

## Foreword by Jannie Malan

Most probably our readers will join us in agreeing about the constant need for research and about the great advantages of implementing valuable research findings. But some of us occasionally find ourselves in situations where the importance of research is debated, and where extreme pragmatists are denouncing research as an abstract luxury. Most of us will surely have potentially convincing responses ready for use in such cases, but will also remain on the lookout for new advantages of worthwhile research. Obviously, our openness toward fresh research findings is not only meant to provide us with arguments for discussions, but also and especially to increase our own effectiveness wherever we are dealing with conflict personally and/or professionally.

In the articles presented in this issue, good examples may be found of research results that may lead to new understandings or applications. As I was reading, and as editor rereading, these articles, several thought-provokers struck me. Realising very well, of course, that each reader will be prompted by different things according to her/his situation, cultural context, experience, insight and attitude, I am nevertheless inclined to share some of my lines of thinking.

The method used in some versions of customary mediation in the Sudan (1st article), where the mediators divide themselves into "doves" and "hawks", caused me to think about the thrust which such a combined approach may have. Normally, I tend to regard tactfulness and firmness as alternatives between which a choice has to be made according to the conflictual and cultural situation and the personalities involved. But now this time-proven tradition points to the possible advantages of supplementing such or-thinking with and-thinking

With regard to South Africa's peacekeeping role (5th article), combined planning is also emphasised. The need for multilateral, political and military, responses to crises is emphasised. And the growing recognition, in military circles, of conflict resolution in the light of common interests and responsibilities is welcomed and encouraged. In the conclusion to this article, the interrelating of politico-military pressure and preventive diplomacy is clinchingly stressed.

Similar inclusive emphases are found in the discussion of issues in conflict resolution (4th article). Mediation should be deadlock-breaking and trust-building. Conflict resolution should not only be oriented towards terminating violent behaviour and changing offensive structures, but also towards building confidence in order to improve attitudes.

Another thought that influenced my own thinking, was the importance of widespread awareness wherever an inter-human problem has to be solved. With regard to water management (3rd article), the focus is on a need for regional and global awareness of serious, even health and survival threatening, problems. Recognition is given to organisations and projects that are alerting the public not only in their own and neighbouring countries, but in an interdependent world to urgent problems and possible solutions.

The same challenge to increased national, regional, and global awareness is unequivocally posed where the grave and tragic problem of child soldiers is discussed (2nd article). The hope is expressed that an increased awareness and growing consensus will lead to the definite implementation of problem-solving recommendations and possibilities.

The last line of my thinking I wish to share, is the ever-intriguing and always-relevant one about the complexities of cultural rigidity and flexibility. It was with some feeling of helpless disappointment that I read how and why the traditional institution of mediation in the Sudan "has been losing its sanctity and effectiveness in a changing society" (1st article). Societies all over the world are indeed constantly changing for the better or the worse. There are changes that seem to be inevitable, but there are those that may be counteracted to some extent. It is therefore not necessary to accept an apparently detrimental development as if nothing can be done about it. So, where a warning is sounded that a valuable cultural element may be phased out, we may remain committed to the preservation and promotion of customs and attitudes that are oriented towards human and humane co-existence. We may keep on doing our various bits, not only in the particular cultural contexts where we happen to find ourselves, but also wherever an opportunity of wider cross-fertilisation presents itself.

What these few examples are supposed to communicate, is a strong encouragement to take research outcomes seriously, by being on the lookout for meaningful ideas, or implications of ideas, or implementations of ideas, and being oriented towards putting such possibilities into practice. By so doing, we can contribute to a wider acceptance of the value of research, and especially also to the greater effectiveness of our attempts to deal with conflict. And if the fascinating phenomenon called intertextuality causes each of us to come up with a different set of impressions and intentions, so much the better. In the diverse field of dealing with conflict, a diversity of skills and commitments is exactly what is needed.

Notes

References

## Book Review - Peacemaking in South Africa A Life in Conflict Resolution by Jaap Durand

Peacemaking in South Africa A Life in Conflict Resolution  
Van der Merwe, H.W. 2000  
Cape Town: Tafelberg, 223 pp.

Reviewed by Jaap Durand, retired Vice-Rector of the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town,  
South Africa

This is the autobiography of a man who played a significant role in the peace-making process in South Africa that led to the negotiated settlement in 1994, which is often described as the South African "miracle". H.W. van der Merwe, now deceased after a long illness, had been described by the media as the man "who brings South Africa's enemies together".

Although he tells his own story, his autobiography is also the story of how the South African "miracle" began to take shape in the early stages that preceded the political negotiations of the 1990s. By and large it all started in 1984 when H.W. (called "Harvey" by many English-speaking people according to the Afrikaans pronunciation of his initials) facilitated the first meetings between the African National Congress (ANC) in exile and supporters of the apartheid regime. Chapter 11, which relates these events, makes fascinating reading. The slow process of convincing government officers and supporters about the necessity of at least meeting with members of the ANC clearly comes to the fore.

The frankness with which the author tells his story enhances the complete credibility of a history that unfolds on a very personal level without losing sight of the far broader picture on a national and even international level. He does not hide the fact that at his first meeting with the Executive Committee of the ANC in Lusaka he was embarrassed because of his lack of knowledge of the ANC, so much so that he had to ask Thabo Mbeki (Head of the Department of Information and Publicity) and Alfred Nzo (Secretary General) their respective positions in the organisation. He also acknowledges his contact with the security police. Despite the fact that he did not have an easy relationship with them and that they watched him closely, he nevertheless shared with them his reports on his meetings with the ANC, emphasising the sincerity of the ANC's wish to talk. By doing this he clearly showed his peace-making and bridge-building intentions. Typical of their perspective, the security police warned him that he was playing with fire and that he was being used by the ANC for their own purposes. The difficulty of playing such a role is vividly portrayed in an incident which happened at an earlier stage in his life as a lecturer at Rhodes University, when his wish to protect someone banned under the Suppression of Communism Act on the one hand and his friendly relationship with the head of the security police in Grahamstown on the other hand led to a serious misunderstanding about the role he was playing (pp. 38-40).

In the early chapters he tells us a very abbreviated story of his early life, including a rather naive but honest story of the moment in his life when he as an Afrikaner "became an African". Then follows the story of his "Anglicisation", when he started lecturing at Rhodes University and later at the University of Cape Town, where eventually he became director of the Centre for Intergroup Studies and honorary professor of the University (1968-1992).

To a large extent the middle part of his book (chapters 4 to 8) does not only relate his personal history, but also the history of the Centre for Intergroup Studies. This is not surprising, because the Centre almost became synonymous with H.W. van der Merwe. In these chapters we read about the Grabouw Seminar in 1972 on the theme "The Political Position of the Coloured People in South Africa", a unique occasion "where coloured and white Afrikaner leaders shared living quarters for a weekend a highly emotional and controversial event at the time because it raised the spectre of racial intermixture" (p. 62). The 1973 student strike at the University of the Western Cape, the fight against forced removals at Cross Roads and District Six, the Soweto revolt and the subsequent Cillie Commission of Inquiry all these stories of important milestones in the struggle against apartheid during the 1970s are told from the perspective of someone who had been deeply involved in efforts to salvage something out of a chaotic situation. Historians will discover in this book details of certain happenings which they will not find anywhere else. In this regard special mention must be made of the Centre's and H.W.'s relationship with the black conscious South African Student Organisation (SASO) and its founding president, Steve Biko (pp. 68-73).

In chapter 3 the author gives us some insight in his own spiritual and religious development. He grew up in the Dutch Reformed Church as an active member, but gradually became completely disillusioned by this church's unwillingness to change from its racist policies and attitudes and its emphasis on dogmas and creeds. In 1973 he and his wife, Marietjie, approached the (coloured) Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) for membership, recognising their approach as a political statement. Unfortunately the conservative minister of the nearby DRMC congregation was not very helpful for fear of rocking the boat. The result was that H.W. and his family eventually ended up with the Quakers. Quakerism became their spiritual home.

When one compares H.W.'s personal history with that of Quakerism the appropriateness of this new religious relationship becomes very clear. The Religious Society of Friends with its basic orientation towards peace and justice has shown throughout history how a small band of men and women can witness to the world out of all proportion to its numbers. In the hidden world of behind-the-scenes peacebroking H.W. demonstrated the same tenacity of purpose.

However, H.W.'s relationship with Quakerism did not preclude difference of opinion with regard to the political situation in South Africa during the 1980s, more specifically the issue of an economic boycott. This he describes in chapter 14. Whereas the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) supported the "total isolation" (including economic isolation) of South Africa, H.W. was of the firm conviction that campaigners in foreign countries did not have the right to cause unemployment among workers in South Africa. He also differed from the AFSC in so far as it refused to have any contact with the apartheid government. H.W. argued that it was the task of Quakers to help them break out of an evil system. The following quotation is an apt summary of the consistent course followed by the author in his peacemaking efforts: "If Quakers could work with liberation forces who had resorted to a violent armed revolt, of which we could not approve but could understand, we should also be able to work with people of goodwill who operated within the apartheid system which we deplored" (p. 185).

H.W. van der Merwe ends his autobiography on a rather controversial note when he criticises the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for failing "to meet the needs of millions of South Africans who wish to see that justice is done". For the author it is a basic principle of justice that wrong should be righted that the offender deserves punishment. Furthermore, the Truth Commission failed through the collapse

of its Commission of Reparation through poor leadership and inefficiency. Nothing came of the expectations of black people that they deserved to be compensated for the immense material losses as well as the emotional and psychological damage that they suffered (pp. 212-216).

In his foreword Nelson Mandela comments: "It is because South Africa had people like H.W. van der Merwe that we were able to enjoy a dramatic and peaceful transition to democracy, which serves as an inspiration to the world."

Anybody who reads H.W.'s book with an open mind, will agree.

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References

## Book Review - Putting People First: African Priorities for the UN Millennium Assembly by Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni

Putting People First: African Priorities for the UN Millennium Assembly  
Mathoma, Pandelani, Mills, Greg and Stremlau, John (eds.) 2000  
Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs, 129 pp.

Reviewed by Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Department of History & Development Studies, Midlands State University, Gweru, Zimbabwe

Putting People First is a collection of edited papers, which were commissioned and then discussed at a conference held at Johannesburg in November 1999 under the joint auspices of the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) and the International Relations Department at the University of the Witwatersrand. The theme of the conference was "Priorities for Africa and the UN Millennium Assembly". Because of the centrality of human security in the conference discussions, the editors of the papers decided to capture this in the title of the book, Putting People First, as the people are central to the whole concept of human security. The main message of the book is that for too long Africa has been seen by the world as a problem to be solved, rather than a voice to be heard. Putting People First is a bold African voice, statement and contribution about the challenges facing Africa, particularly in the area of peace, security and development. It provides a discussion of possible solutions as conceived and articulated by African intellectuals, including the potential role of the United Nations as seen by Africans themselves.

The book is organised around the major themes that were identified by the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, for the UN Millennium Assembly, namely: peace and security, development and poverty eradication, human rights and democracy, and the issue of strengthening the United Nations as a global organisation. A total of eight different authors formulated their themes around the above broad areas and succeeded in adding the missing African voice and African realities.

Sikose Mji and Pandelani T. Mathoma, one of the editors of the book, wrote the preliminaries, contributing a preface and a foreword respectively. Mji invites the world to ponder on the question: "Can there be a 'new millennium' for Africa and the UN Assembly without a paradigm shift from unbridled globalization to one with a people-centred development focus?" (p vii). She identifies certain core principles that form the foundation and integral part of a people-oriented development strategy, namely: ethics (less violation of human rights), inclusion (less marginalisation of people and countries), human security (less instability of societies and less vulnerability of people), and development (less poverty and deprivation). Mathoma, on the other hand, provides a context and background to the eight essays and comments on the thrust of some individual contributions.

Putting People First is organised into eight neat and comprehensive chapters. The first one, by John Stremlau, is captioned "Putting People First: Priorities for Africa and the UN Millennium Assembly", and the title of the book is derived from this contribution. Stremlau boldly pushes the point that the African continent should not only be seen as a problem to be solved but as a voice to be heard. He challenges the international community to listen to African leaders when they articulate their priorities and to help them realise their plans. He proceeds to redefine pan-African relations with a view to

entrench a more people-centred approach to security and development, and emphasises the strategic value of human rights and democratic realism. He presents Africa's challenge to the west, delineates the new priorities for Africa at the UN, and concludes with a discussion of a new North-South co-operation encompassing African priorities in its agenda.

The second chapter is by Greg Mills on "Global Realities and African Priorities: A View from South Africa". He assesses the nature of past international relations and grapples with the challenge of how the present African communities can equip themselves for the future global problems and realities. Like Stremlau, he is concerned about the African position in the international system. He observes that "we are facing a world which is both fragmenting and integrating" (p 33). He emphasises the role of information technology in speeding up the entry of the poor and isolated into the global economy as well as the promotion of human rights and democracy. He discusses the humanitarian crisis situation, drug abuse and trafficking, the spread of HIV/AIDS, poverty and gender inequality, the combating of terrorism, and the safeguarding of the environment all of which have to be factored into the new global diplomatic calculation and matrix.

Ogaba Oche's "Human Security in Africa: An Agenda for the Next Millennium" constitutes chapter three of the book, and is concerned with three major issues, namely: definition of conflict, the emergence of the concept of human security and the strategies and tactics of conflict resolution. He concludes: "As Africa enters the 21st Century there is very little doubt that the enhancement of human security should constitute a focal point of its development agenda" (p 50). In chapter four, Abdoul Aziz M'Baye deals with the controversial issue of "Nations, States or Nation-states" in the context of human rights and democratisation in Africa. His focus is on the evolution of African structures and institutions and how they generate, or are prone to, conflict. He concludes with a challenge for embracing the notion of an African renaissance, which he hopes if well marketed and given practical expression "is to bring about a real renewal of the African structures, their nations and ultimately the modernization of their states" (p 68).

Shadrack B.O. Gutto's contribution, entitled "The African State, Human Rights and Refugees", provides a radical critique of the concept and the process of globalisation, the concept of the state and government, the phenomenon of arbitrary colonial boundaries, and the problem of refugees in Africa. With regard to refugees, he discusses the role of the UN and civil society in combating the refugee problem, and also examines the crucial issue of the conditions and circumstances that produce refugees in Africa. He concludes with a call for the reform of the African state as well as the rethinking of the "New World Order" so as to open vistas of humane treatment of citizens and refugees.

In chapter six Shyley Kondowe grapples with the pertinent issues of sovereignty, intervention and democratisation in what she regards as "small Africa states". Kondowe comes up with illuminating observations: that "many of the African leaders and governments have used 'state sovereignty' as a tool to sustain the oppression of their citizens"; and that the western powers, on the other hand, have "used 'intervention' as a tool for marginalizing those segments of society that they do not want because of racial, religious or ethnic differences" (p 85). Kondowe argues that democratisation has created a competition among western ideologies and systems, and patronage of the poor by the rich. In short, Kondowe's contribution is a radical critique of the triple concepts of sovereignty, intervention and democratisation in Africa.

Paul Omach, in chapter seven, discusses the dynamics of domestic factionalism and the internationalisation of conflict in East and Central Africa. He views East and Central Africa as a "security complex", that is, countries with interlinked security concerns wherein internal conflicts easily spill over to neighbouring states, leading to intervention and counter-intervention in the domestic political upheavals and subsequently resulting in interstate wars. He calls for an examination of the interface between domestic factionalism and international politics. Indeed, East and Central Africa is experiencing a "security complex" arising from the DRC conflict, vindicating Omach's hypothesis. The final contribution is by Bassey E. Ate, on the enhancement of regional capacity for conflict and security management in the 21st century. It is a study of the so-called "Ecomog Concept" as ideal for grappling with conflict in Africa rather than looking for the outside world to take the burden of protecting African people from atrocities committed by Africa.

Thus, in terms of content, the book is very rich and informative on aspects of human rights and democracy, general problems affecting Africa, identification of African priorities for the 21st Century, the nature of African conflict, critique of strategies and tactics of conflict resolution and suggestions for the way forward.

The strength of the book lies in its approach which runs through all eight chapters, that of "putting people first". This approach is an excellent innovation drawn from critical peace and security studies literature. It stands out as an alternative way of seeing the world taking the people as the major point of reference and moving away from the traditional, narrow, selfish and exclusively state-centric paradigm which emphasises security of regime, territory and government. In this way the book reveals crucial details on the formidable threats to human security such as poverty, disease, vagaries of environment, exploitation, hunger, oppression and injustice. The book also stands poignantly as a critique of the unequal and exploitative relations between the North and the South and exposes the unfair conditions under which the African continent was integrated into the nexus of the evolving world capitalist system. It also stands as a clarion and articulate call for the democratisation, not only of the governments of Africa but also of the New World Economic Order, to be spearheaded by the UN.

However, there is one major weakness of the book as a whole, that is, the absence of any discussion on HIV/AIDS as one of the major threats to human security. The reality is that, never before, not even when the bubonic plague ravaged Europe in the Middle Ages, has there been a disease as devastating to mankind as the current HIV/AIDS pandemic. The book glosses over this crucial threat to mankind. There are other weaknesses such as the lack of an index and a selected bibliography at the end.

Nevertheless, the book remains a monumental contribution to the fields of history, peace and security, international affairs, politics and development studies.

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References



# Child Soldiers in Africa: Solutions to a Complex Dilemma

by Martin A. Kalis

## Abstract

This article focuses on the dilemma of using child soldiers in violent conflicts throughout Africa and on ways of resolving it in the future. The first section briefly examines some important domestic and international aspects and dimensions of the problem. Then, attention is shifted to particular individual countries on the continent in which the use of children in battle has been most prevalent during the past decade. The next section reviews some recent efforts by the international community to assuage the crisis, offers recommendations on how they can be improved, and raises alternative ideas for new strategies and initiatives. Finally, a conclusion ties all this information together and suggests a hopeful future for the children of war-torn countries in Africa.

In recent years, the use of child soldiers by both government forces and insurgent groups in African countries such as Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, and Sudan has been harshly condemned by the international community. Past efforts to alleviate the problem have been somewhat ineffective and many children continue to engage in violent conflict either voluntarily or against their will. The dimensions of this terrible dilemma are complex and widespread, stemming from both domestic and global forces. There is still hope, however, for the children of these war-torn nations. Many countries and international organisations are joining together to develop new strategies that will discourage the use of child soldiers and punish those groups and governments that do. It is extremely important that the United States support these endeavours in their early stages so that effective measures can be implemented that may one day help solve the problem.

## Introduction

Throughout most of its history, the African continent has been no stranger to violent conflict. In the past decade alone, the world has witnessed widespread genocide in Rwanda, interstate war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and bloody, protracted civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Both government forces and insurgent groups have become increasingly reliant upon the recruitment of children to help fight their battles. In addition, these young individuals sometimes serve as sex slaves for high-ranking military officials or are sold into slavery in exchange for weapons, money, and other scarce resources. This disturbing trend has received much attention in recent years from political leaders, human rights activists, and other members of the international community. Several initiatives have been launched during the past decade to help alleviate the problem. Much work still remains, however, before an effective strategy can be developed and implemented that will discourage the use of children in battle.

## Dimensions of the Problem

The use of children in violent conflict is a serious problem that continues to plague both the African continent and the international community as a whole. According to a recent report released by The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, more than 300,000 children under the age of 18 serve as child soldiers with government armed forces and armed opposition groups worldwide, with over 120,000 of them located in Sub-Saharan Africa alone (The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2001). In some of these countries, it is not uncommon to even find 7 and 8-year-olds engaged in battle. Some children voluntarily join government armies or insurgent groups, while others are abducted and

forced to fight against their will. There are many reasons why the recruitment of children, both boys and girls, in particular African nations has continued to increase over the years. In addition, the problem is often exacerbated by several domestic and international factors. Some of the more salient features of this disturbing trend are worth reviewing.

## Proliferation of Small Arms

The proliferation of light, inexpensive weapons in many African countries in recent years has greatly contributed to the recruitment of child soldiers for battle. One U.S. State Department report notes:

During the Cold War, state-to-state arms transfers to Sub-Saharan Africa involved primarily heavy, high-maintenance equipment such as jet fighters, helicopters, transport aircraft, and tanks. After the collapse of Communist governments in the former Soviet Union and its East European allies, state-to-state transfers declined while commercial and illegal arms trafficking in light weapons increased. The consequent widespread availability of cheap weapons, easy to use and maintain (AK-47s sell for as little as \$6 in some African countries), fuels destruction throughout the continent.

U.S. State Department 1999

In previous years, weaponry was still somewhat complex, heavy, and bulky and children were limited to mainly support roles when participating in violent conflict. The increased availability of small arms, however, has allowed even the youngest of individuals to engage in direct combat. Very little effort and training is required for a 10-year-old to use an automatic weapon that weighs only a few pounds but still results in massive slaughter. Additionally, the relatively low cost of such weapons allows them to be bought by some of the poorest communities on the continent. The same report vividly demonstrates this point by stating, "In some countries, it is easier and cheaper to buy an AK-47 than to attend a movie or provide a decent meal" (U.S. State Department 1999).

## Governmental Unwillingness or Inability to Resolve the Problem

A major factor that encourages the use of child soldiers is the unwillingness or inability of African governments to initiate effective measures that will help curb the problem. Even though a majority of these nations have national laws setting the minimum age for recruitment at 18, they are either poorly enforced or not applied at all in practice (The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2001). The case of Sierra Leone serves as an excellent example. Despite government promises and claims to the contrary, up to 30 percent of government-sponsored Citizens Defence Forces (CDF) in some areas are between 7 and 14 years of age (The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2001). Furthermore, many of these laws have built-in stipulations that decrease their effectiveness. For instance, both Uganda and Chad accept children for battle younger than 18 with parental consent and Botswana, Kenya, and Zambia allow for the recruitment of children with the "apparent age of 18" (The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2001). Contradictions such as these undermine the rule of law and set a dangerous precedent for other African countries to follow. Poor record keeping and a lack of birth registration systems throughout the African continent contribute to the problem by allowing children well below the minimum age limit to be recruited. Finally, in cases of protracted internal conflict, governments simply may not have the resources or even the will to enforce these laws and are preoccupied with other political, economic, and social considerations.

