently became suspicious of the Blacks and felt unsafe coming under Black rule. On the other hand, this quest for state power (by groups/elites) coupled with the absence of an overarching or common enemy, set South African blacks against each other.

These two examples raise a serious question. Must there always be the presence of the *aggressive/dominant other,* before ethnic groups within African states can forget their differences and work together? In most African states where the fight for independence was intense, most ethnic groups worked together to secure independence. But with independence secured, the quest for state power and a mutual suspicion between these same groups arose, thus leading to the disintegration of the unity forged. This pattern applies to many ethnic conflict situations in Africa.

Côte d'Ivoire

The population of Côte d'Ivoire is diverse, comprising more than 60 ethnic groups. The country enjoyed political stability and great economic growth during the 1960s and 70s despite occasional challenges by students and members of the armed forces to the generally conservative, business oriented outlook of Houphouet-Boigny. Sommerville (2006) notes that in 1990, President Felix Houphouet-Boigny extended his thirty-year rule through the ballot box. He died in office in 1993. What also died with him was his iron grip over politics and his conscious efforts to balance the appointment of senior ministers to avoid a build up of ethnic, regional and religious tensions among a diverse population. Felix Houphouet-Boigny had succeeded in keeping a lid on these divisive factors. His successors, lacking the respect or fear accorded him by Ivorians, used these divisive factors to establish their power. Today, one of West Africa's most promising

and peaceful states is struggling to recover from an ethnic conflict that tore it apart and laid it in ruins.

Houphouet-Boigny's overarching authority coupled with a blossoming economy and common sense diplomacy which ensured that most (if not all) groups were adequately represented in government, elicited respect from his people. This established ethnic cohesion during his thirty three years at the helm of affairs. However, as has been observed, the danger here is, when such overarching authority leaves the scene, chaos reigns as some groups, distrusting the new regime, try to break away, while others get ambitious to want to fill this vacuum. The violence that took over Eastern Europe with the collapse of the former Soviet Union, and Iraq with the expulsion of Saddam Hussein, are good cases in point. And with regard to countries like Libya, Egypt and Cuba, it is an open-ended guess what will happen when their charismatic or larger than life dictators quit the stage before they can prepare their people for proper democratic transitions or groom an acceptable successor. Cuba so far seems to have succeeded in this with the handover of power by Fidel Castro to his brother Raul Castro.

While this research tries to identify existing trends in the above treated cases of states ridden with ethnic conflict, attention will be focused at this point on African states that have been seemingly peaceful to see if in them, we can find the key to peaceful ethnic co-existence.

Botswana

Since independence in 1966, Botswana has had a flourishing multiparty democracy. Each of the elections since independence has been free and fair. The country's minorities participate freely in the political process. Botswana is a country rich in diamonds and cattle and it possesses a population of just 1.6 million. But as an ethnic minority, the San experience both poverty and allegedly discrimination. The San have pressed for better standards of living but have never been violent as they acknowledge both the government's efforts to improve their lot as well as the factors militating against them. For example, the IRIN report (2004:1) on the 'San' Bushmen states: 'The government of Botswana provides free education but the San have problems accessing it.

Teaching is done in Tswana and English, which many San children do not speak.' Under the Remote Area Dwellers (R.A.D.) programme, of which the San are a majority, the government has made many accomplishments. It has based the programme's assistance on the distance of a people or group from existing social services, as well as on economic marginalisation, rather than on ethnicity. This has enabled the government to reach settlements in the most distant parts, bringing in roads, potable water, primary schools, hostels and health posts. All these have been possible due to the fact that the government has stuck – or at least tried to stick – to its principle of non-differentiation and non-discrimination which it adopted at independence in 1966. Several studies have observed that the Tswana make up over 50% of Botswana population and most of the remaining peoples have been heavily absorbed into the Tswana culture. This may be one of the main reasons for Botswana's cultural and social stability over the last two centuries.

It is my position here that in its policy of inclusion, the Botswana government has endeavoured to carry all peoples along, thus dousing the need for any group to want to project its interests above those of others. The December 12th 2006 court ruling which gave the San Bushmen (about 1,000 in number) the right to remain on their land instead of being moved to enable diamond mining, attests to this. In respecting this court order the Botswana government showed that despite the meagre population of the San Bushmen, which accounts for less than 0.1 per cent of the entire population, they had every right to the good things of life and the preservation of their ancestry. Only very few African countries can boast of such respect for minorities within their borders. In observing the aforementioned court ruling, the Botswana government thus repudiates the notion of Tolanda (1993:1) that:

> the state has always been at the risk of promoting and maintaining the degradation of the social environment because of the propensity of federal policy making to focus on self-sustenance at the expense of those groups and individuals that are deemed peripheral to the state.... Studies of statehood have shown us that…policies and expectations that

serve the interests of all ethnic groups, irrespective of their differences, has not yet been fully realized.

Within the context of such transparency and respect for group rights, Botswana's flourishing democracy sets the standard and serves as an example for most African states.

Tanzania

If poor economic performance is believed to be one of the causes of ethnic unrest, then the case of Tanzania is bound to nullify this claim. From the beginning, Tanzania was a poor state with few minerals suitable for export, little industry, and an agricultural system dominated by ideas of local self-sufficiency. Though since the mid 1990s, Tanzania's economy has performed fairly well, it still remains one of the world's poorest countries. So, what spell has kept Tanzania's over 120 ethnic groups from tearing at each other in the midst of very scarce resources and in their quest for domination and control – as has been witnessed in most multi-ethnic states in Africa?

Other than an anti-colonial rebellion in 1905 known as the Maji Maji revolt, Tanganyika was fairly quiet. It became independent in December 1961. The appeal of the major party, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), led by Julius Nyerere, cut across ethnic and national lines. Thus Nyerere became Tanganyika's first president, and later Tanzania (after Tanganyika's amalgamation with Zanzibar) served as an adhesive for the people. This factor, coupled with the level of literacy facilitated by the Tanzanian government, has helped maintain ethnic cooperation within the polity. The country boasts of a 90% literacy rate.

Though economic policies such as Ujaama operated by Nyerere failed largely due to external factors (the increase in world oil prices) and the corruption of the middle men and local chiefs, the transparency of his government and the will for progress (as exhibited by other reform policies) assured his legitimacy standing. An illiterate populace most likely would have found it difficult keeping the peace in the face of such policy failures, a factor most political opponents would have taken advantage of to spur the 'illiterate'

people to violent protests which would most likely have degenerated into ethnic conflict.

Analysis of trends

In the cases treated, I believe patterns can be deduced such that, irrespective of the peculiarity of any case of ethnic conflict, each case could be analysed against the backdrop of such trends.

Some of the cases treated bring to mind the story of two feuding brothers, who on sighting a wild beast, set aside their grievances and joined forces to battle for their lives, but resumed their feuding as soon as the beast was killed. The period of colonial rule saw all of Africa in solidarity for one another. There was a common enemy and African brotherhood was needed to defeat it. Now that the enemy is gone, with no common goal to unite them, the brotherhood is broken and survival of the fittest takes precedence. From the volatile cases in Rwanda, Burundi and now Sudan to the less violent ethnic tension in Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal, this trend applies. Reduction of ethnic hostilities in Uganda has been mainly because of perceived threats from her neighbours. Need there always be an external threat or fear of reprisal from an overbearing force for ethnic groups to sheath swords and work together? Ensuring the existence of an external threat to maintain internal peace or cooperation among groups is certainly no solution as the external threat may one day act out its anticipated aggression and thus exacerbate local tension into a cross-border or regional one. Certainly, suspicion of one group against the other has been the bedrock of ethnic conflicts, so the problem remains: How best can suspicion be curbed?

Taking a close look at cases treated here, we can deduce the following trends.

There is seldom any country in the world today where the economy is good, the literacy level is high and the government desirous of progress that experiences violent ethnic upheavals. Using Botswana as a starting point for African states, the expanse of land needed by the San for hunting runs

contrary to land needed for the rearing of livestock which is the mainstay of the Tswana majority, since social affluence is still largely determined by the number of cattle owned. Rather than disregard the San who are an almost insignificant minority, the government has strived to maintain a balance between both cultures. The government has been able to achieve public awareness of its efforts through its commitment to literacy. This is not surprising when 'primary school enrolment is around 98/99% for boys/girls, and secondary school enrolment is around 61/68%. Literacy is 74/80% for men/women' (Pearson Education 2006:2). The same applies to Tanzania where, despite a poor economy, violent confrontations among ethnic groups have been kept at the barest minimum. Tanzania has laid great emphasis on education since independence and has invested considerable resources in providing services for adults as well as children. As a result, the country has one of the highest literacy rates in the developing world, around 90%, which is almost on a par with that of the United States.

The presence or absence of visionary and charismatic leaders, greatly affects the escalation or erosion of ethnic conflict. Unfortunately, African states south of the Sahara can boast of just a few such leaders, and this I believe is largely responsible for the high number of ethnic conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa as opposed to North Africa. Côte d'Ivoire's history during and after Felix Houphouet-Boigny is a tale of both sides of the coin. It can also be argued here that the one-party structure of most North African states and states south of the equator helped their leaders keep a lid on divisive factors, ethnicity inclusive. Bearing in mind the observation of Quaker-Dokubo that most African states are made up of communal contenders, having just one party with which all members of the political community identify, the presence of a firm and respected leader within such a party helps cement differences. This also accounts for the rarity of ethnic upheavals and military coups in these states, unlike states such as Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda and Burundi where ethnic tensions climaxed into military coups. As noted by Ali Mazrui (in Raph Uwechue 1991:244), 'A remarkable fact about the distribution of military coups in post colonial Africa is that they are overwhelmingly north of the equator …. One relevant factor would bring

us back to the single party hypothesis.' If recent happenings in Kenya are anything to go by, ethnic tensions are now at their worst under the present rule of democracy compared to the relatively stable era of dictatorship and the one-party system under Daniel arap Moi. This argument is still plausible when cordial ethnic relations are considered in Zambia under Kenneth Kaunda, Julius Nyerere's Tanzania, Muammar Ghaddafi's Libya, Hosni Mubarak's Egypt, Leopold Senghor and Abdou Diouf's Senegal.

Also, experiences in Ghana, Tanzania and Botswana have shown that fair and peaceful democratic transitions have aided ethnic cooperation. Once again, experiences in Kenya as well as events that led to Nigeria's civil war among others tell how improper and violent elections/transitions can exacerbate ethnic crises. Ali Mazrui (1991:244) once again observes:

> Countries like Botswana, Mauritius, Lesotho and Swaziland have been more open societies in the liberal sense than have most others in Africa. Mauritius has even shown the ability to defeat an incumbent government at the polls – and have it hand over power peacefully to a successor regime. Such political culture is less 'conflict' prone than average on the continent.

Ghana has also been a beneficiary of this. Rwanda, with the end of the genocidal killings on 4th July 1994, has made great strides with political parties cutting across ethnic divides. Rwanda today is showing signs of development with peaceful elections held in 2003 along with the adoption by referendum of a new constitution that forbids any political activity or discrimination based on race, ethnicity (with emphasis on Hutu/Tutsi identity) or religion. A World Bank 2006 report (cf Atojoko 2008:99) rated *government's effectiveness* in Rwanda at 39.8%, which is twice that of Nigeria's 16.6%, her *political stability* at 27.4%, eight times better than Nigeria's 3.8%, her *anticorruption* at 55.8% as compared to Nigeria's 5.8% and her observance of the *rule of law* four times higher (34.3%) than Nigeria's (8.1%). Bearing in mind that Rwanda emerged from a civil war boasting one of Africa's worst

cases of genocide just a little over a decade ago, the gains of peaceful and fair elections cannot be better imagined or estimated.

But peaceful elections do not appear from nowhere. They are worked at. Throughout history, leaders have spurred their people to achieve the almost impossible and our time is no different. As observed by Offe (in Morgan 2002:3-4), 'Progress toward a unity of intention and action will materialize only when national publics are presented with convincing grounds for political integration'. Siedentop reaffirms this position when he says 'it is the duty of a democratic political class to give a lead' (Siedentop 2000:218).

Conclusion

Bassey and Oshita (2007) opine that ethnic conflicts are not a new phenomenon. They have been for as long as states have been in existence. This study was therefore conducted with the belief that since ethnic conflicts are not new, so also are their causes. And if these causes can be generally identified, then a reduction in ethnic conflicts can be achieved if these causes are avoided.

So far, the examination of selected states done herein reveals that countries with high levels of literacy suffer little or none of such conflicts as opposed to countries with low literacy levels. Secondly, firm, fair and progressive leadership, which are pre-requisites for stable multiparty democracies, have been shown to foster ethnic cooperation. So far, Paul Kagame's transformation of Rwanda is but a clear example of how such leadership can shift a society from bitter resentment to effective cooperation.

It is generally held that had the botched 1994 elections in Nigeria, which were considered her freest and fairest, been allowed to prevail, ethnic dissent in the country would have been a thing of the past, most especially if the perceived winner (Moshood Abiola) had endeavoured to be fair to all groups within the country. African scholars agree that smooth transitions in South Africa, Ghana and Senegal have helped the stability in these states. Fair elections therefore, are a third factor that helps in curbing ethnic conflicts.

Rwanda and Burundi arguably pose Africa's worst case scenarios of ethnic discord planted by colonialism. If Rwanda, after the most gruesome of happenings, can work to curb ethnic discord within its borders, then the rest of Africa really has no excuse after almost half a century of independence. Colonialism ought not to be blamed for Burundi's refusal to emulate present day Rwanda or for the refusal of ethnic groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to sheath their machetes. Nor should neo-colonialism be accused of being responsible for the desire of most African governments to stay corrupt and partisan, thereby intensifying suspicion and tension among their people.

Africa should look inward to find the causes of ethnic tension rather than blame colonialists who left fifty years ago. This study, while not pretending to have all the answers, has taken these steps of inward examination. It is therefore my summation that, while establishing that the presence of the above variables leads to ethnic cooperation and communality, lacking them leads to ethnic discord and violence. Achieving or lacking these tenets is an internal issue.

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Nation Building in Zimbabwe and the Challenges of Ndebele Particularism

*Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni**

Abstract

This article deploys a politico-sociological historical analysis in the interrogation of the origins, tenacity and resilience of Ndebele particularism across pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial epochs in Zimbabwe. While the issue of Ndebele particularism is currently overshadowed by the recent political and economic crisis that has seen Zimbabwe becoming a pariah state, it has continued to haunt both the project of nationalism that ended up unravelling along the fault-lines of Ndebele-Shona ethnicities and the post-colonial nation-building process that became marred by ethnic tensions and violence of the 1980s. In this article, Ndebele particularism is described at two main levels. Firstly, successive pre-colonial, colonial

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and post-colonial historical processes contributed to the construction and consolidation of Ndebele particularism. Secondly, this particularism is a product of coalescence of grievance and resentment to Shona triumphalism. The politico-sociological historical analysis is intertwined with a social constructivist perspective of understanding complex politics of identities in general. The discussion is taken up to the current reverberation of Ndebele particularistic politics on the internet including the creation of a virtual community known as United Mthwakazi Republic (UMR) that symbolises the desire for a restored pre-colonial Ndebele nation in the mould of Swaziland and Lesotho.

Introduction

> Zimbabwe is one entity and shall never be separated into different entities. It's impossible. I am saying this because there are some people who are saying let's do what Lesotho did. There is no Lesotho here. There is one Zimbabwe and one Zimbabwe only. (Robert Mugabe, *The Sunday Mail*, 20 November 2005)

In May 2007 the former Governor and Resident Minister of Matabeleland North, Welshman Mabhena, wrote a letter to the British Ambassador in Harare as a 'Notice of intent to file an application for the review of the verdict of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the Land Case Matabeleland on the 19th of 1918.' In the letter Mabhena (2007) wrote:

> Your excellence you may be surprised to hear that I usually get lost when I come across people who mix up my country Matabeleland with Zimbabwe, because Zimbabwe is a former British Colony which was colonised in 1890 and granted independence on 18 April 1980. While my homeland Matabeleland is a territory which was an independent Kingdom until it was invaded by the British South Africa Company (BSA Co) on 4 November 1893, in defiance of the authority of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. Actually in terms of the Moffat Treaty of Peace and Unity of 11 February 1888 between Queen Victoria and

King Lobengula, Britain and Matabeleland were allies, and due to our respect to our late King we have not renounced his vow.

Working within the auspices of the organisation known as *Umhlahlo we Sizwe sika Mthwakazi* dedicated to the restoration of an autonomous Kingdom of Matabeleland, Mabhena has progressed to file a legal case for review of the verdict of the judicial council of the Privy Council on the land case of Matabeleland on the 19th of July 1918 by the British Government. What is of historical interest here is what is termed 'the thesis of the plight of the people of Matabeleland and its remedy' which outlines the constitutional history within which the people of Matabeleland were colonised and their sovereignty taken away. This is how the case is put forward:

The Respondent is the SOVEREIGN OF THE BRITISH CROWN a colonial power which granted the 'Royal Charter of Incorporation to the BSA Co.' and conferred it with all the powers of a government on all lands north of the Limpopo River. After the conquest of the Kingdom of Matabeleland on 4th of November 1893 the Respondent did legalise the contraband deal of the BSA Co. pioneers, referred to as the 'Victoria Agreement of 14 August 1893' which was a scheme of displacing the people of Matabeleland and loot their cattle. I also submit that the Respondent went further to legalise the said contraband contract through the proclamation of the Matabeleland Order-in-Council on 19th of July 1894…The Respondent further ruled through the verdict of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in 1918 that: 'The Ndebele Sovereignty had been broken up and replaced by a new, better system as defined by the Matabeleland Order-in-Council of 1894'.

