

## Forward by Jannie Malan

From our experience at the editorial desk we wish to share something with our readers and potential writers. It is about a two-way thinking in which we often seem to get involved. On the one hand there is the specificity that is supposed to be one of the crucial characteristics of proper research. On the other hand there is the boundary-defying generality of our particular field of research.

Academic tradition is of course strongly oriented towards specialisation. So much so that a witty description of the academic hierarchy has been coined: the junior lecturer knows something about everything, the lecturer more about less, the senior lecturer much about a few things, and the professor knows everything about nothing. This little saying may elicit a benign smile, but it may also cause a sigh about the absurd extremes to which the fame of specialisation can tempt sane academics.

At this a point we might just shrug our shoulders and dismiss the topic, or we can welcome a debate on academic specialisation and responsibility. Should we, as researchers, keep probing into minute details, expecting to penetrate to microscopic discoveries? Or should we research in an exploratory mode, hoping to arrive at findings based on wider-angle views? Or should we specialise in both specificity and generality, prioritising the one or the other according to needs and circumstances? Should we expect cases where we may have to accept the apparent paradox: that general observations can enhance specific insights, and that specific perspectives can add value to general contributions?

Instead of trying to answer all these questions, let us briefly focus our attention on the one about the limits of our field of research. Clarity in this regard may help us find contextual answers to the questions above. So, how definitely can the legitimate terrain of conflict resolution be demarcated? Or does it happen to be a field with no real boundaries?

Academically, conflict resolution is usually described and practised as an interdisciplinary area of study. It is made up of valuable contributions from the broad spectrum of human sciences dealing with the social and cultural, individual and gendered, behavioural, moral and educational, economic, political and legal aspects of human co-existence. In addition to, and because of, its interdisciplinary character, the field of conflict studies also accommodates other forms of boundary-transcending integration. Due to its life-related nature it self-evidently has to be made up of theory and practice. Due to the fact that conflicts are caused and resolved by left and right brained human beings, conflict studies can justifiably be called a combination of science and art. And due to the ancient but never-ending history of conflicts and responses to them, conflict studies is a field in which good use can be made of diachronic traditions and synchronic innovations.

Historically, this kind of study has emerged out of a variety of life situations. Through the millennia conflicts have undoubtedly been waged and resolved (in some way or another) in all areas of human interaction. When, during our most recent century, a specific focus developed for dealing with conflict, it took place in an assortment of conflictual contexts: wages and service conditions, civil and political rights, partner and child abuse, state and international affairs.

Culturally, the field of dealing with conflict cannot afford any sign of exclusiveness or compartmentalisation. An unprejudiced openness should be maintained towards all cultures with their

commonalities, differences and peculiarities. Many conflicts are caused precisely by cultural clashes, ranging from minor dissimilarities to shocking incompatibilities. Not only when such deep-rooted conflicts are dealt with, but generally and constantly, genuine culture-friendliness should be shown. Here an interesting paradoxical combination may be kept in mind. When scope is given to a group of people to practise their particularistic cultural assertiveness, it may produce the surprising result of an inclusive cultural understanding, respect and even unity.

Ethnically, a similar symbiosis of own group affirmation and unrestricted xenophilia may be encouraged. So, ethnically as well as culturally, or simply ethno-culturally, the field of conflict resolution should be regarded as completely unlimited. In the first edition of this journal we have expressed the hope "to share something special about insights and skills from South Africa and Africa". "African" is indeed the first word in the names of both the journal and ACCORD. But our hopefully justified focus on Africa does not mean that we are monastically fencing ourselves in in one part of the global village. As far as possible we wish to integrate our continental accountability with a planet-wide docility.

Extensively, therefore, the field of conflict resolution has grown into a comprehensive one indeed. The names we use for it, and also for our journal and organisation, are merely convenient abbreviations for much more than conflict resolution. The noun "resolution" and the verb (and noun) "resolve" happen to function in very appropriate semantic fields: separating into constituent parts, putting an end to a difficulty or discord by reaching a solution, adopting a decision and duly formulating it in writing, and being determined to implement what has been agreed upon. There may be circumstances, however, such as the firm entrenchment of a root cause, or the intransigence of a party, when resolution is not, or not yet, a feasible option. Other options have therefore secured their warranted positions within the field, such as conflict accommodation, management, transformation and prevention. And of course, conflict itself – its reasons and objectives, escalation and de-escalation, procedures and strategies inevitably deserves an important place in our field of study.

This brief reminder about the variety of directions into which the field of conflict resolution extends and can extend was intended to encourage us to increase our receptive openness. With regard to our research, and the publishing of research material, we should obviously maintain our valid academic traditions of profound, penetrating and concentrated investigation. At the same time, however, we should be flexible enough in applying our criteria and categories. We should remember how widely inclusive our field of study happens to be. A topic, approach or method that we may at first thought be inclined to refer to another field of study may prove to be of indirect but definite value in our own field. After all, the study of the realities of conflict and responses to conflict is of world-wide applicability. It is of everyday relevance to all of us as human beings, regardless of gender, age, looks, work, address, language or culture.

Our message from the editorial desk may therefore be summarised as follows:

Let us keep in mind the very wide-ranging scope and relevance of the field which we conveniently call conflict resolution.

Let us live up to our commitment to do thorough research – whether it takes us in conventional or unconventional directions.

We trust that you will find meaningful ideas and encouraging inspiration in this issue. The articles deal

with important aspects of the peace-building role of African women, intra- and inter-ethnic conflicts, indigenous methods of conflict resolution, and risk assessment in a particular conflict. Two are sequels to previous articles, but can be read on their own without first referring back to the first contributions by the same authors (Gwexe and Osamba).

Notes

References

## Book Review - Consolidation of Democracy in Africa: A View from the South by Senzo Ngubane

Consolidation of Democracy in Africa: A View from the South - Solomon, Hussein and Liebenberg, Ian (eds.) 1999. Ashgate: England & USA, 367 pp.

Reviewed by Senzo Ngubane, Research Officer, ACCORD

Since the emergence of the Post-Cold War era a large amount of contributions have been made, both as oral and as written statements, about Africa's democratisation (or lack thereof). As Africa approached the turn of the 20th century, the issue of democratic transition and consolidation continued to be a matter of contested terrain among academics, students of African politics and policy makers. This book should be seen as a further contribution to this vigorous debate about the nature and content of democracy in Africa. It deals specifically with the issues involved in the process of democratic consolidation. Consisting of nine chapters, this book looks at various organs of society (for example, civil society, the state, the military) and the extent to which each of them contributes to or hinders democratic consolidation.

The first chapter, by Irina Filatova, traces the evolution of the African state and the failure of democracy to take root on the continent. The "misbehaviour" of most African states, as reflected in the phenomenon of coups and counter-coups, is regarded as one of the things that has hindered the path to democracy. The second chapter, by Clive Napier, tackles the issue of constitutional reforms in Africa. This is done by looking broadly at four different phases from pre-colonial Africa to the post-colonial 1990s era which have a bearing on Africa's constitutional issues. Also, a critical appraisal is given of the countries which have embarked on this constitutional transformation route, such as Zimbabwe, Kenya and Swaziland.

Ian Liebenberg and Elke Zuern, in chapters three and four respectively, deal with the challenges and role of civil society in democratic consolidation. Liebenberg's chapter depicts a clear picture of the theoretical discourse and raises a number of important questions around the notion of a civil society, or a civil community, as he calls it.

In chapter five, Mark Malan confronts Africa's old problem of civil-military relations. It gives reasons, without necessarily offering justification, as to how and why, historically, the military have had to "step into" politics. However, with regard to the newly found democratisation in the 1990s, the chapter also delves into the problems associated with creating "proper control" by civilians over the military.

Chapter six, by Linda Cornwell, deals with the relation(s) between gender (women), development and democracy in Africa. Cornwell calls for a gendered approach to development and democracy. The chapter also contains basic facts and figures relating to the position of women in Africa, which may serve as an excellent reference point of statistical information.

In this day and age, globalisation relates to everything and it "spells confusion)about what it is, how the process unfolds, and where it is leading developed and developing countries to" (p 203). This quotation captures the main theme of what chapter seven, by Petrus de Kock, is about. The chapter

rightly states that the structure of the international (political) economy is one that is based on unequal power, which reflects the domination of the developed countries over developing states. In the context of democratic consolidation (in Africa), De Kock argues that in order for democracy to flourish, the economic and social needs of the people need to be taken into consideration.

The penultimate chapter, by Mandla Seleokane, deals with human rights and democratic consolidation in South Africa. The chapter provides a precise summary of the country's Bill of Rights. It then looks at the Human Rights Commission as one of the institutions set up under Chapter Nine of the South African Constitution to assist in the promotion and support of the country's democracy.

Chapter nine, co-authored by Agranoff, Sindane and Liebenberg, looks at the concept of power sharing (decentralisation or devolution of powers to local/regional authorities) among the various levels of government in a democratic state. The chapter refers extensively to other countries, such as Spain, which have had to deal with this issue. Although the authors mention that this subject is "to an extent under-researched in South Africa" (p 267), the chapter does have examples from the South African democratisation process.

A useful aspect of this book is that the editors did not only introduce the chapters in the introduction. In the conclusion they also summarised the main arguments and themes which came out of the various chapters.

After the conclusion there follows an appendix entitled "Ninety-two Days in the Life of a Continent". Although it provides a useful summary and analysis of major events that occurred in Africa during the period under examination, the section seems to be out of place in a publication on democratic consolidation.

The book can assume its place among other important publications on democratisation and democratic consolidation. It covers most of the key issues which face any country (particularly in Africa) involved in this process. It would therefore be a good reference for students of African politics and practitioners in the field. Finally, the book comes with an exhaustive list for further reading, which contains almost all key publications by African and other scholars who have contributed to this challenging topic of democratic consolidation in Africa.

## Notes

A shorter version of this review appeared in Conflict Trends 1/2001.

## References

## Book Review - No-Party Democracy in Uganda, Myths and Realities by Senzo Ngubane

No-Party Democracy in Uganda, Myths and Realities - Mugaju, Justus and Oloka-Onyango (eds.)  
2000. Uganda: Fountain Publishers, 158 pp.

Reviewed by Senzo Ngubane, Research Officer, ACCORD

The question of democracy, as it relates to the right of people to decide who and how they ought to be governed, still remains one of the thorny issues in African politics. Of course, notwithstanding countries like Botswana, Senegal and South Africa who appear to be consolidating their democratic paths, most African states are still battling with this issue.

The debates as to whether multi-party democracy is an ideal type of political system will surely be part and parcel of African discourse for some time to come. One of the countries in Africa that has been engaged in such a debate both at practical, theoretical and political levels is Uganda. About its no-party democratic system a number of questions are still debated. Is this system relevant? Is it a genuinely African political experiment?

The book entitled No-Party Democracy in Uganda, Myths and Realities, which was published just before the June 2000 referendum, goes a long way towards further expanding on the debates around the movement system (National Resistance Movement) or multi-party democracy. As indicated in the introduction, the book is a collection of essays (eight) by various African academics and politicians. In Chapter two Justus Mugaju outlines Uganda's political history with the aim of reflecting the context within which the movement system was introduced in Uganda. Mugaju argues that because of the manner in which British colonialists treated their colonies the ideals of democracy never flourished in Uganda during the colonial era. He also makes mention of the same phenomenon in the post-colonial era where most political parties which emerged did little, if anything, to foment the seeds of multiparty democracy.

John-Jean Barya's chapter (Political Parties, the Movement and the Referendum on Political Systems: One-Step Forward, Two Steps Back?) traces the debate around the movement and multi-partyism. This is done by outlining the arguments made in favour of the movement system (no-party) and those made in favour of multi-party democracy. Barya states that one of the arguments for the movement system is that it is meant to build solidarity and forge national unity. The argument for multi-party democracy is that the right to associate is fundamental and should not be taken away by the state or by a vote (p 31). Barya contends that the movement (just as multi-partyism) was never meant to be a political system but only an electoral mechanism or a means to acquire or retain state power. He concludes by arguing that instead of adopting an either-or approach it is necessary to find a middle path. This middle road could be somewhere along the lines of retaining the movement through a pluralist political setup that recognises political parties but avoids 'a winner takes all situation'.

Instead of seeking for a middle road between the two systems, Oloka-Onyango argues in chapter four (New Wine or New Bottles? Movement Politics and One Partyism in Uganda) that the movement system needs to open up the political space for other political actors. Through a detailed examination of the Act of the Movement, the author concludes that there is little difference between the current politics of the movement and the single-party state of the past in Africa. He also makes an observation, similar to that of the previous author (Chapter 3), that the victory of the movement system in the June

2000 referendum was a forgone conclusion.

Chapter Five by Nelson Kasfir ('Movement' Democracy, legitimacy and Power in Uganda) notes that the conditions that existed in 1986 when the movement was launched and which might have created a need for a no-party democracy have changed significantly. Kasfir further notes that a closer examination of the movement democracy and its application since 1986 is a reflection of a political strategy to legitimise state power more than being a 'novel form of democracy (p 61). Although Kasfir accepts that, compared to previous governments of Uganda the movement system has done better, he maintains that the activities of some of those in power have tended to undermine the Ten Points Programme.

In Chapter Six, James Francis Wapakhabulo traces the origins, progress, challenges and prospects of the movement democracy in Uganda. According to Wapakhabulo the origins of the concept of the movement could be traced back to the situation immediately prior to the Tanzania-Uganda war of 1979 when the Ugandan liberation movements came together to form the Ugandan National Liberation Front (UNLF). This formation however was not a success and Wapakhabulo gives a number of reasons for the UNLF's failure to meet its objectives. The author is of the opinion that of all the political systems that Uganda has had, no one has given the country more stability, peace and development than the current movement. He sees the movement as an inclusive political system which has succeeded in bringing democracy in Uganda.

Another intriguing chapter is by Tarsis B. Kabwegyere, which deals with Civil Society and the Democratic Transition in Uganda since 1986. The thrust of this chapter is that the emergence and proliferation of civil society structures and their growing political influence are a manifestation of the success of no-party democracy in Uganda. The chapter also states, quite correctly, that because of colonialism civil society never flourished or, to use Kabwegyere's term, civil society was 'suffocated'. He goes on to argue that the same remained true in post-colonial Africa where the leaders viewed civil society as something to control rather than to activate. According to the author this was the case in Uganda before the emergence of the no-party movement which has led to the thriving of civil society.

Sallie Simba Kayunga tackles the issue of armed oppositions in Uganda and their impact on the movement system. He argues that besides the continued existence of old armed formations in the country, there are other new ones, which emerged after 1986. The chapter goes into an in-depth analysis of two such armed groups: the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Kayunga is of the view that the movement has not handled the problem of armed opposition in a correct manner. Hence the chapter's proposal that any post-referendum government must adopt measures that would address the various root causes (historical, economic and others) of armed opposition and one way of doing this is by creating institutional mechanisms to isolate 'men of violence' (p 125).

The penultimate chapter, by Ali Mazrui, (Between Domestic Policy and Regional Power: The Role of Ideology in Uganda) argues that President Museveni's Uganda has played a greater role in regional politics under the guise of Pan-Africanism than the erstwhile leaders of the country. To this end, the chapter wants to ascertain whether such regional involvement is an attempt to 'export' his no-party democracy to the rest of the Great Lakes region or whether it is inspired by his ambition to become the

power broker in the region. In trying to offer answers to the question, the chapter provides a comparative analysis of President Museveni's policies, strategies and ideology and that of former President Obote. Over and above this though, the chapter offers an excellent theoretical account and further enlightens the reader's understanding of various debates and ideologies, which shape the course of events in Great Lakes politics and other African regions in general. To this end he examines the role of Pax Africana as an ideology that drives (or that should drive) African regional politics.

The concluding chapter by Mugaju makes broad observations about the necessary steps which need to be taken by all political formations in order to finally arrive at a common ground on the country's future political system. The chapter also raises the often asked question by advocates of multi-party democracy, which is, When will the country be ready for multi-partyism? Ten years? Fifteen years? (p 141).

For scholars of African studies interested in understanding the politics of no-party democracy in Uganda, this is certainly a book to read. Almost all the chapters are written in a straightforward manner, which makes the entire book easy to read. Another positive aspect of the is that it has a full bibliography list of further readings relating to Uganda's political history, socio-political issues and those that deal with Uganda's political landscape since 1986.

Notes

References



# Engendering Peace in Africa: A Critical Inquiry Into Some Current Thinking on the Role of African Women in Peace-building

by Louise Vincent

## Abstract

Romanticised, popular concepts of womanhood and of women's peace-building capacities need to be critically investigated. A gendered approach is recommended as a corrective to stereotyped perspectives about women and peace, as well as to gender-blind experiments. Such an approach may be found realistic and useful, not only in everyday circumstances, but especially also in war and post-war situations. Particular attention is given to gender in post-war politics, economy and social reconstruction.

## Introduction

A view which has wide popular currency among aid organisations, intellectuals, politicians and citizens in the peace-building community, holds that women have special or different perspectives, experiences and capacities which make them non-violent in orientation and which render them particularly effective as peace-makers. These qualities, it is argued, have been largely ignored and under-utilised outside the family context. In the light of this, women are called upon to speak out and take action in order to "retrieve their power to say no to war" (UNESCO 1995) the implication being that this is an inherent, natural predisposition that has been "lost" or artificially obscured.

This article argues that such notions are on dubious conceptual ground and rest on discredited essentialist accounts of womanhood. Such essentialist accounts ghettoise women by placing them in a category of their own which is removed from the diversity of identities and extended range of experience and ways of being that are by implication available only to men. They obscure the many differences between women and employ stereotyped categories that are themselves the product of gendered relations. The article argues that rather than focusing on "women" as somehow naturally suited to the task of building peace, what is required is a gendered account which talks of women and men (and the relationships between them) and how they behave in gendered ways in relation to specific circumstances. Only by focusing on these relations of dominance and their attendant violence can we come to understand how they might be superseded. Talk of a "women's hermeneutic" obscures the fact that ways of thinking arise from the roles which women have been assigned, and that attitudes which emphasise peace, sharing and partnership are as much part of human identity and potentiality as is the capacity for destruction and brutality.

## Gender versus women

Articles and stories documenting women's positive contributions to peace-building have become something of a growth industry. Women are said to be "active and ingenious participants in almost any aspect of post-war recovery and rebuilding" (Sørensen 1998).<sup>3</sup> African women have been singled out for special attention in the peace-building efforts of international agencies, national governments and local civil society organisations in recent years<sup>4</sup> The unquestioned assumption underlying all these efforts is that "women", in this case, "African women", constitute a category of person with common characteristics that lend themselves to being employed in the project of building peace.

The Zanzibar Conference on "Women of Africa for a Culture of Peace" held in Tanzania from the 17th to the 20th of May 1999 with the sponsorship of UNESCO in conjunction with the government of Tanzania, the Organisation of African Unity, the African Women's Committee for Peace and Development and other inter- and non-governmental organisations is a case in point. More than 300 participants including policy makers, academics, peace activists, and members of non-governmental organisations from forty-nine African countries and six European and North American countries, representatives of the UN family, the OAU, ECA and other regional institutions, including 25 ministers from 60 countries, 50 of them African, came together to talk about women's initiatives and potential for peace-building.