## Voluntary and Forced Recruitment

African children become active participants in violent conflict by either voluntarily offering their services to armed groups or being coerced to do so against their own will. According to the Center for Defense Information, "It is probable that the vast majority of young soldiers are not forced or coerced into participating in conflict. But they remain subject to many subtle manipulations and pressures that are more difficult to eliminate than forced recruitment" (Isenberg 1997)<sup>1</sup>. There are several reasons why young individuals choose to voluntarily join national armies or rebel groups engaged in conflict. For one, there is the enticement of receiving a modest wage that can be directly used to support family members. Since the political, economic, and social institutions of many African countries are in extremely poor condition, many children are left with no viable alternatives for earning money in order to survive other than becoming soldiers. In addition, some youth are motivated by revenge when deciding to join armed groups. A young child may have witnessed the brutal murder of family members or close friends and feel that it is necessary to punish the perpetrators of such acts. Furthermore, some African communities even glorify war and teach children at a very early age that engaging in military combat is an honour for both the nation and family. One recent study conducted in Sierra Leone noted, "Many mothers have remarked on the joy of seeing their ten-year-old dressed in brand new military attire carrying an AK-47" (Isenberg 1997). The need for identity and association is another reason why many young individuals voluntarily join combat groups in Africa. This is especially true for adolescents and young teenagers. In apartheid South Africa, black township youth called the Young Lions adopted an ideology of liberation, which gave meaning to the harsh realities of their existence and conferred a clear sense of identity and direction (Wessells 1997). It becomes apparent that all of these factors greatly influence the decision of many African children to voluntarily join armed groups engaged in violent conflict.

Despite the voluntary participation of many African children in national militaries and insurgent groups, thousands are also forced to do so against their own will. It is not uncommon for local insurgent or military leaders to meet recruitment quotas by kidnapping, press-ganging, or abducting children from their own villages. In Ethiopia, several cases have been reported where armed militias would surround a public facility, order every male to sit down, and then force into a truck anyone deemed "eligible" (Wessells 1997). Once taken by the insurgent groups or local military units, young children are often subjected to brutal methods in order to "toughen them up" and turn them into ruthless "killing machines". This "conditioning" process can include being forced to kill or physically maim one's own friends or family members, participate in torture, rape, and execution of entire villages, and being beaten and sexually abused by the very forces for which they are fighting. In Sierra Leone, for example, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) forced captured children to take part in the torture and execution of their own relatives, after which they were led to neighbouring villages to repeat the slaughter (Machel 1996). In a recent ABC News report, a 16-year old girl named "Miriam" vividly describes her horrific experience after she and other village members were forcefully taken by the RUF:

Ten men raped me the day I was abducted. I was begging them to leave me alone, but they wouldn't listen. This happened for three days. Then they gave us 50 kilograms (110 pounds) of rice to carry. Later, I was forced to be the wife of a soldier named Mohammed. We were taught how to fire guns. There were over 100 boys and girls, the youngest 6, 7, and 8 years old. There were about 50 my age, and the others were all little ones.  
(Abrahamson 2000)

To ease the psychological and physical trauma of "training" and engaging in battle, children are often given amphetamines, tranquillisers, alcohol, and other drugs. This has resulted in the addiction of many young individuals to these harmful substances. Again, quoting "Miriam" from the ABC News report, "If you say no [to taking drugs], they beat you. It makes you feel strong, like a big person" (Abrahamson 2000).

Whether voluntarily recruited or forcefully abducted, children receive treatment on an equal level as their adult counterparts and are used in a variety of ways by armed groups. Many directly participate in violent battles and are oftentimes selected to do so over adults. One young man who was recruited by the Mozambican National Resistance group RENAMO during the 1980s at the age of 10 explains, "RENAMO did not use many adults to fight because they were not good fighters\kids have more stamina, are better at surviving in the bush, do not complain and follow directions" (Isenberg 1997). Others serve in support roles such as porters, lookouts, messengers, cooks, checkpoint officials, and even spies. Sometimes, new recruits may first serve in support roles before progressively advancing to combat. A former child soldier from Burundi states, "We spent sleepless nights watching for the enemy. My first role was to carry a torch for grown-up rebel leaders. Later I was shown how to use hand grenades. Barely within a month or so, I was carrying an AK-47 rifle and even a G3" (The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2001). Finally, young girls may be used as "sex slaves" by male soldiers and rebel leaders and are forced to marry and bear children for them. In the end, these young victims of war are left physically and psychologically traumatised with no medical or economic assistance from state institutions.

## Countries Most Affected by the Problem

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers has identified ten African nations that have been most affected by the problem of child soldiers: Angola, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Uganda. All of them have suffered politically, economically, and socially from the practice and continue to do so to this day. A brief examination of some of these countries will be sufficient to demonstrate the magnitude of the crisis on the African continent.

### Angola

For over 20 years, Angola has experienced a bloody civil war in which the use of child soldiers has been a common practice. Both government and UNITA (National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola) forces have actively recruited children of all ages to engage in violent conflict. Between 1980 and 1988, it is estimated that every third child in the country had been involved in some military aspect of the civil war (Taylor 2001). Furthermore, the government has lowered the minimum conscription age for military service on many occasions since 1993, with the latest revision set at 17 years old (The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2001). Forced recruitment of young individuals still continues even today, especially in several suburban areas near Luanda and the rural countryside. Recent figures place the number of children actively engaged in combat in Angola at over 3,000 (Taylor 2001). Even worse, the crisis seems to be spreading to neighbouring countries. According to some recent reports by the National Society for Human Rights:

Child soldiers are being recruited on Namibian soil for use in armed combat in Angola. This recruitment

of "voluntary" soldiers under the age of eighteen has escalated in the last three years and is being actively endorsed by the Namibian government. These child soldiers are reportedly as young as fourteen years old and are said to have been trained to be exceptionally ruthless.

(Inter-Church Coalition on Africa 2001)

There have also been claims that military commanders are collaborating with Namibian police officers and paying them to find new recruits (ReliefWeb 2001). It is clear that the problem of child soldiers is no longer a domestic concern for the Angolan government alone, but a regional one that threatens to severely weaken the moral, political, and social fabric of its bordering states.

## Burundi

Along with Rwanda, Burundi currently has one of the lowest recruitment ages for military service on the entire African continent. It appears that either 15 or 16 years of age seems to be the set standard, but this is difficult to confirm because copies of national recruitment legislation are impossible to find (ReliefWeb 2001). Estimates regarding the number of child soldiers actively engaged in combat vary widely. One source suggests that in 1998, there were between 800 and 1,000 children between 14 and 17 in the regular armed forces alone (ReliefWeb 2001). In recent years, the proliferation of military schools throughout the country known as "training centres" has increased youth recruitment and exacerbated the problem. Again, it is difficult to ascertain exact figures, but one report claims that the number of children attending these schools surpasses 36,000, with all of them being members of the armed forces (Taylor 2001). This surge in recruitment has led some organisations to believe that anywhere between 8,000 and 10,000 child soldiers are currently taking part in hostilities throughout the country (ReliefWeb 2001). As the government continues to foster a climate of militarism and condones the use of young individuals in combat, Burundi will continue to suffer the ravages of war and the loss of its children. If the future well being of a nation is determined by the development of its youth, then Burundi's future looks bleak as young individuals are urged to solve their problems violently instead of in an atmosphere of dialogue and compromise.

## Liberia

Despite claims by the Armed Forces of Liberia that individuals under the age of 18 are not recruited for military service, evidence indicates that all factions have recruited large numbers of underage children to engage in violent conflict, especially during the height of the country's protracted civil war. A report released by Human Rights Watch estimates that during the disarmament and demobilisation period from 1996 to 1997, over 18% of National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) soldiers were between 8 and 17 years of age (Taylor 2001). Of this number, 69% were between the ages of 15 and 17, while 27% were anywhere from 12 to 14 (ReliefWeb 2001). To this day, evidence still remains of past mistreatment and neglect of Liberia's youth. Many former child soldiers still remain physically and psychologically traumatised. Some continue to be addicted to drugs and alcohol given to them while in the military, and the number of homeless children and abandoned infants in Monrovia still remains extremely high (ReliefWeb 2001).

## Rwanda

Along with Burundi, Rwanda currently has the lowest recruitment age for military service in Africa.

Legislation adopted in 1977 sets the minimum age for volunteers at 16, but allows the Ministry of Defence to make exceptions with respect to the age and educational level of recruits (ReliefWeb 2001). Thousands of youth actively participated in the 1994 genocide throughout the country. In 1998, at least 2,893 minors were being held in Rwandan detention centres as genocide suspects (ReliefWeb 2001). Further compounding the problem is the fact that many secondary schools in Rwanda refuse to accept former child soldiers for enrolment. With no alternatives left, these children often decide to return to military service. The latest figures indicate that anywhere between 14,000 and 18,000 children are recruited into the armed forces every year (Taylor 2001). In addition, there have been recent reports that Rwandan youth are being abducted and forced to join both the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPA) and several armed factions fighting President Laurent Kabila's armed forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (ReliefWeb 2001). As in the case of Angola, the crisis is spreading to neighbouring countries and having devastating implications for the region.

## Sierra Leone

Graphic media images of traumatised youth with amputated limbs have brought much international attention to the problem of child soldiers in Sierra Leone in recent years. According to one journalist, "Sierra Leone has one of the world's worst records for recruiting children as soldiers. Between 1992 and 1996, the period of the worst fighting between the Government forces and the RUF (Revolutionary United Front), an estimated 4,500 children were forced to fight on both sides" (ReliefWeb 2001). Current estimates are difficult to calculate since the problem is so widespread. While one report states that over 3,000 child soldiers are currently living in the bush with the RUF, a Civil Defence Forces commander claims that he has the same number of youth stationed in a single district in the eastern part of the country (ReliefWeb 2001). Interestingly, Sierra Leone has an extremely high number of young females in the armed forces and militia groups. It is estimated that a third of all underage soldiers are girls (ReliefWeb 2001). Even though the level of violence has decreased since 1999 due to the efforts of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the ruinous effects of the prolonged civil war on the country's youth can still be seen. Many former child soldiers are left homeless, sick, poverty-stricken, and incapacitated due to the brutality they suffered in combat.

## Sudan

Since the outbreak of civil war in Sudan nearly two decades ago, the use of child soldiers has been a common practice among government armed forces in the north, the SPLA in the south, and a host of militia groups throughout the country. Some groups have become somewhat dependent upon recruiting children for military service due to a lack of adult volunteers. In 1993, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) began a project to reunify willing underage soldiers with their families, but the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) refused to cooperate with the program and decided to retain them for combat when needed (Human Rights Watch 1995). Like other nations examined in this work, the problem is not confined to Sudan's borders, but has spilled over to neighbouring countries. A 1994 Human Rights Watch report describes how the SPLA maintained large camps of boys between 14 and 16 years of age in Ethiopia for induction into battalions known as the "Red Army" (ReliefWeb 2001). The relentless fighting has resulted in the massacre of thousands of children in combat and has caused many to flee to nearby Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya. Additionally, the government supports camps in the southern part of the country that are used to train soldiers, many of them children, for a Ugandan opposition group known as the

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Finally, both government forces and insurgent groups engage in the practice of abducting children and selling them into slavery to generate income for the purchase of weapons (Zihindula 2000).

## Uganda

Uganda is currently experiencing internal conflict between government forces and several rebel groups, most notably the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in the south-western part of the country and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the north. The Concerned Parents Association estimates that about 90% of LRA soldiers are abducted children and believes that the group could not operate without them (ReliefWeb 2001). This figure is somewhat startling since the group is estimated to number around 12,000. Some reports indicate that LRA members commit heinous atrocities through an initiation ritual in which children are forced to gang up and kill other children with clubs, rocks, and pieces of firewood (Taylor 2001). Males between the ages of 12 and 16 are often targeted for abduction, but females are taken as well and are often forced to be "sex slaves" and wives for high-ranking officials. As previously mentioned, the group is known to have training camps for these abducted children in southern Sudan.

The LRA, however, is not the only organisation guilty of using child soldiers in combat. The ADF has also engaged in kidnapping young individuals from local schools and communities, especially in the south-western part of the country. For instance, on 19 February 1998, the group abducted 30 girls and three boys from a secondary school outside Fort Portal (ReliefWeb 2001). Finally, the effects of the crisis in Uganda do not seem to differ drastically from those of other African nations that have been plagued with the same problem. The country's youth has been left homeless, psychologically and physically scarred, and poverty-stricken, while the dilemma continues to spread into neighbouring states.

## International Efforts to Alleviate the Crisis

The international community has made several attempts in recent years to alleviate the problem of child soldiers on the African continent. Numerous global and regional conferences have been held with the intention of initiating concrete measures that would discourage the use of children in combat. In 1999, the Security Council of the United Nations even passed a resolution condemning the practice. Unfortunately, these well-intentioned efforts have had limited success and the recruitment of underage soldiers continues to pose a major challenge to the political, economic, and social development of many African countries. Let us briefly examine some of these most recent initiatives.

## Maputo Declaration on the Use of Children as Soldiers

In April 1999, over 250 representatives from more than 50 nations worldwide met for a four-day conference in Maputo, Mozambique, to address the problem of child soldiers on the African continent. The African Conference on the Use of Children as Soldiers opened with a report prepared by The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, which examined the legislation and practices in each African country by both governmental forces and non-state actors. Those attending the Conference were given the chance to respond to the report and submit comments on the situation in their own

particular country and how it could be improved. These comments and suggestions have been incorporated into The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2001. Throughout the four-day period, several group sessions were held that addressed important issues related to the crisis. Some of the topics included prevention of child recruitment, demobilisation and re-integration of child soldiers, preventing child recruitment by non-governmental armed groups, and legal and political aspects of the use of child soldiers (American Friends Service Committee 2001). The Conference resulted in the adoption of the Maputo Declaration on the Use of Children as Soldiers on 22 April 1999, which states, "The use of any child under 18 years of age by any armed force or armed group is wholly unacceptable, even where that child claims or is claimed to be a volunteer" (Maputo Declaration on the Use of Children as Soldiers 1999). Furthermore, the document demands:

An end to the recruitment of children and calls for the demobilisation and release of current child soldiers;  
African governments to take appropriate action against any government or armed opposition group that engages in the practice;  
African and international media to support all efforts to end the use of children as soldiers; and  
All governments, including those outside Africa, to provide adequate assistance to implement the Declaration's tenets.

Overall, the Conference and its resulting Declaration were a success and an extremely important step in fostering international co-operation to address the issue of child soldiers on the African continent.

#### United Nations Security Council Resolution 1261

On 25 August 1999, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1261, which condemned the use of child soldiers by any nation. Preceding the adoption of the agreement, over 48 speakers gave testimony to the Security Council, voicing their concerns and opinions about the problem worldwide during an all-day debate. Fred Beyendeza from Uganda stated before the Council:

Nothing could be more painful to my country than the systematic abduction, torture, detention, enslavement, mutilation and killing of its children, as has been happening for 12 long years in northern and western Uganda. Terrorist groups often target defenceless women and children between 11 and 16 years of age, at times abducting younger ones of 5 to 9 years, often after massacring their parents and relatives. Violations against children should be classified as crimes against humanity.  
(United Nations Press Release 1999)

One woman, Josepha Coehlo Da Cruz, described the situation in Angola:

My country was one of the many that had faced the problem of children in armed conflict for several years. Efforts by the Angolan Government to protect the children caught in the vicious circle and to alleviate their suffering had been consistently hindered by the actions of the bandits that continued to pursue the war in Angola as a means to reach their goals.  
(United Nations Press Release 1999)

There is little doubt that the personal testimonies of these and other individuals from war-torn countries helped to influence the Security Council to take concrete steps to alleviate the crisis and unanimously adopt Resolution 1261.



Resolution 1261 is an important global effort to protect the rights of children in many ways. Not only does it address the problem of recruiting youth for military service, it also focuses on many aspects involving their safety, security and well being in internal conflicts and interstate wars. For instance, Article Ten urges all participants in armed conflicts to:

Take special measures to protect children, in particular girls, from rape and other forms of sexual abuse and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict and to take into account the special needs of the girl child throughout armed conflicts and their aftermath, including in the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

(United Nations Security Council Resolution 1261 1999)

Article 14 of the Resolution is particularly important because it, "Recognizes the deleterious impact of the proliferation of arms, in particular small arms, on the security of civilians, including refugees and other vulnerable populations, particularly children" (United Nations Security Council Resolution 1261 1999). It strongly urges the international community to restrict or limit small arms transfers to countries in which the problem of child soldiers is particularly acute or has the potential of becoming so in the future. Even though the overall effectiveness of Resolution 1261 has yet to be determined, it is, nevertheless, an important step in the right direction by the international community to end the use of children in combat.

## Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

On 20 November 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 44/25 entitled Convention on the Rights of the Child. This document was an early effort by the international community to protect and preserve the fundamental humanitarian rights of all children, including the right to life, adequate health care, and freedom of expression, conscience and religion. One of its major landmarks is that it established an international standard as to what constitutes a "child". Article One of the agreement states, "A child means every human being below eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier" (Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989).

As the problem of using child soldiers in combat began to attract worldwide attention and condemnation, this Resolution alone was no longer adequate. In response to the impending crisis, the General Assembly adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts. Although this agreement was ratified and opened for signature on 25 May 2000, it is still not yet in force. According to Article Ten, "The present Protocol shall enter into force three months after the deposit of the tenth instrument of ratification or accession" (Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts 2000). As of December 2000, 74 nations had signed the Protocol and only three had ratified it (Commission on Human Rights 2001). Amongst those who have not is the United States. The key component of the agreement, which is laid out in Article One, prohibits the use of individuals below 18 years of age by a country's armed forces in direct combat. Current U.S. policy allows for the voluntary recruitment of 17-year-olds for military service. This conflict of interest has caused the U.S. to take a firm stance against signing the Resolution. Without U.S. support, the Optional Protocol on the Rights of the Child will have a difficult time being ratified and effectively implemented.

## Other International Conferences

A number of international conferences have been held in recent years to address the problem of child soldiers in both Africa and around the world. Representatives from across the globe have attended these forums in order to bring unique perspectives and suggestions on how to alleviate the crisis. These gatherings have varied in size and scope. Sometimes, they have been hosted by large regional organisations, such as the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). On other occasions, small non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been the main sponsors. Two conferences that deserve mentioning are the International Conference on War-Affected Children and the Amman Conference on the Use of Children as Soldiers. Both were inspired by the African Conference on the Use of Child Soldiers held in Maputo, Mozambique, in April 1999.

In September 2000, both the Canadian Government and UNICEF hosted the International Conference on War-Affected Children. This week-long event was attended by a wide array of delegates and representatives from over 50 countries around the world. Also present were members from United Nations agencies, international organisations, and researchers from academic institutions. The purpose of this gathering was to reflect upon efforts to alleviate all forms of child suffering, including the use of child soldiers during the past decade, and to recommend actions for the future. The Conference resulted in several important reports that suggested ways in which all sectors of society, including private corporations, NGOs, foreign governments, regional organisations and the media, can work to alleviate the suffering of children affected by war.

In Amman, Jordan, over 150 delegates from over 20 different countries attended the two-day Amman Conference on the Use of Children as Soldiers in April 2001. This event also examined past efforts to combat the use of child soldiers across the globe and explored recommendations for the future. It resulted in the Amman Declaration on the Use of Children as Soldiers, which was adopted on 10 April 2001. Like many other international agreements to halt the recruitment of child soldiers, it called for an immediate end to the use of individuals below 18 in military combat. It also urged all nations to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts.

On a final note, UNICEF plans to hold a Special Session on Children at the United Nations headquarters in New York in September 2001. During this unprecedented event, the United Nations General Assembly will meet with foreign governmental leaders, representatives from NGOs, and actual victims of war to discuss ways to alleviate child suffering throughout the world. Objectives of the Special Session include reviewing the progress made for children during the past decade and renewing commitments and pledges for specific actions in the coming decade (United Nations Special Session on Children 2001). This gathering of world leaders promises to be a major step in increasing international attention and awareness of the problem of child soldiers and encouraging concrete actions to end its practice.

## Recommendations for Enhancing International Efforts

Despite the many efforts in the past decade to eliminate the scourge of child soldiers on the African continent, they have had only limited success and the problem continues to pose a major challenge for

the international community. There are many reasons, some of them extremely complex, why this has been the case. For one, not all parties agree with the principles and outcomes of particular conventions or agreements and refuse to give their support due to conflicting interests. Furthermore, those that supposedly support such initiatives do not always comply with its tenets. Some countries may want to appease and get into the "good graces" of the international community, but may stand to benefit more by using child soldiers in the short term. Finally, one of the greatest weaknesses common to all these efforts lies with the problem of enforcement. It is extremely difficult for supporters of a particular agreement to decide what actions to take against those who refuse to comply with its mandates. For example, although the U.S. refuses to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol on the Rights of the Child, not too many nations are willing to challenge its stance and find it in their best political, diplomatic, and economic interests to remain silent. There are some ways, however, to enhance the effectiveness of both existing and possible future initiatives to end the use of child soldiers in Africa.

### U.S. Support for the Optional Protocol

In order for the Optional Protocol on the Rights of the Child to be an effective tool in the fight against the use of children in combat, it must first receive the support of the United States. Current U.S. policy conflicts with the tenets of the agreement by allowing 17-year-olds to serve in the military, even though the total number of individuals falling into this category are less than one-half of one percent (Human Rights Watch 2001). If the U.S. were to sign and ratify the Protocol, other nations could follow suit without fear of displeasing the global hegemony. It is necessary, therefore, that the U.S. be persuaded to adjust its domestic military policy accordingly and support the Optional Protocol on the Rights of the Child so that it can soon go into effect.

### Peace Agreements, Child Demobilisation, and Reintegration

Most past peace agreements in Africa have failed to consider what to do with children that have been engaged in battle once the fighting is over. As previously mentioned in this work, many Rwandan youth were forced to return to military service after hostilities ceased within the country because most secondary schools refused to accept them. It is mandatory, therefore, that any future peace agreements either between nations or governments and insurgent groups include specific measures for demobilising and reintegrating child soldiers back into society. Examples include building schools and providing an education for these war-ravaged youth, creating jobs so that they can support themselves and their families, and initiating health and psychological programs that will allow for a smoother, more effective transition back into society. The most important point to remember when considering such measures is that they must offer viable, realistic alternatives that will discourage children from returning to military service.