After the above judgement had usurped the Sovereignty of the Kingdom of Matabeleland through the said Order which replaced our statehood, the Respondent again through the 1923 Constitution of Southern Rhodesia, did confer the jurisdiction to the white supremacy regimes who were comprised of its descendants, the power of reigning over us through conquest, using the legal bases of the said Order, an act which

continued to seriously prejudice our wellbeing for a duration which accrued to a total of 87 years under racial domination.

In 1980 again the Respondent went further to use the said Order as the legal basis of simultaneously decolonising Mashonaland with the status of an independent Republic of Zimbabwe, to which it consequently transferred the mandate of ruling us, in Matabeleland by conquest to black majority supremacy regime comprising of Shona tribe through 'The Constitution Order 1980 (S.I. 1980 of the United Kingdom) made 19th March 1980.' an act which has perpetuated tribal domination for 27 years bringing the duration of repression in Matabeleland to a total 114 years.[1]

This case indicates the current embers in the politics of Ndebele particularism and the current drive for the restoration of an autonomous Ndebele nation separate from Zimbabwe. This article, therefore, interrogates the history behind the origins and resilience of Ndebele particularism – that makes it refuse to be swallowed by current territorial nationalism.

The Ndebele of Zimbabwe are variously described as a tribe, a clan and an ethnic group. But Ndebele novelists and culturalists, including active promoters of Ndebele particularism and advocates of the restoration of the pre-colonial Ndebele kingdom, prefer to use the term nation instead of tribe.[2] The idea of the Ndebele as a distinctive nation inevitably threatens Shona hegemony that became triumphant in 1980 when the Zimbabwe African National – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), the former liberation movement that

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1   An application for the review of the verdict of the judicial committee of the privy council in the land case of Matabeleland on the 19th July 1918, with the view to ascertain its jurisdiction and to hear the demand of the people of Matabeleland who are praying for the revocation of the Matabeleland order-in-council of the 18th July 1894 with the subsequent restoration of the kingdom of Matabeleland and the accompanying restitutions.

2   Among the leading promoters of Ndebele particularism and advocates of the restoration of the pre-colonial Ndebele kingdom is the former Governor of Matabeleland North, Welshman Mabhena, once a leading nationalist and resident minister under ZANU-PF and a radical Diaspora-based grouping known as Mthwakazi People's Congress (MPC).

was dominated by the Shona-speaking people, came to power. As noted in the epigraph above, Robert Mugabe has ruled out as impossible the idea of the realisation of a restored and autonomous Ndebele nation in the mould of Swaziland and Lesotho. But throughout the liberation struggle, Ndebele-speaking people stuck with the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). Whose support base and military wing were dominated by people from the south-western part of Zimbabwe.[3] Ndebele historians like Pathisa Nyathi prefer to use the term *uMthwakazi* for the Ndebele nation as it is done by the radical UK-based Mthwakazi People's Congress (MPC).[4]

This article starts by engaging with some theoretical and definitional issues including contested interpretations of who qualifies as a Ndebele in context of a society characterised by assimilation and incorporation of people from different ethnic groups into the Ndebele state. This process proceeds right from Mzilikazi Khumalo's (the founder of the Ndebele) migration from Nguniland to his final settlement on the south-western part of the Zimbabwean plateau in the late 1830s. The article engages with the historical processes that continued to reproduce Ndebele particularism right across the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods.

Theoretical and interpretive framework

A leading anthropologist, John Comaroff (1997), provided five theoretical propositions relevant to understand issues of ethnic identities in general. His first proposition was that ethnicity was constructed by specific historical forces which are simultaneously structural and cultural. He posits that ethnicity was never a unitary phenomenon because it described both a set of relations and a mode of consciousness that was ever changing. As a form of consciousness, ethnicity was one among many socially constructed

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3　ZAPU recruited and mobilised its supporters mainly from Matabeleland since the time of the nationalist split of 1963 that gave birth to a Shona dominated ZANU that concentrated its recruitment in Mashonaland.

4　There is no clear definition of what *uMthwakazi* means. Some people think it is derived from *uMutwa*—a Ndebele name for the original inhabitants of Southern African known as the San. See Nyathi 1994, 1996 and 1999.

phenomena that included totemism, each of which emerged within particular historical structures. Comaroff's third proposition was that while totemism emerged with the establishment of symmetrical relations between structurally similar social groupings which may or may not come to be integrated into one political community, ethnicity had its origins in the asymmetric incorporation of structurally dissimilar groupings into a single political economy. The fourth proposition was that while ethnicity was the product of a specific historical process, it tended to take on the 'natural' appearance of an autonomous force and a 'principle' capable of determining the course of social life. The final proposition was that ethnicity as an objectified 'principle' of collective consciousness of society, could be perpetuated by factors quite different from those that caused its emergence and could also develop a direct and independent impact on the context in which it arose (Comaroff 1997:69-85).

These are useful propositions that point to ethnicity as a socio-political constructed phenomenon emphasising that the process of construction is mediated and shaped by specifiable historical factors. Comaroff (1997:83) concludes:

> The major problem, in both theoretical and empirical terms, it seems to me, is not to account for the genesis and persistence – or even the transformation – of ethnic consciousness and affiliation. Once ethnicity is understood to exist as a set of human relations, a product of specifiable historical forces and processes rather than a primordial 'given,' those issues become readily understandable.

This argument tallies with Leroy Vail (1989:xi) who stated that: 'If ethnic consciousness was a product of historical experience, then its creation and elaboration would be a proper subject of enquiry for historians.' With specific focus on the Ndebele, Bjorn Lindgren (2004:5-8) attempted to take into account what he termed 'historically formed specificity of ethnicity' and 'internal dynamics of ethnicity' in Matabeleland. He focused on clan names and castes in Matabeleland, arguing that Ndebele speakers use

various clan names, origins, and 'castes' in a practice of naming and that these internal processes and 'practices break the category Ndebele into parts' (Lindgren 2004:5). Lindgren's interests were on smaller units of analysis like izibongo (surnames/clan names) as another avenue towards a more complex understanding of Ndebele ethnicity (Lindgren 2004). Lindgren's intervention ended with him trying to deploy the ephemeral izibongo (clan names/surnames) that need explanation in themselves as a scientific concept that could explain Ndebele identity. Ndebele izibongo are a very complex phenomenon on their own and have a complex history of their own for one to simplistically deploy as a concept to understand identity. For instance, in Matabeleland the isibongo Ndlovu is not signifying a single clan group. There are Ndlovu (Gatsheni) who are Nguni, Ndlovu (Gabula) who are Kalanga, Ndlovu (Mthombeni) who are Nguni and other Ndlovus with various ethnic origins. So one cannot use and take isibongo Ndlovu to mean a single clan and then quickly assign ethnic origin to the concept (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2004). On top of this there were numerous people of Lozwi-Shona origin who used their own agency to translate their original Shona surnames into Ndlovu. The reality is that one finds numerous Ndlovus in Matabeleland and the Midlands regions sharing a common totem (elephant) but not tracing their descent from common clans or ethnic groups.

Totemic politics need explanation and cannot be deployed casually to enlighten debates on ethnicity in Matabeleland. Lindgren relied heavily on the works of white literate observers and early white writers who simplistically failed to go beyond the totem to the clan name in their definition of who was Ndebele and who was not (Hughes 1956; Child 1969). Ngwabi Bhebe, a historian, has shown that a number of people of Shona origin who were assimilated into the Ndebele state tended to Ndebele-lise their Shona surnames. Examples included Shiri becoming Tshili, Mhofu becoming Mpofu, Zhou becoming Ndlovu, Hungwe becoming Nyoni (Bhebhe 1979). Therefore, an approach to understanding Ndebele ethnicity based on izibongo rides roughshod over complex histories and complex processes of social engineering that took place in the Ndebele state. Lindgren ended up reviving the old fashioned idea of the

Ndebele nation being divided into castes. This is how he put it (Lindgren 2004:13):

> The isibongo places an individual within one of these categories of origin, and thereby within one of the three categories denoting 'caste': the Zansi, the Enhla and the Lozwi (or Holi).

The discourse of castes just like that of *izibongo* ignores historical factors and social fluidities within the Ndebele state. For instance, the term *Zansi* literally meant the South in geographic sense while *Enhla* literally means the North. It also denotes direction. But *Lozwi* is a form of ethnic identity of a branch of Shona people who belonged to the Rozvi state that dominated the south-western part of the Zimbabwean plateau prior to the arrival of the Ndebele. This means that at one level people in the Ndebele state were categorised according to where they came from with the *abeZansi* (those from the South) forming an aristocratic grouping, the *abeNhla* (those from the North) constituting a second layer of grouping, and those assimilated from the Rozvi state forming the *Holi* grouping.[5]

Terence Ranger (1994b:10) defined identity in Matabeleland at two levels. The first was what he termed the 'generous' and 'inclusive' and the second was what he described as the 'narrow' and xenophobic. The formation and consolidation of the Ndebele state was predicated on the generous and inclusive assimilationist policy where Ndebele language became a common signifier of identity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009). The Ndebele were active in defining and articulating their identity in positive terms of a strong nation. And their neighbouring Shona communities also engaged in defining the Ndebele as a tribe that only expanded through forcible assimilation of captured Shona people, the majority of whom were given Ndebele-oriented animal totems as surnames. What Ranger termed the narrow and xenophobic conception of Ndebele identity was also promoted by the Shona groups

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5   It is not yet well established by historians what the term *Holi/Hole* literally meant. Some argue that it was derived from *amaholingubo* (those with long dresses touching the ground), a reference to the style of clothes put on by the Rozvi.

for counter-hegemonic purposes. In this scheme of things, the Ndebele were reduced to Ngunis who were identifiable through such surnames as Khumalo, Mkwananzi, Gumede, Mafu, Gatsheni and Mathema.[6]

So far there are many versions of Ndebele identity that have mushroomed in recent years. The most narrow and ill-informed of them all is that one that reduces being Ndebele to being members of the Khumalo clan that constituted itself as the ruling elite under Mzilikazi and Lobengula Khumalo. This is a clannish definition that fails to take into account the complex processes of nation building evolved by Mzilikazi who continually added new groups into the lower echelons of the original Khumalo clan. The second version is one that defined Ndebele-ness linguistically – as comprising any one who spoke Ndebele language as a mother tongue. Then there is the regional-local definition that defines a Ndebele as any person residing in Matabeleland or the Midlands regions of Zimbabwe. This I will call the regional-geographic definition of being Ndebele. To those with a hegemonic Ndebele agenda, being a Ndebele means a conglomeration of all those people whose ancestors were assimilated into the Ndebele state, be they of Nguni, Sotho, Shona, Kalanga, Tonga, Tswana, Venda or Lozwi extraction. This historical-pluralistic-hegemonic definition of being Ndebele celebrates the Ndebele nation as a pre-colonial form of a rainbow nation. The most recent definition was concocted during the post-colonial era and in the midst of violence that engulfed Matabeleland and the Midlands regions of Zimbabwe in the period 1980-1987. During this period being Ndebele was limited to being loyal to Joshua Nkomo and PF-ZAPU, the former liberation movement that became an opposition after 1980 (Sibanda 2005). This political definition had the immediate impact of uniting all those who were brutalised by the Fifth Brigade, not only as a dissident community as ZANU-PF and Robert Mugabe defined them, but also as a victimised and unwanted community that had to look for a state of their own (Msindo 2004). This definition took the form of post-colonial re-tribalisation and provincialisation of Ndebele identity that was initiated by the state in the period 1980-1987. Its message was very simple: 'ZAPU is connected with dissidents and ZAPU is Ndebele

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6   This is an attempt to reduce Ndebele identity to barely a handful of clans.

therefore the Ndebele are dissidents' (Abrams 2006:60). As put by Enos Nkala, Nkomo was then the modern Ndebele king (BBC 1983).

Since 1980, the Ndebele identity continued to undergo a continuous process of minoritisation as Shona identity picked the agenda of hegemonic triumphalism. Finex Ndhlovu, a language specialist based in Australia, argued that the notion of ethnic minorities is a highly contested subject that cannot be fully explained in terms of demographic facts alone as it is indexically linked to struggles over socio-political power, cultural domination and control (Ndhlovu 2006:1). He explored how discursive practices underwriting the hegemony of dominating ethnic groups like the Shona, the use of languages as markers of ethnic and national identity, as well as the appropriation and abuse of the terminology such as 'minority' and 'majority' are deployed in Zimbabwe in pursuit of exclusionary political agendas (Ndhlovu 2006:1).

One can define the Ndebele as an ethnic group as well as a nation. But Stephen Barbour (2001:7) tried to differentiate an ethnic group from a nation in this way:

> Unlike a nation, an ethnic group need not occupy a territory. Also, unlike a nation, its 'common myths and historical memories' may be more plausible; since ethnic groups may be much smaller than modern nations…And, rather than a 'mass, public culture' uniting very disparate elements, there may be high level of shared cultural norms; and there is usually a shared language.

All these complex definitions cannot make sense outside a properly nuanced interrogation of specific historical processes that continued to enact, produce and reproduce Ndebele particularism.

Historical interpretation of the construction of Ndebele Identity

Ndebele particularistic ethnic identity has a pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial origin. Its origins are lodged within the complex nation-building project initiated by King Mzilikazi Khumalo and taken further by his son and successor King Lobengula Khumalo. The Rhodesia settler-colonial state was not an innocent bystander in this process and the Shona-dominated post-colonial Zimbabwean state also shared in this process.[7] What is not in doubt is that Ndebele identity is a product of complex constructivist processes that span pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial epochs.[8] A historically informed, careful and nuanced analysis of the evolution of Ndebele particularism should take into account such concrete historical factors as the *Mfecane* Revolution and Nguni-Sotho nation building strategies of the 1820s, as well as the role of colonialists and African nationalists in pushing the evolution of the country towards self-determination along bifurcated ethnic lines. Post-independence events like the connection of Shona triumphalism with *Gukurahundi* atrocities; the limits of the Unity Accord, the death of Joshua Nkomo and the current Zimbabwe crisis with its displacement of many people and the resultant formation of exile-based diasporic communities obsessed with identity politics need to be analysed and factored into the understanding of Ndebele identity politics.

It was the superior art of nation building displayed by Mzilikazi Khumalo that led the historian John D. Omer-Cooper (1966:8) to present the *Mfecane* as a positive process of political change and a 'revolution in Bantu Africa'. Despite the vigorous revisions of the *Mfecane* by Julian Cobbing in the 1980s and 1990s, and his attempt to 'jettison' the *Mfecane* from Southern African History, no one has disputed that this revolution was marked by creative statecraft that led to the emergence of such new political and social formations

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7   Terence Ranger, who previously emphasised the colonial 'inventedness' of Ndebele identity, later accepted the pre-colonial 'inventedness' of Ndebele identity in his *Voices from the Rocks: Nature, Culture and History in the Matopos Hills of Zimbabwe* (Ranger 1999:99ff).

8   See Ranger 1985, 1993 and 1994a.

such as the Ndebele in the highveld of South Africa (Cobbing 1988).[9] The process unfolded in terms of how a small Khumalo clan expanded into a nation and how a small Khumalo ruling elite managed to broadcast its power over people of different ethnic groups. Mzilikazi employed such strategies as raiding, conquest, assimilation and the incorporation of individuals, groups and communities. It included inculcating Ndebele values and language over people of different ethnic groups (Cobbing 1976). By the time of Ndebele permanent settlement on the south-western part of the Zimbabwean plateau after 1840, what had started as a small Khumalo clan had snowballed over time into a heterogeneous nation consisting of different groups. On how the Ndebele won a sizeable number of Sotho and Tswana communities into their nascent state, Margaret Kinsman argued that the presence of the Ndebele on the western highveld from 1826 to 1838 introduced a period of ambiguous peace rather than devastation. The Ndebele managed to push out the Griqua, Kora and other brigands that subsisted on raiding the Sotho and the Tswana. This atmosphere attracted some of these communities to join the Ndebele on their own volition.[10]

It was the Boer Trekkers, trekking from the Cape Colony in what became known as the Great Trek, who used firearms in their constant attacks on the Ndebele and eventually forced Mzilikazi to migrate to the Zimbabwean plateau (Pretorius & Kruger 1937; Tylden 1953). On reaching the Zimbabwean plateau, the process of nation building continued in the form of conquest, assimilation and incorporation of Lozwi, Kalanga, Birwa, Tonga, Nyubi, Venda, and Suthu inhabitants of the south-west. It was those people of the south-western part of the Zimbabwe plateau who constituted the third

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9   See also extended debates on the *Mfecane* in Hamilton 1995.

10   See Kinsman 1995, where details are given on how some Sotho and Tswana communities voluntarily joined the Ndebele and how some were attached and forcibly incorporated into the Ndebele state.

segment in the Ndebele state known as *abaLozwi* or *amaHole*.[11] Lindgren (2005) correctly noticed a basic feature of Ndebele ethnicity: that it was built on multiple origins that were ordered in a hierarchy of belonging. A Ndebele may be of Nguni, Sotho, Tswana, Khalanga, Venda, Tonga and/or Shona origin. Commenting on this arrangement and organisation of the Ndebele state, Sithole wrote, 'It would seem then, that the social system among the Ndebele was a 'porous' or 'flexible' rather than rigid caste system' (Sithole 1995:130). The uniting factor was the language known as *IsiNdebele.*

The best way to understand Ndebele ethnic identity is as a socially constructed phenomenon, not as a fixed primordial identity. It must be understood as the protean outcome of the continuous and generally conflict-ridden interaction of political, economic and cultural forces both external and internal to developing ethnic communities (Berman 1998:310). Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor and Terence Ranger in their book *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland* (Alexander et al 2000) captured how violence and its memory shaped the history and identity of the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe. They explored in detail how the interconnections of nationalism, ethnicity, religion, Ndebele resistance against colonial forces as well as the assaults on the Ndebele by the post-colonial forces contributed to the reinforcement of Ndebele identity. What has not been explored is the issue of how the Ndebele continued to promote their 'particularism' within the colonial state and even after the achievement of independence. This particularism refers to the rendition of a separate Ndebele history which is different from the Shona historical experiences, the attempts to revive Ndebele kingship, and the continual formation of Ndebele particularistic organisations up to the mass nationalism phase of Zimbabwean history.