The conference was billed as providing a forum for African women to develop their own agenda for conflict resolution, peace-building and reconciliation. Its premise as understood by its UNESCO backers was that "African women's quest for peace and their strong determination to be involved in political decision-making in order to help solve problems at the roots instead of utilising stop-gap measures in emergency situations" had to be supported. In the words of Ingeborg Breines, Director of UNESCO's Women and a Culture of Peace:

Faced with the ever-increasing number of armed conflicts and persistence of violence world-wide, and acknowledging that women's visions, talents, skills and experience have been under-utilised in decision-making for far too long, the ultimate goal of the Conference was to provide a forum for African women to co-ordinate their actions for peace so as to effectively and significantly impact decision-making processes on the continent and serve as an early warning mechanism.<sup>5</sup>

The premise of the "Zanzibar Declaration" emanating from the conference was that women had, in the post-colonial period, enjoyed limited participation in democratisation processes and negotiations for peace on the continent tended also to be male dominated. This marginalisation had "denied Africa the use of women's talents, experience and skills as agents for peace and development" (Zanzibar Declaration 1999:Clause 2). Participants pledged themselves to promote non-violent means of conflict resolution, "African values for a culture of peace" and consensus-building and dialogue. Appealing to African governments and parliaments to reduce military expenditures and re-channel these resources to people's basic development needs, the Zanzibar Declaration highlights the importance of education in establishing a culture of peace and calls for the "strengthening of African women's capacities to sensitise, mobilise and reconcile the entire continent to the importance of peaceful means of conflict prevention, resolution and transformation" (Zanzibar Declaration 1999:Clause 16).

While there is some reference in the Zanzibar Declaration to "gender", the use of the term as synonymous with "women" appears to have been the underlying assumption of the conference. Salma Salim Amour, the wife of Zanzibar President Salim Amour, called on the "first ladies of Africa", and on all other women, to "sensitise their husbands to the culture of peace and convince them not to wage war any more" (UNESCO Presse 1999b). UNESCO's Director-General, Federico Mayor, underlining the importance of women in building peace, declared: "Women and life are synonymous terms. A woman gives life, she is the most apt at preserving it", adding that "only 4 per cent of decisions are taken by women in the world" while "women are the best messengers for peace" (UNESCO Presse 1999a). Similarly, the Vice-President of Uganda, Speciosa Wandira Kazibwe who is also Chairperson of the African Women Committee for Peace and Development, stressed the importance of women in building peace, notably due to their role in education: "Women have the advantage of moulding children at a very impressionable age. We must begin by loving our children and teaching them to love everyone irrespective of ethnicity, religion, race, gender, class." She further argued that "women do not

seek power for power's sake, but to improve the human condition" (UNESCO Presse 1999a).

While it is common, within this perspective, which characterises also for example the Kampala Action Plan on Women and Peace (1993), the African Platform for Action (Dakar, 1994), the Women Leadership Forum on Peace, (Johannesburg, 1996), the Kigali Pan-African Conference on Peace, Gender and Development, (1997), the inter-agency Workshop on Documented Best Practices of Women in Peace-building and Non-violent Means of Conflict Resolution, (Addis Ababa, 1997); as well as other African women's initiatives at local and national levels, to talk of "the mainstreaming of a gender perspective" (United Nations Economic and Social Council 1996), it is unclear why a gendered perspective would suggest the need for an African Women's Conference or initiatives focusing on women. The Zanzibar Agenda for Peace is described as a "gender contract" which would guide the participants in their actions for peace but goes on to refer to "we African women" who have "employed effective mediating techniques in our efforts to address the recurring violent conflicts" (The Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace in Africa 1999:Clause 2). It continues: "The women of Africa are deeply concerned with the persistence and proliferation of violence and armed conflicts" (The Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace in Africa 1999:Clause 3). The Agenda argues that while women have primarily been considered as the victims of conflict, their "life experiences and know-how are an enabling factor for playing key roles in various forms of preventive action" (The Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace in Africa 1999:Clause 8). Lip-service is given to notions of gender, but it is clear that what is really being spoken of is women rather than gender and that the category of "women" that the speakers have in mind is shot through with essentialist notions of who and what women are. In this sentimentalised ideal-type it is difficult to recognise the large numbers of women who contribute to violence, directly or indirectly by inciting men to defend group interests, honour, and collective livelihoods.

Rather than relying on romanticised (and ultimately oppressive) constructs of womanhood, a gendered approach attempts to heighten awareness of the particular (and changed) circumstances which war creates for the construction and reconstruction of gendered roles in a society. While particular circumstances vary, pre-war experiences along with those of the war itself will affect (but not pre-determine) the way in which gendered roles are reconfigured in the post-war period. In societies characterised by gender inequality and discrimination, the pattern is one of systematic exclusion and disadvantage of women for no reason other than that they are women. Along with the marginalisation of women goes the marginalisation of certain ideas and perspectives. In this sense it becomes possible to talk of the privileging not only of men themselves but of those perspectives and ways of being that are constructed as "male" and the concomitant marginalisation of those perspectives and ways of being which are part of the socially constructed category "female". It is however important not to confuse these social constructions with the real perspectives, experiences and attitudes of real women since it is quite impossible either conceptually or empirically to specify what these might be.

A critic might respond that it is in their (common) role as mothers or care-givers that women come to be characterised by attitudes of caring and nurturing which render them particularly unavailable to projects of militarisation and violence. Yet, even that most ubiquitous and powerful of cultural icons, woman as mother, has been deconstructed by feminists of many hues to reveal that "neither a woman nor a man is born a mother; people become mothers in particular historical and social circumstances. Even if pregnancy and birth are taken as part of mothering, the biological fact of birthing is, both medically and symbolically, culturally various. Once a child is born, maternal work can assume radical

differences.... Any mother speaking in or about a maternal voice is a particular person of a particular temperament, social location, and politics". (Ruddick 1995:52). The myth that mothers are naturally good which some have been so pleased to employ in the service of the peace project has as its inevitable counterpart the "bad mother" and it is betwixt these two equally oppressive stereotypes that real mothers do the real work of mothering. As Ruddick (1995:31-32) comments,

An idealized figure of the Good Mother casts a long shadow on many actual mothers' lives.... Many mothers who live in the Good Mother's shadow, knowing that they have been angry and resentful and remembering episodes of violence and neglect, come to feel that their lives are riddled with shameful secrets.... The myth that mothers are naturally good or wickedly bad inspires ignorant contempt for the actual work that mothers do.

Generalisations about the supposed commonality of women's experience in post-war situations include the fact that war leaves women as widows, victims of rape and torture, as the majority of internally displaced persons and refugees and as ex-combatants. However, as with "motherhood" the social significance of each of these categories of experience lies in the ways in which the structuring of gender roles in society which pre-date any specific war or conflict, create a gendered set of meanings and implications for certain roles. So, for example, to say that someone is a "widow" has social, economic and political implications and resonances which are not present if one refers in gender-neutral terms to "someone who has lost a spouse". But these resonances only exist because of a prior set of social structures which are gendered. Apart from contributing to the definition of women's specific post-war concerns, these structural and situational factors, as Birgitte Sørensen (1998)<sup>6</sup> has pointed out, play a decisive role in defining the motivations as well as the constraints on women's involvement as social actors in the political process toward sustainable peace.

A gendered perspective of post-war reconstruction then, needs to look at the political, economic and social spheres in order to understand how these spheres are structured in gendered ways, perpetuating patterns of discrimination against and disadvantage of, women, albeit on a new terrain created by the conflict and the dynamics of its aftermath. In attempting to understand the gendered structuring of experience and relationships, however, it is important that social actors are not treated as passive bearers of structures but rather that human agency is recognised as an important ingredient in creating, recreating, mediating and contesting gendered identities. This point is particularly important in post-war contexts where social relations tend to be in enormous flux and where wartime conditions create a radically new set of experiences for many people, which can lead to new ways of viewing both themselves and their relationships with others. This in turn may create possibilities for change and/or conflict as some actors attempt to introduce new ways of being while others attempt to retain the status quo.

## Gender and Post-war Politics

In the political sphere a common call on the part of peace-builders has been for quotas, a "critical mass" or simply increased involvement of women in decision-making positions both during peace negotiation processes and in the post-war political dispensation. However, if, as this article has argued, there exists no essential category of "woman" it is worth asking what lies at the basis of the call for greater women's representation in political decision-making. A number of (often unstated) assumptions appear to inform this demand. These may include questions of fairness (the idea that since men and women are present in the population in roughly equal numbers this demographic reality should be reflected in decision-making institutions) and/or the more far-reaching idea that there exists a

"women's approach" which is unjustifiably and damagingly absent from the dominant political discourse, and/or that women have a set of interests different to those of men which can only be defended by other women. All three of these concerns are, for example, present in the following explanation for why women ought to be represented in political decision-making in relation to peace:

Women's wish to be included in the peace negotiation process is more than a simple demand for numeric representation proportional to women's presence in a particular society. It is a demand based on the belief that institutions governed by men are unlikely to reflect the specific interests and views of the female population; instead, these institutions may reproduce and even reinforce the marginalized position of women in society. Insofar as female citizens have needs and priorities different from those of their male counterparts, they would themselves be interested in participating in such negotiations to ensure that adequate attention is given to their views (Sørensen, 1998).<sup>7</sup>

However, in all three cases conceptual and practical difficulties abound. Where women are influential in formal peace processes (Palestine; Guatemala) their influence is the result of prior mobilisation and organisation in defence of their interests. This is in itself difficult to achieve because women are not a homogenous category and while having certain fundamental commonalities they also have interests that profoundly conflict. Once negotiations move from the general (cessation of hostilities; establishment of peace) to the specific (land distribution; competition for developmental resources), class schisms, rural/urban divides and other areas of conflicting interest come to the fore.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, initiatives to include women in greater numbers, which emerge from the national or central level, frequently do not reflect changes in attitudes or mores in the broader society. It is for example often pointed out that in Somalia, women were present early on in the Mogadishu peace deliberations. However, when it was recommended that all regional representations to the Transitional National Council should include at least one woman, it turned out that many clans would not accept being represented by a woman (Zainab 1996). Women are generally also excluded from the clan-based councils of elders, which in the present situation is a more important organ for political discussions (UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] 1994).

When we shift our focus to informal peace-building activities, often initiated at the peak of atrocities and instability, we see a very different picture. Here, women from all walks of life are among the most ardent participants, involved in a wide array of activities. However, the political nature of these activities is often undervalued. Women's activities in community or church groups, for example, are often labelled "volunteer", "charitable", or "social" despite their obvious political dimensions (Ferris 1998). Women themselves frequently adopt these appellations as a convenient legitimising tool for their political activities<sup>9</sup>. On the other hand, as women become politicised, and particularly when they form linkages with other women whose experiences are similar to their own, there is much testimony to suggest that the connection between what happens in the private domain of the family and social violence is rendered more transparent.

The conviction that peace should be approached at community and family levels is one shared by many women's peace organisations. But when peace agencies and activists glibly conclude that women must take up the cudgels for peace within their own families (Enloe 1993:47), they often risk underestimating both the psychological, emotional, physical and economic risks that women must take in order to challenge gender relations in their own families, and the far-reaching implications that such a challenge would have. Few women are in a position to take such risks and to ask them to do so is to place the responsibility for peace and justice on the shoulders of the most marginal, least empowered

and most vulnerable members of war-torn societies. Not surprising then, that where peace is won, it is often fragile and seldom just, failing to tackle the fundamental questions associated with societies whose very structure is dependent on violently enforced relations of dominance.

## Gender and the post-war economy

War generates circumstances of crisis, which in turn evoke responses that may upset or radically alter traditional gender role definitions and patterns of behaviour. Adult males become economically inactive due to their participation in fighting during the war and the post-conflict situation leaves many families in which the adult males have been killed. Of necessity women in these circumstances enter into new economic roles. In northern Somalia, for example, war led to some nomadic women taking over men's traditional role in trade. They began to frequent markets, to sell livestock and milk and to buy other essential consumer items. While these activities were initially temporary coping strategies, they nevertheless had long-term consequences, as women learned new skills which could be used in post-war times as well. Many men now prefer that women make these long trading journeys indicating that war-time conditions can have long-term effects on gender role definitions (Sørensen, 1998).<sup>10</sup>

For those women who are combatants during the fighting or who are displaced from their homes, war may expose them to new ideas and new possibilities for economic activity. Watson's study of female returnees in Chad, for example, showed that they maintained and elaborated on relationships established while in exile: "women...were able to take advantage of the permeability of national borders in these key frontier zones to trade in Nigerian cloth, cosmetics, whisky and alcohol" (Watson 1996:136).

However, this process of re-definition is often highly contested and a source of conflict between men and women. For example, women who transgress social boundaries by becoming involved in trade are often stigmatised as prostitutes.<sup>11</sup> Once women achieve a measure of economic independence, men risk losing control over them and women come to be seen as competitors for scarce economic resources such as jobs, trade routes and markets. The fact that some women resort to prostitution in the war or post-war situation becomes a convenient mechanism for discrediting all women's economic activity which is deemed to threaten men's interests. As women become increasingly successful in economic life, male-dominated state institutions adopt regulations and practices that undermine women's entrepreneurial activities and marginalise them as "problem citizens".

The ease with which women's economic activities are discredited or seen as marginal or unusual is heightened by the limited options for employment in the formal economic sector available to women. Here gendered relationships play a central role in excluding women and privileging men. For one thing, formal sector employment usually requires access to education and skills training and this access is gendered. Moreover, at the ideological level gender stereotypes are used to justify differential access and to minimise the scale of the perceived economic crisis in the post-war economy. With high rates of male unemployment due to demobilisation, economic decline and restructuring there is a strong motivation for governments to exclude women from the labour pool. Women are for the most part at the behest of state programmes which either encourage or discourage their participation in the formal economy because in the absence of socialised child care and other support for them in their roles as carers, their opportunities to enter the formal sector are greatly limited. The absence of programmes which make education and training available to women has a similar effect.

In the wake of demobilisation, and increased competition on the labour market due to repatriation and resettlement, ideologies of women's "proper role" which may have been de-emphasised during hostilities, come to the fore once more. Within this prevailing ideology war is seen to create unusual circumstances which require "unusual" responses, but once peace is restored, "Rosie the Riveter" must return to her natural *métier*, "lay down her tools and pick up her cookery books" (Beddoe 1989:4). To the extent that peace-builders draw on stereotypes of women's "natural" capacities and assumed biological traits, they are reinforcing rather than assisting in the fundamental revisioning of prevailing relations of gender dominance which justify women's exclusion from the public sphere of work and politics on the basis of their putative special responsibilities and proficiencies as mothers.

## Social Reconstruction

At the social level, post-war societies face the challenge of rehabilitating the social sector and creating the conditions for the long-term social re-integration of war-damaged societies. Social services are often severely damaged by war, partly due to the reallocation of funds from social budgets to the military domain and partly due to the loss of professional personnel. Intrastate conflicts in particular, often target social sector institutions and cause massive social dislocation. As women often carry the main responsibility for the well-being of their families and communities, they are particularly affected by the social damage caused by war. For the same reason, they are also very active in restoring essential social services such as health and education, both during and after conflict.

Some commentators have seen this gendered role definition as having the potential to place significant power in women's hands. In war-torn societies, education is often regarded as an important agent of socialisation in alternative norms to prevailing attitudes of hostility. There are many examples of women's self-help groups (in Somalia, Rwanda, Uganda and elsewhere) that focus on trying to increase women's awareness of their indirect roles in conflict through their primary responsibility for socialisation of children and of the possibilities for change. Such programmes however are premised on the idea that the disempowered are through their very disempowerment able to challenge social structures. They take as given women's predominance in certain social roles and responsibilities and fail to challenge some of the bases for war and violence in relations of gender domination which alienate men from children, result in an absence of positive male role models performing functions of caring and nurturing, deny women access to power or authority, marginalise attitudes of peaceableness and valorise violence. Under these structural conditions women are far more likely to fulfil their socialised "responsibility" of reproducing relations of dominance and militarised attitudes than they are to challenge them.

The post-war social milieu is frequently one of heightened uncertainty about gender role definition, which creates the conditions both for challenge and for conflict. Accounts from war-torn societies indicate the frustration experienced by many women, especially female combatants who are suddenly excluded from positions of authority in the post-war social arena and again confined to the domestic sphere, where they are expected to revert to traditional ways of behaving. As a result, as a number of studies have indicated, women may be reluctant to return to their pre-war home villages and instead remain in exile or relocate to urban centres. Those who do return to their home villages may face hostile and suspicious social attitudes. Returning women frequently experience domestic violence and abuse, often related to alcohol abuse, which is in turn linked to male insecurity due to unemployment

or traumatised during the conflict. Returnees' behaviour and new attitudes developed during war are perceived as a lack of respect for local cultural traditions and they find it difficult to gain acceptance and integration with the local community. Like returning female soldiers, women who have been raped or widowed and are difficult to incorporate into the dominant framework of woman as wife, mother or virgin daughter, face ostracism and diminished access to resources (Sørensen, 1998).<sup>12</sup>

Rather than perpetuating unhelpful stereotypes, post-war social reconstruction needs, then, to be sensitive to the redefinition and renegotiation of gender roles and relationships that are likely to characterise the post-conflict society in complex ways. War erodes traditional social bonds giving rise to new nodes of conflict while at the same time destroying the social fund of goodwill, collective wisdom, shared norms and communication networks that provide the means for resolving conflict. As Chingono (1996:220) writes of Mozambique: "The erosion and, in some cases, the breakdown of public institutions has affected the interrelations between kin, friends, and neighbours. New forms of family and association are replacing kinship and extended family ties". At the most fundamental level then, war challenges are re-ordering relationships between men and women. We cannot get at this re-ordering by talking about women. Rather, it is the gendered nature of social institutions that are at the heart of appropriate interpretations of the social impact of war.

## Conclusion

Essentialist notions of mothers and peace, which arise in the peace movement and in the discourse of aid organisations, appear in part to be building on a misappropriation of a wide body of feminist work which has critiqued dominant ideas of rational thinking and offered in their stead the notion of "maternal thinking". However, feminist scholarship has long conceded the absence of an essential "women's nature" and acknowledged what it calls the concept of "difference". For example, in Sara Ruddick's book *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*, she is careful to characterise mothering as a practice rather than as a biological inevitability: "mothers are not identified by fixed biological or legal relationships to children but by the work they set out to do.... This conception of mothering as a kind of caring labor undermines the myth that mothers are "naturally" loving. There is nothing foreordained about maternal response" (Ruddick 1995:xi).

Ruddick points to the potential of maternal practice to develop ways of dealing with conflict that are consistent with the goals of mothering. Such practices are marginalised as a result of women's marginal position in society's power structure. As Enloe (1993:246) puts it, militarisation occurs because some peoples' fears are allowed to be heard, and to inform agendas, while other peoples' fears are trivialised or silenced. The point is that attitudes of peace and caring are marginalised and that this arises from a social milieu in which war, violence, inequality and aggression have come to be legitimised; and unequal gender relationships and socially constructed gender stereotypes are very central to the process of legitimisation. By uncritically adopting these stereotypes, those with an interest in peace-building become part of the problem. As Ruddick (1995:xviii) points out, "neither women nor mothers, nor for that matter men nor fathers, are 'peaceful'". Instead, we need to understand that to the extent that a politics of peace, care and justice is possible, it must be created and actively fostered.