### Limiting Small Arms Transfers

It has already been determined that a major contributor to the problem of child soldiers is the widespread availability of relatively cheap but deadly small arms on the African continent. The global community must make a commitment to ban or at least limit the sale of these weapons to countries in which the problem is serious or has the potential of becoming so in the near future. Although some agreements, such as the Maputo Declaration on Child Soldiers and United Nations Security Council

Resolution 1261, explicitly call for an end to small arms transfers to states that use child soldiers, many signatory and non-signatory nations do not comply with these tenets due to overriding economic and political interests and continue to do so underhandedly through private dealers on the black market. Currently, it is estimated that of all small arms entering the African continent, approximately 21 percent are from China, 18 percent from Russia, and 14 percent from Western European countries, including Great Britain and France (CNN World View, CNN TV 2000). Those that continue to engage in this practice must be given alternatives and incentives for not doing so by the international community. These can come in the form of increased economic assistance through subsidies, conferring "Most Favoured Nation" trading status on particular states, and fostering closer political and diplomatic ties to stop the practice of small arms sales.

## Increased Attention and Awareness of the Problem

The international community should continue to hold global conferences that will generate increased attention to the problem of child soldiers in Africa. One of the key solutions to this growing dilemma lies in education and awareness. As more and more foreign governments, NGOs, academic researchers, and private companies become involved in efforts to end the suffering of children in combat, they bring with them specialised expertise and fresh, new ideas. Furthermore, large amounts of resources are necessary to sustain such undertakings and the greater the number of individuals and organisations contributing to the cause, the better. Finally, a determined, cohesive body of diverse participants might eventually be able to bring pressure upon those who engage in the use of child soldiers on the African continent to refrain from the practice. UNICEF's upcoming Special Session on Children is an important step in the right direction to further increase global awareness of the problem and encourage participation in resolving it.

## Conclusion

Even though the inhumane use of children in violent conflict continues to result in much suffering and devastation to many African nations, efforts to stop the crisis are more determined than ever. International awareness of the problem and its causes is constantly increasing and there seems to be a growing consensus that something must be done before it is too late. Recently, there have been some hopeful signs that the global community's past efforts have not been in vain. In February 2001, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) demobilised nearly 2,500 child soldiers from combat zones in southern Sudan (Mwangi 2001:11). Additionally, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone released nearly 600 children in May 2001 (Farah 2001:A20). Despite these positive developments, much work still remains to ensure that children throughout Africa have a promising future. The U.S. must fully support all efforts to limit the transfer of small arms to the African continent and prevent recruitment of children for military service under 18 years of age. Only then can an international consensus be achieved and strong measures be taken to eliminate the use of child soldiers from the African continent.

## Notes

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1. It must be noted that the term "voluntary" should be viewed with some skepticism since political, economic, and social considerations often determine the choices that children have in situations of violent conflict. Instead, it may be better to think of "voluntary" as "not coerced".

2. These comments and suggestions have been incorporated into The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2001.

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# Intergroup Conflicts and Customary Mediation: Experiences from Sudan

by Adam Azzain Mohamed

## Abstract

Recently scholars around the globe have given attention to conflict prevention, management and resolution. A considerable body of literature has been added to our academic libraries mostly by scholars from the Western societies. Conflicts in the developing areas by contrast are only minimally researched. For quite some time the assumption seems to have been made that the Western techniques of conflict prevention, management and resolution will also apply to Third World nations. Recently, however, some scholars in the developing countries began to think otherwise. Cultural diversities do not only shape our perception of conflicts but also determine techniques to be employed in handling them. The study of conflicts in the Sudan has significance for scholars in Africa, the Middle East and, indeed, around the globe. Sudan reflects the cultural heritage of Africa and the Middle East. Sudan has known a central authority that brought all its territory under effective control only since the beginning of the colonial era in 1898. Before that time local communities were largely left to administer themselves, inventing their own mechanisms for handling conflicts. Customary mediation is such an important mechanism which appears to have been effective up-to-now among tradition-bound communities. Over the course of time, and because of societal normal processes of change, government-sponsored mediations have been introduced, incorporating to a large extent indigenous practices. Lately, however, government intervention appears to be doing more harm than good, leading to the exacerbation of intergroup conflicts and the inadequacy of customary mediation to solve them. The article explores both phenomena, pinpointing what went wrong. It also argues that customary mediation, as a Sudanese practice, may have relevance for scholars in Sudan, Africa, the Middle East and indeed around the globe.

## Introduction

Currently Sudan is troubled by three types of conflict: (1) conflicts with some of its neighbours (e.g. Uganda, Eritrea), (2) a protracted civil war in the south, the Nuba Mountains and southern Blue Nile area and (3) intergroup conflicts that are presently prevailing in the extreme western Sudan and among southern Sudan ethnic and/or tribal groups (Mohamed & El-Amin 2001). To a large extent, conflicts in which the state is involved (i.e. civil war and interstate conflicts) captured the attention of the world community. Oftentimes they make global head news. Intergroup conflicts, on the other hand, go unnoticed, although they are sometimes no less devastating than civil wars. For instance, the Masaleet-Arabs violent conflicts (1996-1998) forced some Masaleet tribesmen to seek refuge in neighbouring Chad after having being looted of every thing they owned and having to flee their homeland for safety. Takana (1998) reported that the Masaleet-Arabs conflicts during the period (1996-1997) left on the side of the Masaleet 722 dead, 109 injured, 50 burned villages, 2833 burned houses and considerable loss of property. Losses on the part of the Arabs were relatively smaller, amounting to 220 dead, 40 injured, 922 burned houses and considerable loss of animal wealth (Mohamed & Wadi 1998).

Unlike the civil war and interstate conflicts, intergroup conflicts are hardly heard of by the Khartoum populace, let alone by the international community. Two factors account for this: (1) they take place in too remote areas (the south and extreme western Sudan) to be of concern to the Khartoum populace, (2) they are oftentimes treated by the government as security matters of which the publication might do

more harm than good. Lately, however, some post-graduate students got interested in the phenomenon and several post-graduate theses have been added to university libraries<sup>2</sup>. It can be generally observed, however, that student theses tend to be case studies and mostly descriptive. Lately, some scholars also got interested in studying intergroup conflicts, but again, these studies are mostly descriptive<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, students or scholars have not studied customary mediation as a cultural heritage that has been constantly threatened by local developments and central misguided policies. This article, therefore, briefly discusses the nature of intercommunal conflicts, but places more emphasis on customary mediation as a mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution. It will also show how over the course of time it appears that customary mediation has been losing its sanctity and effectiveness, implying what needs to be done to strengthen it.

## Intergroup Conflicts

Societal conflicts are inevitable wherever scarce resources are unequally distributed among competitors and inequity is reflected in cultural and political relationships between groups. In the case of the Sudan, the problem is further compounded by a multiplicity of divisive factors: cultural, ethnic and religious. The first population census (1955-1956) estimated that 7 major ethnic groups inhabited Sudan, further subdivided into 46 smaller groups that spoke different languages and followed different religious creeds (Department of Statistics 1994). On the other hand, the 1993 population census estimated that 71 percent of the Sudan population lived in rural areas, competing over meager natural resources. For western and southern Sudan, intergroup competition over natural resources is even more acute and conflict-generating because of the prevailing modes of living. An International Labour Organisation commission that visited the Sudan in 1971 described the principal modes of living in those regions to be traditional rainfed agriculture and livestock raising (International Labour Organisation 1976). Clashes between farmers and herdsmen are inevitable as livestock raising takes the form of pastoral nomadism. In any case, conflicts are always likely among farmers or herdsmen as the increasing numbers of human and animal populations overwhelm the land's carrying capacity. Furthermore, although all rural Sudan is relatively underdeveloped, the rural parts of southern and western Sudan are even more so. Rural populations in those areas still manifest cultures and behaviour patterns of traditional communities (e.g. identity group solidarity, the warrior man image, tendency to take revenge etc)<sup>4</sup>. A war culture and actual engagement in violence are further perpetuated by prevailing illiteracy and absence of modern security forces that prevent and manage conflicts.

In western Sudan, Takana (1998) reported that during the period 1968-1998, 29 major intergroup violent conflicts were recorded. He showed how damaging those conflicts had been. Underlying causes of conflict might be grouped into two categories: competition over natural resources and competition for leadership positions (Mohamed & El-Amin 2001). The tribal or ethnic landholding system also aggravates the conflict situation. Two interpretations exist with regard to land and its uses: (1) that all unregistered land is government land and therefore all citizens are entitled to its use, and (2) that as a "de facto" reality in rural Sudan, every inch of land is claimed by an identity group (ethnic or tribal). Access to land and its uses constantly becomes one of the possible causes of clashes between landowners and newcomers. Over the course of time, and particularly when violence resulted in homicide, intergroup feuds developed and further complicated the conflicting situation<sup>5</sup>. Episodic factors will then add to the conflict-riddled situation. Population exodus because of war or climatic changes is one such episodic factor leading to intergroup violence. The direct causes of conflict might



range from homicide, word or deed of abuse, animal damage of property, to animal theft or elopement with a girl (Mohamed & El-Amin 2001).

Intergroup conflicts in both western and southern Sudan have become more devastating as a result of the proliferation of firearms. Since the early 1970s, firearms have found their way into the hands of ordinary tribesmen in Darfur region as a spillover from the protracted Chadian civil war (Mukhtar 1998). On the other hand, since 1991 when the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) split into warring factions, divisions were along tribal lines (Mohamed & El-Amin 2001). Even ordinary tribesmen have been armed and trained to use firearms. As a result, tribal militia has become a phenomenon in both western and southern Sudan, making it difficult to prevent, manage or resolve conflicts through traditional customary mediation.

### Customary Mediation Experiences

Intergroup warfare is not the only manifestation of conflicts at the grassroots level. In addition, there are conflicts within families, among individuals and within modern social associations. Today, Sudan maintains five mechanisms of handling conflict at the grassroots level: (1) modern state courts and law enforcement institutions, (2) native courts that apply customary laws, (3) Sharia law courts that handle disputes when Muslims are involved, (4) citizen-based customary mediation practices and (5) government-sponsored peacemaking conferences. It is the latter two mechanisms that this article explores. On the other hand, the discussion of conflict is limited to intra or intergroup warfare.

Causes of inter or intragroup conflicts are numerous. Some long-lasting intergroup feuds have structural causes (e.g. competition over natural or political resources). Other causes are episodic (e.g. demographic or climatic changes) (Mohamed & El-Amin 2001). In other words, in rural southern and western Sudan, communal life is often pregnant with conflict. Direct causes leading to violent conflicts are also numerous, ranging from word or deed of abuse, affray, cow theft, animal damage of crops or elopement with a girl, to homicide (Mantier & Dhal 2000, Mohamed & El-Amin 2001). Small-scale conflicts will soon develop into widespread intergroup violence if steps were not taken to handle them. Identity group solidarity drives more and more people into intergroup violence.

#### a. Citizen-based customary mediation

Fortunately, in both southern and western Sudan, grassroots communities have developed their own mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution. In northern Sudan, particularly in Darfur region, the practice is known as "Judiyya" (i.e. mediation). The people who act as mediators are called "Ajaweed" singular "Ajwadi". In its historical context, Judiyya is performed by the tribal elderly who are versed in customs and traditions and are reputed for their impartiality and peace loving. In general, in rural Sudan the elderly used to enjoy high regard from all members of the local community. Their words of wisdom are rarely disputed. Over the course of time Judiyya acquired sanctity. To fail to respect Judiyya rulings subjects one to considerable communal pressure. One will be labeled as "deviant" a detrimental verdict in situations where group solidarity and support are vital for one's security and well-being.

Two episodes may help to explain how in the past Judiyya had been effective and helped to prevent

limited conflicts from developing into large-scale communal warfare. Cunnison (1966) wrote that among the Humr tribe of western Kordofan, when homicide took place, the Ajaweed would hurriedly hide the killer in a protected place, capture the victim's relatives of kin who would be most likely to go off immediately and commit an act of vengeance, tie them up to trees, and order the killer's clan to change its pastoral route so that they would not come in contact with the victim's relatives of kin. Then they will take both the killer and the victim's relatives of kin to be kept by government authorities. Then the Ajaweed arrange for a series of conflict resolution meetings that would normally end with a grand meeting in which brotherly relations would be restored. Government authorities would then be asked to release all captives (Cunnison 1966:144-145).

The other episode comes from the extreme southwestern corner of Darfur region, where the Fellata and Bani Halba tribes are living. During the colonial era, a Fellati is said to have killed a man from Bani Halba. The Fellati was brought to a state court presided over by the British district commissioner, who eventually released the accused for lack of evidence. The Fellata "Nazir" (paramount chief) ordered that the accused be put in jail until the issue was resolved with the Bani Halba. The district commissioner got furious that his ruling was not honoured by his subordinate. The dispute between him and the Nazir was raised at higher administrative levels, which ultimately supported the position of the Nazir. The Nazir was convinced that the Fellati was the killer and was aware of the possible retaliation by Bani Halba should the case not be subjected to traditional conflict resolution practices<sup>6</sup>.

Several observations may be made: Firstly, about the sanctity that the Judiyya used to have among rural communities. This is exemplified in young men (i.e. the relatives of kin) allowing themselves to be tied up to trees by elderly people. Secondly, about the status and confidence those native administrators used to enjoy from the colonial government. The Fellata Nazir, a follower of the district commissioner, was made triumphant over his boss. Thirdly, it can be seen how citizen-based customary mediation may help avert possible large-scale intergroup violence.

For the most part customary mediation still plays an important role in conflict prevention, management and resolution in areas where modern state institutions do not exist. In an interview with Zakiddeen<sup>7</sup>, he related to me that in most cases he referred disputes presented to his native court to be settled through customary mediation practices. Asked why he would do that, he answered: "The court will postpone the problem, the Judiyya will solve it". The court declares one of the disputants victorious; the other will feel being the loser and will never forgive the victor. The Judiyya, on the other hand, makes both disputants satisfied with its decision, thus pre-empting future tense relations.

Both El-Bashar and Zakiddeen have had wide experience as mediators in conflict situations. El-Bashar asserted that none of the mediations in which he participated failed to reach amicable agreements. Zakiddeen, on the other hand, explains how the Ajaweed proceed with mediation so that they would solve the problem. They divide themselves into "doves" and "hawks". The doves work relentlessly to persuade parties in conflict to forgive and forget. They remind them how their ancestors lived in peace and what types of friendship they maintained. Considerable citation from the Koran, Sudanese proverbs and sayings is also made, praising the virtue of forgiveness and showing how feuds are mischievous in this life and hereafter. The wrongdoers will normally be asked to make friendly gestures, mostly symbolic such as kissing the heads of the victimised. On the other hand, the hawkish group would threaten the recalcitrants about the mischief that they would get into should they refuse to accept Ajaweed judgment.

Although customary mediation is normally performed by a group of Ajaweed, sometimes a single Ajwadi may do the job. For instance, in 1978, Hussain Dawsa, a leading Zaghawa tribesman, managed to avert impending violence between members of his own tribe and another tribe the Rezaigat (Mohamed & Badri 1999). In southern Sudan, customary mediation is performed by even more developed institutions. Depending on the type and magnitude of conflict, it can be resolved by a grand "Mejlis" in which professional actors and ordinary citizens may take part in "talking" (Mantier & Dhal 2000).

Mantier and Dhal (2000) found that among the Dinka and Nuer tribes five categories of mediators might be identified:

- the traditional earth priests;
- the oldest traditional leader;
- members of customary law courts;
- the "rephraser" of story-telling in mediation meetings and
- the cattle camp leader.

In most cases, customary mediations result in deciding several types and amounts of compensation for losses and injuries. Blood money is particularly important when conflict results in homicide. In the past, compensation was paid in kind (livestock). At a gradually increasing rate, it is now being paid in money. Blood money helps to control the drive for vengeance.

#### b. Government-Sponsored Mediations

The colonial government (1898-1956) adopted two policies that greatly lessened intergroup violent conflicts: (1) a heavy-handed pacification policy and (2) the establishment of a tribal leadership system, commonly known as Native Administration. By definition, colonisation implied pacification so that extraction of economic benefits would be possible. Disturbing law and order was made punishable and in most cases individual responsibility replaced the traditional communal responsibility for dealing with crimes. Homicide, for instance, became a crime punishable by the death of the killer. On other hand, besides the collection of taxes, the primary function of native administrators was to maintain law and order within and between tribes (Mohamed, in Ahmed 1998). They did the job very successfully, enjoying acceptance from the government and their followers (Bakheit 1985). Furthermore, native administrators were encouraged by the government to maintain friendly relations among themselves, holding meetings seasonally to solve problems, exchanging gifts and taking wives from each others' tribes (Bakheit 1985).

Nevertheless, intergroup conflicts were inevitable; and when native administrators failed to resolve them, the government would normally call for a grand peacemaking conference to which several parties would be called: representatives of parties in conflict, representatives of the government authority and, most importantly, the Ajaweed, who are mostly native administrators but also include saints and some community notables that are versed in intercommunal customs and traditions. It is the Ajaweed who actually work out dispute settlements. They do this through soft and harsh tactics as indicated above. Just like in citizen-based customary mediation, in government-sponsored mediation the Ajaweed also decide a variety of compensations for the victimised. Important among these is blood

money in cases of homicide. If properly estimated and paid, blood money will normally help in soothing tensions and preempting resort to vengeance.

Before a government-sponsored peacemaking conference is convened, preparatory measures will be taken by the government authorities, including: deciding the time and place for the conference; directing security forces to prepare lists of deaths, injuries and material losses; selecting and notifying the Ajaweed; asking the parties in conflict to select their representatives; and arranging how the conference is to be managed. A fairly senior public officer, believed to be capable and acceptable to the parties in conflict, will be designated as chairperson for the conference and will be assisted by a working group. Of course, it is the government that meets the financial obligations for the conference.

When the conference is convened, the procedure goes as follows: A moderator will ask one of the saints to recite verses from Koran and the Hadeeth. Citations will normally concentrate on verses and Hadeeth that commend living in peace for individuals and communities. Listeners are also reminded of the mischievous consequences for engaging in feuds and homicide. Then the chairperson addresses the conference acknowledging the difficulty of the task at hand, but indicating his confidence in the Ajaweed whom he is sure have the ability to solve the problem and restore brotherly relationships between parties in conflict.

The next step is story telling by representatives of the conflicting groups. In general, each party will try to demonstrate how the other party was the one responsible for starting and worsening events leading to violence. As a way out, each party will lay down extreme conditions for the other party so that the conflict might be resolved. A written statement will normally be read out by a representative of each party and will be submitted to the Ajaweed and government authorities as a conference document. The floor will then be open for more story telling by representatives of each group, confirming in most cases what the group had decided on in its written document. The meeting will then be adjourned so that the Ajaweed might sit by themselves and deliberate on how they may proceed with the mediation. The government authorities would have already decided about who should be the Ajaweed chairperson. The Ajaweed will then meet with each party in caucuses for deliberations on issues they raised and solutions they suggested. The Ajaweed will be careful not to indicate sympathy with either side. Rather, they would express their understanding of the points parties made, and would advise them to be lenient on certain issues that might block the reconciliation process. Again, the Ajaweed will sit by themselves and agree on what they perceive to be the solution for the problem. They go back and forth between the parties after having assigned roles for the "doves" and "hawks". Their tentative judgments will by now be clear and their most difficult task is convincing parties to accept such judgments. This process of convincing might take hours and sometimes days in which not only the Ajaweed but also the government authorities will put pressure on the party refusing settlement conditions. Certainly no side will want to be labeled as the obstacle to making peace or the one refusing the wisdom of the Ajaweed. The representatives of parties in conflict will normally find themselves in the difficult situation of having to accept Ajaweed judgment while fearing grassroots reaction to what may be perceived as unjust problem solving. This is one of the reasons why increasingly government-sponsored peacemaking conferences have failed to put an end to intergroup conflicts. Judiyya judgments might not always be properly and honestly conveyed to people at the grassroots level<sup>8</sup>.

## Why Mediations Fail to End Conflicts

Mohamed and El-Amin (2001) found that for most part customary mediation still functions effectively in tradition-bound communities. Even those rural communities who moved to Khartoum, to stay in camps as internally-displaced persons (IDPs) or in squatter settlements, tend to resolve their disputes through customary mediation rather than resorting to the nearby, modern state law courts. But on the whole, in rural areas customary mediation is no longer having the sanctity and effectiveness it used to have during the colonial era. Post-independence years have been characterized by (1) steady escalation of intergroup violent conflicts, (2) increasing frequencies of government-sponsored peacemaking conferences and (3) increasing failure of such conferences to put an end to conflicts.

As a case study, Darfur region best illustrates these three phenomena. Takana (1998) found that 29 major intergroup violent conflicts took place in a thirty-year period (1968-1998). In other words, every year a major intergroup battle was fought in that region. On the other hand, Mukhtar (1998) reported that in a forty-year period (1957-1997) 29 government-sponsored conferences were held to resolve intergroup conflicts in that region. By contrast, only one conference was held during the colonial era (1916-1956). The colonial authority appears to have held only one major conference to settle disputes among camel nomads of northern Darfur state and their counterparts in northern Kordofan state (Mukhtar 1998). Astonishingly, five conferences were held for the same camel nomads in a forty-year period (1957-1997), indicating not only the multiplicity of conferences but also their failure to put an end to conflicts. Conferences were repeated not only for the camel nomads but also for other groups, nomads and non-nomads, as the following table illustrates:



Sources: (1) Mukhtar 1998.  
(2) Bureau of Federal Governance 1999.

In this article our concern is not so much with explaining the phenomenon (i.e. repeated conferences) as with understanding why government-sponsored customary mediations would fail to end conflicts. Two explanations might be hypothesised: (1) that such conferences did not address the root causes of conflicts but rather the superficial ones, (2) that customary mediation as a traditional institution, has been losing its sanctity and effectiveness in a changing society (see Mohamed 2000). That conferences do not address the root causes can be demonstrated by the fact that none of conferences discussed the problems related to modes of living and land carrying capacity; to the controversial issue of tribal "dars", i.e. homelands; nor to the prevalence of illiteracy among combatants<sup>9</sup>.