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11 *AbaLozwi* were part of the Rozvi state ruled over by the *Mambos* (rulers). This Rozvi state was found by the Ndebele already tottering and breaking into smaller chieftaincies. As such the Rozvi people were not able to offer united resistance to the Ndebele invaders from the South. The Ndebele assumed that all the people of the South-west were under Rozvi rule before they came hence they labelled those assimilated into the Ndebele state on the Zimbabwean plateau *amaLozwi.*

Colonialism, nationalism and Ndebele particularism

The colonialists did not 'invent' Ndebele ethnic identity; they 'reconstructed' it for colonial purposes. By the time of colonial rule, the Ndebele state had existed as a centralised political reality in the south-western part of the Zimbabwean plateau with people who were conscious of being Ndebele and who spoke *IsiNdebele* as their national language (Cobbing 1976; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2004). The Ndebele existed as an independent nation up to 1893 when King Lobengula was violently removed from power by the British colonialists. While Mashonaland was occupied in 1890 by the Pioneer Column that culminated in the raising of the Union Jack Flag in Fort Salisbury in September 1890, the Ndebele state remained independent for the next four years. Colonial rule was extended from Mashonaland to the Ndebele state after the Anglo-Ndebele War of 1893 where the Ndebele forces tried to resist the invasion of their state by Cecil John Rhodes's imperialist forces (Glass 1968). This led the historian Arthur Keppel-Jones (1983:8-11) to argue that Mashonaland was 'occupied' and Matabeleland was 'conquered.' The heroic charge of the Ndebele against the colonial forces' encampments at the Shangani and Mbembesi Rivers was inscribed into Ndebele national memory. The disappearance of the king was also captured as a Ndebele national memory. A common Ndebele song regarding these events went like this:

> *Kudala kwakunganje*
> *Umhhlab' uyaphenduka*
> *Kwakubus' uMambo lo Mzilikazi.*
> *Sawela uTshangane,*
> *Saguqa ngamadolo*
> *Inkosi uLobengula yasinyamalala.*[12]

[The world is changing; things were not like this in the olden days.
The reigning kings were Mambo and Mzilikazi.
But when we fought at Tshangane River,

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12 This popular song is a summary of how the Ndebele perceived the conquest of their state and how their lives were changing. It is a song that clearly indicates the Ndebele awareness of changing circumstances and what it meant to their nationhood.

And we fell on our knees,
King Lobengula then disappeared.]

This song encapsulated how the Ndebele as a nation understood the impact of colonial rule and the changing circumstances brought about by colonialism, particularly the disappearance of black kings and their replacement by white rulers. Despite the disappearance of their king in 1893, the Ndebele were able to use their remaining institutions to rise against the colonising chartered British South Africa Company in March 1896.[13] All this indicates the resilience and cohesiveness of the Ndebele nation and its level of political consciousness together with their desire to restore their sovereignty (Cobbing 1977; Beech 1986; Ranger 1967). The surrender of the Ndebele in 1896 was facilitated through negotiations (Indaba) at Matopos Hills where Cecil John Rhodes made some promises to the Ndebele which included giving them seeds for farming and the return of some originally looted cattle to the Ndebele chiefs (Ranger 1999). This means that the Ndebele even emerged from the Uprising of 1896 as a cohesive nation. This lasted up until the time of the massive evictions of the Ndebele from areas around Bulawayo to far away areas, which opened the way for white commercial farming in the 1920s and after the Second World War (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2007).

Since the colonial conquest, the Ndebele have not given up the dream of re-establishing themselves as a nation with a new king as its head. Terence Ranger, in *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia*, provides details on how in the period 1898-1930 the Ndebele formed what he described as protest movements that were partly looking towards accommodation with the structures of the colonial states and partly campaigning for a separate homeland (Ranger 1970). The main voice fighting for a separate Ndebele homeland was Lobengula's son Nyamande Khumalo who played a leading role in the formation of the National Home Movement which was succeeded by the Matabele Home Society after his death (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2007:183-184). In recent years Ray S. Roberts has interrogated the history of

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13   The issue of the disappearance of the king is discussed in Lindgren 2002a. See also Lindgren 2002b.

Khumalo royal family focusing on the sons of King Lobengula, the roles they played in Ndebele protest movements during the colonial period and how the colonial state treated them. Though he tries to critique Ranger's concept of the 'African voice' by arguing that the story of Lobengula's other sons (with the exception of Nyamanda), particularly Nguboyenja Khumalo, was not of great importance politically, his articulation of Matabeleland politics in the light of Lobengula's family indicates how the Ndebele still aspired to be a nation, how they were conscious of their identity and how they still looked to the sons of Lobengula as leaders of the Ndebele nation (Roberts 1984; Roberts 2005). For instance, Rhodes Lobengula Khumalo, one of the sons of Lobengula, was active in the Matabele Home Society, introduced football and boxing as sports to Bulawayo and continued the fight to protect Ndebele interests (Roberts 2005:38). While the Ndebele associations, from the National Home Movement, the Matabele Home Society to the Mzilikazi Family Association, might have somewhat chequered histories, they indicated the level of consciousness of the Ndebele and their attempt to maintain a particularistic identity within the confines of the colonial state. Enocent Msindo analysed how Ndebele attacked the Shona working and residing in Bulawayo in 1929 as part of Ndebele claims to Bulawayo as their city even though it was now run by the colonial regime. Despite being colonised, the Ndebele still viewed Bulawayo as their city, deriving ammunition from its pre-colonial history as *isigodlo* (the capital city) of the Ndebele state. Msindo (2006:433) made this point clear when he wrote that:

> This fossilisation, in a settlement previously a Ndebele pre-colonial headquarters, of 'foreign' languages, different ethnicities and modes of behaviour, explains why it took a heavy and protracted struggle for the Ndebele and other inhabitants of Matabeleland to 'regain' Bulawayo.

Throughout the colonial period up to the time of the rise of the mass nationalist movements, the Ndebele had tried very hard to maintain a certain level of particularism. The colonial state reinforced this development of particularism by dividing the country into ethnic names like Matabeleland,

Mashonaland and Manicaland. Bruce J. Berman (1998:315) commented on this colonial development in this way:

> Each administrative unit ideally contained a single culturally and linguistically homogeneous 'tribe' in which people continued to live within the indigenous institutions and were subject to 'tribal discipline' through local structures of authority. The imperatives of control thus also constrained the transformation of African societies and indeed, made what the colonial state understood to be the local institutions of tribe and kinship into grassroots foundations of colonial domination, as well as a means by which it could derive a degree of legitimacy from association with 'traditional' social forces.[14]

Ndebele particularism continued to reverberate within the colonial state to the extent that the Matabele Home Society successfully lobbied and agitated for name-change of Rufaro Township into Njube Township (Roberts 2005). *Rufaro* was a Shona name for a township at the centre of Bulawayo. Njube was one of the sons of Lobengula. This change was owing to the urban work of the Matabele Home Society. Roberts concluded that 'the Home Society, the Mzilikazi Family Association, and indeed the Khumalo as traditional leaders outside the colonial order, played their part, holding the people of western Zimbabwe together, as a nation defined by culture rather than as nationalists defined by politics' (Roberts 2005:37).

Masipula Sithole, who studied Zimbabwean nationalism from the perspective of ethnicity, noted that at the formation of the first mass nationalist organisation, the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress (SRANC) in 1957, the Ndebele-Shona axis emerged, manifesting itself in the words exchanged at the founding congress as well as in the structure established to lead the party. Conscious effort was made to achieve ethnic or regional balance between the Ndebele and the Shona (Sithole 1995:132).[15] By 1963, a major ethnic rift hit the nationalist politics with the Zimbabwe African

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14   See also Ranger 1985.

15   See also Sithole 1999.

People's Union (ZAPU) splitting along ethnic lines into the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) that was Shona dominated and ZAPU that became Ndebele dominated (Nkomo 1984).[16] Since that time the history of ZAPU and ZANU have become a tale of ethnic politics and tribalism, bringing more division than unity to the Ndebele and the Shona.

The Zimbabwean nationalists carried the burden of trying to balance the ethnic factor in their respective political organisations in a bid to gain national support and in a bid to manage ethnic differences. Within ZANU the burden was how to balance and manage the equally volatile issue of intra-Shona ethnicities involving Karanga, Zezuru, Manyika and Korekore groups. ZAPU had to balance Ndebele-Kalanga-Shona composition and Muzorewa and Sithole were engaged in similar processes within their respective organisations. Chief Khayisa Ndiweni of Ntabazinduna in Matabeleland even went to the extent of forming the United National Federal Party (UNFP) that advocated for open power sharing 'between the two major communities in the country' (Sithole 1986:79-84).

The recent recurrences of Ndebele particularism

The first crisis that hit the post-colonial nation-building project had to do with ethnicity and integration of military forces. A crisis which began in the ranks of the military, involving open exchange of fire between the triumphant and Shona-dominant ZANLA and the Ndebele-dominated ZIPRA in Connemara (Gweru) and Entumbane (Bulawayo), which ignited a reign of state terror in Matabeleland and the Midlands region in the period 1980-1987. The reign of terror that became known as the *Gukurahundi* campaign was ostensibly meant to seek and destroy some ex-ZIPRA combatants who had defected from the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) to embark on a life of dissidence. But as noted by Bhebe the violence was somehow an inevitable consequence of the way nationalism had evolved and how the nationalist armies had been formed. This is how he puts it:

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16 Where Nkomo blames Leopold Takawira for fomenting the split on tribal lines.

It is not unreasonable for readers to ask how such close allies [as ZANU and ZAPU] could be involved in a civil war that saw many lives being lost in Matabeleland. On the other hand, to us such a question would only show that the reader has not read this book with attention. For the book has shown how factional conflict in Zimbabwe, or among Zimbabweans, is quite close to the surface. It does not matter whether people belong to the same party…The situation is worse when people belong to different political parties. The reader saw how ZAPU and ZANU followers started killing each other when they were dumped together at Mboroma by the Zambian authorities. The ZIPA experiment in Mozambique collapsed for just that same reason. In Libya, ZAPU and ZANU were put in the same training camps and they killed each other. The reason was very simple. These young men and women were trained to hate each other by their leaders, who wanted to justify the separate existence of their parties. Each party had its own Commissariat Department, whose task was to teach recruits the history of the party, how the party was different from each other, who the leaders were and how they were different from the less revolutionary or sell-out leaders of the rival party. Thus, the cadres were brought up to hate (Bhebe 2004a:256).

The post-colonial period was crucial in the process of furthering Ndebele particularism by the state's use of violence. The ethnically inspired clashes between ZIPRA and ZANLA in the Assembly Points, the running away of some ex-ZIPRA combatants back to the bush, the exploitation of the antagonistic situation by apartheid South Africa via Super ZAPU, and the 'discovery' of arms caches in PF-ZAPU owned farms around Bulawayo, gave the Shona-led government a pretext to use state power to crush PF-ZAPU once and for all, demonstrate to the Ndebele who was in power and widen ZANU-PF control into the south-western part of the country. According to Brian Eric Abrams (2006:24), ZANU-PF and the state 'developed a clear message, sharp media campaign and a multi-layered military response to achieve its highly focused political goals.' The violence was in reality an indication of how Ndebele particularism could not easily blend with a Shona

imagined nation and Shona triumphalism. This was indicated by the fact that while the policy of national reconciliation (uniting whites and blacks) endured until 2000, the national policy of unity (uniting blacks) collapsed in 1982 and was followed by ferocious civil war.

As clearly detailed in the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resources Foundation (LRF)'s Report, *Breaking the Silence: Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980-1989*, the military operation that was orchestrated through deployment of the Fifth Brigade (Gukurahundi) became a bizarre combination of random killing of every Ndebele-speaker, hunting and killing of every PF-ZAPU supporter, raping of Ndebele women and girls, as well as abduction, torture, politicisation and attempts at forcing every Ndebele-speaker to switch to the Shona language and then support ZANU-PF (CCJP & LRF 1997).[17] Bhebe (2004b:15) had this to say about the roots of this violence:

> Moreover, when people discuss our nationalist historiography they want to pour their worst venom on ZANU-PF and even forget the inevitability of our post-colonial civil war. Perhaps what was not inevitable were its excesses. But frankly, considering the way we had built our guerrilla armies, I again doubt whether a ZIPRA dominated army would have fought such a civil war in Mashonaland any different from the way ZANLA dominated Zimbabwe National Army fought the civil war in the Midlands and Matabeleland. I am aware of the destructive and brutal role of the Korean trained Gukurahundi, but are we certain that if we, as ZAPU, had won the elections, we would not have had our friends to train our own military units to destroy or tame former ZANLA forces. Rivalry between ZAPU and ZANU was simply too much and uncontrollable and only those who were on the periphery of our struggle deserve to misunderstand our post-colonial conflicts.

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17   See also Alexander 1998:151-182 and Yap 2001.

To some extent we accept the notion of the inevitability of a violent post-colonial civil war pitting the former liberation movements and their former armies against each other. But there is need to posit that the inevitability of violence was underwritten by incompatibilities of Ndebele and Shona particularities. The violence was in a way symptomatic of the failure of a smooth blending of major ethnicities into a new national identity called Zimbabwe. The net effect of this was that violence was the only invitation card by which the Ndebele were invited into a Shona-imagined nation. Matabeleland had to be conquered and forced into part of Zimbabwe. That was the essence of the violence of the 1980s. PF-ZAPU, ZIPRA and Joshua Nkomo only happened to be mistaken for symbols of Ndebele particularism. It is within this context that the impact of that violence has to be understood, particularly its role in the re-packaging of post-Gukurahundi politics in Matabeleland. The proclamation of *uMhlahlo we Sizwe sika Mthwakazi* has summarised the forms of oppression emanating from Shona triumphalism in this way:

a.   Marginalisation of the elected MPs of Matabeleland
b.   Instituting the reign of terror in Matabeleland
c.   Perpetrating ethnic cleansing against the people of Matabeleland
d.   Translocation of the economic resources of Matabeleland to Mashonaland
e.   Reserving key jobs for Shona people in Matabeleland
f.   Depriving the people of Matabeleland of education opportunities
g.   Retarding the cultural identity of the inter-cultural society of Matabeleland[18]

This list encapsulates the core reasons for Ndebele resentment of the post-colonial nation, as a Shona nation and post-colonial state serving Shona interests at the expense of Ndebele. The openly ethnic nature of the violence did not help matters as it made the Ndebele to be even more aware of their differences with the Shona. Lindgren (2005:158) noted that 'people in Matabeleland responded by accusing Mugabe, the government and the 'Shona' in general of killing the Ndebele'. Besides the Fifth Brigade atrocities instilling fear in Matabeleland and the Midlands, it heightened the victims'

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18   The proclamation of *uMhlahlo we Sizwe sika Mthwakazi.*

awareness of being Ndebele and a sense of not being part of Zimbabwe.[19] The Unity Accord that was signed between PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF on 22 December 1987 was nothing less than a surrender document where the PF-ZAPU politicians threw in the towel and allowed PF-ZAPU to be swallowed by ZANU-PF.[20] The bitterness and the memory of having lost family members, relatives and friends did not go away with the Unity Accord (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003).

Gukurahundi violence provoked radical Ndebele cultural nationalism as well as radical Ndebele politics that sometimes contested the whole idea of a unitary Zimbabwe state. This spirit manifested itself more openly in the formation of such radical Ndebele pressure groups as *Vukani Mahlabezulu, Imbovane Yamahlabezulu, ZAPU 2000,* as well as *Mthwakazi Action Group on Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in Matabeleland and Midlands* and *Mthwakazi People's Congress (MPC).*[21] The first organisation focused more on revival of particularistic features of Ndebele culture and its main proponent was a novelist and academic, Mthandazo Ndema Ngwenya, who lost his life in a car accident on the Bulawayo-Harare Road. The second one concentrated on the issue of making those who perpetrated atrocities in the 1980s accountable for their sins. Such political figures as Enos Nkala and others, like Joseph Msika, were invited to explain to the people as to who gave the instructions for atrocities that affected the Ndebele of Matabeleland and the Midlands regions. The third one was a belated attempt to revive ZAPU following the death of Joshua Nkomo in July 1999. Its focus was repudiation of the Unity Accord which was interpreted as a surrender document that did not benefit the ordinary people of Matabeleland who suffered the consequences of ethnic violence. It accused the former ZAPU elite of selling

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19 In 2002, I carried out in-depth oral interviews in Bulawayo and Gweru about the Ndebele perceptions of the military and the results indicated that to the Ndebele, the military is a Shona-manned institution organised to kill those who are not Shona.

20 For details on the Unity Accord see Chiwewe 1989.

21 These organisations came into being in the wake of the swallowing up of PF-ZAPU by ZANU-PF in 1987 and they tried to continue the work of such other earlier organisations as Ndebele National Movement, Matabele Home Society and Mzilikazi Family Association that were decentred by the rise of mass nationalism.

out the people of Matabeleland for personal interests. The last two were a Diaspora phenomenon and they seek the establishment of an autonomous United Mthwakazi Republic (UMR) as the only way for the Ndebele people to realise self-determination.[22] *Umhlahlo we Sizwe sika Mthwakazi* must be understood within this politics and it defines itself in these terms:

> *Umhlahlo we Sizwe sika Mthwakazi* is being proclaimed as a freedom front to eradicate the oppression and suppression of the people of Matabeleland along tribal lines. Umhlahlo shall not be a political party and has no programme of contesting elections because of the people of Matabeleland have no freedom to govern themselves. Instead *Umhlahlo* is a community umbrella of the Inter-Cultural Society of Matabeleland which is committed to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is non-violent community rooted umbrella of all the suppressed people regardless of partisan, ethnicity, creed, gender, class or age. Its membership is free to individuals, groups, institutions and associations who adhere to the principles of justice and humanitarianism.[23]

The processes of Matabeleland politics are complex. As represented by *Umhlahlo we Sizwe sika Mthwakazi* and other discreet groupings, the politics is both anti-colonial and anti-Shona domination. The young generation of political activists in Matabeleland are very sceptical of territorial nationalism as represented by ZANU-PF. The common perception is that ZANU-PF is a tribal party that survives on tribalism. This position was recently put forward by one regular columnist for *New Zimbabwe.com* (Mabhena 2006):

> ZANU-PF is a party that is founded on splitting Zimbabwe into tribal groupings, i.e. Shona and Ndebele, whereby Shonas must provide national leadership. ZANU-PF, usually referred to as 'The Party,' has always had in their leadership deck Shonas taking up key leadership

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22   The emergence of these organisations may also be interpreted within the broader perspective of the rise of civil society at the end of the Cold War.