A gendered approach differs from the tradition of women's studies which isolates women for special treatment; tending to portray women as a homogeneous group. The result is the construction of a



universalistic narrative of women's experience of war. Yet "women come out of armed conflicts with highly diverse experiences and priorities for the rebuilding process" and develop "dissimilar strategies and employ different means to deal with what appear to be similar conditions" (Sørensen, 1998).<sup>13</sup> A gendered approach is a corrective also to "gender-blind" accounts which employ categories such as "people", "the population", "refugees", "internally displaced persons", "demobilized soldiers", or "disabled persons", that conceal the gendered nature of experience. Processes such as state-building, national identity formation, democratisation, economic development and so on, which have previously been regarded as largely gender-neutral and often external to women's domains are themselves exposed as inherently gendered.

A gendered analysis, in contrast to both gender-blind approaches and those which focus exclusively on women, addresses the social relationships between men and women. In conflict and post-war situations gender relationships are challenged. Both women and men struggle to identify and consolidate new identities and roles. However, as these struggles of identity and status are often mixed with battles over resources and power, the reconstitution of gender is potentially conflictual. "As women and men set out to win, consolidate or reclaim different rights and positions, social institutions and categories such as community, family, household, workplace, and friendship take on new meanings and roles" (Sørensen, 1998).<sup>14</sup>

While women clearly are particularly vulnerable in times of crisis, it is important that this is seen not as a result of women's nature, but the result of social structures and mechanisms that turn women into victims and reproduce or even increase their vulnerability in times of crisis. If these structures and mechanisms are not challenged and exposed as gendered, processes of post-war reconstruction are likely to, despite initial gains, eventually result in the reinforcement of the relations of domination which make war more likely in the first place.

## Notes

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1. While the term 'sex' is usually used to refer to the biological differences between men and women, the notion of 'gender' encompasses the socially constructed roles and characteristics which adhere to the categories 'male' and 'female'. These may differ in time and place.

2. Here I am drawing on Riane Eisler's formulation in Eisler 1988 in which she distinguishes between the 'partnership' societies of the Neolithic period which predate the 'dominator' societies of later periods that have come to be known as 'Western civilization'.

3. Concluding Remarks, p.1. <http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/op3-11.htm>

4. The discussion of women's participation in decision-making in relation to war and peace in fact predates the recent discussion of post-conflict reconstruction. In 1975, the Nairobi Conference, which marked the opening of the United Nations Decade for Women, pointed to the need to involve women equally in decision-making. The recommendations of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the

Advancement of Women stated that: 'Governments should be encouraged to increase the participation of women in the peace process at the decision-making level, including them as part of delegations to negotiate international agreements relating to peace and disarmament and establishing a target for the number of women participating in such delegations' (United Nations Economic and Social Council 1993:Recommendation XX). At the Beijing Conference in 1995, the issue was again raised at the international policy level, when the conference defined it as a strategic objective to 'increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels...and integrate a gender perspective in the resolution of armed or other conflicts...and ensure that bodies are able to address gender issues properly' (United Nations Economic and Social Council 1995:61). Since 1989 the U.N.'s Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) have devoted much time to this issue. A 1996 report of an Expert Group Meeting of DAW reiterates the need for external and government actors to pay attention to women's particular needs and capacities in programmes relating to peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction (United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women 1996). In the early 1990s UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) founded a project called African Women in Crisis (AFWIC). The project document states that 'The mission of AFWIC is to promote a development-oriented strategy to the process of disaster mitigation which ensures that women are viewed as both crucial resources and full participants in all efforts to alleviate crisis situations in Africa' (UNIFEM 1994:7).

5.'Women Organize for Peace and Non-Violence in Africa'. Introduction by Ingeborg Breines. [http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/projects/women\\_organize\\_for\\_peace\\_in\\_africa.htm](http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/projects/women_organize_for_peace_in_africa.htm)

6.'Political Reconstruction', p.1. <http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/op3-03.htm>

7.'Political Reconstruction', p.7. <http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/op3-03.htm>

8.For a fuller discussion on the question of interests and women's representation see Vincent 2001.

9.For more on this see Vincent 1999.

10.'Economic Reconstruction', p.4. <http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/op3-06.htm>

11.See for example Cheater & Gaidzanwa 1996:191.

12.'Social Integration', pp 1-5. <http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/op3-09.htm>

13.'Conclusion', p.2. <http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/op3-11.htm>

14.'Conclusion', p.2. <http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/op3-11.htm>

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# On Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict Management in Nigeria

by Rian Leith and Hussein Solomon

## ABSTRACT

From Angola to Armenia and from Kosovo to Kenya the world is witnessing the rise of virulent ethnic nationalisms. This article has three main objectives. First, it aims to provide a broad overview of the theoretical quagmire of notions of ethnic conflict. Second, by means of examining Nigeria as a case study it examines how variables such as governance, civil-military relations, economics and religion effect notions of ethnic identity. Finally, it proposes certain policy-relevant recommendations to address the problem of ethnic conflict in Nigeria.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ethnic conflict is an issue that, particularly during the last decade or so, has crept to the forefront of international political debate. Events such as those unfolding in Rwanda, Burundi and the Balkans, have brought the issue to a position of prominence, but it is not a new issue altogether, as various instances in Africa amply illustrate. Polarisation between ethnic groups and resulting conflict between them as they compete for resources, political and economic power and other goals, has spawned negative consequences of tremendous proportions, of which genocide, ethnic cleansing and civil war are but a few examples (Stremlau 1999-03-26:1).

In Africa in particular, the problem of ethnic conflict has been compounded by the colonial legacy of national states whose artificial boundaries cut across many ethnic divides. The challenge of ethnic conflict, therefore, is set out in the following question by Diamond (in Diamond & Plattner 1994:xiv): "How can particularistic and often antagonistic group identities be reconciled with the unifying mission of the modern state? More especially, how can this be done in a democratic state?"

In this paper it is attempted to discuss the concept of ethnic conflict by using Nigeria as a specific case study, while some practical suggestions will be offered to contribute to the process of finding solutions to this issue.

## 2. WHAT IS MEANT BY "ETHNIC CONFLICT"?

Since the earliest times, ethnicity has been viewed in terms of a group setting and associated with the idea of nationhood. Indeed, according to Peterson, Novak and Gleason (1982:1), the word "ethnic" is derived via Latin from the Greek *ethnos*, which means nation or race. 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". Toland (1993:3) basically agrees with Thomson in her conception of an ethnic group, but takes it one step further by adding a sense of belonging on the individual level: "[ethnicity is] the sense of peoplehood held by members of a group sharing a common culture and history within a society". These two views are shared by Diamond and Plattner (1994:xvii), who regard ethnicity as a "highly inclusive (and relatively large-scale) group identity based on some notion of common origin, recruited primarily from kinship, and

typically manifesting some measure of cultural distinctiveness. So conceived, ethnicity easily embraces groups differentiated by colour, language and religion; it covers 'tribes', 'races', 'nationalities' and 'castes'. In this sense, "an ethnic group is much like the 'imagined community' of the nation". Ethnicity, however, focuses more on sentiments of origin and decent, rather than the geographical considerations of a state," according to Thomson (2000:58).

Thomson (2000:58) further makes the important observation that ethnicity becomes more pronounced when it is used to distinguish one social group from another within a specific territory. Contrary to the popular view that an ethnic group is found within a larger society (and thus clashing with Toland's definition above), he posits that 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.

Toland (1993:1) states that the state has always been at risk of promoting and maintaining the degradation of the social environment because of the propensity of federal policymaking to focus on self-maintenance at the expense of those groups and individuals that are deemed peripheral to the state. Indeed, as she (1993:2) further notes, the idea of a "pure" nation state with one monolithic voice has never been a reality, and will probably never be. She continues by arguing: "studies of statehood have shown us that although the nature of state society has always been plural, the presence of pluralism, that exists as a form of rule only when there are policies and expectations that serve the interests of all ethnic groups, irrespective of their differences, has not yet been fully realised".

The ideal solution to this problem will, of course, be the achievement of social pluralism with equal respect for, and equal representation of, all ethnic groups within one state, but, as Diamond and Plattner (1994:xix) indicate, "ethnicity is the most difficult type of cleavage to manage. Because ethnicity taps cultural and symbolic issues – basic notions of identity and the self, of individual and group worth and entitlement – the conflicts it generates are intrinsically less amenable to compromise than those revolving around material issues. When the struggle is over money, taxes, wage levels, business regulations, social welfare, infrastructural investments, or similar issues, the gains and losses are divisible in a variety of ways". The point is thus being made that, although ethnic conflicts often involve material issues which can sometimes easily be resolved through conventional bargaining, they revolve around underlying exclusive symbols and conceptions of legitimacy and become characterised by competing demands that cannot easily be broken into "bargainable increments".

What we have here, then, is that ethnicity is not simply the "quest for commonality", as Robert Nisbet (as quoted by Peterson, Novak and Gleason 1982:19) puts it, but is also based on the wider functions of the state, "and thus the greater impetus to organise in order to get what the state is distributing – and to prevent others from getting it" (Peterson, Novak and Gleason 1982:19). One of the more influential and outspoken theoretical approaches characterising ethnicity as a political factor, builds upon this premise and links ethnicity with both the modern state and nationalism. Viewing elite competition as causing ethnic conflict, the approach by Paul R. Brass argues "ethnicity and nationalism are not 'givens', but are social and political constructions. They 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) this process invariably involves competition and conflict for political power, economic benefits, and social status between the political elite, class, and leadership groups both within and among different ethnic categories" (Kruger 1993:11).

In this context, Bostock (1997:94) defines ethnic conflict as a "breakdown of accommodation of ethnic minorities within a state". We have a few reservations with this definition, however. Firstly, ethnic conflict can also result from a failure to accommodate ethnic majorities within the state, as illustrated by the case in South Africa under apartheid. Secondly, the definition is too vague. Ethnic conflict can, for instance, result from insufficient accommodation within the state, as perceived by ethnic groups, without a breakdown having to occur (although a breakdown will surely feed the conflict and exacerbate the situation). Lastly, the cause of ethnic conflict might not necessarily lie within the state, but can be the result of external influences, as the case in eastern Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) under the influence of the ethnic genocide in Rwanda and Burundi illustrates.

The question that now remains is what, then, is meant by "ethnic conflict"? In light of the discussion above, it is important to note that mere differences in values or regional development, or between ethnic groups for that matter, do not as such promote ethnicity and ethnic conflict, according to Kruger (1993:12). Quoting Brass, he states "ethnic selfconsciousness, ethnically-based demands, and ethnic conflict can occur only if there is some conflict either between indigenous and external elites and authorities or between indigenous elites". Furthermore, as we are reminded by Cohen (as quoted by Toland 1993:13), "ethnicity is first and foremost 'situational'. It is a dynamic process in which the interactive situation determines the level of inclusiveness used in setting-up the self/other relationship. In other words, how the identity is subjectively or objectively perceived relates to what is important to include in the identification criteria. What is important is going to relate to who the individuals or groups are within the interaction, what biological and cultural heritages are at stake, why the interaction is taking place, what the self-interests are that have to be satisfied and if it is a situation where both parties are equal".

### 3. CASE STUDY: ETHNIC CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is located in West Africa and is, with about 118,5 million inhabitants, the most populous nation on the continent. Rich in oil reserves, Nigeria is ranked as one of the most developed states in Africa, but ongoing conflicts of interest between various population groups have put a damper on further political and economic development. As Thomson (2000:65) notes, much of this has led to political mobilisation on ethnic lines.

As a result of boundary demarcations during the colonial period, Nigeria as a political entity was created in 1914 a multi-ethnic nation consisting of more than 200 ethnic groups speaking over 250 languages. The three main groups are the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and the Igbo, who comprise roughly 28%, 20% and 17% of the population respectively (Falola 1999:5). These groups, however, can further be subdivided, such as the twenty-nine distinct divisions within the Hausa-Fulani that Thomson (2000:66) identifies. Although these groups interacted with one another before the colonial era, they were not primordial societies, and the artificiality of the British-drawn boundaries contributed to the 'social construction' of these ethnic groups, so much so that "the creation of these 'tribes' are closely linked to the era of British colonial rule" (Thomson 2000:66).

Each of these groups mobilises in a distinct geographical region that closely resembles the administrative boundaries of the colonial period. The northern region is home to the Hausa-Fulani and, as the Northern Protectorate, was administered through indirect rule with the Fulani emirs as intermediaries. After previously being run as two separate administrative regions, the western region, dominated by the Yoruba, and the eastern region, mainly populated by the Igbo, were combined in 1906 to form the Southern Protectorate and eventually joined with the Northern protectorate to establish a single Nigeria (Falola 1999:68; Thomson 2000:66). Given this distinct regional administrative pattern, it was only natural, according to Thomson (2000:66) that ethnic groups would develop within, and identify with, these separate regions, as this was a rational way to lobby the colonial authorities for resources. Indeed, the uneven modernisation and differential administration of the protectorates under colonial rule (coupled with the artificial boundaries), engendered strong regionalist pressures for the introduction of full-fledged federalism to replace the unitary (albeit decentralised) colonial administration. In 1954, this transition finally occurred with the inauguration of a federal framework, which secured autonomy and hegemony for the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo in the northern, western and eastern regions respectively (Suberu in Diamond & Plattner 1994:57).

When Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960, the constitution entrenched this reality, to a large extent affirming regional differences and providing a strong institutional base for group sentiments, with the result that the First Republic was dominated by ethno-regional groupings. The federal system of three regions was established with the aims of recognising the needs, and balancing the aspirations, of the ethnic dominant groups with each region having a strong and relatively autonomous government while the central government focused on national issues such as foreign policy, international trade and defence (Falola 1999:98; Thomson 2000:67). Coming as no surprise, Nigerians "responded to this ethno-regional constitution by voting for their 'cultural brokers'. They charged their chosen candidates with capturing central federal resources, bringing these back to the regional community. Consequently, no powerful nationwide political party or constituency emerged. Local considerations, dominated, and issues of ethnicity became increasingly politicised. A political party that squarely identified with just one ethnic group governed each region. The Fulani-Hausa governed the north, the Yoruba the west, and the Ibo the east" (Thomson 2000:67-68).

The problem with the federal structure was that it not only inequitably incorporated minorities into ethnic-dominated regional bastions, but also created a disproportionately large northern region, which included nearly three-quarters of Nigeria's territory and over half its population. Ethno-regional polarisation increased as the Christian south feared the more populous and Muslim north, while the economically poorer north feared the better-educated south, and a more vicious struggle for political advantage among the regions ensued (Suberu in Diamond & Plattner 1994:58). In the words of Falola (1999:10), "the three regions and their ethnicities competed as enemies".

Thomson (2000:68) is adamant that the greatest constitutional danger lay in the fact that it was possible for two regions to join forces against the third, a possibility that turned into reality when the northern party formed a coalition with the eastern party soon after independence. Using their majority in the national assembly, they exploited a split in the isolated Yoruba party and created a fourth federal region, the Midwest region, in 1963 to disperse the political power of the Yoruba. While giving satisfaction to certain ethnic minority aspirations in the old western region, Nigeria's minority situation remained substantially unresolved and further intensified the overall imbalance in the federal structure.



Coupled with economic mismanagement and labour agitation, this instability paved the way for a military intervention in January 1966, ostensibly to restore order and discipline (Suberu in Diamond & Plattner 1994:58; Thomson 2000:68).

The military coup, however, just marked the beginning of a deeper crisis. Ironsi, an Igbo, succeeded the head of the coup, Major Nzeogwu, as leader of the military, but as the coup was interpreted by other groups as Igbo-inspired, Ironsi was soon deposed by Gowon in a counter coup in July 1966. Gowon was from the north, and "like the politicians, the soldiers too had their ethnic loyalties" (Falola 1999:11). The situation in Nigeria degenerated fast, leading to a general massacre of thousands of Igbo in the north, followed by the Igbo's declaration of the eastern region as the independent state of Biafra in 1967 (Falola 1999:11).

Thomson (2000:68) describes this event as the low point in Nigeria's aspirations of national unity, but a probable highpoint of political mobilisation along ethnic lines. In the civil war that ensued, Nigeria was brought to the world's attention, with the US and the USSR backing Nigeria, and Biafra receiving support from states like France, Portugal and South Africa. Re-unification only took place after the civil war was ended three years later in 1970, but by then almost two million "Biafrans" had died (Nel & McGowan 1999:155-156; Thomson 2000:68).

The first period of military rule lasted until 1979. The federal military government immediately embarked on a process of centralising state power, strengthening its control over the states and consolidating the influence of the federal civil servants. This process was aided by the increase in oil revenues, which was used to fund a post-war reconstruction programme. By installing nationalist institutions, it was attempted to tame mobilisation along ethnic lines, and as an extension of this approach, the number of regions in the federation were also increased to 12 and later to 19. This multi-state federalism aimed at loosening the stranglehold of the three dominant ethnic groups by opening up opportunities for the smaller ethnic groups in order to contain the disintegrative tendencies inherent in Nigeria's cultural diversity (Suberu in Diamond & Plattner 1994:58; Thomson 2000:68-69). The extent to which the military was successful in maintaining Nigeria's national integrity, is illustrated by the fact that there have not been any serious attempts at secession after the Biafra civil war, but as Thomson (2000:69) correctly notes, it does not mean that the country enjoyed complete political stability. Corruption within the bureaucracy and poor economic management, coupled with the waning of Gowon's popularity after a reneging of his promise to hand over power to civilians, enticed officers to effect a palace coup in 1975, bringing Murtala Mohammed to power (Falola 1999:11; Thomson 2000:69).

It was Mohammed's successor, Lt-Gen Olusegun Obasanjo, who returned Nigeria to civilian rule in 1979. The Second Republic was founded on a highly centralised constitution, designed to reinforce the integrative effects of the multi-state structure. The northern-based National Party of Nigeria (NPN) won the elections, but due to support of the organisation in the south, it received some credibility in its pretensions as a national party. Although the federal government still looked after its own interests, it had to acknowledge ethno-regional power and distribute resources accordingly, and according to Thomson (2000:68) "[apart from] material goods, and local budgets, political posts were also part of this arithmetic". The top federal posts, such as the posts of president, national chairman and vice-president, were rotated among party notables from all of the regions, while the inclusive federal cabinet also represented all of the major 'ethnic brokers' in Nigeria. All in all, the result of this system was that

no ethnic group could be perceived as being too dominant, with the flip-side of the coin that none of these groups could be excluded (Falola 1999:58; Thomson 2000:69).

As history went on to show, these attempts at "ensuring that the kind of ethnic and regional polarisation that savaged the First Republic did not emerge in the Second Republic" (quoted by Suberu in Diamond & Plattner 1994:58) just were not enough. The 'boomerang effects' of the structural and institutional changes were illustrated by the abuses and controversies that beset the attempts at implementing the federal principles at national level, as indicated by the vociferous campaigns for the creation of new states by communities in order to gain access to federal revenues and the high degree of antagonism that opposition-dominated state governments showed toward the centralising features of the 1979 constitution (Suberu in Diamond & Plattner 1994:58). Some of these state governments did fall in the national elections of 1983, which established the hegemony of the NPN, but these elections were alleged to have been heavily rigged and the party system again lost its credibility (Falola 1999:11-12).