That customary mediation has been losing sanctity can be explained by reference to several factors. First, as human societies move from traditionalism to modernity, traditional institutions tend to become less effective in controlling individual attitudes and behaviour. For instance, as people become urbanised or educated, they tend to rely on modern government institutions rather than on those of identity groups for settling their disputes. Although rural communities in both western and southern Sudan are still tradition-bound, the segment of the transitional individuals is on the rise, and they are less bound by customs and traditions (Palmer 1980).

Secondly, for the last thirty years, small arms found their way into the hands of ordinary tribesmen. In

Darfur region this was the result of the protracted Chadian civil war. Most tribes of the Darfur region have relatives of kin in neighboring Chad, which enabled Chadian combatants to cross the border and receive shelter with relatives in the region. Often retreating Chadian troops brought with them their weapons and offered them for sale at affordable prices (Mukhtar 1998). Eventually, tribes in Darfur started using firearms to settle old-time intergroup feuds. Tribal militia could not be controlled by traditional means.

Thirdly, post-independence central governments have been consciously or unconsciously undermining the customary mediation institution by undermining the system of "native administration" or by the manipulation of ethnic diversities. At times the central government was captured by revolutionary elements (in 1964, 1969 and 1989). The October 1964 caretaker government was dominated by leftist elements. They passed a resolution for the liquidation of native administration. Traditionally, leaders of the national movement, and particularly the leftists who were urbanized and educated, perceived native administrators as "colonial stooges", founded to help the foreign rule pacifying the rural population and prolonging its existence (Bakheit 1985). Further, radical political elements have always felt that native administrators blocked their way to the rural "masses" (Bakheit 1985).

Radical elements regarded native administrators as influential supporters for the conservative political parties in the rural areas (Bakheit 1985). So, the October 1964 government was quick in passing the resolution that native administration be dissolved. However, the caretaker government was short-lived and the conservative government that succeeded it ignored the implementation of the resolution. But the harm had already been done. Native administrators lost credibility in the eyes of their followers and lost interest in performing their traditional responsibilities (Bakheit 1985). Then the more serious blow to native administration came in 1970 when the second radical government (1969-1985) practically dissolved the system, unseating the paramount chiefs. Although further attempts have been made by subsequent governments to reinstall the system, it has not been possible to make it perform the same functions.

Fourthly, not only revolutionary governments but also all central political associations allowed themselves to manipulate ethnic and/or tribal divisions. In the Fur-Arabs conflicts (1980-1989), each of the two principal political parties (the Umma and the PDP) was allegedly sympathetic with one of the conflicting groups. A much clearer central tendency to support one group against the other can be demonstrated by the stand taken by the present government (1989-2002). Many independent observers are convinced that the central government took the side of the Arabs in the Masaleet-Arabs conflicts. While the Arabs demonstrated their political support for the government, the Masaleet failed to do so. Then the government intervened with the controversial issue of tribal landholding. The Masaleet had a long-history of an established sultanate in which they formed a clear majority and other tribes, including the Arab, were minorities. The Sultanate territorial area had been recognized even by official documents as "Dar Masaleet" (Masaleet homeland). In 1995 the western Darfur state governor took a unilateral decision subdividing the sultanate into administrative emirates, with the majority of them being given to the Arabs (Rabbah 1998). The Masaleet were furious about the decision and were bent on preserving their landholding right. Although the Arabs were a minority, they had advantages over the numerous Masaleet. They are basically nomads, moving from one place to the other, which makes it difficult for the Masaleet to attack them as a group. Furthermore, the Arabs were allowed to possess and carry firearms for guarding their herds. The Masaleet, on the other hand, are settled farmers, living in huts and are forbidden by law to possess and carry firearms. When

violence erupted the Masaleet were sitting ducks<sup>10</sup>.

Fifthly, conference decisions are often largely ignored, improperly disseminated to the grassroots or not implemented. Most Ajaweed being interviewed mentioned this as the major cause of renewed violence. Several reasons are behind the failure to disseminate conference agreements or implement them. One: native administrators are either non-existing or demoralised. They are the ones who traditionally used to do the job. The antagonistic central policies towards them made them disinterested in the job and its function. Two: group representatives might not be whole-heartedly in favour of agreements reached. They are less willing therefore to convey conference resolutions effectively to tribesmen at the grassroots. Three: in the past government authorities had no mechanisms for implementing agreements. Native administrators used to do the job. Only recently has a modern mechanism been created. The Fur-Arabs (1989), the Rezaigat-Zaghawa (1996), and the Masaleet-Arabs (1999) are all agreements that were followed by a government-appointed mechanism to oversee that agreements were implemented<sup>11</sup>. None of them had setbacks.

### Implications for scholars and practitioners

Recently, conflict prevention, management and resolution have become global concerns. Statesmen, scholars and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are all concerned about handling conflict. In the Western world, a considerable body of literature has been produced, delineating techniques of conflict prevention, management and resolution (CPMR). By contrast, in the developing countries controlled studies have been scanty and it appears that a presumption is made that what applies in the Western world will also apply in the developing countries. Lately, however, it has been realised by scholars in the developing countries that this might not be so (see Salem 1997). During the period January 21-23 1998 a workshop was held in Arusha, Tanzania, to look into African experiences with conflict mediation. Statesmen, theoreticians and practitioners took part in deliberation and came to the conclusion that Africa had no such documented experiences (see Othman 1998). The need grows for cross-cultural examination of conflicts.

Irani (1999) made a useful comparison between Western and Middle Eastern nature and perceptions of conflicts and techniques employed in handling them. The Sudan, influenced by both African and Middle Eastern cultural heritages, may present useful experiences that deserve being looked into by scholars in Africa, the Middle East and the Western hemisphere. It will be evident that managing conflicts in rural Sudan reflects clear differences from that of the Western societies. First, in the Sudan conflicts erupt among identity groups rather than among individuals, as it is common in the West. Then, disputes are referred to customary mediation institutions rather than to modern societal professional mediators who are paid by the parties in conflict (Irani 1999). By contrast, in the Sudan, mediators are volunteers who would not ask for compensation for their time and effort. Secondly, while mediators in the Western world are required to be convincingly neutral, helping the parties in conflict to find solutions for their own problems, the Ajaweed in the Sudan, and indeed in the Middle East, are not expected to be neutral. They take the side of the party interested in peace and put pressure on the one wanting to continue with feuds. As Irani (1999) notes, the mediator is perceived as a person with the capability of solving any problem, with a record as peacemaker, and someone enjoying acceptance from both sides of the conflict. Thirdly, although material compensations are decided on for those affected by war, material considerations are not as important as the psychological aspects. Disputants must be persuaded or even pressured to forgive and forget so that tensions might be soothed and

future recurrence of violence preempted. Irani (1999) identifies four rituals as being extremely important for resolving conflicts among Middle Eastern communities: the Sulh (settlement), the Musalaha (reconciliation), the Musafaha (handshaking) and the Mumalaha (partaking of salt and bread, i.e. eating together). Western statesmen and theoreticians need to take these rituals into consideration as they venture to resolve conflicts in Africa or the Middle East.

The African scholars also need to look into Sudan's experiences with customary mediation. It has been argued that among most tradition-bound communities, customary mediation may still be effective but needs to be acknowledged and supported with capacity building. It is less expensive and more effective. When societies move from traditionalism to modernity, however, customary mediations need to be reformed so that they take account of the changing milieu. Sudan's government-sponsored mediations could be cited as an example worthy to be considered by African and Middle East scholars. This article indicates, however, what went wrong so that Judiyya became less effective in ending conflicts. Those are lessons to be learnt by African scholars and statesmen.

In fact, findings reached by this article might be even more relevant for decision makers in the Sudan than elsewhere. It has been indicated that in general conflict transformation rests with changing the modes of living that are up-to-now conflict generating (pastoral nomadism and shifting rainfed agriculture). The areas where intergroup violence is mostly occurring are the western and southern Sudan. They are also relatively the most underdeveloped. Until modes of living are changed through calculated development projects, and until illiteracy rates are reduced, intergroup conflicts will increase rather than decrease over the course of time. Land carrying capacity will steadily become overwhelmed by the growing need to feed human and animal populations.

Until development is realised, however, customary mediation mechanisms will have to be empowered to be more effective in ending conflicts. Citizen-based customary mediations need to be acknowledged and strengthened, as they are now the only mechanism for resolving conflicts in areas where modern government institutions do not exist or are not resorted to by ordinary citizens. The central government must give priority to individual protection of life and property rather than to being overly concerned with building political support for itself in the rural areas. The antagonistic policies towards traditional leaders and policies of manipulating ethnic or tribal differences have greatly impaired the effectiveness of customary mediation.

In view of the growing magnitude of intergroup conflicts, government-sponsored peacemaking conferences appear to be more realistic than the citizen-based customary mediation, although some of the interviewed Ajaweed argue to the contrary. In any case, government-sponsored mediation conferences need to be reviewed so that they become more effective. Firstly, the Ajaweed must be given a free hand to work out solutions in the interests of parties in conflict rather than to realise government-desired solutions. Secondly, the government must improve its image of being biased. The government can make this happen by wholeheartedly supporting judgments reached freely by the Ajaweed. Effective support of Ajaweed decisions implies that government must play an effective role in implementing them. Finally, a consistent policy must be adopted and implemented with regard to the issue of tribal homelands. It will have to be a grassroots creation so that the government might not be accused of taking sides. But once an agreement is reached, its implementation must be universal. The Masaleet are now complaining, not so much about why their territory has been portioned, but rather about why their territory alone has been portioned! A grand meeting for the entire regional population



could resolve this issue once and for all.

## Notes

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1. An interview with Ibrahim Yahya Abdul Rahman, a former western Darfur governor. He was interviewed in my office, December 1999. Rabbah (1998) confirms the governor's report but caution must be had, as the governor is a Masaleet tribesman.
2. For instance, in Khartoum University theses included: Naeem 1987; Ayyoub 1991; Ali, M.A.N. 1998; Rabbah 1998; Haggar, A.A., 2001
3. Examples of scholarly studies include Salih 1998 and Harir and Tvedt 1994.
4. For more elaboration on attitude and behaviour patterns in traditional and transitional societies see Palmer 1980 and Evans-Pritchard 1990.
5. For details about how feuds developed among identity groups in Sudan see Evans-Pritchard 1990 and Al-Hardollo 1975.
6. This information comes from Ahmed El-Sammani El-Bashar, the present Fellata Nazir. He was interviewed in my house in Khartoum, 30.6.2000.
7. Azzain, H. Zakiddeen is the present "emir" for the Bedairiyya tribe in northern Kordofan, and president of a native court. He was interviewed in his house in el-Obeid, 16.2.2001.
8. Information about Judiyya processes comes from a personal experience. Besides being a Darfur native, I served as a province commissioner for both southern and northern Darfur states, during the period 1982-1985. I was ex officio participant in some peacemaking conferences.
9. See: Bureau of Federal Governance 1999.
10. For details about the tragic Masaleet-Arabs conflicts see Rabbah (1998).
11. Major General (Police) El-Taib A. Mukhtar was appointed by the government as chairperson of a commission that would follow up the implementation of agreements made in these conferences. He was interviewed in his house in Khartoum 19.11.2000

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# Issues in Conflict Resolution

## by Dirk Kotzé

### Abstract

With regard to various issues in dealing with conflict, it is important to bear in mind not just overt, physical violence, but also the sometimes subtly disguised forms of structural and cultural violence. As to the components of conflict, the focus should not only be on hostile behaviour, but also on prejudiced attitudes and incompatible interests. From such wider perspectives meaningful insights may be developed about cultural values underlying conflicts, and power issues in the field of mediation. More attention may be given to the effects of changes in leadership on conflicts and their resolution, and to several constitutional and procedural ways of promoting post-conflict confidence building. During the crucial stage of monitoring and managing the implementation of an agreement, the various forms of violence and the different components of conflict should seriously be taken into account. Such a comprehensive understanding can even lead to a wider application of certain conflict resolution and restorative justice methods, so that they can contribute to conflict prevention. Diversified knowledge, insight and expertise can indeed improve the quality and effectiveness of present-day conflict resolution.

### Introduction

Conflict management in general, and conflict resolution in particular, is almost entirely determined by our understanding of the composition of a conflict, and not only by its symptoms. In the same breath it is also important to question whether conflict resolution and peace are synonymous. In some instances the study of conflict (and its resolution) is limited to instances of physical violence (notable in this respect is the approach of the Department of Peace and Conflict Research in Uppsala, compared to that of the Department of Peace and Development Research in Göthenburg), in others a broader approach is adopted in terms of peace (like the Peace Research Institute in Oslo). Without further belabouring the point, it could be accepted that studies in conflict resolution or peace are diverse in their approaches, and therefore a summation of issues in conflict resolution is an ambitious undertaking. For the purpose of this discussion and as one of the points of departure, it is useful to note Johan Galtung's (1990:291-295) additions of structural and cultural violence to physical violence. Approaches and techniques in conflict resolution can greatly benefit from Galtung's (1969) description of conflict in terms of the following three necessary components: firstly, incompatibility of interests (or a contradiction), or what C R Mitchell (1981:18) calls a "mis-match between social values and social structure"; secondly, negative attitudes in the form of perceptions or stereotypes about others; and thirdly, behaviours of coercion and gestures of hostility and threat. Politics by definition functions in contexts of scarcity: scarcity of resources, scarcity of power, scarcity of status and so forth. Competition is, therefore, inevitable, whether it is between two or more individuals, groups or even states. Conflict can be prevented or managed if those involved are parties to a figurative agreement about the "rules" in terms of which the competition is managed an example of such an agreement being the "social contract". In the absence of such a consensus, conflict becomes prolonged, unresolved and harmful.

Galtung's triangle provides guidance to conflict resolution practitioners and researchers for understanding the root causes and basic nature of a conflict situation. Many mediation processes have concentrated mainly on the behavioural aspect. Then the objective of a cease-fire, for example, is

paramount, but the other two components are not addressed. (In the same vein Khan cautions against over-emphasis on a cease-fire in the Kashmir conflict in Khan 2001:25.) Confidence-building mechanisms, on the other hand, concentrate on the changing of attitudes, while structural changes (in the form of a negotiated constitution, for example) emphasise the reduction of incompatible interests.

Some might argue that there is a causal relationship between incompatibilities and attitudes, and between attitudes and behaviour, with the resultant view that conflict resolution should concentrate primarily either on the incompatibilities or on behaviour as its point of departure. Unfortunately for those who yearn for meta-theories in this field, no research has yet discovered such correlations. The art of conflict resolution expects a practitioner to analyse thoroughly all three components and only thereafter make a determination of where are the most appropriate entry points for facilitative interventions. Such a decision may be closely related to William Zartman's (2000) notion of a mutually hurting stalemate coupled with the danger of a catastrophe, and linked to a "way out". Chester Crocker (Crocker 1999:223-226) provides an example of how facilitators had to create such perceptions in Southwest Africa in the 1980s in order to mould a viable situation for mediation. In some instances a cease-fire (i.e. a change in behaviour) is a prerequisite before anything else. In other instances the level of distrust between the parties is so immense that elements of mutual trust and confidence must first be established (i.e. change in attitudes) which can then lead to a cease-fire and later to negotiation. Sometimes the incompatible interests are addressed head-on (like with the Dayton agreement between Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yugoslavia in 1995) and only thereafter confidence-building and changes in attitudes are addressed (Holbrooke 1999). Experience in conflict resolution and a sound theoretical understanding of the nature of conflict appear to be absolute prerequisites to determine how a facilitation process should be approached. Textbook recipes are not available.

## 1. The Value Base of Conflict Resolution

The moral virtues of conflict resolution and peace are often taken for granted. Paul Salem (1997:12-13) warns against such a culture-specific assumption. According to him, struggle and not peace can be a virtue in certain traditions, including Islam. Unqualified insistence on conflict resolution or peace-making is then perceived as a predominantly Christian or Western liberal value determination. Under such conditions a facilitator might be seen as biased towards the status quo or a particular value framework. It affirms the importance of understanding all three components of a conflict, including its very specific cultural context. Zartman (2000:25-30), by implication, agrees with this sensitivity in his explanation of why mutually hurting stalemates sometimes strengthen the resolve of parties to continue with conflict, instead of encouraging them to seek a settlement, and why "mutually enticing opportunities" are also required.

Does conflict resolution mean submission to the interests of the powerful? Current events suggest that most conflict resolution initiatives in the Balkan, Middle East, Latin America or South Asia will arguably be inconceivable without active American support or tacit agreement. The same principle is ostensibly applicable in respect of determining the approach to providing justice in post-conflict arrangements. Why did the international community not dictate the justice-seeking arrangement in South Africa (the Truth and Reconciliation Commission), but did so in Cambodia, Sierra Leone and Rwanda? The answer lies in the fact that the decisions have been determined by political contingencies and not by general, universal principles.

International public law is often considered to be the only universal value base of conflict resolution. Though diplomacy has always been determined by interests and political considerations, the increased prominence of political decision making has changed the de facto nature and practice of international public law insofar as it relates to conflicts. Chapters 6 and 7 of the UN Charter provide a range of conflict resolution instruments. Of the two, Chapter 7 has been most effective because it allows for economic sanctions, blockades and use of military force. International legal practices ascribe ultimate authorisation in those respects to the Security Council. But the American intervention in Kosovo in 1999, without such explicit authorisation (despite American denials) has introduced more than merely a symbolic or incidental change in international law (Cassese 1999:23-30). The effects of international political realignment amongst the traditional Anglo-American partnership versus French, Russian and Chinese defiance and smaller state resistance have created, arguably, an anticipation that in the future international law will increasingly and more overtly be determined by political considerations rather than directing political behaviour. Test cases in this respect are the American refusal to ratify the formation of the International Criminal Court and its violations of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Sweden has set an example by establishing in 1999 an international commission headed by Judge Richard Goldstone to investigate possible American violation of international law in Kosovo in 1999. Unilaterally imposed sanctions are equally controversial in respect of maintaining a universal value framework. Does a state have the right to impose sanctions on another as part of its domestic policies, while the international community in general disagrees with it?

Such a state of affairs complicates conflict resolution as a practice because its value base (in the form of the UN Charter as its primary source) has become negotiable. Chapter 6 remains relevant as describing instruments for peaceful means of conflict resolution. But can they be combined with Chapter 7 instruments? Jan Eliasson (1998:205-207) suggests that Chapter 6 constitutes a ladder of resolution instruments which implies a ranking of the remedies. General legal principles normally determine that all internal remedies have to be exhausted before certain external remedies are available. Arguably, Chapter 6 and 7 fit in such a framework. But, ostensibly, it does not fit current political approaches.

## 2. Mediated Negotiations

Mediation, as assertive facilitation by an external party, is a special form of negotiation. Mediation should not be treated as only deadlock-breaking facilitation, but also as exploratory and trust-building facilitation. A prominent feature of mediation initiatives currently undertaken is the use of power or leverage (i.e. power mediation or leverage mediation). Examples are Camp David (1978), Madrid (1991), Dayton (1995), Haiti (1994) and Southwest Africa (1980s). Samuel P. Huntington's (1999:38-39) summary of the American approach to conflicts in recent years as a combination of military air strikes, economic sanctions and negotiation, provides an indication of its utility. The American approach to Kosovo is an example of it. Nordquist (1999:7) identified the facilitator's national interest as the main motivation for power mediation. It means that mediation, in its traditional sense as facilitation by an unbiased and non-partisan external party, is not applicable in this case. The mediating agency, in fact, becomes a negotiating partner although it is not a direct party to the conflict. Power mediators are seldom invited by the parties to facilitate, but most of the time impose themselves on the situation. Parties accept it sometimes reluctantly because of the mediator's power advantage over them and because of the negative international repercussions otherwise.

## 2.1 Mediation through leverage

Can any agency other than the USA be a power mediator? Power or leverage mediation depends on a number of conditions: a-symmetrical power relations between the mediator and the parties involved; the mediator's ability to reward co-operative parties with, for example, developmental aid; the mediator's ability to mobilise negative international sanctions against recalcitrant parties; and the mediator's ability to mobilise support from other powers to muster leverage in the negotiation process (Baker 1999:189-192; Crocker 1999:240-243). Theoretically, powers other than the USA can also play this role, but we have yet to experience it. The UN can also, though it does not possess interests similar to national interests to be promoted. Its emphasis on diplomatic caution and consensus building also inhibits such direct interference.

Can individuals apply leverage and use power mediation? Jimmy Carter has come closest to it in his intervention in North Korea. But he could not apply the same power in Burundi or in Yugoslavia. Nelson Mandela is presently involved in the Burundian process and has been asked repeatedly to assist in the Middle East. His power is not based on national interest, economic or military capacity, but on moral authority and international status. It is also known to everyone that he has access to just about any international forum or leader should their leverage be required. Though his mediating tactics might be more forceful than those of other mediators, it is not the US style of power mediation, because he does not constitute a de facto negotiating party. The use of elderly statesmen is sometimes contemplated as a valuable source for mediation. Most of them cannot guarantee success, however. They have experience in negotiation as political leaders but not necessarily in mediation, and they seldom have the infrastructural support to sustain a settlement process. Therefore, irrespective of how attractive and "idealistic" it appears to be, its likely success is relatively low. Sir Ketumile Masire, on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), faces the same predicament in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

## 2.2 Track II mediation

Track II mediation is normally exploratory and trust-building in nature. It is the phase during which civil society is most directly involved in conflict management. In the past, when conflict resolution resorted mainly in the domain of diplomacy, this form of mediation received little attention. In recent years it has emerged as an indispensable part of almost any peace-making process. Almost without exception, those processes that have failed did so because of a lack of civil society involvement in preparing an atmosphere conducive to negotiations, and to the successful implementation of an agreement. Church leaders, business leaders, NGOs and academics appear to be most active and involved in this area. The best-known recent example of such an initiative is the Oslo channel process for the Middle East, started by Swedish academics and continued by the Norwegian trade union movement. Business and church leaders in South Africa also took the initiative in 1991, which resulted in the National Peace Accord. In 2001, Turkish and Armenian business leaders, retired politicians and former military officers took the initiative to establish a commission for the promotion of dialogue between the two adversaries after recent Armenian efforts to gain international recognition for an Armenian genocide in 1915 in Turkey (Aktan 2001:5). Swedish academics regularly invite academics and other opinion leaders of conflicting parties (like in Nagorno-Karabakh) to experience the unique constitutional arrangement on the Åland islands in the Baltic Sea. Another popular track II approach is peace or pro-democracy

foundations that facilitate dialogue between the youth of conflicting parties.