23   The proclamation of *uMhlahlo we Sizwe sika Mthwakazi.*

positions with a lacing of Ndebele apologists making up the leadership elite numbers. The party had to enlist the services of Ndebele apologists to paint a picture of a government of national unity following the inconsequential 'Unity Accord' signed in December 1987. The Ndebele apologists were to behave like gagged guests at this party – 'make no key decisions and above all don't raise questions about the development of the other half of the country.

The Matabeleland problem continues to impinge on and to pulsate within national politics and its salience led Khanyisela Moyo (2006) to state: 'In my opinion, the Matabele question is critical and cannot be cursorily thrust aside. It should be subjected to an intellectual and candid debate'. Currently, the embers of the Matabeleland problem are burning more in the Diaspora than in Zimbabwe due to the Zimbabwe crisis that unfolded in 1997 sending millions of people into the Diaspora. The dimensions of the Matabeleland problem in the Diaspora have included Ndebele-speakers linking up via the internet and continuation of the project of fighting for recognition of Ndebele particularism. Already there exists an imagined autonomous United Mthwakazi Republic (UMR), complete with its own national flag and other ritualistic trappings of a state, if not a nation-state as a virtual community on the internet. A separate history is claimed together with appropriation of Joshua Nkomo, ZAPU and ZIPRA as the property and heritage of the Ndebele. What is at play is serious contestation of Shona triumphalism and hegemony. Mthwakazi proponents have openly declared that:

> For our part, for our present generation, this Zimbabwe, and any attempts to maintain it in any guise in future as a state that includes uMthwakazi, is as false as it is silly. It is only part of the grand illusion of the whole Zimbabwe project created in 1980…What we have is their Zimbabwe, of Shonas, and a fledging state for uMthwakazi which we have called UMR. (Mthwakazi 2006)

These radical separatist politics co-exists with an equally strong drive by some politicians from Matabeleland and the Midlands regions to close ranks

with such political organisations as the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), to fight for what they term a 'New Zimbabwe'. These politicians still believe in the power of territorial nationalism and they define the problem as an issue of governance rather than ethnicity. Added to this constituency are the old guard ZAPU nationalists who have continued their membership in ZANU-PF despite being pushed to peripheral positions within the party and the government. All this indicates the depth of the complexities of Matabeleland politics and the lack of consensus within the region on the best way forward.

Conclusion

What is beyond doubt is that what I have termed Ndebele particularism is a complex phenomenon that cannot be ignored in the imaginations of a post-crisis Zimbabwe. It is at the root of the problem of how two nations (Shona and Ndebele) with different pre-colonial histories and memories can be invited into one centralised state that masquerades as a state adhering to the Shona worldview. Ndebele particularism does not fit easily into this imagined nation and the state where Ndebele experiences, histories and heroes are subordinated to triumphant and hegemonic Shona history, if not completely ignored. The way the post-colonial state was abused by ZANU-PF in its drive to violently destroy Ndebele particularism set in motion the current Matabeleland politics of alienation, resentment and grievance that are combining to fuel the desire for a restoration of the pre-colonial Ndebele state. There is pervasive fear in Matabeleland that without a state of their own the Ndebele remain in danger of a repetition of *Gukurahundi*. The Ndebele people have come to realise that states are used as vehicles to suppress unwanted communities and hence their drive for their own state that will cater for their own national interests.

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Religious Networks in Post-conflict Democratic Republic of the Congo: A Prognosis

Ayo Whetho & Ufo Okeke Uzodike *

Abstract

The role of religion and religious networks in public life is gaining increasing attention in contemporary social science discourses against the backdrop of ascendant religiosity in many non-Western societies. In Africa, the reality of ascendant religiosity is exemplified by the phenomenal growth in the membership of the two leading religions – Christianity and Islam – and the increase in the number of other syncretic sects. Within this context, religious networks have emerged as important actors in civil society and as powerful forces for social mobilisation, albeit for both constructive and destructive ends. With reference to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), religious groups wield enormous influence in the public space as providers of social services in a polity that has been characterised by years of misrule, declining state capacity and protracted conflict. The conflict in the DRC has deepened the imperative for constructive engagement by faith-based groups

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in the public domain, especially in facilitating the peacebuilding process. Against this background, this paper examines the roles of religious networks in the DRC's public sphere in the post-conflict epoch and prognosticates the future of the country.

Introduction

> Those who neglect religion in their analyses of contemporary affairs do so at great peril (Berger 1999:18).

Berger's assertion is underscored by the realisation of the increasing socio-political role of religion in human affairs, or as Rubin (1994:20) puts it, its 'profound political influence in public life'.[1] In fact, religion features prominently in public life in relation to many social phenomena. For example, Wilson (1982:34) aptly notes that religion often serves to legitimise the purposes and procedures of society; sustain men in their struggle; justify wars; provide explanations for misfortunes; function as a platform for dispute resolution; and prescribe techniques with which people could undertake daily tasks or once-in-a-lifetime enterprises. Paradoxically, religion (and its role in society) has been a subject of intense debate over the years. For much of the twentieth century though, religion was ignored or marginalised in the analyses of social, economic, and political phenomena. This was due largely to the dominance of non-eschatological paradigms, which were influenced primarily by the Age of Enlightenment as well as the writings of philosophers. Haynes (1993:6) notes that 'the analysis of political behaviour for the greatest part of the twentieth century was dominated by the modernisation and political development paradigm, dependency/ underdevelopment, neo-Marxist and other radical perspectives'. Religion

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1   It is instructive to note from the outset that religion plays different, contradictory roles in public life. In some instances, religion has been a force for bad, as exemplified by the culpability of religious actors in a number of conflicts around the world and the legitimation of violence through religious rhetoric. On the other hand, there is ample evidence, which suggests that religion also serves as a resource for peace. This is illustrated by the positive role of faith-based organisations in social service delivery and facilitating peacebuilding. That religion functions as a force for both good and bad depicts the socially ambivalent character of religion in public life.

was considered as purely tenacious and atavistic. At best, religion was ignored; at worst, it was regarded as 'an opium' (*à la* Marx) and completely denounced.

The promise held forth by the dominant theories of liberalism, modernisation, and Marxism, spawned the prediction of the decline or demise of religion. Cox (1965:1) and Wallace (1966:264) had predicted that religion was to disappear and become consigned to history. In other words, the decline (and the possible extinction) of religion, in view of the inception of modernity, was expected. According to Rubin (1994:21), it was anticipated – in the West during the 18th, 19th and (early part of the) 20th centuries – that 'modern ideas, such as science, technology, secularism, and humanism, would overcome the religious concepts that dominated premodern society'. Lubbe (2002:237) notes that this expectation was informed by the conviction that 'modernity goes hand in hand with a decline in religion'. The advent of the Cold War reinforced the fervour concerning the atrophy of religion as ideologies such as capitalism, socialism/communism, imperialism, and nationalism gained ascendance in the analyses of issues. Again, religion was viewed as 'irrational and premodern' (Weigel 1991:27; Reychler 1997). In the defunct Communist bloc, religion was officially stigmatised and repressed. In the West, it was regarded as a remnant of tradition. Religion was simply depicted as 'epiphenomena' (Haynes, 1993:6). The tendentious treatment of religion in both academic circles and in the public domain promoted secularisation. The futuristic resurgence of religion was not anticipated. However, in deference to Crawford's (2002:204) opinion that religion has a way of revitalising itself, the resurgence of religion (in the form of intensifying religiosity) has been witnessed in Africa and Eastern Europe, thereby stultifying the central propositions (associated predictions) of Marxism, modernisation, and development paradigms vis-à-vis its future.

The 'crisis of modernity', according to Lubbe (2002:240), is one of the three factors that account for the renaissance of religion. The inability of modernity (and secular philosophies) to furnish convincing explanations regarding the origin and destiny of human life has made religion attractive. Hence, Rubin (1994:23) submits that 'the secret of the influence of religion

in contemporary politics is that the modernization process, rather than causing religion to weaken and disappear, often makes its public role stronger and a more necessary part of the process of state-building or revolutionary transformation'. Furthermore, the contradictions of globalisation (such as the mass movement of refugees and economic immigrants across national boundaries, and the weakening of state boundaries) have resulted in the loss of identity and national self-confidence in many societies. The search for identity has led many to religion. In addition, 'political uncertainty and financial risks' associated with the globalised environment induce volatility and instability that necessitate considerable adjustment. Within this milieu, religion is seen as a stabilising factor since it 'provides humanity with a sense of direction and destiny' (Lubbe 2002:240).

The above submissions find practical expression in many societies in the Third World, particularly in Africa, such that 'the political importance of religion reverberates with special strength in these societies' (Rubin 1994:22). For example, the Commission for Africa (CFA) (2005:120) notes the astounding increase in religiosity in Africa, which is underpinned by certain causalities. The CFA argues that nationalism in Africa is exhausted and that its place has been overtaken by religion. Bunting (2005) adds that 'politicians and state structures have lost almost all credibility or legitimacy'. Consequently, religion has emerged as a strong socio-political factor in galvanising people such that it cannot – and should not – be ignored in the analyses of contemporary issues – in Africa and elsewhere. Indeed, religion is assuming greater importance in many countries irrespective of their level of economic development (Thomas 2000:817). Given this context therefore, it is apposite to examine the underlying dynamics of intensifying religiosity currently underway in Africa. One of such dynamics is the increasing importance of religion in the public domain (especially in countries that have a weak state apparatus) such that faith-based actors are often co-opted into crucial local and national decision-making structures and processes in that they are a key constituency in civil society. In this paper, we use the DRC to illustrate this fact. But first, it is appropriate to highlight briefly religious

affiliation in the DRC with a view to depicting the influence of faith-based networks in the country.

DRC: Religious Demography

In Africa, nowhere is the strategic importance of the religious constituency more apparent than in the DRC, where faith-based networks wield enormous influence over large sections of the national population. The country's religious demography attests to this: the DRC has a huge Christian population (put at 80%), predominantly Roman Catholic. Approximately 50% of the DRC's population is Roman Catholic, 20% is Protestant, 10% is Kimbanguist, 10% is Muslim while the remaining 10% comprises other religious organisations, syncretic sects and traditional religions.[2] It is stated elsewhere that 16.5% of the population is Kimbanguist and that Islam 'counts only a small number of adherents in DR Congo, perhaps 1% of the population and principally clustered in a few cities'.[3] This is significantly divergent from the 10% estimation given above, thus confirming the existence of conflicting figures on religious affiliation in the DRC. In fact, what comes across in the comparison of figures on religious affiliation is the imprecision of statistics as a majority of Congolese, for instance, are not identified exclusively with any one religious group. Basically, DR Congo's religious configuration exhibits overlapping affiliations, which make exclusive categorisations difficult. In addition, religious identity in DR Congo (as with class and ethnic identities) is often situational and based on pragmatism.[4]

Figures provided by the *World Christian Encyclopedia* regarding religious affiliation in the DRC prove useful in another regard: they indicate the annual growth rate of each religious group, thus enabling inferences as to the extent of religiosity as well as the attendant influence of religious

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2   Although there are conflicting statistics as to religious networks' membership profile in the DRC, these figures have gained wide acceptance in official circles. See About.com. n.d. (a); Answers.com. n.d. and United States Department of State 2004.

3   See About.com. n.d. (b).

4   See About.com. n.d. (b).

networks in the country. This source indicates that Christians make up over 90% of the country's population. And the powerful influence of the Catholic Church can be deduced from the figures pertaining to the years 1990-2000 in which its members numbered more than half of the Christian population. Table 1 depicts DR Congo's religious demography:

Table 1:

Religious adherents in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1990-2025

Religious cluster	Mid-1990 Adherents (%)	Mid-1995 Adherents (%)	Mid-2000 Adherents (%)	Mid-2025 (projected) Adherents (%)	Percentage annual change (1999-2000)
Christians *including* Roman	35,392,480 (94.7)	43,289,860 (95.3)	49,255,901 (95.4)	100,935,700 (96.3)	3.36
Catholics	18,750,000 (50.2)	23,000,950 (50.6)	26,300,000 (50.9)	55,000,000 (52.5)	3.44
Protestants	7,780,000 (20.8)	9,328,718 (20.5)	10,485,000 (20.3)	18,862,000 (18.0)	3.03
Muslims	435,000 (1.2)	500,000 (1.1)	568,656 (1.1)	900,000 (0.9)	2.72
Country's population	37,363,000	45,421,244	51,654,000	104,788,000	

Source: Barrett, Kurian & Johnson (2001:211).

It can be seen from Table 1 that Christianity grew at 3.36 percent annually in the DR Congo whilst the annual growth rate for the Catholic Church

is put at 3.44 percent.[5] With its extensive membership and the associated influence, the Catholic Church has been described as a 'proto-state' (Callaghy 1984:176). And during the conflict epoch, the Commission for Africa (2005:120) described the Catholic Church as the only reasonable coherent organisation in the country, which functioned as a post office in the absence of a national postal service. Other religious organisations such as the *Église du Christ au Congo* (ECC) – Church of Christ in the Congo – and the Kimbanguist Church also wield tremendous influence in the DRC as a result of their significant memberships, immense resources, and strong external ties. It can be argued that the influence these networks have on the generality of the Congolese may rival (or even surpass) that of the state in view of the enduring state incapacitation arising from years of misrule and protracted conflict. Haynes (1993:116) argues that these religious networks are autonomous structures beyond the state's control and that they provide development goods, which the state has been unable or unwilling to supply to the Congolese. Against this backdrop, it is clear that religious networks are important and powerful actors in DR Congo's public sphere. Their importance as key actors in DR Congo's civil society is also beyond doubt if their roles as social service providers are considered.

It is apposite to mention that religious networks have also facilitated the initiatives that led to the formal cessation of hostilities in the DRC. In particular, the Catholic Church joined forces with other civil society actors to garner support for the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) which was convened at Sun City, South Africa in April 2003. It was at the ICD that the various belligerents in the DRC conflict signed a cease-fire agreement, which culminated in the formation of a transitional government. It is instructive to note that the Catholic Church sponsored a number of delegates to the ICD,

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5   The *World Christian Encyclopedia* presents what is arguably the most comprehensive information on religious affiliation on country-by-country basis. Hence, it is possible to provide a sketch of religious affiliation in the DRC on the basis of these figures that are widely accepted. However, we hasten to add that a Christian bias is not unlikely in this encyclopedic presentation as population figures do have political and strategic implications in many countries.

thus underlining its key role in the peace process.[6] This is one of the several peacebuilding initiatives undertaken by DR Congo's religious networks in the period leading to the formal declaration of the end to the country's conflict.[7] That said, faith-based actors in the DRC have had to play other crucial roles in the post-conflict epoch. This paper now examines these roles and prognosticates the future of the Congolese state, taking into cognisance the centrality of religious actors to the process of resuscitating the state.

Supporting the democratic transition: religious networks in post-conflict DRC

> …for many years, the Church has had to take the role of the state… [and the performance of that role represents] a moral obligation.[8]

Historically, religious networks had been engaged in public service delivery prior to the eruption of conflict in the DRC. And the onset of war did make religious groups' constructive intervention in public life absolutely imperative. Further, the formal declaration regarding the end of hostilities (or the end of the transition process) did not obviate the need for faith-based social action as the Congolese government is still struggling to establish state authority across the country as at the time of writing this paper (and probably in the foreseeable future). Government's control over Congolese territory has been hampered and continues to be hindered by the military operations and atrocities on the part of the Mayi-Mayi and other militias (notably the group led by 'renegade' General Laurent Nkunda) in the eastern part of DR Congo. However, in recent times, the Kabila administration and MONUC[9] have been making efforts to deal with the security situation in

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6   Interview with a Congolese journalist, Kinshasa, 22 Nov 2005.

7   We have examined the salient contributions of the major religious actors to the DRC's peace process elsewhere. For details, see Whetho & Uzodike, forthcoming (b).

8   Iyananio Molingi of the Diocese of Kasongo, Manirema Province, quoted in IRIN 2006a.

9   MONUC is the French acronym for the United Nations peacekeeping force in the DRC: *Mission des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo* i.e. United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

the east. Overall, all the provinces of the DRC were made (relatively) safe for the general elections that were held in August 2006 (the first round) and in October 2006 (the second round). Given the relative peace (or the cessation of pervasive hostilities) in DR Congo and the successful conclusion of the elections, the focus of peacebuilding initiatives by religious networks and other civil society organisations shifted (expectedly) to (medium- to long-term) initiatives aimed not only at promoting reconciliation and fostering national unity but also creating the ambience conducive for the reconstruction and resuscitation of state institutions.

The first half of 2006 was marked by an increased national awareness campaign intended to sensitise voters about the 2006 elections. Against the backdrop of an obvious realisation of the powerful influence of religious groups, the *Commission Électorale Indépendante* (CEI – or the Independent Electoral Commission) co-opted faith-based organisations into its preparations for the elections. The CEI equally carried along other non-religious civil society actors in the implementation of its mandate. While launching its voter education campaign in April 2006, the CEI distributed sensitisation materials and presented its operational plan for civic action and electoral education to civil society actors including DR Congo's religious organisations. The CEI's operational plan underscored 'the participation of multiple actors in the campaign, including the media, non-state actors, civil society organisations, such as *churches*, syndicates and other traditional leaders' (Wisniewska/MONUC 2006) in the political process [emphasis added]. Specifically, the CEI trained religious leaders and other civil society actors as part of its capacity-building efforts, which enabled them to promote awareness about the elections.