On New Year's Eve of the same year, Maj-Gen Muhammed Buhari came to power on the back of a military coup. This time around, the military did not reject the democratic federal government because of a failure of ethnic arithmetic or its nationalist sentiments. But instead, as Thomson (2000:69) indicates, the rejection was because of the alleged massive fraud of the 1983 elections, abuse of power by the police and the judiciary, failure by the federal government to stem the large-scale corruption among the political elite and the mismanagement of the economy (a situation compounded by a decline in oil revenues) (Falola 1999:12). Thomson (2000:70) further elaborates on the situation as follows: "In a system of government that relied on ethnic patronage for its survival, corruption was hard to control. Politics had become centred on the short-term winning of state resources, and gaining access to levers of power. Little long-term strategic political and economic planning could survive in this institutionalised system of political exchange. Resource capture and distribution had become more important to politicians and bureaucrats than the actual development of the economy that produced these resources. Nigeria had hit, head-on, the problems of inefficiency and legitimacy associated with [Donald Rothchild's] hegemonial exchange model". Telling, indeed, then, was the fact that the population welcomed the military after clamouring for democracy in the 1970's (Falola 1999:12).

Buhari's government failed to find any remedies to these continuing problems, especially where the economy was concerned, and became increasingly authoritarian in realising its goal of restoring discipline to public life. Paying little attention to public opinion and involving itself in human rights' abuses, the military government increasingly lost public support, while the "public cooperated because of coercion rather than patriotism" (Falola 1999:12). This prompted Maj-Gen Ibrahim Babangida to overthrow the Buhari regime in yet another military coup, in 1985. In an attempt to gain immediate popular support, he released political prisoners and promised open government, while launching an economic structural adjustment programme to strengthen the ailing economy. Babangida also promised a return to civilian rule by 1992, and in this respect there was an attempt to formulate a new constitution that could manage Nigeria's social divisions more successfully than the 'democratic experiment' of the Second Republic (Thomson 2000:70).

Under the presidency of Babangida, the states were considerably weakened via fragmentation into smaller units (numbering about 30 states), the cutting of their shares of federal revenues, and the systematic erosion of their power over local authorities. In the political sphere, Babangida continued

his drive of centralisation by introducing a two-party system based on national, and not regional, political competition. In this step, aimed at bringing the institutionalised ethnic balancing of the past to an end, both parties now had to win support from across the country in order to win power. The fragility of the mandatory two-party system was exposed in the June 1993 elections, however, when a southerner, Moshood Abiola, won the elections for the first time in history. Under the pressure from the military, Babangida promptly annulled the elections and Abiola was thrown in jail (Suberu in Diamond & Plattner 1994:59; Thomson 2000:70-71). Clearly, "elements of the military enjoyed their taste of political power, and were not prepared to relinquish the reins of the state" (Thomson 2000:71).

Falola (1999: 13) is of the opinion that, although Babangida had a friendlier disposition than Buhari, his ambition to hang on to power became his undoing. Surviving two coup attempts in 1985 and 1991, Babangida was forced to transfer power to an Interim National Government (ING). In a peculiar arrangement, Gen Sani Abacha, the Chief of Defence Staff, was retained as the only senior military officer in the ING, and of course he quickly rose to dominate it. He disbanded the ING and proclaimed himself as president of Nigeria, launching a reign that manipulated ethnicity, the greed of civilian politicians and brutal violence to stay in power against the popular will, only ending with his death in 1998 (Falola 1999:13; Okojie 1997:11-13).

Multi-party democracy only returned to Nigeria in 1999, when Olusegun Obasanjo, the retired general that led Nigeria's military government in 1976-1979, was elected as the president of the Third Republic. According to Thomson (2000:71), Obasanjo's election clearly illustrated the 'veto' that the military still held over Nigerian politics. Democracy, however, did not bring an end to Nigeria's diverse troubles, and as McGreal (2000-02-08:1) notes, the end of military rule has unleashed a store of bitter resentments in Nigeria that have fuelled ethnic massacres, the rise of militant regional organisations and a rush to introduce sharia law in the Islamic north over the virulent protests of Christians.

One can obviously ask the question of why exactly this is the case. The UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs (2000-01-06:1), reports that analysts in Lagos and Harcourt offer the explanation that "the introduction of democracy has acted like the release of a pressure valve, enabling people to vent their pent-up anger and express themselves more freely". One of the analysts is of the opinion that the causes for the communal conflicts have been there all along, with another continuing and expounding on this line by arguing that "under successive military governments, particularly the suppressive and brutal regime of Sani Abacha, not many of these conflict areas have been able to give vent to their anger as the fear of the military kept them in check". Yet another analyst contends on his part that "after Abacha's experience, people are now prepared to defend whatever they consider their interests to be, more forcefully" (UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs 2000-01-06:1).

Whatever the case may be, the situation in Nigeria clearly needs to be resolved, but before some practical suggestions are offered in this regard, it is a good idea to briefly expand upon and clarify the main issues at stake.

From the above discussion, and in line with the purpose of this paper, it is clear that the question of ethnicity and ethnic conflict underlies the problems that Nigeria has faced and currently continues to face. Ethnic conflict in Nigeria mainly revolves around the following four specific legacies of the past:

## Geographic and demographic characteristics:

In addition to forging over 200 ethnic groups together into one state, the colonial legacy of the three separate administrative regions (closely resembling the three dominant regions today) has proved to be a major stumbling block in attempts to establish unity in Nigeria. Mobilisation has taken place along ethno-regional lines in order to lobby the colonial authorities for resources a practice that continued after Nigeria became independent. The result was constant regional rivalries, and the more each group became focused on realising its own interests, the further their ethnic consciousness grew. In the process the idea of 'being Nigerian' was thrown to the wind.

### - Resources and the economy:

As noted above, the economy played a large role in the fuelling of conflict in Nigeria. The south is more resource-rich, particularly richly endowed with oil reserves, while the north is more agriculturally orientated. Since oil accounted for more than 80% of the federal government's revenues, and as a result of the competition between states for shares in this revenue, the north tried to increase its political influence and maintain its dominance in Nigerian politics to gain access to these resources. At the same time, the groups of the south counter-reacted to these attempts of the north in order to maximise their own slices of the cake. The problem is further exacerbated by the fact that oil is located in specific ethnic areas, with the result that the groups in these areas tend to feel that the oil is '100% theirs'. Obasanjo's proposals that 30% of the oil revenues be ploughed back into the local areas from which oil is pumped, has also conflicted with the interests of the local elites who want to strengthen their own positions by erecting infrastructure. In the process ethnic rivalries have further increased, fuelled by the economic mismanagement of the various governments since independence.

### - Religion

It is noted above that the Christian south feared the larger-populated Muslim north, while the 'underdeveloped' north feared the better-educated south. Religion has indeed been a major divisive factor in Nigeria for decades and religious contention has been sharpened by the fact that the two previous republics were led by northern Muslims on top of the dominance of the federal government by Muslim northerners for more than thirty years since independence. The religious turbulence has resonated sharply in regional struggles for power in Nigeria, the most recent being the clashes between Christians and Muslims over the introduction of the Islamic sharia law in the northern state of Zamfara, and possibly other states as well (Cunliffe-Jones 2000-03-06:2). The UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs (1999-08-04:1), for example, gives an account of the violence in the south-western town of Shagamu that erupted between the three major ethnic groups after a Hausa woman was killed by a Yoruba group for watching forbidden religious rites.

### - The military:

Nigeria has spent only about ten years under a democratic government since gaining independence in 1960 the rest of the time a military government was in power. Although all of the Nigerian governments have looked after their own interests first, the military took it one step further. The authoritarian military governments followed a kind of a 'divide and rule' approach in order to stay in power, and flamed ethnic tensions to draw attention away from themselves. An example of this can be found in Babangida's move of enrolling Nigeria in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1986 (Suberu in Diamond & Plattner 1994:60). In protest against the military regimes, many ethnic-based militant groups have emerged. One such group a group that is widely regarded as one of the

fuelling factors behind recent ethnic violence in Nigeria is the pro-Yoruba Odudua People's Congress (OPC), but obviously the formation of such groups has led to similar groups being formed, such as the pro-Hausa-Fulani Arewa People's Congress (APC) (UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs 2000-01-06:2).

#### 4. ETHNIC CONFLICT IN NIGERIA: WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

When trying to offer practical solutions for the resolution and/or management of ethnic conflict, it has to be borne in mind that one is almost always faced with a multi-faceted issue containing numerous complexities the case of Nigeria being no exception. Not being intimately familiar with all these intricacies certainly detracts from any suggestions offered, but every attempt is a step closer to realising the ultimate goal, just as every drop fills the bucket.

Firstly, let us have a look at the challenges facing Nigeria under Obasanjo challenges that ethnic conflict management will obviously have to take into account. According to Solomon (2000:17), these challenges include the following:

- To forge a united Nigeria out of 250 fractious ethnic groups;
- To limit the power of the military, while ensuring its maintenance as a source of stability in West Africa;
- To inculcate a culture respectful of human rights and the rule of law;
- To increase economic performance while simultaneously developing an understanding of the need for a more equitable distribution of the country's wealth; and
- To put an end to spiralling levels of crime and corruption through effective, good governance.

Three models on ethnic conflict management have been identified in the literature on ethnic conflict: the control model, the shared homeland model, and the consociational model (Rabie 1994:60-61). The control model was developed by Ian Lustick, based on the Israeli political system in dealing with the Arab minority in Israel, and is a model to achieve political stability by allowing the majority to have a near total control over the minority "a system of majority dictatorship to enhance the interests of the controlling majority at the expense of the controlled minority, reducing it to a position of subordination and submission" (Rabie 1994:61-62). It should be clear that this model could not be applied to Nigeria, as there is no clear distinction between a 'majority' and a 'minority' in the country. Besides, attempts of one group to control another, have often elicited negative counter-reactions by other groups in Nigeria (e.g. the emergence of militant groups such as the OIC and the APC). The shared homeland model has been developed by Mohamed Rabie to deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict, and recognises the political reality of nationalism and ethnicity. It therefore calls for the political separation of groups unwilling or unable to peacefully co-exist under one political system. Again, it should be clear that this model should not be applied to Nigeria. More than 200 ethnic groups have been sharing the Nigerian territory for at least many decades, and even centuries, with the result that there are no distinct boundaries to be drawn between them. Any attempts to do this will literally open Pandora's box, not only in the context of Nigeria, but in the African context as well, and will further be against the explicit international understanding of the OAU that colonial borders will be honoured an understanding aimed exactly at keeping the box closed.

The consociational model is not perfect either, but is certainly more applicable to Nigeria than the previous two. Developed by Arend Lijphart and based on the Netherlands' political experience, it is a power-sharing model that views different ethnic or cultural groups as partners interested in overcoming their differences to make the system work and therefore willing to negotiate and make compromises. This model does not only assume the existence of a legitimate leadership to represent each group, but also that intergroup negotiations are done by these leaders who have the ability to avoid the dangers

of intergroup conflict through negotiation (Rabie 1994:61). This model should further be applied by using the integrative approach. The integrative approach aims at integrating the interests of adversaries through solutions that meet their mutual needs without sacrificing their basic demands. This may be accomplished through building new cooperative relationships that facilitate the fulfilment of seemingly contradictory goals (Rabie 1994:73). How can this be applied to Nigeria, however?

In Nigeria, there are three main levels of leadership that can potentially participate in the negotiations process, namely the federal government under Obasanjo, the state governments and the leaders of the various ethnic groups outside of these structures. Under the initiative of the federal government, determining the various leaderships to participate in the negotiations process can take place both horizontally (e.g. Obasanjo and his cabinet with National Assembly or between groups on grassroots level etc.) and vertically (e.g. federal government with state governments). During these preliminary talks (as well as later on) issues such as ideology and religion should be downplayed to a minimum, as only a basis for future talks and negotiations are being formed. These talks can then be gradually intensified and broadened to encompass other issues as well. It should be stressed that this process must be as inclusive and representative as possible.

Clearly a higher degree of government centralisation should be introduced in order to circumvent many problems of the past. As an example, the number of states should be kept to a minimum, as their proliferation intensified competition for federal resources in the past, and so contributed to ethnic conflict and fragmentation. A higher degree of state centralisation will obviously be conducive to uniting Nigeria, but will not succeed in bringing this about on its own. It should be accompanied by nation-building and the forging of a common Nigerian identity based on symbolism and the spirit of ubuntu. These symbols should incorporate as many of the symbols cherished by the various population groups as possible, while combined with totally new ones. The alternative is that an entirely new set of symbols be introduced. In the negotiation process, the details of these and other important issues such as the division of power can be worked out, but we do think that a limited party system, similar to the two party system under Babangida, will be more effective than a multi-party system, as it will force political parties to gain support nationally instead of relying on traditional bases of support, and contribute to a unified nationhood in which each person will see him/herself as a Nigerian first of all. Indeed, the powerful effects of a national pride should not be underrated.

In addition, the results of the negotiations should be contained in a constitution that clearly specifies all aspects of the political and other systems as agreed between the negotiating parties. A charter of human rights should form a main part of this document, while the constitution should clearly make provisions for establishing the rule of law principle. It is further important that the provisions of the constitution remain rooted in reality, while the judiciary should be sufficiently strengthened to uphold it.

In our estimation the economic factors should be viewed as the key to the effective management of ethnic conflict in Nigeria. Revenues from oil especially, should be managed in such a way, that each community sees substantial benefits emanating from their peaceful participation in both the political and economic processes, instead of competing with one another for federal resources. The federal government should still be the primary administrator of these revenues, and allocate at least 30% of the revenues, whether from oil or other economic activities, to the area in which it is generated. Conversely, communities can be provided with different benefits, for instance in the form of housing or infrastructure. Instead of antagonising local leaders, or the communities themselves, the federal

government should involve them as much as possible in the decision-making process of how resources should be allocated. In this process, both the positions of the federal government and these leaders can be strengthened based on the principle of interdependence.

Special attention should be paid to the economic situation in poorer northern Nigeria, especially by focusing on issues such as illiteracy, development of trade and industry, better agricultural methods and the development of infrastructure. Perhaps this can be done in forging partnership programmes between the north and the south. As the north presently fears the better-educated south, southerners might even be encouraged to participate in federally and privately funded education programmes in the north, for example. One of the most important things to bear in mind, though, is that it is absolutely crucial to bring about positive changes and improvements in the living standards of the population and to eradicate inequality among them in other words, just like with every issue tackled in managing ethnic conflict in Nigeria, there should be tangible benefits to persuade the people to actively participate in the process, including concrete signs that the government is doing its best to root out corruption and to deliver maximum benefits to its citizens.

Regarding religious issues, it is more difficult to suggest any solutions. Solutions may be forthcoming from the negotiating process, but to our mind, these negotiations should take part between the religious groups themselves, rather than as part of the formal negotiations. As religious matters are highly contentious in the Nigerian society, we think that there should be a total division between the secular state and the religious institutions. In other words, the state should not involve itself in purely religious affairs and vice versa.

The military should also be restructured to reflect the values of a transforming Nigeria. Changes in leadership of the armed forces will already be a positive step forward (as Obasanjo has already done), but a sufficient system of checks and balances should be implemented in order to ensure that the Nigerian executive maintains control over them. It might also be a good idea to include members of the armed forces in the negotiation process, and afterwards to persuade them that, by serving the interests of the democracy, they are serving the interests of Nigeria and its people.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Ethnic conflicts are some of the major challenges facing the world, and Africa in particular, today. These conflicts also have a compounding influence on other issues such as political, economic and social stability. The case of ethnic conflict in Nigeria is illustrative of this point, and indeed multi-faceted and extremely complex. Although many positive steps have already been taken by the present democratic government of Obasanjo in the direction of addressing this conflict and other problems facing Nigeria, it is clear that much more still has to be done especially in the light of the recent heightening of ethnic tensions. In this context, it is hoped that the modest practical suggestions made above may contribute to the process of finding a solution to this pressing problem.

## Notes

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# Peace building and Transformation from below: Indigenous Approaches to Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation among the Pastoral Societies in the Borderlands of Eastern Africa.

by Josiah Osamba

## ABSTRACT

Violence among the pastoral communities in the borderlands of Eastern Africa has escalated to such an extent that governments seem to be unable to contain the conflict. More is needed than efforts by states to restore law and order. If these conflicts are to be dealt with effectively, more will also be needed than western methods of conflict resolution. Traditional customs and values have to be utilised. Marginalised indigenous ways of approaching and resolving conflict have to be explored and utilised. Taking theoretical considerations and the historical background into account, this article focuses our attention on indigenous approaches that may promote a more peaceful coexistence. It shows how the application of such methods may result in a wider involvement of the communities concerned, which may contribute substantially to the actual resolution of conflicts and to real reconciliation.

## INTRODUCTION

Violence and warfare, especially in the form of raids and skirmishes among pastoral peoples, have existed from time immemorial. However, the borderlands of Eastern Africa have witnessed unparalleled violence, anarchy, and insecurity in the last two decades. These acts often degenerate into war. Yet, the often wanton destruction of life and property and the rise of terror in all its manifestations tend to undermine the sense of value and dignity of human life.

The governments of the Eastern African states are finding it extremely difficult to maintain law and order in the borderlands through the use of security forces and other extra-judicial methods. Such measures seem to have failed to contain conflict and violence probably because they address merely the symptoms rather than the root causes of the conflict.

The principal concern of the study is to locate traditional customs and values that may be of significance in promoting security, peaceful coexistence and respect for human rights. The study posits that the devastating effects of the current conflicts among the pastoral communities in the borderlands could be minimised through the adoption of norms and values based on those of the indigenous cultures.

The term "pastoralism" is applied in the study to denote communities whose main mode of production is the herding of livestock on extensive bases or in combination with some form of agricultural activities. Such communities include the Turkana, the Pokot, the Samburu, the Somali, and the Boran of Kenya. Among others are the Toposa and the Merille of Ethiopia and Sudan, and the Karamojong of Uganda.

The terms "rustling" or "raid" are used interchangeably in the study to refer to armed attacks by one group on another for the purpose of stealing livestock and not necessarily for territorial expansion (Markakis 1993:124). On the other hand, the term "conflict" is used to denote "a dispute into which the threat of physical coercion (violence) has been introduced" (Amoo 1992: 3).

The phrase "conflict resolution" refers to the termination of a conflict or dispute through the elimination of the underlying bases or causes of the conflict (Burton & Dukes 1990:217).

## THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Basically, this study is conceptualised as a critique of the western legal framework of conflict resolution. It points out that the marginalisation of the African indigenous practices of conflict principles and norms is to some extent a major contributory factor to the current incessant violence in Eastern Africa.

The upsurge of ethnic conflicts all over the world, and especially in Africa, has elicited a wide variety of theoretical explanations from scholars with divergent ideological standpoints. To some scholars, violent and non-violent conflicts between different ethnic groups within a nation-state are a normal phenomenon. This is attributed to the natural urge by human beings for self-realisation, identity and supremacy.

Another school of thought that emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s posits that ethnic conflicts in the developing countries are a manifestation of a people's quest for self-identity, which they have been denied by the powers that be. Such conflicts tend to become more protracted and volatile, especially when they hinge on such people's cultural values.