The success of track II mediation depends largely on a delicate balance between public exposure of the process and maintaining confidentiality. This form of mediation can serve two purposes: to influence public opinion towards accepting dialogue between rivals and therefore to prepare an environment receptive for negotiation, or to create the initial contact between persons (but not yet official representatives) from the rivals. Both purposes are directed against entrenched stereotypes of each other, which are kept intact by mutual isolation and the absence of contesting impulses. Some attempts have been made to achieve both purposes in one process, but as a general observation it may be said that they are bound to fail, because of the tension between publicity and confidentiality.

An example of such a failure happened in 1996 in Turkey. At the height of the internal war between the Turkish army and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the southeast, a Kurdish writer, Ismail Nacar, established contact with the PKK with the knowledge of the Erbakan government. The initial motivation for his initiative was the fact that a number of Turkish soldiers had been captured by the Kurds. The fact that the military opposed the initiative because it eroded their demonisation of the PKK as communists and terrorists, and the fact that it was reported daily in the media to a public who were not yet prepared for such initiatives, resulted in its failure. On the other hand, examples of the confidential approach are the dialogue between Nelson Mandela (then still in jail) and the National Party (NP) government in the middle 1980s, and the dialogue between the African National Congress (ANC) and Afrikaner opinion leaders in the same period (Sparks 1994:76-86). Also in the same period, but as part of a public opinion socialisation process, the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA) conducted a number of public dialogues with the ANC in exile. Though the National Party government denigrated them (despite its own dialogue in secret), the IDASA initiative did not constitute the main dialogue process. The Nacar initiative, on the other hand, was the main and only one. A certain level of confidentiality was applied in the Oslo process (as the main dialogue process) between the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel, while the secondary dialogue process in Washington and elsewhere was public but did not produce any tangible results. It appears, generally speaking, that in its formative stages the main dialogue process should be kept confidential. When public opinion is not receptive for dialogue (often as a result of prolonged negative indoctrination by the parties involved), negotiators are unwilling to risk their reputation in public. The risk of failure is normally very high in the initial stages and the possibility for face-saving relatively low. In summary, the contradiction between the dehumanised images of the rival cultivated for the public, and the images of negotiators talking to the very same people, is too much to reconcile in public and with their political colleagues at that stage. Normally, because of internal differences of opinion on the matter, not even all the members of the government and their rivals are necessarily informed about the dialogue.

A special type of rapprochement comparable to track II mediation, but not real mediation, is the emergence of social movements amongst rivals. In Northern Ireland, social peace movements organised by women emerged and placed insurmountable pressure on political leaders to engage in a peace process. The earthquake in Turkey in August 1999 and the spontaneous Greek humanitarian response to it also introduced a period of improved relations between the two countries.

Our understanding of mediation within the ambit of political conflict resolution is definitely changing. The fact that power mediation receives so much attention, although it is actually not mediation but a redefinition of the negotiation relationships, is unfortunate. But a return to more classical forms of



mediation is not unlikely.

### 3. Leadership Changes

A conflict resolution issue which has so far received only tentative attention is the influence of leadership changes on resolving conflicts. Prolonged conflicts are normally cluttered with failed resolution attempts, betrayal of leaders' personal feelings, or entrenched commitments to particular demands or negotiation positions. Negative memories of aborted agreements, unkept promises, superior tactics by the other side or attacks on the characters of leaders, are all serious obstacles for conflict resolution. Because the costs of face-saving increases as the governing term of the leaders increases, a stalemate (even a hurting one) is often present, and deepens with each acrimonious exchange between the leaders. Term of office is mostly directly related to the age of leaders. Younger generations appear to be more amenable to dialogue and change. (A possible correlation between age and successful negotiation should be a worthwhile research topic.) Examples where leadership changes have increased the chances of a negotiated agreement are the UK in 1997 (for Northern Ireland), South Africa in 1989 and the DRC in 2000. Leadership serves as an impediment in Cyprus and Northern Ireland. The new British Labour government with a firm parliamentary majority definitely served as a catalyst for the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Change in leadership in South Africa from P W Botha to F W de Klerk is also an underestimated factor in the South African transition. Since the advent of the younger Joseph Kabila's presidency in the DRC, he has unbanned political parties, accepted the SADC mediator and initiated an intra-Congo dialogue, which are all positive indicators for an eventual settlement.

The issue of leadership change raises two related political issues, namely the importance of consolidated leadership authority and the use of elder statesmen in conflict resolution. Leadership change normally means a new leader with a fresh mandate and high public expectations but not yet with consolidated authority in the machinations of the state. A possible explanation for their willingness to engage in negotiation is their relative isolation from the military or armed wing. The longer they are in office, the more they become responsive to the military frame of mind, which is always status quo-oriented, unless they have already lost their battle.

Ali Mazrui (1994:41-42) is of the opinion that the involvement of elders in conflict resolution is one of its characteristic values in Africa. Examples of it in the last few years are: Julius Nyerere in Burundi, Sir Ketumile Masire in the DRC and Nelson Mandela in Burundi. The examples of Jimmy Carter, Lords Owen and Carrington in the Balkan, Henry Kissinger in South Africa in 1994, the Eminent Persons' Group of the Commonwealth in South Africa (1986), and the George Mitchell Commission of eminent persons for the Middle East (2001) are also useful. Their records as mediators are, however, not encouraging and none of them have succeeded in their missions. Even in Northern Ireland, George Mitchell chaired (not mediated) a successful negotiation process (Mitchell 1999), but failed to include a mechanism for overseeing its successful implementation. The question is, therefore, still unanswered whether elder statesmen are successful mediators and if not, why not?

### 4. Confidence Building

An agreement negotiated in good faith always envisages a new situation, which by implication entails

changes and uncertainties. Some would prefer the known status quo (even though it is undesirable and hurting) to unknown uncertainty. Therefore, for mediation and other facilitation processes to be successful, they depend on innovative confidence-building mechanisms and guarantees. The nature of the transition and of the incompatible interests will also determine whether the mechanisms should operate only for a temporary transitional period, or permanently. Their duration is a critical issue, because they normally reflect a negotiated compromise between the parties and are considered to be deviations from "normal" constitutional practices. Confidence building is generally treated as an ad hoc measure to create sufficient trust between the negotiating parties to secure the transition and to enable them to proceed ultimately to "normal" practices. As a general observation, such measures should not acquire permanent status, because it will signal an inability to address and remove the root causes of the conflict. On the other hand, a transition or stabilisation phase can be a relatively long period.

A number of constitutional means are available for confidence building. A popular mechanism is a government of national unity or a grand coalition. It is meant to include all the significant political movements in a particular situation, so that no one can claim political marginalisation. Joint governmental responsibility creates political checks and balances and therefore guarantees against preferential treatment for sectors in society. Switzerland is an example of such a permanent arrangement. Similar temporary arrangements were introduced in South Africa (1994-1999), Mozambique and Rwanda. In Angola (1992) and Macedonia (2001) it failed. In Lesotho (since 1999) a variation was applied, with mixed results. A government of national unity appears to be suitable when the guarantees or confidence builders are located in the national centre of the constitutional dispensation.

When the negotiating partners distrust the political and constitutional national centre and believe that co-operation in that centre is unlikely or undesirable, a decentralised approach is adopted. It can assume two forms: allocation of political and other rights on a territorial basis, or allocation based on the principle of personality. A political geography of territorial division is possible where politicised population groups are concentrated in certain areas and power can be devolved to allow them to exercise high levels of autonomy. Alternatively, in geographies of mixed composition, competences can be devolved to group institutions composed of persons with a common loyalty, irrespective of where they are located. Bosnia (1995) is an example of the first; Cyprus (1960), Lebanon and Belgium to a lesser extent, are examples of the second alternative.

Cyprus (in its 1960 Constitution) provides an example of a combination of a central government of national unity and a decentralised personality-based constitutional structure. It failed, probably because of this ambivalent combination. If the choice is for an integrative government of national unity, it should not co-habit with instruments which do not encourage co-operation and integration, but sectoral autonomy. The tension between the two will be so immense that both are bound to fail. In South Africa the Government of National Unity co-existed with relatively weak territorial provinces. The constitutional and political nature was quite clear: the emphasis is on the centre and the confidence should be built around that centre.

Conflict resolution and confidence building will always under-emphasise mutually exclusive arrangements or arrangements which can lead to polarisation. Therefore, ingenious measures to soften the impact of majorities and minorities are required. A first possibility is to apply a guiding principle of proportionality in the composition of institutions like the executive, parliament, the public

service, the judiciary, the military and so on. It does not guarantee equality in representation, but equality in constitutional status. It guarantees predictability and certainty about representation and it takes countenance of fears of marginalisation. On the negative side, it entrenches group identities and does not provide any motivation for eventual national integration. Proportionality is only really feasible in the absence of a majority (50%+1) grouping. If all the associations are minorities, it encourages cross-cleavage coalition building and therefore stabilisation.

Proportionality is not only encapsulated in representation but also in decision-making mechanisms. Ordinary or absolute (50%+1) majorities are susceptible to polarisation and pure power politics. Especially when overlapping identities and associations create patterns of permanent majorities and minorities, the political dispensation is prone to conflict. Galtung would refer to it as structural violence. Many examples exist of (ethnic) groups who support a particular political movement and, as the beneficiaries of its governing power, receive disproportionate economic benefits. When ethnicity, political class and economic class coincide in the case of a majority or a minority, the use of conventional democratic instruments (such as simple majorities) produce undemocratic results, and cannot create confidence in a constitutional dispensation. Confidence building therefore requires arrangements in which the intentions of the majority principle are incorporated, but by other means such as special or loaded majorities. Consensus, on the other hand, is also not desirable because the veto right of everyone does not encourage coalition building or cross-sectional support. Do-it-yourself approaches are not long-term options for conflict resolution, because the international tendency in about everything is in favour of integration, and not disintegration.

Another variation of proportionality is autonomy. Less than independence, it accommodates unique features which are sub-national characteristics. These can be a unique regional history, language or social composition. In the absence of autonomy these unique features would enjoy the status of minority features or will be assimilated into the majority features. If they are considered to be vital for the identity of their adherents, autonomous decision making about matters pertaining to those characteristics, but within a national value framework, is an option. A federal dispensation is such a possibility it can even be extended to an a-symmetrical federation like Canada (Quebec) and Spain (Catalonia and Basques). Autonomy is also possible in more united, centralised states like the Åland islands (in Finland) and Zanzibar (in Tanzania).

Elections are normally considered to be one of the pillars of a democracy. Many peace processes are directed at an election as their main objective, implying that an election in itself is a conflict resolution instrument. Elections are normally viewed as the most legitimate means of distributing political power in a society. But the distribution can cause conflict if it is not supported by mechanisms which can prevent or resolve that conflict. Lesotho (1998), East Timor (the referendum on 30 August 1999) and Zanzibar (October 2000) are examples of such conflict. On the other hand, an election can be a means of conflict resolution or a means through which confidence can be created. If the conflict was about the absence of a democratic dispensation, a free and fair election can be one of the most powerful symbols indicating the beginning of a democratic era.

An election date can provide a deadline for a negotiation process and it can indicate a serious commitment to negotiation. A negotiation process without a deadline and timeframes can continue indefinitely, and the negotiating parties can develop a suspicion that negotiations are being used merely for tactical purposes and not in good faith towards reaching a settlement. Such distrust can be

addressed by a commitment to a particular closing date in the form of an election.

Confidence building may also be promoted when an election is not administered by the incumbent government or its bureaucracy, but by an autonomous electoral commission. Electoral manipulations in the form of gerrymandering, election fraud, undue utilisation of state resources and the media for electioneering, are possible grounds for elections to become causes of conflict. An autonomous commission should secure a level playing field, should also establish faith and confidence in the fairness of the election, and should be able to determine independently whether it was free and fair, thereby providing the election's legitimisation (Harris & Reilly 1998:309-319). India was one of the first to institute such an agency in 1950 in the form of the independent Chief Electoral Commissioner and later an Election Commission.

Other means of securing confidence in elections are the presence of domestic and international monitors or observers, and electoral tribunals to adjudicate disputes between parties. In the case of Cambodia (1993) the election was administered and conducted by the UN. It provided the credibility that no domestic institution was capable of providing, since the Khmer Rouge still enjoyed impunity and their influence permeated all sectors of society.

An election or referendum can also enhance the confidence of negotiators or political leaders if it provides a mandate to continue with a negotiation process, or to approve an agreement and its implementation. Negotiators are always concerned about the effect of their actions on public opinion, because they know that at some stage in the process they will be judged in an election. Examples of such confidence-building referendums are the one in South Africa in 1992 about continuation of the constitutional negotiations, and the referendums in Ireland and Northern Ireland in terms of the Good Friday Agreement (1998).

In conflict situations crimes are committed on all sides and prisoners are taken. Perpetrators of the crimes, and in particular the military components on all the sides, as well as those with political responsibility for the perpetrators, will not be party to an agreement without guarantees against prosecution afterwards, unless they have been militarily defeated. It entails a form of indemnification, like amnesty. It is a priority in situations where the perpetrators will be part of the new dispensation (like part of a new defence force or police force) and where their support for the new dispensation is critically important. The reverse side of the demand for indemnity is a demand for retributive justice also as a prerequisite for confidence in the fairness of the new dispensation. Where the perpetrators will be isolated from the new dispensation, it is unnecessary to balance justice against amnesty. (Situations where international war crimes tribunals are used or where perpetrators are permanently disqualified from public office, are examples of such circumstances.) More complex are situations where they are integrated. Blanket amnesty for everyone does not appear to be an appropriate option. (It has been used in Latin America, for instance Chile, and also in the Macedonian agreement in August 2001). Qualified amnesty for conflict-related crimes and retributive justice for all other crimes, is one of the tested options. The option of doing nothing (in for example Namibia, Zimbabwe or Cambodia until recently) is very attractive, because it does not engage with the problems around retributive justice, but at the same time it does not provide any form of security or predictability about the future, and undermines confidence in the just nature of an agreement.

Release of political prisoners is a complex issue, but an indispensable confidence-building mechanism.

Similar to the release of prisoners of war, it signifies either the end of a conflict or a gesture of goodwill and reconciliation. And it removes a useful but potentially disruptive bargaining chip from the negotiation process. For example, it is then no longer possible to argue: "Our leaders are in prison and therefore we cannot negotiate". Examples where release of political prisoners at the beginning of a negotiation process contributed towards a normalisation of the situation and enabled negotiations were in Zimbabwe in the late 1970s, in Namibia in the 1980s and in South Africa after 1990. An example where the releases were part of implementing an agreement and served as a confidence builder for implementation of other sections of the agreement, was seen in Northern Ireland (Sentence Review Commissioners 1999:6-8).

Release of political prisoners is conceptually (and sometimes also tactically) packaged with decommissioning of arms or a cease-fire. Negotiation as a peaceful means should, strictly speaking, be void of any default positions of an armed or military nature. Otherwise, threats of violence can be a bargaining chip which is unlikely to encourage any real negotiation probably only concessions under duress. However, negotiators whose status as a party to the conflict depend greatly on its armed capacity are unlikely to forego that capacity before it has been fully exploited in the negotiation process. For example, Gen. Wesley Clark, NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) Commander in the Balkan at the time of the Dayton agreement, claimed that they did not apply their airpower sufficiently against Serbia during the initial negotiation, but did so in 1999. The Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland also risked the Good Friday Agreement with its reluctance to decommissioning its arms. In the case of the ANC in South Africa, it unilaterally announced a suspension of its armed activities in August 1991 (in the Pretoria Minute) and in the following year started with decommissioning because, although the military dimension did not hold much bargaining value, the "cease-fire" had high symbolic value. Agreement on the National Peace Accord in September 1991 also made a valuable contribution not only to dealing with political violence, but to building confidence in the settlement process.

## 5. MANAGING IMPLEMENTATION OF AN AGREEMENT

A neglected aspect of conflict resolution is the period directly after an agreement, when the facilitating agency has quite often left the scene and the parties are left to their own devices in implementing the agreement. The period after finalising an agreement is normally an anticlimax. And if the agreement does not specify who is responsible for its implementation, it can cause uncertainty. Moreover, the details of agreements often exclude the possibility of likely disputes about procedural and substantive matters. It is therefore critically important that the agreement provides for a centrally-placed authority that can provide a final and authoritative interpretation of disputed aspects of the agreement, enforce the agreement's timeframes, resolve implementation disputes, and engender trust in the agreement. It is not the same as international guarantees offered by witnesses to the agreement or by international organisations. An implementation authority should supply a political and security dimension to secure the transition and provide a stimulus for the process. The UN often provides such an implementation authority. Two examples are the UN Transitional Administration in Cambodia (UNTAC), established in 1992, and the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) since 1999.

A good example of a comprehensive implementation authority is the General Framework Agreement of Dayton (1995) which included the Agreement on Civilian Implementation of the Peace Settlement. It established the High Representative with a staff to "maintain close contact with the Parties to promote

their full compliance with all civilian aspects of the peace settlement" (article II, 1(b)), and to facilitate "resolution of any difficulties arising in connection with civilian implementation" (article II, 1(d)). The High Representative should also maintain in constant contact with the Commander of NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR). The military dimension is accommodated in accordance with the Agreement on Military Aspects of Peace Settlement, which provides for the Joint Military Commission chaired by the IFOR Commander. It is established to oversee implementation of the military aspects of the agreement (Grant 1998:28-31).

Angola and Northern Ireland are examples where such an agreement implementation agency has been absent, and where lack of adherence to the agreements has become a major stumbling block (Ohlson 1998:180-182).

Inclusion of such an implementation authority in an international settlement process is less problematic than in instances of internal processes. Two examples of such an internal implementation authority are the Transitional Executive Council (TEC), used between January and April 1994 in South Africa, and the Interim Political Authority (IPA) in Lesotho since 1999. The TEC consisted of all the negotiation parties and served almost as a parallel government to the National Party government, and as a monitor of its activities. It used seven sub-councils to monitor critical areas of policy and security during the transition (Sarakinsky 1994:74-81). The IPA followed the same approach but did not attain a similar level of success.

Galtung's conflict triangle implies that conflict resolution should not be confined to treating the symptoms of a conflict situation; in other words, firstly, conflict behaviour and secondly, conflict attitudes. The incompatibility of interests should also be removed, which means that the unjust structural dimensions of structural conflict and the hegemonic cultural dimensions of cultural conflict should be removed. Conflict resolution should, in other words, proceed to conflict prevention. It is a much longer-term project and much less attractive, and therefore less attended to by professional mediators.

## 6. Prevention of Conflicts

Conflict prevention is in the first instance associated with preventive diplomacy. Diplomatic pressure and influence including the classic "carrot and stick" diplomacy associated with Realpolitik are used to reach agreements before it can develop into conflict. Conflict prevention, manifested as deterrence, whether in the form of a nuclear threat, conventional military power, economic or technological capacity or other considerations, is a variation of power or leverage politics. Conflict prevention can also be approached from a more idealist point of view. In this sense, conflict is viewed as a cyclical phenomenon, and not as a linear beginning-end event. It implies that the root causes of a conflict can be addressed in the form of negotiation and other forms of conflict prevention before they develop into open conflict. As part of the cyclical nature, after an open conflict has been resolved, its deep-rooted resolution also requires conflict prevention, although in different forms. If the essential incompatibilities are addressed, it will prevent the conflict from recurring, but if unsuccessful, it can be the beginning of a new conflict cycle.

While track II mediation is conventionally associated with the early stages of conflict resolution, when

the situation is ripening and when preparations take place for "talks about talks", it appears to be also appropriate for conflict prevention and consolidation of a peace process. Involvement of civil society at this stage is again an imperative. Implementation of agreements requires further dialogue and negotiations, albeit less in the limelight. An example of such an approach is when traditional opponents, who have to co-operate in the light of the new agreement but who still distrust each other, are jointly involved in a process of learning new conflict resolution techniques. If the negotiating teams of an employer/management and a trade union can jointly undergo a course in alternative negotiation techniques to avoid stalemates, political opponents can do the same. If political opponents have a sound understanding of the fundamental principles of mediation and have jointly gained that understanding through workshops and exercises, they have a common basis of understanding those techniques and therefore can easily refer to aspects of it without the danger of misunderstandings. Training in aspects of peace studies is another popular endeavour in conflict prevention.

A long-term conflict prevention objective, which is equally applicable to the consolidation of democracy, is to cultivate a culture of respect for human rights, including political tolerance. Equally important as a preventive measure and as a democratic principle, is socio-economic development. Today most political conflicts include a prominent socio-economic dimension. With more resources available, competition for them is not necessarily less intense, but it is considered to be less mutually exclusive and less threatening for their survival. The Swedish approach to humanitarian assistance within the framework of development is an example of such an understanding of conflict prevention. Its underlying assumption is "that programmes of development co-operation can contribute to the prevention of armed conflict before they break out. This can be achieved through targeted development projects, programmes for strengthening democracy and human rights, regional co-operation programmes and supporting communication between hostile parties" (Norberg 2000:25).

Over the last decade a relatively new phenomenon has appeared in the context of conflict prevention. It is the use of war crime tribunals and truth commissions. Most of the research work in this respect focuses on the legal dimension of the tribunals, its impact on the sovereignty of states, the new nature of international humanitarian law, and the way in which it promotes (retributive) justice. Truth commissions, on the other hand, are assessed in terms of the ostensible dualism between truth and justice, and granting of amnesty appears to be a focus point in this respect (for example Gutmann & Thompson 2000). These issues are seldom presented in the context of conflict resolution, and hardly ever in that of conflict prevention. The significance of this debate is, however, that it adds an important philosophical and jurisprudential dimension to conflict prevention. In this respect, the function of a legal system in political conflict resolution and prevention should receive more attention. What also deserves to be explored, is the impact of religious values on the conceptual understanding of truth commissions as motivation for conflict prevention.