At another level, the United Nations also held consultations with non-state actors with a view to promoting their participation in the electoral process. For instance, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the Under-Secretary General for UN Peacekeeping Operations, visited the DR Congo in March 2006 to consolidate the collaboration between the UN and other stakeholders in the political process. Alwira/MONUC (2006) reported: 'Mr. Guéhenno met Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo, Chairman of the Episcopal Conference in

the DR Congo to promote civil society involvement in the [2006 general] elections'. On that occasion, Archbishop Monsengwo 'told the media that civil society networks would do all they [could] to discourage and appease those trying to create tension in the democratic process in the DRC' (Alwira/ MONUC 2006). Archbishop Monsengwo's statement lends credence to the capacity of DR Congo's religious groups, as well as other civil society groups, to promote a culture of peace and to mobilise citizens towards massive participation in constructive national processes.

Accordingly, religious groups in DR Congo's post-conflict epoch intensified peace education and electoral sensitisation campaigns within their constituencies and in local communities at large. This initiative was undertaken against the realisation that a peaceful and stable DRC – in essence, the country's future – would be determined by the successful conduct of the 2006 general elections and, more importantly, the people's acceptance of the outcomes.[10] Therefore, the task before religious groups in the aftermath of the elections was to foster reconciliation (first between aggrieved politicians) and to intensify peace advocacy in communities where the recourse to violence was likely due to discontent with the outcomes from the democratic transition process.

However, the success of the elections and post-transition peace was threatened by factors as the resistance to disarmament and demobilisation and, more significantly, the threat of violence by some supporters of defeated presidential candidate, Jean-Pierre Bemba.[11] The significance of these factors brings the implications of the elections to the fore. Although elections *per se* do not automatically translate to stability, the successful conclusion of the DRC elections – described as 'the most significant in Africa

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10   Interview with JDK, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, 30 Apr 2006.

11   The results of the second round of the presidential elections, as announced by the CEI on November 15, 2006, showed that Joseph Kabila, the incumbent president, won 58.05 percent of the vote and Jean-Pierre Bemba, the main opposition leader, 41.95 percent. However, Bemba's camp immediately denounced the results, alleging vote rigging by Kabila, thereby heightening fears of possible post-election violence. See British Broadcasting Corporation 2006b.

since Nelson Mandela was elected as South Africa's president in 1994'[12] – offered Congolese a window of opportunity to build sustainable peace. The elections held the potential to help establish the framework for a legitimate government in which case the (elected) leaders could count on the people's support for reconstruction and rebuilding efforts in the post-transition period. With the benefit of hindsight, the general election was perceived as one that could create the ambience for stability, which the DRC needed (and still needs) in order to put itself on the path to sustainable development. The success of the elections was also crucial for central Africa: a peaceful DRC was (and is) *sine qua non* for a stable regional neighbourhood. Indeed, a peaceful DRC stood the chance of becoming an economic powerhouse in central Africa and this should give impetus to the process of regional integration and development.

As noted above, harnessing the (potential) positive gains of a successful democratic transition depended on the acceptability of the election results by losers (and their supporters). The fact that some Congolese were disinclined towards a Kabila victory (and consequently, a Kabila presidency) which they viewed as a recipe for chaos, raised serious concerns as to the stability of the DRC.[13] Given their massive support across the country,[14] notable political figures opposed to Kabila (Jean-Pierre Bemba and Etienne Tshisekedi being the prominent ones) were seen as key to the success or failure of the transition. It was feared that their supporters might seek to undermine the authority of the government unless these political leaders demonstrated a strong commitment to do otherwise. It was suspected that the DRC might lapse into crisis or slide back into the throes of another war if the frustration arising from electoral defeat was not satisfactorily addressed. In other words, many feared that the contestations of the post-transition

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12 See British Broadcasting Corporation 2006b.

13 A cross section of Congolese society has consistently questioned Joseph Kabila's nationality. This group of people has repeatedly alleged that Kabila is not Congolese, that he is a puppet of the international community (read, the West) and that his election to DR Congo's presidency would further divide the country and exacerbate the country's crisis. See British Broadcasting Corporation 2006a.

14 Interview with JDK, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, 30 Apr 2006.

epoch might become new sources of tensions that could undermine the success of the elections and consequently threaten the relative but fragile peace and stability that the country enjoyed after the elections. Abbe Paulin Kalala, a Roman Catholic Church priest in Mbuji Mayi, argued poignantly that it was 'possible and even probable that after the elections there [would] be conflict and even war, unless we [entered] into the process of negotiation [to deal with the issues in contention]' (IRIN 2006b). It was also 'feared that the… warlords [might] go back to fighting [in which case the] failure [of the elections would] be so catastrophic, [with the possibility that] the country [might] be divided up like Yugoslavia…' (IRIN 2006b).

In view of the foregoing, religious leaders have had to play a role in 'healing the wounds' of the democratic transition. For instance, faith-based actors were instrumental to reconciling both Kabila and Jean-Pierre Bemba after the latter rejected the election results. Specifically, Catholic bishops brought pressure to bear on both leaders as it urged them to seek a peaceful solution to the electoral crisis by accepting and supporting the mediation process led by the United Nations.[15]

The intervention by religious groups in order to defuse tensions before and after the presidential elections provides a pointer to their continued future engagement and importance in the maintenance of peace in the DRC. In this regard, religious actors' intervention in the crisis in the east becomes imperative. Since the completion of the elections and the inauguration of the new government, DR Congo's religious groups have been emphasising the need for the political class to act responsibly and to put the country first, rather than to allow parochial interests to scuttle the relative peace in the country.[16] This was not unprecedented, since the Roman Catholic Church had stressed – through its Pastoral Letters – the absolute necessity for politicians to build bridges of understanding as the democratic transition neared its terminal stages.[17]

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15   Interview with a Congolese priest, JCA, Durban, South Africa, 5 Dec 2006.

16   Interview with SB, Kinshasa 12 Jun 2007.

17   Interview with a university professor, Lubumbashi, 14 May 2006.

Apart from the preceding, it is worth noting that Laurent Monsengwo – the Archbishop of Kisangani, the president of the *Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo* (CENCO) [the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo] and head of the Roman Catholic Church in the DR Congo – a key political mediator in the country since the time of the late president Mobutu Sese Seko – envisioned a greater role for religious groups in promoting sustainable peace and facilitating the collaborative approach towards handling political differences between politicians in the post-transition epoch. For example, the Roman Catholic Church, in collaboration with other faith-based networks and civil society actors, gave support to the convocation of consultative forums for the reconciliation of political differences and for consensus building which, of course, is germane to creating the conditions necessary for long-term stability and economic prosperity in the DRC.[18] In the light of the foregoing, Congolese can look forward to increasing civil society engagement (including religious networks' involvement) in DR Congo's public sphere with a view to building on the potential gains of a successful (at least so far and barring a recourse to war) democratic transition. But in view of the crisis in eastern DR Congo, one may conclude reasonably that the prospect for peace in the DRC is either sound or parlous, depending on the commitment of political actors and continuous support from the international community towards addressing the root causes of instability in the country. In fact, it is impossible to conceive of an entirely localised framework for resolving the DRC's problems; the support of the international community is central to the success of the peacebuilding initiatives by governmental and civil society actors.

A case for sustained external support: the international community and the DRC's future

On the basis of the above, it is worth noting that the international community has been deeply involved and supportive of efforts by the people of the DRC to build peace. Apart from the peacekeeping role of the

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18   Interview with a Congolese, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, 6 Nov 2006.

United Nations, regional and global actors were also instrumental in giving impetus to the democratic transition. Suffice it to say that the international community's engagement has taken cognisance of the need to collaborate with DR Congo's civil society actors. The United Nations Security Council's 'whirlwind working tour' of the DRC in mid-June 2006 is a case in point. In an apparent recognition of the role of faith-based networks in the (post-conflict) democratic transition process, the UN Security Council delegation's itinerary included 'a meeting with the heads of the various religious organisations in the DRC' which have been recognised as one of the 'many important actors in the Congolese election process' (Young/MONUC 2006). Such engagement by the international community, one which lends critical support to local initiatives, assumes greater significance in view of the massive challenges facing the Congolese state in terms not only of sustaining peace after the elections, but also in regard to reconstruction and the re-assertion of state authority over the entire DR Congo territory. In fact, it would be illogical for the international community to disengage now that the authority of the new government is being constrained by the crisis in the east.

Against this backdrop, the international community has an all-important role to play in building sustainable peace in the DRC. The main role of the international community in the short-, medium- and long-term periods should be to lend critical support to initiatives by the Congolese people to foster reconciliation, rebuild infrastructure and resuscitate state institutions. The United Nations in particular, through MONUC, will have to sustain the process of demobilisation of (ex-)combatants and militias, especially in eastern DRC. The people of DR Congo require sustained, active and even greater engagement by international actors on the long road to recovery and stability. The Congolese government will need the assistance of the international community in resolving the crisis of governance, reviving the health and education systems and creating conditions necessary for investment and for economic growth. It is in these areas that the specialised agencies of the UN will have to play vital roles. In the long term, the international community (in collaboration with local actors) will have to

assist the Congolese to nurture a culture of (unwavering commitment to) peace. Within this context, one can envision sustained commitment on the part of all actors, including the United Nations and indeed, religious networks, to the peacebuilding process in the DRC.

By and large, DR Congo's religious groups in the post-conflict period have focused on supporting the democratic transition through civic education and advocating responsibility by the political class. The import of their role in the post-conflict epoch had been the nurturing of an environment within which a successful transition could be conducted. This role was underscored by the realisation that the recently concluded elections were crucial to the future stability of the Congolese state. The successful conduct of the elections and the resolution of the post-election crisis engendered optimism regarding a peaceful, stable, and prosperous post-transition chapter in the DRC's history. However, this optimism is being dampened by the instability in the eastern part of the country. Now that the Congolese government is gradually finding its feet, this paper – given its objective – next addresses these questions: What should be the role(s) of DR Congo's faith-based networks in the post-transition epoch and in the not too distant future? Would the cessation of conflict, the successful conduct of elections and the subsequent inauguration of a democratically elected government (buoyed by the people's mandate) obviate the involvement of religious networks in DR Congo's social and political space? The next section ruminates on the roles of religious actors in the post-transition epoch and concludes thereafter with recommendations that should inform not only faith-based peacebuilding but also the involvement of religious actors in the process of state reconstruction. These recommendations draw from the empirical findings (of field research) on religiously motivated peacebuilding in the DRC.

Religious networks and the future of DR Congo

An accurate prognostication about the future of a phenomenon in the social sciences is very difficult. Expressed differently, it is tricky to predict

with absolute certainty what future trends or situations will be. This *problématique* arises, *inter alia*, from the complexities of social science phenomena, the limitation of human episteme and the fact that events do not necessarily follow linear or unidimensional logic. This prognostic complexity notwithstanding, the predictive facet of social science research remains an important element in empirical scholarly inquiry. As a matter of fact, it is the element of prognostication that often provides the background or justification for further research as it provokes 'new' thinking or the 'other' view, which may lead to the substantiation, or revision, or invalidation of theories, for instance.[19] However, it is fitting to add that the 'fear' of being confuted has not been and should not be too strong to deter scholars from embarking on prognostic analysis of social science phenomena. Here too, this paper undertakes a futuristic analysis, but of the roles of faith-based actors in the DRC. Suffice it to note that prognostication is often based on the objective interpretation of, and deductions or inferences from, past and current realities. In other words, past and present scenarios tend to define the future, and scholars often draw from these scenarios when making predictions, albeit with due recourse to the *ceteris paribus* caveat. In line with this 'tradition', this section forecasts the expected roles of religious networks in the post-transition period in the DRC.

The analysis in this section derives from the incontrovertible conception that state deflation or state collapse incapacitates the institutions of governance. Typically, a post-conflict environment creates the necessary imperative to reconstitute the state or rebuild its institutions as the case may be. And the advent of a new administration in the aftermath of a successful post-conflict transition process is more often than not accompanied by multifarious challenges, which the new regime may not be (adequately) equipped to surmount. A new regime may be faced with the tasks of establishing and/ or consolidating its authority, reforming the security sector, building or reconstructing infrastructure, engendering national reconciliation, and

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19 Take for example, Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' prognostic thesis (as it then was), which subsequently engendered a robust scholarly engagement vis-à-vis the main factors that would precipitate conflict in the post-Cold War international system.

seeking to ensure the provision of basic social services. The enormity of these challenges may even overwhelm the new regime to such an extent that this state of affairs gives civil society actors comparative advantage in the public sphere. Posner (2004:239-240) posits that state collapse (or deflation) undergirds civil society's role in governance in which case non-state actors provide public goods and substitute for a state that cannot yet fully function. In the case of the DRC, the inauguration of Kabila's government has not obviated religious actors' engagement in the delivery of 'public goods'. In fact, insufficient state capacity and government's preoccupation with the insurrection in the east will underpin the continued provision of social services by religious networks, which represent the foremost constituency in DR Congo's civil society.

In conjunction with other non-state actors, faith-based organisations will, for the foreseeable future, play pivotal roles in the public sphere. There is little doubt that the Kabila administration is constrained by challenges to its authority. Within this context, for instance, the reluctance or, more significantly, the resistance to demobilisation and disarmament by some militias, especially in the eastern part of the DRC, presents immediate and future challenges for security sector reform and for DR Congo's long-term stability. It can be reasonably forecast that the Kabila government will continue to be heavily burdened vis-à-vis the containment of violence and the maintenance of security. Civil society actors or (as the case may be) the most powerful non-state actors such as religious networks will then have to continue to perform certain public functions that otherwise should be the preserve of the government.

As the government tries to consolidate its authority and build security (in the eastern part of the DRC in particular), faith-based organisations will continue to find themselves, perhaps, as the only actors that are capable of

delivering 'public goods.'[20] In fact, DR Congo's religious networks have a rich reservoir of history and experience to tap from as far as the performance of social and political roles is concerned. Back in 2006, it was noted that faith-based actors would be involved in the rehabilitation of public infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, and schools in DR Congo's post-transition period. [21] In addition, the churches, in collaboration with both local and international non-governmental and governmental organisations will have to support an ambitious programme to rehabilitate former combatants (those who have been demobilised or disarmed) in order to prevent their recourse to violence. This role lends credence to the conflict transformational role of religious actors. More than that, the performance of the aforementioned functions by religious and non-religious civil society actors compensates for insufficient state capacity.

Another pointer to the anticipated continued performance of pivotal roles by DR Congo's religious groups in the post-transition period came in March 2006 during the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's visit to the country. While in Kinshasa, Annan held talks with a number of stakeholders in the DRC's peace and transition processes, including religious leaders. On that occasion, Laurent Monsengwo, the President of the country's Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Archbishop of Kisangani, presented a request to the UN to the effect that an International Criminal Court (ICC) be set up for the DRC to try perpetrators of war crimes not just for the sake of retributive justice but also to ensure that compensation is paid to victims, 'individual families and the Catholic archdiocese alike'.[22] Having made the request for a tribunal for DR Congo, it is anticipated that the country's religious groups will play a prominent role in the processes that would culminate in the prosecution of perpetrators of war crimes and crimes

20   It is however necessary to point out that the extent to which religious networks (and other civil society actors) can function in this regard would depend partly on the level of security or stability in the DRC. There is no gainsaying the fact that non-state actors cannot function effectively where the necessary prerequisites of stability and security are lacking in the polity (Posner 2004: 247).

21   Interview with Pastor JPM, Kinshasa, 30 Mar 2006.

22   See Allafrica.com. n.d.

against humanity.[23] One can foresee a role for DRC's religious groups in the process of accounting for the past and forging reconciliation. This brings us to another hoped-for pivotal engagement by DR Congo's religious actors in the post-transition period: serving as catalysts for national reconciliation.

Faith-based actors in the DRC would have to deepen their engagement in the process of national reconciliation. Ex-fighters and even politicians (especially those who might feel aggrieved by the outcome of the last transition process) still need to be reconciled. It is especially important for religious leaders to galvanise public interest in the national reconciliation process. Besides, faith-based actors need to hold consultations with other civil society actors in order to establish the modalities for a post-transition countrywide process of reconciling aggrieved parties. Hence, it is anticipated that in the foreseeable future, religious groups will sustain the national reconciliation process either as its custodians (primarily driving the process) or as facilitators (supporting the government's reconciliation efforts).

There is no doubt that the conflict in the DRC has had a concomitant deleterious effect on not only physical infrastructure but also the country's human resources. So many Congolese, including the country's 'best brains', are outside the borders of the DRC. The new regime will sorely need the best human resources possible in order to deliver 'public goods' and promote sustainable development. Even when some Congolese abroad do return home, the core of the country's public service will consist of those who had remained in the DRC. The Kabila administration will have to work through a civil service that is heavily disoriented, de-motivated and emasculated by autocracy and corruption – some of the infamous legacies of 'Mobutuism'. This poses a serious challenge to the government, and if the new administration were to surmount this hurdle, considerable reform in

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23 The ICC has assumed jurisdiction for the crimes perpetrated in the DRC conflict and has issued warrants of arrest in certain cases, the most notable being those for Thomas Lubanga (former leader of the Union of Congolese Patriots militia in Ituri) and Germain Katanga (former leader of the Patriotic Resistance Force in Ituri). Lubanga and Katanga are on trial at the court.

public service – in terms of orientation and efficient service delivery – will be needed.