Culture is an important component in conflict resolution (Burton & Dukes 1990; Kozan 1997; Bryne & Irvin 2000). Burton affirms that culture is vital because it is a "satisfier". Moreover, cultural values are important to most members of the community. He points out that indigenous societies were more inclined towards rituals that led to co-operative problem solving than to the type of confrontation and power bargaining which has become the vogue in the western world. Lederach and Coner (1990) also advocate the necessity of cultural and indigenous approaches to conflict resolution. In the African context, this would involve incorporating various traditional theories and practices into the contemporary general mechanisms of conflict resolution. Augsburger (1992) argues that in traditional cultures, there exist pathways in the ethnic wisdom for managing conflicts. This, he points out, may be lost due to the influence of westernisation.

Indigenous cultures viewed conflict as a communal concern. Thus, the society was seen as having ownership of both the conflict and its context. However, the westernised conflict resolution approach puts more premiums on personal and individual ownership. Most of the time it is a win-lose situation.

On the other hand, a grassroots peacemaking approach hinges on the premise that since most of the active players in any conflict situation are grassroots people, it becomes inevitable to involve this large segment of the society in the process of peace making and conflict resolution. This approach also presupposes that peace can be built from below. Traditional approaches of conflict resolution are an important component of the cultural heritage of African societies.

There are many assumptions that surround a people's perception and approach to culture in the field of conflict resolution. These assumptions rarely make explicit the fundamental concerns about the relevance, dominance and ideology underlying the meaning and purpose of conflict resolution.

The study, therefore, analyses the accumulated understanding of conflicts, and the traditional modus

operandi of conflict resolution and reconciliation among the pastoral communities. For example, practices in which symbols and rituals figure prominently are very vital in the process of peace building among many African societies.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Pastoral systems are, to a large extent, products of climatic and environmental factors. The system of pastoralism in Eastern Africa is currently under intolerable stress. This is evident in an upsurge in cases of conflict and violence in the region.

According to Markakis, ethnicity is to some extent a factor in conflicts in the borderlands. This is due to the struggle by each group to enlarge its share of resources. The pastoralists clash among themselves and also with the agriculturalists. Occasionally such clashes culminate into serious violence.

From antiquity, conflict and warfare have existed in human history though confrontations had limits. As Salih points out "armed conflicts generally followed predictable patterns and were soon followed by pressures for truce or reconciliation. Killing was relatively limited partly because of the weapons used and partly because payment of compensation to aggrieved relatives could be expensive in terms of livestock" (East African Social Science Research Review 1993:24).

According to Fukui and Turton (1979), there are certain elements of social organisation that serve the "midwifery" role to heighten or lessen the intensity of conflicts. Thus "warfare among pastoralists has more in common with raiding than with large scale, set piece or pitched battles of European history" (Turton 1996:190). This distinction between raiding and war helps to differentiate two levels of armed conflict. Socially accredited values and beliefs determine the latter, while the former is an individual or small group act with limited or without societal approval (Turton 1996:191).

Mazrui on the other hand, plays down the dichotomy between raid and war. He posits that "the warrior tradition underlines all those issues linking precolonial combat to modern warfare, mediating between culture and politics, affirming the individuals' obligation to society and constantly drawing the boundaries between war and peace in human experience" (cited in Fukui & Turton 1979:191).

Traditionally, raiding among pastoral societies had three main objectives:

Firstly, it had a social and economic base. An individual without livestock could not actively participate in the socio-political affairs of the society.

Secondly, there was competition for grazing land and water. Due to scarcity or dwindling of resources as a result of overpopulation or adverse climatic changes, some groups are forced to move their livestock to territories that belong to other ethnic groups or clans and this causes conflicts.

Thirdly, there are survival strategies. Loss of cattle could lead to raids, which was one of the options of replenishing depleted herds. Or, raids could be undertaken as means of increasing one's stock as an insurance against unforeseen calamities. In other words, cattle wars constituted a communal response

to natural calamities (Ocan 1995).

The adoption of transhumance by some pastoral societies entailed the development of serious hostilities about grazing land among the various groups,. According to Dyson-Hudson "aggressive confrontation" is an essential component of pastoralists' strategy (Markakis 1993:1).

In pre-colonial times, pastoral societies tended to use migrations as a panacea to manage conflict and/or natural calamities. The pastoralists enjoyed friendly relations with most of their neighbours in spite of sporadic raids and conflicts, which to a very large extent were regulated by elders through the political system of gerontocracy (Odegi-Awuondo 1990:46). This peaceful intercourse included intermarriage between the pastoral neighbours.

But the imposition of fixed ethnic and national borders by the colonialists, with little regard to the seasonal variations and the needs of the people for pasture, had serious repercussions (Galaty 1990:145). The borders did not only limit free access to grazing land and water but also seem to have increased social conflicts among the pastoralists. As access to land diminished and populations of people and livestock increased against available resources, there emerged acute competition for water and pasture. These, in turn, tend to intensify both intra and cross border raids and conflicts.

Today, conflicts among pastoral communities have taken new exaggerated dimensions. They create misery, poverty, and insecurity among the populace.

## CONFLICT, CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND RECONCILIATION: AN OVERVIEW

Conflict occurs when the parties involved try to achieve their objectives by destroying or disabling their opponents. Different occurrences of armed conflicts have varying characters and degrees of intensity. War can be seen as "one of the modes of destruction which varied in accordance with available technology" (Hutchful & Bathily 1998:11).

Proponents of a political approach regard warfare as an activity per se of sovereign political groups. As such, groups are seen to fight because conflict is inherent in social relations. Hence it is in their nature to do so unless they are restrained by the institutions of social control (Njeru 1998:4). This approach reflects both the Hobbesian and Durkheimian perspectives. The former posits that a propensity towards violence in pursuit of self-interest, is a fact of human nature, hence the purpose of the state is, to keep various forces in check. The latter holds that the source of peace and order in society lies in the moral authority exerted by the group over its members (Lamert 1999:89-99; Ritzer 2000:82-102).

The anthropological study of war focuses on attempts to explain armed conflicts as a universal feature of the human condition manifesting itself in culturally specific terms (Njeru 1998:4). The institution of war may take different forms. In a single society, various categories of armed conflict are recognised. These range from duels between two groups by appointment, wherein the participants seek to inflict non-mortal injury, to "mother-of-all-wars" battles, which are rare and result in many deaths (Fortes & Evans-Pritchard 1940:xx). Feuds or collective actions using force or the threat of force are not synonymous with wars since the actions are limited to obtaining satisfaction for a particular injury and are controlled by the norms of a given society. Raiding for cattle is only one aspect of conflict.

To a large extent, the economic system, the lineage structure and ritual ideology facilitated local cohesion as a factor of common solidarity. Among the pastoral societies, two neighbouring clans could occasionally arrange a feud, agreeing to put two similar age-sets against each other. Sometimes these engagements turned bloody. A third group normally intervened as arbiter in such a case.

The social structure of the pastoral groups is largely based on generational lines and age-sets. Elders form the senior generation set. In their role as political and spiritual leaders of the society, the elders laid down rules and procedures to initiate warriors, settle disputes, sanction raiding expeditions and determine grazing areas in their transhumant pattern. The society therefore relied on their wise guidance, prayers and blessings. Their advanced age and experience was seen as indicating their close relationship with the spiritual world. Thus, their decisions on any issue were sacrosanct. The warriors constitute the junior generation set. Their role in society was to execute decisions agreed upon by the elders.

The elders, therefore, played an important part in defusing tensions and conflicts, which usually centred on the control of grazing land or water. They had well laid down procedures for settling disagreements in which all the parties to the conflict got a chance to put across their views. The elders were recognised as having authority to act as arbiters and give judgement on the rights or wrongs of a dispute submitted to them and suggest a settlement though they may have had no power of physical coercion by which to enforce them (Fortes & Evans-Pritchard 1940:xviii).

The negotiation or reconciliation process in the traditional setting was seen as a re-establishment of relationships between people and also with their God and spirits who were regarded as witnesses and active participants. As Kiplagat (1998:7) points out: "There is a holistic approach to the process, working with the community as a whole, invoking spiritual forces to be present and accompany the community towards peace". The responsibility of the elders was to guide the negotiation towards an agreement, which would reflect as much as possible the consensus of all the parties involved.

Among the pastoralists, ties of kinship, marriage and friendship as well as cattle loans often bind neighbours. For example, the Luo people of Kenya have a proverb stating "kinship is strengthened through friendship". Many individuals, therefore, often have divided loyalties and interests in any conflict situation. Hence they would apply pressure for a quick settlement of any dispute. As Gordon and Gordon (1996:235) point out, "when people of different descent groups must marry, live among, and cooperate with one another, their cross cutting ties together with the pervasive fear of feud constitute an important mechanism for the maintenance of social order".

The ethical code of war ensured the respect and protection of women, children and the elderly. Respect for women was imperative since they represent the origin (source) of life. The child represents innocence, while the elderly were considered to be closer to the spirit of the ancestors (Njoya 1988:7). Generally, before the outbreak of conflict or hostilities, the parties to the conflict tried to settle the dispute peacefully. Only when all efforts to achieve reconciliation had failed did the parties resort to war. After any conflict, the question of reconciliation was put on top of the agenda. It was usual for the two protagonists to meet in the presence of an arbitrator from a neutral community. In many cases, treaties or agreements were entered into solemnly and were usually regarded as binding and sacred. The beliefs behind oaths were that God or some supernatural power would punish any individual who

breaks the requirements of the oath (Mbiti 1970:212).

Among the Turkana, when there was any serious conflict, the elders would call a traditional peace conference. The whole community would gather with one common objective, i.e. to restore the broken relationship and invigorate the process of healing. Such a meeting would be open-ended so that all the participants had time and opportunity to air their views. The meeting would be held in a "carnival" atmosphere, punctuated with stories, songs, dance, proverbs, etc. The name of God and the spirits would be invoked during the meeting. A bull would be slaughtered and its blood collected and sprinkled into the air as a way of binding the community to the peace covenant. As a gesture of reconciliation the whole group would eat the meat together. Thereafter, feasting, singing, dancing and celebration would continue for several days. The whole society would thus be part of the agreement and anybody who violated it could suffer some calamity.

For example, following a bloody conflict between the Luo and the Maasai of Kenya, negotiation and reconciliation would be arranged by the elders with rituals to solemnise the occasion. The elders and the "whole community" women, children and the youth would assemble at one point along their common border. A makeshift obstacle consisting of tree branches would be created along the border and the warriors would place their spears over it. A dog would then be slain and cut in half and its blood sprinkled along the border. Then, mothers would exchange babies with the "enemy" group and suckle them. The warriors would also exchange spears. Prayers would then be offered by the elders and a profound curse pronounced on any one who attempted to cross the border and create havoc to either side. After such an agreement it would be almost impossible for the two sides to fight again (Augsberger 1992:276). This was a form of creating blood brotherhood.

Thus, in the traditional set up, reconciliation was formally and informally characterised by the implicit involvement of the whole society. The peace message would then be conveyed and become incorporated in the people's oral tradition. The community therefore serves as the repository within which conflict resolution was performed.

As William Ury (1999:28) notes:

Emotional wounds and injured relationships are healed within the context of the emotional unity of the community. Opposed interests are resolved within the context of community interest in peace. Quarrels over rights are sorted out within the context of overall community norms. Power struggles are contained within the context of overall community power.

The mediators (elders) represented the norms and values of the society, especially on moral issues. They thus advocated a settlement that would accord with commonly accepted principles of justice in terms of custom, virtue, and fairness, and reflect community judgement about appropriate behaviour. Thus, to flout such a settlement was regarded as defying the moral order of the society. Conflicts and their resolution, therefore, were viewed as events in the comprehensive continuation of social life. As Malan (1997:24) points out: "A typical immediate goal is to reach an agreement which includes more than merely solving the problem or rectifying the injustice. What is specifically aimed at in the search for durable peace, is genuine reconciliation and, where necessary, restitution and rehabilitation". According to Lederach (1975:53): "Reconciliation is both a focus and a locus, a place where people and things come together ) creating the possibility and social space where both truth and forgiveness

are validated and joined rather than a framework in which one must win over the other".

Today, respect by the youth for the elders and the traditional hierarchy of authority has been seriously diluted through westernisation. This has undermined the traditional motives of raiding, the raiding process and cordial relationships among some pastoral communities. Traditionally, the elders were actively involved in the planning process and the performing of traditional ceremonies before and after raids. The motives for raiding were geared to community survival and reproduction. At present, raids are mainly geared to individual accumulation. This aspect has led to a profound disregard for alliance among pastoral communities that were once allies. This in turn has created an atmosphere of animosity and vindictiveness.

Thus, the pastoral societies are currently undergoing transformation. The authority of traditional elders has dwindled as warrior-youth acquire more prominence. The incorporation of the pastoral communities into the market economy, through the sale of livestock and livestock products, has had some adverse effects. It has contributed to the emergence of "cattle warlords" thereby exacerbating a state of conflict and insecurity as these "merchants" compete to acquire livestock for sale.

There have emerged new trends, tendencies and dynamism leading to commercialisation and internationalisation of raids. It is no longer a cultural practice of testing a person's bravery and prowess, but a bloody warfare between various groups. All these pose serious challenges to societal structure, security, survival as well as traditional moral foundations.

Consequently, the primordial causes of cattle raids have been compounded and exacerbated by the effects of the modern economy in tandem with the unfolding and changing nature of social relations. The current struggles are waged with new sophisticated firearms and verge on ethnocide, where neither women nor children are spared. Is this a symbol of the breakdown of social norms?

Traditionally, women were excluded from political decision making among the pastoral communities. In most societies, this exclusion was ostensibly because of women's inability to keep secrets. Women, however, were allowed to attend general community meetings but were not legible to membership of the Council of elders. Most generally, therefore, parallel authority structure necessitated men and women to exercise authority over their own gender and its activities. Women thus had their own courts, market authorities and age grade institutions. These organisations reflected the sexual division of labour and the different roles for men and women. Thus, for women, power across the gender line could only be exercised indirectly or informally behind-the-scene. Nevertheless, women had some traditionally acknowledged rights to land, animals, etc.

Today there is need to give women a more prominent role in conflict resolution. In Africa there is a tendency of ignoring women as important agents of socio-economic transformation. Yet women have, in many respects, been the most conspicuous victims of ethnic conflicts. Thus, there is need to involve them more in the process of generating solutions to conflict by positively influencing men from engaging in such activities.

## LESSONS FROM THE INDIGENOUS METHODS

The indigenous methods of conflict resolution stressed the need of fostering a spirit of peace and mutual respect for both individuals and groups, in times of peace and in times of conflict. This was effectively ensured through the institution of the council of elders and age-set organisations. The elders played an important role in defusing conflicts within and between societies. They were able to manage and counterbalance the aggressiveness and military orientation of the youth.

Conflict was viewed as a communal concern. Conflict resolution followed conflict patterns as embedded in the norms and customs of a society. Resolution processes, therefore, were culturally prescribed. Emphasis was placed on reconciling the protagonists with each other, rather than on establishing right and wrong, winner or loser. Thus punishment was not aimed at retaliation, but at restoring equilibrium, usually through the mechanisms of restitution, apology and reconciliation. There was emphasis on justice and fairness, forgiveness, tolerance and coexistence.

Conflicts were, therefore, seen as events in the rhythm of social life. A holistic approach to resolution was emphasised. The spiritual dimension was quite evident. Since cultural values are important to the people, a traditional approach was inclined towards rituals to promote a conciliatory community. The approach thus emphasises healing of emotional wounds created by conflict and restoration of social relationships. This was often done through public acts of reconciliation, which were entered into by all parties, and were binding on all the involved parties. The rule for breaches was exclusion from society. All these helped to transform conflict to harmony and reminded the groups of their shared unity.

Thus, in the African setting there is no "private dispute" of any seriousness, since a dispute affects everyone in one way or another. As one African philosopher, John Mbiti (1970), correctly says, the African philosophy is based on the "I am because we are ) because we are therefore I am" principle. To the Africans, therefore, there is recognition of the importance of relationship and harmony in the community.

The ethical code of war ensured respect and protection for women, children and the old in times of conflict. For durable peaceful coexistence, tolerance and understanding are important elements in indigenous conflict resolution. This encompasses the adoption of joint problem-solving techniques incorporating dialogue, reconciliation, mediation and accommodation, which lead to the working out of a consensus.

## CONCLUSIONS

African societies are undergoing socio-political transformation, which involves a change in values, often reflected in loss of traditional reference points and adoption of western values. This tends to create psychological stress within individuals and societies. Conflict among the pastoral groups, and between the elders and the youth have become more pronounced. There is intense competition and struggle for survival among these societies. Conflicts, therefore, appear to have become endemic. These phenomena may destroy the basic norms of social and ethnic cohabitation. The precursors and nature of these conflicts thus need to be identified and addressed.

The state of insecurity and conflict in the borderlands calls for concerted efforts from both the pastoral communities themselves and the governments if some semblance of law and order, as well as respect



for human life, is to be restored in the region. There is a need for pastoral societies to reinforce their institutional capacities with specific reference to traditional norms, rules and regulations, especially in tackling the twin phenomena of violence and insecurity. For durable peaceful coexistence to be achieved, the pastoral communities must accept the reality that each is part and parcel of the wider geo-political and economic entity.

Moreover, unless there is understanding of the history of a society and its people, and above all a process of reconciliation among the pastoral communities based on justice, the cycle of revenge can become normal and the violence unstoppable. The mayhem in Somalia is a classic example. The state, society and individuals need to adopt mechanisms and identify how the environmental or ecological threat to peace and security could be contained, lessened or eradicated.

There is a need to revitalise customary law in conflict resolution. It should be noted that such law is not sporadic, but has great significance for its adherents as it has "passed the test of time". Such customs are the result of some systematic, carefully planned and designated patterns of behaviour and thus not irrational or erratic. It is reflexive and adapts to reflect the changes in the society.

The study concludes that the incorporation of indigenous methods and cultural values could greatly contribute to restoration of peace, security, and stability and cordial relations among the pastoral communities in the borderlands of Eastern Africa.

## Notes

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# Risk Assessment: Democratic Republic of Congo Post-Laurent Kabila by Lirette Louw

## Abstract

Internal and external conflicts, as well as renewed peace initiatives, in the Democratic Republic of Congo after the death of former President Laurent Kabila are used as a frame of reference for a domestic and an international risk assessment. The roles of various actors are discussed, and the volatile situation is viewed from the perspectives of important variables. With the necessary caution, some policy recommendations are presented as a starting point of the discussion.

## 1. Executive Summary

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has been caught up in internal and external warfare since the overthrow of President Mobutu Sese Seko's three-decade long dictatorship in 1996. This overthrow took place under the leadership of Laurent Kabila, who became president in 1997. In 1998 a war situation broke out once again between rebel movements inside the country and the government, involving as many as six neighbouring countries on different sides of the conflict. This situation continued unresolved, even in the presence of the 1999 Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, until Laurent Kabila was assassinated on the 16th of January 2001. This study specifically focuses on the post-Kabila era, especially on the internal and external conflicts and the renewed peace initiatives engaged upon this time under the leadership of Joseph Kabila, the interim President.

This study is divided into two parts. The first part examines the conflicts between the various actors along the line of five variables: the military balance-of-power, social dynamics, the political context, environmental aspects and economic dimensions. This, then, constitutes the domestic risk assessment. The influence of local and external actors is then analysed in regard to the conflict situation. The second part of the study deals with the international risk assessment and focuses specifically on the integrated character of the conflict in the DRC with reference to the impact the situation has on all the countries involved and whether or not the post-Kabila era will see a withdrawal of foreign interventionaries.