The issue of justice is arguably one of the centre-pieces in conflict prevention. An essential part of the debate about tribunals versus truth commissions as the most appropriate instruments, deals with the notion of justice. Implicit in the debate is the question: which form of justice is necessary or most appropriate for conflict prevention retributive or restorative? The liberal democratic perspective insists on retributive justice with a strong emphasis on the rule of law and a positivist emphasis on procedural prudence in the application of justice. Those who emphasise the contingent nature of a transitional period immediately after an intense conflict are in favour of restorative justice, which is less procedural and formal, and aimed at rehabilitating a fractured society. Procedural justice is normally intimately

linked to democracy, which is similarly defined in procedural terms. It provides an explanation why those with a predominantly procedural view of moral and value-determined issues in society insist so vehemently on retributive (and not restorative) justice.

An underdeveloped aspect of tribunals and truth commissions, in the context of conflict prevention, is their real impact on societies. Can their methods of operation address the fundamental incompatibilities of interests and finally remove the root causes of the conflict? In other words, is there any correlation between individual involvement in a tribunal or commission and a wider societal impact? It will not amount to conflict prevention if it affects only individuals. Little empirical work has been done in this respect. In the case of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a general opinion poll was directed at determining public opinion two years after its completion. The general conclusions were firstly the marked attitudinal differences based on race, secondly a general acceptance of the TRC and its work, and thirdly a perception that in a procedural sense it treated the perpetrators of violence fairly, but that the victims were not treated fairly in terms of granting amnesty to the perpetrators (Gibson & Macdonald 2001:3-5, 6-8, 19, 20-23). It established a complex picture of a high level of legitimacy for the TRC in general, but lower legitimacy levels on specific issues. A possible explanation is that the symbolism of reconciliation (with also strong religious undertones and calls on traditional ubuntu humanism) is more powerful than the specific nature of its functions.

International preference, however, favours tribunals. In addition to those established for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the International Criminal Court is in its formative stages. A new variation also appeared lately in Sierra Leone and Cambodia. In both the latter instances, the UN has been instrumental in creating war crime tribunals of a combined international-national nature in which the two states play a critical role. On the other hand, since the arrest of Slobodan Milosevic, a debate has emerged about establishing also a truth commission (in addition to the tribunal) for the former Yugoslavia.

It is difficult to envisage a truth commission with authority to grant amnesty, in the absence of possible prosecutions for those who did not apply for amnesty or for those who failed in their application. Otherwise, the motivation for amnesty would be absent. Opponents of amnesty view it as an alternative to justice and a form of impunity. If, however, amnesty has an equal status to justice, it follows that the substantive requirements for receiving amnesty are equal to the substance (not procedural requirements) of justice. Arguably, full disclosure of information (i.e. truth) within a closely circumscribed set of political activities with a demonstrable political (and not a personal) motive and objective, meet the substantive requirements of both justice and amnesty. For everything outside this ambit, retributive justice should still be applicable. There is little argument about the fact that in procedural terms amnesty is not equal to retributive justice. The question is then whether procedural justice is an absolute precondition for substantive justice. The legal answer is no, but the moral answer is debatable. The politics-of-transition answer is also no.

## Conclusion

All the dimensions of conflict – its causes, its management and its resolution – are undergoing significant adjustments over the last number of years. It will be an oversimplification to ascribe everything to post-Cold War dynamics or globalisation. Changes in the state, new tendencies in international public law,



new social-political movements and the penetrating tremors of development, are very radical for the minds of people who yearn for stability and security, but who are constantly exposed to insecurity and change.

In the past, ideological solidarity and categorisation of the world into those for, those against and the non-aligned, made conflict resolution across those categories almost impossible. In the minds of many, this ideological contestation has been replaced by contestation between two fundamentalisms: ideology and religion or between economically reduced Western/liberal ideology and religiously reduced fundamentalism. More space for conflict resolution has emerged, but still severe qualifications are placed on its options in terms of ideology or religion. Ironically, together with the neoliberal notion of a "smaller and leaner" state, there has emerged a concomitant greater sensitivity for minorities and both have weakened the state. In circumstances without well-consolidated constitutional states, state structures cannot absorb all these pressures and thus become prone to conflict.

Conflict resolution, nowadays, is therefore more often faced with structural inefficiencies of both the state and society, and less often with inter-state realpolitical ambitions of power. What has remained unchanged is the phenomenon of states exploiting internal conflicts in other states.

Today, the main issues of conflict resolution are all inextricably linked to the changing dynamics within states and in the international community. No conflict can be isolated any more and treated in controlled conditions, though Dayton came closest to such an attempt. Conflict resolution, therefore, requires real expertise and sound knowledge in a range of disciplines, including political dynamics and history, diplomacy and psychology. Peace studies or conflict studies are hardly sufficient as disciplines on their own.

## Notes

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# The emerging South African profile in Africa: Reflections on the significance of South Africa's entrance into peacekeeping

by Theo Neethling

## Abstract

Since the political transformation in South Africa in 1994, there has been a steady growth in expectations in Africa and elsewhere regarding South Africa's role as a peacekeeper in African conflicts. With its participation in two peace missions of the United Nations (UN) in Africa, the country now seeks to take up its rightful role in international peacekeeping, both politically and militarily. It can rightly be stated that South Africa's engagement in peacekeeping is of great interest from a foreign policy and security point of view. This paper endeavours to discuss South Africa's emerging profile in Africa. Especially, it attempts to reflect and comment on the significance and importance of the country's contributions to multinational peacekeeping.

## 1. Introduction

Being committed to regional peace and security, and to the strengthening of regional security arrangements, the South African government has embarked upon a process of planning for eventualities as regards peace missions<sup>1</sup>. Against this background the White Paper on South African Participation in International Peace Missions (hereafter White Paper) was compiled by the Department of Foreign Affairs, approved by Cabinet on 21 October 1998 and tabled in Parliament on 24 February 1999. Generally speaking, the White Paper can be regarded as a crucial framework and guideline for South Africa's participation in peace missions. The document has a wide scope and covers not only the philosophical and political aspects of involvement in peace missions, but also the practical aspects of the country's potential contributions. From a foreign policy point of view, the White Paper is certainly a groundbreaking document. It is possibly the most important foreign policy document yet to pass Cabinet, since it forced the South African government to outline its national interests and to define how these interests interfaced with its philosophy on conflict resolution and its general approach towards Africa.

While South Africa is now beyond the point of defining policy guidelines on participation in peace missions, the government has practically moved to involve the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) in international peace missions in two African states. Towards the end of 2000 an announcement was made that South African officers would be deployed as military liaison officers to support the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea. A total of seven SANDF officers have since then been deployed to the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and another two officers to the Organisation of African Unity Liaison Mission in Ethiopia/Eritrea (OLMEE) (Van der Walt 2001:3).

In an even more significant announcement on 23 March 2001, the South African Minister of Defence, Mr Mosiuoa Lekota, stated that in compliance with the international obligations of the Republic of South Africa towards the UN, South Africa would contribute elements of specialised units to the UN Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) (Anon. 2001a:1). This announcement was a historical development in the sense that it paved the way for the SANDF's first substantial contribution – specifically of a human resources nature – to international peace missions. At the time of writing, 96 members of the SANDF have been deployed to the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) as staff officers in various specialised roles, such as air cargo handling, air crash rescuing,

medical evacuation, as well as command and support tasks (Van der Walt 2001:9-10).

It should immediately be said that South Africa's contributions to these missions could by no means be considered as big. Furthermore, it has been decided that South Africa will only contribute a number of (unarmed) military observers to UNMEE and a few military liaison officers to OLMEE. Also, at the time of writing no officers have been deployed in combat or peace enforcement roles as far as MONUC is concerned. Yet these developments are of great interest from a South African foreign policy and security point of view. It also coincides with the deployment of between 600 and 700 South African troops in Burundi in October and November 2001 with a view to protecting about 150 Burundian political leaders returning from exile to participate in that country's power-sharing Transitional Government, which was installed on 1 November 2001. The aim of this paper is to reflect and comment on the significance of South Africa's emerging profile in Africa with specific reference to its contributions to the above-mentioned multinational peacekeeping endeavours.

## 2. Africa's Importance for South Africa

In today's community of nations, South Africa can be regarded as a "middle power". Between Denmark and Indonesia on the one hand and Thailand and Finland on the other, South Africa ranks number 29 in terms of Gross National Product in the international community (Anon. 2001b:364). The country seems to align and present itself as part of that consortium of countries that includes developing states Norway, Canada, Sweden and the Netherlands, and developing countries such as India, Cuba and Brazil (Cilliers 1999a:1). South Africa has certainly shown a remarkable ability to engage in and contribute to multilateralism and middle power diplomacy in recent years. Yet as far as the promotion of security goes, its role and placing in the African context is of particular interest.

The White Paper clearly makes the point that "although South Africa acknowledges its global responsibilities, the prioritisation afforded to Africa in South African foreign policy makes Africa the prime focus for future engagements" (Department of Foreign Affairs 1999:22). This state of affairs is no coincidence since Africa is one of South Africa's largest export markets. Ahwireng-Obeng & McGowan (1998:11) state that

Exports to Africa are sharply different from South Africa's exports to its traditional Triad markets. Unlike South Africa's continuing export of gems, precious metals, minerals and base metals to the North, South Africa's exports to Africa are now the largest destination for value-added goods, taking nearly 30 per cent of total beneficiated exports...in manufacturing and services South Africa's prime growing market is Africa, particularly Southern Africa. Other than tourism and trade in minerals and niche agriculture (wine and fruit) with the North, it is in Africa that South Africa has its strongest competitive advantages.

Apart from its economic interest in Africa, South Africa is also strongly concerned with Africa's well being and future. Analysts often point out that "state collapse" and wars in countries such as Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have important implications for South Africa. "Without an end to these wars and the establishment of an effective state in countries such as the DRC and Angola, there cannot be stability or democracy, and therefore no sustainable development" (Cilliers 1999a:1).

Within this framework, South Africa's current relations with the rest of the continent are especially

concerned with the African Renaissance vision: Africa's long-awaited upliftment – spiritual, technological, cultural, political and otherwise. It would seem that South Africa – with President Thabo Mbeki clearly at the helm – feels a strong responsibility for realising the African dream. Specifically, the South African President has been an initiator of the New Partnership for Africa's Development Plan (NEPAD) – a blueprint for Africa's future development<sup>3</sup>. In fact, one may argue that South Africa's relations with the rest of Africa seem to arise from a genuine concern with the future of the continent and its people. According to a 1997 foreign policy discussion document of the African National Congress, South Africa's approach to the rest of the continent is based on the following considerations:

The fact that South Africa is part of the African continent, and that its economic development is linked to what happens on the continent as a whole.

The fact that South Africa has an important role to play in the economic and political revival of the continent.

The fact that the economic development of the African continent as a whole will be a significant step in overcoming the North-South divide (Botha 2000:3-4).

Against this background, it is hardly surprising that South Africa's security interests are strongly attached to that of the rest of the continent and that the country's armed forces have been specifically committed to participation in peace missions on African soil.

### 3. South Africa's International Profile

Some observers argued in the late-1990s that South Africa's input in the African debate on peacekeeping had been fairly limited owing to the fact that the country was still relatively inexperienced in the field of peacekeeping, and because of a perceived reluctance to deploy troops in conflict situations. For instance, Malan (1998:21) earlier pointed out that

[p]articipation in international peacekeeping is a passport to international respectability and to an authoritative voice in the debate on the future of international conflict management and the reform of intergovernmental organisations such as the United Nations, the Organisation of African Unity and the Southern African Development Community. It is through such participation that countries with far less resources such as Ghana, Senegal, Kenya, Botswana and Zimbabwe enjoy a stronger voice in these debates – despite the considerable insight and analytical capability of South Africans in this arena. However, South Africa has officially declared its commitment to playing a meaningful role in Africa and the rest of the international community, and has even (at least by implication) stated its aspiration to become a permanent member of the Security Council of the UN. In 1998 it was also selected to chair the Non-Aligned Movement for a period of three years and it will become the first chair of the to-be-established African Union in 2002. It is envisaged that the African Union will replace the OAU in 2002. In addition, President Thabo Mbeki has probably been the most prominent African leader to address the G8 summit in Italy in July 2001 on plans for uplifting African countries.

Against this background, it is important to note that the White Paper explicitly states that participation in peace missions is increasingly becoming a prerequisite for international respectability, and for a strong voice in debates on multinational conflict management and on the reform of supra-national organisations. With its contributions to MONUC and UNMEE, South Africa has now clearly shown its commitment to becoming involved in international peacekeeping endeavours. Therefore, it can be stated that South Africa has seemingly realised that lack of participation in international peace

missions will make it extremely difficult to play key roles in the international community, in Africa and in the regional environment especially in the field of peacekeeping.

Having said this, it is important to note that Zimbabwe which has always been considered the powerhouse of peacekeeping training in Southern Africa was formally recognised in 1999 by the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Inter-State Defence and Security Committee as the location for a Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre. However, the worsening political situation in Zimbabwe has seemingly upset a number of Western stakeholders, with dire consequences particularly for continued Scandinavian engagement with the Centre in Harare.

#### 4. Preserving Regional Peace and Alleviating Human Suffering

Observers in South Africa often argued in the past that South Africa should be an African leader and that inevitable responsibilities and commitments flow from its position of economic and moral strength. It has likewise been said that most Southern African states eagerly look to South Africa for moral and material leadership, and that it is in South Africa's economic interest to do all it can to stabilise the region. South Africa cannot prosper in a sea of African insecurity and instability. In such a situation, the country will suffer as a result of populations fleeing their own desperate countries, and as a result of people trying to survive by trading in drugs, weapons and contraband. Thus, for South Africa, peacekeeping in Africa may be considered as action in direct support of its national security and economic interests (Cilliers & Malan 1996:343).

The political will to commit resources to peace missions depends largely upon the perceived national interest of potential contributors. In this regard, the South African government clearly links peace and stability in Africa and the region to the country's national interest. The official South African response to the above arguments has clearly been outlined in the White Paper. It makes the point that South Africa "has an obvious interest in preserving regional peace and stability in order to promote trade and development, and to avoid the spill-over effects of conflicts in the neighbourhood" (Department of Foreign Affairs 1999:22).

Another important policy document, the South African Defence Review, recognises that problems relating to political conflict in Africa are not confined within national borders. It is specifically mentioned that inter- or intra-state conflicts may arise in Southern Africa and that such conflicts can pose a security threat to regional peace and stability, and thus to South Africa itself as an integral part of the Southern African community. The Defence Review specifically states that conflicts and underdevelopment impact negatively on neighbouring states in the form of a range of non-military threats: environmental destruction; the spread of disease; refugee movements; and cross-border trafficking in drugs, stolen goods and small arms (Department of Defence 1998:18-20).

Thus it may be stated that South Africa's contributions to MONUC and UNMEE are a practical recognition that conflicts in Africa impact negatively on the continent and its people. The contributions also coincide with the African Renaissance vision and the fact that African states have to deal with their own problems at a time when the continent stands at a critical juncture in its history. In this regard, the former Director General of South Africa's Department of Foreign Affairs, Mr Jackie Selebi, earlier explained that "[w]e cannot talk of an African renaissance, or even achieve a better life for

people in South Africa, if around us countries are in conflict) if Africa disintegrates there will be no South Africa. There will be such a movement of people from central and southern Africa into South Africa that our economy will never be able to address the interests of South African people" (Selebi 1998:14). In a somewhat more altruistic tone, the White Paper also declares that it is in the South African national interest to assist peoples who suffer from famine, political repression, natural disasters and the scourge of violent conflict (Department of Foreign Affairs 1999:22). Thus it seems that South Africa's approach to participation in international peace missions not only links peace and stability in Africa and the region to the country's national interests, but also indicates at a more altruistic level that the country is willing to play a role in alleviating the suffering caused among Africans by the scourge of armed conflict.

## 5. The Need for Multilateral Responses to Crises

The complexity of the new global and regional distribution of power has resulted in a radically altered security paradigm. Recent global developments suggest that there is a growing need for multilateral political-military responses to crises. Today, it is widely accepted that the breakdown of the bipolar Cold War system means that responses to security crises both preventive efforts and beyond have to come from a wider group of nations and organisations than during the Cold War period.

Within the dynamics of the post-Cold War global community, attitudes to strategic geography need to be viewed from a different perspective than before. Coalition operations are now the usual form of military activity: almost every major conflict of the past decades and all peacekeeping missions have involved combined forces. In fact, the unilateral use of force by any state today generally verges on the unthinkable.

Countries are finding that their vital interests and their regional or global responsibilities are not necessarily restricted or confined to their own regions. Rather, their forces may have to be deployed to some distant theatres to participate in operations aimed at regional security or humanitarian intervention. Because the significance of ideologically based bloc politics has waned, countries are more likely to work alongside regional partners to promote common security. In the current multipolar international community, strategic and security planning should proceed from a consideration of the complex set of variables that bind states' vital interests together (Ryan 2000:4-6).

Against this background, it is interesting to note that the White Paper states that the demise of the Cold War and the collapse of the ideological barriers that separated the world have vastly improved the potential of the international community to jointly address threats to common security. It is also mentioned that this situation has particularly resulted in the growing commitment to, and co-operation with regard to, conflict resolution that has emerged in various regional and international forums in recent years (Department of Foreign Affairs 1999:7). Thus it seems that South Africa today realises that it cannot consider strategic and security issues purely by identifying (military) threats. Of even greater significance are global or regional responsibilities and common interests with other countries.

## 6. Domestic Priorities vs. Regional Challenges

Since South Africa's political transformation in 1994, much time, energy and resources have been

directed towards the transformation of South African society in all its spheres. Likewise, domestic security issues rather than regional security issues normally topped the political agenda since the mid-1990s. Specifically, this concerns the personal security of the citizenry and unsatisfactorily high levels of crime. Furthermore, many ordinary citizens and politicians effectively argued for an emphasis on domestic priorities, such as socio-economic upliftment of the poor; promotion of economic growth; the need for improved education and health systems; disaster management; lack of foreign investment and so forth. However, it can be said that with South Africa's entry into international peace missions, the country is now casting its eyes beyond its northern borders. This implies a realisation that the country also has a role and responsibility towards the rest of the continent.

Thus South Africa's involvement in peace missions in Africa implies that the country has effectively been moving away from an earlier "fortress mentality". This indicates that South Africans have an interest in dealing with matters relating to regional peace and stability. According to Vreÿ & Esterhuysen (2000:11), "South Africa's domestic agenda is (now) set, but has not yet solidified). Subsequently a healthy competition exists between groups arguing for domestic priorities and implicitly, for some degree of isolationism from the region and its insecurities, and those championing the declared views of the government to simultaneously deal with regional matters of security".

However, it needs to be made clear that certain individuals and lobby groups are still vociferously emphasising the fact that domestic socio-economic challenges remain the South African government's main challenge. The following comment or warning to the government by senior journalist Max du Preez (2001:14) bears testimony to this:

President Thabo Mbeki should forgive the working classes and the unemployed if they don't seem too interested in the African Renaissance and the Africa Millennium Recovery Plan right now. He can be assured they will be right behind him supporting these lofty projects as soon as they have jobs and proper homes and water and sanitation). The Mbeki administration should recognise this new critical mass and take it very seriously. Poverty and non-delivery are the issues of the next few years). This comment should certainly be taken seriously. At the same time, it could be argued that South Africa is part of the broader region, and that an isolationist approach on the part of South Africa would be to the country's detriment. Therefore, an "equilibrium between isolationism and regional conflict management" (Vreÿ & Esterhuysen 2000:12) would seem to be the appropriate route in the short to medium term.

## 7. High International Expectations

South Africa has been identified by many observers as the one state able to help ensure effective peacekeeping in Africa. After the political transformation of South Africa in 1994, there were growing expectations that South Africa would "take up its responsibilities as a potential regional leader and to exert its influence in creating a stable region". Accordingly, "South Africa is (still) experiencing a constant barrage of calls for assistance, intervention and mediation in African crises" (Vreÿ & Esterhuysen 2000:12). This may sound very dramatic, but there can be no doubt that South Africa is often (sometimes rather simplistically) perceived as a regional leader.

Thus it is interesting to note that the White Paper starts with an opening statement to the effect that since 1994, domestic and international expectations regarding South Africa's role as a responsible and



respected member of the international community have steadily grown. "These expectations have included a hope that South Africa will play a leading role in international peace missions" (Department of Foreign Affairs 1999:5). The White Paper also states that South Africa is committed to responsibly fulfilling its obligations under the Charters of the UN and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), as well as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Treaty (Department of Foreign Affairs 1999:23). Thus South Africa's decision-makers are fully aware of international expectations that the country will play an increasingly significant political-military role in African peacekeeping, and that it cannot stay aloof from UN peace missions.

There can be no doubt that South Africa will remain subject to multiple pressures to "do something" to help put an end to fighting in conflict-stricken African states. In fact, the former Secretary General of the OAU, Mr Salim Ahmed Salim, made it clear during a visit to South Africa in December 1998 that he had been disappointed by South Africa's reluctance to play a more active role in conflict resolution in Africa (Malan 1999:3). Since the creation of the SANDF in 1994, the South African position on committing forces to peace missions may be described as "cautious". Firstly, the practical difficulties of integrating seven formerly adversarial forces (as a result of the political process) and of training them for peace missions elicited caution on the part of the Department of Defence (Steyn 1997:9). The novelty of such operations is another important aspect upon which the Department of Defence earlier urged caution because peace support tasks were new to South Africa and the SANDF (Department of Defence 1998:22).

Also, it is commonly known that reduced military spending and a dwindling defence budget have been at the centre of significant budgetary changes in South Africa in the past decade. Practically speaking, the SANDF has seen many years of consecutive cuts. The defence budget is presently about 1,7 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product – a situation that produces a discrepancy between the peacekeeping requirements emanating from national policy and the capability of the SANDF to meet such requirements (Le Roux 1999:63). This would seem to form an important part of explanations concerning South Africa's preference in the past years for a role of diplomatic peacemaker to that of military peacekeeper. Hence, South Africa's conundrum is that it must sail between the Scylla of national interest and humanitarian concern, and the Charybdis of financial and military prudence (Steyn 1997:8-9). At the same time, the government has firmly declared that as a member of the UN, South Africa must assist the world body in its peacekeeping task – especially as the country seems to have aspirations to become a permanent member of the Security Council (Nhlapo 1999:5).