It can be safely prognosticated that the success of the regime, say with regard to good governance and social service delivery, will depend to a large extent on individual and institutional capacity building. Here again, civil society, which embraces DRC's religious networks, will play a role in building the capacities of public servants towards promoting good governance and effective social service delivery. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, has demonstrated its ability to lend support to capacity building for good governance in many African countries through its Justice, Development and Peace Commissions. In the DRC, Roman Catholic Church leaders are not oblivious of the need to do the same in the post-transition epoch.[24] Its extensive international connections give the Roman Catholic Church considerable leverage to implement capacity-building programmes for political leaders and public servants. The Church could collaborate with both local and international (non-)governmental organisations for the sake of bringing this idea to fruition. Given religious groups' antecedents, therefore, one can expect to see the Roman Catholic Church – just one of the faith-based actors in the DRC – embark on political conscientisation and activism in some way similar to its advocacy in the Mobutu era. Such engagement, it should be noted, would be geared towards ensuring good governance on the part of the new government that derives its mandate from the people.

Against the backdrop of the pivotal place of religious networks in the DRC and their strategic leverage as agents of social mobilisation, it can be said that they are important stakeholders in the project of charting the DRC's future. Although DR Congo's religious groups do not, *stricto sensu*, measure up to groups that have the means to precipitate violence on a massive scale or the means to subdue it (such as militias, the national army, MONUC), the country's faith-based organisations hold the allegiance of the generality of Congolese given the number of their adherents. Hence, religious networks have the capacity – no matter how minuscule – to either promote stability

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24 Interview with Reverend Father FGM, Katanga, 18 Nov 2005.

or subvert the peace process and, ultimately, jeopardise the country's future depending on what they 'feed' their members with. Given the socially ambivalent roles that religion plays in public life, religious groups can mobilise their members for both constructive and destructive ends. Therefore, the end to which DR Congo's faith-based organisations mobilise their members will impinge on the country's future. Should religious networks continue with their constructive roles in the post-transition period, they would be contributing to the building of a sustainable climate of peace which, in turn, would guarantee a stable and secure future for the DRC. Suffice it to add that a successful African renaissance agenda needs a DRC that is at peace with itself and its neighbours.

Religious groups have made immense positive contributions to the conflict transformation process and it is inconceivable that they would turn around in the future to undermine their own efforts at building sustainable peace by mobilising their members or deploying their resources for destructive ends. That would be most illogical. In fact, it is only their sustained preoccupation with building sustainable peace that can guarantee their continued existence which, in turn, promotes the realisation of their own objective to 'save souls'. Having said that, this paper next concludes with logical inferences from our field research findings vis-à-vis religious networks' role in the DRC's peace process.

Concluding remarks

The performance of such roles as facilitating peacebuilding and providing social services by religious actors typifies the constructive element inherent in religion. However, this paper equally acknowledges that religion could be a contrivance for destructiveness, especially when it is used to legitimise or justify violence. Recourse to empiricism in establishing the opposite ends that religion potentially serves illustrates the ambivalence of religion. Hence, it does not come as a surprise that the role of religion in public life is still a contested terrain within the academic community. That said, most scholarly analyses of the nexus between religion and politics present an overarching

bias, which essentially 'demonises' religion by conceiving it, fundamentally, as a 'hue in the human mosaic' (Jordan & Rowntree 1990:190) that triggers and exacerbates conflict. The potential and actual (established) constructive roles of religion in conflict situations, more often than not, are marginalised or ignored in scholarly analyses. But the reality of the positive roles of faith-based actors in the peacebuilding processes (including more significantly when and where state actors are not trusted) underscores the need to rethink the role of religion in public life, if only to give expression to its ambivalence. This paper gives cogent representation to the 'other' side of religion that has long been ignored in conflict discourse – the constructive roles of religion as a viaduct for sustainable peace in societies torn apart by the spectre of violence.

In its exploration of the peacebuilding role of religious actors in the DRC, this paper predicates the performance of positive social, economic and political functions by faith-based groups on the notion of *liberation theology*. Although having eschatological foundations, liberation theology is essentially a social construct that underscores positive collective action towards alleviating pain and suffering. For DR Congo's religious networks, inaction in the face of untold suffering (caused by war) was not only unthinkable but also a sin against the Supreme Being. This paper posits that the involvement of the DRC's faith-based organisations in the public domain (either as agents of development in the pre-war and post-war years or as facilitators of the peacebuilding process during the conflict period) speaks to the intent and spirit of liberation theology. Another underlying causality in the involvement of DR Congo's religious actors in the conflict transformation process is that faith-based networks in the DRC have comparative advantages in the performance of functions that otherwise should constitute the government's core mandate. In a country where state bureaucracy has almost always existed only in name (except for Kinshasa, perhaps), the majority of Congolese have had to rely on non-state actors in the area of provision of social and other crucial life-support services. The onset of conflict in the DRC, this paper contends, deepened the imperative for religiously motivated social action for peace and development. In fact,

it is apt to recall here that even war-weary Congolese citizens craved for the involvement of faith-based actors in the peacebuilding process.[25]

The peacebuilding initiatives undertaken by DR Congo's religious networks can be suitably situated within the context of *conflict transformation*. Rather than conducting a manipulative search for an agreement that is acceptable to the warring parties or one that merely satisfies the interests of the parties to the conflict, DRC's religious networks have undertaken roles intended to generate the cumulative effect of shifting the attitudes of parties, transforming structures as well as relationships for durable peace and harmonious coexistence. The country's faith-based actors have been seeking to transform not only the parties' perceptions but also the environment within which the DRC conflict has occurred. Conflict transformation speaks to a long-term commitment to peace. The deconstruction of structures and attitudes that engender violence and the nurturing of 'new' attitudes and modes of organisation, interaction and social cohesion, which promote sustainable peace, exemplify such commitment. Therefore, it is only logical that the involvement of DR Congo's religious networks in the country's public sphere has taken on added significance in the post-conflict period. Since the conclusion of the ICD, religious groups' initiatives have been directed more at the nurturing of a climate that is conducive to sustainable peace. One reality that illustrates the foregoing is their efforts at facilitating the country's democratic transition, promoting national reconciliation and undertaking infrastructural reconstruction. It is this paper's submission that the performance of such roles with the goal of enduring social transformation in mind, and the increasing attention to it in scholarly discourse, should engender a holistic paradigmatic approach to analysing the role of religion in public life.

It is apposite to state at this juncture that the saliency of religious networks' positive roles in the DRC's conflict transformation process is underscored by state deflation/collapse (or what may be referred to as declining statecraft). In fact, the scenario in the DRC exemplifies the increasing socio-political

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25   Many of our interviewees stressed this point during field research.

role of religion within the context of declining statecraft in Africa's conflict zones. It is indisputable that faith-based actors have made (and are making) significant contributions to the peacebuilding and development processes in the DRC. And local and international reactions to religious networks' roles in the public domain have been overwhelmingly positive, albeit a few respondents are cynical of religiously motivated peacebuilding.[26] Granted, an objective assessment of faith-based actors' involvement in peacebuilding indicates that religious organisations have given momentous impetus to the peace and development processes in the DRC. However, it is noted that some religious institutions target only their members in terms of provision of humanitarian assistance in which case such intervention inadvertently alienates those who profess other faiths – thus deepening divisions in society. Suffice it to add that those who have been marginalised in this regard have been 'compensated' by non-religious civil society actors (whose assistance to war-weary Congolese has not been defined by such factors as creed or religious affiliation), thereby mitigating the frustration and aggression that might have resulted from religiously motivated parochial or partisan assistance.

As a corollary of the foregoing, this paper acknowledges that a number of non-religious civil society actors as well as international donor or humanitarian and governmental agencies have made vital contributions to the process of building peace in the DRC. In some way, the preceding speaks to the complementarity of the peacebuilding efforts by DR Congo's religious networks and local or international non-religious civil society actors. However, this paper has focused primarily on the roles of faith-based actors in the DRC's conflict transformation process and the ramifications of their involvement for the DRC's future. In tackling its essential concern as described above, the paper recognises that faith-based peacebuilding in the DRC has not been without its drawbacks and, therefore, concludes with recommendations that should underpin religiously motivated efforts at building sustainable peace in societies torn apart by conflict.

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26   For a comprehensive account of the diverse reactions to the involvement of faith-based actors in the DRC conflict, see Whetho & Uzodike, forthcoming (a).

The first recommendation is derived from a significant drawback in faith-based peacebuilding. As noted above, some of DR Congo's religious networks have embarked on peacebuilding initiatives that can be described as partisan in that their programmes do not address the needs of the wider society but those of their members only. The implication of this is the alienation of those excluded in the communities in which case the actions of religious networks, albeit potentially, inadvertently engender divisions and ultimately conflict. In such instance, faith-based actors might contribute to the intensification of factors that precipitate conflict rather than create the conditions for unity or social cohesion and peace. Having said that, one has to acknowledge that religious organisations have a primary obligation to undertake programmes that target their followers at particular times. But given the inadvertent consequences of partisan faith-based social engagement, this paper recommends that religious networks focus on high profile projects that show them as having the capacity and interest to look beyond denominations and religion. For a certainty, the implementation of high profile non-partisan conflict transformation initiatives by DR Congo's religious networks will contribute to fostering reconciliation and social cohesion.

Research findings suggest that many of DR Congo's religious actors, especially religious leaders, have been implementing peacebuilding initiatives in their personal capacities. Besides, their performance of peacebuilding functions has been predicated on the 'social mission' drawn from religious convictions rather than on professionally enabled or enhanced personal capacities. In other words, religious groups and actors do not always possess the professionalism required in conflict transformation processes. Hence, there is the need to build the capacities of DRC's religious actors to complement the theological underpinnings of faith-based conflict transformation work. In so doing, faith-based actors can anticipate the replication of successes attained by other (professionally) trained civil society actors involved in peacebuilding.

A corollary of the foregoing is the need to separate religiously motivated social action (in this case peacebuilding) from a purely religious mission such as proselytising. Some Congolese are critical of faith-based organisations'

involvement in public life as churches often provide social services in order to induce conversion. In fact, some respondents during field research were unreservedly cynical of (the motivations for) faith-based peacebuilding. Although the underlying basis for faith-based social action is religious (as it derives from liberation theology), the goal of such involvement should not be to promote the conversion of persons but rather to complement the efforts of local and international (non-)governmental agencies in alleviating the effects of political instability.

Research findings indicate that DR Congo's religious groups have broadened their peacebuilding initiatives to embrace several processes in the conflict transformation spectrum. For instance, it is not uncommon to find that a faith-based organisation is involved in several processes (such as peace advocacy; humanitarian or relief services; negotiation, mediation or reconciliation; demobilisation or reintegration of ex-combatants; and reconstruction) at the same time. In such instances, their efforts are dispersed and do not yield homogeneous results. Therefore, it is necessary that religious groups identify areas of comparative advantage and competence in the peacebuilding spectrum. This will make for thorough involvement and deeper engagement in which case the benefits of intervention can be harnessed and enjoyed more fully. For now though, it can be safely prognosticated that religious networks will be more inclined towards making decisive positive contributions to the social, economic and political development of the DRC.

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The Coherence Dilemma in Peacebuilding and Post-Conflict Reconstruction Systems

Cedric de Coning *

Abstract

This article analyses the coherence and coordination dilemma in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction systems, with special reference to the United Nations' integrated approach concept. It argues that all peacebuilding agents are interdependent in that they cannot individually achieve the goal of the overall peacebuilding system. Pursuing coherence helps to manage the interdependencies that bind the peacebuilding system together, and coordination is the means through which individual peacebuilding agents can ensure that they are coherent with the overall strategic framework. The article is focused on two areas where the lack of coherence provides the most promise for improving peacebuilding coherence. The first is the need to generate a clearly articulated overall

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peacebuilding strategy. The second is the need to operationalise the principle of local ownership. The article argues that without meaningfully addressing these shortcomings peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction systems will continue to suffer from poor rates of sustainability.

Introduction

It is estimated that approximately a quarter of all peace agreements fail in the first five-years after they have been signed (Collier 2003).[1] There are many reasons why some peace processes are not sustainable.[2] Some relate to the role of spoilers (Stedman 1997; Newman & Richmond 2006; Gueli, Liebenberg & Van Huyssteen 2005:11) and the dynamics of post-conflict settlements (Du Toit 2003:105; Du Toit 2001) whilst others are associated with shortcomings in the support provided by the international community (Stedman, Cousens & Rothchild 2002; Chesterman 2004; Fukuyama 2004; Paris 2004). This paper is focused on one of the aspects that contributes to the lack of sustainability in the latter context, namely the coherence dilemma that continues to cause stress to international peacebuilding systems.

Despite a growing awareness that the security, development, political, human rights, humanitarian and rule of law dimensions of peacebuilding systems are interlinked, the agencies[3] that implement programmes in these dimensions are finding it extremely difficult to meaningfully integrate them. The goal of this paper is to analyse the coherence and coordination dilemma in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction systems, with

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1   The approximately 50% figure sited generally has been demonstrated by Suhrke and Samset (2007) to be a misrepresentation, with a more correct finding of Collier (2003) being approximately 23%.

2   For a quantitative analysis of the factors that have influenced the outcome of peacebuilding operations since 1944, see Doyle & Sambanis 2000.

3   In this paper 'agents', and 'agencies' in the plural, are used as a collective term for all peacebuilding actors, i.e. those that execute programmes or otherwise undertake activities with the intent to engage in peacebuilding action, as defined in this paper. This includes international military forces, peace operations, development and humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and UN agencies, departments, funds and programmes, operational donor agencies, and states engaged in bilateral peacebuilding actions.

the objective of generating meaningful findings and recommendations with regard to (a) improving coherence and coordination within and across state and civil agencies engaged in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction systems, and (b) initiating, encouraging and supporting initiatives that will improve coherence and coordination in the international, including especially the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) peacebuilding systems.

The paper is presented in two parts. The first defines and analyses peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction in the context of the coherence and coordination deficit. The second identifies two key priority areas where improved coherence and coordination are likely to have the most meaningful impact.

Peacebuilding and Post-Conflict Reconstruction

In the post-Cold War era, the focus of international conflict management has increasingly shifted from peacekeeping, which was about maintaining the status quo, to peacebuilding, which has to do with managing change (Eide 2004). The nexus between development, peace and security has become the central focus of the international conflict management debate (Uvin 2002:5), and peacebuilding is increasingly seen as the collective framework under which these peace, security, humanitarian, rule of law, human rights and development dimensions can be brought together under one common strategy at country level.[4] These developments culminated, as the centrepiece of the UN reform proposals of the 2005 World Summit, in the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission. In Africa, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) adopted a Post-Conflict Reconstruction Framework in 2005 and the AU adopted a Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy in 2006.

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4   See, for instance, Secretary-General of the United Nations 2005 (*In Larger Freedom…*) and Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on System-wide Coherence 2006 (*Delivering as One*).

For the purposes of this paper a complex peacebuilding or post-conflict reconstruction system is defined as a post-conflict[5] intervention[6] that provides for parallel, concurrent and interlinked short-, medium- and long-term activities[7] that work to prevent disputes from escalating, or avoid a relapse into violent conflict by addressing both the immediate consequences and the root causes of a conflict system. The peacebuilding or post-conflict intervention starts when a cease-fire agreement or peace agreement, which calls upon the international community to support the peace process, is implemented. It typically progresses through three stages, namely a stabilisation phase, a transitional phase, and a consolidation phase.[8] The peacebuilding intervention ends when the host society has developed the capacity to manage and sustain its own peace process without external support.

A complex peacebuilding or post-conflict reconstruction system requires a wide range of internal[9] and external[10] actors, including governments, civil society, the private sector and international agencies, to work together in a coherent and coordinated effort. These peacebuilding or post-conflict

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5   The UN distinguishes between preventative peacebuilding and post-conflict peacebuilding. This paper is focused on post-conflict peacebuilding.

6   Intervention in this context is not meant to imply the use of force, but is rather used in the broad sense of taking action aimed at bringing about change.

7   'Activities' are used throughout this article as an umbrella term for policies, programmes and projects and all other related actions taken by peacebuilding agents to pursue their respective objectives. It is defined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as action taken or work performed through which inputs, such as funds, technical assistance and other types of resources are mobilised to produce specific outputs. See OECD 2002.

8   There are a number of different interpretations of these phases, but most convey the same essential progression. See, for instance, AUSA & CSIS 2002, in which three stages are identified, namely: the initial response, transformation and fostering sustainability. For a more detailed explanation of the three stages referred to here, namely stabilisation, transitional and consolidation, see De Coning 2007.

9   Internal actors are all local actors in the country or conflict system where peacebuilding activities take place.

10   External actors are all international actors engaged in undertaking peacebuilding activities in a given country or conflict system.

reconstruction agents undertake a broad range of activities that span the security, political, development, human rights, humanitarian and rule of law dimensions.[11] Collectively and cumulatively, these activities address both the causes and consequences of the conflict system, and builds momentum over time that facilitates the transformation of the system and increases its resilience to deal with potential outbreaks of violent conflict and its ability to sustain peace. In the short term the goal of peacebuilding or post-conflict reconstruction interventions is to assist the internal actors with consolidating the peace process and preventing a relapse into conflict, but its ultimate aim is to support them in transforming the causes of the conflict and laying the foundations for social justice and sustainable peace and development.[12]

Coherence and Coordination

The need for, and benefits of, improved coherence are widely accepted today in the international multilateral governance context. There is now broad consensus that inconsistent policies and fragmented programmes entail a higher risk of duplication, inefficient spending, a lower quality of service,

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11 There is broad consensus on these dimensions. See, for instance, the African Union's Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Framework (African Union 2006) that comprises six constitutive elements, including gender as a self-standing element. The UN Secretary-General's Note on Integrated Missions (2006) lists seven dimensions, namely: political, development, humanitarian, human rights, rule of law, social and security. Note that humanitarian assistance is included as one of the peacebuilding dimensions in the UN Integrated Mission concept. The Utstein Report (Smith 2003) and NEPAD's Post-Conflict Reconstruction Policy Framework for Africa (NEPAD 2005) include humanitarian assistance as part of the socio-economic development category. Many in the humanitarian community argue that humanitarian assistance falls outside the scope of peacebuilding, and should not be included in any such peacebuilding categorisation. See, for instance, Weir (2006). The humanitarian dimension is included as one of the peacebuilding dimensions throughout this paper as per the UN concept, with due regard for the principle of the independence of humanitarian action, as recognised in paragraph 10 of the Secretary-General's Note on Integrated Missions.