Since the focus of this study is on the new political situation with Joseph Kabila in the leader's seat, the peace process is addressed in all its facets and with reference to all of the different actors. On an international level, the United Nations' role is examined, also the role of individual countries like Belgium. On a regional level, the role of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and that of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are discussed. Other international and national actors who assist in the realisation of peace in the DRC are non-governmental organisations and human rights institutions. There are also those actors who do not assist in solving the conflict situation, for reasons of personal benefit from the abundant natural resources of the Congo, and these are also dealt with in the study.

The risk assessment, with regard to the DRC post-Kabila, should be clear on one fact the situation in the DRC is currently that of a stand off. There is no stability and the situation literally changes daily, thus creating a very volatile environment that urges extreme caution from all the parties involved in sorting out their differences in the interest of a peaceful DRC.

## 2. Policy Recommendations

Securing genuine peace and stability in the DRC should not only focus on the withdrawal of foreign armed forces and the disarming of rebels within the Congo, but it should also focus on the development of a new political system. For this to be realised, however, Joseph Kabila will first need to lift the ban on political activities and free all political prisoners. The DRC needs a government functioning in conformity with principles of productivity, efficiency, consistency and quality said to be the basis of economic growth (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:97-98). This seems to be on the agenda, for the OAU-designated facilitator of the inter-Congolese dialogue, Ketumile Masire, announced on the 5th of March 2001 that the peace process intended to achieve a new political dispensation for the country beginning in early April 2001.

International pressure should however be put on the former President Masire to convene the preparatory meetings for the Inter-Congolese Dialogue sooner rather than later. With regard to the format of such a new dispensation the following serve as recommendations in order to avoid a system where yet another dictator can emerge in the DRC: a presidential system as opposed to a parliamentary system, devolution of power in favour of the provinces instead of a strict federal system, and a restructured judicial system focusing on impartiality, transparency and consistency (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:98-101).

With reference to the economic consequences resulting from the ongoing civil war, note should be taken that while an end of the war will be a determining factor in the real reconstruction of the DRC, a partnership between the State and the private sector is just as indispensable, according to Kabwe (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:173-174). There is a disturbing contrast between the Congo's immense natural wealth and valuable human resources, and the current process of impoverishment. The blame for this, according to Kabwe, can be placed on the shoulders of the State, for the State considered itself to be the principal actor in development through its model of growth and distribution, a model which operates to the detriment of the private initiatives. The State should, in a process of working together as Congolese, concentrate on strengthening the macro-economic framework and on providing the essential finance to production and infra-structural sectors which form the indispensable basis of all economic activity. The domestic production of the country is almost non-existent and the state does not have the means for reconstruction. Thus, the country needs to liberalise its economy and enter into a programme of economic stabilisation and growth with principal actors such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:173-175).

In the light of the grave human rights violations that swept the DRC not only by the government forces under Kabila, but also by the forces of Rwanda, Uganda and the Congolese rebels allied to them Human Rights Watch (HRW) made the following recommendations: the new regime must end all interference with basic human rights, review those currently in prison and release those held without charge or credible suspicion of guilt, investigate and prosecute crimes against humanity, end harassment of human rights groups and declare and enforce respect for all Congolese people (regardless of ethnic or regional origin). HRW went on to insist that the UN Security Council should be called upon to name a Commission of Experts to resume an earlier enquiry, previously blocked by Kabila in 1997, into the accountability of all parties involved in the crimes committed under Kabila's authority.<sup>2</sup>

Another area that will need attention in the post-Kabila era is the role of NGO's, churches and

community-based organisations. As these entities are entrenched in their respective communities, they should, according to Katulondi, undergo a radical change in order to play a central role in the better management of society in conjunction with the corporate state (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:98-99). It is further strongly recommended that the problem of the DRC serving as a launching pad for rebel movements of neighbouring countries needs to be rectified. For if the rebel movements' sources of discontent in their countries of origin are not identified then their countries will continue to enter the DRC for reasons of forward defence (Solomon & Mngqibisa 2000:31-32).

### 3. Domestic Risk Assessment

#### 3.1 The Military Balance-of-power

The first attempt to stop the war that broke out in 1998 came in July 1999 with the signing of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. The cease-fire failed due to an absence of leadership, for the agreement relied entirely on the co-operation of the parties. Each suspected the other of a double game and used this to justify its own duplicity, especially in the absence of an international guarantor to compel compliance. 3 The conflict situation took on a whole new dimension after the assassination of President Laurent Kabila on the 16th of January 2001. This event brought the prospect of a cease-fire once again to the table in the DRC.

The United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1341 in February 2001, thereby urging the parties to the conflict to prepare by 15 May a plan for the withdrawal of their troops and to agree on a second plan for the disarmament, repatriation or resettlement of other armed groups. Kinshasa was apparently satisfied because the resolution took into consideration the Harare military disengagement agreement, which was a precondition for the cessation of hostilities as well as an effective implementation of the cease-fire conditions. These could, hopefully, lead to the withdrawal of foreign nations from the Congo. According to Patrick Mazimhaka, Special Envoy of Rwandan President Paul Kagame, the rapid deployment of Phase two of the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC) will help begin disengagement. 4

Disengagement did start, as Rwandan and Ugandan forces began pulling out of the DRC in the last week of February 2001. The Rwandan pull-out of about 2 000 soldiers from Pweto in Katanga province and the return of two Ugandan battalions of about 800 soldiers, assembled at Buta in north-eastern DRC, began as scheduled according to UNITA. Rwandan President Paul Kagame, in a speech on 7 April 2001 to commemorate the seventh anniversary of the 1994 genocide, stated that although Rwanda was pulling its troops out of the DRC the pull-out would not be completed until Rwanda's security is guaranteed. 5. Allegations that the withdrawal of Ugandan forces was aimed at vote-catching in the forthcoming elections were denied by the army commander, Maj-Gen Odongo. These forces are, however, not withdrawn far from the border in most instances. 6. Uganda is meanwhile seeking permission from the UN to use Bangoka airport in Kisangani, eastern DRC, to pull out an estimated 1 500 troops which will bring the number of Ugandan soldiers withdrawn from the DRC since August 2000 to 6 500.7

The Angolan and Zimbabwean governments, Kabila's allies, responded in a notably low key to these withdrawals. After talks with the Belgian Government in the first week of March 2001, Zimbabwe

apparently refused to withdraw its troops from the Congo until it was sure that rebel movements would not fill the vacuum and that this in turn required restarting the long-stalled inter-Congolese political dialogue. 8. Angola's troops, according to Angolan defence Minister Kundi Paihama, would return home "when it's time". According to him Angola has no more than a battalion of about 300 men in the DRC. 9 President Joseph Kabila, in addressing the issue of troop withdrawals by Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia, stated that these troops were brought into the country on a request following the invasion of the country and the moment this invasion comes to an end they will return to their countries.10

Meanwhile, the fear exists that the Congolese rebels or their Ugandan and Rwandan backers could take advantage of the current confusion and withdrawal of troops to make territorial gains.

In the first week of April 2001, the political committee for the implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in the DRC held its 10th session to evaluate the progress of the peace process. The committee commended the progress accomplished in the withdrawal and redeployment of troops. It approved of the concept of a three-phase operation and the timetable for phase one of the project for the disarming, demobilising, reintegration and reinsertion of armed forces as presented by the Joint Military Commission. It noted, however, that there existed some problems with the withdrawal of the Gbadolite-based forces of the Mouvement de liberation du Congo (MLC).11

### 3.2 Social Dynamics

The DRC has an estimated population of 50 million people, but according to the International Rescue Committee, a US aid group, about 200 000 civilians have died as a direct consequence of the fighting and 1,7 million civilians have died amid the dislocation caused by the war. 12 The war is also affecting the DRC's neighbours, with massive influxes of Congolese refugees, of whom an estimated two million are displaced. 13

According to a joint UN-NGO mission to the north-eastern Ituri Province, from 14 to 19 February 2001, fear and tension are still prevailing amongst the suffering civilian community. The Ituri region has been wrecked by ethnic fighting between the Hema and Lendu communities, leaving thousands of people dead. Other severely affected sectors of community life are, firstly, the agricultural sector where fear, flight and the systematic destruction of crops paved the way for food insecurity. Secondly, school attendance had also dropped dramatically. Thirdly, data on displacement is difficult to ascertain due to the high number of "invisible" victims, hiding in the bush after ethnic cleansing offensives.13 In a call by Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, in February 2001, for renewed efforts to end the fighting, he underlined the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country, especially for women and children. For terrible crimes have been committed against women and children, such as raping women as a weapon of war and sending children off to fight in the front. 15

In assisting the displaced and war struck population of the DRC, the UN food agency, World Food Programme (WFP), pledged in February 2001 to provide a total of 134 565 mt of food to the "most needy" Congolese over a two year period.

### 3.3 The Political Context

Since August 1998, the DRC has been torn apart by conflict involving at a local level three rebel movements: two called Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD), one led by Wamba dia Wamba and the other by Emile Ilunga, and the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC), led by Jean Pierre Bemba all of whom took part in the attempt to overthrow the late President Kabila. Internal actors that should also be brought into the peace process are the various Congolese political parties, an estimated 150 in total. The Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) with its leader Etienne Tshisekedi is the best known party in the DRC conflict, but this party was banned by the former Kabila. In Tshisekedi's Proposals to the Bush Administration and Congress, he described the decision of the Kabila camp to appoint Joseph Kabila as President as deepening the juridical and political void and further reinforcing the precariousness of power in Kinshasa. He pointed out Joseph Kabila's failure to lift the ban on political activities, his unwillingness to free political opponents and his continual arrests of political opponents and journalists.<sup>16</sup> Other local actors include the Christian Social-Democratic Party and the Forces Novatrices de l'Union Sacree (Solomon & Mngqibisa 2000:35-37).

On an international level Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia joined in an attempt to back the government of Kabila (ulterior motives for intervening will be dealt with under the international risk assessment). Uganda and Rwanda intervened in the Congo in 1998 taking a stand against President Kabila and joined with those in favour of overthrowing his presidency, especially since Kabila had trained their rebel movements in breach of the mandate he had from them after they helped him get into power in 1997.

Burundi entered the DRC for similar reasons: to protect its borders from the Burundian Hutu rebel groups, the Forces de defense pour la democratie (CNDD-FDD) and the Forces nationales de liberation (FNL), operating from inside the DRC.

The political situation in the DRC took a drastic turn with the assassination of President Laurent Kabila on the 16th of January 2001. The cabinet immediately appointed the late president's son, Joseph Kabila, to lead the army and the government, thus retaining control within the existing "inner circle" and thereby also buying time for the members of that elite to make their case for leadership.<sup>17</sup> In analysing the political change in the DRC, Reyntjens a Great Lakes analyst attached to the University of Antwerp in Belgium stated that everything depends on the succession and since there are no constitutional rules guiding this process there is a lot of speculation among those very close to the late president. Some key figures who have been closely involved in government policy making and who could have provided some continuity were: Colonel Eddy Kapend, Interior Minister Gaetan Kakudji (who may have tired of Kabila's war strategy), Education Minister Yerodia Abdoulaye Ndombasi and the current foreign minister Leonard She Okitundu (who is highly acclaimed by the international community). Yet, Kapend together with several senior military officers (all ethnic Lundas) have been arrested in connection with Laurent Kabila's assassination.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, Interim President Joseph Kabila dismissed the entire cabinet in the beginning of April 2001 and announced the members of his new government on the 14th of April 2001. The new cabinet saw the departure of many stalwarts from his father's day, but, notably, Leonard She Okitundu (former foreign minister) and Mwenze Kongolo (former minister of justice) stayed on in the twenty-five member government.<sup>19</sup>

Katulondi portrays the Congo conflict as a consequence of the dysfunctioning of the Congolese political system as opposed to the view that it was merely a power struggle between Kabila on the one

hand and his former allies and the Mobutuists on the other. He portrays the DRC crisis as a combination of a power struggle between the elites and the democratic aspirations of the Congolese people in a failed state (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:90-91). The aim of this struggle has been personal benefit from natural resources on both sides of the conflict in contrast to real "freedom fighting" towards a democratic dispensation where resources will be managed in the interests of the people.

### 3.4 Environmental Aspects

The Democratic Republic of Congo is Africa's third largest country by area, bordering on no less than nine countries. However, out of the 2 344 858 square kilometres the arable land percentage is only about 3% with a forest coverage of about 50%.

As a consequence of the civil conflict in the DRC substantial data are not available for the environment of the country. Some important environmental issues that have been identified by Country Watch include the following: poaching, water pollution, deforestation as a result of displaced populations and 1,2 million area refugees. The agriculture sector in the DRC contributes 58 percent of the Gross Domestic Product and employs an estimated 65.1 percent of labour, as stated in the GDP/Employment by Sector of Origin table. 20 This is, then, the sector that has taken the hardest blow in the war situation.

An important aspect with regard to the environment are the findings of the United Nations panel of experts on the exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth in the DRC as it was revealed on 17 April 2001. This report disclosed that the illegal exploitation of the mineral and forest resources of the DRC is taking place at "an alarming rate", distinguishing mass-scale looting and the systematic exploitation of natural resources as the two phases of the plundering. The report continues in noting that the conflict in the DRC has become one mainly concerning access by foreign armies to the country's rich mineral resources, a conflict which is enhanced by the lack of government control and ongoing violence<sup>21</sup> The next serious security problem in the region might very well be posed by the various criminal cartels and their worldwide connections looting the natural resources in occupied territories.

### 3.5 Economic Dimensions

The outbreak of war on the 2nd of August 1998 created a severe set back in the country's economic kick-start programme, not only by creating a climate of insecurity accompanied by investment declining, but also by ruining the financial results of businesses. The war of liberation has turned into an economic war in which belligerents are attracted by the thought of exploiting the country's natural resources.

The belligerents in the conflict have largely financed the fighting by plundering the vast mineral wealth of Congo including copper, cobalt, diamonds and gold. Rather than the Congo's development, the country's vast mineral riches funded the war and kept Kabila in power. Over-exploitation has led to diminished mine capacity. 22

Direct consequences of the war are to be found in the fact that businesses function only at an average



of 23% of their installed capacity and monetary reform was weakened with negative effects on diverse sectors. The state was obliged to resort to monetary financing as a result of the unexpected expenses imposed by the war. State resources, which should have been directed towards national reconstruction, were redirected toward an unjust war, thus creating a real handicap to stabilisation and economic growth (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:167-174). As a result of economic failures, worsened by the conflict situation, the DRC has not paid on its debts to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in ten years, and as of 1993 the country became ineligible for further aid disbursements.<sup>23</sup>

The late president Laurent Kabila handed out rights to exploit the Congo's vast mineral riches "to his commercial and military cronies" while ordinary people lacked the basic needs of life, and the time has come to take economic responsibility, according to a Human Rights Watch Report of January 2001.

### 3.6 Local Actors

Civil society, through representation by non-governmental organisations (NGO's) and churches, is a vital actor if a lasting peace is the objective. It was NGO's who, through a conference held a month after Kabila's ascendance to power, first cautioned his government. Kabila attempted to silence NGO's and continually refused to recognise them as role players. Notwithstanding these obstacles, NGO's in the DRC acquired an elevated status taking over from the state in areas such as the delivery of social services (Solomon & Mngqibisa 2000:40-42).

There are, however, non-governmental organisations, political parties and churches that lack an institutional system of resource allocation, for personal greed seems to surface. The rulers and representatives of these local actors exploit the socio-economic and political hardship of the citizenry to their own advantage, as has clearly been the case in the DRC (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:95-96). However, religious groups have played a positive role to some extent in attempting to find a solution to the conflict, for example, the Community of Sant' Egidio that offered to mediate between the parties (Solomon & Mngqibisa 2000:36).

No local peacemakers emerged from inside the Congo in the time before Kabila's assassination, for the belligerents did not trust such initiatives. If Joseph Kabila will welcome internal mediators will still have to be seen when the parties to the conflict finally sit down. Yet, NGO's and church groups should not be excluded in the post-Kabila era, but should be given a chance to give input to the peace dialogue.

International capitalism stands, as one of many obstacles, in the way of transformation in the Congo. Local actors and international mining companies built alliances exploiting Congo's minerals to gain a quick profit without investing in Congolese society. Leaders in the conflict, both from the rebels' side (by exploiting gold and diamonds in rebel-controlled territories) and from the side of Kabila's government, create serious stumbling blocks in the transformation to peace (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:96-97).

### 3.7 External Actors

The conflict in the DRC has been internationalised, bringing with it both positive and negative international role players.