## 8. Limitations of the UN

Much was expected of the UN in the aftermath of the Cold War in the field of peacekeeping, but the world body proved unable to meet those expectations. Specifically, the UN has proved not to be in a position to deploy robust force postures that are able to conduct peace enforcement operations in acute conflicts. In Africa, the UN's experience in Somalia between 1992 and 1995 and in Rwanda between 1993 and 1996 were glaring examples of the UN's limitations in terms of peacekeeping in complex emergencies. Also, in Angola the UN terminated its involvement in the peace process in February 1999 after years of futile peacekeeping efforts by no less than four peace missions. The termination of the UN's involvement in Angola marked the end of a decade of international military presence in the Angolan civil war, with no definite end in sight to the tragic and devastating conflict that has raged sporadically since the country gained independence in 1975.

The UN's endeavours in the DRC and Sierra Leone have been further proof that the UN is not in a position actually quite unable to respond meaningfully to complex emergencies in Africa. In both cases, the UN was practically impotent in averting conflict or to end the political turmoil. Berman & Sams (2000:379) state that "years after the failure to stop the genocide in Rwanda, insufficient progress has been made to respond appropriately, let alone to prevent, a similar catastrophe". By the same token, it is argued in the Brahimi report<sup>5</sup> that the UN has repeatedly failed to meet the challenge of peacekeeping, and that "[w]ithout renewed commitment on the part of Member States, significant institutional change and increased financial support, the United Nations will not be capable of executing the critical peacekeeping and peace-building that the Member States assign to it in coming months and years" (Brahimi 2000).

In view of this, an important development in the international community concerns the trend for regions to accept co-responsibility and to share the burden of policing themselves. Practically speaking, this means a dilution of the central role many hoped that the UN would play in peacekeeping challenges worldwide and in Africa in particular. Basically, this trend concerns an approach to building global security on a strategy of co-option and devolution of responsibility from what remains a relatively weak international system of conflict prevention and management (Cilliers 1999b:90).

Against this background (sub)regional role-players in Africa are compelled to play a constructive role in security and peacekeeping. This is, of course, of special significance for South Africa as a subregional power or hegemony. In fact, it is difficult to overstate South Africa's dominant position in much of Africa. See table below for a comparative index (World Bank 2001):



It has already been noted that much is expected of South Africa as a contributor to peace missions on the African continent. Although there are certain practical limits to the ability of South Africa to impact upon the continent, it must be clear that the country is effectively compelled to play an active political-military role with a view to resolving current and future conflicts.

## 9. African Armed Forces and International Peacekeeping

It is sometimes argued that those countries in Africa with the greatest scope and depth of experience in capacity building for peacekeeping are those which contribute troops to UN missions. Having said that, functionaries in peacekeeping circles often contended in the past years that South Africa has to "catch up" with Botswana, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Zimbabwe and others countries that are all experienced in the field of UN peacekeeping. Likewise, some observers have often said that South Africa lags behind the list of African countries that have subscribed to the UN standby system: Botswana, Chad, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Malan 1998:23).

Considering Africa's international position, it needs to be noted that the increase in troop contributions to the UN system has mainly been the result of developing countries contributing troops to peacekeeping operations. At the beginning of 1991, out of the top ten contributors, only two were

developing countries, namely Ghana and Nepal (UN Department of Public Information 2001b). By 28 February 2001, the overwhelming majority of the top ten contributors of uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping operations worldwide were developing countries three of them were African states. In this regard, the UN's profile of contributions to UN peacekeeping operations indicates the following as regards the top ten positions (UN Department of Public Information 2001a):



By comparison, contributions from the five permanent members of the UN Security Council were as follows (UN Department of Public Information 2001a):



Interestingly, in 1993, France had been the largest contributor to UN peacekeeping operations with around 6 000 troops, while the United Kingdom's contribution increased fivefold since the end of the Cold War to 3 700 (Kemp 1993:26). In this context, Berman and Sams contend that the five permanent members of the Security Council practically led by the US have become increasingly reluctant to commit their troops or their money to UN peacekeeping efforts, particularly in Africa. "As a result, the international community's peacekeeping goals became decidedly more modest" (Berman & Sams 2000:32).

It is important to note that troop-contributing countries are now insisting that the bigger their contribution, the greater their representation in the UN Department of Peacekeeping should be. It can be argued that South Africa is certainly aware of the fact that a number of African states have actively participated in UN peace missions in the post-Cold War era, and the White Paper states that the country will co-operate with regional partners in enhancing its capacity to participate in international peace missions. Moreover, it has already been pointed out that South Africa realises that lack of participation in international peace missions will make it extremely difficult to play key roles in the international community in general and in Africa in particular.

## 10. Incremental Entrance into Peacekeeping

South Africa is compelled to play an active political-military role in Africa and the country needs to enter the peacekeeping arena on an incremental scale. Observers often point out that South Africa is entering the peace support domain at a time when "polite peacekeeping" is over. Specifically, this relates to UN deployments where peace settlements have been agreed upon but not implemented. The UN's experience in Sierra Leone in May 2001 is certainly a case in point.

For instance, following on a number of incidents since January 2000, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) strongly rocked the shaky peace accord in May 2000 by launching attacks on towns and personnel of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). After killing Kenyan soldiers (four deaths were later confirmed) in an attack on a UN contingent, the RUF also wounded and captured several other UN soldiers (Anon. 2000a:13). In the course of further events, the rebels eventually captured some 500 UNAMSIL personnel as hostages. Some of them were later released. After two months, in

July 2000, all hostages were released, but only after a rare display of force by the UN. This happened after heavily armed UN soldiers moved into the rebels' main headquarters in the eastern part of the country to save 222 UN peacekeepers that were still being held (Roy-Macaulay 2000). Shortly before, the deteriorating situation in Sierra Leone sparked Britain to send paratroopers, marines, and a variety of warships, helicopters and transport planes to evacuate 500 British citizens, as well as to offer support to UNAMSIL (Anon. 2000b) an offer which certainly kept UNAMSIL from disintegration.

Generally speaking, international reaction on the taking of UNAMSIL personnel as hostages was one of shock and outrage. Critics hammered the UN for its role and profile in Sierra Leone. The New York Times, for example, stated that Sierra Leone demonstrated the danger of sending a weak and inadequately trained peacekeeping force into a country where there was no peace to keep. The paper called upon the UN to quickly reinforce the 8 700 peacekeepers already there and to regain control of an unravelling mission. For the New York Times, the situation in Sierra Leone suggested a need to improve the planning and execution of UN peacekeeping operations to ensure that UN peacekeeping forces do not become casualties in the conflicts they are supposed to help end. "An international force must then be given the financial resources, manpower and disciplined command needed to protect itself and effectively carry out its mandate" (Anon. 2000c).

Considering such challenges to peacekeepers and given South Africa's inexperience in the field of practical peacekeeping, the country has entered the peacekeeping arena only in a support role. However, it is important that in the case of MONUC (in the DRC), South Africa is making contributions in certain technical fields where few African states are able to contribute, and which have been in demand in earlier peace missions in Africa. At the same time, it may be argued that the real test will surely be the deployment of larger numbers of South African peacekeepers in conflict situations. The peacekeeping effort in the DRC remains a risky endeavour and may well lead to the deployment of infantry contingents. Thus the capabilities and preparedness of the South African military to engage in peace missions might be put to the test in the short to medium term if not in the DRC, then probably elsewhere on the continent.

## 11. Capacity-Building for Peacekeeping

The White Paper states that "the SANDF believes that when it does contribute troops to international peace support operations, its contingents must be well equipped and trained to the highest standards" (Department of Foreign Affairs 1999:26). In order to properly prepare for peace missions, the SANDF has since 1994 begun to address the notion of peace missions and the anticipated role of the South African military in study programmes and exercises at various SANDF training institutions. As far as officer training is concerned, the aim is to provide officers with a theoretical and practical orientation towards the doctrine, planning and command-and-control of peace missions. Selected senior officers and personnel have already received peacekeeping training abroad and visited Bosnia and other places to study peacekeeping activities. Peace support training was likewise started at the lowest level for all new intakes. Other units were also identified for such training. The SA Army Battle School is giving specific attention to training programmes and exercises, especially as regards the tactical level. The SA Army College, with its function of research and development, also gives attention to peace support exercises in both the Junior Command and Staff Duties Course and the Senior Command and Staff Duties Course for army officers<sup>6</sup>.

It is envisaged in the White Paper that continued regional co-operation in the realm of preparation may eventually lead to a joint and combined SADC contribution to a peace mission of the UN or even the OAU (Department of Foreign Affairs 1999:32). In April 1997, the armed forces of eight member states of SADC (including a contingent from the SANDF) participated in Exercise Blue Hungwe, a multinational peace support exercise held in the Nyanga area in Zimbabwe. Blue Hungwe was followed by Exercise Blue Crane held in April 1999 in South Africa at the SA Army Battle School in the Northern Cape Province. The latter involved approximately 4 000 defence force members from SADC countries<sup>7</sup> and was the biggest peacekeeping exercise thus far on African soil. The SANDF played a major role in Exercise Blue Crane. Not only did the SANDF play host to the event, it also provided the exercise director and control staff.

In this context, it has often been contended in peacekeeping circles in South Africa that a number of South Africans have received ample training for peacekeeping, but that this investment in capacity building may be nullified should participation not result in practical engagement. It has also been argued that South Africa should augment its political role with respect to conflict resolution by providing opportunities to military personnel in missions where South Africa could cut its teeth in practical peacekeeping tasks. This means that officers and officials that have received peacekeeping training should be utilised in positions where they can gain experience and develop relationships with other forces and functionaries.

It has been mentioned that South Africa's contributions to MONUC and UNMEE are relatively small and that no officers are currently deployed in combat or peace enforcement roles. In other words, South Africa's involvement in multinational peace missions is still fairly limited at this point. However, it is certainly significant and will surely increase the country's peacekeeping profile in political and military terms. Furthermore, it may help to ensure that training and capacity building initiatives of the past years are not nullified, but may rather serve as a basis for South Africa's future involvement in peacekeeping on an even broader scale.

## 12. Conclusion

It is clear that South Africa today sees itself as part of Africa and that the government holds the view that instability and insecurity, especially in Southern Africa, are to the detriment of the country. In other words, from a political, economic and security perspective South Africa regards itself as an integral part of the region and officially holds the view that an approach of isolationism would not be in South Africa's interest. Moreover, as the international community continues to minimise its military involvement on the African continent, the political-military role of South Africa in Southern Africa and further afield is likely to become even more important. In addition, as stability in the region shows few signs of improving, pressures from within the region and elsewhere in the international community for increased South African political-military involvement can be expected.

At this point, however, it should be clear that South Africa is not keen to utilise its military to forcefully address security issues in the region. In fact, it would appear that the Lesotho debacle in 1998 has elicited caution on the part of the South African government to use force as a means of resolving conflicts. Currently, there is no reason to believe that South Africa would – unlike Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe in the DRC, for instance – deviate from this approach (Vreÿ & Esterhuysen 2000:12). In fact,

the White Paper firmly makes the point that preventive diplomacy, peace building and peace making are the essential pillars of any peace mission, and that conflicts will recur if the underlying causes of crises are allowed to persist (Department of Foreign Affairs 1999:21).

Be that as it may, the South African government seems to accept the fact that Africa stands today at one of the most critical junctures in its history. Given the hegemonic nature of South Africa's position in Africa, the challenge is to be a constructive leader in the region and to respond positively to international or regional requests and expectations for political-military involvement in peacekeeping. In the final instance, South Africa has no choice but to accept participation in peacekeeping as a foreign policy priority, and the country should continue to cautiously and systematically engage in challenges of a peacekeeping nature.

## Notes

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1. The notion "peace mission" is used as a generic term to include all political, diplomatic and military activities related to multinational endeavours to prevent or settle disputes in terms of the UN Charter.
2. Europe, North America and Japan.
3. The Millennium African Recovery Programme has been merged with the Omega Plan of Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade into the New African Initiative in July 2001. In October 2001 the New African Initiative has been revised, further fine-tuned and issued in a framework document, known as the New Partnership for Africa's Development.
4. It is envisaged that the African Union will replace the OAU in 2002.
5. Panel of experts on UN Peace Operations - 2000. The 10-member panel was chaired by Algerian Foreign Minister, Lakhdar Brahimi. It was tasked to assess the future of UN peacekeeping operations.
6. The Senior Command and Staff Duties Course for all SANDF officers is, since February 2002, the responsibility of the SA War College; a newly formed joint training institution on the premises of the SA Army College in Thaba Tshwane. It is expected that the bulk of the SANDF's peacekeeping training for senior officers will be done at the SA War College.
7. The DRC and the Seychelles did not take part in the exercise.

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# Water Management Conflict and the Challenges of Globalisation notes

by Jo-Ansie van Wyk

## Abstract

This contribution explores the globalisation of water issues. It addresses a number of emergent patterns in this process, i.e. the retreat of the state, the growth of transborder links, the development and expansion of international law, increased private sector involvement in global and national water regulation and management, the spread of global social movements addressing water issues, the increase in the number of global governance agencies involved in this field, and the formulation of globally shared values with regard to water.

## Introduction

Water is life. Water is politics. Water is also scarce. Water is also a global issue. Globally, water is abundant, but unevenly distributed in time and space. See Table 1. As a natural resource it shares a number of characteristics with other resources. Yet, not all resources share water's significance as the basis for all forms of life. Water is one of the few renewable resources via the hydrological cycle. The fact that water is mobile gives rise to tensions pertaining to ownership and control. Water can be used in a number of ways such as for agriculture, irrigation, industrial and human consumption (Young et al 1994:1-20).



As globalisation intensifies, the power of national governments to address water issues declines. The Westphalian order of the state is increasingly threatened. Water issues, unlike the Westphalian concept of the state as a fixed territorial space, are not limited to particular social and geo-political boundaries. Furthermore, water issues challenge another Westphalian notion, that of the state's sovereignty. In some cases, states have given up their sovereignty in order to have sustainable water resources. Water issues have since the 1960s become a transnationalised political issue (of who gets what, where, when and how). In this sense, globalisation has reconfigured the state and its power vis-à-vis water (for example) in a number of ways. The state's territory is increasingly becoming part of a borderless world. Water as a transborder issue redefines geography, community and power. Secondly, state sovereignty on water is increasingly eroded. New international rules and authorities govern water issues. Thirdly, state autonomy on water issues is compromised. The state cannot act alone on water issues anymore. It has to consult with a number of various other actors. Fourthly, the question of citizens' allegiance towards the state is challenged. New centres of public authority are created outside the state's jurisdiction. Citizens are more likely to align themselves with a transnational social movement on a particular issue. Lastly, the world is not anarchic, but rather a heterarchy, i.e. a system in which political authority is shared and divided between different layers of governance and in which various actors share in governing (McGrew 2000:127-167)<sup>2</sup>.

Globalisation is a highly contested concept and definitions of the concept abound. However, a clear and specific definition is needed to develop sustainable explanations, precise evaluations and effective policies. For the purposes of this paper, globalisation is referred to as "processes whereby social relations acquire relatively distanceless and borderless qualities." This process is an ongoing trend

whereby the world becomes a borderless social space. However, this trend does not mean the end of fixed territorial geography. Although elements of globalisation have been witnessed previously in history, it was since the 1960s that globalisation unfolded to an unprecedented extent. It is a process that touched the lives of almost every human being on the globe. Yet, the trend has spread unequally.

This paper examines the globalisation of water issues, which relate to basic human needs and human health, food security, ecosystems, and national security. For the purposes of this paper, water issues are defined as issues relating to water access, quality, quantity, management and control, and to the allocation of water resources. Water issues also include concerns over global and regional food security and sufficiency, as well as the link between water and health.

There are a number of ways in which water issues can be said to have become globalised. There are water issues which are local in their occurrence and scale, but global in their impact. Others are intrinsically transnational and therefore inherently global. There are about 250 international watersheds covering more than 50% of the land surface of the globe and including more than 40% of its population. Some water issues relate to the exploitation of the so-called global commons. As water is intimately connected with all aspects of the natural environment and most human activities, it is a valuable resource which can often be coupled with disparities in power or wealth. Water is the basis for all forms of life. It is also the basis for development in industrialised societies as well as agrarian economies. Water scarcity remains one of the most fundamental development constraints in developing countries.

The globalisation of water issues is manifested in, inter alia, global awareness, the number of multilateral organisations and agreements addressing water issues, the expansion of International Law to deal with water, and the growth in the number of NGOs and social movements involved in global water issues.

### Emergent Patterns in the Globalisation of Water Issues

Water issues (be it water scarcity, droughts, floods, managing of water resources, the building of dams) are increasingly shaping global social relations. Not only does this occur through large-scale projects such as dams, but also because a significant number of main water resources of states originate outside their borders. In this regard a number of emergent patterns in the globalisation and global governance of international water issues is evident and will be addressed in this paper:

On a global scale we stand on the verge of massive global population growth. Since 1945 the world's population has more than doubled. More people means more water needs. As the development gap between developed and developing countries widen, an increase in the divergence between these economies is evident.

The economic globalisation of water is taking place. The global recognition of water as an economic resource was one of the cornerstones of the Mar del Plata, Dublin and Rio statements (Barlow 1999, Becker et al 2000:55-99). Also, water supply schemes often attract large foreign direct investment by multinational companies to a state. This was the case in, inter alia, the Lesotho Highlands Water Project in Lesotho and the Illisu Dam project in Turkey (Rohr 2001).

The process of the globalisation of water issues is sustained by, and produces, national and regional

interdependencies. During the Cold War era, regionalism was determined by security arrangements. The focus has subsequently shifted to economic arrangements that, inter alia, deal with water issues such as the Southern African Development Community's (SADC's) Water Sector.

An institutionalisation of intergovernmental and transnational networks of international political interaction on water issues is expressed in, inter alia, the establishment of formal organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and transnational social movements.

One of the main consequences of globalisation is its significant impact on the state. This is illustrated in the growth of additional loci of governance besides the state (Scholte 1999:15, Scholte 2000:8-9,41), the growth of new centres of authority on water above, below and alongside the state, and the state's declining ability to provide in all the welfare needs of its citizens.

The emergence of an evolving global polity on water issues is evident. In spite of the fact that no global government exists, a number of global and regional organisations, established to address transborder water issues, constitute an emergent system of global governance, which reflects increased political co-ordination among governments, intergovernmental organisations and transnational social movements. In this process, common goals are worked for, via agreed rules, values and principles. Water is increasingly becoming an issue dealt with in multilateral forums.

The emergence of a global/transnational civil society on water issues is noted. NGOs, advocacy groups, scientists, academics and ordinary citizens' organisations are increasingly playing an influential role in mobilising, organising and exercising influence on a particular water issue. This has been made possible, inter alia, by the spread of global communications systems such as the Internet.

#### Global Awareness of Water Issues and Scale of the Problem

By the end of the 20th century, water as an international issue has been placed solidly on the global agenda. Since the 1960s, global awareness of the nature and scale of international water issues increased. One of the outcomes of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro was that the UN General Assembly designated 22 March of each year as the World Day for Water (or World Water Day). Each World Water Day has a particular theme and a particular UN agency as lead agency. In 2001 the theme was Water and Health, and the World Health Organisation (WHO) was the lead agency for the day (World Water Day 2001).

Water issues are not new to international relations. Increased industrialisation and rapid population growth are but two issues that have greatly increased the scale and intensity of water issues. As table 2 indicates, water ignores political boundaries and has multiple and conflicting demands on its consumption. Despite the fact that more than 3600 international treaties have been signed over various aspects of international waters since AD 805, international law pertaining to water is in its infancy and is paradoxical and unenforceable (Wolf & Hamner 2000:123-124).

Table 2: Rivers or lakes with five or more countries forming part of basin (Mather & Chapman 1997:201)



#### The Role of the United Nations, Global Governance Agencies and Regime Formation

The UN agencies dealing with water are many and varied. There is no single agency dealing with

water. Instead there are a number of agencies each dealing with a particular aspect of water, and some regional UN bodies co-ordinating water concerns in a broader regional context. Box 1 contains some of the UN agencies with water interests.

Environmental organisations played a limited role within the UN before the Stockholm conference. The conservation of natural resources was part of the mandate of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO). UNESCO played an important role in the establishment of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1948. The IUCN has both governmental and non-governmental affiliates. The IUCN was instrumental in the establishment of the WWF. Other significant activities before the Stockholm conference was the International Geophysical Year (1957-1958), the IUCN's First World Conference on National Parks (1962), UNESCO's International Hydrological Decade (1965-1974), the International Hydrological Programme, the Operational Hydrology Programme and UNESCO's Biosphere Conference of Scientific Experts (1968).

Box 1: Selected UN agencies with water interests (Young et al 1994:24)

UN Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, UN Development Program (UNDP), UN Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations University, UN Economic Commission for Africa, UN Economic Commission for Europe, UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, UN Centre for Human Settlement, Office of the UN Disaster Relief Coordinator, World Food Programme, International Labour Organisation, Food and Agricultural Organisation of the UN, UNESCO, World Health Organisation, World Bank, UNCED.

The 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm marked a watershed in UN deliberations on the environment and water issues specifically. This conference was also a watershed in terms of the engagement of transnational movements concerned with water issues. A record number of 134 international environmental organisations participated in the proceedings. The Stockholm conference itself and its preparations contributed to increased international awareness. One of the major outcomes of this conference was the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Another outcome of this conference was the setting up of Ministries of the Environment in a number of states. Furthermore, the Stockholm conference framed two of the major environmental debates to date, i.e. the relationship between the environment and development, and state resistance to pressures on national sovereignty over natural resources within its borders (Conca 1996:103-119).

Global concern over the global implications of water problems has subsequently been the focus of a number of conferences, conventions and meetings, including the UN Conference on Water Development and Management (Mar del Plata, 1977), the launch of the UN International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1980-1990), the publication of the World Commission on Environment and Development's report, *Our Common Future* (1987), the Global Consultation on Safe Water and Sanitation for the 1990s (New Delhi, 1990), the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), the World Conference on Water and Environment: Development Issues for the 21st Century (Dublin, 1992), the Inter-ministerial Conference on Drinking Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation (Noordwijk, 1994), the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (1997) and the International Conference on Sustainable Development of Water Resources (New Delhi, November 2000).