12 This definition was initially developed by the author and Senzo Ngubane in De Coning and Ngubane 2004, and was further elaborated by the author in De Coning 2005. For a thorough overview and discussion of peacebuilding definitions, see Barnett et al 2007:35-58.

difficulty in meeting goals and, ultimately, a reduced capacity for delivery.[13] There is, however, a considerable gap between the degree to which the benefits of coherence are held to be of self-evident and operational reality. The lack of coherence among field activities in the humanitarian relief, development, political and security spheres have been well documented in a number of evaluation reports and studies,[14] and is acknowledged in a number of recent UN reports.[15]

For example, the Joint *Utstein* Study of peacebuilding, that analysed 336 peacebuilding projects implemented by Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Norway in the 1990s, has identified a lack of coherence at the strategic level, what it terms a 'strategic deficit', as the most significant obstacle to sustainable peacebuilding (Smith 2003:16). The *Utstein* study found that more than 55% of the programmes it evaluated did not show any link to a larger country strategy. The evaluation studies cited have consistently found that the peacebuilding interventions undertaken to date have lacked coherence, and that this has undermined their sustainability and ability to achieve their strategic objectives.

It is possible to distinguish between four elements of coherence[16] in the peacebuilding context, namely: (1) agency coherence, i.e. consistency[17] among the policies and actions of an individual agency, including the

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13 See Policy Coherence: Vital for Global Development 2003.

14 Amongst others: Dahrendorf 2003; Porter 2002; Sommers 2000; Stockton 2002; Donini 2002; Reindorp & Wiles 2001 and Duffield et al 1998.

15 See footnotes 4 and 13.

16 See Picciotto 2005:13-14, where he identifies (1) internal coherence, (2) whole of government coherence, (3) donor coherence and (4) country-level coherence.

17 Consistency in this context is not necessarily ethical, i.e. doing like under like circumstances with respect to any one rule or norm, i.e., avoiding double standards; instead it refers to one agency, government, or system not working at cross-purposes with itself in a more general sense. This does not imply that there is no room for differences and debate during the policy formulation and review process, but once a policy or intervention has been agreed on it needs to be implemented in such a way that all the different elements of the agency, government or system contribute to the overall objective in a complementary fashion. I am grateful to Ramesh Thakur (The Centre for International Governance Innovation) for pointing out this difference (e-mail correspondence, 15 May 2007).

internal consistency of a specific policy or programme; (2) whole-of-government coherence, i.e. consistency among the policies and actions of the different government agencies of a country;[18] (3) external coherence, i.e. consistency among the policies pursued by the various external actors in a given country context (harmonisation[19]); and (4) internal/external coherence, i.e. consistency between the policies of the internal and external actors in a given country context (alignment[20]). The degree to which a specific peacebuilding system can be assessed to be more, or less, coherent will be a factor of all four elements of coherence.

In this paper 'coherence' is understood as the effort to direct the wide range of activities undertaken in the political, development, human rights, humanitarian, rule of law and security dimensions of a peacebuilding system towards common strategic objectives.[21] It is important to recognise, however, that the dynamic and non-linear nature of complex systems means that coherence can never be fully attained (Cilliers 2002). It is possible, however, to distinguish between systems where there is less, or more, coherence, and coherence is thus about degree during a process, not about an end-state. Coherence also needs to be understood in the context of the natural tensions, and therefore trade-offs, between the four elements of coherence. In the real world, peacebuilding agents, more often than not,

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18 Note for instance the Canadian approach aimed at combining Diplomacy, Defence & Development, the so-called '3D' approach.

19 Note the 'Rome Declaration on Harmonization' of 25 February 2003. See <www.aidharmonization.org>, accessed on 12 May 2007.

20 Note in this context the 'Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness' of 2 March 2005. See <www.oecd.org>, accessed on 12 May 2007.

21 For alternative definitions, see, for instance, Policy Coherence: Vital for Global Development (2003) that defines policy coherence as '…the systematic promotion of mutually reinforcing policy actions across government departments and agencies creating synergies towards achieving the agreed objectives'.

have to settle for 'second best' or 'partially coherent' solutions in order to establish a workable foundation for cooperation.[22]

A number of potentially negative effects of pursuing coherence has been identified. First, in some cases short-term political and security considerations may override longer-term development considerations and this may undermine the very socio-economic rehabilitation on which sustainable peacebuilding depends. Second, undue pressure on internal actors may materialise when external actors form a coherent block on certain issues. Third, the neutrality, impartiality and independence of humanitarian action may be negatively affected when integrated with political and security activities.[23] Whilst these three examples can be said to be examples of poor coherence trade-offs, rather than inherently negative effects of pursuing coherence per se, the more important point is that pursuing coherence can generate unintended consequences. When evaluating the impact of coherence, one should consider with care the balance that has been struck among the four elements of coherence, the transaction cost in terms of the time and resources invested in coordination, as well as any unintended consequences that may have come about in the process (Aoi et al 2007).

If 'coherence' is the aim, then 'coordination' is the activity through which coherence is pursued. Whilst coordination seems to be the most obvious and logical of pursuits, especially in the highly dynamic and fragmented complex emergency context, empirical evidence suggests that it is, in reality, a highly

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22 I am grateful to Robert Picciotto (King's College) for adding the notion of trade-offs between the four coherence vectors. He argues that it is important to stress that coherence only leads to unintended and poor results if the trade-offs among its four dimensions are badly struck. When this is acknowledged, alternative coherence solutions become possible, and this may allow for gradual repositioning of imperfect or partial coherence. For instance, the capacity building of local actors may allow gradual upgrading of domestic institutions so that they exercise their voice option with greater vigour and improve the alignment of internal and external goals (e-mail correspondence, 14 May 2007).

23 See CDA (Committee for Development Assistance) Collaborative Learning Project 2006:24. This report was prepared for the OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation and the Network on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation (CPDC), as part of an ongoing initiative to develop the 'OECD/DAC Draft Guidance for the Evaluation of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities'.

controversial and dysfunctional activity. Barnes reports, in the context of her experiences in Mozambique, that the meaning of coordination often varied depending on which of the stakeholders employed it at a given moment, and that the various stakeholders competed to place their agencies at the forefront of the process to enhance their own legitimacy and subsequent fundraising capacities (Barnes 1998). Uvin provides a useful list of reasons why effective coordination appears to be so elusive: 'The lack of co-ordination is partly due to widely recognized factors: the multitude of actors, often numbering in the hundreds; the high cost in time and money that effective co-ordination entails; the need for donors to satisfy their own constituencies and serve their national interests; competition for influence and visibility between donors; and the general unwillingness of actors to limit their margin for maneuver by the discipline of coordination' (Uvin 1999:29). Donini (2002) argues that the effective provision of assistance requires that duplication, waste and competition among agencies be avoided, but he cautions that the objectives and organisational cultures of the development, humanitarian and peacekeeping communities are essentially irreconcilable within a single centralised structure. Paris (2004) cautions that coordination can create a sense of 'false-coherence' where fundamental tensions and differences are glossed over for the sake of operational expediency, only to re-surface and undermine cooperation at the critical moments when cohesion is most needed.

From these and many other reports it is clear that coordination is not a 'good' in and of itself. There is a limit to the added value of coordination. The time and resources devoted to coordination necessarily increase the administrative costs of delivering assistance.[24] There is a point at which the cost benefit ratio will become negative, and coordination activities should thus be proportional to the overall effort. At the same time, it is clear that no one is advocating that there should be no coordination. In fact, to the contrary, and as Peter Uvin (1999:18) points out: 'all documents on peace-building stress the need for improved co-ordination: there is no single

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24 See Stockton (2002) and the argument he makes that coordination is in effect a levy on the scarce resources allocated to beneficiaries.

need more emphasized'. There seems to be a tension between the need for improved coordination on the one hand, and the potential limiting effects coordination may have on the ability of individual agents to exercise control over their own programming and allocation of resources.

Coordination can entail developing strategies, determining objectives, planning, sharing information, dividing roles and responsibilities, and mobilising resources (Minear & Chellia 1992:3). It should be recognised, however, that not all the agents in the system need to be engaged in all coordination activities. And those that are, do not need to be engaged at the same level of intensity. There will typically be a core network that is well connected, an intermediate group that is regularly connected, and a periphery that is infrequently connected, if at all. The development of an overall strategic framework would, for instance, usually take place among a relatively limited network at the outset, but it could then be refined through various participatory and consultative processes that could inform and shape the overall direction of the system, and serve to build a wider base of ownership and accountability. Whilst there should be coordination between the humanitarian and the peace and security dimensions of a peacebuilding system, the level and intensity of this link do not have to be of the same quality as that of the link between the other dimensions of the system. It is thus possible to accommodate a range of appropriate levels of coordination within one larger system.

Thus, whilst coherence and coordination are interlinked, one should not assume a linear or causal relationship, as the one does not necessarily lead to the other. Each needs to be independently considered in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the inter-linkages between the two.

The Logic of Coherence

A peacebuilding or post-conflict reconstruction system consists of a large number of independent agents that collectively carry out a broad range of activities across the dimensions of the system. These agents are independent in that they are each legally constituted in their own right, have their own

organisational goals and objectives, have their own access to resources, and are in control of those resources, i.e. they have the power to make decisions about the allocation of those resources. Some of these agents are linked together in networks or sub-systems. The humanitarian community can be recognised as a distinct network within the larger peacebuilding system, in that they have broadly similar aims, operate on the same principles, and consciously try to work together in a networked pattern at country-level through the humanitarian coordinator system, cluster approach and joint resource mobilisation. Another example is the various members of the UN family that, at country-level, form a unique sub-system in that they have a common identity, they employ various mechanisms to pursue a common objective, and they actively strive to be seen to be acting as one System, with the slogan 'delivering as one'.[25] However, each UN agency within the UN system, even when it is organised at country-level into a 'UN System', remains a separate and independent agency with the ability to control its own resources.

A distinguishing feature of a peacebuilding or post-conflict reconstruction system, however, is that all the agents and their activities are interdependent, in that no single agency, network or sub-system can achieve the ultimate goal of the peacebuilding system – addressing the root causes of the conflict and laying the foundation for social justice and sustainable peace – on its own. Each agency independently undertakes activities that address specific facets of the conflict spectrum, but a collective (combined) and cumulative (sustained over time) effect is needed to achieve the overall peacebuilding goal. The peacebuilding or post-conflict reconstruction system thus consists of all of the agents that are necessary to achieve the overall peacebuilding goal, and the system effect is brought about by their interdependence.

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25 'Delivering as One' was the title of the Report of the High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence, and has subsequently become shorthand for pursuing coherence within the UN Country Team system. During 2007, eight countries would pilot different models to deliver as 'One', looking at common elements, such as 'One Programme', 'One Budgetary Framework', 'One Leader' and 'One Office'. See <www.undg.org> for more details.

Each agent is only contributing a part of the whole, and it is the overall collective and cumulative affect that builds momentum towards sustainable peace and development. If the peace process fails and the conflict resumes, the time and resources invested have been wasted. It is only if the combined and sustained effort proves successful in the long-term that the investment made can be said to have been worthwhile. The success of each individual activity is linked to the success of the total collective and cumulative effect of the overall undertaking (Smuts [1926] 1987:78). It is thus in the best interest (rational choice) of each individual peacebuilding agent to ensure that the activities it undertakes are coherent with the overall peacebuilding strategy, because doing so will greatly increase the likelihood that the overall peacebuilding goal will be achieved, and thus, that the individual activity would be successful.

When the need for coherence between each individual activity, the agents that undertake them, and the overarching peacebuilding goal is established, coordination emerges as the tool with which to pursue this logic. In this context, coordination is the process that ensures that an individual peacebuilding agent is connected to the larger peacebuilding system of which it is a part.

Pursuing Coherence

In order to pursue coherence in a given peacebuilding or post-conflict reconstruction system, agents would have to pursue all four elements of coherence, using all the tools of coordination (developing strategies, determining objectives, planning, sharing information, dividing of roles and responsibilities, and mobilising resources). It is not possible to address all these vectors in this paper. Instead, this paper will focus-in on two areas where the lack of coherence has had the most damaging effect on achieving sustainability, and which; correspondingly, hold the most promise for improving peacebuilding coherence, once addressed.

The first is the need to generate a clearly articulated overall peacebuilding strategy that can provide the various peacebuilding agents with a common

frame of reference which it can use as a benchmark for coherence, i.e. the framework with which it should be coherent. It is impossible to achieve coherence if the framework, with which individual agents have to be coherent, has not been developed and shared with all the agents in the system.

The second is the need to operationalise the principle of local ownership. The inability of the external actors to give meaning to their stated policies and principles of alignment is one of the most significant shortcomings in the context of peacebuilding coherence. It is also one of the most challenging, with few obvious solutions and extensive entrenched practices and established relationships. It would thus require considerable political will and focused attention to adjust, but the paper argues that without meaningfully addressing this shortcoming peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction systems will continue to suffer from poor rates of sustainability and success. It is inconceivable that a peacebuilding system can achieve sustainability if either of these two aspects – an overarching peacebuilding strategy or local ownership – are lacking.

The Need for a Clearly Articulated Overall Peacebuilding Strategy

The importance of an overall strategic process is widely recognised and accepted but poorly applied in practice (Paris 2004). As the *Utstein* and other recent studies cited[26] have pointed out, however, the lack of a clearly articulated overall strategy is, in fact, a critical shortcoming in most past and contemporary peacebuilding systems. The first prerequisite for coherence in any peacebuilding or post-conflict reconstruction system is the development of an overall strategic framework. Without it the various peacebuilding agents have no benchmark against which they can judge the degree to which they are coherent with the overall peacebuilding strategy.

A strategic framework should reflect a common understanding of the problem, i.e. the root causes of the conflict and the more immediate triggers

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26   See footnote 11.

that have caused the outbreak of violent conflict, and that may be continuing to stress the peace process. It should be grounded in a shared long-term vision of the future path the country or conflict system wishes to realise, and it should contain a clearly articulated multi-dimensional and integrated strategy for the short to medium future direction of the peace process.

A strategic framework is not an operational and tactical implementation plan. Implementation planning is best done by those agents that have the responsibility for allocating their resources, and although such plans should be coordinated with partners, shared within sector and cluster coordination processes, and aligned with overall strategy, it would be impossibly complex to design one overall system-wide operational and tactical implementation plan. In fact, attempts aimed at controlling operational and tactical implementation planning at some central point are likely to cause dysfunction as a result of the simplification that any such central planning process would have to impose. It is thus important to distinguish between a strategic framework on the one hand, that identifies common goals and objectives, milestones and benchmarks, and the broad processes through which they should be pursued, coordinated and integrated, and operational and tactical implementation planning on the other.

For an overall peacebuilding strategy to be a meaningful vehicle for system-wide coherence, it needs to be transparent, readily available to all agencies, open for input and consultation, and regularly revised and updated. It is also critical that the overall effect of the strategy needs to be closely monitored. If every peacebuilding agency has access to the strategic framework, and information related to the effect it is having on the peace process, they would be able to use this information to inform and adjust their own strategic processes and implementation planning.

Unfortunately, we have very few examples of successfully applied strategic frameworks to date (Patrick & Brown 2007:130). This is the most critical shortcoming in international peacebuilding systems. What we do have at this stage are various partial processes. For instance, there is the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) that is a vehicle for aligning the strategies

of the various UN development agencies and the host government for a specific period at country level. The humanitarian community has developed the humanitarian Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), but this is more of a resource mobilisation tool than a strategic planning tool. In the context of the UN integrated missions model the UN has developed the Integrated Missions Planning Process (IMPP). It is still being refined and piloted, but it is primarily a UN System planning tool and its link with the need for an overall strategic framework that goes beyond the UN family is still unclear. It could become the catalyst for such a larger strategic process, but there is also a danger that it may generate such internal momentum, and become so wrapped-up in its internal planning processes, benchmarking and reporting, that is neglects the need to connect the UN planning process with the wider peacebuilding strategic framework.

The most broad and pervasive process to date is probably the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) process, facilitated by the World Bank and aimed at aligning the overall development strategy of the external actors and the host Government. The PRS process was, however, developed in the development context and thus tends to focus on macroeconomic and financial issues. It is not designed specifically for managing post-conflict transitions in fragile states. There have been attempts to develop system-wide strategies that go beyond the development realm in a post-conflict setting, such as the Strategic Framework process in Afghanistan and the Results Focused Transitional Framework (RFTF) in Liberia. However, in both these experiments the linkages with the UN peace operation, and thus the UN Security Council mandates, were weak. The lessons learned from these experiments are that for any overall peacebuilding strategy to be meaningful it needs to be firmly grounded in the political peace process that lies at the core of the international conflict management intervention, i.e. it should focus on those areas that secure and consolidate the peace (United Nations Security Council 2007:7). This does not mean that the developmental, humanitarian, human rights, and rule of law dimensions should be subsumed to the political and security dimensions, but rather that the overall effect of the integrated approach needs to facilitate and secure the peace process. It is the focus on the conflict

prevention aspect that gives peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction its unique identity, and the overall strategy during the peacebuilding phase needs to reflect this emphasis on consolidating the peace process.