International non-governmental organisations (INGO's) can be classified as external actors in the DRC dedicated to establishing and maintaining peace and security for the country and the region as a whole. The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is such an actor in the DRC. They are preparing a contingency plan for their activities in the post-Laurent Kabila era, for they expressed their concern with the extra measures of uncertainty in an already unstable region.<sup>24</sup>

Another INGO that is concerned with the conflict situation in the DRC is the US-based Human Rights Watch (HRW), which is dedicated to play a role in the post-Laurent Kabila era. At the end of January, they set out the challenges facing a new government in the DRC, urging the rectification of human rights abuses that swept the country under Kabila's rule as well as a focus on economic responsibility, also a previously exploited subject.<sup>25</sup> According to the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Kenzo Oshima, local and international NGO's were working in "extremely difficult conditions". For they are conducting operations without access to the most vulnerable segment of the Congolese population because of geographical obstacles, poor infrastructure and lack of adequate security.<sup>26</sup>

Another very influential external actor is the United Nations, who is playing its role of maintaining peace and security in the region. The UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC) is set to deploy more than 3 500 troops in the DRC. MONUC was created by the UN Security Council in November 1999 to maintain liaison with the DRC and the five regional states who signed the July 1999 Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. On 24 February 2000, the Security Council expanded the mission's mandate and size, authorising a troop strength of up to 5 537 military personnel, including 500 military observers.<sup>27</sup> The accord froze the armies in their positions but did not stop the fighting, thus the UN observers could not be deployed. After the assassination of Laurent Kabila on the 16th of January 2001, the UN Security Council, on the 22nd of February 2001, adopted resolution 1341, initiated by France, on a new peace plan according to which the initial retreat of foreign troops to 15 km should have been accomplished by 15 March 2001.<sup>28</sup> On the 6th of April 2001, the number of UN peacekeepers on the ground in the DRC reached nearly 500, according to UN spokesman Fred Eckhard. <sup>29</sup> In the newest development to date, the government of the DRC called on the UN Security Council to hold an urgent meeting after rebels barred some 120 UN peacekeepers from being deployed in Kisangani, the country's largest city. The Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) stopped the UN peacekeepers from Morocco from deployment, demanding UN condemnation of alleged cease-fire violations by government troops and accusing the government of "delaying tactics" in order to continue to occupy and plunder the eastern DRC. <sup>30</sup>

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU), as an external actor, plays the part of facilitating the inter-Congolese dialogue through the former President of Botswana, Ketumile Masire. Even though Joseph Kabila has recognised former President Masire, he has not yet appointed his representatives to the preparatory dialogue sessions, nor has he allowed for political parties to freely consult on this matter.<sup>31</sup>

On a regional level the role of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) comes into play. SADC extended membership to Kabila, without taking his human rights record into account, after he ordered Rwandan and Ugandan troops out. The three SADC countries of Angola, Zimbabwe and

Namibia soon afterwards intervened in the Congo conflict by throwing their support and troops behind Kabila. SADC, through President Chiluba of Zambia, attempted to facilitate peace in the region. In the post-Laurent Kabila era, SADC once again features in facilitating peace negotiations. President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa is involved in the Kinshasa dialogue and South Africa will most probably supply 165 soldiers for UN Peacekeeping. 32

The Belgian government's newly-appointed Special Envoy to the DRC is one of the external actors trying to assist positively in the peace process by identifying emergency intervention projects in health, justice infrastructure, education and the advancement of democracy. The focus of this Envoy will also fall on the demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration of child soldiers as well as the proliferation of small arms in the DRC.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4. International Risk Assessment

The current crisis sweeping the DRC has both internal and external dimensions. Internally, it was caused by the late Kabila's exclusion of political players and continued disregard of basic democratic principles. Joseph Kabila, in taking up his father's role in January 2001, expressed the will to engage in inter-Congolese political dialogue yet, he postponed the talks on lifting the ban on political activity without an explanation. Externally, the former president's fall-out with former allies, who are neighbours with a keen interest in the end-state of the DRC, gave momentum to the rebellion (Solomon & Mngqibisa 2000:31). That the conflict situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo circled out into the international sphere is and was a known fact from the outset of the war on the 2nd of August 1998. No fewer than six foreign governments have troops fighting in the DRC: Uganda, Rwanda, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Burundi. These countries all got caught up in the conflict for their own reasons. According to George Bloch, a political analyst with the International Crisis Group, none of the countries fighting in Congo have achieved any of their objectives, with the possible exception of Angola (who aimed to keep UNITA out of Kinshasa). 34

Rwandan and Ugandan troops invaded Congo for the first time in 1996 in a bid to overthrow dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, whom they accused of supporting Ugandan and Rwandan rebels based in his country. After installing former President Laurent Kabila in Mobutu's place, with the express mandate to keep Congo free of their rebels, they withdrew. Only to re-enter the Congo in 1998 to overthrow Kabila after the Rwandan intelligence discovered that Kabila was in fact training and arming those same rebels. The Rwandan rebel group, Interahamwe, today apparently boasts an estimated 30 000 well-trained and well-equipped soldiers in the Congo, committed to the overthrow of the Rwandan government. With the pull-out of Rwandan soldiers in accordance with the peace process, the question remains if stability in this region will surface as long as the Interahamwe forces pose a threat to Rwanda.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni entered the war to tackle his own set of rebels, the Alliance of Democratic Forces (ADF). But he also wanted to claim a share of Congo's vast mineral wealth especially gold and diamonds. For the figure of exported gold from Uganda has risen from \$12,4 million before Uganda joined the war to \$110 million after positioning deep inside the Congo. 35 As is the case with Rwanda, Uganda is also pulling out troops in the post-Kabila peace initiative, but there are speculations that senior officers in the Ugandan army might be reluctant to give up their war profits

with regard to the mining concessions held by them.

Angola entered the war because it feared that Kabila's defeat would create a power vacuum that would allow the UNITA rebels to establish bases and supply routes inside Congo.

In analysing the position of Zimbabwe under President Robert Mugabe, it has been said that they are perhaps the most eager to withdraw since their scheme to win profitable mineral concessions that would finance their intervention in Congo did not deliver profits at all, but put the country into even greater debt. For Mugabe, in committing his support to Laurent Kabila, struck a promising deal whereby Zimbabwe would provide weapons and troops in exchange for the take over of the Congo's state owned copper mining company and 37 percent of its profit. The deal was not profitable at all and, according to Zimbabwe, the war has cost the country \$100 million a year, while the International Monetary Fund estimates it at \$300 million. 36

However, in a meeting with the Belgium government in the first week of March 2001, Zimbabwe made it clear that it refuses to withdraw its troops in the absence of a guarantee that rebel forces will not fill the vacuum.

Burundi has as yet not joined the peace process and in this regard South Africa is explicitly an interventionist, for Deputy President Jacob Zuma was given a renewed mandate by regional heads of state in Tanzania, at the end of February 2001, to intensify his efforts to bring Burundi's rebels into the peace process. The African National Congress was asked by the Rwanda-backed Congolese Rally Democracy to play a dominant role in peace negotiations due to its experience on this front. 37

The death of Laurent Kabila is not viewed by all the international role players as an aid to the peace process. Former Botswana President Ketumile Masire, the designated facilitator of an inter-Congolese political dialogue process proposed under the Lusaka agreement, considered that Kabila's reported death clouded further the peace process. He commented, "The death of Kabila is not an end to the conflict, it only complicates an already very complicated situation. His death might set peace efforts back, it might accelerate them)".38

The spill-over effects of the DRC conflict, which worsened as time elapsed since the outbreak of the war in 1998, created a situation where the conflict dynamics of each intervening or neighbouring country became so interlocked that the death of Kabila did not bring automatic peace to Central Africa. For even though his son, Joseph Kabila, is reinforcing the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement of 1999 and speaks of peace, the conflicts surrounding the Congo will need individual attention to secure peace in the region.

## Notes

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## Chronology

1960 (30 June) Belgian Congo became the independent Republic of the Congo

1965 President Mobutu Sese Seko comes to power

1997 President Laurent Kabila comes to power after violently overthrowing the Mobutu dictatorship

1998 (2 August) War breaks out in the Congo amongst the government and the rebels, supported by different regional interests

1999 (10 July) Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement signed by the countries involved

1999 (31 August) Rebel groups signed the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement

2001 (16 January) President Laurent Kabila is assassinated

2001 (26 January) Joseph Kabila is appointed as Interim President

2001 (14 April) Appointment of new cabinet

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# Brothers at War? Reflections on an Internecine Conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

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## ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of an Afro-fatigue as engendered by the tragic events in Liberia (1990), Somalia (1992) and Rwanda (1994) was salutary in so far as it intensified debates on the pivotal role assigned to the United Nations (UN) and the international community at large in African conflict resolution. Subsequently, there emerged clarion calls for African solutions to African conflicts, with foreign intervention only playing a complementary role. This new thinking put sub-regional organisations like ECOWAS in West Africa and SADC in Southern Africa in a good stead to take this initiative. So far, however, such initiatives in these and other sub-regions have been fraught with problems most of them insurmountable.

Using the Ethio-Eritrean conflict as a point of reference, this paper argues that such innovations are hobbled by the inherent weaknesses and moribundity of key organisations as is too obviously the case throughout Africa.

## 1. THE CHANGING CONTEXT

Since time immemorial, the continent of Africa, just like other continents, had been continuously ruined by civil wars, inter-state wars, conventional wars and ethnic conflicts. These various endemic conflicts that occurred at different times for different reasons has led Africa to be perceived in a negative light as a dark continent of despair. The intensity of these protracted political conflicts undermines and dashes away hopes for sustainable peace.

Over the past three decades, the political conflicts in Africa resulted in humanitarian crises and refugee problems which, in turn, accelerated political instability, severe hardships and abject poverty in many African countries. As a result, the high death toll invoked serious debates about collective security in the continent of Africa as a whole.

Currently, the most urgently pressing issue at the top of African political agendas is to address civil wars that persistently threaten the prospects of peace and political stability, which are so desperately desired to attract foreign investment. The outcomes of these conflicts manifest themselves in forms of ethnic cleansing, mass genocides, gross violation of human rights as well as rampant massacres. These political conflicts are not only undesirable, but they also result in a tragic loss of human lives, population displacement, economic stagnation as well as environmental degradation. As Copson (1994:3) sharply observed:

The costs of war for Africa's people, its cultures and societies, and its economies have been immense. Indeed, measured in terms of deaths, refugees and displaced persons, and lost economic opportunities, African war is one of the greatest calamities of our era. It is also a calamity in dimensions that are more difficult to measure, including the anguish and suffering of millions, and the destruction of traditional ways of life, perhaps forever). What may be happening to traditional human societies and to wildlife in the war zones is largely a matter of speculation. And we have no way to gauge the psychic pain of the homeless, the orphans, and the destitute.

Apart from the afore-mentioned centrifugal forces, Africa was equally not immune from the centripetal forces. One of these was the peaceful end of the cold war. This event had wide ramifications. One example in the post cold war era was that bipolarity gave way to unipolarity. A notable feature of the contemporary post-cold war world is a tendency towards unilateral action by the West, with the US



maintaining its core leadership *primus inter pares* role. However, to the third world and indeed the rest of Africa, the most felt ramification of the thaw of the Cold war was the gradual marginalisation of the third world by the West (Bush & Szeftel 1995:295-293; Neethling 1998:27; SAPEM 1999:3; Williams 1973:134). In the light of the changes engendered by the end of the Cold War, economic considerations superseded political considerations. This re-directed the focus of the West to the developing countries in Latin America and South East Asia. The first world countries were also pre-occupied with enticing former communist countries in Eastern Europe and with containing potential conflicts in the former Soviet Union.

Since the first wave of independence in 1960, Africa had a fair share of conflicts and UN peacekeeping missions (Hanekom 1998:154; Kaure 1999:7; Regan 1996:353-357). Inevitably, the continent has become a testing ground for innovations to the internationally hatched collective security.

In 1992 the UN decided to review its strategy for conflict resolution and peacekeeping. Non-payment of contributions, coupled with the reluctance of western countries to commit their military personnel in hazardous peacekeeping operations (in Africa), made it imperative for the UN to review its grand strategy (Boutros-Ghali 1992:28, 41). Boutros-Ghali's Agenda for Peace, the policy document on UN peacekeeping, came as a direct response to these changes. This document, *inter alia*, called for the partial delegation of peacekeeping duties to regional organisations (Boutros-Ghali 1992:chap 7).

To follow suit, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) adopted the Declaration of Fundamental Changes, which moved from the premise that Africa had to assume responsibility for her own affairs. Subsequently, in Cairo in 1993, the OAU adopted the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (MCPMR) (Jan 1993:13).

As it blossomed, it appeared that at the core of this new thinking was the partial delegation of conflict management roles to regional and sub-regional organisations. This was coupled with a concerted search for African solutions to African problems. This view was corroborated by Alden (1997:1) when he said:

At the same time, the difficulties experienced by the United Nations, symbolised by the debacle in Somalia, have caused the organisation to reconsider its role in conflict management. In its stead, the UN is encouraging regional and sub-regional organisations to take up the mantle of conflict management in their respective regions. In the case of Africa, the international community has identified the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as key institutions whose capacity should be expanded in the light of its own diminished capacity.

Following Ate (1999:1-6), one can also add that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was in an equally in advantageous position to be in the forefront of renewed moves towards bringing African solutions to African conflicts. However, as shown by a string of events since the Somali debacle in 1992, the recommendations of this new thinking, based on the UN's Agenda for Peace and the OAU's MCPMR are, in fact, fundamentally flawed.

Using the Ethio-Eritrean war as a point of reference, this paper will start off with a synoptic review of the origins of this conflict, to be immediately followed by an analysis of both foreign and African endeavours in managing and resolving it. In its main arguments, this paper will posit that fratricidal conflicts like the one under review here are, indeed, most intractable; that a lasting solution to this conflict hinges on the amicable resolution of the central issue – a clear demarcation of disputed

boundaries between the two countries; that the political conflict in the Horn of Africa invariably retards economic development; and, lastly, that this new thinking will for some foreseeable future be hobbled as long as the regional powers are either embroiled in, or insensitive to, such raging conflicts.

Lastly, this paper will conclude that, as a matter of practicality, without fully implementing the currently innovative ideas on African conflict resolution proposed by the OAU and the UN; without taking into consideration the fratricidal dimension of this inter-state conflict; and without a substantial financial backing from the West, the newly-hatched United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) is not likely to produce the desired outcome.

## 2. WHY THE ETHIO-ERITREAN CONFLICT? A SYNOPTIC VIEW

### 2.1. The post-dergoue era: A period of quietude?

Upon the ascension into power of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in May 1991, Eritrea achieved a de facto independence to be immediately followed by a de jure independence in May 1993. Rapidly enough, that same month, on May 21, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) seized power in Addis Ababa. In the wake of those dramatic events, there was so much euphoria as the common enemy despotic Lt.Col. Mengistu Mariam had been deposed. Another notable reason for jubilation was the anticipation that, as the protracted war was eventually over, there was even a much greater need and opportunity for the two countries to cement their cordial relations, given the long-standing working relations between the leaderships of the EPLF and the EPRDF (Henze 1993:53-61).

However, to the disappointment of the denizens of the two countries and the dismay of the proponents of African Renaissance, <sup>1</sup> this turned out not to be the case at all. This became evidently clear in May 1998 when a border dispute between the two brothers in arms flared up.

As alluded to above, the 1998-2000 conflagration hinged on a clear demarcation of disputed borders between the two countries. For this reason, it is imperative to shed some light on a brief history of Eritrea, the nature of its struggle and the role players thereof. Only when we know the underlying causes of this conflict can we realistically hope to come up with possible solutions to this conflict a conflict dubbed as a "crazy" conflict by the inhabitants of the two countries and the international observers at large.

### 2.2. The root causes of the conflict

With regard to the history of Eritrea, one needs to note that it is intertwined with that of Ethiopia. Historical links between the two countries go as far back as the 19th century. Modern history of Eritrea, the younger of the two, dates back to 1886 when she first became an Italian colony. Later on, she was used as a springboard in Italy's dismal attempt to conquer Ethiopia in 1896. After five decades, following the defeat of the Axis powers during World War II, Eritrea became a protectorate of Great Britain in 1941. However, this arrangement was short-lived. In 1950, the UN General Assembly took a resolution ending British administration of Eritrea. Subsequently, in 1952, Eritrea became part and parcel of the Federal Union of Ethiopia. The then Ethiopian Emperor, Haile Selassie, gradually reduced

Eritrea's autonomy, however, when he reduced her to an Ethiopian province in 1962, thus providing a land-locked Ethiopia with much needed access to Red Sea ports.

Another notable fact is that Eritrea was never pleased with the 1952 arrangement. By then, the 1948 formation of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) in Cairo under the leadership of Harris Awate had already taken place. Because of its determination to attain national independence, the ELF resorted to the armed struggle on September 21, 1961. In its early years, the ELF was faced with a number of formidable challenges, both external and internal, though the latter tended to be the most nagging. Notable amongst the internal challenges was a series of internal divisions within the Front. These were so intractable that they led to the breakaway from the ELF and the subsequent formation of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in June 1970 (Stevens 1981:40-43).

The formation of the EPLF was an added factor in the history of Eritrea as its primary goal was the attainment of national independence from Ethiopia. This cause immediately led to the intensification of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict. Since then, the Eritrean issue became a thorn in the flesh of Ethiopia. For example, out of Ethiopia's 14 regions, Eritrea topped the three conflict areas, the other two being the Ogaden and regions dominated by leftist and traditional groups. The intensity of the Eritrean struggle was, amongst other things, reflected in the number of guerrillas on the ground. In 1978 the ELF and EPLF, respectively, had 20 000 and 15 000 men on the ground; whereas Ethiopia had 60 000-80 000, following the end of the war with Sudan over Ogaden (Rinehart 1981:265-268).

In retrospect, equally important was the impact of the working relations between the EPLF and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) earlier on and the EPLF and EPRDF later on. Geographically, Tigray and Eritrea were the two most northern provinces of Ethiopia. Because of their propinquity, it became easy for their respective guerrilla movements TPLF and EPLF to join forces in their protracted struggle to overthrow the dergue regime in Addis Ababa. Apart from their proximity, there were two other compelling reasons for a close co-operation between these two movements in the 1980s. On the one hand, the Eritreans, including President Isaias Afewerki, wanted to attain their independence. On the other, the Tigrans, among them Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, realised that they were in a good stead to topple the ruling elite in Addis Ababa and remained determined to do exactly that.

Given the long-standing cordial relations between these two former allies, it still remains a near impossible task to satisfactorily give a clear account of the actual causes of the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Several factors, though, have presented themselves as possible explanations.

The most plausible amongst these are the territorial factors. To recall, upon assuming power in Addis Ababa in 1991, the EPRDF, to the dismay of the EPLF, allowed the provincial government in Tigray to redefine its borders. That move then led to a rupture between the two regimes in Asmara and Addis Ababa, thus bringing to the fore a border issue which had been simmering even during the days of the struggle in the 1980s. However, that issue had always been tactically swept under the carpet for the sake of achieving the ultimate goal the overthrow of the Mariam regime. That rupture, as will be shown hereunder, ultimately led to a war which has been fought over sections of the 990-km border between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Eritrea, on the one hand, bases her claims on the 1902 treaty between Ethiopia's King Menelik II and the Italian government, which had colonised present-day Eritrea. Ethiopia, on the

other hand, refutes such claims. The contested areas mainly are: Om Hager/Humera in the west; Badme and the Yirga triangle around Sheraro, between the Merab and the Takazze rivers; Tserona and Zalenmbessa north of Adigrat; Alitiena and Irob; Badda and the Northern Dankalia depression; and Bore on the road to Assab. The most serious clashes, though, have been in the Yirga triangle, covering 400 kms along the border around Zalembezza and Alitiena and in Bore (ROAPE 1998:511).

### 2.3. Other factors

Despite the primacy of territorial claims in causing this war, there are other possible factors as well and these are worth mentioning here. Pre-eminent among these are economic, political and leadership factors.

Economic factors, for one, hinged mainly around such issues as labour migration, currency, trade and its corollary access to Red Sea ports.

With respect to labour movement, the two countries have differing, contradictory and mutually exclusive views. Ethiopia, on the one hand, was disgruntled with 500 000 Eritreans who continued to have free access to jobs in Ethiopia, at a time when a claimed 150 000 Ethiopians were immediately expelled from Eritrea during the 1991/92 period (ROAPE 1998:510-511). In a nutshell, in Ethiopia there was a general perception that the standing arrangements were skewed in favour of Eritrea as they allowed her to largely benefit at the expense of Ethiopia. Eritrea, on the other hand, was aggrieved by Ethiopia's refusal to provide any reparations; Ethiopia's border control which affected food supplies into Eritrea; and Ethiopia's importation of refined oil products at the expense of the ageing Assab refinery (ROAPE 1998:511).

Currency is another issue which drove a wedge between the two countries. As Eritrea was a newly independent state, there is no doubt that she badly needed to have her own currency and the creation of nakfa exactly fulfilled that need. That after all, would be a sign of national sovereignty. What the Eritreans overlooked, though, were the actual implications of doing so. They simplistically assumed that nakfa and Ethiopian birr would be used in both countries with an equal buying power. When Ethiopia could not acquiesce, tensions flared up.

Trade was another contentious economic issue between the two countries. The Eritreans, in particular, with their lofty idea of creating "An African Hong Kong" wanted preferential trade treatment from Ethiopia so that Eritrea could easily buy Ethiopian raw materials and flood them back in the Ethiopian market as manufactured goods. However, this plan was fundamentally flawed as it simplistically assumed that Ethiopia had neither plan nor ability to use her raw materials for her own industries. When Eritrea could not get such trade concessions from Ethiopia, she retaliated by refusing a land-locked Ethiopia her much-needed access to the Assab port.