Other notable UN conferences that dealt with water related activities include the Conference for Small Island Developing States (Barbados, 1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the Fourth Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), Habitat II Conference (Istanbul, 1996), and the World Food Summit (Rome, 1996).

Further UN involvement was sparked by the finding of the Committee on Natural Resources of the Economic and Social Council that some 80 states, including 40% of the global population, are already experiencing serious water problems. The UN Commission on Sustainable Development at its second session in 1994 noted the rapid deterioration of water quality and quantity in certain states. This Commission requested a Comprehensive Assessment of Freshwater Resources of the World, which was submitted to the Special Session of the General Assembly in 1997. This Assessment was prepared by a number of UN agencies such as UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO, WHO and FAO. The Assessment concluded that in many developed and developing states water use is not sustainable; water use is growing at twice the rate of the global population rate; water shortages are causing health problems limiting economic and agricultural development; and human water demands strain water resources such as rivers, causing severe water pollution and damage to the ecosystem<sup>4</sup>. In 2000 UNESCO announced the inauguration of a World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP). It was adopted by the UN as a system-wide programme and contributes to global awareness of the role of water within human development (Annan 2001).

There has been an increase in the number of global governance agencies involved in managing and regulating international water issues. International water regimes came into being with the establishment of the Mekong River Commission in 1957. This Commission continued to function despite the Vietnam War. In this regard the United Nations, the Mekong River Commission, the World Commission on Dams (WCD), the World Water Council, the World Bank and others play an important role (World Commission on Dams 2000). The establishment of various international commissions to deal with water issues is one more indication of the globalisation of water issues. OKACOM, for example, is an initiative of the three states (Angola, Botswana and Namibia) in the Okavango River Basin. These states established the Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission in 1994 to co-ordinate and collaborate on the sharing of the basin's water resources<sup>5</sup>.

### The Retreat of the State and the Growth in Transborder Links on Water

One of the main features of globalisation is the "retreat of the state". In this sense, water issues are increasingly becoming supranational issues. Increased international multilateral (as opposed to national) efforts to address international water issues are evident since the 1970s.

The global increase in transborder links (such as bilateral or multilateral agreements) is one other example of an emergent pattern of the globalisation of water issues. The establishment of a number of international collaborative arrangements on water such as the Global Water Partnership, the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council and the World Water Council (WWC) reflects another aspect of the increasing globalisation of water issues. One illustration of efforts to establish transborder links to manage water resources is the establishment of the Global Water Partnership (GWP) in Stockholm in August 1996 and the First Water Forum in Marrakech in March 1997. The Marrakech Declaration laid the foundation for the development of a World Water Vision as it was at this meeting

that the WWC was mandated to undertake this task.

The GWP is an international network open to all parties involved in water resources management such as governments of developed and developing countries, UN agencies, multilateral banks, professional associations, research organisations, the private sector and NGOs to formulate, co-ordinate and implement integrated water resource management programmes. The GWP was one of the participants of the Second World Water Forum in The Hague in March 2000.

The World Water Council (WWC), an international water policy think-tank, was established as a non-governmental organisation in 1996. The WWC consists of 200 member institutions representing more than 50 states (or two thirds of the global population), a number of international organisations, governmental agencies, the private sector and NGOs. Responding to an international call, the WWC embarked on the development of the Vision for World Water, Life and the Environment for the 21st Century. A group of world leaders was appointed to guide this process under the name of the World Commission for Water for the Twenty-first Century. The GWP was the WWC's major partner in this process. Workshops and consultations were conducted around the world over a period of 15 months. Mid-term results were released in Stockholm in August 1999. The final report was released in March 2000 at The Hague during the Second World Water Forum (Haldenwang 2000). The World Water Vision is one of the most comprehensive international assessments of water challenges for the 21st century. The document outlines the uses of water in the world today as well as the threats to future water resources, water futures, its vision and how to achieve this vision by including governments, NGOs, local communities, UN agencies and multinational corporations (MNCs) (Cosgrove & Rijsberman 2000).

Increased Private Sector Involvement in Global and National Water Issues, Policy and Regulation.

The idea of a hydrosocial contract was first mentioned at the 9th Stockholm water Symposium. It is an unwritten contract between the public and the government that comes into existence when the individual citizen is no longer capable of mobilising sufficient water for his/her own personal survival. This then acts as a mandate by which government ultimately takes on and executes this responsibility. This hydrosocial contract then acts as the basis for institutional development and determines the equitable distribution of water resources. Two variations of this are the Hobbesian Form of Hydrosocial Contract (a bipolar configuration between the government and water consuming public when water scarcity is encountered in a given social space) and the Lockean Form of Hydrosocial Contract (a triangular configuration between the government, the water consuming public and special interest groups such as NGOs when existing water supply schemes fall short of water demand, so that a condition of water deficit prevails and a new water awareness emerges). At the Second World Water Forum a special session on The Social Charter for Water was held. The World Water Vision, however, refers to the tripartite alliance between government, civil society and the private sector. The establishment of "water user parliaments" in order to include all stakeholders in decision making on water is another element of the World Water Vision (Turton & Meissner 2001:1-24).

A good example of increased private sector involvement (as an indication of the Lockean Hydrosocial Contract) in global and national water issues, is the Netherlands Water Partnership (NWP). It is a body set up by the Dutch public (government departments and agencies) and private (water supply companies, consultancy firms, contractors, the banking sector and manufacturing industry) sector to

act as a national co-ordination and information point in relation to Dutch water activities and interest internationally (The Netherlands Water Partnership 2001).

## The Spread of Global Social Movements

The explosion of the activities of global social movements addressing water issues since the establishment of the environmental organisation, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), in 1961 reflects the broader trend of globalisation allowing individuals spread over social spaces/territories to develop shared agendas at the global level. These movements have greatly benefited from the redefinition of national security to include non-military issues (such as human security issues and water) and a broader decision-making base. The ability of these global movements to harness support on issues across borders gave them a tremendously powerful influence on global issues. Their ability to collect, marshal and disseminate information efficiently in various locations across the globe contributes to their influence in decision making on global matters. These movements exert influence by shaping public attitudes, interests and identities; altering the agenda of local, national and global politics; providing citizens with a channel of access to global and regional decision-making forums; exercising moral and technical authority; and seeking to make governments and MNCs accountable for their decisions and actions (McGrew 2000:127-167).

In recognition of their global influence, some of these movements are formally accredited by a number of international organisations. Through the UN Charter's Article 71, a consultative relationship was established between some of these movements and the UN. Most UN agencies have established mechanisms to accommodate these movements, giving rise to the emergence of a global civil society on water issues (Vincent 1999:121-132).

World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace International, Earthwatch, Econet, Environmental Defense Fund, Natural Resources Defense Council, Rainforest Action Network, Resources for the Future, Sierra Club, World Conservation Monitoring Centre, World Resources Institute, Worldwatch Institute, International Rivers Network, Friends of the Earth, Earth Patrol, One Earth, PlanetKeepers, International Forum on Globalization, Green Cross International, WaterAid, International Network on Water and Waste Management, International Office for Water are only a small number of international organisations and social movements addressing water issues across the globe.

A number of significant studies and programmes on water issues have also been undertaken by NGOs and the scientific community. Some of these initiatives have been promoted and executed by, inter alia, the International Association of Hydrological Sciences, the Collaborative Council for Water Supply and the International Water Resources Association.

Social movements addressing water issues have established various networks. An example of this is the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP) based in India. It was established in 1998 with a view to interact with the World Commission of Dams (WCD). SANDRP regularly publishes updates on the Internet on water issues such as dams, flooding, rivers, safe drinking water and hydropower in this region (South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP) 1999).

The involvement of local and international interest groups in the Lesotho Highlands Water Project

(LHWP) is an example of the global nature and impact of a water issue. In this case, the Lesotho Highlands Church and Solidarity Action Group (HCSAG), Earthlife Africa, the International Rivers Network and the Environmental Defense Fund joined forces against the South African and Lesotho governments, the World Bank and other agencies involved in the LHWP to protest against the building of the Katse and Mohale dams. In the case of the Kunene River, non-state actors became involved in the politics of the proposed Epupa Dam. The most notable international organisations involved in this case were the International Rivers Network, Environmental Defence, the Norwegian Association for International Water and Forest Studies, Survival International from the UK, Earthlife Africa, the Environmental Monitoring Group from South Africa, and the Southern African Rivers Association (SARA) (Meissner 2001, Meissner 2000).

The Streams of Knowledge coalition was launched at the Second World Water Forum in The Hague in March 2000. It is a global coalition for capacity building in the water and sanitation sector<sup>7</sup>.

Global water issues involve a range of local, national and international processes and actors. Since the 1970s the number of global social movements addressing water issues increased dramatically. Initially, water availability was the main issue. Subsequently, water quality, access, human rights, global warming, sustainable water use, women and water, and the building of dams became more important.

Green Cross International (GCI) was founded by former Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, to address the environmental legacy of the Cold War. GCI is one international organisation that works to prevent conflicts in water stressed regions. It contributes to conflict prevention and resolution of actual and potential conflicts by convening representatives of all the relevant communities in a particular water-stressed region. GCI is currently involved in the Water Emergency Plan for the Middle East, the Fight Against Desertification in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, a drinking water project in Swaziland, mediation between communities effected by large dams in Argentina and Paraguay, the World Water Council, the Global Water Partnership, and the Gender and Water Alliance (Curtin 2001).

GCI is also raising global awareness of water issues by involving other world leaders. In October 2000, for example, *Civilization* (the magazine of the US Library of Congress) was launched, focusing on water as the globe's most precious resource. Contributors to this edition of *Civilization* included Mikhail Gorbachev, Kofi Annan (UN secretary general), Madeleine Albright (US secretary of state at the time), Hanan Sher (The Jerusalem Post), Kader Asmal (Chairperson of the World Commission of Dams), Anil Agarwal (New Delhi Centre for Science and Environment), Fidel Ramos (former president of the Philippines), Ismail Serageldin (Chairperson of the World Commission on Water for the 21st Century) and Douglas MacDonald (Massachusetts Water Resources Authority) (Green Cross International 2000).

The International Forum on Globalization (IFG), established in 1994, is an alliance of 60 activists, academics, economists and researchers formed to stimulate new thinking, joint activity and public education in response to economic globalisation. It represents 60 organisations in 25 countries. The IFG's objectives are to expose the effects of globalisation and to reverse the globalisation process by encouraging ideas to ensure long-term ecological stability. Its Committee on the Globalization of Water in June 1999 released a report, *Blue Gold: The global water crisis and the commodification of the world's water supply*. The report critically addresses such questions as the ownership and privatisation of water as well as the role of multinational corporations as owners of water systems (Barlow 1999).



The International Water Management Institute (IMWI), based in India, is another notable organisation in the globalisation of water issues. It is a scientific organisation focusing on the use of water in agriculture and on the water needs of developing countries. Working in multi-disciplinary teams, IMWI is involved in water research and development projects in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Mexico, the Philippines, Iran and parts of Africa<sup>8</sup>.

The world's leading development agencies concerned with providing water and sanitation services to the poor established the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) under the administration of the World Bank. With its head office in Washington, the WSP has regional offices in South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, Africa and the Andean region, and operates in more than 30 countries assisting local community partners to improve water and sanitation service delivery.

### The Development and Expansion of International Law

The development and expansion of international water law is one of the manifestations of the globalisation of water issues. Four main doctrines have been developed, i.e. the doctrine of absolute territorial sovereignty, the doctrine of absolute territorial integrity, the doctrine of limited territorial sovereignty and the so-called Helsinki Rules (the doctrine of community of interest).

The International Law Commission and the International Water Law Project are only two of the number of international organisations involved in addressing legal issues surrounding international water resources.

### Global Water Values

One of the notable outcomes of the World Conference on Water and Environment: Development Issues for the 21st Century (Dublin, 1992) was the emergence of a set of principles, The Dublin Water Principles, for water planning and management. These principles are gaining world-wide acceptance and have been, for example, applied in the new water policy in South Africa.

The formulation of globally shared values pertaining to water is another emergent pattern of the globalisation of water issues. An example of this are the values enshrined in the World Water Vision launched at the World Water Forum in March 2000. At the Second World Water Forum in The Hague in March 2000, the notion of a Social Charter for Water was mooted. The Charter was launched at international level with inputs from more than 50 countries. The Charter is indicative of the convergence of global values on water and follows on recent declarations focusing on water such as the Earth Charter (Sweden), the Health Charter (England), the Declaration of Madeira by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Report on Water Ethics by UNESCO, the Cape Town Declaration, the Delhi Declaration and the World Water Group by the Lisbon Group. The purpose of the Social Charter for Water is to promote a water policy for the 21st century that is designed by policy-makers and their experts, in partnerships with the citizens, to integrate their demands in the projects and to take into account local economic imperatives (Turton & Meissner 2001:18).

The World Water Vision discussed above states a common vision:

Water is life. Every human being, now and in the future, should have access to safe water for drinking, appropriate sanitation, and enough food and energy at reasonable cost. Providing adequate water to meet these basic needs must be done in an equitable manner that works in harmony with nature.

### The Dublin Water Principles 9

Principle 1: Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable source, essential to sustain life, development and the environment.

Principle 2: Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy makers at all levels.

Principle 3: Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.

Principle 4: Water has an economic value in all its uses, and should be recognised as an economic good.

Another indication of the globalisation of water issues is the convergence of the global development and security agendas at the beginning of this millennium. The UNDP's 1994 Human Development Report focused explicitly on human security. It redefined security to also include conditions arising from poverty and inequality. However, despite the positive sides of globalisation, the process is resulting in a highly uneven distribution of gains. The UNDP reported that more than 5 million people die per annum from diarrhoeal diseases caused by water contamination (Thomas 2001:159-175).

### Water as a Source of Global Conflict and Co-Operation

The end of the Cold War ushered in a new global era and a shift from military to human security. Threats to security are now defined as military, social, political, economic and environmental. The threat to water security falls into the category of non-military or human security.

Water as a source of conflict is increasingly contested in the literature on the subject. Although some research concludes that there has never been a single war fought over water, it remains a source of potential conflict as in the case of the Middle East for example. Research does indicate the link between access to clean water and political stability.

Each international treaty on water can be regarded as a resolved dispute. Water conflict often occurs after the internationalisation of a previously national waterway such as the Jordan, Indus, Nile and Aral basin. Another contributing factor is the existence of ethnic minorities along major waterways as in the Kurdish regions along the Euphrates or the Punjab between India and Pakistan. The pattern of water-related tensions is often that riparians of an international basin implement water development projects unilaterally within their own territory in an attempt to avoid the politics of the shared water resource. As water demands approach supply, one of the riparians implements a water development project that impacts on at least one of its neighbours. Egypt's plans for a dam high on the Nile, Turkey's Great

Anatolian Project (GAP) project on the Euphrates or Indian diversions of the Ganges to protect the port of Calcutta are examples of these. Any water development project impacting on a neighbouring state in the absence of institutions to resolve tensions can become a hydropolitical conflict. Wolf and Hamner (2000) identify a number of indicators of an impending water conflict:

- water quantity
- water quality
- water management for multiple use such as irrigation and hydropower
- political divisions within the basin
- geopolitical setting
- levels of national development in basin
- the hydropolitical issue(s) in a basin
- institutional control of water resources
- national water ethos.

International co-operation (such as the Mekong River Commission and the SADC Protocol on Shared Water Courses) on water issues seems to be one of the driving forces of the globalisation of water issues.

Water issues are an important aspect in the Middle East peace process<sup>10</sup>. This conflict, which has been globalised on its own, is another manifestation of the globalisation of water issues. A number of international organisations and social movements are involved in addressing the water issues in this conflict. In September 1999, GCI, the International Arid Lands Consortium, the Peres Center for Peace and the Center for Middle East Peace and Economic Development hosted a workshop in Amman on creating sustainable regional solutions for water in the Jordan valley. The workshop addressed the current and impending water shortage in the region, the role of water in agriculture, desalination, political issues, the creation of a regional institution such as a "Regional Water Resources Commission", financing water initiatives and related environmental concerns. This initiative was followed up by a fact-finding mission under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev to Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Jordan in March 2001. This mission was in preparation of the session called Water for Peace in the Middle East at the Second World Water Forum in The Hague (Green Cross International 2001a, Green Cross International 2001b).

The Nile is one example where one single state cannot address all issues relating to it. It is also an example of the water vulnerability of a downstream state such as Egypt. Burundi, the DRC, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda have a part or all of their territories in the Nile Basin. The Nile COM is a Council of Ministers including all the Ministers of Water Affairs of the Nile countries. The Nile flows through some of the most unstable states in Africa since the Cold War. A number of initiatives were launched to establish an international discourse on development in the Nile Basin. The World Conservation Union (IUCN), the WWF, the World Bank, Nile COM, the Canadian International Donor Agency (CIDA), the UNDP, InterAfrica Group, Arab Office for Youth and Environment, International Committee of the Red Cross, Wetlands International, Uganda Wildlife Society, Sudanese Environment Conservation Society etc are involved in this ongoing process (Abrams 2001, Tafesse 2000, Swain 1997).

## The Use of Internet and Technology

Since October 1998 Waterweb hosted a series of summits on water. The initial Water Information Summit was the Water on the Web Workshop held in October 1998. Subsequent Water Information Summits (October 1999 and November 2000) addressed the use of information and internet technology with regard to water-related information on the Web. The Fourth Water Information Summit will take place in Panama in October 2001 and will focus on internet-based mechanisms and partnerships to build virtual capacity for sustainable water resources management<sup>11</sup>.

The number of electronic/internet conferences on water issues is increasing. Some of the notable conferences in this regard are the Fourth Electronic Conference on Streams of knowledge: Knowledge sharing in the water and sanitation sector (March 15 - April 21, 2000) and the Third Electronic Conference on Small towns' water and sanitation (January 31 - March 10, 2000) (Europe's Forum on International Cooperation (Euforic) 2001:1-6).

INTERWATER is an electronic network of institutions in the water and sanitation sector acting as a gateway to other sources of water and sanitation information.

The Internet is also used by various social movements and international organisations to raise global awareness of water issues. Green Cross International's website, for example, lists 13 pages of international organisations and NGOs dealing with water issues<sup>12</sup>. The Water Page ([www.thewaterpage.com](http://www.thewaterpage.com)) is an example of this.

## Water Issues and the Challenges of Globalisation

The provision of quality water remains one of the most important challenges. Global freshwater consumption rose sixfold between 1900 and 1995 – twice the rate of population growth. Population growth and development are currently driving a rapid increase in water demand. As the world's food demands rise, so will the demands on water resources. Developing countries are most likely to be hardest hit. As these states industrialise in order to improve growth and development, so will the demands on the water sector increase (World Resources Institute 2001).

The link between water and health was discussed above. A number of states in Southern Africa, for example, have been shown to have the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates recorded in the world. The pandemic already has had an enormous impact on the region. Apart from the social and economic effects, HIV/AIDS also poses associated challenges for water resource management in this region. Contradictory forecasts of HIV/AIDS-related mortalities on population growth rates have complicated the planning and implementation of water supply schemes. Furthermore, families who have lost their breadwinners are unable to pay for water service delivery. HIV/AIDS-infected individuals are also more prone to a number of illnesses and water-borne diseases. High HIV/AIDS prevalence rates contribute to decreased productivity and an increase in the demand for training skilled and semi-skilled replacements. The provision of safe water and sanitation services to poor communities in developing countries offers an opportunity to reduce the incidence of water-borne diseases. The speedy implementation of national and regional programmes in Southern Africa, for example, is required if the impact of the pandemic is to be contained (Ashton & Ramassar 2001, Eales et al 2001).

## Conclusion

This paper attempted to address the globalisation of water issues as manifested in, inter alia, global awareness through global governance agencies such as the UN, selected multilateral organisations, NGOs and social movements involved in global water issues.

As the development and resource gap between developed and developing countries widen, an increase in the divergence between these economies is evident. The answer does not lie in the increase in the number of bigger water supply schemes, but in sharing water values on a global scale. States are increasingly dependent upon other states and non-state actors to ensure adequate quality and quantities of water. The emergence of an evolving global policy on water issues to address transborder water issues constitutes an emergent system of global governance reflecting increased political co-ordination among governments, intergovernmental organisations and transnational social movements. In this process a common purpose and goals via agreed rules, values and principles as discussed above are worked for.

The emergence of a global/transnational civil society on water issues is increasingly playing an influential role in mobilising, organising and exercising influence on a particular water issue. This has been made possible, inter alia, by the spread of global communications systems such as the Internet.

## Notes

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1. Paper presented (under the title, The Globalization of Water Issues) at the 2001 Hong Kong Convention of the International Studies Association on Globalization and its challenges in the 21st century, 26-28 July 2001, Hong Kong.

2. See also Cutler 2001.

3. Based on Scholte 1999:15, Scholte 2000:8-9, 41, McGrew 2000:127-167, Mills 1998:5-25, and Garret 2000:941-991.

4. United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, Comprehensive Assessment of the Freshwater Resources of the World, [www.un.org/esa/sustdev/freshwat.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/freshwat.htm) , pp 1-25.

5. Permanent Okavango River Commission, [www.iwwn.com/na/namibianet/okacom/main.htm](http://www.iwwn.com/na/namibianet/okacom/main.htm) .

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7. Streams of Knowledge, [www.irc.nl/stream/index.htm](http://www.irc.nl/stream/index.htm), 25 May 2001, p 1.

8. The International Water Management Institute (IMWI), [www.imwi.org](http://www.imwi.org) .

9. United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, Comprehensive Assessment of the Freshwater Resources of the World, [www.un.org/esa/sustdev/freshwat.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/freshwat.htm), pp 21-22.

10. See, for example, Soffer 1999.
11. Waterweb, Water Information Summits, [www.waterweb.org](http://www.waterweb.org)
12. See, for example, [www.gci.ch/GreenCrossPrograms/waterres/links/links.htm](http://www.gci.ch/GreenCrossPrograms/waterres/links/links.htm)

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