The UN Peacebuilding Commission has been mandated to address this challenge, and it has, in its first year of existence, facilitated the development of integrated peacebuilding strategies for Burundi and Sierra Leone. According to the Commission's annual report the purpose of an integrated peacebuilding strategy is 'to ensure coherent, prioritized approaches that involve international donors and agencies' (Peacebuilding Commission 2007). It is still too early to judge these Peacebuilding Commission facilitated integrated peacebuilding strategies but whilst they look promising on the grounds that they are clearly focused on those areas that could threaten the consolidation of peace, they are also hamstrung by the UN's internal division of responsibilities that limit the focus of the Peacebuilding Commission to those post-conflict situations no longer under the UN Security Council spotlight. As a result, the Peacebuilding Commission's integrated peacebuilding strategies are designed around the demands of the consolidation phase of peacebuilding systems. It would appear as if a division of responsibilities has emerged where the stabilisation and transitional phases, in the UN system context, and as long as a UN peacekeeping operation is deployed, should be managed by the UN integrated approach concept, and from a planning perspective, the new Integrated Missions Planning Process (IMPP), whilst the consolidation phase, or that part of it that follows after the withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping operation, is the purview of the Commission's integrated peacebuilding strategy. This is a field experiencing rapid innovation. The Peacebuilding Commission's integrated peacebuilding strategies have been developed in 2007. The UN's integrated approach has been under development since 2000. The IMPP was developed in 2006 and 2007, and will be rolled out in 2008. The AU's Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development policy was adopted in 2006. These new developments need time to be refined through practice before they can be meaningfully analysed.

Without a clear country strategy, and without feedback on the progress made in achieving that strategy, individual agents are unable to position, adjust and monitor the degree to which they may be making a contribution to the achievement of the overall peacebuilding goal. The process of developing and adjusting a common country strategic framework, and continuously sharing this information with all the agents in the system, thus acquires a critical role in the complex peacebuilding systems approach. The degree to which such a strategic planning system is currently absent goes a long way to explaining the lack of coherence evident in past and present peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction systems.

The Need to Ensure the Primacy of Internal Actors in the Peacebuilding System

There is wide recognition that externally driven post-conflict peacebuilding processes are unsustainable (Peacebuilding Forum Conference 2004:2). Peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction activities need to be need-based, and the priorities, sequencing and pace of delivery need to be informed by the dynamics of the conflict system, through local ownership and meaningful internal/external coordination. It is also widely understood that peacebuilding activities that are not grounded in the socio-cultural belief systems that shape the worldview of the internal actors cause dysfunction. Achieving a balanced and meaningful partnership between internal and external peacebuilding agents is thus one of the most important success factors for any post-conflict peacebuilding system. It is also one of the most difficult to achieve.

The principle that peacebuilding systems should be locally owned and led is well established in the policy realm. For instance, the Rome Declaration on Harmonization (2003) has generated the following four principles of harmonisation: (1) recipient countries coordinate development assistance, (2) donors align their aid with recipient countries' priorities and systems, (3) donors streamline aid delivery and (4) donors adopt policies, procedures and incentives that foster harmonisation. The Rome Declaration and

related policies are aimed at addressing the core structural inequality of the international assistance regime, namely that the external agency is empowered by virtue of being the benefactor. If left unchecked, external agencies tend to dominate the internal/external relationship. The most effective counterweight to this structural imbalance is the recognition that peace processes can only be sustainable when owned and led by internal actors. In this context, donors have come to accept the moral principle, and operational reality, that assistance has to be needs based and locally owned.

However, this is easier said than done and external actors have reported that they have encountered a number of obstacles when trying to implement policies that encourage local ownership, especially in the fragile state and post-conflict contexts. External actors find it difficult to identify credible internal actors with whom they can enter into a meaningful partnership, especially in the stabilisation and transitional phases before elections are held. This is because the parties emerging out of conflict typically represent ambiguous constituencies, and there are often conflicting claims of ownership and support. The internal actors also typically lack the time, resources, technical expertise and support systems to engage meaningfully with the external actors. In fact, the concept of fragile states was initially developed in the donor context to refer to countries where the Government is unable or unwilling to establish a meaningful relationship with bilateral and multilateral donors.

The internal peacebuilding agents report that they typically feel intimidated by the momentum, scope and depth of the external intervention. They are overwhelmed by the pressure to engage with all the assessments, proposals and plans generated by the sudden influx of external actors, and they are frustrated that despite all this activity there is typically little to show, in terms of immediate delivery, for their time and effort. Whilst this is especially the case in the stabilisation and transitional phases, before or whilst the necessary capacities have been developed, it remains a problem long thereafter. The work of the Peacebuilding Commission in Burundi is a case in point. The development of the integrated peacebuilding strategy for Burundi put considerable additional strain on the Government of Burundi, and in June

2007 the UN Country Team had to ask the Peacebuilding Commission not to further burden the Government of Burundi, and as a result the Commission decided to postpone the work on monitoring mechanisms (Peacebuilding Commission 2007:6).

External actors also point to the dysfunction caused by their own institutional cultures that emphasise output rather than impact. The pressure to rapidly respond, achieve planned outputs and to disburse funds within fixed time-frames (donor budget cycles) often result in external actors compromising on the time and resources needed to invest in identifying credible internal counterparts, generate consultative processes and develop meaningful local ownership. Consultations undertaken under pressure, for instance during rapid needs assessments, often serve to legitimise pre-conceived perceptions rather than add value by generating independent and objective opinions and analysis, and thus fail to reflect the true needs and priorities of the internal actors. Under pressure from the internal/external power imbalance, internal actor representatives make the common mistake of telling the external actors what they think the external agents would like to hear, rather than sharing with them their own perceptions and opinions of what kind of support they think they need, and the priorities as they perceive them.

There are two areas within the internal/external tension that have the potential to transform the inherent tensions in the relationship. The first builds on the fact that external actors have already recognised the principle, both for moral and functional reasons, that the peace process needs to be locally owned and led, and the second gives meaning to the principle that the support generated by the external agencies needs to be needs-based rather than supply-driven.

The first is the need to establish a new basis for the internal/external relationship, namely a rights-based approach that recognises that the internal actors have the human right to determine their own future. Meaningful sustainability requires that the internal actors should not just own the problem, but also the solutions. This rights-based approach implies that there should be processes in place, controlled by the internal actors,

that generate the needs-based information needed to assess, design, plan, coordinate and implement assistance programmes. Where such processes are not in place, the external actors should invest in facilitating them. Whilst external partners can facilitate such processes, they need to be truly locally owned and have meaningful power. This will be particularly challenging in post-conflict environments and fragile states, and both internal and external agents will need to invest considerable resources to developing processes and mechanisms that can generate meaningful local ownership. Without it, however, any investments made in peacebuilding systems are unlikely to be sustainable.

Whilst the first emphasis is thus on generating the processes that will serve to realise the human rights of the internal actors to determine their own destiny, the second emphasis is on ensuring that the combined and cumulative effect of the assistance offered has a positive effect on the internal actors, and that it is delivered at a rate that can be absorbed. If the ultimate aim of the post-conflict reconstruction system is sustainable peace and development, then the overall strategy, and the pace of its implementation, should reflect the optimal balance between delivery and absorption. The legacy of violent conflict typically results in the internal actors having a much lower capacity to absorb assistance than the external actors anticipate. Post-conflict peacebuilding activities are typically planned at the outset, as intense short-to medium-term interventions and the bulk of the money theoretically available for these activities are made available in the early phases of the transition. Although well intended, the result is that large amounts are spent on activities that the internal actors simply cannot absorb.

There is a need to synchronise the rate of delivery with the rate of absorption. In general, this translates into programming those elements of the assistance package that are not aimed at emergency relief and early recovery over a longer term, and directing more of the earlier assistance to building the capacities that would be required to absorb downstream assistance. Internal actors will be best placed to absorb assistance towards the end of the transitional period when some basic capacities have been restored or newly established, and in the consolidation phase, when a newly elected government

is in place that have the constitutional legitimacy to determine national priorities. The short- to medium-term high-impact approach currently favoured is not conducive to sustainable post-conflict peacebuilding and ultimately results in higher costs to both the internal and external actors.

Conclusion

This paper analysed the coherence and coordination dilemma in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction systems. It was presented in two parts. The first defined and analysed peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction systems in the context of the coherence and coordination deficit. The second identified a few priority areas where improved coherence and coordination are likely to have the most meaningful impact.

It was pointed out that one of the reasons why coherence has proven elusive is because the agencies that undertake peacebuilding activities lack a shared understanding of the role of coherence and coordination in peacebuilding systems. It was suggested that there is a core logic for coherence in peacebuilding systems, namely that all peacebuilding agents are interdependent in that they can not individually achieve the goal of the overall peacebuilding system – addressing the root causes of the conflict and laying the foundation for social justice and sustainable peace and development. In this context, the role of coherence and coordination is to manage the interdependencies that bind the peacebuilding system together.

The paper focused on two areas where the lack of coherence has had the most damaging effect on achieving sustainability, and which, correspondingly, hold the most promise for improving peacebuilding coherence, once addressed. The first was the need to generate a clearly articulated overall peacebuilding strategy that can provide the various peacebuilding agents with a common frame of reference which they can use as a reference point for coherence, i.e. the framework with which it should be coherent. The paper argued that it is impossible to achieve coherence if the framework, with which individual agents have to be coherent, is missing. It also stressed the need to monitor, on an ongoing basis, the effect the overall

peacebuilding strategy is having on the host system, so that the strategy can be continuously adjusted to the dynamic environment, and so that the individual peacebuilding agents can independently make course directions to their own activities, and in so doing contribute to the synchronisation of the overall peacebuilding system.

The second was the need to operationalise the primacy of the principle of local ownership. The paper argued that the inability of the external actors to give meaning to their stated policies and principles of alignment is one of the most significant shortcomings in the context of peacebuilding coherence. It is also one of the most challenging, with few obvious solutions and extensive entrenched practices and established relationships. It would thus require considerable political will and focused attention to adjust, but the paper argues that without meaningfully addressing this shortcoming peacebuilding systems will continue to suffer from poor rates of sustainability and success.

The desire to improve the current poor record of sustainability and success in the field on peacebuilding is, however, an important and meaningful incentive, around which the international community in general, and African institutions such as the African Union in particular, can generate the necessary political will, both domestically and internationally. The stakes are high, especially for the 'bottom billion' born into the least developed and failed states periphery of the world system, but the potential rewards, for a more stable, secure and developed world system, are significant, and worth pursuing.

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Book Review

Kofi Annan: A Man of Peace in a World of War

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In *Kofi Annan, A Man of Peace in a World of War,* Stanley Meisler presents a biography of Kofi Annan as a man who rose from schoolboy in Ghana to world statesman and Nobel prize winner, and of the joys and despair that marked his decade as leader of the United Nations (UN). The book is not an authorised biography and Annan did not read the manuscript before publication, but he was aware of the biographer's intentions and co-operated with the project. He also encouraged his staff and friends to meet with Meisler.

Meisler, also the author of *United Nations: The First Fifty Years,* has known Annan for many years as a journalist (of the *Los Angeles Times*) and portrays the former Secretary-General as someone who is not an ideologue or academic theorist. Annan is described as a pragmatic leader who adhered to some core values and unconditionally – almost religiously – promoted the letter and spirit of the charter of the UN during his terms as chief functionary of the world organisation.

A number of interesting facts and issues about Annan are presented and highlighted. For instance, Annan, who joined the UN as an employee at a fairly young age, had his fist substantive diplomatic assignment in 1991 at the age of fifty-two when he was asked to persuade Iraq to let go nine hundred UN workers and dependents that were taken hostage. Before that he spent much of his time pushing folders around a desk or poring over budget figures as a personnel and budget specialist in the UN bureaucracy. In 1993 he took over as UN head of peacekeeping under Boutros Boutros-Ghali in order to strengthen Africa's presence in the higher echelons of the UN. It had taken him more than thirty years to climb from the lowest rank in the UN to the rank of Undersecretary-General.

As Undersecretary-General in charge of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Kofi Annan presided over the most spectacular rise in peacekeeping in UN history. By 1994, the second year of Annan's tenure as peacekeeping chief, the UN deployed more than 75 000 peacekeepers throughout the world. However, although he was quoted in the news from time to time, Meisler points out that Annan did not have a high public and media profile in those days. He describes how Boutros-Ghali ran a centralised UN, leaving little room for his top lieutenants to shine. He did not even allow an Undersecretary-General like Annan to brief the Security Council on its own. In fact, Meisler contends that Boutros-Ghali did not want Annan to have a high media profile.

The book furthermore deals with Annan's stint as UN peacekeeping chief when the slaughter of approximately 800 000 Tutsis and moderate

Hutus occurred in Rwanda. It is said that Annan still lives with guilt over this humanitarian catastrophe and therefore later apologised for the failure of the UN system to prevent and stop the genocide in Rwanda. For him the Rwandan crisis also drove home the institutional weakness of the UN. As peacekeeping chief, Annan was also heavily involved in the Bosnian crisis – another crisis that made the UN look ridiculous and effete, arousing worldwide revulsion at its failure.

The part on Annan's election as Secretary-General of the UN in 1996 reveals some fascinating behind-the-scenes-politics. There were significant differences between the Secretary-General and the United States (US) towards the end of Boutros-Ghali's first term. Moreover, conflict between Boutros-Ghali and Madeleine Albright, former US Ambassador to the UN, was taken to personal levels. The US therefore decided to block a second term for Boutros-Ghali. Apparently, many Africans felt cheated when the first African Secretary-General turned out to be an Egyptian from North Africa and decided that if they were going to get another chance at the job, they would prefer a black African from south of the Sahara. The US campaign favoured Annan and after several ballots in the Security Council which brought Annan to the fore as the primary and later sole candidate, the French Ambassador (and his right to veto) stood between Annan and the top UN position. However, after some further diplomatic footwork, Annan was elected by the Security Council as the seventh Secretary-General of the UN. In this regard, Meisler presents some insightful information on the international political bickering that led to Annan supplanting Boutros-Ghali. The enormous political influence of the US as the world's only superpower is also evident from this part of the book.

As top UN official, Annan understood the limitations of a job that provided the aura of a world statesman but no political or military power of his own. Annan also knew that he reigned over a battered and weakened UN as the three crises of Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia had taken a bitter toll. The weakness of the UN was most glaring in African peacekeeping challenges and the author of the book deals with these

issues in a most interesting and gripping manner. It also deals with Annan's negotiations with the former Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, over suspected programmes for weapons of mass destruction and his (unsuccessful) talks about an agreement that would prevent military action against Iraq.

Meisler further turns our attention to the crises of 1999 in Kosovo and East Timor, which tried the Secretary-General even further as a man who is at the pinnacle of world diplomacy, but who has only moral force and no real political power. The US specifically, did not mind Annan handling the East Timor crisis, but refused to allow him to take charge of Kosovo and especially to negotiate on behalf of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). In the end, NATO – and not the UN – intervened and patrolled Kosovo with peacekeeping troops. Spurred by reports and controversies over UN peacekeeping, the Secretary-General asked Lakhdar Brahimi, a former Algerian foreign minister, to head a panel that would study the future of UN peacekeeping and this resulted in a landmark document, popularly known as the Brahimi report.

On a different level the book also deals with Annan's efforts to change the image of the UN in another, more personal way. He allowed himself to become a celebrity in New York, accepting invitations to dinners, parties and other occasions regularly. He also dealt with the plight of Africa in a very personal way and put considerable energy into issues concerning the development of the African continent. But the landmark events on the morning of 11 September 2001 in New York when two planes crashed into the World Trade Centre demanded his attention especially. In the end, Annan's energy was consumed by the invasion in Iraq. His personality and position as UN chief functionary often put him at odds with the Bush Administration throughout the Iraq crisis and war. In the most significant act of his tenure, he opposed the American-led and American-inspired invasion of Iraq in 2003. In this regard, Meisler describes how the Bush Administration displayed a disdain for Kofi Annan and the UN. He describes how relations worsened and how the White House began to look on the Secretary-General as far more

than an annoyance. In fact, the ten years of Annan's administration were overwhelmed by the crisis in Iraq. In the meantime, the troubled Secretary-General also had to deal with many more issues than Iraq: Israel, Darfur, southern Sudan, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, HIV/Aids, and several others. However, his decisions on Iraq mattered more than anything else.

In addition, another more personal crisis crippled Kofi Annan in his stride: the so-called oil for food scandal. In 2004 his son, Kojo, was mired in the scandal and all of these pressures left him tired, depressed and absent. According to Meisler, he was fatigued, had lost his appetite and did not feel like seeing anyone. This took quite a toll from his person, but Annan managed to regain his thoughtfulness, his alert mind, his grasp of a myriad of issues, his careful and articulate speech, his engaging sense of humour, and his uncanny ability to listen carefully to others. Unfortunately, his troubles did not end. His reform proposals for a radical overhaul of the UN Secretariat pushed Annan into a confrontation with the UN staff union.

In the end, Meisler argues that despite the many challenges and crises that Annan had to face, his administration should actually be credited with an impressive handful of major achievements. He established the principle of the right of the international community to intervene politically and militarily when a government abuses its own people. Annan also revived a weakened peacekeeping department and increased the deployment of troops to near-record levels. He injected openness and transparency into the UN system. The UN's role as the main co-ordinator of international relief was further solidified under Annan. In the final instance, he presided over an organisation that could not be described as irrelevant. The point is also made that the UN works best when the US and the Secretary-General are in harmony – a wedding of American power and political influence with a moral force reflecting the needs and desires of the rest of the world.

Kofi Annan, A Man of Peace in a World of War is not an academic work per se and does not intend to be, but is most certainly of academic interest and value. The book complements other insightful works, such as William Shawcross' book on UN peacekeeping, *Deliver Us from Evil*. It is good reading material for scholars, students and all those interested in diplomacy, international affairs, international organisations, war and peace, or anyone interested in the affairs and functioning of the UN as the pre-eminent organisation responsible for international peace and security. Personally, I find this book and biography on Kofi Annan most stimulating, lucid and insightful.