Political factors. There are perceptions that this war is a perversion created by the leaders of the two countries in order to divert attention from the real political challenges in their respective countries. Eritrea's Afewerki is not only faced with the daunting task of reconciling the ELF and the EPLF, but is equally expected to democratise and contain potential divisions among such diverse ethnic groups as the Tigre, Baria, Biten, Saha, Kunana, Rashaida and Tigrigna. The same can be said of Ethiopia,

which is equally not immune from regional and ethnic diversity (Sotal 1999:15).

Furthermore, the role of leadership factors in fuelling this conflict cannot be overlooked. The respective African leaders – whether they are in Southern, Central, Western or Eastern Africa – try to boost their profile in international forums and platforms and ingratiate themselves with the Clinton regime in the US. In the Horn, recognition as a leader is a hotly contested and much coveted role. Each one of these two leaders would use just about every occasion and platform to shine above the other as "the leader" in that sub-region. Zenawi, for one, wants to project himself as a pacifier and a purveyor of democracy and market economy in the region.

As has already been pointed out, singling out one factor as the primary cause of this war does not help much in a quest for a lasting solution to this war. So long as the (underlying) causes of this conflict are not delved into, so long will this conflict remain dubbed as "the stupidest" of conflicts the world over. With such a negative perception around, finding a lasting solution to this conflict will always remain an elusive goal. For this specific reason, this paper has found it imperative to at least scratch the surface with a view to finding the actual causes. Though the quintessence of this approach is indubitable, this paper cannot pretend to have been exhaustive in this regard. For example, what about the role played by social factors?

### 3. THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES AND OUTSIDE INTERVENTION

With respect to the outbreak of hostilities, on 6 May 1998, the Eritrean army responded to an earlier bombing of the Asmara airport by bombing the Ayder School in Mikelle, the capital of Tigray province, killing about fifty civilians in the process, and went on to occupy territories in the Badme area. This and other skirmishes that ensued marked the outbreak of the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1998.

From the onset, peace efforts reached a stalemate: On the one hand, Ethiopia, which administered the area, said the Eritreans were the instigators and demanded their immediate and unconditional withdrawal to pre-6 May positions; on the other, Eritrea admitted it was the aggressor but insisted it was only reclaiming its own territory.

Again, after an almost 13 months lull in their fighting, Ethiopia and Eritrea, the two poorest but promising nations in Africa, went to war on 3 May, 2000, over their disputed border.

At this juncture, it is imperative to know what forms of intervention were precipitated by this war, what informed such efforts, who were involved and in what capacity, and what their successes and failures were and why. An attempt to tackle some of these poignant questions follows next.

#### 3.1. Towards a resolution: Moulding a successful outside intervention

First and foremost, we cannot really assess outside intervention without identifying the interveners themselves. Because of a great number of interveners involved, they have been categorised here into three different groups.

Firstly, there is the UN and the OAU, whose very natures dictate that they get involved in finding an amicable solution to this conflict.

Secondly, there are interested, persistent and committed parties such as the US and Rwanda.

Thirdly, the last group comprises interveners from interested yet not so much involved parties like the EU, Netherlands, Italy and other African countries, namely, Djibouti, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, the DRC and Zimbabwe.

Naturally, the main interlocutors are the Eritrean Government led by EPLF and the EPRDF Government in Ethiopia.

With respect to a realistic assessment of outside intervention, the dramatic manner in which the hostilities between the two countries flared up focused attention on the fact that the unique nature of this conflict has presented pacifiers with a mammoth task indeed. As a pre-requisite to a resolution, policy makers therefore have to acknowledge that there is a dire need to substantially reduce the existing gap between theory and literature.

Corroborating evidence for the above is overwhelming. In fact, our rummage through the existing literature on conflict studies reveals that this is a very rich field indeed, and that there is great value that can be derived by scholars, policy makers and peace practitioners.<sup>2</sup> Out of this existing theoretical framework, this paper has identified some important cues pertinent to the resolution of the conflict here under review. Where necessary, these will be illuminated by citing specific examples from various peace efforts surveyed here.

In a random and non-exhaustive manner, the following have been identified as the important cues which might have relevance to the final peaceful resolution of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict.

The first one is to be open-minded, innovative and goal-driven. Doing so has practical utility. A *sine qua non* for this, however, is to make an accurate taxonomic analysis of peacekeeping missions. One sure way of ensuring this is by classifying various peacekeeping operations, setting specific objectives they ought to achieve and assessing whether they have enough capacity to do so. Once this has been done, it then becomes clear that unlike the traditional missions, the contemporary peacekeeping missions are much more complex in nature and invariably assume multiple roles. This view was corroborated by Diehl et al (1998:37) when they clairvoyantly pointed out that:

The new missions are more complex and explicitly committed to and involved in conflict resolution. What was formerly regarded as primarily a control function has been extended to include peacemaking and peacebuilding, both of which involve the use of conflict resolution processes or skills. These skills include negotiation, mediation, facilitation, consultation, conciliation, and communication. Although missions and situations may vary in terms of the extent to which these skills are needed, they are an important part of the modern peacekeeper's "toolbox".

In addition to alerting us to training needs, a classification of peacekeeping missions equips policy makers with logistical tools for planning. It allows them to determine whether a specific mission can fulfil specific roles simultaneously or sequentially, or for that matter, whether different roles are mutually exclusive and whether heedlessly combining them is inherently problematic. All these are critical factors that need to be carefully considered as they have a direct bearing on the likely outcome

of any peacekeeping mission.

Hanekom (1998:158) was acutely aware of this critical factor when he pointed out that the preponderance of conflict clearly indicates that there is a dire need to amend the UN Charter, particularly chapters 6 and 7, and Article XIV of the OAU Charter. Doing so, according to him, would enable these organisations to effectively deal with the current conflicts which tend to be most intractable.

Even the success of the newly-hatched UMEE hinges around this critical point. For one, the training of 4 200 peacekeepers and other observers will remain very crucial so that they can, amongst other things, alert themselves to the vagaries of the relations between the two countries under review here. Adequate training, particularly in communication, will go a long way towards levelling communication barriers among the peacekeepers themselves, as they come from 19 different countries, 3 and will also facilitate communication between peacekeepers and citizens of the two countries in conflict (Blake 1998:310-311).

Another cue, closely linked to the above, is to acknowledge a dire need to determine specific roles the interveners should play. 4 Are they mediators, merely content with dispute settlement? Or are they arbitrators, mainly interested in imposing a settlement? Or, for that matter, are they peace corps, suitably trained and versatile enough to be involved in a wide range of operations from traditional peacekeeping to post-conflict peacebuilding? Though this point has a direct bearing on the successful resolution of any conflict, the record of various peace efforts, particularly between May 1998 and April 2000, inspires little confidence. For one, outside intervention was tardy, and when it eventually came, there was no clarity on the actual form it was supposed to take. As the war broke out on May 6, the US and Rwanda were the first to intervene on May 31. Given the level of conflict a full-scale war their choice of intervention as facilitators was simply inadequate to deal with the situation. For this reason, it does not come as a surprise that the central element of their peace proposal Eritrea's withdrawal to pre-May 6 positions was firmly rejected by Eritrea hence there was a deadlock from the onset.

Apart from the US/Rwanda peace effort, other subsequent efforts by Libya, Djibouti and Italy clearly indicated the form of intervention was not thought through beforehand. Rather, each party intervened on an ad hoc basis as it saw fit.

A penultimate point is that the existing theoretical framework has been salutary in the sense that it helps policy makers determine issues in a particular conflict and discern orientations of the disputants and intervene accordingly. What issues are involved in a particular conflict? Are they tangible (like territory, resources, government positions) or intangible (like ethnic, religious, ideological differences)?

With respect to the role of such issues, this paper will guard against gullibly accepting the view that conflicts based on tangible as opposed to intangible issues are much more tractable. This circumspection is informed by the fact that this new genre of African conflicts in the post-cold war era, at times, simply gainsays such tangible motifs. For example, in regard to the impact of tangible resources, our case study reveals that though the underlying cause seems to be the violation of existing boundaries between the two countries, other factors mentioned above, like political factors, seem to exacerbate this conflict.

As for party positions, are the disputants interested in integrative bargaining, thus seeking mutually beneficial solutions to a conflict? Or are they interested in distributive bargaining, thus increasing their outcomes at the other's expense? Once those orientations have been discerned, interveners can then be in a position to determine whether a given party is rigid or flexible and to what forms of intervention are they amenable and/or impervious. Diehl et al (1998:51) equally agreed that distinguishing such party orientations has policy implications as well and went on to elaborate on this. According to them, there are two dimensions to this. On the one hand, conflicts in which parties adopt a distributive orientation require negotiating skills suitable for competitive situations. On the other, missions in which parties adopt a much more integrative orientation require such problem-solving and communication skills as searching for information that reveals underlying interests and needs, developing trust, and identifying solutions that avoid concessions. For mediators, they asserted, it is also important to generate hypotheses, diagnose and give disputants a sense of ownership of negotiating solutions.

As for the actual impact of such skills on various peace efforts, there has been a tendency to blame the failure of US/Rwanda-brokered peace talks on the ineptitude of the US chief negotiator Susan Rice. There has been a perception that she did not embark on a fact-finding mission ahead of time. Doing so, it is believed, would have alerted her to contentious issues that the belligerents were not likely to compromise. However, these allegations, which are neither here nor there, should not obscure the real issue here that such skills play a pivotal role. It is only when mediators, for example, are equipped with problem-solving and other skills, that they can handle delicate situations as they unfold. If the tensions are too high, for example, an experienced negotiator can decide to meet the parties separately for a start, as did the Algerian President and current OAU Chairperson Abdelaziz Boulefflika during the proximity talks in April/May 2000. Though this might seem like a trivial point, it really went a long way towards building trust and reducing tensions between the warring parties, hence the 18 June 2000 breakthrough.

Lastly, current literature has taught us that the status of the intervener is equally critical to the likely outcome of any intervention attempt. This is simply because larger countries have much more latitude when it comes to organising an intervention strategy. Major powers, Regan (1996:348) further observed, not only have larger and more projectable military forces but also a wider range of economic resources that can be brought to bear in a foreign policy role such as peacekeeping. He concluded by pointing out that the effectiveness of that intervention should be greater than that of a non-major power.

History abounds with examples in which the intervention of powerful states has produced the likely outcome of peace efforts. Pre-eminent is the current involvement of the western trio the US, Great Britain and France in various initiatives in Africa (Ate 1999:13-16). Within Africa, there are more pertinent examples. One is South Africa's involvement under the rubric of the SADC in resolving the Lesotho crisis from 1994 to September 1998. The other, and more spectacular, has been Nigeria's involvement in the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) missions in Liberia from 1990 to 1997 and in Sierra Leone as well.

The ongoing conflict in the Horn of Africa bears testimony to the above-mentioned point as well. Notable here is the fact that this conflict has been prolonged by the absence of the UN-OAU-Sub-Regional power synergy as envisaged by the UN. This state of affairs is due to the fact a regional power in the Horn, Ethiopia, is one of the belligerents. Ethiopia's status has therefore foiled IGAD's



(Inter-Governmental Authority on Development) chances of trying to resolve this conflict. In general, compared to other sub-regional organisations, IGAD 5 is still lagging behind in this regard. Firstly, earlier mediation attempts by Djibouti President and IGAD Chair at the time, Hassan Gouled Alidan, failed to make any impact on the peace process. Secondly, subsequent attempts by individual member states equally foundered. Somalia, on the one hand, could not have been meaningfully involved in the peace process given her strained relations with Ethiopia. On the other hand, Uganda's extensive involvement in the peace process has been encumbered by her engagement in the DRC conflict. Whatever the reason, the crux of the matter is that a collective involvement of IGAD as a unit would have gone a long way towards resolving the conflict.

Another complicating factor is that even the OAU does not have enough capacity to decisively resolve this conflict. This Achilles heel of the OAU, therefore, accounts for the organisation's dithering negotiation efforts between May 1998 and April 2000. This was first shown when the OAU did not intervene promptly when the war broke out on 6 May, 1998. Its intervention was tardy, even overtaken by the US/Rwanda peace effort mentioned above, as it only took place on the 10th of June, 1999. If the OAU could not intervene promptly and decisively, which other organisation in Africa was in a good position to play that role? The Achilles heel also manifests itself in the OAU'S lack of leverage in general as it failed to convince the two warring parties to adopt its Framework Agreement Proposal on the 8th of November 1998. Furthermore, the AOU has allowed these parties to hold the peace talks at ransom. For more than two years, it could not get its peace proposal accepted by the two parties mainly on two grounds: Ethiopia's initial insistence on Eritrea's withdrawal to pre-6 May positions; and, later, on Eritrea's insistence on Ethiopia's signing of a cease-fire before any substantive talks could begin. For almost two years, the OAU just could not break that impasse!

#### 4. WAY FORWARD

The ongoing conflict has already had catastrophic results and bequeathed both Ethiopia and Eritrea with problems of unimaginable proportions: a tragic loss of human life on a grand scale as thousands of soldiers and civilians were caught up and slain in the battlefield; a major humanitarian crisis in the turn of the century as hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians in both countries were forced to flee their homes and trudge across hundreds of miles in search of safe havens;<sup>6</sup> and the destruction of the economies of the two countries.

The last point, which will have wider and long-lasting ramifications, needs some further elaboration. First, it needs to be unequivocally stated that this war has depleted the meagre resources in these two countries. A substantial portion of their resources, which could have been optimally used for the provision of food and other essential services, has been siphoned off for defence spending. Subsequently, such resources have been used to buy modern Russian Aircraft so that the two countries can annihilate each other. To have two of the poorest economies in the world, with acute shortages of food, staging hi-tech war in the modern history of Africa is nothing else but a remarkable folly. <sup>7</sup> This becomes conspicuous when it is recalled that this war has also jettisoned any plans for economic recovery in the two countries. Because of this war, reciprocal trade links (at least in the short term) have been curtailed. Doing so has not only shattered the two economies, but has also rocked the very foundation of close economic co-operation at sub-regional (IGAD) level. In a nutshell, the costs of this war are exorbitant and its further continuation is just incomprehensible. But what are the prospects for finding a lasting solution? Not bright at all!

As shown above, various peace efforts in resolving the Ethio-Eritrean conflict during the first round of this conflict inspire little confidence. Be that as it may, there are promising developments which took place after the outbreak of hostilities in May 2000. Amongst these is the resumption of Proximity Talks on May 30, 2000, in Algeria under the auspices of the OAU. These talks were a major breakthrough as they paved way for the subsequent signing of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities between the two warring countries on the 18th of June, 2000.

Given the limited success of peace efforts during the first round of this conflict, are there cogent reasons for a much more sanguine view of such endeavours in the second round? Probably there are. One of them is that the UN, in particular, has beefed up its measures by coming up with much more innovative ideas on dealing with the current multi-dimensional conflicts. Amongst these are establishing UN Committees on Peace and Security and Humanitarian Affairs to prepare and co-ordinate complex operations; establishing Contact groups of interested countries to mobilise international support for peace efforts; co-deploying with regional, sub-regional, and multinational forces; holding Annual meetings between officials from the UN and OAU Secretariats chaired by the two Secretaries-General and establishing a UN Liaison Office at the headquarters of the OAU in (ironically!) Addis Ababa to consolidate Cupertino and facilitate the deployment of political efforts to prevent, contain and resolve conflicts in Africa.<sup>8</sup> Also, as alluded to above, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1312 (2000) of July 31, 2000, which established the formation of UNMEE.

Apart from this, there is not much reason for further optimism. One of the reasons for this jaundiced view is that the conflict under review here is complex, intractable and multi-dimensional in nature and requires a multi-pronged approach. In addition to our case study, the DRC conflict, which is essentially an ethnic intra-state conflict with a strong inter-state dimension, is highly indicative of this same phenomenon. It is upon acknowledging this reality that policy-makers can realistically hope to prescribe a decisive form of intervention. The very nature of this conflict dictates that the UN should come up with a multi-pronged approach for prevention, management and resolution of conflicts whether they are intra or inter-state in nature.

Though these innovations are a huge step towards the right direction, policy makers should guard against complacency. Such operations would be very complex in nature and invariably need enormous resources if they are to be successful. For this, continued support of the Western countries, particularly the US, Great Britain and France<sup>9</sup>, will be relied upon; and further financial support from potential donors such as the EU, Netherlands, Canada and others, solicited.

Without these, so will wither African Solutions to African problems; and so will wilt the high hopes of innocent civilians in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

## Notes

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1. This is a widely used term and its definition will not be repeated here. However, for a better

understanding if this concept see, amongst others, Statement of the NEC of the African National Congress (ANC) delivered by Thabo Mbeki on January 8, 1999, on the 87th anniversary of the ANC, p.4.

2. Notable here is the fact that in a concerted search for sustainable peace and political stability (in Africa), scholars, particularly those who specialise in the area of political conflict studies, have propounded various conflict theories for the currently prevalent political conflicts. For implications of these, see, for example, Bozeman (1976:41-45), Deutsch (1991:26), Pederson and Jandt (1996:3-4), and Zartman (1989:12-17). For additional yet crucial information on conflict and conflict resolution, also see, inter alia, Vayrynen (1990:1-5) on the role of actor, issue, structural as well as rule transformation; Regan (1996:338-40, 343-352) on third-party intervention in intrastate conflicts since 1994; Malan (1997:16, 92-96) on the significance and nature of conflict resolution wisdom from Africa; and Blake (1998:310) on the role of peace communication in conflict resolution endeavours in Africa.

3. Among the countries which pledged to contribute troops were Algeria, Canada, Kenya, Sweden and Zambia. For the whole list, visit <http://www.reliefweb.int/IRN/cea/contrystories/ethiopia/20000901a.phtml>

4. Equally important is to understand the nuances between conflict management and conflict resolution. Zartman (1989:8) might be helpful in this regard.

5. For a brief introduction to IGAD, formerly known as the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Desertification (IGADD), see Salem (1992:15).

6. In his recent report on Ethiopia and Eritrea, the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has given graphic details of the humanitarian crises in both countries. For example, in Ethiopia, he reported that by January 2000, an estimated 349 837 people had been displaced by war in the northern regions of Tigray and Afor alone; whereas 10 million people, including 1.4 million children under five years of age, have been left in a dire need for food. This desperate situation has been exacerbated by drought, he added. In Eritrea the situation was equally desperate, with 400 000 people displaced and 1.6 million affected by drought and war. For additional information on this and amounts required for emergency relief assistance, visit <http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsb/48> or <http://www.un.org>

7. As Sotal (1999:15) pointed out, this perception can also be attributed to the fratricidal dimension of this conflict. Close affinity between the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea is reflected in the fact that the Tigri people, who live on both sides of the borders, have known one another for centuries. They speak the same language, worship together and have developed and strengthened family ties. In fact, this is a conflict which has split families and, as it did to Afewerki and Zenawi, brought cousin against cousin.

8. In a recent report to the Security Council, the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has come up with a number of innovations in addressing African conflict. For more information on these, visit <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/sgreport/innovat.html>

9. Ate (1999:15) has well documented the peacekeeping initiatives of this trio in Africa. The US, for example, is primarily responsible for initiating the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI); France, the

Reinforcement of African Capacity for Peacekeeping (RECAMP); and UK, the African Peacekeeping Training Support Programme.

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